Safavid Persia and Persians on the Early Modern English Stage: Drama, and Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1580-1685

Amin Momeni

MLitt Thesis in English Literature
Department of English Literature
School of English, Drama, and American & Canadian Studies
Faculty of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham

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Abstract

This thesis is the first study to investigate the relationship between, on the one hand, early modern English dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians, and on the other, Tudor-Stuart foreign policy towards non-Christian allies and enemies such as the Safavid Persian empire and Ottoman Turks. It breaks new ground by arguing that such depictions actively contributed to shaping English attitudes towards contemporary Persia and Persians, and, by so doing, to participating in contemporary debates about Tudor-Stuart foreign and domestic policy. This study contributes to the existing scholarship in three main areas. Firstly, it adds to existing studies of early modern English dramatic depictions of Islamic culture. These studies have chiefly been focused on English literary engagements with the Ottoman empire and Islamic North Africa, whereas my focus on English drama's representation of Safavid Persia reveals the distinctive place held by Islamic Persia and Persians in early modern English thought. Secondly, this study goes beyond previous research by specifically focusing on English dramatic depictions of Islamic Persia rather than ancient Persia and Persians. My study shows how Tudor-Stuart playwrights put Safavid Persia on stage at least partly to help shape public opinion with regard to England's political ambitions, at home and abroad. Thirdly, I propose that a dynamic relationship existed between depictions of Islamic Safavids on stage and the early modern political interplay between Safavid Persia, England, and the Ottoman Turks. From a theoretical point of view, this thesis challenges Edward Said's theory in *Orientalism* regarding cultural constructions of west-east binary oppositions. By contrast, my study shows that early modern English drama's positive representation of Islamic Persia constitutes a clear alternative to Said's self-other construct established in *Orientalism*. Indeed, this thesis argues that English dramatic depictions of Islamic Persia might be thought of more as an imaginary embodiment of an alternative 'self' for early modern English politics and religion, than as the xenophobic creation of an ideological and military rival and 'other'.

Contents

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INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the role played by Persia and Persians in the imagination of Renaissance England. Most recently, Jane Grogan described ancient Persia as the bedrock on which English writers of all kinds built their literary and political fictions in order to offer an idealized model of monarchy through the legacy of the classical Persian world.[1] However, Grogan, like other critics, tends to focus predominantly on English literary engagements with ancient Persia only – the Persia of the Achaemenid empire, Cyrus the Great, Darius the Great, and of Zoroastrianism – and to downplay literary references and allusions to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Islamic empire of Safavid Persia. This thesis, by contrast, focuses squarely on the place held by Islamic Persians in the English literary imagination of the period. In particular, my research focuses on depictions of Islamic Safavids on the early modern English stage, building on and extending Linda McJannet's pioneering article, 'Bringing in a Persian'.[2] This thesis not only reveals a wider range of allusions and representations to Islamic Persia and Persians than recorded by McJannet, but also breaks new ground by exploring the ways in which such depictions are connected to foreign and domestic policy debates in Tudor-Stuart England.

To date, most research on English literary representations and engagements with Islam in the early modern period have focused on depictions not of Persia, but of the Ottoman empire. Gerald MacLean, for example, has shed light on the history of travel and cultural exchanges between England and the Ottoman Turks;[3] similarly, Nabil Matar has surveyed

[1] Jane Grogan, *The Persian Empire in English Renaissance Writing, 1549-1622* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). The format I use for referencing in the body of text, footnotes and bibliography follows that of the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA). Here and in each chapter the first reference is given in full, and in short from thereafter.

[2] Linda McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism and Reviews*, 12 (1999): 236-267.

[3] See Gerald MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), and *Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire before 1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

early modern England's relations with the Turks and North Africans.[4] MacLean and Matar have also co-authored a book on Elizabeth I's diplomatic and commercial ties with the Ottoman and Moroccan empires.[5] The book examines early modern British perceptions of, and interactions with, Islamic culture, but the book deals with Islamic Persia in general rather than focusing specifically on Safavid Persians. More narrowly, but significantly for present purposes, Matthew Dimmock has explored the representations of the Ottomans on the English stage.[6] My thesis aims to supplement and extend the focus of these critics on English literary engagement with the Ottoman empire by focusing on dramatic representations of and allusions to the Islamic empire of the Safavid Persians. It is my argument that the drama of the period reveals the distinctive place held by Islamic Persia in early modern British (or more narrowly, English) thought. Furthermore, I will argue that a fascinating, hitherto unsuspected, dynamic relation existed, changing over time, between such dramatic depictions and the constantly shifting political interplay between Safavid Persia, England, and the Ottomans.

Recent research that specifically concerns literary representations of Persia touches on the subject in different ways. Anthony Parr has focused on English travel writing and the ways in which it informs early modern English drama.[7] Parr maintains that 'a large and varied body of such material grew up around the exploits of the Sherley brothers in the late 1590s and during the Jacobean era'.[8] In examining early modern English conceptions of the

[4] Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[5] Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[6] Matthew Dimmock, *New Turks: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
[7] See Anthony Parr, *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), and 'Foreign Relations in Jacobean England: The Sherley Brothers and the Voyage of Persia', in Jean-Pierre Maquerlot and Michele Willems (eds), *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 14-31.
[8] Parr, 'Foreign Relations in Jacobean England', p. 14. Other recent studies which I have found useful include: Hafiz Abid Masood, *From Cyrus to Abbas: Staging Persia in Early Modern England* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 2011); Laurence Publicover, 'Strangers at Home: The Sherley Brothers and Dramatic Romance', *Renaissance Studies*, 24 (2010): 694-709; Javad Ghatta, '"By Mortus Ali and our Persian gods": Multiple Persian Identities

Persian empire, previous studies have tended not to distinguish very clearly between perceptions of ancient Persia on the one hand, and contemporary sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Safavid Persians on the other. Linda McJannet, for example, has identified representations of Persia in early modern English drama, and compiled a list of plays involving both Islamic and ancient Persian elements, yet without clearly distinguishing between the two.[9] Jane Grogan's book, despite addressing early modern English conceptions of Islamic and ancient Persia, underestimates the impact of the presence of Islamic Safavids in early modern English drama and politics.[10] By contrast, my thesis focuses on the ways in which early modern English dramatists used Safavid Persia and Persians for political purposes. Scholars such as Jonathan Burton have demonstrated the important role played by drama in early modern English thinking about foreign affairs. Burton argues, based on his excavation of English, Ottoman and North African sources, that drama shaped English discourse regarding Muslims in the period. He demonstrates that for early modern England, then in increasing contact with the Muslim world including the Ottomans and North Africans, the challenge was to *turn to* the Turks without *turning* Turk, or, in other words, without converting to Islam.[11] The current thesis applies the literary critical method of studies such as Burton's (involving both close historical contextualisation of individual plays *and* an appreciation of how such plays participate in broad cultural discourses about race, nationality and foreign cultures) to English dramatic depictions of Safavid Persians, and to the cultural and political significance of those depictions.

My research draws together a wide range of dramatic texts, including tragedies, comedies, masques and pageants, some comparatively well known and some relatively

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in *Tamburlaine* and *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*', *Early Theatre* 12 (2009): 235-249; Bernadette Andrea, 'Lady Sherley: The First Persian in England?', *The Muslim World* 95 (2005): 279-295.

[9] McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', p. 241.

[10] See Grogan, *The Persian Empire in English Renaissance Writing*.

[11] Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579-1624* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005); see also Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 29, 198.

unknown, performed before a variety of audiences, public and private. The thesis covers a time span of approximately a century, 1580-1685, from the first performances of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* (1590) to the Restoration drama of the reign of Charles II. By analysing seventeen dramatic works, this thesis shows how, in Marlowe's great tragedies, contemporary Anglo-Persian political relations first appeared on the English stage, and how, thereafter, English playwrights continued to deploy dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians for political purposes, though in different ways, over almost the next one hundred years.

The first state-sponsored attempts to establish Anglo-Persian political relations date back to A. D. 1238 when a Mongol-invaded Persia appealed for assistance to European countries such as France and England.[12] Further appeals and diplomatic contacts ensued over the next four centuries. Some of those who travelled to or through Persia from the Christian world included the Franciscan Jean Plano de Carpini, Pope Innocent IV's envoy in 1245, the Venetian Marco Polo in the 1270s, Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, the Spanish Ambassador, in 1404, and Anthony Jenkinson of the Muscovy Company in 1562.[13] Safavid monarchs treated the Christian envoys who visited Persia in different ways according to their political priorities. For example, Tahmasb I (1514-1576), the longest reigning of the Safavid Shahs, expelled Anthony Jenkinson from the court because he was a Christian, while Shah Abbas I (1571-1629) tolerated Christianity as part of his anti-Ottoman policy.[14] During the Safavid dynasty, Europe and England's increasing contact with Islamic Persia was reflected in the increasing frequency and intimacy of both commercial and political contacts between the two regions in the period 1501-1722. As a result, Islamic Persia loomed large in European and English imaginations during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as variously reflected on the

[12] Laurence Lockhart, 'Persia as Seen by the West', in Arthur J. Arberry (ed.), *The Legacy of Persia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 318-58 (p. 340).
[13] *Ibid*., pp. 340-44.
[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 344, 347.

English stage in plays from Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590) to Thomas Southerne's *The Loyal Brother, or, the Persian Prince* (1682).

The first chapter of my thesis focuses on changing English perceptions of Persia in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. I argue in particular that the exchange of emissaries between early modern England and contemporary Persia actively shaped such perceptions in a period of rapidly developing Anglo-Persian political, commercial, and cultural relationships. I propose that, amongst the ambassadors exchanged between early modern England and Safavid Persia, Robert Sherley stood as the most influential in marking a turning-point in England's foreign policy towards Islamic Persia, and in facilitating closer Anglo-Persian political, mercantile, and military ties. I show that Robert Sherley, through his presentation of a remarkable diplomatic letter from Shah Abbas I to James VI and I, contributed to sealing the first Anglo-Persian military alliance in 1622. Building on this historical context, I go on to explore the ways in which early modern English poets and playwrights such as Thomas Middleton celebrated, in a variety of literary forms, Robert Sherley's significant diplomatic achievement, and depicted Sherley's personal hybrid Anglo-Persian identity as the embodiment of contemporary Anglo-Persian relations.

This introductory chapter also focuses on a selection of dramatic literary allusions to Persia in general. This is in order to provide the thesis with a wide literary, cultural, and political context before focusing specifically on the dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians. Through examining William Alexander, First Earl of Stirling's closet drama *The Tragedie of Darius* (1603) and Sir John Suckling's tragi-comedy *Aglaura* (1638), I show the different ways in which English dramatists, writing before and after Robert Sherley's return to England as a Safavid emissary, characterized ancient Persian figures such as Darius, the Achaemenid king. The objective in this chapter is to gauge the extent to which the travels of emissaries such as Robert Sherley influenced the ways in which English playwrights used

ancient Persian dramatis personae to reflect or comment upon contemporary Anglo-Persian relations. I find that, in contrast with Alexander's *Darius*, written and performed some years *prior to* Sherley's 1611 embassy to England from Persia, Suckling's *Aglaura*, written and performed some years *after* the Sherley embassy, emphasizes specifically Islamic features of Persian culture throughout the course of its text, and, as such, clearly uses its ancient Persian setting to comment on contemporary Anglo-Persian political and commercial relations. In order to compare various strands of English thought towards Persia and Persians in the period, I contrast the representations of ancient Persia in *Darius* and *Aglaura* with the depiction of Islamic Persian characters in plays such as Christopher Marlowe in *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* (1590) and *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins. By so doing, I reveal the ways in which both types of representations informed England's foreign policy towards Persia, and, at the same time, demonstrate the ways in which early modern English drama, both directly and indirectly, established provocative parallels between ancient Persian dramatis personae and contemporary English political dynamics.

The second chapter analyses the depiction of Islamic Persia and Persians in two plays, one Elizabethan and one Jacobean: Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* (1590) and Thomas Heywood's *The Foure Prentices of London* (1615). In the first section I argue that Marlowe dramatized contemporary Persia and Persians as secular and areligious. Marlowe's purpose, I suggest, in depicting Persians as such had political reasons and consequences. Through his presentation of the infamous burning of the 'Turkish Alcaron', the playwright attacked existing Anglo-Ottoman political ties, established between Elizabeth I and Murad III in 1580, and showed his strong distaste towards the Ottomans as an

Islamic ally of England.[15] At the same time, Marlowe's play popularizes Safavid Persians as hostile to the more tyrannical forms of Islam, and, by doing so, implicitly makes a case for an alternative ally for England in the east, namely, Persia. The second section shows how Thomas Heywood develops two lines of thought in *The Foure Prentices of London* (1615), building on the contrast created by Marlowe between Safavid Persia and the Ottoman Turks. Heywood attempts, first, to criticize Catholic-Protestant clashes, and, second, to suggest a surrogate ally for England should his country's relationship with the Ottoman Turks fail. Through a detailed examination of the dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians, this chapter reveals, for the first time, the ways in which Elizabethan and Jacobean English playwrights used representations of Safavid Persians in order to engage with foreign policy debates.

The third chapter explores three Jacobean dramatic texts in three sections. The first section focuses on *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day, George Wilkins, and William Rowley. Here I argue that Persian and English dramatis personae are dramatized as characters who undergo transformations of identity. I show that the transformation of identity in characters such as Shah Abbas I and Robert Sherley is designed to symbolize and support the Jacobean intention for closer Anglo-Persian political relationships. The second section focuses on Thomas Campion's *The Description of a Maske* (1614), performed at the Jacobean court, and proposes that the work is an attempt to raise the political profile of Safavid Persia amongst the masque's elite audience. It does this by making the Persian nation stand alone as the sole representative of the whole continent of Asia, thereby emphasizing Persia's importance in world affairs. The third section shows that in *Albumazar* (1615), a satirical comedy, Thomas Tomkis creatively reinvents his titular Persian astrologer in order to attune the character to the political atmosphere of the Jacobean period.

[15] Dimmock, *New Turks: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England*, p. 52; also see Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (London, 1590), sig. K5r.

Following the implicit introduction of Safavid Persia as a potential ally for England in plays such as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* tragedies, Jacobean drama seeks to endorse and encourage Anglo-Persian political and military relations through dramatizing Islamic Persia and Persians for both elite and public theatregoers.

The fourth chapter investigates early Caroline and mid-Caroline dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians. I argue that early Caroline dramatists characterize Safavid Persians in order to entertain the English, and to pay tribute to England and English elite audiences. A new monarch, Charles I, ascended the throne in 1625, and in order to glorify and honour the occasion playwrights such as Thomas Dekker praise the royal court through their representations of Islamic Persian dramatis personae. This section ranges from Thomas Dekker's *Londons Tempe* (1629) to Sir William Davenant's *The Temple of Love: A Masque* (1634). The mid-Caroline period, by contrast, is dominated by the personal rule of Charles I, who had dissolved Parliament in 1629, causing widespread dissatisfaction amidst the members of the house.[16] As a result, mid-Caroline dramatists such as William Strode tend to use dramatic representations of the Safavids in a different way. Playwrights such as Strode employ such depictions to address the increasingly fractious political milieu of the period, and, like the late-Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, seek to comment, albeit indirectly, on the political issues of the day by warning the English monarch of the insidious dangers posed by evil counsellors. Here, my discussion includes analysis of two plays: William Strode's tragi-comedy, *The Floating Island* (1636), and Sir William Lower's tragic romance, *The Phaenix in her Flames* (1639). This chapter concludes that, depending on the political atmosphere in the period, the four dramatists deploy in their works adaptable depictions of Islamic Persia and Persians in order to achieve various purposes. From attempting to impress political figures to intersecting with Caroline policies, these writers

[16] Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. xv.

sought to affect Caroline English thought through their dramatizations of Islamic Persia and Persians.

The fifth chapter addresses the dramatic representations of the Safavids in the late Caroline period and Interregnum. I examine surviving play texts in the light of the fraught political climate of the pre- and post-civil war periods, and show how playwrights such as John Denham and Robert Baron draw clear parallels between their Safavid Persian characters and the contemporary English political scene in order to warn the king about his closest courtiers, to criticize, or advise the English monarchy, as well as to educate their readers and audiences. Compared to the mid-Caroline period, the warnings and criticisms contained in the plays of the 1640s reflect far more overtly the broad political crisis in the decade, and the urgency of the playwrights to counsel the king through Islamic Persian characters.

Here, I focus on John Denham's *The Sophy* (1642) and Robert Baron's *Mirza* (1647/55), and show that political analogies between Safavid Persian and Caroline courtiers consist both of one-to-one correspondences as well as single characters embodying the multiple attributes of various political factions (such as those of the parliamentarians and royalists). I offer a comparative study between these two tragedies, showing that Baron follows Denham's example in employing Islamic Persian dramatis personae to criticize the English monarchy. In addition, my comparison shows that Denham's *The Sophy* was intended for theatrical performance, while Baron's *Mirza* was an attempt to educate readers, rather than audiences, through its printed text. Given that on 2 September 1642 Parliament had banned the staging of plays in the London theatres, the royalist Baron's *Mirza*, published in print in 1655, sought to exercise literary influence during the Interregnum through its depictions of Safavid characters and stories. Towards the end of the chapter, I extend such a comparison to two dramatic texts from the Interregnum. Through focusing on Henry Glapthorne's *Revenge for Honour* (1654), a tragedy, and John Tatham's pageant, *Londons*

Triumph (1659), I argue that both writers engage with England's foreign and domestic policies through theatre: Tatham emphasizes Islamic Persia's place as a prominent foreign destination for English trade, and dramatizes the Asian country as a close commercial ally for England. In *Revenge for Honour*, the playwright uses Islamic Persia to symbolize the English civil war, and to warn the English of the potentially disastrous outcome of a national conflict.

Finally, in my sixth chapter, I extend the research undertaken in the previous chapters to the Restoration period and Charles II's reign by providing a snapshot of the representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in Elkanah Settle's *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa* (1677) and Thomas Southerne's *The Loyal Brother, or, the Persian Prince* (1682). The chapter is also an attempt to compare the representations of Islamic Persians with depictions of other, non-Persian Islamic figures. To this end, it reveals the similarities and differences between dramatic portrayals of the Safavids and Ottoman Turks on the early modern English stage. The chapter aims to show that playwrights such as Elkanah Settle and Thomas Southerne dramatize Islamic Persians, whether in isolation or in contrast with the Ottoman Turks, in an attempt to change the course of England's domestic policy through commenting on contemporary political disputes. The chapter concludes that there exists a shift in the purpose for which dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians were employed by the playwrights in this period compared with the previous eras, and with the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods in particular. Instead of intending to participate in the debate over England's foreign policy, Restoration dramatists seek actively to guide the country's domestic affairs, such as the disputes between the rival political parties, the Whigs and Tories.

Broadly speaking, recent research has shown the influence of English literature on political culture in the Tudor-Stuart period. Cyndia S. Clegg, for example, argues that literary works such as Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590) and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577) 'helped construct an English national identity', and

that the English monarchy and its subjects 'employed printed propaganda to popularize their religious and political agendas'.[17] Clegg's argument and, as pointed out earlier, Jonathan Burton's survey of the ways in which early modern drama shaped English discourse on Ottoman and North African Muslims underpin the idea that portrayals of Safavid Persians on the early modern English stage contributed significantly to informing the political culture of early modern England. My thesis both emulates and endorses the critical approaches taken by Clegg and Burton, and aims to extend their theories of the shaping influence of early modern literature on English national identity and discourse through my consideration of dramatic representations of Safavid Persians in Tudor-Stuart England. That is, the current project maintains that such depictions shaped English political and cultural attitudes towards the English, on the one hand, and towards Safavid Persia, on the other. Although these dramatic representations may appear minor in terms of quantity, it is my argument that looking at them as a whole helps reveal persistent English interest in Safavid Persia's policies, culture and society.

In his pioneering study, *Orientalism* (1978), Edward W. Said develops a powerful thesis about the ways in which the east is seen from a western point of view, building on contrasting binary oppositions such as the self and other, and the occident and orient. Said argues that the notion of the 'representation' of the east in dramatic texts as early as Aeschylus's play *The Persians* projects a 'highly artificial enactment of what a non-Oriental has made into a symbol for the whole Orient'.[18] Critics such as Anthony Parr and Linda McJannet, however, doubt the very existence of a contrasting self-and-other construct between early modern Europe and contemporary Persians. Parr maintains that compared to the Western 'stereotype of the raging and expansionist Turk', Persia appeared as 'a rather

[17] Cyndia S. Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 8.
[18] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 21.

different case'.[19] McJannet observes that 'traditionally, a land of wealth and luxury, with a glorious imperial past, Persia was for Western writers a genuinely exotic country, not a malign and unknowable neighbour, but a fabulous resource'.[20] She continues that 'like India or Japan, [Persia] was not so much Europe's Other as its opposite or foil'.[21]

This study theoretically inclines to critical approaches such as Parr's and McJannet's regarding early modern English perceptions of contemporary Persia, but goes beyond Parr and McJannet to argue that the depictions of Safavid Persia and Persians on the early modern English stage present the Islamic state as a distinguished political friend rather than foe. In contrast with their Ottoman counterpart, the Safavids appear accommodating in tolerating the Christian world, including England; in presenting Safavid characters and culture in this way, early modern English playwrights project a significant discrepancy between Islamic Persia and other contemporary Muslim states. This thesis goes further to argue that early modern English dramatists presented Islamic Persia as possessing discreet but politically moderate characteristics in order to affect and contribute to English foreign and domestic policies more fully. While questioning Said's theory in *Orientalism*, which tends to maintain Persia as Europe's 'other', the aim of this study is to reveal the ways in which early modern drama presented Islamic Persia as a close political parallel for, or ally of, England and English political figures. This thesis thereby seeks, by looking through the lens of early modern English theatre, to show the important role played by Safavid Persia and Persians in the constantly changing political sphere of Tudor-Stuart England.

The texts covered in this thesis are arranged in chronological order. They involve major Islamic Persian characters, settings, and direct references to Persia. In order to preserve original spelling, and to avoid textual misinterpretation, I have used sixteenth- and seventeenth-century editions of these texts. The chronological order of the texts derives from

[19] Parr, *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*, p. 11.
[20] McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', p. 236.
[21] *Ibid*., p. 236.

first-edition title-pages of each work accessed through *Early English Books Online* (*EEBO*) unless otherwise stated. In dating the plays I have also used standard reference works such as Edward Arber's *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London*, the *English Short Title Catalogue* (*ESTC*), and Martin Wiggins's *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*. To place the plays in the chronological order I typically use the date of printing for each text. In addition to *EEBO*, I have made use of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*ODNB*) to supplement biographical information on each writer. In order to provide original documentation regarding the background of early modern Anglo-Persian historical and political relations, I have accessed *State Papers Online* (*SPO*). *SPO* allowed me to examine the first early modern English political letters and correspondences concerning contemporary Safavid Persians. To name a few other particularly important studies that contributed to this thesis I refer to critical surveys by Paul Whitfield White, Laurence Publicover, Ralph Hertel, Robert Wilcher, and John M. Wallace.[22] Whitfield White's argument that the notion of 'secular theatre' was inaugurated by Marlowe in his *Tamburlaine* tragedies helped me, in the second chapter, theorize the idea of a dramatic secular Persia as a form of a moderate, anti-Islamic state in the east and thus a potential ally for England. Publicover's and Hertel's insightful articles contributed considerably to informing my argument in the third chapter on the hybrid and transformative identities in *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*, wherein such dramatic identities were intended by the playwrights to symbolize broader Anglo-Persian commercial and political exchanges on the early modern London stage. While benefiting from Parvin Loloi's and Brendan O Hehir's

[22] See Paul Whitfield White, 'Marlowe and the Politics of Religion', in Patrick Cheney (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 70-89; Publicover, 'Strangers at Home: The Sherley Brothers and Dramatic Romance'; Ralf Hertel's 'Ousting the Ottomans: The Double Vision of the East in *The Travels of the Three English Brothers (1607)*', in Sabine Schulting, Sabine Lucia Muller, and Ralf Hertel (eds.), *Early Modern Encounters with the Islamic East: Performing Cultures* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 135-52; Robert Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism 1628-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); John M. Wallace, ''Examples Are Best Precepts'': Readers and Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Poetry', *Critical Inquiry*, 1 (1974): 273-90.

studies in the fifth chapter, I built chiefly on Wilcher and Wallace's discussions regarding political parallels in *The Sophy* and *Mirza* in order to argue that the plays comment in significant ways on contemporary political affairs through representations of Islamic Persia and Persians.[23]

[23] See Parvin Loloi, *Two Seventeenth-Century Plays* (Salzburg; Oxford: University of Salzburg, 1998), p. lxiv, and Brendan O Hehir, *Harmony from Discords*: *A Life of Sir John Denham* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p. 43.

CHAPTER 1:

Early Modern Anglo-Persian Relations: Literature, Politics, Trade

Introduction

In light of mercantile and diplomatic exchanges between early modern England and Persia, this introductory chapter aims to provide an overview of English literary allusions to Persia and Persians during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Before turning specifically to dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in the period, this chapter aims to place my analysis of those dramatic depictions in their wider literary, cultural, and political contexts. To that end, I focus here on a number of dramatic and non-dramatic texts in which early modern English authors such as playwright Thomas Middleton (1580-1627), poet and politician William Alexander, First Earl of Stirling (1577-1640), and poet Sir John Suckling (1609-1641?) make literary references to Persia and Persians, both ancient and Islamic. In conjunction with this, I will explore the ways in which emissaries such as Sir Robert Sherley (*c.* 1581-1628) actively contributed to the creation of such literary allusions through their diplomatic activity, particularly in the early Jacobean period. My focus on the exchange of emissaries between England and Safavid Persia sheds light on the nature of the political, commercial, and cultural relations between the two countries at this time, and crucially for the purposes of my thesis, on changing English perceptions of Islamic Persia in the period.

The first section of this chapter examines the ways in which diplomatic emissaries in particular brought England and Persia into political and cultural contact with one another during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The section chiefly focuses on the venture to Persia of the Sherley brothers (Sir Thomas (1564-1633/4), Sir Anthony (1565-1636?) and Sir Robert), and, in particular, on Sir Robert Sherley who, after a nine-year stay in

Persia, returned to England in 1611 in the official capacity of a Safavid Persian ambassador, a remarkable and unprecedented transformation of an English diplomat's national and cultural identity. It is the argument of this section that Robert Sherley's role as a hybrid Anglo-Persian ambassador to Jacobean England, and his audience with James VI and I, were instrumental in encouraging the English monarch to establish and endorse political, military, and commercial alliances with the Safavid king, Shah Abbas I. Before and after Robert Sherley's diplomatic attempts to seal such treaties, English ambassadors to the Persian empire earned little more from their efforts than a scattering of relatively insignificant commercial privileges.[24] Edward I's envoy to the Persian court, Geoffrey de Langley, failed in 1290 to secure a military alliance with Persia against the common enemy, the Turks. Anthony Jenkinson of the Muscovy Company was effectively expelled from the Persian court by Tahmasb I in 1562, but achieved partial mercantile privileges in some parts of Persia.[25] And finally, Sir Dodmore Cotton, Charles I's ambassador to Persia in 1627, died en route back to England, and left the mission incomplete. In comparison, then, with this catalogue of uncompleted missions and diplomatic failures, Sir Robert Sherley's achievement of an unprecedented deal between the two countries stands as both a remarkable diplomatic achievement and actively contributes to a defining change in England's political approach towards Islamic Persia.

In particular, I will argue that a politically and commercially significant letter from Shah Abbas I, brought to James VI and I by Robert Sherley in 1611, constitutes a strategic turning point in early modern Anglo-Persian relations. Building on this argument, I will show how, in the literature of the period, writers such as Thomas Middleton responded to the significance of Robert Sherley's role as a Persian envoy. Sherley was certainly not the first or

[24] Denis Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians: Imperial Lives in Nineteenth-Century Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), p. 2.
[25] Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 7 vols (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1907), vol. 2, pp. 21-24.

only English emissary whose journeys found their way into English literature and culture. Nor was he the first to attempt to establish diplomatic, commercial, and military ties with Persia. His significance, however, not fully appreciated in previous historical and literary criticism, lies in his dual cultural *and* political role as a uniquely successful facilitator of early modern Anglo-Persian relations.[26]

The second section of this chapter explores two dramatic tragedies, William Alexander's *Darius* (1603) and John Suckling's *Aglaura* (1637, rev. 1638), in order to address the ways in which the playwrights dramatized ancient Persian figures such as Darius, the Achaemenid king, before and after Robert Sherley's return to England as a Safavid emissary. The focus here is to demonstrate the extent to which the actions and personalities of political envoys, and in particular those of Robert Sherley, inspired or prompted the playwrights to allude to Anglo-Persian political relations through ancient Persian dramatis personae. The section also compares the representations of ancient Persia in *Darius* and *Aglaura* with Islamic Persian characters in plays such as Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* (1590), and *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins. Such comparisons reveal various strands of English thought regarding Persia and Persians in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and show how representations of both ancient and contemporary Persia shaped and contributed to England's political approach towards the Islamic Safavid empire.

English perceptions of Persia in this period were dominated by two principal images of the Persian empire. On the one hand, there existed ancient Persia, a land of luxury ruled by semi-mythical kings such as Darius and Cyrus. On the other hand, there was the spectre of Islamic Persia, represented by the Shi'a Safavids, which stood as a potential bulwark or ally against the Sunni Ottomans, the most dangerous threat to Christendom in the period.

[26] See Chapter 3 for detailed discussion of Robert Sherley's significance both for Jacobean drama and for the political approach to Safavid Persia adopted by James VI and I.

Understanding in England and Europe of the schism between Shi'a and Sunni grew in the period, especially as it related to Shi'a Persians and Sunni Ottomans. In *The History of the Warres betweene the Tvrks and the Persians* (1595), John-Thomas Minadoi emphasized this schism by casting contemporary Shi'a Persia as strongly anti-Ottoman. Contemporary English playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe in *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* (1590), and later Thomas Heywood in *The Foure Prentises of London* (written *c*. 1594-1600), also represented Persia as anti-Ottoman, or at the very least, no friend to Muslim Turks. Heywood, in particular, dramatized divisions in Islam in order to allude, in parallel, to clashes in Christianity between Catholic and Protestant. It is the argument of this section that play texts such as William Alexander's *Darius* and John Suckling's *Aglaura* which contained representations of ancient Persia and Persians also tended to comment on political tensions in England. As a tragedy published after Robert Sherley's missions in England, John Suckling's *Aglaura* resonated Islamic Persian features in an ancient Persian setting in order to involve a contemporary parallel for England in its implied commentary.

In light of Robert Sherley's first and second returns to England – in 1611 and 1623 – as a Persian ambassador, the second section aims to examine the relationship between English dramatic depictions of ancient Persian plots and characters and contemporary English politics.[27] The plays considered in this section have been chosen to enable a 'before' and 'after' comparison. *Darius* (1603) was published *before* Robert Sherley's first return to England in 1611 as the ambassador of Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629); *Aglaura* (1638) appeared in print after Robert Sherley's second return to England in 1623 and his last return to Persia in 1628.[28] My comparison of the two plays shows a number of ways in which English literary treatments of ancient Persian dramatis personae changed between 1603 and 1638, reflecting

[27] Cyrus Ghani, *Shakespeare, Persia, and the East* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2008), p. 89.
[28] *Ibid*.

both changes in the nature of the Anglo-Persian political and cultural relationship, and also changes in the relationship between drama and the political sphere itself.

1.1 Anglo-Persian Exchanges: Political, Mercantile and Cultural

> Hee comes laden with the Trophyes of Warre, and the honors of Peace. The *Turke* hath felt the sharpnesse of his sword, and against the *Turke* is hee now whetting the swords of Christian PRINCES.[29]

In 1608 Sir Robert Sherley arrived in Europe after his long sojourn in Persia (1599-1608), 'laden with the Trophyes of Warre', as Thomas Middleton put it. During his residence in the court of Shah Abbas I, Robert Sherley fought the Ottomans, on the side of the Persians, in several battles and left the Turks feeling the 'sharpnesse of his sword'. Robert Sherley wore Persian clothing, served in the Shah's army, and married Teresa Sampsonia [in February 1608], 'a Circassian woman in the court of the Shah'.[30] Sherley's selection by Abbas I later that year as the first Persian ambassador to England, and his clothing (Fig. 1, p. 27), are perhaps the two most visible Persian aspects of his life.[31] On his arrival at Rome in September 1608, Robert Sherley was reported, by a Venetian ambassador, to have been dressed 'in a cloak of black velvet trimmed with gold; he [Robert Sherley] wore a turban with a cross on the top of it to show he is a Catholic'.[32] In Fig. 1, however, his turban, as depicted by Van Dyck, was made of rich material (without a cross), and his lavish courtly cloak was

[29] Thomas Middleton, *Sir R. Sherley Sent Ambassadour in the Name of the King of Persia* (London, 1609), sigs A4v-B1r; also see Jerzy Limon and Daniel J. Vitkus (eds), 'Sir Robert Sherley His Entertainment in Cracovia', in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (eds), *Thomas Middleton, The Collected Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 670-78 (p. 673).
[30] Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani (eds), *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550-1700* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), p. 39.
[31] The first Persian embassy which Shah Abbas I sent to Europe, and which never reached England was dispatched in 1599: the group included Husayn Ali Beg as the ambassador and Anthony Sherley as the travel guide. See Guy Le Strange (trans. and ed.), *Don Juan of Persia: A Shi'ah Catholic 1560-1604* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926), pp. 1-5.
[32] See Horatio F. Brown (ed.), *Calendar of Sate Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, 1607-1610* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1904), vol. 11, p. 361 (Giovanni Mocenigo, Venetian Ambassador in Rome, to the Doge and Senate, 3 Oct. 1609).

embroidered with pictures of Persian musicians in royal gardens. Pride and power are manifest in his face and in his bow and arrow, reinforced by the sword swung at his side. His precious dress is made of silk, a major Persian export during Shah Abbas I's reign; silk was fabric normally 'enjoyed by aristocrats'.[33] What we see in this portrait, therefore, is the depiction of a hybrid Euro-Persian cultural identity.

Middleton's description of Sherley is also a testament to the latter's status as a prominent early modern Anglo-Persian diplomat who stands as a kind of emblem for wider Euro-Persian relations. Robert Sherley's hybrid identity prompts questions about the precise nature of those relations. Recent commentary on early modern diplomacy conjectures that 'contact [between nations] does not simply have sociocultural effects but is itself culturally determined and moved in certain directions by emissaries, and the forces they represent and engage with'.[34] As an early modern emissary, Robert Sherley facilitated cultural and political exchanges between Europe and Safavid Persia, and reflected those exchanges in his own dual identity: on the one hand, he was a Catholic convert who 'probably about 1603, while in the Shah's service, […] converted to Catholicism', and on the other, an Englishman sent by a Safavid Persian king as ambassador to the English court.[35] It is clear, therefore, that Robert Sherley's hybrid figure encapsulated both personal and cultural dimensions; his religious conversion reflects his personal hybridity, and his Persian costume expresses his hybrid public, cultural status.

[33] Bernadette Andrea and Linda McJannet (eds), *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 10.
[34] Charry and Shahani (eds), *Emissaries*, p. 5.
[35] Richard Raiswell suggests that the date of Robert Sherley's conversion to Catholicism was 'probably about 1603' (see Richard Raiswell, 'Shirley, Sir Robert, Count Shirley in the papal nobility (*c.*1581-1628)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; an older view dated Sherley's conversion to 1608 (see Samuel C. Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 303).

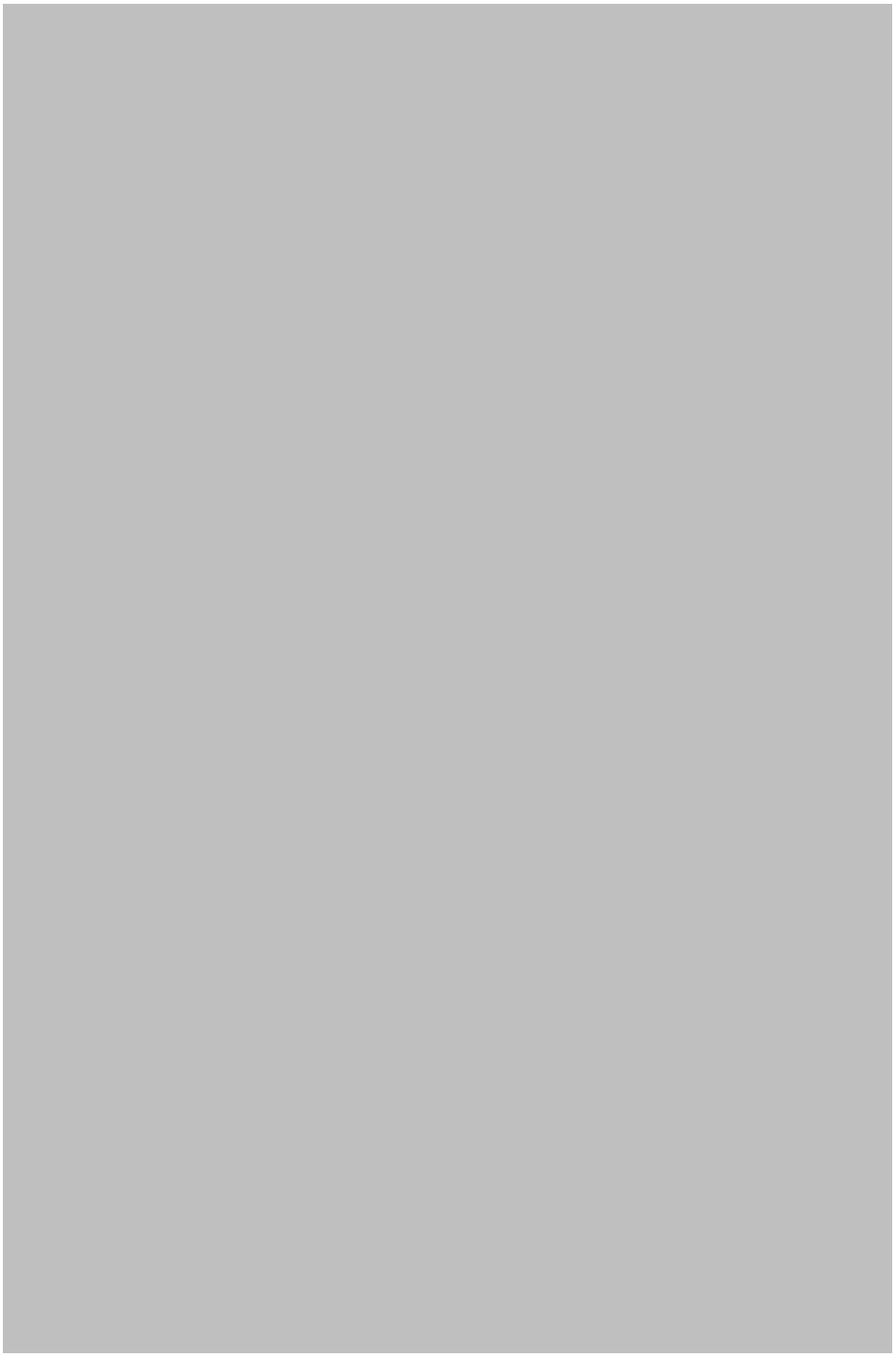

Fig. 1: Sir Robert Sherley in Persian Costume, by Anthony Van Dyck, Rome, 1622
Petworth House, National Trust

Without doubt, Robert Sherley's compound status served the Safavid Persians in pursuing their foreign political ambitions. In fact, the Safavid court saw it as a strategic policy to dispatch an effective envoy to Europe who was thought fit for various political missions in different countries of the continent, including Catholic Spain and Protestant England. Robert Sherley's conversion to Catholicism in Persia just before his departure to Europe, then, prompts the suspicion that his conversion was undertaken for political and pragmatic reasons, as well as personal ones; a Catholic Persian emissary would be more acceptable to Catholic nations. It is also believed that 'the Carmelites probably influenced the sovereign to select [Robert] Sherley rather than one of his own subjects' having known that Shah Abbas I had 'already decided to send an emissary' to Europe.[36] A Safavid Persian representative who spoke native English, and represented a country which rivalled the Ottoman Turks, would certainly have stood as a favourable envoy to James VI and I who, in 1601, had congratulated Shah Abbas I for the Persian king's military victory over the Ottomans.[37] In order to avoid papal overtones in his appearance in the Protestant Jacobean court, however, Sherley discreetly would have removed the cross from his Persian costume during his mission in England (as portrayed by Van Dyck in Fig. 1). I suggest, therefore, that Robert Sherley's composite appearance provided him with a political flexibility designed to appeal to a variety of hosts, Catholic and Protestant, while on his mission as a Persian diplomat. In representing a foreign power that was opposed to the chief enemy of Europe (namely, the Ottoman Turks), Robert Sherley could be portrayed by writers such as Middleton not only as a mere diplomat, but as the proud possessor of 'Trophyes' and 'honors'.

At the beginning of his encomiastic pamphlet on Robert Sherley, Thomas Middleton praises the fame and diplomatic honour Sherley has earned for his native country, England:

[36] David William Davies, *Elizabethans Errant* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 168-72.
[37] Franklin L. Baumer, 'England, the Turk, and the Common Corps of Christendom', *The American Historical Review*, 50 (1944): 26-48 (n. 59).

> Reader, This Persian robe, so richly wouen with the prayses onely of Sir Robert Sherley (thy Conntriman) comes to thee at a lowe price, though it cost him deere that weares it, to purchase so much fame, as hath made it so excellent. It is now his, foreuer, Thine so long as it is his; for euery good man (as I hope thou art) doth participate in the Renowne of those that are good, and vertuous.[38]

Middleton suggests that Robert Sherley's Persian costume is a symbol of the latter's simultaneous political and ceremonial personal success. But Middleton also puns here in analogizing 'This Persian robe', which 'comes to thee at a lowe price', with his own pamphlet. Sherley's costly Safavid outfit is clearly meant to impress European courtiers including the Jacobean court in England. For Middleton, Robert Sherley's Persian gown also represents personal virtue and 'fame'; the writer suggests that the 'vertuous' envoy should be celebrated by the 'good man'. It is believed that most of Middleton's pamphlet on Robert Sherley is a 'prose translation of a Latin poem by Andrew Leech, a Scottish Jesuit living in Poland'.[39] The above excerpt, however, appears as part of the epistle 'To the Reader', which aims to downplay any hint in the translation of Leech's poem that Sherley had in anyway 'gone native' during his time in Persia. Middleton was aware that the English reading public, then as now, were not always favourably disposed to visitors from abroad: 'in early modern England, anxiety about contact and exchange with foreign culture generated objections to the importation of luxury goods and to the presence of aliens in London'.[40] Therefore, in order to publicize Robert Sherley in Jacobean England without giving offence, Middleton avoids using a phrase such as 'English Persian' and uses 'Traueller' instead in 'To the Reader'.[41]

But how sincere was Middleton in complimenting Robert Sherley? There are two likely motivations for Middleton to present Robert Sherley in a good light: first, the perennial need of the writer for patronage and support; and second, Middleton's commitment to, and support

[38] Middleton, *Sir R. Sherley Sent Ambassadour in the Name of the King of Persia* (1609), sig. A4r; Limon and Vitkus (eds), 'Sir Robert Sherley His Entertainment in Cracovia', p. 673.
[39] Limon and Vitkus (eds), 'Sir Robert Sherley His Entertainment in Cracovia', p. 670.
[40] *Ibid*., p. 671.
[41] Middleton, *Sir R. Sherley Sent Ambassadour in the Name of the King of Persia* (1609), sig. A4v. It is worth noting that in sig. C4r Middleton uses the phrase 'this famous English Persian', and, therefore, maintains the wording in the main body of the text.

of, the idea of universal peace, a key component of James VI and I's self-fashioning as *rex pacificus*. It is known that Thomas Middleton suffered from financial difficulties in the period from December 1608 to July 1609, partly because of the 'closure of theatres due to plague'.[42] Middleton dedicated the pamphlet to Robert Sherley's brother, Sir Thomas, which suggests that he sought patronage from the Sherley family. Above all, however, Thomas Middleton knew that James VI and I himself, and the upper echelons of Jacobean society, supported Robert Sherley's role as envoy from Persia to Europe, and would welcome the Englishman to the king's court as a promoter of Anglo-Persian relations, not least to help stave off the threat of the Ottoman Turks to continental Europe. While there is no evidence that Middleton's celebration of Sherley's embassy was an officially commissioned one, there is no doubt that his pamphlet stands as an example of the way in which literary works in this period, of all kinds of genres, contributed to the fashioning of public opinion regarding England's foreign policy towards Persia.

So far I have argued that, as a Safavid Persian ambassador, Robert Sherley possessed a singular importance for the development of early modern Anglo-Persian relations, leading to the eventual agreement of a military alliance between the two countries in the early 1620s. But how did Sherley encounter Persia for the first time, and how was he occupied in the Safavid court prior to becoming an ambassador to Europe? What follows is a brief account that explains how the Sherley brothers, Robert and Anthony, set about their adventurous journey to Safavid Persia for the first time, and came to have an audience with Shah Abbas I in the late sixteenth century. Such a background helps shed additional light on English perceptions of Safavid Persia in the period, and on the ways in which Persia was viewed by English travellers visiting the country.

[42] Limon and Vitkus (eds), 'Sir Robert Sherley His Entertainment in Cracovia', p. 672.

Before embarking on their Persian journey, Robert Sherley and his older brother, Anthony, had never heard of Persia. The Earl of Essex 'gave money towards Sir Anthony Sherley's private expedition against the Spanish in Africa', but this mission was unfortunate and 'the Persian venture' emerged as the 'upshot of the futile plans of [the Earl of] Essex in the matter of Ferrara'.[43] Effectively, Anthony Sherley represented 'the Earl of Essex', but spoke 'in the name of all of Christian Europe in his call for an anti-Ottoman league'.[44] Essex 'had two aims in view when he sent the brothers to the court of Shah Abbas; the first a religious and political one', and 'the second an economic one'.[45] By dispatching the brothers to Safavid Persia, Essex sought to 'persuade the Shah to unite with the Christian states against the Turks', and 'to establish trade relations between England and Persia'.[46] The Sherley brothers started their journey from Venice, in 1598 when Robert Sherley was just eighteen years old. Anthony Sherley's personal reason for undertaking this journey, which was never achieved, was to convert Shah Abbas I to Christianity. With some Persian merchants on board, without whose help the English would have starved en route, the group included twenty-four members which after seven months of travel finally reached Qazvin (the former capital of Persia) in December 1598.[47] William Parry, a member of the English party, noted:

> we then happily entered the king of Persiaes country, where upon our first entrance we thought we had bin imparadised, finding our entertainement to be so good, and the manner of the people to be so kinde and courteous (farre differing from the Turkes) especially when they heard we came of purpose to their king.[48]

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[43] Paul E. J. Hammer, *The Polarization of Elizabethan Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 228. D. W. Davies discusses the ways in which Sir Anthony Sherley's venture in Africa was unfortunate. See Davies, *Elizabethan Errant*, pp. 40ff.
[44] Rudolph P. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 79.
[45] Boies Penrose, *The Sherleian Odyssey* (London: Barnicotts, 1938), pp. 46-49.
[46] *Ibid*.
[47] William Parry, *A New and Large Discourse of the Trauels of Sir Anthony Sherley Knight, by Sea, and ouer Land, to the Persian Empire* (London, 1601), p. 18. Quoted in E. Denison Ross, *Anthony Sherley: His Persian Adventure* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1933), p. 115.
[48] *Ibid*.

Parry makes a clear distinction between the Safavid Persians and Ottoman Turks, and, thereby, differentiates Shi'a Persia and Persians and Sunni Ottomans. Parry emphasizes that there exists a culture in Persia which appeals to the English and which is 'farre differing' from that of the Turks. Late Elizabethan drama draws on such distinctions too. I will argue, in Chapter 2, that playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe, both informed by and responding to popular English perceptions of the religious, social, and cultural differences between the Persians and Ottomans, dramatize Persia and Persians as different from Ottoman Turks in order to suggest a surrogate political ally for England.

In Qazvin, the English had to wait several weeks before the triumphant return of the Shah from the battle with the Uzbegs (a tribe which was settled in eastern Persian territories). Once the monarch was close to the city, the English rode their horses to meet the victorious king. What follows is Anthony Sherley's description of their encounter with the Shah:

> When we came to the King, we alighted, and kissed his Stirrop: my speech was short vnto him; the time being fit for no other: That the fame of his Royall vertues, had brought me from a farre Countrey, to be a present spectator of them; as I had beene a wonderer at the report of them a farre off: if there were any thing of worth in mee, I presented it with my selfe, to his Maiesties seruice. Of what I was, I submitted the consideration to his Maiesties iudgement; which he should make vpon the length, the danger, and the expence of my voyage, onely to see him, of whom I had receiued such magnificent and glorious relations.[49]

Anthony's interpreter was a Christian Turk named Signor Angelo, who stayed with Anthony until his departure from Persia. Before this meeting, Shah Abbas is said to have 'sent word that the English were to […] meet him in Persian costume, which they did'. Anthony Sherley wore a turban worth 'two thousand dollars', and a jewelled scimitar to be swung at his side. Robert Sherley 'was attired in cloth of gold, Angelo['s] garments were of silver cloth, and all of the others wore silk and velvet'.[50] Clearly, the triumphant Abbas attempted to exercise his dominance over the foreign visitors by ordering them to wear Persian costume. The English travellers, however, saw the Shah's treatment of them as a generous tribute worth thousands

[49] Anthony Sherley, *His Relation of his Travels into Persia* (London, 1613), p. 64.
[50] See Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, p. 106.

of dollars: Abbas I's insistence on Persian clothing commodity in general would later play a potentially important part in diplomatic efforts to establish trade and political relations with European states including England. For example, in early 1600s, Shah Abbas 'wrote to his Spanish colleague', King Philip III (Philip II of Portugal), that he was 'determined to deprive the Ottomans of future silk profits', asking, in return, that 'Iranian and Armenian merchants be allowed the freedom to visit Goa'.[51] It was also possible that, through exchanging letters, Abbas I had spoken of a 'diversion of Iranian silk and a Spanish blockade of the Red Sea as ways to thwart the Ottomans'.[52]

In his court, the Shah esteemed the English highly, and, on several occasions, remarked his favour of the Christians over the Turks. Before moving the court to the new capital, Isfahan, 'upon Sir Anthony he [the Shah] bestowed the title of Mirza, a title all the more desirable as it was bestowed upon Christians very seldom'.[53] They entered Isfahan, the new and spectacular capital of the Sophy, at the end of January 1599, but a few months later in April or May, Anthony Sherley and some other members of the English travellers were sent on an embassy from the Shah to Europe.[54] Robert Sherley and several other Englishmen were left behind as a 'pledge' for the embassy's return from the mission.[55] Robert Sherley would reside in the Safavid court for almost the next nine years. Abbas I's attempt to keep Robert Sherley in his court as a guarantor for the embassy's return shows that the Shah was ambitious to achieve pragmatic and productive headway in Safavid Persia's foreign policy towards Christian Europe as early as 1599.

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[51] Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 80.
[52] *Ibid*.
[53] Penrose, *The Sherleian Odyssey*, p. 70. 'Mirza' is the contraction of the word 'Mirzadeh' which literally means 'born from a lord' or 'born of noble blood'.
[54] 'Sophy' was a common distortion of the word 'Safi' or 'Safavi', a former title for the ruler of Persia during the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736). Here it refers to Shah Abbas I.
[55] The number of the English who were left behind is the subject of debate: five (excluding Robert Sherley), according to Penrose, *The Sherleian Odyssey*, p. 82; fifteen (including Robert Sherley), according to Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, p. 117; and fifteen (excluding Robert Sherley), according to Le Strange (trans. and ed.), *Don Juan of Persia*, p. 233. The word 'pledge' is used in John Cartwright, *The Preachers Trauels* (London, 1611), p. 70: 'hee [Anthony Sherley] left his brother Master Robert Sherley a worthy gentleman as a pledge for his returne out of Christendome'.

Samuel Chew describes the first two years of Robert Sherley's residence in Qazvin (1599-1601) as 'a blank'.[56] However, from September 1600 until his departure from Persia in 1608, Robert Sherley hosted a number of European visitors including 'John Cartwright, an English Clergyman, and John Mildenhall, a Merchant'.[57] Cartwright noted that Robert Sherley's house in Qazvin was 'the onely harbour and receite for all poore Christians that trauaile into those parts'.[58] The Shah had appointed 'a house with a sufficient upkeep in accordance with the rank that these [the English] were said to bear'.[59] Cartwright is said to be one of the many 'heretics' to whom Robert Sherley was disposed:

> [Robert Sherley] favoured the heretics, who went to Persia, such as an English clergyman [John Cartwright] who stayed for some months in his house, and John Meldinal (*sic*, Londinel?) also an English heretic, sent previously by the Queen to the King of the Moguls (i.e. the Mogul Emperor at Delhi) to obtain from him certain seaports in the East Indies,… [Robert Sherley] presented him to the King of Persia both on his going out and on his return.[60]

Robert Sherley's favour to 'heretics' such as John Cartwright in 1600 meant the hospitality extended from one English Protestant to another. It is clear, therefore, that before Robert Sherley converted to Catholicism in 1608, he received fellow Protestants in Persia. From the political and commercial point of view, Robert Sherley's presence in the Persian court may well have attracted foreign traders and diplomats including the English. For Safavid Persians, the traffic from overseas brought about commercial and political benefits, and thereby increased the influence of Persia in foreign trade and transport as well as in regional political dominance. For the English, on the one hand, living in the Persian court meant freedom of practicing their religion in an Islamic state, and, on the other, provided potential opportunity

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[56] Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p. 298.
[57] Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, p. 166.
[58] Cartwright, *The Preachers Trauels* (1611), p. 70
[59] Le Strange (trans. and ed.), *Don Juan of Persia*, p. 233.
[60] *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, 2 vols (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939), vol. 1, pp. 143-44. The quotation that I have given is written during Robert Sherley's residence in Persia as elsewhere in the narrative we read that 'it is almost 10 years past that he has been at the Persian Court without having received a farthing from his home'. The narrative derives from 'observations from an (unsigned) different source, presumably Augustinian or Spanish'. See page 143, footnote three about Fondo Borghese II.

for establishing Anglo-Persian military ties in order to oppose the common enemy, the Ottoman Turks. In addition, the English presence in Abbas I's court strengthened the influence of Protestants in Persia, and could, to some extent, counter the regional dominance of Catholic Christians. Safavid Persia, therefore, appeared as a state tolerant towards Christianity, and in light of this tolerance, figures such as Robert Sherley effectively facilitated Anglo-Persian political and military alliances.

Alongside the Safavid court's strategic inclination towards Christian Europe in general and England specifically, some crucial changes in foreign affairs contributed to establishing Anglo-Persian political and military relations in the period. The death of Elizabeth I and the accession of James VI and I to the throne in 1603 marked the beginning of a turning point in England's foreign policy towards the Safavids. In the Elizabethan period, statesmen such as Sir Robert Cecil were irritated by Robert Sherley and his brother, Anthony Sherley, for 'meddling in international affairs', and deplored 'the tendency of their actions to queer the pitch of English foreign policy'.[61] England had been allied with the Ottoman Turks since 1580, and the Ottomans would not have tolerated close relationships between England and Safavid Persia, the Ottomans' Islamic rival.[62] James I, through endorsing Robert Sherley's diplomatic endeavours, in effect fundamentally opposed his predecessor's political strategies in dealing with the Ottoman Turks.

The personnel and cultural atmosphere of the Jacobean court also differed markedly from that of the Elizabethan, and in ways that suggest parallels with the court of Abbas I in Persia. The first key difference between the Jacobean and Elizabethan courts was that the

[61] See Anthony Parr, 'Foreign Relations in Jacobean England: The Sherley brothers and the Voyage of Persia', in Jean-Pierre Maquerlot and Michele Willems (eds), *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 14-31 (p. 16).
[62] Matthew Dimmock, *New Turks: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 52.

latter 'brought a new elite, the Jacobean Scots […] in the royal Household'.[63] Likewise, the Safavid court of Shah Abbas I favoured ethnic Georgians to positions of power (Georgia was a subject to Iran in the Safavid era). One such example was the military general Qarajaghay Khan, formerly 'a Georgian slave (*ghulam*) brought up in the royal family' (see Fig 2: Qarajaghay Khan, in the upper right of the picture, head tilted, wears a turban and red robe).[64] Qarajaghay Khan held several important roles in the Safavid court such as the commander 'of the artillery and musketeers' and Governor of

[63] Linda Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 3.

[64] See Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 63, and Barbara Schmitz, 'On a Special Hat Introduced during the Reign of Shah Abbas the Great', *Iran* 22 (1984): 103-113. Fig. 2 is a miniature of the Persian courtiers. The courtiers' names are transcribed in Farsi on almost all painted figures. The miniature shows a garden typical in the Safavid paintings with servants, women, courtiers, musicians, and emissaries such as the black member in a yellow robe on the left-hand side of the picture with drinks in front of him as a sign of the Persian court's respect and admiration for foreign visitors.

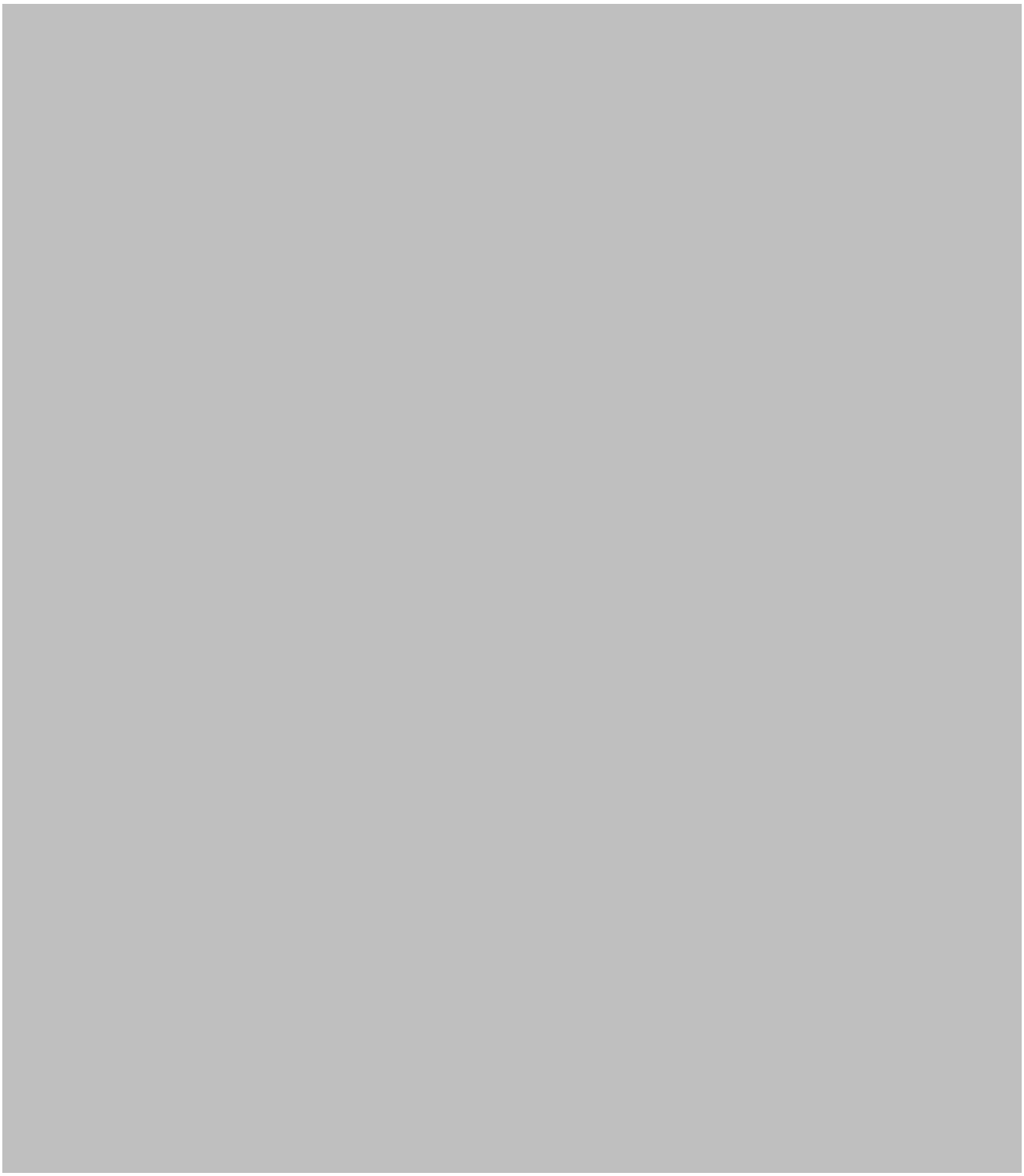

Fig. 2: *Umara-i Shah Abbas-i avval* (The Amirs of Shah Abbas I)
Persian Miniature in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, MD (Accession Number: W691. A)

Mashhad, a city in the north east of modern Iran.[65] Therefore, while maintaining royal authority in the person of the king, both the English court of James VI and I and the Safavid court of Shah Abbas I exercised the new strategy of giving political authority to powerful minorities in order to surround themselves with trusted allies.

In addition, the English and Persian kings appeared to have personal interests in common, chiefly theology and philosophy. 'One of the familiar Court sights of James I's reign was the King at dinner, engaged in theological conversation with one or two divines who stood behind him'.[66] This image of James I debating 'resembles the debates the Safavid kings attended, in which their *sadrs* and prized Shi'a theologians from Jabal Amil performed feats of logic and Islamic philosophy'.[67] In *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607), John Day, George Wilkins and William Rowley dramatized these debate scenes, and characters who featured in such scenes included a number of English and Persian travellers including Anthony Sherley and Husayn Ali Beg (Halibeck), both members of the Shah's first embassy to Europe sent in 1599. I suggest, therefore, that the English and Persian courts had much to gain through exploration of their mutual interests, in culture, domestic political strategy, and international affairs.

In order to facilitate an Anglo-Persian alliance, Robert Sherley set off for Europe as the Persian ambassador in 1608 (reaching England in 1611). In his career as a Persian emissary, Robert Sherley was given an audience by James I twice: his first meeting with the English king was in 1611 on his first return to England; his second encounter was towards the end of James I's reign in January 1624. Prior to his first visit with the English king:

> he summarized the proposals he would submit […]: the English would have the free use of […some Persian] ports; silk would be sold to them at such a price as would yield them a profit of 700 per cent; they would have their goods passed free of

[65] Eskandar Beg Monshi, *History of Shah Abbas*, Roger M. Savory (trans.), 2 vols (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1978), vol. 2, p. 810.
[66] Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603-42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p. 230; see also Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, p. 54.
[67] Andrea and McJannet (eds), *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds*, p. 61.

> customs and might maintain consular agents in Persia; the Shah would accept gold and precious stones for his silk so as not to deplete England's supply of silver.[68]

In October 1611 Robert Sherley:

> was received as the Shah's ambassador […] three paces from the dais he made submission, sinking on his knees and imploring His Majesty's pardon, […] the king was pleased at this manner of preceding…and dismissed him, praising his prudence, eloquence, and modesty after he had retired.[69]

Robert Sherley presented Abbas I's message to the English king in 1611. Sherley had written the letter himself, but was at pains at the outset to make clear that his 'warrant' for doing so came directly from the 'King of Persia':

> The great Sophy Abbas, Emperor of Persia (whom I now serve by your Majesty's sufferance) in the letter he has written to your Majesty prays you to give me entire credit in all that in his name I shall say unto you, and has commanded me to give these few articles in writing to the end he may receive an answer punctual.
>
> The King of Persia has commanded me to assure you of the great affection he wishes to you and your affairs; and has ordained me expressly to inquire if he may do your Majesty any service, offering himself cordially as your professed friend and brother.
>
> The King of Persia with other Christian potentates is joined in league against the common enemy. Your Majesty he desires that whereas you have a league with the Turks merely for trade and 'contractation', you would as well command your subjects to trade with him. For what they have in brief of the Turk are not commodities which grow in that country, but are transported thither either by land from Persia or from the Indies through the Red Sea. Those commodities which grow in Persia, and others which come by land from Mugur and Cattai the King of Persia was wont to give free passage to be transported into the Turk's country, but now is resolved to restrain the same, or at least all such commodities as the Turk did utter to the merchants of Christendom, having found that his enemy by this makes to himself a double infinite benefit: the first by the customs he takes in Babylon, Voyn, Charraemitt, Bittles, and other places, whereby he not only pays strong garrisons upon the frontiers of Persia, but is able in a small time to gather so great a treasure that without relief from other places the Turk taking his occasions is able to make and continue a harmful war. Secondly, he makes the Christians his friends by letting them truck for the Persian commodities, which are raw silk worth many millions, drugs, cotton wool and yarn, indigo, pearl, and precious stones of all sorts, and many other rich commodities needless here to nominate, and by the truck of these he is accommodated from Christendom with money, and that in such quantities as if the Indian mines were under his jurisdictions, besides munition both for sea and land. And having well considered these things, the King of Persia offers your Majesty ports in Gulfo Persico, as Rashell, Damaim and Bezar, all or any of them for your subjects to come, remain

[68] Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, p. 231.
[69] *Ibid*., p. 236.

> or return at their pleasures, and to be free to buy, sell or truck with as much liberty as if they were free born amongst them. Moreover, the King of Persia will defend them being once within his precincts, and procure them if need shall be secure ports with Indian princes his friends and neighbours. And if they will come by the way of Muscovia and so pass the Caspian Sea, then shall they have for their ports Derbent, Baccu, Cuszal Agatch and Langarru. Their consuls or factors shall have their residence in what place they shall think most fit for them, their consciences shall be free, not subject to any law, living discreetly under their own governors; and if the ports have any defects he will spare no cost to mend and fortify them.
>
> Thus much I have written by warrant from the King of Persia, which if it be not thought sufficient I am ready to offer further satisfaction, so that it be not to the prejudice of the King that has sent me, and likewise to subscribe it with my name and seal it with the seal I have from the King for like purposes.[70]

The letter is undated and unsigned, but the First Earl of Salisbury, Robert Cecil, authenticated it after its presentation by writing 'Sir Robt. Sherley' on the document. Given that Salisbury would die in 1612, only one year after Robert Sherley's audience with James I, the letter must have been presented to the English king during 1611-1612.

In this address to James VI and I, Sherley conveys Shah Abbas I's wish to present himself as the 'professed friend and brother' of the English king in order to enhance Anglo-Persian relations. Sherley's address clearly expresses Abbas's alliance with 'other Christian potentates', communicating that Persia is already in military 'league' with the Christians against the 'common enemy', the Ottoman Turks. Sherley's letter also makes clear that the Shah is well aware of Anglo-Ottoman trade, but proposes that English merchants should trade with Persia instead, to avoid having to pay unnecessary and unwarranted customs duties to the Turks. To effect such trade, the Shah promises commercial, political, and religious protection to the English merchants and diplomats while they traffic with and live in his kingdom. Clearly, through this letter Abbas I sought a stronger military and political league with Christian Europe, and was prepared to reward the English with significant commercial

[70] 'Sir Robert Sherley to the King' [?1611], G. Dyfnallt Owen (ed.), *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), vol. 21: 1609-1612, p. 325, No. 866. Cited in *State Papers Online: The Government of Britain 1509-1714*. The text is a modern spelling transcript of the original copy which is held at Hatfield House, in the archive of Cecil Papers.

advantages in order to create a more powerful coalition force against the Ottoman Turks on Persia's western borders.

Having achieved James VI and I's support for his proposal, Robert Sherley returned to Isfahan in June 1615. He was well received and greatly rewarded by the Shah: 'he was so well satisfied with what he [Robert Sherley] had done in his service that he [the Shah] could not say enough about it to his nobles and repeated his praises many times'.[71] Sherley's proposal, containing such attractive commercial rewards for English trade, was followed by relatively immediate effects on Anglo-Persian international relations. In December 1616, 'the first ship of the English East India Company' entered the Persian Gulf to offer 'the Shah a fresh opportunity to diversify his diplomatic and commercial projects'.[72] In 1615, the English East India Company had sent two agents, Richard Steel and John Crowther, to visit Safavid Persia 'with the task of exploring commercial opportunities'.[73] In Isfahan, the agents managed, with Robert Sherley's support, to obtain a *farman* (decree) from Shah Abbas I which safeguarded the English and their commercial merchandise in shipping ports such as 'Jasques, or any other of the Ports', in Safavid Persia.[74] Robert Sherley had also facilitated Anglo-Persian commercial relations by sending a letter to Edward Connock, the 'secretary to the Ambassador in Constantinople', who led the first English commercial venture in Safavid Persia in 1616.[75] In the following years further attempts were made by the English East India Company to negotiate new terms and conditions in Anglo-Persian commercial contracts. In late 1617, London appointed Edward Monnox and Thomas Barker, Connock's successors following the latter's death in December 1617, for reaching an agreement with the Safavid Shah on granting of fixed customs rates and set prices for import and export goods and the

[71] Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, pp. 248-60.
[72] Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 83-84.
[73] *Ibid*., p. 96.
[74] Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes*, 20 vols (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905-7), vol. 3, p. 279.
[75] See Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, *c*. 1973), p. 327.

establishment of a protected port in the Persian Gulf which was refused by Abbas I.[76] In early 1619, the English expressed their willingness to pay 'good money' for Safavid Persia's silk, an attempt which preceded a price war staged by Abbas I in September that year.[77] The arrival of the English in the Persian Gulf and their commercial engagements with Safavid Persia brought about the first Anglo-Persian military alliance in action in 1622. Robert Sherley, as a Persian ambassador to Jacobean England, facilitated Anglo-Persian commercial and political relationships, and, in effect, strengthened Safavid Persia's and England's influences in their borders and beyond.

Whilst becoming increasingly aware of the political and commercial benefits of an Anglo-Persian alliance, the Persian and English courts continued to exchange emissaries. As a result, Abbas I instructed Robert Sherley to proceed with further efforts to maintain Euro-Persian relationships, an attempt which would be followed by the dispatch of the first official English ambassador to Safavid Persia in the late 1620s in Charles I's reign. After leaving Isfahan in September 1615 and 'being deliberately delayed in Goa by Portuguese intrigue', Robert Sherley arrived at Lisbon in 1617, and stayed in Spain till 1622, 'being well entertained but coldly received' as the Spanish were not 'really interested in trade to Persia'.[78] In 'December 1623', Robert Sherley arrived in England to meet James I – 'who had a personal interest in the silk trade' – for the second time in 'January 1624' in order to consolidate Anglo-Persian commercial relations.[79] James I's death in 1625 led to a short hiatus in the exchange of English and Persian emissaries, until Charles I dispatched Sir Dodmore Cotton in 1627 as the English ambassador to Persia and official respondent to the

[76] Sir William Foster (ed.), *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India 1615-1619*, 2 vols (London: Himphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1926), vol. 2, pp. 462, 554-56.
[77] See Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 334, and Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 97, 99, 101-103.
[78] R. W. Ferrier, 'The European Diplomacy of Shah Abbas I and the First Persian Embassy to England', *Iran* 11 (1973): 75-92.
[79] *Ibid*. Also see Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, pp. 248-60.

second ‘arrival […] of Sir Robert Sherley’ in England in 1624.[80] From 1624 to 1627 Robert Sherley stayed at the English court as a resident Persian ambassador in London.

Before Charles I dispatched his envoy to Persia, another Persian emissary, Naqd Ali Beg, had appeared in the English court. The Shah had, perhaps, sent the second emissary to England as a replacement for Robert Sherley who had not returned to Persia since 1615.[81] Charles I, therefore, had to give audience to two Safavid envoys, Robert Sherley and Naqd Ali Beg, who seemingly had clashing interests in England. This clash led to a famous incident in the English court, recounted by John Finett:

> Entering the Hall, (where he [Naqd Ali Beg] then was sitting in a chair on his legs double under him, after the Persian Posture) and affording no motion of respect to any of us, Sir *Robert Sherley* gave him a salutation, and sate downe on a stoole neer him, while my Lord of *Cleaveland* by an Interpreter signified, in three words, the cause of the Ambassador *Sherleys* and his and our comming to him, but with little returne of regard from him, till I informing the Interpreter (of the new Ambassador) what my Lords quality was, he let fall his Trust-up-leggs from his chaire, and made a kinde of respect to his Lordship. This done, Sir *Robert Sherley*, unfolding his Letters, and (as the Persian use is in reverence to their King) first touching his eyes with them, next holding them over his head, and after kissing them, he presented them to the Ambassador, that he receiving them, might performe the like observance, when he suddenly rising out of his chaire, stept to *Sir Robert Sherley*, snatcht his Letters from him, toare them, and gave him a blow on the face with his Fist.[82]

It is unknown when exactly this encounter happened, but it must have taken place between February 1625 and March 1627, when Charles I ascended the English throne, and, two years later, decided to send his official envoy (Sir Dodmore Cotton) to Shah Abbas I’s court along with the two Persian envoys, Robert Sherley and Naqd Ali Beg. Naqd Ali Beg’s treatment of Robert Sherley in the English court shows that the latter was no longer held in high regard in Persia, and was not considered the Shah’s emissary anymore. Finett’s account (pp. 172-177) also suggests that Robert Sherley had his critics and doubters in the English court. In spite of

[80] William Foster, *Thomas Herbert Travels in Persia 1627-1629* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1928), p. xvi.
[81] Matthee argues that Abbas I sent Naqd Ali Beg to England in order to be updated about the situation there, and to ‘gauge the chances of direct silk sales’ in the country. See Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 114.
[82] Sir John Finett, *Finetti Philoxenis: Som* [*sic*] C*hoice Observations of Sir John Finett Knight, And Master of Ceremonies to the two last Kings* (London, 1656), p. 174.

this, he stood as an influential figure in the Jacobean period. The increasing frequency of Anglo-Persian diplomatic and commercial exchanges between 1611 and 1627 appears to reveal Persia's and England's ambitious intentions in pursuing and maintaining long-term national interests through effective mutual relations between the countries.

Following the unamicable encounter between the Persian emissaries in the English court the envoys, including Naqd Ali Beg, Robert Sherley, and Dodmore Cotton, embarked on a journey to Persia in March 1627. The journey, however, ended catastrophically. Naqd Ali Beg died on board, and both Robert Sherley and Dodmore Cotton died in Persia in July 1628 after suffering from 'severe dysentery', leaving the mission incomplete.[83] Cotton, therefore, never returned to England despite meeting Abbas I in Ashraf in the same year. Thomas Herbert, the English traveller and historian, accompanied Robert Sherley on his fatal return to Persia in 1628. Following Sherley's death in Qazvin, Herbert described the ambassador as follows:

> He was brother to two worthy Gentlemen Sir *Anthonie* and Sir *Thomas Sherleys*, his age exceeded not the great Clymacterick, his condition was free, noble, but inconstant. He was the greatest Traueller in his time, and had tasted liberally of many great Princes fanours [*sic*]: of the Pope he had power to legitimate the *Indians*, and from the Emperour receiued the Honour and Title of a Palatine of the Empire. His patience was better then his intellect […]. He had beene seruant to the *Persian* neere thirty yeares.[84]

In this account, written six years after Robert Sherley's death in Persia, Thomas Herbert writes of the significant role played by Sherley in facilitating stronger Euro-Persian and Anglo-Persian relations. He refers to Robert Sherley as the greatest traveller in his time, and, like Thomas Middleton, emphasizes the political importance of Sherley's missions as a Persian ambassador, or as he put it, as a Persian 'seruant'. In his career as Shah Abbas I's emissary, Robert Sherley was a decisive figure in establishing an Anglo-Persian military alliance. In 1622, the first Anglo-Persian military alliance was marked in action when the

[83] Ghani, *Shakespeare, Persia, and the East*, p. 89.
[84] Thomas Herbert, *A Relation of Some Years Travaile* (London, 1634), pp. 124-25.

English navy supported a successful Safavid attack on the Portuguese on the island of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf in return for commercial privileges from the Persians.[85] Robert Sherley had offered extensive commercial benefits to the Jacobean court in 1611 through presenting Abbas I's letter to James I. Although there is no unequivocal evidence that the Anglo-Persian military alliance was the direct result of Robert Sherley's endeavours as a Persian envoy, I propose that his mission in 1611 was a defining moment which helped make subsequent Anglo-Persian political, military, and commercial ties possible. The next section in this chapter examines the ways in which early modern English playwrights treated Anglo-Persian relations, both before and after Robert Sherley's first visit to England in 1611. The purpose of this section is to gauge the extent to which Sherley's visit affected these writers' dramatization of ancient Persian figures such as Darius, the Achaemenid king, as a cultural response to the changing nature of political and commercial relations between England and Safavid Persia in the period.

1.2 Dramatic Depictions of Ancient Persia before and after Robert Sherley's Dispatch to England as a Safavid Envoy

In 1603, William Alexander published his first tragedy, *Darius*, 'written in what was one of the most highly regarded genres of the Renaissance, the Senecan closet tragedy in verse'.[86] *Darius* was the first of Alexander's tragedies which appeared in successive editions during 1603-1637.[87] The tragedy is set in Babylon, and is based on the story of the king of the Persian Achaemenid Empire, Darius I, recounted by the Roman historian Quintus Curtius,

[85] Jane Grogan, *The Persian Empire in English Renaissance Writing, 1549-1622* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 5.
[86] David Reid, 'Alexander, William, first earl of Stirling (1577-1640)', *ODNB*.
[87] A. S. D. Thomson, review of L. E. Kastner and H. B. Charlton (eds), *The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1921), in *The Scottish Historical Review*, 18 (1921): 290-91.

translated into English by John Brende in 1553.[88] In 'THE ARGVMENT', Alexander offers a synopsis before introducing the dramatis personae. The summary of the play is as follows: having successfully annexed numerous lands to his territories, Darius demands tribute from Philip, the king of Macedonia. Refusing to do so, Philip threatens Darius with an invasion of Persia and his capital, Persepolis, but death prevents the Macedonian from executing his will. In due course, however, Alexander, Philip's son, marches on the Persian borders with thirty thousand men. The Macedonian and Persian armies encounter each other in the straits of Cilicia where the Persian troops are defeated. Darius flees, and the Persian king's mother, wife, and children are taken captive by the invading army. Darius then offers Alexander gold in return for the release of the captives, but Alexander refuses his offer. Darius prepares for a second offensive with a Persian military reinforcement, but is informed that his wife has died while being held prisoner. Devastated by his wife's death, and then betrayed by two of his subjects, Nebarzanes and Bessus, Darius tragically dies, and is eventually buried by his mother, Sisigambis.

In contrast with John Suckling's *Aglaura*, William Alexander's *Darius* deploys ancient Persian dramatis personae with far less veiled reference to contemporary Safavid Persia. In general, *Darius* contains features that reinforce rather than mitigate the idea of West-East confrontation represented through hostility between Europe and Asia (epitomized in *Darius* by ancient Persia). Throughout his tragedy, Alexander avoids depicting Persia and Persians with Islamic attributes. Instead, the playwright emphatically associates ancient Persian dramatis personae with the notion of paganism, whether of the Persian variety, or of that belonging to Roman and Greek mythology. My argument here is that Alexander in 1603, unlike Suckling in 1637/8, was writing *before* the initiation of the Jacobean policy of political, cultural and commercial entente with Islamic Persia. A pivotal moment in this

[88] Kastner and Charlton (eds), *The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1921), p. 459.

policy, as we have seen, came in 1611 with the Persian embassy of Robert Sherley to the Jacobean court. However, in 1603, Alexander's failure to allude to Safavid Persia in *Darius* merely reflected contemporary popular attitudes in England and foreign policy priorities.

As well as suffering from foreign invasion, the Persian court in *Darius* faces betrayal and a coup designed to overthrow the monarch, Darius I. Several Persians, however, remain loyal to their king. Before his tragic fall, Darius has a long soliloquy in which he reacts to the internal turbulence in his court, which has escalated after the military invasion on his territories. Remarkably, Darius asserts that 'We of our owne confusions are the cause', thereby warning the English audience of the dangers of internal, national instability.[89] In the course of his tragedy, William Alexander praises the Scottish monarch, James VI, but warns the king of the risks of potential disintegration in the court. To that end, the playwright uses ancient Persia in *Darius* as a negative example of how *not* to govern a nation and conduct international affairs.

At the beginning of Act II, the Macedonian successor to Philip, Alexander, addresses his lieutenant, Parmenio, glorying in defeating the Persians in battle:

> Mountaines of murthered corps, aud [*sic*] seas of blood:
> Vn-buried bodies buried all the fieldes.
> […]
> Let vs goe prosecute with dint of sworde
> That fortune, which the heauens our hopes assignes.[90]

A few lines later, Parmenio replies to Alexander, and maintains that

> What hostes haue we ouerthrow'n? what citties raz'd?
> Loe, populous *Asia* trembles at our deedes,
> And martiall *Europe* doth remaine amaz'd.
> Proud *Greece*, whose spirits oft preast to skorne the skyes,
> A prostrate supplicant before thee falles.[91]

Alexander reminds his lieutenant of the post-war scene, yet determines to continue his advance into Persia, by power of the 'sworde', and in accordance with celestial destiny.

[89] William Alexander, *The Tragedie of Darivs* (Edinbvrgh, 1603), sig. G4v.
[90] Alexander, *The Tragedie of Darivs* (1603), sigs C1r-v.
[91] *Ibid*., sig. C1v.

Parmenio acknowledges Alexander's words and lauds the military power of the Greeks, pointing to the stunned reaction of the continents: '*Asia* trembles' and Europe stands 'amaz'd'. In this context ancient Persia and Persians are presented as clearly alien and in opposition to Europe, rather than as any kind of potential ally.

In William Alexander's dramatization of ancient Persian characters, the playwright draws extensively on Roman and Greek mythology. This is in order to reflect the pagan attributes of both Persians and the invading Macedonian troops. For example, in Act III, Scene I, Darius's mother, Sisigambis, asserts that:

> Yet *Ioue*, if this may dis-en-flambe thine ire,
> Let all thy lightning light vpon mine head:
> To be consum'd with a celestiall fire
> Some comfort were, since that I must be dead.[92]

In Act IV, Scene I, following the death of Darius's wife in captivity, Tiriotes, a eunuch in the Persian court, addresses Darius and maintains:

> She was not wrong'd, as you haue mis-conceau'd.
> The Gods haue had a care for to preserue her:
> Such fauour of the victour she receau'd,
> As of her subiects that were bound to serue her.[93]

The playwright dramatizes the Grecian general, Alexander, as a pagan figure too. In addressing Darius's wife while she is a prisoner of the invading forces, Alexander assures the Persian queen with a faithful gesture, and tells her that:

> I sweare by *Ioues* inviolable throne,
> And doe protest by my imperiall worde,
> That neither I, nor any wight shall wrong you.[94]

In the three excerpts above, William Alexander's emphasis on non-Christian and non-Islamic terms such as 'Gods' and '*Ioues*' is an attempt to create a distance between ancient Persian belief and contemporary English religious practice. At the same time, the dramatist appears to suggest that the Greeks possess a religious dominance, as well as military superiority, over

[92] *Ibid*., sig. D2v.
[93] *Ibid*., sig. F3r.
[94] *Ibid*., sig. E1v.

ancient Persia. To this end, Darius's mother is dramatized as a figure who sincerely believes in Jove's 'lightning light' and 'celestiall fire', the mythological powers of the same Greek and Roman entity to which the Greek general swears. The eunuch in the Persian court is also impressed with the civilized culture and humanity of the Greek commander, Alexander, that he chooses to 'preserue' prisoners, rather than execute them, as a 'fauour of the victour'. What we see here, therefore, is a non-Islamic Persian kingdom dispossessed of its own cultural, political and regional influence.

After depicting the lowering of ancient Persia's international and cultural borders, William Alexander shifts his focus to the country's internal instability. By focusing on the fractured ancient Persian court, the playwright provides a clear model, on stage, of the disastrous consequences of political infighting and disunity. It is my argument that William Alexander dramatizes a relatively balanced combination of evil and loyal Persian courtiers in an attempt to conclude his tragedy with several convincing lessons for James VI of Scotland, the heir apparent to Elizabeth I. By including both evil and faithful councillors in the Persian court depicted in *Darius*, William Alexander portrays a world closer to contemporary reality than one inhabited only by loyalists, or, alternatively, only by traitors. Towards the end of *Darius*, the play depicts a purging of the court. This action takes on particular significance in the light of James VI's ascent to the English throne, and his populating of the royal household with 'a new elite, the Jacobean Scots', in order to surround himself with trusted allies.[95] In building up to the purging of the court scene, *Darius* first establishes the traitorous plans of the Persian plotters against the Persian king, Nabarzanes and Bessus. Nabarzanes spells out to Bessus the plans for the coup:

> The *Persians* we with promises must feede,
> So to disarme him [Darius] of his natiue pow'rs:
> Then we will apprehend himself with speede,
> For whill that he is free nothing is ours.

[95] Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, p. 3.

That we may seeme to vse him with respect,
(As to the state of such a Prince pertaines:)
We will not this last ornament neglect;
He shall be bound but bound with golden chaines.[96]

Loyalists such as Artabazus, however, a nobleman in the Persian court, oppose the betrayal of the Persian king. Artabazus insists on staying true to the king to the last:

Come let us with our best attire and armes
Accompanie our King to this last strife:
Through bloody squadrons, and through hote alarmes
By slaughter onlie we must looke for life.
And when our host, as I hope shall preuaile,
Our countrie shall haue peace, we praise of right:
And if our Fortune, not our courage, faile,
We die with honour in our Soueraignes fight.[97]

Clearly, the play depicts a deeply divided Persian court. At the end of the tragedy traitors overthrow Darius by binding him with 'golden chaines', as they put it, and they surrender the Persian king's half-dead body to the Macedonian general, Alexander. The play offers the audience and readers, therefore, a mixed picture of Persian qualities: on the one side, the betrayal of the king by Nabarzanes and Bessus even though they summon the courage to oppose a tyrant, and on the other the national pride, steadfastness and courage of Artabazus. The play privileges loyalty to the king above all other virtues, even when the king brings about his own downfall and that of his country because of his pride. William Alexander's *Darius* valorizes loyalty above even the courage it takes to oppose the self-destruction of the tyrant.

The more tragic the ending of the play, the more influential seem the lessons deriving from it. William Alexander's closing lines warn James VI of the dangers of monarchy. Despairing in his tragic state, Darius laments:

O Wretched Monarchie, vaine mortals choice,
The glorious step to a disgrace-full fall:
Our pow'r depends vpon the peoples voice,

[96] Alexander, *The Tragedie of Darivs* (1603), sig. F1r.
[97] *Ibid*., sig. G1v.

And to seeme soueraigne needs we must serue all.
[…]
A golden Crowne doth couer leaden cares:
The Scepter cannot lulle their thoughts a-sleepe,
Whose breastes are fraught with infinite dispaires,
Of which the vulgar wits sounds not the deepe.
[…]
That of all wo no wo is like to this,
To thinke I was, and am not now a King.[98]

It is evident that the playwright intends to warn James VI of the threats involved in being a monarch (risks of which James was, of course, already only too aware, having, by 1603, survived the factional and often lethal world of the Scottish court for over two decades as king in full control of the government).[99] But the play also suggests solutions in order to maintain a king or kingdom. The Macedonian commander, Alexander, hints at such solutions after the death of the Persian king, Darius. Alexander declares his intention to hunt down those who betrayed the Persian king:

But I will punishe with most greevous paines
The treason damnable they did contriue.
[…]
Earth cannot keepe them [the traitors] safe, if I abhorre them:
Ile search them out though they were in the center.
[…]
Vnto th'eternall terrour of all traitours,
They shall dismembred be before my eyes.[100]

As an exemplar of how to maintain discipline and loyalty within a court, Alexander's envisioned punishment for Nabarzanes and Bessus is bloodcurdling, even allowing for dramatic license. Yet, as counsel to a king (James VI and I) not unused to court factionalism and efforts to depose him, Alexander's chilling words may not, perhaps, have been regarded as excessive or unwelcome. Darius appeared in print in 1603 and on several other occasions in the Jacobean era. In 1604 and 1607, for example, the play appeared in *The Monarchick(e) Tragedies*, a collection of Alexander's tragedies on the theme of kingship. Its repeated

[98] *Ibid*., sigs G4v, H1r-v.
[99] See Pauline Croft, *King James* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 46.
[100] Alexander, *The Tragedie of Darivs* (1603), sig. I1v.

appearance in print suggests that William Alexander's warnings and advice in *Darius* were at least tolerated, if not welcomed, by James VI and I.[101]

John Suckling's *Aglaura* was published in 1638 two years before William Alexander's death in 1640 and just three years before Suckling's own death in 1641/42.[102] Critics conjecture that by 1637 most courtier dramatists, including John Suckling, 'did not offer the royal family second hand goods, but arranged to have their plays acted first (or even exclusively) at Court'.[103] *Aglaura* was 'completed in the course of 1637 and performed on three occasions, twice during the winter season and again in April 1638'.[104] It was successfully staged at the Caroline court, and was performed again 'shortly before 7 February 1638, at Blackfriars Theatre with much applause', costing 'three or four hundred pounds, […] eight or ten Suits of new Cloaths', embroidered with 'pure gold' and 'silver' laces, and 'an unheard of Prodigality'.[105] On the 3 April Suckling's *Aglaura* was restaged before Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria in the Cockpit Theatre 'with a new fifth act' aimed to make the play a tragicomedy, 'possibly at the king's suggestion', all printed at the playwright's expense in order for the performance to be of acceptable quality and content for the royal occasion.[106] In the prologue to the fifth act Suckling addresses the women in the royal audience, and states that:

> But Ladies you, who never lik'd a plot,
> But where the Servant had his Mistresse got,
> And whom to see a Lover dye it grieves,
> Although 'tis in worse language that he lives,
> Will like't w'are confident, since here will bee,

[101] See William Alexander, *The Monarchick Tragedies* (London, 1604), and William Alexander, *The Monarchicke Tragedies: Croesus, Darius, The Alexandraean, Iulius Caesar* (London, 1607).
[102] Scholars remain uncertain about the date and manner of Suckling's death. See Tom Clayton, 'Suckling, Sir John (*bap*. 1609, *d*. 1641?)', *ODNB*; and A. Hamilton Thompson (ed.), *The Works of Sir John Suckling in Prose and Verse* (London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, 1910), pp. x-xi.
[103] John Freehafer, '*The Italian Night Piece* and Suckling's *Aglaura*', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 67 (1968): 249-65.
[104] Robert Wilcher, *The Discontented Cavalier: The Works of Sir John Suckling in Its Social, Religious, Political, and Literary Contexts* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), p. 27.
[105] See Oliver Lawson Dick (ed.), *Aubrey's Brief Lives* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960), p. 290; and Clayton, 'Suckling, Sir John', *ODNB*.
[106] Clayton, 'Suckling, Sir John', *ODNB*.

That your Sex ever lik'd, varietie.[107]

It is clear that the playwright devised the tragicomic act for his play in order to please the women in the royal audience and Queen Henrietta Maria, in particular, who was known to dislike plays with 'tragic endings'.[108] The 1638 edition of the play contains both the original tragic version and the new fifth act with the happy ending which was added later for the Cockpit Theatre performance, and which is believed was 'surely printed hastily, from prompt copy'.[109]

Although Suckling mentions 'Scena Persia' before listing the dramatis personae, he keeps the exact setting of the play unclear. In fact, by referring variously to '*Cadusia*', a region in the southwest of the Caspian Sea, '*Carimania*', 'Delphos', '*Diana's* Grove', '*Diana's* Nunnerie', and even 'the Towne', that is London, Suckling creates a confusion regarding the setting in *Aglaura*.[110] The playwright avoids appointing a particular city for the plot's location in order, perhaps, to suggest that his story is a universal one, and that even London could burn in the tragic flames of the kind of disintegrated court depicted in his play. *Aglaura* is concerned with 'the new Love', the fashion for Platonic love that held sway in Henrietta Maria's court, referred to in the play as 'the new religion in love'.[111] The play contains a series of love affairs involving almost all the dramatis personae. The relationship between Thersames, the Persian king's son, and Aglaura, with whom the king is also in love, stands at the centre of these dramatized love stories. Thersames and Aglaura, who is in love with Thersames but is named mistress to the king, appear as Platonic lovers. Suckling uses the prince's and Aglaura's affectionate bond in order to show that Platonic love possesses an

[107] John Suckling, *Aglaura* (London, 1638), sig. L2v.
[108] Freehafer, '*The Italian Night Piece* and Suckling's *Aglaura*', p. 260.
[109] *Ibid*., p. 256. For further discussion on the theatrical features of John Suckling's *Aglaura* see Leonie Star, 'Inigo Jones and the Use of Scenery at the Cockpit-In-Court', *Theatre Survey*, 19 (1978): 35-48.
[110] Suckling, *Aglaura* (1638), sigs D2r, G1r, C2v, B1r, D2v.
[111] *Ibid*., sigs D2v, E2v. Also see Thompson, *The Works of Sir John Suckling in Prose and Verse*, p. 381. For further detail on the 'cult of Platonic love' and an idealized 'view of women' at the court of Henrietta Maria see Erin Griffey, *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics, and Patronage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 58.

anti-tyrannical power throughout his play. To this end, Thersames addresses Aglaura at one point, and asserts that:

> come, to bed my Love!
> and wee will there mock Tyrannie, and Fate,
> those softer houres of pleasure, and delight,
> that like so many single pearles, should have
> adorn'd our thread of life, wee will at once,
> by Loves mysterious power, and this nights help
> contract to one, and make but one rich draught
> of all.[112]

The playwright refers to love as a mysteriously delightful power with which Thersames and Aglaura will unite and contract 'to one', and so end their enforced separation. With such a power they can 'mock' the dark 'Fate' and 'Tyrannie' surrounding the lovers in the Persian court. *Aglaura*, then, concerns the hardships and tensions involved in courtly love intrigues. Other figures who engage in secret love affairs in the play are as follows: Orithie, along with Aglaura, is in love with Thersames; Orbella, Thersames's mother and the queen of Persia, loves the king's brother, Ariaspes; Orbella is also the mistress of Ziriff, the captain of the guards; Ziriff himself appears as Aglaura's brother or otherwise disguised as Sorannez, Orbella's former lover; and finally, Jolas, a lord of the council, is characterized as a figure fond of Semanthe, Ziriff's Platonic lover. The Persian court becomes turbulent once Thersames and Aglaura seek a secret marriage; the play begins with rumours about the impending union. When informed of this secret affair, the king of Persia decides to eliminate his son, but is himself murdered by traitorous Persian courtiers. At the end of the play, Aglaura stabs her beloved, Thersames, by mistake, thinking that he is the king. A series of other murders follow, and figures such as Ariaspes, Ziriff and Orbella all end up dead. In the tragicomic version of the play, none of the characters die, and the king of Persia appears as a repentant figure who attempts to dispense justice to all at the conclusion of the play.

[112] Suckling, *Aglaura* (1638), sig. F1v.

Several decades later in the Caroline period, and on the brink of the English civil war, John Suckling dramatizes an internally disturbed ancient Persian court while depicting Persia as a stabilized country on its borders. Suckling portrays the fraught ancient Persian court in *Aglaura* in order, perhaps, to mirror the chaos in the Caroline court at the time, an attempt to show or warn that internal instability devastates a country as equally as foreign invasion.[113] I suggest, therefore, that ancient Persia appears as a dramatic model for England in *Darius* and *Aglaura* in order to accommodate and represent various political contexts which endanger the country from within or without. As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, what follows in this section argues that Robert Sherley's travels to England as a Safavid envoy during the Jacobean period influenced the ways in which playwrights such as John Suckling dramatized ancient Persian figures in Charles I's reign. In other words, post-Sherley play texts such as *Aglaura* contain dramatic features reminiscent or characteristic of Islamic Persia and Persians, yet still represented through ancient Persian dramatis personae. Before Robert Sherley's first visit to England in 1611, however, plays containing ancient Persian characters such as Darius, in William Alexander's play of that name, fail to project dramatic traces of Islamic Persia and Persians.

In John Suckling's *Aglaura* Persia appears as a country engaged in active political and cultural exchanges with its neighbouring countries despite the fraught circumstances inside the court. In one of its earliest scenes, a servant informs Ziriff, the captain of the guards, that 'Th'Embassadours from the Cadusians' are outside the court expecting an audience with the Persian king; Ziriff urges the servant to show the ambassadors 'the Gallerie'.[114] By depicting diplomatic activity, Suckling reveals an international advantage possessed by the Persian

[113] It is worth noting that between 1637 to 1638 when *Aglaura* was being written and performed, the Caroline court was enforcing ambitious policies such as 'the plantation policy' in Ireland. In Scotland, Charles I was revoking the 'new Scottish service book and canons', and abolishing the 'Scottish High Commission'. John Suckling's *Aglaura* was, perhaps, an attempt to urge the Caroline court to maintain internal unity while such policies were being exercised. See Richard Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), pp. 206, 208.

[114] Suckling, *Aglaura* (1638), sig. B1v.

court. He shows Persia's appeal to foreign politicians and diplomats, and its importance as a centre for international political and cultural exchanges. Elsewhere in the play, Thersames, the prince of Persia, refers to a possible alliance between Persia and *Cadusia* through a royal marriage involving the two countries. Thersames maintains that, 'They doe pretend the safetie of the State / now, Nothing but my marriage with *Cadusia* / can secure th'adjoyning countrey to it'.[115] This marriage never takes place in the play, but the underlying, hard-nosed truth is clear: such dynastic, international marriages are instrumental in strengthening national security and 'safetie' for both parties, and countries, to the union.

John Suckling published his play in the late 1630s, a decade after Robert Sherley's last return to Safavid Persia from England in 1628, and four years after Thomas Herbert published *A Relation of Some Years Travaile* in 1634, praising Robert Sherley as the 'greatest Traueller in his time'.[116] Given that under James VI and I, the playwright's father, Sir John Suckling, 'became Secretary of State in 1622', – the same year that the Anglo-Persian military alliance was tested in action – the playwright must have been familiar with contemporary Persia's ambitious foreign policy.[117] Suckling himself, a royalist courtier, became actively engaged in English politics before the outbreak of the civil war, and, in 1639, raised a troop for the 'first Scottish war of Charles I'.[118] In his role as courtier-dramatist, then, Suckling would likely have been able to draw on his experience and knowledge of contemporary political intelligence. It is possible that Suckling simply used the exotic, romantic setting of ancient Persia as a convenient setting for his pleasing, if superficial, tragicomedy on the unfortunate consequences of giving in to lust and illicit love. But it is my argument that Suckling's choice of setting is very much a deliberate one, taken with the political parallels between the English and Persian courts in mind.

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[115] *Ibid.*, sig. D2r.
[116] Herbert, *A Relation of Some Years Travaile*, pp. 124-25.
[117] Clayton, 'Suckling, Sir John', *ODNB*.
[118] See Clayton, 'Suckling, Sir John', *ODNB* and Thompson, *The Works of Sir John Suckling in Prose and Verse*, p. x.

Although Suckling dramatizes an internally troubled Persia in *Aglaura*, he frequently depicts the Persian kingdom as actively engaged in mercantile exchange and trade with other countries. I argue that through such depictions, and by characterizing ancient Persian figures, the dramatist draws on the commercial importance of contemporary Persia as another feature of the country's international profile. By using extended metaphors, Suckling shows that the Persian dramatis personae are familiar with international trade and business. For example, Aglaura addresses Orithie, in a scene, and maintains that:

> would'st thou not thinke a Merchant mad, *Orithie*?
> if thou shouldst see him weepe, and teare his haire,
> because hee brought not both the Indies home?
> and wouldst not thinke his sorrowes verie just,
> if having fraught his ship with some rich Treasure,
> hee sunke i'th' verie Port?[119]

Elsewhere Jolas tells his beloved, Semanthe, that:

> It is ill done, *Semanthe*, to plead bankrupt,
> when with such ease you may be out of debt;
> In loves dominions, native commoditie,
> is currant payment, change is all the Trade,
> and heart for heart, the richest merchandize.[120]

In the first example, Aglaura refers to 'both the Indies', two contemporary commercially significant centres in international trade. There exists no evidence that historical ancient Persians specifically made references to 'both the Indies' as centres for commercial exchange. In the second example, Jolas boastfully displays his knowledge of business terms, and his ability to connect such vocabularies with the idea of love. He draws on words such as 'debt' and 'bankrupt' as well as 'native commoditie', 'currant payment', 'Trade', and 'merchandize' in order to persuade Semanthe to love him back. Through using these conceits, the playwright shows that Persian dramatis personae have a competent knowledge of world commerce and marketing traffic.

[119] Suckling, *Aglaura* (1638), sig. H1v.
[120] *Ibid*., sig. H2v.

Compared to William Alexander's *Darius*, John Suckling's *Aglaura* dramatizes the Persian king as a more powerful and magnanimous political actor. I argue that Suckling's portrayal of the Persian king in *Aglaura* reflects another feature of contemporary Persia which facilitated the country's policies of international engagement with Christian Europe. Suckling emphasizes the Persian king's flexible and tolerant approach towards his subjects and surroundings, characteristics also represented by the Safavid Sophy, Shah Abbas I of Persia, in *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins. In the closing lines of *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*, Abbas is depicted as a Persian in a Christian role, tolerantly baptizing Robert Sherley's child born in a church in Safavid Persia.[121] In what follows I will quote from Suckling's *Aglaura* to argue that the playwright's ancient Persian king embodies attributes of contemporary Safavid monarchs such as Shah Abbas I.

At the outset of *Aglaura* Suckling depicts the Persian king as a mighty emperor whose wrath frightens his subjects, including the Persian prince, Thersames. In a conversation with Jolas, the lord of the counsel, the prince asserts that:

> Is there no way for Kings to shew their power,
> but in their Subjects wrongs? no subject neither
> but his owne sonne?[122]

Unlike William Alexander's monarch, John Suckling's Persian king possesses a political authority which is reinforced further in the tragicomic version of *Aglaura* at the end of which the king appears as a figure dispensing justice and equality. In light of depicting the Persian monarch as a dominant character, Suckling draws attention to a priest in the Persian court as a way of showing the Persian king's tolerance and magnanimity. In the beginning of the play Jolinas, Aglaura's waiting woman, addresses Jolas, the lord of the counsel, and states that:

> they meane to leave

[121] My third chapter, on the Jacobean era, deals extensively with dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in this period.
[122] Suckling, *Aglaura* (1638), sig. D1v.

the company, and steale unto those thickets,
where, there's a Priest attends them.[123]

By 'they' Jolinas means Thersames and Aglaura who plan to meet a priest to seal their secret marriage away from the Persian courtiers' presence. Suckling dramatizes a 'Priest' dwelling in Persia, an attempt, perhaps, to reduce the alienation of a geographically distant court for English audiences through Christian terms. In other words, the playwright accommodates his foreign material to English understanding. Suckling says nothing specific about the beliefs or ritual practices of the 'Priest', meaning that the 'Priest' does not necessarily have to be thought of as a Zoroastrian clerical official, or *mobed*. By using the word 'Priest', Suckling invites the audience/reader to associate, at least at first glance, a non-Christian setting with a Christian entity, and, therefore, depicts Persia as a religiously flexibly nation. Another scenario regarding the word 'Priest' is also possible: the mention of '*Diana's* Grove' introduces anachronistic Roman mythology into the world of the play, suggesting that the reader/audience is simply supposed to understand 'Priest' as a pagan cleric, a figure who vaguely belongs to a non-Zoroastrian cultural setting.[124] Suckling's usage of the word 'Priest' for pagan Persia would also have been a deliberate attempt to relate a non-Christian setting to Christian entities.

In order to illuminate further the Persian king's tolerance and magnanimity in *Aglaura*, Suckling portrays the Persian king as a flexible figure, willing to negotiate and compromise where necessary. The playwright depicts the Persian king as willing to use diplomatic rhetoric to resolve conflict. In a conversation with Ziriff, the captain of the guards, the king, possibly being aware that his queen is mistress to Ziriff, maintains that:

I have conceiv'd of Joy, and am growne great:
Till I have safe deliverance, time's a cripple
and goes on crutches, […] as for thee my *Ziriff*,
I doe here entertaine a friendship with thee,

[123] *Ibid.*, sig. B1r.
[124] *Ibid.*

shall drowne the memorie of all patternes past;
wee will oblige by turns; and that so thick,
and fast, that curious studiers of it,
shall not once dare to cast it up, or say
by way of ghesse, whether thou or I
remaine the debtors, when wee come to die.[125]

Long-lasting loyalty and friendship are the keynotes of the king's address to Ziriff. The king boasts of his royal power before offering a generous friendship to the captain of the guards; the nature and style of this offer recalls that made by Shah Abbas I in his letter to James VI and I, as seen earlier in this chapter, where the Persian monarch referred to himself as 'the professed friend and brother' of the English king. The Persian king in *Aglaura* suggests that he and Ziriff start afresh by forgetting the 'memorie' of the past, and that they form a new alliance in order to find the traitors in the court. Whether the king's offer is genuine or not, it is clear that he is dramatized, here, to emphasize his capability as an influential negotiator and politician. Elsewhere in the play, in a dialogue with Aglaura, the Persian king asserts that:

Thou hast orecome [*sic*] mee, mov'd so handsomely,
for pitie, that I will dis-inherit
the elder brother, and from this houre be
thy Convert, not thy Lover.[126]

The term 'Convert' reminds us of several religious references including Islamic ones. Alongside the literal meaning of the word here, which conveys falling for Aglaura, other connotations suggest a more figurative signification, alluding to contemporary religious and political affairs.[127] The idea of conversion, perhaps, hints at Christian efforts to convert Islamic rulers such as Shah Abbas I. Anthony Sherley's personal reason for travelling to Persia in the late 1590s, for example, was to do nothing less than convert the Shah of Persia to Christianity. In both Islam and Christianity the term touches on the notion of religious

[125] *Ibid*., sig. G1v.
[126] *Ibid*., sigs H2r-v.
[127] Check *Oxford English Dictionary* in order to examine the various shades of meaning attached to the word 'convert'.

schism, such as that between Shi'a and Sunni Islam, or between Protestants and Catholics. This religio-political sense of conversion, or apostasy, from one faith to another, is paralleled in *Aglaura*'s world of amorous allegiances and schisms. Ziriff is quick to inform Aglaura that the king intends to deceive her by his declaration of conversion, in order that he [the king] may apprehend and do away with the disloyal prince. Clearly, then, Suckling's portrayal of the Persian monarch as a cunning and strategic rhetorician allows for both a literal interpretation of his words, confined to the world of the play, and a metaphorical, political interpretation extended to the contemporary world of domestic and international affairs.

William Alexander's *Darius* and John Suckling's *Aglaura* tell the story of troubled courts, and emphasize the notion of royal corruption and political tension. Whilst Alexander dramatizes ancient Persia as a kingdom struggling with foreign threats, Suckling takes a more intimate approach than Alexander, and focuses on ancient Persia's intra-court relations. In *Aglaura*, Suckling portrays the tragic fall of an empire from within as a result of ambitious love affairs rather than as a consequence of foreign invasion, as dramatized by Alexander in *Darius*. Alexander's depiction of Persia as a victim of ferocious foreign attack in *Darius* follows that of Christopher Marlowe who, in *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*, dramatizes Persia as an empire with deeply unsettled borders, a once formidable country which in Marlowe's tragedy appears vulnerable to threats from abroad. In *Darius*, Alexander adopts Marlowe's theme, and stages the horror of foreign invasion to remind English audiences of the consequences of losing national unity. Through *Darius*, Alexander urged the English to maintain constitutional and civil stability in 1603, the year of the accession of James VI of Scotland to the English throne. In addressing both the Scots and English in his play, Alexander clearly promotes a course of cooperation rather than conflict and brings to

the fore the pragmatic and symbolic importance of maintaining a 'straiter vnion and conjunction' between the two nations.[128]

In this chapter, I argued that the exchange of emissaries between England and Safavid Persia actively contributed to shaping English perceptions of Islamic Persia and Persians, and fostered, at the same time, political, cultural, and mercantile relations between the two countries during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. I suggested that Robert Sherley appears as the most prominent Anglo-Persian political figure in the period. In his capacity as an influential Persian ambassador, Robert Sherley facilitated closer political relations between England and Safavid Persia, leading to an Anglo-Persian military alliance in 1622. Through his delivery of a politically and commercially significant letter from Shah Abbas I to James VI and I, Sherley offered remarkable commercial privileges to England in 1611, eleven years before the realization of an active military collaboration between England and Safavid Persia. I examined the ways in which the cultural aspects of Robert Sherley's political missions resonated in both non-dramatic and dramatic literature of the period. To this end, I argued that, through publicizing Robert Sherley as a facilitator of early modern Anglo-Persian relations, writers such as Thomas Middleton and Thomas Herbert highlighted Anglo-Persian political and cultural exchanges in non-dramatic texts such as travel accounts.

This thesis chiefly focuses on dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians and the role played by such depictions in shaping English foreign policies towards its non-Christian allies and enemies such as Safavid Persia and the Ottoman Turks. By focusing in the second section on dramatic representations of ancient Persia in William Alexander's *Darius* and John Suckling's *Aglaura*, I aimed to achieve two objectives: to provide the thesis with a broader perspective regarding representations of Persia and Persians on the English stage, and to investigate whether contemporary political emissaries such as Robert Sherley

[128] Alexander, *The Tragedie of Darivs* (1603), sig. A1r.

influenced the ways in which playwrights dramatized ancient Persian dramatis personae. William Alexander's *Darius* and John Suckling's *Aglaura* appeared politically significant texts given that the former was published before Robert Sherley's diplomatic missions in Jacobean England and the latter after Robert Sherley's audiences with James VI and I and Charles I. *Darius* and *Aglaura* both commented on England's political tensions through representations of ancient Persia and Persians in different eras. While Alexander used such representations to warn James VI and I of foreign invasion and the potential loss of national integrity and sovereignty as a consequence, Suckling sought to raise questions about the internal stability of the state through his cautionary tale of ancient Persia and Persians. In my examination of the relationship between ancient Persian dramatis personae and English contemporary political dynamics and parallels in these two plays, I proposed that Robert Sherley's travels to England shaped the ways in which John Suckling dramatized ancient Persian figures in *Aglaura*. As opposed to William Alexander's *Darius*, *Aglaura* is significant in representing contemporary Anglo-Persian political and commercial relations under the guise of an ancient Persian setting. In other words, English drama, following Robert Sherley's remarkable career as an Anglo-Persian diplomat, offers us valuable and previously neglected evidence that English perceptions of, attitudes towards, and international relations with Persia would never be the same again. The next chapter investigates the ways in which Elizabethan English playwrights used representations of Safavid Persia and Persians in order to engage with contemporary foreign policy debates.

CHAPTER 2:

Dramatic Representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in the Late Elizabethan Period: Safavid Romance and Secular Persia

Introduction

In April 1561, three years after her coronation, a letter carrying Elizabeth I's imprimatur was addressed to Tahmasb I (d.1576), the Safavid Persian king.[129] She sent the first letter to Shah Ismail I's successor, Tahmasb I, to be delivered by Anthony Jenkinson of the Muscovy Company who carried with him messages from the Russian emperor as well as the English queen for the Persian king. Anthony Jenkinson had spent some time in Russia before travelling to Persia. His presence in Russia was instructed by Elizabeth I in a separate letter to the Russian emperor, Iohn Basiliwich, who was asked by the queen to provide Jenkinson with 'safe conduct […] to passe thorow […] *into* Persia, *to the Great Sophie*'.[130] Beginning with a terse description of herself, 'Elizabeth, by the grace of God, Queene of England, &c ', she proceeded to adorn the Persian Tahmasb with a considerably longer and more elaborate title, writing:

> To the right mightie, and right victorious Prince, the great Sophie, Emperour of the Persians, Medes, Parthians, Hircans, Carmanians, Margians, uf the people on this side, and beyond the riuer of Tygris, and of all men, and nations, betweene the Caspian sea, and the gulfe of Persia, greeting, and most happie increase in all prosperitie.[131]

Elizabeth I's letter to the Persian Tahmasb reveals the English court's perceptions of Safavid Persia at the beginning of her reign. Persia appears as a vast kingdom promising potentially lucrative commercial opportunities for English traders. The English monarch's letter attempts to name every single territory ruled by Tahmasb I in order to praise Islamic Persia's political and geographical authority. Elizabeth's reference to the 'grace of God', avoiding mention of

[129] Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiqves, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 3 vols (London, 1599-1600), vol. 1, pp. 340-41.
[130] *Ibid*., pp. 338-39.
[131] *Ibid*., p. 341.

Christ, carefully minimizes the risk of offending her Muslim addressee. Elizabeth I's tactful letter, and the rhetorical lengths it goes to in order to praise and honour Tahmasb, reveals the considerable commercial and political importance that Safavid Persia held for England in the early years of Elizabeth's reign.

In fact, the English interest in Persia dated back to 1290 and the reign of Edward I. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the first recorded English envoy to Persia, Geoffrey de Langley, was instructed by Edward I to meet King Arghun (d.1291), the Ilkhanate monarch of Persia, in order to 'seek […] aid against the Turks'.[132] In the Tudor period, the earliest recorded letters involving the matter of Persia date to Henry VIII's reign. On 10 January 1515, Fabricius de Caretto, an Italian knight, wrote from Rhodes to King Henry in order to inform him of the details of a recent military confrontation between the Ottomans and Persians. He was referring to the 'battle of Chaldiran' (1514) which took place in a county by the same name now located in northwest of Iran.[133] The Calendar summary of the letter mentions that Caretto had 'received letters in Greek from Sel[im], signing himself Sultan of Persia, a dignity he had never reached. After his late engagement with the Sophi, both armies drew off'.[134] In his letter, Caretto attempted to provide the English monarch with military intelligence, such as the number of soldiers lost in war and the current location of the Turkish king. Over a year later, on 10 April 1516, Caretto highlighted another Ottoman-Persian military engagement in a second letter from Rhodes. The English paraphrase of the letter states that Caretto informs the English king that, 'The Sophi took last year the town of Chimacum [Chemach]; the Turk is making great efforts to oppose him, and is now at

[132] Denis Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians: Imperial Lives in Nineteenth-Century Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), p. 2.
[133] Rudolph P. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 17.
[134] See J. S. Brewer (ed.), *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII part I: 1515-16* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1864), vol. 2, p. 5, No. 17. Cited in *State Papers Online: The Government of Britain 1509-1714*. The quotation I have given here is a much later English synopsis of Caretto's letter which is in Latin.

Adrianople about the affairs of Hungary, busy with his navy'. The paraphrase continues that 'the knights of Rhodes are making all preparations in case of being attacked [by the Ottoman Turks]'.[135]

These important letters depicted Safavid Persia, in the second decade of the sixteenth century, as an effective deterrent power against the Turks, who themselves posed an ever-present threat to Christendom. More than forty years later, Elizabeth I was clearly also aware of the strategic and geographic importance of Persia as a bulwark against the Ottomans' incursions from the east. Indeed, in 1560 Elizabeth received intelligence regarding Persia which influenced her decision to write to the Persian Tahmasb I. The letter was written and despatched by Guido Giannetti, an Italian reformist and provider of diplomatic information for the English queen.[136] After stating that 'The most important news is that the Turks have gained the fort of the Zerbe' in opposing 'the King of Spain', the Calendar summary of Giannetti's letter maintains that, 'It may also be hoped that the Turk will be disturbed in another quarter, as it appears that […] the King of Persia [has not] replied to his proposals'.[137] Giannetti informed Elizabeth I that the possible clash between the Turks and Persians could benefit Europe, and should be taken seriously by the queen of England. This letter shows how in mid to late sixteenth-century Europe the fate of Christendom was perceived to be intertwined with Persia and Persians. That is, the more that Persia engaged the Ottomans from the east, the more Christians were able to resist Turkish military pressure on the west.

At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, however, the impetus for closer ties between England and Safavid Persia came not only from strategic and military imperatives, but from commercial ones too. In her letters in 1561 to the Russian emperor, Iohn Basiliwich, and

[135] *Ibid*., p. 497, No. 1756.
[136] For an account of the role played by Guido Giannetti in sixteenth-century English domestic and foreign affairs, see Anne Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations, c. 1535-c. 1585* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 38, 78, 168.
[137] Joseph Stevenson (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, 1558-1589: 1560-1561* (London: Longman, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1865), vol. 3, p. 279, No. 494. Cited in *State Papers Online: The Government of Britain 1509-1714*.

Tahmasb I, in connection with Anthony Jenkinson's journey to the east, Elizabeth mentions that her royal envoy [Jenkinson] is sent to Persia 'chiefly for triall of forren merchandises'.[138] Her letter declares to 'the great Sophie' that Jenkinson's 'enterprise is onely grounded vpon an honest intent, to establish trade of merchandise with your subiects, and with other strangers traffiking in your realmes'.[139] A month later on May 14, 1561, William Cecil, First Baron Burghley and the chief advisor to Elizabeth I, presented a note to the queen confirming that Jenkinson's journey was, as the English synopsis of the note suggests, 'undertaken for the Society of the Merchant Adventurers, [and] for discovery of lands, islands, & c'.[140] Elizabeth I's address to Tahmasb I shows the queen's awareness of Safavid Persia's important role in England's foreign and commercial policy. It is evident, therefore, that Safavid Persia both increased and extended (from Russia in this case) the trading opportunities for Elizabethan England.

Through diplomatic and mercantile correspondence, then, the commercial and geo-political significances of Safavid Persia became known to Elizabethan England. Anthony Jenkinson met Tahmasb I on 20 November 1561. Jenkinson reports having to wear special shoes, 'Basmackes', when meeting the monarch, on account of being a 'Christian, and called amongst them [the Persians] [. . .] vnbeleeuer, and vncleane: esteeming all to be infidels and Pagans which do not beleeue as they do'.[141] Jenkinson's mission ended in ignominious failure, having failed to secure Tahmasb I's permission for English merchants to trade freely in the whole of Persia. Even worse, Jenkinson left the Persian court under a cloud, with the parting shout of Tahmasb ringing in his ears: 'Oh thou unbeleeuer, […] we haue no neede to haue

[138] Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1599-1600), pp. 339-40.
[139] *Ibid.*, p. 341.
[140] S. R. Scargill-Bird (ed.), *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury, Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire: 1306-1571* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1883), vol. 1, p. 260, No. 829. Cited in *State Papers Online: The Government of Britain 1509-1714*.
[141] Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1599-1600), p. 349.

friendship with the unbeleeuers'.[142] And finally, when forced to depart, Jenkinson was followed by a 'man with a Basanet of sand, sifting all the way that […Jenkinson] had gone within the said pallace, euen from the said Sophies sight unto the court gate' to cleanse the path he had trodden.[143]

Further contextualisation of this episode shows that the humiliating treatment of Anthony Jenkinson in the Persian court had been deliberately staged for political purposes. As Jenkinson mentions in his account, there had been a Persian-Ottoman 'late concluded friendship' or a 'new league' of which the English were aware.[144] Evidently, the Persian monarch did not mean 'to breake' this league by warmly welcoming the 'Franke', a 'nation that was enemie to the great Turke'.[145] It appears that Tahmasb I had invited Turkish ambassadors to his court *before* Jenkinson's audience with him. By rejecting Jenkinson in an exaggerated manner, the Safavid monarch demonstrated his loyalty to the recent Persian-Ottoman truce, emphasizing that he did not intend to upset the treaty at any cost. In fact, Tahmasb stage-managed the disgrace of the English emissary in front of the Turkish representatives in order to highlight the political importance of the recent Persian-Ottoman treaty for Persia. Late Elizabethan playwrights would tend to depict Islamic Persia and Persians as both enemies and allies to the Ottoman Turks. In *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* (1590), Christopher Marlowe would cast Islamic Persia as a nation opposing the Turks, and Thomas Heywood, in *The Foure Prentises of London* (1599-1600), would dramatize Persia and Persians as conflicting allies to the Ottomans; Persia is depicted as a pivotal kingdom deeply disagreeing with the Turks on strategic, political, and military approaches towards Christendom.

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[142] *Ibid.*
[143] *Ibid.*
[144] *Ibid.*
[145] *Ibid.* *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'Frank' (n.) as a 'coalition of nations' or as (adj.) 'western nations of Europe.' Here, 'Franke' refers to Europeans in general.

Where the Turkish ambassadors were not present, however, Jenkinson was welcomed warmly by the Persian courtiers. As he retired to his lodging after meeting Tahmasb, Jenkinson was 'fauoured' by the king of Hircan's son, who was 'commended onto him from his father', 'Obdolowcan' or Abdullah Khan, and told that Jenkinson 'should haue good successe with the Sophie, and good intertainment'.[146] Hircan or Shirvan, a central Asian Khanate, was a neighbouring state to Safavid Persia, and Abdullah Khan's son appears to have been pursuing trade-talks in the Safavid court at the time.[147] A year later, on 20 March 1562, the Sophy offered Jenkinson a 'rich garment of cloth of golde' as a present, and 'dismissed' him 'without any harme'.[148] By 15 April that year, Tahmasb had instructed king 'Obdolowcan' to give Jenkinson 'letters of safe conductes and priuiledges' in order to exempt the English from 'paying custome' in the dominions under Obdolowcan's control, i.e. Shirvan.[149] And finally, Tahmasb provided safeguard for the English envoy on his way back to Russia. The dual policy of the Safavid monarch towards Jenkinson, privately amicable yet publically hostile, shows that Tahmasb did not intend to lose the commercial and political opportunities which existed in collaborating with the English and Turks simultaneously. Tahmasb provided the English with a limited permission for trade, only partially allowing what Jenkinson requested, and it was not until 1566 when the English obtained rights from the Persian king to freely trade in his kingdom.[150] At the same time, Tahmasb also maintained a truce with the Turks who were naturally wary of an Anglo-Persian alliance. Therefore, both the English and Persians were willing to maintain commercial and political relationships in 1560s even if instances of political theatre, such as Tahmasb's humiliation of Jenkinson, suggested otherwise.

[146] *Ibid.*, pp. 348-49.
[147] *Ibid.*, pp. 346-47; also see Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 30-31.
[148] Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1599-1600), p. 350.
[149] *Ibid.*
[150] Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 31.

Elizabeth I made two more attempts to strengthen political and commercial ties with the Safavids in the late 1560s and 1570s. In July 1568, a group of English traders met with Tahmasb I in 'Casbin', or Ghazvin, the Safavid's capital at the time, where '*Master Arthur Edwards*', the agent of the English envoys, was asked by the Persian monarch 'from what countrey he came', without raising a single question about the English traders' religion.[151] Perhaps Tahmasb I already knew that he was dealing with Christians, and that there was no need this time for political stage managing, for he favoured commercial ties with England. After a 'talke' between the Sophy and Edwards which took 'two houres', Tahmasb 'granted' 'priuileges for the trade of merchandize into Persia, all written in Azure and gold letters'.[152]

In a second attempt in1579, Elizabeth I addressed 'the great Sophi of *Persia*' as 'the most noble and inuincible Emperour of Persia, King of Shiruan, Gilan, Grosin, Corassan, and great Gouernour euen onto the Indies'.[153] The continuous attempts of Elizabethan England to correspond with different Safavid kings illustrate that the English were aware of the increasing power of Islamic Persia in the region; such attempts also reveal England's deep interest in an Islamic state which took a more collaborative approach (by contrast with the Ottoman Turks) towards Christendom. This feeling was mutual: by accepting English envoys, and granting commercial privileges, Safavid monarchs benefited from Europe through collaboration rather than confrontation.

Elizabethan playwrights mediated such international affairs through the dramatic art of the period. It appears that diplomatic interactions between Safavid kings and English envoys, discussed above, inform the portrayal of diverse Islamic Persian characters in Elizabethan plays. Surviving dramatic works that contain such characters include Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* and Thomas Heywood's *The Foure Prentises of London*. In *Tamburlaine*, for example, Marlowe appears to draw the relationship between

[151] Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1599-1600), p. 392.
[152] *Ibid*.
[153] *Ibid*., p. 418.

Tamburlaine and Theridamas, a Persian captain and a high-ranking courtier in Tamburlaine's court, with an eye to Tahmasb I's complex attitude towards Anthony Jenkinson in the Persian court. Theridamas is portrayed as a flexible and intelligent knight throughout the play, and is represented as a pivotal figure in Tamburlaine's policies. In *The Foure Prentises of London*, Thomas Heywood's flattering representation of the chivalry of the Persian Sophy appears to reflect English admiration for the Safavid monarch's resistance to the Ottoman Turks. Through their favourable representation of Safavid Persian characters, playwrights such as Marlowe and Heywood predisposed English audiences to the notion of Islamic Persia as England's potential eastern ally.

This chapter includes two sections in order to focus on Christopher Marlowe's and Thomas Heywood's dramatic representations of Islamic Persia in *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* and *The Foure Prentises of London* respectively. The first section argues that in *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe turns Islamic Persia into a secular empire. By establishing Persia as a secular state, Marlowe creates dramatic grounds to oppose religious authority and power. While I endorse previous scholarship regarding Marlowe's dramatic secularism in *Tamburlaine*, I extend such discussions by proposing that Marlowe's depiction of Persia as secular helps to introduce to English audiences the controversial idea of establishing Persia as England's potential ally in the east. Marlowe's dramatized secular Persia creates a sharp contrast between Persia and Persians on the one hand, and Ottoman Turks and even Christendom on the other. In the light of such a contrast, this chapter's second section examines Thomas Heywood's *The Foure Prentises of London*. Here, I argue that despite his anti-Christian revolt, the chivalric Sophy is to be contrasted rather than conflated with other Muslim figures in the play. By contrasting Persia with the Ottomans, Heywood alludes to two important lines of thought in Elizabethan England. First, through such a contrast, Heywood implicitly criticizes sectarian clashes between Protestants and Catholics, showing that such

clashes are doomed to failure and destruction. Second, Heywood's contrasts between the Persians and Ottomans also introduces a surrogate ally for England should England's alliance with the Ottomans themselves fail. In what follows in the chapter, I will attempt to shed light on representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in the late Elizabethan period and drama's contribution to the shaping of England's foreign policy.

2.1 *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*: Secular Persia and Christopher Marlowe's Politics of Irreligion

Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* was entered in the Stationers' Register on 14 August 1590, and printed in the same year 'probably from an authorial fair copy or scribal transcript'. The 'text may have been cut', and thus varied in content from Marlowe's original version written in 1587. It was later assigned as *Tamburlaine, Part I*. The first recorded performance of the first part was in 1590 by the 'Admiral's Men in London' followed by nine further Rose performances in 1594 and six more in 1595. Marlowe's *Tamburlaine Part I* draws, for its narrative sources, on George Whetstone's *The English Mirror* (1586) and Pietro Perondino's *Magni Tamerlanis Scythiarum Imperatoris vita* (1553) (for Bajazeth's captivity and death). Marlowe's other sources for the play included *Bevis of Hampton* (*c*.1300) (in 4.2) and Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (1570) (in 1.2-3 and 3.3).[154]

In autumn 1587, Marlowe wrote *Tamburlaine Part II*, which, like the play's first part, was first printed in 1590. It was titled *The Second Part of the Bloody Conquests of Mighty Tamburlaine*. The play was first performed by the Admiral's Men in London in 1587 'before Thursday 16 November'. The playwright's sources for the second part of *Tamburlaine* included Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso 29* (1516-32), Antoninus Bonfinius's *Rerum Ungaricum* (1543) (for the Sigismond episode), Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*

[154] Martin Wiggins, in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, 4 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012-2014), vol. 2: 1567-1589, pp. 375-79.

(unprinted until 1590) (4.1 and 4.3) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1567) (in 4.3). In these plays, Marlowe also refers to Homer's *Iliad*, *The Koran*, and Plato's *Timaeus*.[155] *Tamburlaine Parts I and II* was a 'theatrical success in London'. It epitomized Marlowe's 'thunderous drama of conquest and ambition', building on the 'exploits of the fourteenth-century Tartar warlord Timur-i-leng'.[156]

By establishing Persia as the platform for Tamburlaine's military adventures to conquer Asia, Marlowe dramatizes Persia as a kingdom where the Scythian shepherd's dreams come true. In other words, the playwright introduces Persia to English audiences as a land where the ordinary can pursue towering ambitions, and turn them into reality. The play was performed at least fifteen times during 1587-1595; such a notion of Persia was therefore frequently reinforced for English theatregoers in the late Elizabethan period. Marlowe's sources such as Pietro Perondino's *Magni Tamerlanis Scythiarum Imperatoris vita* indicate, as *Tamerlanis* in the title suggests, that the figure of Tamburlaine first and foremost, and, secondarily, Persia and its rulers engaged literary figures not only in England but in the whole of Europe. Persia would continue to remain a popular subject in later periods including Jacobean and Caroline England for political purposes as we will see this in plays such as *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day, George Wilkins, and William Rowley and John Denham's *The Sophy* (1642). Marlowe refers to Persia in his other works although not as extensively as in *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*. In *The Jew of Malta* (1633), Marlowe hints at the flourishing commercial exchanges between Persia and Europe by referring to '*Persian* ships' and '*Persian* silkes'.[157] In *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1594), Sergestus recognizes the face of a 'Persian borne', with whom he had 'traueld […] to

[155] *Ibid*., pp. 385-89.
[156] Charles Nicholl, 'Marlowe, Christopher (*bap*. 1564, *d*. 1593)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
[157] Christopher Marlowe, *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Iew of Malta* (London, 1633), sigs B1v-B2v.

Aetolia'.[158] Finally, Marlowe's mention of an (ancient) 'Persian shield' in *Hero and Leander* (1598) is historically accurate given that the play is set in the classical world.[159] Marlowe knew Hakluyt's '*Voyages* (though not its expanded edition), and could have met Hakluyt in Paris in 1585 or 1586'.[160] Given the breadth of Marlowe's reading, it is very likely that he was aware of travel narratives by Richard Hakluyt's forerunner, Richard Eden, who, like Hakluyt, also recounted Anthony Jenkinson's journey and those of other English figures to Safavid Persia.[161]

Tamburlaine dramatizes the story of a Scythian thief who ambushes travellers passing through Persia. Dreaming of ruling Asia, Tamburlaine confronts Theridamas, a Persian captain, who is sent by the king of Persia, Mycetes, to oppose the disorder caused by the Scythian. Tamburlaine encourages Theridamas to join his army promising him royal power and position. The Persian army disintegrates as a result of conspiracy and betrayal against the Persian king. Persia falls, and Cosroe, the king's brother, is crowned by Tamburlaine the Regent of Persia. In time, however, Cosroe is betrayed and killed by the Scythian, and Tamburlaine makes himself the Persian king. Meanwhile, Bajazeth, the Turkish king, is defeated, taken captive, and eventually commits suicide rather than face continuing humiliation by Tamburlaine. At the end of Part I, Egypt and Damascus fall to Tamburlaine, and Zenocrate, the Sultan of Egypt's daughter, is made Queen of Persia by Tamburlaine. While ruling Persia, Tamburlaine aims to expand his kingdom. In Part II, he opposes Callapine, Bajazeth's son and previously captive of Tamburlaine, and makes the Turk retreat. Zenocrate dies while Tamburlaine's army captures the cities of Balsera and Babylon. Tamburlaine burns the Qur'an and taunts the Prophet Mohammad for not avenging his

[158] Christopher Marlowe & Thomas Nash, *The Tragedie of Dido Queene of Carthage* (London, 1594), sig. D1r. For discussion of the authorship of *Dido*, see Martin Wiggins, 'When did Marlowe Write *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?', *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008): 521-41.
[159] Christopher Marlowe & George Chapman, *Hero and Leander* (London, 1598), sig. I4v.
[160] Park Honan, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet & Spy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 130.
[161] Vivien Thomas and William Tydeman (eds), *Christopher Marlowe: The Plays and their Sources* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 12.

destruction of Islamic scripture. Tamburlaine dies at the end of Part II, and his son, Amyras, succeeds to his father's throne in Persia.

In *Tamburlaine* Marlowe depicts contemporary Persians as secular figures in order to propose an alternative ally for Christendom and England in particular. In his invasion of Persia, while supported by Persian captains such as Theridamas, Tamburlaine ends the siege of Constantinople by defeating the Turkish Bajazeth. Effectively assisted by the Persian Theridamas, Tamburlaine intends to 'first subdue the Turke, and then inlarge / Those Christian captiues' whose bodies are 'Burdening […] with […] heauie chaines'.[162] Tamburlaine frees those Christian captives kept by the Ottomans as slaves. Marlowe attempts to highlight the Persian Theridamas's collaboration in ending the Christians' captivity. The playwright questions, at the same time, the credibility of the Christian oath when Sigismund fails to maintain a truce with the Turks against Tamburlaine's invasion. The Ottoman-Christian alliance breaks as the Christian reject the Turks as 'iufidels, / In whom no faith nor true religion rests' for they are slaughterers of 'Christian bloods'.[163] In what follows in the play, the now-turned Persian Tamburlaine overthrows the Muslim Turks who previously defeated the untrustworthy Christians. It is as though Tamburlaine's irreligion overthrows religious establishments while he rules as the Persian monarch. In other words, Marlowe portrays Tamburlaine's political triumph through a secular or anti-religious Persia. As a platform for Tamburlaine's triumphs, post-invasion Persia helps Tamburlaine establish his military and political strength, and to impose his will, religion, and irreligion. As a Persian king, Tamburlaine conquers half of the world, converts to Islam, and opposes religious authority by pointing his sword towards the heavens to invite Mohammad to cast his wrath onto the Scythian for his sins.

[162] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (London, 1590), sigs C6r-v.
[163] *Ibid*., sigs G3r-v.

Recent criticism has argued that in his work Christopher Marlowe represents complex interactions between religion and politics, and challenges 'many of the verities his audience took for granted about them'.[164] Paul Whitfield White goes so far as to describe *Tamburlaine Parts I and II* as tragedies which inaugurated 'secular theatre'.[165] Recent criticism has not, however, mentioned that Marlowe turns Persia into a secular empire in order to use the stage to oppose religious authority and power. While I endorse White's argument regarding Marlowe's dramatic secularism, I will extend his discussion by arguing that Marlowe's depiction of Persia as secular helps to make English audiences look more favourably upon the prospect of Persia as a potential eastern ally for England. In this section I argue that Marlowe's representations of Islamic Persia are influenced by travel narratives such as Richard Eden's and Hakluyt's. Tahmasb I's and Khodabanda's toleration of 'unbeleever[s]' is translated to a secular Persia in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, which presents a country where kings and people with complex characteristics co-exist and thrive while other kingdoms, including that of the Ottomans, and those ruled by Christian and Arab monarchs, perish during the course of the play. To this end, Marlowe portrays characters such as Tamburlaine and Theridamas with a rich set of competing motives, interests, and responses all of which are realized in the realm of Persia throughout the course of the plays.

The first step in supporting this argument is to show that the setting of the tragedy includes Islamic Persia and Persians. From a textual point of view, there is no evidence in the play that Marlowe associates Persians with Islamic orientations, but the constant conflict between Muslim Turks and Persia implicitly draws on the historical opposition between Sunni Ottomans and Shi'a Persians in the early modern period. While setting his tragedy in an Islamic middle east, Marlowe dramatizes Persia and Persians as not only without Islamic thought and doctrine, but also in opposition to Christianity and Islam. Theridamas, a Persian

[164] Paul Whitfield White, 'Marlowe and the Politics of Religion', in Patrick Cheney (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004), pp. 70-89 (p. 70).
[165] *Ibid*.

captain and then a high-ranking courtier in Tamburlaine's court, fights against Christians and Turks alongside Tamburlaine, and is a key figure in Tamburlaine's achievements. Theridamas expresses his secular views, at times defying and criticizing the Prophet Mohammad, while in the presence of Tamburlaine and other courtiers. I will return to Theridamas's statements in this regard shortly.

From the historical point of view, Timur-i-leng's invasion of Persia took place when Islamic thought and doctrine had already been introduced into Persia. Timur himself 'can scarcely be described as a particularly religious man', but he respected the 'conversation of dervishes and pious shaikhs throughout his life'. Timur's invasion of Isfahan in Persia did not involve bloodshed, at least in the beginning, for 'Muzaffar-i-Kashi', the governor of the city, 'surrendered the keys to him'. However, a 'rebellion against [Timur's] tax gatherers aroused Timur's wrath and resulted in the slaughter of population' in Isfahan. In Shiraz, the city 'easily fell prey to Timur's] troops' as 'Zain-al-Abidin fled from his capital […] intending to go to Baghdad'.[166] Historically, then, Timur invaded an Islamic Persia rather than Zoroastrian Persia of the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian empires. Also, in the beginning of *Tamburlaine the Great*, the Persians refer to their trading exchanges with the 'westerne Illes' which is probably Marlowe's most explicit dramatic reference to contemporary Anglo-Persian relationships.[167] Such a reference may also allude to the West Indies, but for the English theatregoers in 1590, the phrase was more likely to be understood as a reference to England's own trading relationship with Safavid Persia. Clearly, then Marlowe's

[166] Peter Jackson and Lawrence Lockhart (eds), *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), vol. 6, pp. 44, 60.
[167] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (London, 1593), sig. A3v. Although I cite here the 1593 quarto version of the play, I chiefly draw in this section upon the 1590 quarto text of *Tamburlaine*. I generally use the 1590 version because it is the first publication of Marlowe's tragedy in Elizabethan England, it is 'remarkably clean', and seems to 'derive from a carefully written manuscript, perhaps a fair copy transcript made by Marlowe himself'. Some scenes of the play, however, which are central to my argument, do not appear in the 1590 edition, and were 'apparently excised by the printer himself'. For these scenes I have drawn upon the 1593 quarto edition. See David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (eds), *Christopher Marlowe: Tamburlaine I and II, Doctor Faustus, A- and B-Texts, The Jew of Malta, and Edward II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. xxvi.

Tamburlaine the Great is set historically in Islamic Persia. I argue, however, that Safavid Persia and Persians are dramatized in Marlowe's tragedy as chiefly secular (i.e. areligious) but also, at times, opposed to religions and religious institutions of all kinds. This present section of the chapter therefore discusses the way in which Marlowe's tragedy represents Tamburlaine's transformation of Safavid Persia into both a dramatic and symbolic secular state.

Islamic Persia appears as a chaotic state at the beginning of *Tamburlaine Part I*. The Persian king, Mycetes, confesses that his brother, Cosroe, has 'a better wit than' him. Mycetes's lack of competence in ruling his kingdom has made Persia 'Unhappie', athough the country was, 'in former age[s]', the 'seat of mightie Conquerors' who 'in their prowesse and their pollicies, / Haue triumpht ouer *Affrike*, and the bounds / Of *Europe*, wher the Sun dares scarce appeare'. Cosroe plans to mount a coup against his brother with the help of other Persian courtiers such as Menaphon. Cosroe's plot is 'laid by Persean Noble men, / And Captaines of the Medean garrisons, / To crowne Cosroe] Emperour of *Asia*'. The coup plotters dream of expanding Persian territories, and oppose Christianity. Menaphon informs Cosroe that 'How easely may you with a mightie hoste, / Passe into *Graecia*, as did *Cyrus* once. / And cause them to withdraw their forces home, / Least you subdue the pride of Christendome'.[168]

Betrayed by his courtiers, and threatened by the Scythian, Mycetes orders Theridamas to march on Tamburlaine's troops. The Persian king describes his captain as:

> […] valiant Theridimas
> The chiefest Captaine of Mycetes hoste,
> The hope of *Persea*, and the verie legs
> Whereon our state doth leane, as on a staffe
> That holds us up, and foiles our neighbour foes.[169]

[168] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), sigs A3r, A5r.
[169] *Ibid*., sig. A4r.

When Tamburlaine encounters Theridamas for the first time in the play, the Scythian notices the Persian's nobility. Tamburlaine informs Techelles, one of his compatriots, that 'Noble and milde this Perseau seemes to be, / If outward habit iudge the inward man', and then addresses Theridamas: 'in thee (thou valiant man of Persea) / I see the folly of thy Emperour'. Realizing the value of the Persian, Tamburlaine proclaims, in hope of attracting Theridamas to his army:

> Art thou but Captaine of a thousand horse,
> That by Characters grauen in thy browes,
> And by thy martiall face and stout aspect,
> Deseru'st to haue the leading of an hoste:
> Forsake thy king and do but ioine with me
> And we will triumph ouer all the world.[170]

The lines above and previous passages show that Marlowe attempts to portray Mycetes, Cosroe, and Theridamas with diverse characteristics: incompetent but sincere, ambitious, valiant and noble. The incompetent Mycetes has succeeded the 'seat of mightie Conquerors', but seems powerless in the circle of his courtiers. His brother Cosroe stands as a passionate opportunist ready to claim his brother's crown and become the 'Emperour of *Asia*'. Theridamas, by contrast, appears as a trustworthy and chivalric figure who prepares to oppose the Scythian with only 'a thousand horse[s]' upon the king's order, despite being only too aware of Mycetes's lack of wisdom.

The playwright dramatizes Persia as a complex country, and characterizes Persians with various attributes: trustworthy, anti-religious, and collaborative. The Persian courtiers' view of the intruding Tamburlaine also varies. Mycetes calls the Scythian a 'theeuish villaine'; Cosroe describes him as a miraculous 'valiant' figure, and Theridamas is 'won' with the Scythian's 'words' and 'conquered' with his 'looks' before forsaking the Persian king, Mycetes.[171] The members of the Persian court, then, take various approaches towards

[170] *Ibid*., sig. B1r.
[171] *Ibid*., sigs B2r-v, B3v.

the invading outsider, Tamburlaine. Such multiple approaches towards the Scythian remind us of the twofold treatment of Anthony Jenkinson during his journey to Persia. While Tahmasb I rejected Jenkinson, Abdullah Khan was willing to allow him to trade in the dominions under his control. Jenkinson had to wear special shoes before he was allowed to meet Tahmasb for he was called amongst the Persians 'unbeleeuer, and uncleane'.[172] Jenkinson reported that the Persians regard 'all to be infidels and Pagans which do not beleeue as they do, in their false filthie prophets, Mahomet and Murtezalli'. [173] Marlowe's characterization of the Persians, in their secularity and anti-religiousness, reflects, and, indeed, shapes wider English perceptions of contemporary Persia and Persians. Like Hakluyt, Marlowe hints at various attributes the Persians project in dealing with changing political circumstances. The playwright portrays the Persians (and Theridamas in particular) as political strategists and collaborating allies.

Marlowe continues to emphasize the complexity of Persian character and identity throughout his tragedies. Islamic Persia's corrupt court disintegrates as a result of betrayal and a lack of wisdom. Marlowe emphasizes Mycetes's cowardice after he is defeated by Tamburlaine. The Persian's incompetence forces him to escape conflict, futilely cursing 'he that first inuented war' rather than patriotically defend his kingdom when 'thousands seeke to cleaue' it.[174] Marlowe depicts Mycetes as a fool who buries his crown in the ground in an attempt to save his monarchy. Marlowe, thereby, implicitly reflects on the ineffectiveness of a Muslim ruler. After overthrowing Mycetes, Tamburlaine hands the Persian crown to Mycetes's brother, Cosroe, and makes him the Regent of Persia. Cosroe dreams of returning his kingdom to its ancient glory, inspired by Persia's imperial past. He orders his courtiers to 'follow [him] to fayre Persepolis. / Then will we march to all those Indian Mines, / My

[172] Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1599-1600), p. 349.
[173] *Ibid*.
[174] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), sig. B6r.

witlesse brother to the Christians lost'.[175] Mycetes's brother invites his compatriots to oppose the Christians, and return to Persia its past 'wealth', lost to Christendom in the 'Indian Mines', referring, perhaps, to the mercantile activities of European nations in the East Indies.[176] Cosroe's ancient Persia does not appeal to Theridamas, however, and the Persian captain remains behind with Tamburlaine. Theridamas envisions a better Persia than Cosroe's under Tamburlaine's monarchy: a secular Persia dispossessed of Islamic thought or even ancient Persian doctrine. After Cosroe departs, Usumcasane, one of the Scythian campaigners, maintains to Theridamas that 'to be a king, is halfe to bee a God', and the Persian responds anti-religiously that:

> A God is not so glorious as a king:
> I thinke the pleasure they inioy in the heauen
> Cannot compare with kingly ioyes in earth,
> To weare a Crowne enchac'd with pearle and Golde,
> Whose uertues carrie with it life and death,
> To aske, and haue: commaund and be obeyed.
> When lookes breed loue, with looks to gaine the prize.
> Such power attractiue shines in princes eyes.[177]

Theridamas's remarks show that a capable king rules his dominions more gloriously than a God. Through these lines, he emphasizes Persian patriotism, and defends his loyalty to a competent king (i.e. Tamburlaine), who commands and is 'obeyed'. Theridamas prefers royal glory over Godly 'pleasure' and 'heauen[ly]' doctrine. Here, Marlowe depicts Theridamas as an anti-Muslim Persian, a character who questions the supreme position of God, and a secular figure who prefers the earthly 'ioyes' of a king. Theridamas appears effectively to rank God below a king, and announces that the latter is more worthy of obedience. Marlowe's portrayal

[175] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1593), sig. B6r.
[176] Three meanings 'accrue to early modern underground spaces: they are sources of wealth, they are venues for illicit meetings, and they are entrances to the underworld'. Here, 'Indian Mines' probably refers to the wealth of the East Indies. See Richard Fotheringham, Christa Jansohn, and R. S. White (eds), *Shakespeare's World / World Shakespeares: The Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association world Congress* (Cranbury: Rosemont, 2008), p. 91.
[177] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1593), sig. B6r.

of Theridamas as subversive of religion mirrors, perhaps, the playwright's own nonconformist tendencies and belief.

To summarize my discussion on the Persian court so far, it should be noted that in the first two Acts of *Tamburlaine the Great Part I*, Marlowe depicts the Persian kingdom as unstable. Supported by Theridamas and his patriotic aspirations, Tamburlaine aims to dethrone the second king of Persia. While opposing Islamic corruption and ancient Persian decadence, Theridamas endorses Tamburlaine in the name of royal nobility. It appears that, by the end of Act II, Marlowe deconstructs Persia, and establishes dramatic grounds for his secular state to be ruled by Tamburlaine.

Marlowe portrays the antireligious Persia as a kingdom which considers the Ottoman Empire as untrustworthy, and which rejects any alliance or truce with a Muslim state. Under Tamburlaine, Persia receives its first envoy, Basso, from the Turkish Bajazeth. The Turkish king dispatches Basso to Persia to announce that he is 'content to take a truce, / Because [he] heare[s] [Tamburlaine] beares a valiant mind'.[178] Later in the scene and in response to the king of Morocco, Bajazeth reveals his Islamic beliefs by which he rules the Ottomans. He maintains that, 'All this is true as holy Mahomet, / And all the trees are blasted with our breathes'. It appears that there had been a Persian-Ottoman military confrontation before Tamburlaine ascended the Persian throne, for the Turkish king seeks 'truce' with the new Persia under Tamburlaine. Moreover, Bajazeth's words contain Islamic terms such as 'holy Mahomet', which suggests that the Persian-Ottoman conflict before Tamburlaine's coronation was fought between an Islamic Persia under Mycetes and an Islamic Turkish kingdom ruled by Bajazeth. Here, therefore, Marlowe appears to highlight sectarian clashes between Shi'a Persians and Sunni Ottomans. In the earlier scenes he reveals a Persian-Christian confrontation over 'Indian Mines' which Mycetes lost, and Cosroe sought to retain.

[178] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), sig. C3r.

In other words, Marlowe dramatizes Islamic and ancient Persia as equally dangerous to the Christian world. However, both types of Persia, Islamic and ancient, are overthrown by the Scythian and his closest Persian ally, Theridamas.

Secular Persia in *Tamburlaine* sees the Ottomans as a threat to its security, and therefore, Persian-Ottoman conflicts continue while Tamburlaine rules Persia until the end of the tragedy. In contrast with the policies of its previous rulers, Tamburlaine's and Theridamas's Persia befriends Christendom while opposing the Turks. Tamburlaine rejects the truce offered by the Turk as he believes that the Ottomans are 'ful of brags' and 'to weake, / T'incounter with the strength of Tamburlaine'. Supported by Theridamas, the Persian Tamburlaine intends to 'first subdue the Turke, and then inlarge / Those Christian captiues which [Bajazeth] keep[s] as slaues', for the Turk is:

> Burdening their bodies with […] heauie chaines,
> And feeding them with thin and slender fare,
> That naked rowe about the Terrene Sea.
> And when they chance to breath and rest a space,
> Are punnisht with Bastones so grieuously,
> That they lie panting on the Gallies side.
> And striue for life at euery stroke they giue.[179]

In these lines, Marlowe portrays the exploitation of the Christian captives in the Ottoman's galleys. The style of Marlowe's language possesses a rhythm which is embodied in the playwright's use of blank verse, and which creates a 'pattern agreeable to the ear and gratifying to the mind'.[180] In the passage above, this rhythm appears to produce an emphasis on Marlowe's depiction of the Christian captives' desperation as slaves who crave freedom, food, and assistance. In other words, the emphasis derives from Marlowe's rhythmic pattern and diction, aiming to influence the audience through sound as well as scene. In effect, Marlowe invites the audience to sympathize with the Christian slaves, and, perhaps, to praise and celebrate the dramatic personae who respond to such sympathy. Tamburlaine and

[179] *Ibid*., sigs C5v, C6r-v.
[180] Russ McDonald, 'Marlowe and Style', in Patrick Cheney (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 55-69 (p. 63).

Theridamas fulfil the audience's anticipation by granting the captives freedom and support, demonstrating the effectiveness of Christian-Persian alliance. Marlowe depicts Tamburlaine's strong antipathy to the Muslims, and shows that Tamburlaine appears to seek potential political benefits through stronger ties with Christendom. Tamburlaine and Theridamas offer freedom to those Christian captives by putting an end to the siege of Constantinople where the Christians are under Bajazeth's military pressure. Here, Marlowe attempts to depict an improvement in Christian-Persian political relations under Tamburlaine, the new king of Persia. Marlowe's dramatic portrayal of an amelioration in such relations proposes, whether intentionally or not, an alternative eastern ally for England; that is, contemporary Persia.

At the same time, Marlowe highlights the Persian-Ottoman conflict throughout his tragedies. He emphasizes such a contrast in various ways. In a scene in which the first Persian-Ottoman war breaks out, Zenocrate, Tamburlaine's princess and subsequently the queen of Persia, remarks: 'Ye Gods and powers that gouerne Persea. / And made my lordly Loue her worthy King: / Now strengthen him against the Turkish *Baiazeth*'.[181] Zabina, Bajazeth's wife, by contrast, draws on her Islamic beliefs, immediately after Zenocrate's statement. Zabina asserts: 'Now *Mahomet*, solicit God himselfe, / And make him raine down murthering shot fro[m] heauen / To dash the Scythians braines, and strike them dead'. Not long after Zabina's appeal to '*Mahomet*', Bajazeth confesses that the Turks 'haue lost the field', and states: 'Now will the Christian miscreants be glad, / Ringing with ioy their superstitious belles'.[182] Zenocrate's pagan prayer to 'Gods and powers' appears effectively to overcome Zabina's Islamic invocation. In such a way, Marlowe attempts to undermine Islamic belief and doctrine, and, at the same time, highlight the fruitlessness of Islamic ritual and religious practice. After defeating the Turks, Tamburlaine imprisons the Turkish king and queen in a cage as his footstool. He drags them about wherever he dwells, and symbolically

[181] *Ibid*., sig. C8v.
[182] *Ibid*., sig. C8v, D1v.

humiliates the Islamic thought represented by those in the cage. It appears that Marlowe emphasizes the Persian-Ottoman confrontation in order to highlight the non-Islamic Persian victory over Islamic arms, culture and doctrine. It is certain that English theatregoers would have welcomed a triumph over the Ottoman Turks, albeit one depicted on stage, as the Ottomans were widely regarded as the biggest threat known to Europe.[183] Marlowe's dramatic representation of Persia not only introduces Persia as a powerful rival for the Ottomans but also as a country which possesses anti-Islamic attributes. Later in the play, Marlowe will arouse the audiences' interest in Persia's anti-Islamism more fully through his characterization of Theridamas, the Persian captain, as a secular figure.

Theridamas clearly attempts to convince the Turks that their religious doctrine is false and useless. In the final scene of *Tamburlaine Part I*, Act IV, Theridamas, at a banquet, ironically addresses Bajazeth and Zabina in the cage. Theridamas asks Bajazeth: 'Doost thou think that *Mahomet* will suffer this'? Techelles, another Persian courtier, responds: 'Tis like he wil, when he cannot let it'.[184] Marlowe's first purpose in this scene is to portray Theridamas as a figure who has gained a higher position in Tamburlaine's court than his previous place as a military captain. He appears to have become a member in Tamburlaine's high council, the closest royal circle around the Persian king. We see that Theridamas has a say over Bajazeth's and his wife's fate, that is, a Persian decides whether the Turks should live or die. The way that Marlowe depicts Theridamas in this scene is characteristic of the playwright's attempts to contrast the superior nobility of a Persian courtier with the humiliation of the captive Turkish king. In other words, the playwright's intention in this scene is to show how easily the Turkish could be brought low, how impotent his religion is to help him, and to distinguish the superior Persian from the inferior Turk; Marlowe frequently emphasizes Theridamas's increased royal power throughout the rest of the play. The

[183] The Ottoman military threat to Europe is evident in Francois De La Novve, *The Politicke and Militarie Discovrses of the Lord De La Novve* (London, 1587), p. 249.
[184] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), sig. D7v.

playwright's second purpose in this scene is to depict Theridamas as a Persian anti-Islamic figure who mocks the Turk's Islamic doctrine after boastfully displaying his power as a Persian in Tamburlaine's court. There exists a particular message, likely to appeal to English theatregoers in 1590, in Marlowe's depiction of Theridamas as a powerful and, at the same time, anti-Islamic Persian figure. That is, if England seeks to defeat the Ottoman Turks and subdue their religious influence, or at the very least to resist and withstand it, Persia stands in the east as England's potential ally to help achieve this goal.

In *Tamburlaine Parts I and II* Marlowe's anti-religious thought is translated through anti-Ottoman and, to a lesser extent, anti-Christian scenes. The playwright's secular doctrine becomes more evident in *Tamburlaine the Great Part II* when Marlowe rejects Christian-Ottoman ties by showing that such a treaty is doomed to failure. In the first scene of Act I, Orcanes, the king of Natolia, and Sigismund, representative of western Christendom, attempt to make a league against the Persian Tamburlaine. Upon Orcanes' request to confirm his alliance with an 'oath', Sigismund swears that:

> By him that made the world and sau'd my soule
> The sonne of God and issue of a Mayd,
> Sweet Jesus Christ, I sollemnly protest,
> And vow to keepe this peace inuiolable,

to which Orcanes responds by stating that:

> By sacred Mahomet, the friend of God,
> Whose holy Alcaron remaines with vs,
> Whose glorious body when he left the world,
> Closde in a coffyn mounted vp the aire,
> And hung on stately Mecas Temple roofe,
> I sweare to keepe this truce inuiolable.[185]

Marlowe shows, in later scenes, that Sigismund's and Orcanes' religious vows of alliance are hopelessly ineffective. The Christians break the alliance first, as they believe the Turks are 'infidels, / In whom no faith nor true religion rests', and that the Turks are the cause of 'cruell

[185] *Ibid.*, sig. F5v.

slaughter of […] Christian bloods'. The Turk's oath, Sigismund maintains, 'Breed litle strength to our securitie', whereas the Christians' 'faiths are sound, and must be consumate'. At the same time, the Turks condemn the Christians for breaching the Islamic-Christian league. The Turks declare that there exists 'deceit in Christians', and that they care 'so litle for their prophet, Christ'. Nonetheless, Orcanes believes that Christ 'shall [still] be honoured' for 'Not dooing Mahomet an iniurie', and not denying Muslims their 'victory' over Sigismund's forces.[186] Orcanes still honours Christ in his thoughts, though, and in doing so, he means no disrespect to Mahomet as it is Mahomet's power that had share in this victory.

Marlowe highlights two important notions by emphasizing the failure of a Christian-Ottoman alliance established through Islamic and Christian vows and doctrines. The playwright attempts, first, to depict dramatically through such a failure the hollowness of religious thought and influence. He shows that religious oaths do not guarantee maintenance of mutual political interests, in this case the joint opposition to the Persian Tamburlaine, intended by the Christian Sigismund and Turkish Orcanes. Marlowe's second purpose in emphasizing the failure of the Christian-Ottoman treaty is a contemporary political one, to criticize England's foreign policy. By drawing an implicit parallel between the doomed Christian-Ottoman alliance in *Tamburlaine,* with contemporary Anglo-Ottoman relations in the real world of 1590s geo-politics, Marlowe's plays foresaw, and even helped in an indirect way to bring about, an end to the Anglo-Ottoman alliance which had been 'established between Elizabeth I and Murad III in 1580'.[187] Just over a decade after Marlowe's tragedy was written, James VI and I ascended the English throne, and embarked on attempts to establish an Anglo-Persian alliance, while, at the same time, withdrawing from commercial and political exchanges with the Ottoman Turks.

[186] *Ibid*., sigs G3r-v, G4r, G5r, G6r.
[187] Matthew Dimmock, *New Turks: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 52.

Theridamas's anti-Islamism, however, is just one aspect of his characterization by Marlowe. Other features of his complex behaviour are also important in Marlowe's creation and deployment of a secular Persia for larger, extra-theatrical purposes. In *Tamburlaine Part II*, Theridamas becomes chief advisor in Tamburlaine's court, characterized by his initiative and pragmatic, problem-solving abilities. He is the first character to invite Tamburlaine to face reality after the death of his Persian queen, Zenocrate. In Act II, Scene II, Tamburlaine's beloved dies, and Marlowe casts Theridamas as Tamburlaine's only sympathizer. Theridamas asserts:

> Ah good my Lord be patient, she is dead,
> And all this raging cannot make her liue,
> If woords might serue, our voice hath rent the aire,
> If teares, our eies haue watered all the earth:
> If griefe, our murthered harts haue straind forth blood
> Nothing preuailes, for she is dead my Lord.[188]

Here, the playwright shows how Theridamas uses rhetorical language in order to soothe Tamburlaine. Theridamas's words are eloquently diligent, and contain a slightly imperative tone, hinting at the Persian's self-confidence in dealing with sensitive events such as the unexpected death of Tamburlaine's Persian queen, Zenocrate. Theridamas's minimal use of period creates a line integrity, a 'rhythmical norm' in *Tamburlaine* tragedies, which allows the Persian to draw attention to and emphasize his sense of commitment to loyalty and royal welfare.[189] He empowers his sympathy for Tamburlaine's loss through using hyperbole in an attempt to highlight the vanity of Tamburlaine's grief. In other words, in maintaining the Persian king's magnificence, Theridamas invites his Lord to accept the death of the queen. Through language, therefore, Marlowe depicts the Persian as a multi-faceted character throughout the play.

[188] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), sig. G8r.
[189] Peter Gibbard, 'Breaking up the Line: The Sententious Style in Elizabethan Blank Verse', *Modern Philology*, 112 (2014): 312-35.

In Act III, Scene I, Marlowe portrays the Persian's strategy and logic in war. Upon Techelles's order to the soldiers to declare war on the captain of Balsera, Theridamas maintains: 'But stay a while, summon a parle, Drum, / It may be they will yeeld it quietly', demonstrating his restraint and moderation. But when the captain of Balsera refuses to surrender, Theridamas unleashes his prowess as a military leader, swiftly issuing orders:

> Pioners[190] away, and where I stuck the stake,
> Intrench with those dimensions I prescribed:
> Cast up the earth towards the castle wall,
> Which til it may defend you, labour low:
> And few or none shall perish by their shot.[191]

The playwright highlights here Theridamas's attempts to reduce war casualties to zero, portraying the Persian as humane and quite different in nature from Tamburlaine, who is only too willing to commit savage butchery. But Marlowe also shows, after the fall of Balsera, that the chivalric Persian Theridamas's loyalty to Tamburlaine eclipses, and is opposed to, religious adherence or orthodoxy. Theridamas, for example, encourages Olympia, the wife of the captain of Balsera, to 'goe' with him 'to Tamburlaine, / [for he is] a man greater [than] Mahomet'.[192] Or when Tamburlaine decides to kill his son, Calyphas, for his lack of competence and obedience to his father, Theridamas appears as the first figure who asks for Tamburlaine's pardon for his son by stating that 'Yet pardon him I pray your Maiesty'.[193] Theridamas's loyalty wins him the respect and ear of Tamburlaine, but the Persian's influence only reached so far. Tamburlaine eventually stabs Calyphas to show the 'state of his supremacie'.[194] This is the only moment in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* that Theridamas holds no influence with his Lord.

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[190] *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'Pioner' as a 'member of an infantry group going with or ahead of an army or regiment to dig trenches, repair roads, and clear terrain in readiness for the main body of troops'.
[191] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), sigs H5r-v.
[192] *Ibid.*, sig. H6v.
[193] *Ibid.*, sig. I4r.
[194] *Ibid.*, sig. I4v.

The passages above confirm Theridamas's complex character and the special place he holds in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. The Persian embodies diverse characteristics, from an intelligent military strategist to a chivalric empathizer. Because of such attributes, attuned to and adept at political accommodation, Persia and Persians stand out in *Tamburlaine* in a dramatized middle east predominantly occupied, in English theatregoers' eyes, by the Ottoman Turks. Marlowe's portrayal of the Turks in his tragedies is almost constantly negative and one-dimensional. Marlowe depicts the Turks as a symbol of Islamic prejudice, who frequently engage in brutal war with Christendom. Secular Persia and Persians, by contrast, are characterized as far more collaborative, presenting Persia as a country that, potentially, would be more likely to engage with Europe and England despite obvious religious differences. The success of *Tamburlaine* at the box office is legendary, and interestingly, the demagogic character of Tamburlaine himself 'evoked a positive response in the contemporary audience, which [was] not limited to ignorant groundlings but extended to literate Gentlemen'. Various of Marlowe's fellow playwrights attempted to win 'the same kind of [positive] response' for other seemingly unpopular protagonists, such as King John.[195] As a dynamic figure in the plays, and as a Persian and Tamburlaine's closest comrade, Theridamas also attracted a large part of audiences' approval. Inevitably, given the vast popularity of *Tamburlaine*, England's foreign policy had to respond and adjust to the English stage in order to meet, to some extent, the expectations of the public raised by Marlowe's dramatic portrayal of Persia. In other words, Elizabethan England had to think of, and devise an approach to, Safavid Persia that was quite different to the way in which it perceived and engaged with the Ottoman Turks. Through its dramatic language and art, therefore, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*, in greater and lesser ways, played its part in

[195] See Richard Levin, 'The Contemporary Perception of Marlowe's Tamburlaine', in Robert A. Logan (ed.), *The Univeristy Wits: Christopher Marlowe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 223-42 (p. 226).

shaping not only cultural perceptions of Islamic Persia, but also of informing and influencing England's foreign policy towards the Safavid empire.

Marlowe's final attempt in *Tamburlaine* to engender a positive perception of contemporary Persia as a potential ally for England is evident in the scene where Tamburlaine burns the Qur'an. After the fall of Babylon, Tamburlaine orders that 'the Turkish Alcaron, / And all the heapes of supersticious books, / Found in the Temples of that Mahomet' be piled in one place and 'burnt'.[196] In his speech after this famous scene, Tamburlaine proclaims that 'In vaine I see men worship Mahomet, / My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell', yet Tamburlaine finds himself still alive, 'untoucht by Mahomet'. Tamburlaine, then, invites the Muslim prophet to appear and save the Qur'an from burning: 'Come downe […] and worke a myracle' for 'flames of fire […] burne the writ / Wherein religion rests'.[197] Immediately after his powerful anti-Islamic act and blasphemous speech, Tamburlaine orders his compatriots to 'depart to Persea / To triumph after all [their] victories'. First to echo and obey is the Persian Theridamas: 'I, good my Lord, let us in hast to Persea'.[198] Tamburlaine's decision to return to Persia, after the Qur'an-burning scene, underscores the importance of Persia as the place where Tamburlaine launched his campaign against 'supersticious books' and 'Temples of […] Mahomet'. Persia, in Marlowe's telling of the Tamburlaine story, is the platform and redoubt from which Tamburlaine is able to venture forth to defeat the Turks and condemn the vanity of Mohammad's 'myracle[s]' and 'religion'. For English audiences in the early 1590s, Marlowe thereby creates a picture of a secular Persia that is the enemy of their enemy, the Islamic Ottoman Empire of the Turks.

This section attempted to cast light on representations of contemporary Safavid Persia and Persians in Christopher Marlowe's canonical plays, *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*. It explored the tragedies in order to show that Persia and Persians are variously portrayed in

[196] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), sig. K5r.
[197] *Ibid*.
[198] *Ibid*., sig. K5v.

the plays as largely free of religious prejudice and bias, and receptive to engagement with Christendom, in stark contrast to the ideological rigidity and hostility of the Islamic Ottoman Turks. I proposed that Marlowe's purpose in depicting Persia and Persians as such had political reasons and consequences; that is, the playwright attempts to attack existing Anglo-Ottoman ties from an anti-religious, and in this case, anti-Islamic viewpoint. Whether or not *Tamburlaine*'s implied criticism of the Anglo-Ottoman alliance, established in 1580, is consistent with Marlowe's willingness to challenge existing religious, political and social orthodoxies in his other writings (e.g. *Dr Faustus*, *Edward II, The Massacre at Paris*) and in his personal life is a moot point. What is clear, however, is that Marlowe's representations of Islamic Persia and Persians, as religiously and politically accommodating to Christianity, yet opposed to the Sunni Islam of the Ottoman Turks, do seem to have been influenced by travel narratives such as Richard Eden's and Richard Hakluyt's. Indeed, I would argue that Hakluyt's rendering of Anthony Jenkinson's account of the Safavid kings' toleration of Frank 'unbeleever[s]', including Jenkinson himself, contributed in a significant way to Marlowe's dramatic construction and portrayal of a secular Persia and Persians. In Marlowe's plays, the many-sided Persian attitude to foreign powers, envoys, merchants and religions is translated into the equally multi-faceted portrayal of important Persian figures such as Theridamas, who are favourably contrasted with the stiffly ideological, one-dimensional Islamic Ottoman Turks portrayed by Marlowe. *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* ushered in a new era of representing Persia and Persians on the English stage, and in so doing helped to shape the dramatic presence of Persia not only in the Elizabethan English theatre, but also in the succeeding Jacobean and Caroline eras. Bearing this in mind, the second section of this chapter focuses on a late Elizabethan play which is significantly influenced by Marlowe's portrayal of Persia and Persians in *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*.

2.2 Thomas Heywood's *The Foure Prentises of London*: The Secular Sophy and Persian Romance

This section is relatively short compared to the previous discussion on Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*. This is partly because this section explores Thomas Heywood's *The Foure Prentises of London* in light of the discussion in the first section of this chapter on Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. As suggested in the title, there exists a secular Sophy in Heywood's play which appears to be prompted by areligious Persia and Persians characterized by Marlowe in his tragedies.[199] The second reason for examining Thomas Heywood's *The Foure Prentises of London* is that it is a transitional play between Elizabethan and Jacobean England, and involves Islamic Persian figures. By transitional I mean that the play was written and performed in the late Elizabethan period, and was then published in Jacobean England. I will return to the significance of the play's transitional aspect more fully in this section.

The Foure Prentises of London was one of the plays from a 'series of adventure-romances' which was written by Thomas Heywood in 1594-1600, was probably first performed in the 1590s, and published in 1615.[200] Critics have different suggestions regarding the performance date of the play. While some argue that the play is the same as '*Godfrey of Bulloigne* [d. 1100], which was performed as new on July 19, 1594', others speculate that 'it may be identical with *Jerusalem*, acted for Henslowe on March 22, 1592'.[201] If the latter date, 1592, is true, it means that Heywood would have been writing the text before then, that is in the early 1590s, and almost certainly influenced in doing so by Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*, and its representations of

[199] By 'secular' I mean 'not concerned with or devoted to the service of religion'. See the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of 'secular', n. 2.c. In Heywood's *The Foure Prentises of London* Persia and Persians stand as secular or areligious with regards to the Sunni interpretation of Islam represented by the Ottoman Turks.
[200] David Kathman, 'Heywood, Thomas (*c.* 1573-1641)', *ODNB*. For the publication date of Heywood's play, see the title-page of Thomas Heywood, *The Foure Prentises of London* (London, 1615).
[201] See Charles A. Rouse, 'Was Heywood a Servant of the Earl of Southampton', *MLA*, 45 (1930): 787-90, and Linda McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 12 (1999): 236-67.

Islamic Persia and Persians. Heywood's play achieved at least some popularity, as evidence shows that it was still 'being performed in 1607', and that 'like *Tamburlaine*, became almost emblematic of Red Bull fare'.[202] The publication of the play some eight years later, in the wake of the publication of *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607), helped to shape further English perceptions of Islamic Persia and Persians, and favourably to dispose the English public to the establishment of an Anglo-Persian alliance in Jacobean England.

The Foure Prentises of London tells the story of four brothers who live in London, and decide to embark on a journey to Jerusalem. Robert, the Duke of Normandy, leads a crusade against eastern Muslims who rule the holy land. The brothers are separated en route as a result of a shipwreck, and they land on the coast of different parts of Christendom, each believing that his brothers are dead: Godfrey lands in Spain, Guy in France, Charles in Italy, and Eustace in Ireland. In disguise, the brothers' sister, Bella Franca, re-joins them in their final destination, Jerusalem. Without recognizing each other, the brothers fall in love with their sister, and, to win her feelings, draw swords on one another. Bella Franca often urges the brothers to avoid such quarrels. At the end of Heywood's adventure-romance, Bella Franca becomes the mistress of Tancred, the prince of Italy. The brothers' reunion at the end results in victory over the Muslims, albeit after suffering minor defeats during the course of their wars. They enter battle and defeat the allied forces of the Sultan of Babylon and the Sophy of Persia. The repossession of Jerusalem by the Christian forces puts Robert, the Duke of Normandy, in a position to select a monarch for the conquered holy land. Both Tancred and Godfrey refuse the crown. The other three brothers, though, each accept the kingdoms allocated to them. Guy is crowned the king of Jerusalem, Charles becomes the monarch of Cyprus, and Eustace is appointed the ruler of Sicily.

[202] Laurence Publicover, 'Strangers at Home: The Sherley Brothers and Dramatic Romance', *Renaissance Studies*, 24 (2010): 694-709 (pp. 704-5). See also Eva Griffith, *A Jacobean Company and its Playhouse: The Queen's Servants at the Red Bull Theatre (c. 1605-1619)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 1-28, 71-107.

In one of the scenes in Heywood's play, the Persian Sophy rages against the Sultan of Babylon, the Sophy's ally in confronting the Christian invasion of Jerusalem, and proclaims that, 'Should *Soldan, Sophy*, Priest, or Presbyter, / Or Gods, or deuils, or men, gaine-say our will: / Him, them, or thee, would the braue Persian Kill'.[203] Earlier, the peace-seeking Sultan of Babylon had opposed the Persian by saying, 'Should Ioue himselfe in Thunder answere I / When we say no; wee'd pull him from the skie'.[204] The disagreement between the Persian and Sultan shown here is only one among many throughout Heywood's play. Although they are allied in a campaign against the invasion of Christendom, the Sophy and Sultan are constantly contrasted by the playwright in various scenes. Heywood casts the Sophy as a secular and nonconformist figure who opposes the Ottoman Turk's strategies and military interpretation in confronting the enemy. In his doctoral thesis, *From Cyrus to Abbas: Staging Persia in Early Modern England* (2011), Hafiz Abid Masood, proposes three trajectories concerning the perceptions of Persia in Elizabethan England, considering the early 1590s as the performance date of Heywood's play; the first perception regards the Persians as Anti-Ottoman and unimaginable without the Ottoman Turks; the second involves ancient Persia; and the third views Persia as conflated with the Ottoman Turks. This third perception of Persia derives, Masood argues, from the representations of Persia in the chronicles of the first crusades, which present Persia as an Islamic state and thus anti-Christian. Heywood's play, Masood maintains, exemplifies this later perception of Persia as conflated with the Ottomans: 'all difference between them is collapsed'.[205] It is worth noting that there exists no mention of the Ottoman Turks in Heywood's play, but the term 'Sultan', in the Sultan of Babylon invites the audiences to think of the Turkish monarch. In contrast with Masood, I argue that *The*

[203] Heywood, *The Foure Prentises of London* (1615), sig. F2v.
[204] *Ibid*.
[205] Hafiz Abid Masood, *From Cyrus to Abbas: Staging Persia in Early Modern England* (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, 2011), p. 140.

Foure Prentises of London is an attempt to differentiate Safavid Persians and the Ottoman Turks.

In a narrative titled *The History of the Warres betweene the Tvrks and the Persians* (1595), which is written, in Italian, by 'Iohn-Thomas Minadoi' and translated into English by Abraham Hartwell, the writer explores various aspects about Persia. In his words, the narrative contains a 'description of […] matters' such as 'Religion', 'Gouernement', and 'the Countries of the kingdome of the Persians'.[206] It addresses the military conflicts between Safavid Persians and Ottoman Turks starting from the reign of '*Ismahel* the king', the founder of the Safavid dynasty, who 'vseth great cruelties','publisheth a new Religion', and declares war on the Ottoman Turks. After the 'Consultations at *Constantinople*', the Turks send troops to confront the Persian king. The Persians, 'At the first', 'happely ouercome the *Turkes*, but afterwards [are] discomfited', and defeated while '*Manucchiar* the Georgian yeeldeth himselfe to *Mustaffa*, [the Turkish commander], and is interteined by him'.[207] The translation consists of eight other books which all draw on the Persian-Ottoman conflicts in the early modern period. This massive publication in the 1590s shows that English politicians would have been aware of this history of Persian-Ottoman conflicts in 'an age when the reading of history was second only to that of Holy Scripture'.[208] Additionally, it hints at the fact that Persian-Ottoman conflicts would have potentially influenced the future of Christendom given that the Ottoman military threat to Europe had been highlighted earlier in the Elizabethan period.[209] Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the writer allocates nine books in order to draw on battles between the Persians and Ottomans for the latter had been, for so long, an anti-Christian entity in the Europeans' mind. For Christendom, including the

[206] See the title-page of Iohn-Thomas Minadoi, *The History of the Warres betweene the Tvrks and the Persians* (London, 1595).
[207] See the argument in the first book in Minadoi, *The History of the Warres* (1595), sig. B2v.
[208] Joseph Courtland, *A Cultural Studies Approach to Two Exotic Citizen Romances by Thomas Heywood* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 57.
[209] La Novve, *The Politicke and Militarie Discovrses of the Lord De La Novve* (1587), p. 249.

English, it was, indeed, a relief to see an eastern rival rising in the east against the Ottoman Turks. Hence the contrast between the Persians and the Turks had to be emphasized, as it is in Minadoi's narrative. It appears that the 1590s was a decade when historical narratives such as Minadoi's, as well as dramatic works such as Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II*, were attempting to differentiate contemporary Persia from the Ottoman Turks. This cultural process of differentiation, then, seems at odds with what Masood sees as the *conflation* of Ottoman and Persian identity in the decade in which Heywood's *The Foure Prentises of London* was first written and performed.

While I acknowledge the anti-Christian image of the Persians in Heywood's play, I cannot entirely endorse Masood's idea that characterizing the Sophy in one campaign with the Sultan of Babylon is meant by the playwright to conflate the Turks and Persians. In Heywood's play Persians are portrayed as braver as well as more chivalric and courageous compared to their other Muslim campaigners: the Persian Sophy seeks a 'conquest worthy the braue *Persian* swords'.[210] Historically, Safavid Sophies were enemies to the Ottoman Sultans, and Heywood must have been aware of the long history of Persian-Ottoman conflict. Indeed, following Marlowe's lead, Heywood highlights the contrast between the Sophy and Sultan in his play, with the effect of making the Persian character more attractive to English audiences, and, by extension, the larger idea of a potential alliance between England and Persia. Islamic Persia is represented by Heywood as secular through a Sophy who rejects religious attachments and conditions as the Persian threatens to kill '*Soldan*', 'Priest', 'Presbyter', 'Gods', 'deuils', or 'men' if they are against the Sophy's will.[211] The playwright's emphasis on the Sophy's freedom from religious affiliation helps to explain the publication of Heywood's play in 1615, which would have reinforced, or supported, the establishment and maintenance of England's strategic alliance with the Sophy of Persia, the enemy of the Turks.

[210] Heywood, *The Foure Prentises of London* (1615), sig. F2v.
[211] *Ibid*.

In other words, the late publication of *The Foure Prentises of London* helped to create the conditions for support for Jacobean policy towards Persia. The publication of the play in 1615 could have also been a response to a 'dramatic increase in the ability to read and write among England's merchants and small master craftsmen'.[212] It is argued that:

> In London alone such craftsman literacy had reached 82% by the mid-1590s, while in the suburbs the literacy rate rose from 31% in the 1580s to an impressive 69% by 1600-1610, [and that] with the new readership came a demand for some type of pleasurable reading material [including] chivalric romances [which] filled the bill and became the secular reading matter of choice.[213]

This survey shows that the publication of *The Foure Prentises of London* was a response to the readers' high demand for reading such texts throughout England. Publishing the play at the time would have also been financially beneficial to its printer. By 1603 when James VI and I was crowned the Ottoman Turks were no longer in league with England. Marlowe's and Heywood's dramatic secular Persia had introduced a different interpretation of Muslim Persians to Elizabethan and Jacobean England, leading to the establishment of an Anglo-Persian alliance in the Jacobean period.

Before the beginning of the play, Heywood addresses his readers, and informs them that his play could not have 'found a more seasonable and fit publication then at this Time, when to the glory of our Nation, the security of the Kingdome, and the honour of the City, they haue begunne againe the commendable practice of long forgotten Armes' which the brothers have dramatically 'resumed' and 'practice[d] once again in the Artillery Garden'.[214] The writer appreciates the dramatic commemorations of English soldiers through the publication of his play. He reminds us that the English owe their honour, security, and glory to people like the four brothers in the play. He also mentions that it is a 'seasonable and fit' time for the publication of this text. This is the period, as I have pointed out earlier, in which

[212] Courtland, *A Cultural Studies Approach to Two Exotic Citizen Romances*, p. 55.
[213] *Ibid*.
[214] Heywood, *The Foure Prentises of London* (1615), sig. A2v. See also David M. Bergeron, *Textual Patronage in English Drama, 1570-1640* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 169.

the Anglo-Ottoman alliance had ceased to exist. I would argue that Heywood sees 1615 as 'seasonable' in light of Jacobean England's new approach towards the Islamic east and Persia in particular. We know that before this 'seasonable' period, 'English attitudes towards the Orient and Orientals' were also shaped by Elizabethan foreign policy'.[215] Rome and the Catholic powers such as Spain were viewed as enemies by Elizabeth's government, and, because of the Catholic threat, Elizabethan England 'pursued a policy of national self-interest, actively seeking trade and military alliances with Islamic states', a policy that appeared to have changed the 'official [English] perception of the Orient and Orientals' to some extent.[216] Nonetheless, fear, loathing, and mistrust towards Muslim states formed a significant part of the Elizabethans' view of Islam itself.[217] However, the English policy of rapprochement with the Islamic east, for military and commercial purposes, continued in the Jacobean period with some changes: Islamic Persia replaced the Ottomans as the principal political ally in the east. The fear of Islam was, however, still present in English minds in the Jacobean period. For this reason, Heywood's *The Foure Prentises of London* avoids all reference to Persia's Islamic culture and religion, and portrays instead a Persia that is predominantly secular, in order to present the country in a favourable light to English audiences.

Heywood emphasizes the chivalric and non-Islamic characteristics of the Sophy of Persia from two main standpoints: from the point of view of the Christian invaders and from that of the Ottoman Turks. Both constituencies see the Sophy as the monarch of a fiercely independent people, who 'scornes to be colleague, / Or to haue part with them of Christendome', and as a proud military leader who invites a 'conquest worthy the braue *Persian* swords'.[218] As was customary in the period, the Christian figures in the play also associate the Persian monarch with untold riches; when Eustace recognizes his sister, Bella

[215] Courtland, *A Cultural Studies Approach to Two Exotic Citizen Romances*, p. 62.
[216] *Ibid*.
[217] *Ibid*., p. 67.
[218] Heywood, *The Foure Prentises of London* (1615), sig. F2v.

Franca, for the first time, he cries: 'Make me immortall then, by heauen I vow, / I am richer then the *Persian Sophy* now'.[219] This classical picture of Persia and Persian is completed by Heywood's presentation of the Sophy's religion. At the outset of the second confrontation with Christendom, the Sophy calls upon 'ye *Persian* powers', to 'Assist our courage, [and] make the conquest ours'.[220] Through this invocation of unspecified deities ('*Persian* powers'), Heywood depicts the Sophy as anything but Muslim. Defeating the Persian Sophy, amongst other members of the opposition, stands out as an honour for the English since in a conversation between Godfrey and Guy, the brothers emphasize the importance of their victory over the Persian. Godfrey asks his brother 'What puissant arme snatcht hence the Sophies Standard?', to which Guy responds, 'This Crowne vpon my head, sayes it was I'.[221] Even though Heywood stages the defeat of the Persians by the English, the Persian are nonetheless portrayed as courageous and heroic in defeat.

Warlike courage, though, is the defining feature of Heywood's portrayal of the Sophy and Persians in *The Foure Prentises*. The Sultan of Babylon, for instance, calls upon the 'Braue *Persians*'; and other figures in the anti-Christian camp, 'applaud the *Persians* youthfull rage' against the Christian enemy.[222] Moretes, the Sultan of Babylon's representative, remarks that, in the Sophy's eyes, war was a 'sight best pleasing to the *Persian* gods'.[223] Yet, the Sophy is portrayed as something more than a mere bloodthirsty warrior. Rather, he is willing to tolerate the Christians' visit to the holy land, if they 'trauell in deuotion, / To pay their vowes at their *Messia*'s Tombe, / And so, as Pilgrimes, not as Souldiers come'. If they come in arms, however, then the Sophy, in Heywood's portrayal,

[219] *Ibid.*, sig. H3v.
[220] *Ibid.*, sig. K2v.
[221] *Ibid.*, sig. I3r.
[222] *Ibid.*, sig. F2v.
[223] *Ibid.*, sigs G3r-v.

promises that the Persians will 'confront their pride, and […] / Disperse the strength of their assembled Troupes'.[224]

Through contrasting the Persians and Ottomans in his play, Heywood also offers thinly veiled criticism of contemporary Protestant-Catholic conflicts in Europe. His vehicle for achieving this kind of political commentary is the implicit parallel or resemblance between the schism in Christianity on the one hand (between Catholic and Protestant), and in Islam on the other (between Sunni and Shi'a or areligious with regards to the Sunni interpretation of Islam represented by the Ottoman Turks). Shi'a-Sunni conflicts in the Safavid period began when the Persian Shah Ismail I, the founder of the Safavid dynasty, 'embarked on his territorial conquest [in the early sixteenth century] to bring Shi'ism to a population that in majority adhered to the Sunni branch of Islam'. When 'conquering Isfahan in 1503, the Shah caused a bloodbath among Sunnis – ostensibly in retaliation for the killing of many of the city's Shi'a inhabitants under the Aq-Quyunlu regime'.[225] Ismail's successors such as Shah Abbas I, however, adopted mixed approach towards the Sunnis. While 'at times he [Abbas] showed clemency and treated them with his proverbial tolerance', at other times he 'dealt with them in shockingly violent ways'.[226] Shah Abbas's occasionally brutal treatment of Sunnis was not solely for religious reasons, but also to reinforce his power and control and to resist being 'bullied by the ulama', i.e., Shi'a clerics.[227] The bitter religious feud between Sunni and Shi'a resonates at a low level throughout the Safavid-Ottoman conflicts depicted in Heywood's play, and would, to English playgoers, have suggested Christian sectarian religious disputes closer to home.

[224] *Ibid.*, sig. F2r.
[225] Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 173-4.
[226] *Ibid.*, p. 177. When Abbas 'descended on rebellious Simnan in 1599-1600', for instance, 'he fed the noses and ears of the town's Sunni ulama to the people'.
[227] *Ibid.*, pp. 181-2.

The parallel, between Sunni-Shi'a and Catholic-Protestant conflicts, was one well understood by Europeans. 'Ottoman beliefs [were] equated with the outdated and clerically overburdened faith of the Catholics, while the Shi'ite faith [was] seen as one of reform, and thus compatible with the Protestant tradition'.[228] Elizabethan literature also mirrored such parallels. It is argued, for instance, that in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* (first performed in December 1594), it is 'commonly possible for Catholic and Turk to be interchangeable signifiers; […] Ephesus is both the modern town under the Turkish yoke and the town traditionally associated with the Virgin Mary, so central to Roman Catholic Christianity'. Furthermore, the 'Syracuse/Ephesus divide in the play is not only that between Christian and Turk; it is also that between Protestant and Catholic'.[229] English theatregoers, therefore, readily compared Protestant-Catholic clashes with equivalent conflicts in Islam. In *The Foure Prentises*, Heywood draws on Persian-Ottoman and Protestant-Catholic parallels to criticize sectarian religious divisions, perhaps, as an attempt to contribute, via media, to James VI and I's peace-making policies; it is known that James 'prided himself on his biblical motto '*Beati Pacifici* (blessed are the peacemakers)', and Heywood's play supports this policy on the English stage. [230]

Heywood, then, represents the Persian Sophy in *The Foure Prentises*, as a complex, many-sided figure. Clearly, the Sophy opposes the invading Christian forces, but he also stands apart from his nominal ally, the Sultan of Babylon, in his willingness to tolerate the Christian religion, and in his own distinctly non-Islamic beliefs. Heywood includes all these characteristics in the Sophy's rage against the Sultan earlier in the play: 'Should *Soldan*, *Sophy*, Priest, or Presbyter, / Or Gods, or deuils, or men, gaine-say our will: / Him, them, or

[228] Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt (eds), *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty, 2010), p. 185.
[229] Dennis Taylor and David N. Beauregard (eds), *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Eraly Modern England* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2003), p. 38; Peter Holland, 'Shakespeare, William (1564-1616)', *ODNB*.
[230] Pauline Croft, *King James* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 108.

thee, would the braue Persian Kill'.[231] I argue that Heywood's dramatization of the Sophy of Persia as a complex entity was both influential on Elizabethan foreign policy, in urging the replacement of the Turks with a substitute ally, and also timely in the Jacobean period, supporting the formation of an Anglo-Persian alliance. To this end, *The Foure Prentices of London* functioned as a transitional play affecting Anglo-Persian relations.

Anglo-Persian commercial and political exchanges in the Elizabethan period involved a number of English travellers such as Anthony Jenkinson who were appointed by the English monarch to deliver royal letters to the Safavid court. The English envoys who carried these letters with them recounted the details of their journeys into Safavid Persia in travel narratives. These accounts became one of the most influential sources about Persia for English historians, politicians, and playwrights. Above all, travel narratives shaped the English perception of Islamic Persia and Persians more fully and precisely than in previous decades. By dramatically recreating and representing Islamic Persia, playwrights such as Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Heywood introduced Islamic Persia to the English nation more broadly. In this chapter I examined two plays: Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* and Thomas Heywood's *The Foure Prentises of London*. I argued that, from the standpoint of England's foreign policy towards Safavid Persia, the plays affected and reinforced a strategic alliance between England and Islamic Persia. This was mainly achieved by the playwrights through depicting contemporary Persia as secular and anti-Ottoman. *Tamburlaine the Great Parts I and II* introduced contemporary Persia as an alternative ally for England for the first time by placing secular Persians at the centre of religious and political interactions in the tragedies. Anti-Islamic Persia appeared as Marlowe's secular establishment in the play in order to help Tamburlaine advance his ambitions, and, eventually, burn an Islamic symbol, the Qur'ran. In the light of Marlowe's

[231] Heywood, *The Foure Prentises of London* (1615), sig. F2v.

tragedies, Thomas Heywood's *The Foure Prentices of London* continued to highlight the Persian-Ottoman contrast. While in league with the Ottomans, implicitly represented by the Sultan of Babylon, the Sophy of Persia engaged in military conflicts with western Christendom. Heywood dramatized the Persian as a secular and nonconformist figure who opposed the Ottomans' interpretations and strategies in confronting the enemy. As a transitional adventure-romance, Heywood's portrayal of the Sophy raised and encouraged two particular lines of thought: first to introduce Persia as a substitute ally for England should the Anglo-Ottoman alliance fail, and second to reject sectarian disputes. Safavid Persia would have been a potential alternative for England and Christendom since Persian Safavids were the strongest deterrent force on the eastern territories of the Ottoman Turks. Persia as an alternative for the Anglo-Ottoman alliance became effective when James VI and I ascended the English throne, and refused to sign letters to maintain England's relationship with the Turks. But Heywood also created a league between Persia and the Turks in his play in order to criticize Protestant-Catholic conflicts, and to suggest that such conflicts are doomed to failure and defeat if Christendom is threatened by an outside enemy. By implication, Heywood's play suggests that success and prosperity for the English and Christendom can only be achieved through unity and integration. In the next chapter I argue that the Jacobean playwrights' depictions of Islamic Persia and Persians aim to symbolize and support James VI and I's intention for closer Anglo-Persian political relations. Such depictions seek to endorse and encourage Anglo-Persian political and military ties for both elite and public theatregoers.

CHAPTER 3:

Dramatic Representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in the Jacobean Period: Emissaries on Stage

Introduction

Dramatic art of the Jacobean period represents Islamic Persians as brothers to the English. In so doing, dramatic works in the period promote the Persian empire as a replacement for the Ottoman Turks, as England's ally in the east. In 1588, James VI of Scotland, as he was then, produced his first biblical commentary, on Revelation. The main theme of the preface to the commentary 'was an attack on Antichrist: the pope, with his minions the Jesuits and his allies the Turks'. It is in this commentary that James associates 'the pope directly with the Turks'.[232] Critics argue that James first displayed his hostile attitude to the Turks in his poem, *Lepanto*, which pays tribute to the triumph of a Christian fleet over the Ottomans at the battle of Lepanto in 1577, and copies of which were 'brought out around the time of his coronation'.[233] James's policy towards the Ottoman Turks clearly differed from that of Elizabeth I. Whilst Elizabeth's reign witnessed the establishment of 'the Anglo-Ottoman alliance between Elizabeth I and Murad III in 1580', James sought to cultivate relations with the Ottoman's eastern enemy, Safavid Persia.[234]

James VI and I knew that Anthony and Robert Sherley had already laid the foundations for an Anglo-Persian relationship by travelling to Persia in 1598. They had set sail for Persia by way of Ferrara in northern Italy. Anthony had journeyed to Ferrara to help the duke's son against the Pope, but by the time he arrived the quarrel had already been resolved, and he

[232] Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I (1566–1625)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
[233] Laurence Publicover, 'Strangers at Home: The Sherley Brothers and Dramatic Romance', *Renaissance Studies*, 24 (2010): 694-709 (p. 697, n. 15).
[234] Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 52.

'decided to journey further east, through the Ottoman Empire all the way to Persia'.[235] Anthony departed from England without Elizabeth I's permission; when he asked for permission to return to England, she refused 'calling upon Sir Anthony's friends to reprove him for his vanity and folly in meddling with a mission' that would endanger Anglo-Ottoman relations.[236] However, with James's accession to the throne in 1603 the political mood at the court changed, and the Sherleys' programme of alliance with Persia seemed far less outlandish. James's anti-Turkish approach became evident not long after becoming the monarch, when he spurned signing commercial letters to the Ottoman Sultan, 'saying that for Merchants' causes he would not do things unfitting a Christian prince'.[237] Before his accession to the throne, James had written to Shah Abbas I in 1601 to express admiration for the Persian king's successful confrontation with the Ottomans, implicitly offering 'assistance at the earliest opportunity'.[238] In such a political milieu Persia stood as a 'rather different case', not only in England's foreign policy, but in the literature of the period too.[239] Previously known as 'the land of wealth and luxury' and a glorious empire, Persia loomed in European writers' imaginations as a 'genuinely exotic country, not a malign and unknowable neighbour but a fabulous resource'.[240]

The playwrights of the Jacobean period also drew on Persia as a 'different case'. Those who depicted Persians in their works were aware of England's political inclination towards alliance with Safavid Persia. In addition to seeking patronage through their plays, the writers also seemed to support and endorse the political wisdom of an Anglo-Persian treaty. It is true, then, to say that England's foreign policy was 'confirmed in the drama that was to follow

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[235] See Ralf Hertel, 'Ousting the Ottomans: The Double Vision of the East in *The Travels of the Three English Brothers (1607)*', in Sabine Schulting, Sabine Lucia Muller, and Ralf Hertel (eds), *Early Modern Encounters with the Islamic East: Performing Cultures* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 135-52 (p. 135).
[236] Publicover, 'Strangers at Home', p. 697.
[237] *Ibid*; see also Samuel C. Chew, *The Crescent and The Rose* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 176.
[238] Franklin L. Baumer, 'England, the Turk, and the Common Corps of Christendom', *The American Historical Review*, 50 (1944): 26-48 (p. 37, n. 59).
[239] Anthony Parr, *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 11.
[240] *Ibid*.

James's accession', which demonstrates that dramatists and plays had particularly astute engagements with the new politics of the court.[241] I argue, however, that the literature of the period in general and the dramatic art in particular, not only 'confirmed' or reflected the politics of the Jacobean court, but actively affected it and shaped its development. To this end, dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians possess a special position in fashioning England's foreign policy. The writers who employed Islamic Persians in their works attempted to present an image of a friend rather than a foe. The playwrights of the Jacobean period form and reform important Persian characters such as Shah Abbas I in order to present them as flexible, pragmatic, tolerant dramatis personae in both their beliefs and their approach towards Christianity and the English. Unlike the Ottoman Turks who were perceived as rigid in their Islamic belief, Persia and Persians were shown on stage to welcome Christians at the very door of the Persian court. Over time, such dramatic depictions of Persia played a not insignificant part in changing relations between Jacobean England and Safavid Persia.

In this chapter I examine three Jacobean dramas which contain depictions of Islamic Persia and Persians: a popular play, *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day, George Wilkins, and William Rowley; Thomas Campion's elite masque, *The Description of a Maske* (1614); and Thomas Tomkis's academic comedy, *Albvmazar* (1615). Proceeding in chronological order, this chapter addresses the works in three sections. The first, on *The Travailes*, argues that the playwrights politically embellish the portraits of their Persian dramatis personae in order to endorse an Anglo-Persian political alliance. These characters undergo a transformation of identity in direct response to the development of the Anglo-Persian relations, and at the same time maintain a positive representation of Persia and Persians. The second section examines *The Description of a Maske* first performed on 26

[241] Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p. 201.

December 1613 in the 'Banqueting roome at *Whitehall*, […] At the Mariage of the Right Honourable the Earle of *Somerset*: And the Right noble the Lady *FRANCES* Howard' to celebrate the marriage of Thomas Howard's, The Earl of Suffolk's, daughter, 'recently and controversially divorced from her first husband, The Earl of Essex, to the king's favourite, Robert Carr'; the masque is an attempt to 'counter the gossip and rumour that surrounded the event'.[242] In Campion's elite masque Persia has a special status since it is the only nation that stands for or represents an entire continent (Asia), whereas other parts of the world stand only for themselves. This section demonstrates the ways in which *The Description of a Maske* emphasizes Islamic Persia's political position in the English imagination of the east in prompting its audience to think about Safavid Persia's place in the imagination while empathizing with it. As a result of its specificity and nature of genre, the elite masque possibly involved a high degree of participation on the part of its noble audience, and, therefore, presented contemporary Persia's political and commercial significance to a politically influential audience on an intimate stage. As a consequence, the masque would have contributed to connecting English foreign policy debates regarding Safavid Persia with a noble audience.The third section investigates how Thomas Tomkis, the writer of *Albvmazar*, a satire on astrology first performed in 1615, adapts his Persian character in order to fit him into the political milieu of the day. In the play, Albumazar, an Islamic Persian scholar, becomes complicit in theft and fraud; this section, then, shows how Tomkis handles the difficulty of dramatizing a Persian character such as Albumazar at a time when English foreign policy was increasingly leaning towards an Anglo-Persian alliance.

The distinctions between the three works are worth noting before starting the first section of this chapter. While *The Travailes* incorporates the genres of travel adventure and romance, *The Description of a Maske* celebrates the marriage of the Earl of Somerset and

[242] See the title-page of Thomas Campion, *The Description of a Maske* (London, 1614); see also David Lindley, 'Campion, Thomas (1567-1620)', *ODNB.*

Lady Frances Howard in a pageant-like setting. *Albvmazar* introduces a comedy set in London where the main character of the play attempts to take advantage of the ignorant Londoners. There are many and various depictions of Islamic Persians in the plays: from Albumazar's presence in Tomkis's comedy as the only Persian and Campion's symbolic Persian lady in the masque, to frequent appearances of Persians in *The Travailes*. It can be seen, then, that Jacobean foreign policy towards Persia ushers in a range of Islamic Persian dramatis personae in the dramatic art of the period. But how do Jacobean writers refashion Islamic Persians in order to adjust them for the political stage? To what extent do the playwrights transform dramatic Persians in order to justify England's political alliance with an Islamic state? And to what extent do such dramatizations impinge on foreign policy? The following attempts to answer these questions by examining the three works in details of theme and overt and covert parallels drawn by the plays with current events.

3.1 *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*: From Political Alliances to Individual Transformations

> The glorious Sunne of *Persia* shall enfuse,
> His strength of heate into thy generous veines
> And make thee like himselfe: In the meane time
> Looke high; finde feete, weele set thee steps to clime.[243]

Four years after James VI and I ascended the throne, these lines appeared in a travel play, *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers*, co-authored by John Day, George Wilkins, and William Rowley in 1607.[244] Teresa Sampsonia, 'an oriental beauty' and the 'Sophies Neece', addresses Robert Sherley the first time they meet using the words above. She falls in

[243] John Day, George Wilkins, and William Rowley, *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (London, 1607), sig. C3r.
[244] The play was in the 'repertory of Cholmeley's Players, a Yorkshire-based company of recusant players, who performed […] on tour in the homes of Catholic families in 1608-10'. Parr observes that 'it is quite possible that Wilkins himself was a recusant'. See Anthony Parr, 'Wilkins, George (*d.* 1618)', *ODNB*.

love with Robert Sherley in *The Travailes*, and at the end of the play gives birth to a child who is 'a truly hybrid embodiment of intercultural relations'.[245] Such hybridity, of course, appears after the couple themselves undergo a change in personality and belief: while serving in the Persian army, Robert Sherley kills those Turks who refuse to 'Ioyne *Mortus Aly*', turning his back to Christian clemency in favour of Persian tradition; before giving birth to a Christian child, the 'Sophies Neece' bravely confronts Safavid Persian courtiers in an attempt to support Robert Sherley, an English Christian: she maintains 'by yonder Sunne I dote on him', demonstrating that she is possessed of a hybrid, non-conformist attitude.[246] In the excerpt in the beginning of this section the Persian king's niece prays for Robert Sherley, and asks for the sun of Persia's strength and heat to enhance the power of the Englishman and lift his spirit. After infusing her power into his veins through the sun, Persia and the Persian niece shall build steps for Sherley to help the English advance and flourish. These lines suggest that spiritual and physical change in character engages the playwrights' minds, and, in fact, appears in several characters in the play. Such changes in characters are culturally and politically significant as they aim to promote and endorse Anglo-Persian relations in the world beyond theatre. It is worth noting that, historically, Robert Sherley married Teresa Sampsonia, and converted to Catholicism in Persia before his first return to England in 1611. On his return, Robert Sherley carried the title of a Persian ambassador, and wore Persian costume. Part of my discussion in this section analyzes the transformation of identity in characters such as Robert Sherley, Teresa Sampsonia, and above all, Shah Abbas I, the Persian king. It is part of the argument of this section that the 'Sunne of *Persia*', indeed, makes Robert Sherley 'like himselfe', that is not only 'glorious', but also Persian. First, however, I will briefly discuss relevant contextual information about the play's sources, performance and the political atmosphere in which it was written and received.

[245] Hertel, 'Ousting the Ottomans', pp. 137, 139; Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. C2r.
[246] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sigs E1r, G2v.

The Travailes of the Three English Brothers was written and performed in 1607, and celebrated, in a 'fictionalised' fashion, the adventures in Safavid Persia of Sir Anthony Sherley and his two brothers, Thomas and Robert.[247] As the title-page of the play suggests, it was first performed '*by her MAIESTIES Seruants*', the Queen Anne's Men.[248] One year before the performance of *The Travailes*, the same company had acted John Day's *Isle of Gulls*, a satire on James VI and I's court, at the Red Bull in Clerkenwell in 1606, arousing, not surprisingly, official displeasure. It is unlikely, then, that in *The Travailes* Day, Wilkins, and Rowley would risk 'further censure with this play' by seeking to criticize the foreign policy of the English monarch.[249] The play presents the three brothers as follows: Anthony Sherley is a character who 'represents diplomatic exchange', and becomes 'the Shah's ambassador' during the course of the play; Thomas Sherley is a merchant who 'embodies commercial drive in the contact with the East'; and Robert Sherley is 'a captain of a Persian force' who 'prefigures a hoped-for East-West military alliance'.[250] Despite Anthony Sherley's title of 'ambassador' in *The Travailes*, Sherley was seen, as critics note, in a rather different way. In fact, Anthony Sherley was 'one among numerous foreigners drawn to the magnificent court of Shah Abbas, [and] a minor character […] whose misconduct' endangered 'Safavid Persia's global profile'.[251] In *The Travailes*, however, the playwrights present the Sherleys in a flattering light in order to reconstruct their public image.

The authors of *The Travailes* attempt, while avoiding criticism of James I's court, to address 'a current political story with unusual freedom and directness' by employing the Sherley brothers as adventurous characters – the Sherleys had already enjoyed James's

[247] Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p. 201.
[248] See the title-page of Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607).
[249] Anthony Parr, 'Day, John (1573/4-1638?)', *ODNB*.
[250] Hertel, 'Ousting the Ottomans', p. 136.
[251] Jonathan Burton's 'The Shah's Two Ambassadors: *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* and the Global Early Modern', in Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani (eds), *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550-1700* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 23-40 (pp. 36-7).

personal praise for 'their efforts [in] soliciting allies against the Ottomans in 1599'.[252] The appearance of the Sherley's Persian adventure on the 'professional stage' reflects the extent to which 'commercial opportunities' between Persia and England contributed to the creation of travel plays such as *The Travailes* in the Jacobean period.[253] In other words, what we see in *The Travailes* is a translation of Anglo-Persian commercial and political exchanges into literary culture and onto the London stage in particular. In dramatizing the Sherleys' attempts to build an Anglo-Persian political alliance, *The Travailes* presents 'a flattering image of English courage and diplomatic skill'.[254] The complimentary attitude of the play towards the Sherley brothers originates from the instructions of the play's probable commissioner, Thomas Sherley. It is likely that the eldest of the Sherley brothers sought, in commissioning *The Travailes*, to reposition the notorious image of the brothers in English minds by maximizing 'publicity to the brothers' adventures', and paving the way for their return to England. The playwrights, then, seek to achieve a series of purposes in the play: to endorse Anglo-Persian political relations by displaying 'diplomatic activity and cultural contact between England' and the foreign world; and at the same time to burnish the reputation of the Sherley brothers.[255]

The play opens with a Prologue where the three brothers arrive in '*Persia*: / Within the confines of the great *Sophey*, / [in] *Casbin*, which townes gouernor, / Doth kindelie entertaine our English knight [Sir Anthony]'.[256] The Prologue continues with 'If forrein strangers to him be so kinde, / We hope his natiue Country we shall finde / More curteous, to your iust censures then, / We offer vp their trauells and our pen'.[257] The Persians 'kindelie' welcome the brothers to their land. The speaker wishes the same kindness and courtesy from his

[252] Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p. 201; Parr, 'Day, John (1573/4-1638?)', *ODNB*.
[253] Parr, *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*, p. 7.
[254] Parr, 'Day, John (1573/4-1638?)', *ODNB*.
[255] Parr, *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*, pp. 8, 6.
[256] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. A2v.
[257] *Ibid*.

'natiue Country', that is England, and hopes that the English audience will be as or 'more' courteous to the brothers than their Persian hosts. Through a conventional appeal to the audience, the playwrights also request their 'iust censures', asking for the audience's good will and judgment to the play. Two years later in 1609, Thomas Middleton would reinforce the Sherley propaganda, as discussed in the first chapter, and would narrate that:

> Reader, This Persian robe, so richly wouen with the prayses onely of Sir Robert Sherley (thy Conntriman) comes to thee at a lowe price, though it cost him deere that weares it, to purchase so much fame, as hath made it so excellent. It is now his, foreuer, Thine so long as it is his; for euery good man (as I hope thou art) doth participate in the Renowne of those that are good, and vertuous.

Middleton refers to Robert Sherley's Persian costume, and praises Sherley's courage in adventuring in Persia in order to serve England and the English. Two years later in 1611, Robert Sherley 'comes laden with the Trophyes of Warre, and the honors of Peace', as a transformed, but hybrid figure and as a facilitator of Anglo-Persian political, mercantile, and military relations.[258]

Sir Thomas Sherley's attempts to cast a 'good light' on the brothers were not confined to *The Travailes*. Laurence Publicover speculates that the raw material which lays the foundation of *The Travailes* also forms 'Anthony Nixon's almost-contemporary pamphlet *Three English Brothers*'. Publicover writes that this raw material 'was almost certainly provided' by the elder brother, Thomas; 'both play and pamphlet, while singing the praises of the Sherleys, register the need to defend them'.[259] Certainly, like *The Travailes*, Nixon's pamphlet consistently attempts to enhance the prestige and public image of the Sherleys. Islamic Persia plays a significant role in this process of reconstruction, in both the pamphlet

[258] Thomas Middleton, *Sir R. Sherley Sent Ambassadour in the Name of the King of Persia* (London, 1609), sigs A4r-v, B1r.
[259] Publicover, 'Strangers at Home', p. 698.

and the play; indeed, for the Sherleys, as Bernadette Andrea observes, the Safavid Persian Empire provides 'a landscape for the recasting and remaking of the self'.[260]

The Travailes presents Persia as a landscape which is clearly demarcated from that of the Ottoman one. To that end, critics speculate that the play portrays contemporary Persia as a kingdom possessed of a:

> complex society of individuals of different sex, status and opinion, [whilst] the Ottomans form part of a highly uniform community represented *in persona* by the Great Turk. They simply add up numbers, and in numbers only they come: tellingly, the first glimpse of Turks we are presented with is a host of severed heads on Persian pikes on the Shah's return from battle.[261]

From the outset, the play presents the Safavid Persian empire as a force which overpowers the Ottomans despite the Turks' social uniformity and advantage in number. The dominance of Safavid Persians is beyond question when the Turks' 'severed heads' appear 'on Persian pikes'. The dramatists, in the very beginning of the play, thereby clarify the superiority of Persia by drawing a line between the two Islamic empires. Elsewhere in the play, in a war scene, the playwrights emphasize the religious distinction between Persian Shi'a and Ottoman Sunni Islam. In this scene, Robert Sherley leads a Persian army troop which captures a number of Ottoman Turks. Sherley addresses the captives: 'Speak, do yee renounce your Prophet Mahomet? / Bowe to the Deitie that we adore. / Or die in the refusall'. The captives refuse, saying, 'For Mahomet we dye'. Then the Persians under Sherley's command ask the captive Turks to: 'Ioyne *Mortus Aly* then with Mahomet, / [who] flew your Prophets *Hamer* and *Vsman*, / And on a snowie Cammell went to heauen', for if the Turks submit to the Persian Imam, they 'shall finde grace in *Persia*'. The Turks refuse again, responding, 'For Mahomet, none but Mahomet'. They face death upon Sherley's order, 'To death with them, the rest shall follow'.[262] It is evident in this scene that the playwrights

[260] Bernadette Andrea, 'Lady Sherley: The first Persian in England?', *The Muslim World* 95 (2005): 279-295 (p. 281).
[261] Hertel 'Ousting the Ottomans', p. 142.
[262] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. E1r.

attempt to differentiate between Persian and Ottoman Muslims. The writers offer 'Mahomet' as part of the Persians' Islamic belief, yet it is clear that '*Mortus Aly*' carries more importance. Persian Muslims prioritize their Imam, '*Mortus Aly*', over 'Mahomet', for the victorious Persians ask the captive Turks to 'Ioyne *Mortus Aly* then with Mahomet'. Such a hierarchy in employing Shi'a terms aims to intensify the distinction between the two kinds of Islam, i.e. of Sunni Ottomans and Shi'a Persians. Whilst the writers introduce Persian Islam through '*Mortus Aly*', the first Shi'a Imam who is associated here with 'heauen' and the 'grace in *Persia*', they employ words such as '*Hamer* and *Vsman*', the second and the third successors of Mohammad, to represent Ottoman Islam. By characterizing Robert Sherley in the Persian camp, the playwrights implicitly depict the English as more receptive to the Persian, as opposed to Ottoman, interpretation of Islam as Robert Sherley appears to justify Shi'a Persia's brutality and bloodthirstiness against the Sunni counterpart by commanding the beheading of the latter. The dramatists present Robert Sherley as a character who strongly engages with Persian Islam as a military commander, demonstrating the likelihood of an Anglo-Persian military tie in practice. He orders the Turks to 'renounce' their prophet, and bow to the 'Deitie that we adore', counting himself as a Persian agent. As the commander of the Persian 'we', it is Robert Sherley who orders the execution of the Turks after their 'refusall'. The execution of the Turks presents the Persians as, 'within limits, valorized', whilst the Turks 'are, consistently, treated as tantamount to inhumane', as though they do not deserve to live.[263]

The representation of the Persians in this scene demonstrates the play's portrayal of Persia as a potential ally for England in the east. 'The playgoers', of course, 'watching *Travels* at the Red Bull in 1607' would have had mixed feelings towards 'Sherley's attempts

[263] Publicover, 'Strangers at Home', p. 699.

to fracture the Anglo-Ottoman relationship'.[264] The brothers' notorious reputation in Elizabethan England made them exiled from their native land. Also, characterizing Persia as the dominant military power against the Ottoman Turks probably would not have convinced Christian audiences of the desirability of an alliance with an Islamic empire, Safavid Persia. Showing the Safavid empire's military superiority may indeed have increased public fears of another powerful eastern empire as a potential threat to Christendom. Clearly, the play presents the Persians as brutal and bloodthirsty, particularly regarding the practice of beheading.[265] However, the fashion in which the playwrights characterize Persians in *The Travailes* develops, throughout the play, in a direction that resolves the audiences' concerns about such a threat. It appears that representations of the Persians as different to the Ottoman Turks offer a vital distinctiveness designed to spark the audiences' interest and enlist their support for the Persians, if not their sympathy. Such representations, then, help the playwrights 'to convince the theatre's patrons' of the benefits of an Anglo-Persian alliance.[266] But how do the dramatists develop the characterizations of the Persians in *The Travailes* in order to appeal to an English audience?

It is evident that the English audiences perceived the Anglo-Persian relationship with ambivalence. Javad Ghatta observes that European countries' perception of Shah Abbas I comprised two competing aspects. On the one hand, Christian Europeans viewed the Shah positively as a 'Muslim king joining the Christian league against the Turk, not just in arms but also in faith'. On the other hand, the negative perception of the Sophy carried with it 'the anxiety and political-religious allegations surrounding the conversion of prominent Europeans, the now-converted Catholic Robert Sherley included'. The playwrights of *The Travailes* present the Sophy as a character who 'swears by Murtus Ali and other Persian gods

[264] *Ibid*., pp. 697-698.
[265] See Margaret E. Owens, *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2005), pp. 158-64.
[266] Publicover, 'Strangers at Home', pp. 697-8.

and deities', showing the existence of a compound culture which consists of 'pagan and Shi'a elements [in] the absolute head of the body politic'.[267] The Shah speaks of '*Mortus Ally*, and those Deities, / To whom […] *Persians* pay Deuotion', whilst, historically, he possessed an 'unwittingly Zoroastrian […] culture', was born from a 'Georgian Christian mother', and 'raised in a predominantly Sunni community' to rule a Shi'a state.[268]

On the English side, Robert Sherley's cultural hybridity is also evident. Laurence Publicover observes that 'Robert […] describes himself not just as a Christian warrior, but as a true born English soldier'.[269] It is 'the nature of our *English* coast', Sherley says, 'What ere we do for honour not to boast'. At the same time, it is Robert Sherley who confesses, 'Not I, a *Sherly* dare not to deny a *Persian*', suggesting, to some extent, a conformist attitude on his part towards Persian culture.[270] It is clear that Robert Sherley indulges in flattery. Nonetheless, this rhetorical statement indicates the extent to which Robert Sherley identifies with the Persians. Beyond the world of the theatre, the inhabitation of Robert Sherley's personal identity is witnessed in his behaviour on his first return to England in 1611 when he refused, '(at least initially), […] to remove his turban in the presence of King James', preferring 'the glory of Persia, not of England', embodied in his Persian costume.[271] Later in *The Travailes*, Robert Sherley states that the 'fire / that lightens all the world, knows my desire / Durst neuer looke so high', attempting to associate himself 'with a Muslim nation rather than with his native England'.[272] Therefore, Abbas I and Robert Sherley historically and dramatically embody hybrid identities. It should be noted, though, that Robert Sherley

[267] Javad Ghatta, '''By Mortus Ali and our Persian gods'': Multiple Persian Identities in *Tamburlaine* and *The Travels of the Three English Brothers*', *Early Theatre* 12 (2009): 235-49 (pp. 242, 244).
[268] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. B3r, and Ghatta, '''By Mortus Ali and our Persian gods''', pp. 239-40.
[269] Publicover, 'Strangers at Home', p. 704.
[270] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sigs C3v, B3r.
[271] Historically, the multiplicity of Robert Sherley's identity is also visible in 'his status that swerved between royal favourite and hostage for Anthony Sherley's good behaviour' when he 'set off around the courts of Europe acting as the Shah's ambassador' in 1599. See Publicover, 'Strangers at Home', pp. 696, 707-708; see also Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p. 311.
[272] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. G1r; Publicover, 'Strangers at Home', p. 708.

associates with Persia in a very perilous position. Accused of freeing the Turkish prisoners and being in love with the Sophy's niece, Sherley faces the Sophy's anger. He attempts to appease the Persian king by praising him and his culture, and to show how much he, Sherley, respects that culture and the Safavid monarch's power, while still sticking to his own Christian values and identity: the English prides himself on 'Christian charity: / The Pilote of mine actions'.[273] Robert Sherley's sophisticated behaviour conforms to his hybrid identity, and, in fact, gives him a diplomatic advantage with which he seeks to maintain and improve Anglo-Persian relations even in turbulent circumstances.

Teresa Sampsonia, or the Shah's 'Neece', is another character who engages with the theme of multiple identities in *The Travailes*. Bernadette Andrea, for example, describes 'Lady Teresa Sampsonia Sherley [as] a Christian(ized) Circassian from Shah Abbas I's court'. In *The Travailes* the Shah's niece meets the youngest of the Sherley brothers in the Persian court, whereafter a love affair between them begins. Elsewhere in the play, she rejects a 'token of affection from the Persian lord Calimath on behalf of his brother, the warlike Halibeck', preferring an English traveller over a Persian courtier.[274] In the course of the play the couple's affection towards each other strengthens, and near the end of the work an Anglo-Persian marriage takes place in the Shah's court. According to *The Travailes*, the Persian king's niece gives birth to the 'first Christian in' Persia, and, thus, becomes a wife and mother to two Christian figures in the play.[275] Historically, Teresa Sampsonia converted to Catholicism after her marriage to Robert Sherley, before embarking on a European journey with her husband as the Persian ambassador. There is no evidence, however, that Lady Sherley converts to Christianity in *The Travailes*. Nonetheless, her 'passionate speech' about Robert Sherley, as a figure who has the 'hands / Of all the holly Angells, to approue', in order to endorse her 'Christian love […] of the apparently dead Sherley' presents her as a character

[273] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. F4v.
[274] Andrea, 'Lady Sherley', pp. 280, 284.
[275] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. H4r.

strongly influenced by the Christian Englishman, and, thus, close to becoming Anglo-Christian rather than Persian in her values, outlook and identity.[276]

Despite hinting at the hybrid and multiple identities to be found in *The Travailes*, previous criticism has tended to overlook the political factors intertwined with the individual transformations in the play. As mentioned earlier, the theme of transforming identities in *The Travailes* depends, to a great extent, on the development of an Anglo-Persian relationship in the play. The establishment of the political tie and the creation of multiple identities emerge as a gradual process throughout the course of the work. The remainder of this section addresses the development of this process, focusing on three key characters: Shah Abbas I, Robert Sherley, and Teresa Sampsonia.

At the outset of the play, the Shah '*Enter*[s] *from warres* […] *with souldiers*', and meets the Sherley brothers for the first time. The dramatists introduce the Persian king as a figure possessed of political authority and military power as he returns from the '*warres*' with triumph. The Persian king is courteous – he '*giues Sir Anthony his hand as hee offers to stoope to his foote*' – yet mindful of the 'gratulation' that strangers owe to his majesty: '*Robert and the rest kisse his foote*'. At this first Anglo-Persian encounter, Sir Anthony Sherley commends the Shah's theatrical presentation of '*Persian* warres' as 'manly, stout and honourable', and offers to show the Shah 'my Countries [i.e. England's] hardiment' in war, through the enactment of a similar demonstration. The Persian Shah is deeply impressed by the character of his Christian visitor:

> What powers do wrap mee in amazement thus?
> Mee thinks this Christian's more then mort all [*sic*],
> Sure he conceales himself, within my thoughts
> Neuer was man so deepely registred,
> But God or Christian, or what ere he bee,
> I wish to be no other but as hee.[277]

[276] Andrea, 'Lady Sherley', p. 285; Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. G2r.
[277] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sigs A3r-v, A4r.

Sherley is 'deepely registred' within Abbas's thoughts to the extent that the Persian monarch confuses the English traveller with 'God', and Abbas wishes 'to be no other but as hee'. Day, Rowley and Wilkins thus establish mutual respect between Persian king and English adventurers at the outset of the play, possibly hoping thereby to address the concerns of those of their English audience sceptical of an Anglo-Persian political alliance. To this end, Abbas's tolerance grows into absolute fascination with the Christian Englishmen at his court as the play proceeds. Other Persian courtiers such as Callimath and Hallibeck are against the Safavid king's obvious fascination, though, and remain deeply hostile towards the English.

Introducing the Sophy as an Islamic figure who tolerates Christianity allows the playwrights to display flexible Persian identities throughout the play. Abbas's preoccupation with Christian travellers grows having seen their demonstration of 'such warres as Christian vse':

> Next *Mortus Ally*, and those Deities,
> To whom we *Persians* pay Deuotion
> We do adore thee: your warres are royall,
> So ioyn'd with musicke that euen death it selfe
> Would seeme a dreame: your instruments dissolue
> A body into spirit, but to heare
> Their cheerefull Clamours: and those you Engins,
> (We cannot giue their proper Character)
> Those lowd tongues that spit their spleene in fire,
> Drowning the groanes of your then dying friends,
> And with the smoake hiding the gaspe of life,
> That you nere thinke of ought but victory,
> Till all be won or lost, we cannot praise
> It well.[278]

Shah Abbas flatters the English for their military 'instruments' in this speech. He begins by speaking of Islamic Persian figures, such as '*Mortus Ally*' and 'Deities', putting the English second only to them in his esteem and 'adoration'. In one sense, the Persian Shah confers legitimacy on England's 'royall' warfare by placing it in such proximity to Safavid Persia's Shi'a beliefs. This legitimacy is authorized by the Shah's dual status as, on the one hand, a

[278] *Ibid.*, sig. A4r.

political leader and, on the other, a spiritual one who embodies the great Sophy. From the English audience's perspective there existed parallel, if not common, religious grounds between Shia'a Persia and Christian England. Parr observes that 'Shi'ism', from the English standpoint, 'was all about true succession and the legitimacy of a martyred prophet' through Mortus Ali, the prophet's chosen 'heir'. Parr continues that 'later European translations' of Persian works 'find an analogy between Ali's messianic inheritance and the Christian ministry', which 'may also have been perceptible to sixteenth-century visitors attending performances' such as *The Travailes*.[279] It is likely, then, that the writers of *The Travailes* were aware of such audience perceptions as they drew on the Anglo-Persian and Shi'a-Christian parallels in the play.

The play-within-the play put on by the Sherley brothers, also allows Day, Rowley and Wilkins to explore the differences in culture between Islamic Persia and Christian England. Abbas observes that the Sherleys have designated (in their show of war) some of their party as prisoners, and asks, 'but what meanes those in bondage so?', and 'why do they liue?' Anthony Sherley replies that the prisoners live to:

> […] show the nature of our warres,
> It is our clemencie in victorie,
> To shed no bloud vpon a yeelding foe,
> Sometimes we buy our friendes life with ourfoes [*sic*],
> Sometimes for Gold, and that hardens valour,
> When he that wins the honour, gets the spoile.
> Sometime for torment we giue weary life.
> Our foes are such, that they had rather die,
> Then to haue life in our Captiuity.

Anthony Sherley's words emphasize English honour and pragmatism. The English benefit from captives for they save 'our friendes life', and earn wealth and 'Gold' for the victor. Moreover, those who triumph in war 'win the honour', and should not 'spoile' their victory and 'valour' by killing prisoners. Abbas is amazed, impressed equally by the Englishmen's

[279] Parr, *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*, p. 12.

honourable, merciful yet cunning approach to warfare, asserting that, 'We neuer heard of honour vntill now'.[280]

It is evident here that we are witnessing a tipping of the balance of power and influence from the Persian Sophy to his English guests. Shortly after, the Persian king asks the Sherleys to bolster his military, to, 'teach vs vnknowne rudiments of war, / Tell vs thy precepts; and wee'll adore thee'.[281] Clearly, a dramatic shift in relative authority has occurred: from requiring his visitors to kiss his foot, the Muslim Persian has come so far as to ask for military assistance from the Christian English travellers. The king's powerful courtier, Hallibeck, is appalled by the Sophy's fascination with the English Christians, seeing in it the potential erosion of his own influence with the king. He attempts to deter the Sophy, on religious grounds, from pursuing an alliance with the Christians: 'Ile interrupt yee. Ye *Persian* Gods look on, / The *Sophy* will prophane your Deities, / And make an Idoll of a fugitiue: My Liege'.[282] The Persian monarch does not reply to Hallibeck, indeed he does not even hear him, such is his fascination with the English. It appears, therefore, that the shift in the king's status from dominant to strategic engagement results from a process of transformation in his identity which begins with the Sophy's tolerance towards the English, and continues with amazement and fascination. It then includes praising and flattering the travellers for various aspects, and, finally, ends with an enthralled monarch who, despite his counsellor's warnings, becomes increasingly dependent on his foreign guests.

The Persian king's enchantment and strategy towards the English develop hand in hand throughout the play. Before bringing the play to an end, the Shah appoints Anthony Sherley the 'Lord Ambassador' of Persia. After fighting with the Ottoman Turks on the side of the Persians, Sherley decides to leave Persia dispossessed of any claims for courtly ranks. He asserts that, 'Now back I goe vpholden with this good, / In my Gods cause, I ha'shed some

[280] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. A4r-v.
[281] *Ibid*., sig. A4v.
[282] *Ibid*., sig. B1r.

pagans bloud' to which the Sophy responds: 'Stay worthy Englishman and worthy Christian, / We cannot loose a mowld of so much worth, / What is the end thy sute would haue of vs'. Fighting against the Ottomans, Anthony Sherley believes, has satisfied his 'Gods'. He has defeated them and 'shed' their 'pagan bloud'. The Shah employs Anthony Sherley, the 'Late *Sherley* Knight', as a Persian Ambassador 'Chife in commission with Duke *Halibeck*', and after accepting the 'counsaile' from other Persian courtiers, Abbas issues Sherley with his instructions:

> Late *Sherley* Knight, now Lord Ambassador
> Chife in commission with Duke *Halibeck,*
> To make a League twixt vs and Christendome,
> For furtherance of sharpe warre against the Turke,
> Ile send thee forth as rich as euer went,
> The proudest *Troian* to a *Grecians* tent.
> Call thy best eloquence into thy tongue,
> That may preuaile with Princes; if thou speed,
> The Christians bee the honour, while Turkes bleed.

Once more the Sophy emphasizes 'a League' between the Persians and 'Christendome' in order to sharpen the sword of the 'warre against the Turke'. He sends Anthony Sherley and *Halibeck* forth with countless gifts and riches, and encourages them to use eloquent language whilst on mission in the Christian world. It is time to fully 'honour' a Christian-Persian tie, the king believes, as the 'Turkes' still 'bleed', and have not yet recovered from past defeats against Persia. Anthony Sherley cherishes his new title, and promises the king 'That in my businesse I will faithfull bee, / I leaue my brother [Robert Sherley] as a pledge for mee'.[283] It is visible then that the king's dependence on the English visitors enters into another phase: Anglo-Persian diplomatic relations.

The Travailes does not stop, however, at portraying the Persian king as merely enthralled by his English guests. In the penultimate scene of the play, the playwrights go so far as to show the Muslim Abbas's willingness to participate in the Christian sacrament of

[283] *Ibid.*, sigs C1r-v, C2r.

baptism, a bold dramatic climax to their depiction of the gradual transformation of identity experienced by the Persian Sophy throughout the play. Robert Sherley, having married the Persian Shah's niece, and fathered her child, asks permission from the Sophy that: 'My child may be baptis'd in Christian faith, / And know the same God that the father hath'. Going further, he adds: 'I would entreat I might erect a Church [in Persia], / Where in all Christians that do hither come / May peaceablie heare their owne Religion', and

> Where Christian children from their cradles,
> Should know no other Education,
> Manners, language, nor Religion,
> Then what by Christians is deliuer'd them.

The Sophy approves both of Sherley's requests, responding: 'Tis graunted, erect a stately Temple, / It shall take name from thee, great *Sherleys* Church'. Most significantly, the Sophy not only agrees that Sherley should baptise his child as a Christian, but adds: 'our selfe will ayd in it, / Our selfe will answer for't, a Godfather, / In our owne armes weele beare it to the place, / Where it shall receiue the compleat Ceremonie'. The scene concludes with Abbas ordering all to go to the 'Temple, where our royall hand, / Shall make thy Child first Christian in our land'.[284] After expressing that he wants to be like 'no other but' an English Christian at the beginning of *The Travailes*, the Persian monarch has, true to his wish, come so far by the end of the play as to be willing to play a central role in a Christian sacrament. Astonishingly, the onstage Sophy turns into a Christian 'Godfather', who assists in the baptism of a child and whose 'royall hand' makes that child 'first Christian' in Safavid Persia. The Persian Shah's transformation of identity is complete: he began the play as a Shi'a Muslim, speaking of '*Mortus Ally*'; he leaves the stage, however, as a Christian baptiser.

The Sophy is not the only one amongst the dramatis personae in *The Travailes* who undergoes a shift in identity in the course of the play. On the English side, Robert Sherley's national and religious identity is far from consistently stable throughout the play. In *The*

[284] *Ibid.*, sig. H3v, H4r.

Travailes, Robert Sherley remains in Persia as a 'pledge' until Anthony Sherley's return from his ambassadorial mission. Historically, Robert Sherley's long sojourn in Shah Abbas's court led eventually to his marriage to Abbas's niece, and conversion to Catholicism. The dramatists of *The Travailes*, however, characterize Sherley as a staunchly conservative figure, loyal to his nationality and religion. As we have seen, in his conversation with the Sophy's niece he is quite proud (appropriately enough) of English modesty, yet committed enough to his religion to ask the Shah to allow him to baptise his child and to build a Christian church in Persia.

Nonetheless, I suggest that there exist several scenes in the play which present Sherley as a character who turns Persian, albeit temporarily. In a conversation between Sherley and Hallibeck, the anti-English counsellor of the Shah, Sherley rejects Hallibeck's request to surrender his Turkish prisoners to the Persian. 'How Christian?' Hallibeck asks, incredulous, and Sherley replies: 'Thus Pagan, hee's my prisoner. / And heres the Key that locks him in these chaines, / Rescue, release, or hurt him if thou darest'. 'Dare', Hallibeck echoes in astonishment, to which Sherley replies stoutly: 'Dare, / Stare out thine eye-balls I out dare thee to't, / Or let thy hand wrong but a haire on's head, / This hand meates out thy graue where thou doest tread'.[285] Anthony Parr observes that:

> Robert Sherley, Hotspur-like, refuses to yield up his Turkish prisoner to Halibeck, who relishes the prospect of putting him to death – a fate which his victim accepts as part of the custom of tyranny between the two nations. Later in the play Robert orders that the captains of the defeated Turkish army be put to death, on the grounds that as commander he is the Persian substitute […]. In his version of this episode [Anthony] Nixon reports that Robert cut off the heads of the captains and (according to the custom of Persia) caused them to bee carried in triumph about the Market place […]; but the dramatists avoid the implication either that Robert has gone native or that his action legitimates Persian military custom.[286]

[285] *Ibid*., sig. B3v.
[286] Parr, *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*, p. 15; see also Anthony Nixon *The Three English Brothers…Master Robert Sherley his wars against the Turkes, with his Marriage to the Emperour of Persia his Neece* (London, 1607), sig. K3r.

Does Sherley become a Persian at all in these scenes where he first refuses to give up his prisoner to the Persian Hallibeck, insisting: 'hee's my prisoner. / And heres the Key that locks him in these chaines', and then beheads the captive Turkish captains, commanding 'To death with them'?[287] In contrast with Parr, I propose that the playwrights of *The Travailes* attempt to present Robert Sherley as a hybrid figure. Unlike other English travellers, Sherley is the only English character who, on a number of occasions, inclines in his behaviour towards Persian culture and customs. It appears that Robert Sherley adopts Persian martial customs in beheading the Turks, and by doing so effectively makes himself the superior commander, above Hallibeck, the Persian courtier. Earlier in the play, the character of the Sophy epitomised Persian pride and power. As the play proceeds, Robert Sherley adopts and manifests some of the Persian Sophy's more authoritative characteristics. It is Sherley who commands 'To death with' the captive Turks, ignoring Christian clemency in favour of Persian tradition. Indeed, by this advanced point in the play, Sherley has become a Persian who eliminates those who refuse to 'Ioyne *Mortus Aly*', the very heart of Shi'a and Safavid Persian belief and custom.

At the end of the play Robert Sherley marries the Sophy's niece. This event stands, perhaps, as a dramatic union between the representatives of Persian and English culture. However, this kind of union would not entirely appeal to English audiences. So why do the playwrights characterize Sherley in such a manner? I suggest that they attempt to show that Persian-Anglo political relations would not be possible without mutual flexibility on both sides. Through their efforts, the dramatists present Persian culture and tradition as attractive to an Englishman. For those conservative audiences, this symbolic marriage presents the attractiveness of a Persian alliance on the one hand, and on the other, because it is only one instance, it is unlikely to cause widespread consternation. Nonetheless, in reality, Sherley

[287] Day, Wilkins, and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sigs. B3v, E1r.

would appear in the Jacobean court in a few years as a Persian who embodied the fears of some of the conservative audiences. The play must have shaped, after all, an image of Sherley in the English imagination of Jacobean era. Therefore, it is evident that historically and dramatically 'The glorious Sunne of *Persia*' affects Sherley, helps him 'finde feete', and 'set[s]' him 'steps to clime'.

The theme of the transformation of identity is also dramatized in *The Travailes* in the character of the Sophy's niece. Throughout the play she consistently defends Robert Sherley, her future husband, from accusations of disobedience or disloyalty to the Shah. In the first example, the Persian monarch summons his niece to confront here with the accusation: 'Thy bosome / Harbours a Traytor, dost thou not loue yong *Sherley*'. The Sophy's niece reluctantly, but truthfully, admits how things stand: 'Should I not say I, / My honourd thoughts would giue my tongue the lie'. Turning on her accusers, she tells the king and courtiers that, 'You should all loue him, [for] he has spent a sea / Of English bloud to honor *Persia*'. In this scene Lady Sherley publically reveals her affections for Robert Sherley for the first time. Shrewdly, she tells the Sophy that 'I lou'd him to please you: to humour you / Gaue him kind language: if I prais'd his worth, /'Twas not my tongue but yours';[288] she accuses the other courtiers, and especially Hallibeck and Callimath (who wants her for himself), of envy and cowardice. Despite the pressure from these courtiers, and the unwelcome attentions of Callimath, the Sophy's niece does not deny her feelings for the Englishman. Such a characterization of the Sophy's niece allows the writers to place Lady Sherley onto the play's larger theme of transforming identities as she appears to appeal to English orientations rather than Persian ones: on the one hand, the Sophy's niece is drawn to English culture represented by Robert Sherley, and, on the other, her display of loyalty to Sherley is likely to be welcomed by English audiences.

[288] *Ibid*., sigs F3v, F4r.

Later in the play, when Teresa Sampsonia is presented with Robert Sherley's head (which is in fact a counterfeit), she remains loyal to Sherley: 'Thus ile imbrace, thus kisse his louely head: / Alas good *Sherley* did thy warlike hand, / For this defend the *Sophey*, guard his land'. She emphasizes the purity of her love, and warns the Persians that by killing Sherley, 'you haue wone / The Ire of heauen, and hate of Christendome'.[289] Clearly, the playwrights represent the Sophy's niece in such a way as to differentiate her from other Persian courtiers. There exists a combination of qualities in both the Sophy's niece and Robert Sherley. They possess stalwart fidelity both to truth and to their code of honour. They symbolize the openness and freedom from prejudice to be willing to embrace and form an attachment to a person from a culture other than his/her own. The development of the affair between Robert Sherley and his Persian wife symbolically embodies the overall theme of the play: that is, the forging of an Anglo-Persian tie (at a personal level here) despite powerful opposition and prejudice. The issue of the marriage, a Christian child, even more symbolically promises a positive and productive future for the Anglo-Persian relationship in the play, and in the world of contemporary geo-politics beyond.

In the first section of this chapter I have argued that the dramatists of *The Travailes* portray key figures in Islamic Persia as accommodating and flexible towards the English and Christianity. They also show that individual histories and personal relationships mirror, in various ways, the political alliance between England and Islamic Persia. The playwrights reflect this in Robert Sherley's culturally hybrid character and in Shah Abbas's embrace of religious toleration, which presents him as a Christian baptiser at the end of the play. The theme of transforming identities also involves the marriage of the Sophy's niece to Robert Sherley, which both alludes to and implicitly encourages the furthering of contemporary

[289] *Ibid.*, sigs G2r-v.

political relations between Islamic Persia and England in the first years of James VI and I's reign.

3.2 *The Description of a Maske*: The Jacobean Masque and the Favoured Status of Islamic Persia in James VI and I's Court

The second section of this chapter demonstrates the ways in which Jacobean drama shows Islamic Persia as a reliable eastern ally for England. In early 1614 Thomas Campion's *THE DESCRIPTION of a Maske: Presented in the Banqueting roome at Whitehall…at the Mariage of the Right Honourable the Earle of Somerset and the right noble the Lady FRANCES Howard* was published.[290] The masque had been performed to celebrate the Earl's wedding on St Stephen's Day, 26 December 1613, before the 'King, Queen, Prince Charles, and many nobles and bishops'.[291] As commentators have noted, the theme of Jacobean peace dominated masques in this period, and the representation of Persia in these works helped to fulfil and sustain James's peaceful policy towards the east.[292] The English monarch's approach 'followed nearly twenty years of war' with the Spanish, and Safavid Persia, as one of England's most prominent potential Asian allies, becomes the very first empire to James VI and I's pacific policy, or at least was depicted as doing so on the Jacobean stage.[293] I will argue in this section that the unique representation of Persia in *The Description of a Maske* presents the Asian country as a key feature in Jacobean policy.

The marriage of Frances Howard was at the heart of one of the great scandals of the day, involving the annulment of Howard's previous marriage to the third Earl of Essex, and the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, Robert Carr's, the Earl of Somerset's, friend and

[290] See the title-page, Thomas Campion, *The Description of a Maske* (London, 1614).
[291] Walter R. Davis (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Campion: Complete Songs, Masques, and Treatises with a Selection of the Latin Verse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 264; A. H. Bullen (ed.), *Thomas Campion: Songs and Masques with Observations in the Art of English Poesy* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1903), p. 216.
[292] Linda Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 110.
[293] *Ibid*.

political advisor; Overbury, poisoned by Howard, had tried to stand in the way of the annulment. On 24 May 1616, two years after the publication of Thomas Campion's *The Description of a Maske*, Howard was convicted of 'having planned the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury […] while he was a prisoner in the Tower'. Her husband, Robert Carr, was pleaded guilty on the following day, concluding a story which made 'a powerful impact upon contemporary society'. Campion's masque was part of the political propaganda intended by the Jacobean court as a 'glorious cover-up' to justify the annulment, and to defend Howard's marriage to the Earl of Somerset before the scandal reached its peak in 1615 when it was revealed that Howard 'had been implicated in murdering Overbury'. *The Description* was an attempt to confront 'the issue of gossip and rumour', and to argue that 'scandal about the marriage threatens the court, but because the court, in the person of Queen Anne, accepts the marriage, therefore the scandal is misguided'.[294] Depictions of contemporary Persia then became politically significant in Campion's masque, aiming to contribute to bringing a resolution to a political and social turbulence. The Jacobean propaganda used representations of Persia as a favourable theatrical device in an attempt to settle down the scandal.

Campion refers to Persia at the outset when 'the foure parts of the earth' enter the scene 'in a confused measure'; first comes '*Europe* in the habit of an Empresse, with an Emperiall Crowne on her head'; next enters '*Asia* in a Persian Ladies habit with a Crowne on her head'; then comes '*Africa* like a Queene of the Moores, with a crown'; and finally comes '*America* in a skin coate of the colour of the iuyce of Mulberies, on her head large round brims of many coloured feathers, and in the midst of it a small Crowne'.[295] Once all have entered, the four parts of the world start dancing together 'in a strange kinde of confusion', and leave the scene for '*Eternity* [to appear] in a long blew Taffata robe, painted with Starres, and on her head a

[294] David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1, 124, 137-9.
[295] Campion, *Description of a Maske* (1614), sigs A4v, B1r.

Crowne'.[296] The Persian Lady, perhaps performed by one of the twelve high-ranking courtiers named at the end of *The Description*, briefly appears in this scene.[297]

Importantly, Persia alone, out of all major Asian countries, is chosen here to represent the continent itself. It is as though Persia alone is meant to embody all the qualities of the exotic east. None of the other continents in the masque are represented by a single country or empire. '*Europe*' wears 'a habit of an [unspecified] Empresse'; and '*Africa*' is represented by the 'Queene of the Moores', who signifies a people or ethnicity but does not indicate a particular country or empire. The fourth part of the world, '*America*', is chiefly depicted through a headdress of 'many coloured feathers', by contrast to the clearly identified 'Persian' lady representing Asia. Campion's masque both reflects and contributes to a wider trend in dramatic representations of Persia on the Stuart stage (Jacobean and Caroline).[298] It appears, therefore, that Persia becomes significant in two different ways: firstly, it is the only empire that represents a continent, and secondly, it is the only eastern country that symbolizes '*Asia*' as one of the four parts of the earth. Some half a century after Campion's masque, John Tatham's *Londons Tryumph* (1659) takes a Persian trader to represent Asia amongst other countries such as China, Arabia, and India.

Campion employs the notions of '*Eternity*' and 'confusion' in relation to Persia. Each of the characters who represents one of the four continents wear crowns, and like the host country, England, all emphasize royal characteristics. '*Eternity*', symbolized by another character, follows the scene where all the four continents previously danced together. It is as though '*Eternity*' enters to reinforce the idea of eternal royalty on national and international levels. The Persian Lady, alongside other dancing characters, emphasizes an additional dimension. Critics observe that the writer's 'masques often conflate antimasquers and

[296] *Ibid.*, sig. B1r.
[297] I.e. The Duke of Lennox, The Earle of Pembrooke, The Earle of Dorset, The Earle of Salisburie, The Earle of Mountgomerie, The Lord Walden, The Lord Scroope, The Lord North, The Lord Hayes, Sir Thomas Howard, Sir Henry Howard, Sir Charles Howard.
[298] David Lindley, *Thomas Campion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), p. 234.

masquers into the same persons, with the masquers having to reform themselves internally rather than defeat external antagonists […] using nuanced changes which move the performers only gradually towards perfection'.[299] It appears that the notion of performers' personal reform and perfection is visible in *The Description of a Maske*. According to Davis, 'twelve noble gentlemen […] volunteered to take part' in Campion's work amongst whom were Dukes, Earls, Lords, and Sirs.[300] The person who performed the Persian Lady, then, was not an ordinary dancer. From the audience's perspective, the Persian Lady dances to entertain them. But she also stands to announce that attending the Earl's marriage gives the Persian the opportunity to perfect herself 'gradually'. At the same time she dances before courtiers and high-ranking individuals in sheer happiness in order to show a cheerful perfection. From the performer's standpoint, however, there exists another component in the character of the Persian Lady. This component demands personal reform and internal transformation. The English dancer, therefore, should temporarily become remote in position and nature to his native characteristics in order to be able to perform the Persian Lady's role. By doing so, the dancer appears to welcome, to some extent, the Persian culture represented by the Persian Lady. In other words, the English performer internally and externally stands on the Jacobean stage as an embodiment of Persian characteristics.

In *The Description of a Maske* Campion dramatizes ever-lasting glory and mystery of the continental representatives who come to praise the Earl of Somerset and his wife, Lady Frances Howard, in a global celebration. The four monarchies enter the stage in a manner of confusion which attempts, perhaps, to suggest the rush of a crowd keen to congratulate their host for their marriage. Campion employs Persia in order to show that the Asian country has positively responded to Jacobean ambition for a peaceful policy. The Persian Lady, by paying tribute to the Earl of Somerset, honours the English court more broadly. Later in the century

[299] Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 32.
[300] Davis (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Campion*, pp. 264, 284.

playwrights would also employ Persian characters in order to praise London as a globally significant commercial city. As the representative of Asia, Campion's Persian Lady has a special place in this masque. It appears that she is the symbol of mutual cultural and political influences between contemporary Safavid Persia and Jacobean England. The Persian Lady's dance before James has clear symbolic and ritual significances for international relationships. At the same time she affects her English performer, possibly a high-ranking dancing courtier, allowing him to display England's dramatic intimacy towards contemporary Islamic Persia. Such a dramatic orientation appears to shape as well as reflect the political approaches of the Jacobean court in general and James's peaceful policy towards Safavid Persia in particular. *The Description of a Maske*, therefore, offers Persia as both a cultural resource and an eastern political ally for Jacobean England. In the last section of this chapter I examine the ways in which Jacobean comedy handles Islamic Persian dramatis personae with an eye on contemporary political concerns.

3.3 *Albvmazar*: Jacobean Satirical Comedy and the Dramatic Representation of Islamic Persians

Thomas Tomkis's *Albvmazar* was first performed 'before the Kings Maiestie at Cambridge, [on] the *ninth of March* 1614 *By the Gentlemen of Trinitie Colledge*', where the playwright had been awarded his BA degree in 1600. The comedy was then put into print in 1615. As one of Tomkis's two 'academic plays', *Albvmazar* was presented in 'Trinity College hall, […] designed for theatrical use as well as for dining'. The royal audience included 'James I, Prince Charles, and various courtiers who had converged on the university for several days'.[301] In *Albvmazar*, the playwright establishes a 'general satire on charlatans

[301] See the title-page, Thomas Tomkis, *Albvmazar* (London, 1615), and S. P. Cerasano, 'Tomkis, Thomas (*b. c.*1580, *d.* in or after 1615)', *ODNB*.

and the gullibility of their victims'.[302] He dramatizes an 'astrologer-hero', Abu Ma'shar Ja'far ben Muhammad al-Balkhi (d.886), a famous ninth-century Persian scholar.[303] The title of the comedy, *Albvmazar*, is the English distortion of the astronomer's Persian name, Abu Ma'shar, who became known to Europe through the translations of 'Lewenklaw […] 1533?-1593, a native of Westphalia and apparently a Catholic'.[304] Lewenklaw 'spent time in the court of Turin, […] and lived for a time in Constantinople, […] translating and editing eastern texts'.[305]

Critics argue that Tomkis's comedy is an adaptation of Giovanni Battista della Porta's Italian comedy, *Lo Astrologo* (1606).[306] Both *Albvmazar* and *Lo Astrologo* reflect 'anti-astrological literature of the Renaissance'.[307] Interestingly, however, neither Tomkis nor della Porta hint at the Persian nationality of their dramatic astrologer, and, Tomkis, even more than della Porta, keeps the mention of Persia to a minimum. In Act II, Scene III of *Lo Astrologo*, Albumazar refers to 'Zoroastro, figlio di Oromasio persiano' (Zoroaster, son of the Persian Oromasus).[308] While retaining the reference to the Zoroastrians, Tomkis drops the Persian element in his English version. In Tomkis's work, Albumazar says:

> Southward must looke a wide and spatious window:
> For howsoeuer *Omar*, *Alchabitius*,
> *Hali*, *Abenezra*, seeme something to dissent;
> Yet *Zoroastres*, sonne of *Oromasus*,
> Hiarcha, Brachman, Thespion Gymnesophist,
> *Gebir*, and *Budda Babylonicus*,
> With all the subtile *Cabalists* and *Chaldees*,
> Sweare the best influence: for our metamorphosis
> Stoopes from the South, or as some say, South-east.[309]

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[302] Hugh G. Dick (ed.), *Albumazar: A Comedy by Thomas Tomkis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1944), p. 13.
[303] Linda McJannet, *The Sultan Speaks: Dialogue in English Plays and Histories about the Ottoman Turks* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), p. 96; see also, Linda McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 12 (1999): 236-267 (p. 248).
[304] McJannet, *The Sultan Speaks*, p. 95.
[305] *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.
[306] Dick (ed.), *Albumazar*, p. 15; McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', p. 251.
[307] Dick (ed.), *Albumazar*, p. 17.
[308] For an online copy of *Lo Astrologo* see http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/22498/pg22498.html
[309] Tomkis, *Albvmazar* (1615), sig. D3r.

Clearly, unlike della Porta, Tomkis chooses not to identify Oromasus, the father of 'Zoroastres', as Persian. This playing down of the Persian associations of key characters in the play is consistent with Tomkis's playing up of Albumazar's Italian associations, linking him ostentatiously and satirically with famous Italian sages such as Galileo (or as Dick put it memorably, Albumazar 'swaggers in with the name of Galileo on his lips'). Here Albumazar imperiously instructs Ronca, one of the three thieves who support the Persian in advancing his evil plots, to inform the Italian astronomer of his, Albumazar's, new discoveries:

> *Ronca*, the bunch of planets new found out
> Hanging at th'end of my best Perspicill,
> Send them to *Galilao* at *Padua*;
> Let him bestow them where hee please. But th'starres
> Lately discouered 'twixt the hornes of *Aries*,
> Are as a present for *Pandolfo's* marriage,
> And henceforth stil'd *Sidera Pandolfaea*.[310]

Nonetheless, Tomkis's references to the east suggest that he was conscious of Albumazar's historical and cultural background. In one example Albumazar tells Pandolfo, an affluent Londoner:

> My Almanacke, made for th'meridian
> And […] of *Iapan*, giu't th'East Indy company:
> There may they smel the price of Cloues and Pepper,
> Munkies and China-dishes fiue yeares ensuing;
> And know th'successe o'the voyage of *Magores*.[311]

Albumazar boasts about the content of his almanac, which he initially meant for Japan. Here, he appoints it for the 'East Indy company' in order for them to realize the importance of trading goods such as 'Cloues and Pepper'. Elsewhere in the play, Evgenio, Pandolfo's son, refers to the 'glorious Sunne' of 'the East' to describe his beloved, and Albumazar orders Ronca to 'deliuer it [his new discovery] safe / T'a *Turkie* Factor, bid him with care present it / From mee to th'house of *Ottoman*'.[312] All these examples offer a clear presence of the 'East'

[310] Tomkis, *Albvmazar* (1615), sig. C1v; Hugh G. Dick, 'The Telescope and the Comic Imagination', *Modern Language Notes*, 58 (1943): 544-48 (p. 546).
[311] Tomkis, *Albvmazar* (1615), sigs C1v, C2r.
[312] *Ibid*., sigs E3r, C2r.

in a satirical comedy set in England. The play's performance date in March 1614 coincides exactly with Sir Thomas Roe's royally-commissioned embassy to the court of the Great Mogul, the Emperor of Delhi (whose territories were called the Magores) in order to 'encourage the already flourishing business of the [East India] Company', and 'help […] establish friendly relations with rulers in the East'.[313] Roe's trip was not to Persia specifically, but favourable references such as 'the glorious Sunne' of 'the East' implicitly reflect James VI and I's political inclination towards the country representing such references in the drama of the period: in *The Travailes*, Persia is possessed of a 'glorious Sunne' capable of transforming Robert Sherley, and in *The Description*, Persia stands, alone, to represent the continent of Asia. But why does Tomkis avoid dramatizing Albumazar as a Persian?

The dramatic dissociation of the Persian astrologer from his original culture appears to have at least one reason. The Jacobean policy urged the strengthening of commercial relations with the east, and amongst other eastern Empires such as Mongolia and India, Safavid Persia stood as an important country with significant additional benefits for England. Persia was a neighbour to the Ottoman empire, a long-standing threat to the Christian world, and had the potential to reduce the Ottoman's military pressure on Europe by entangling the Turks in their eastern territories. In addition, Persia, unlike other eastern Asian countries, sits closer to Europe, and is possessed of important connecting ports to guarantee commercial exchange with England and other countries in the region. I would argue that Tomkis took the commercial and political significance of Persia in Jacobean policy into consideration when writing *Albvmazar*. For political reasons, Tomkis appears to be particularly wary of mentioning the name of Persia, especially compared with his frequent references to other Asian countries such as Japan, China, and India. It is true that the Italian source of *Albvmazar*, *Lo Astrologo*, does not draw on the nationality of the Persian character. But Tomkis goes

[313] Dick (ed), *Albumazar*, p. 51.

further in his comedy, and omits the few references to Persia available in *Lo Astrologo*. The reason, perhaps, lies in the unflattering portrayal of Albumazar as a 'wily foreigner [and] a con-man [who] preys upon his dull-witted, lecherous, and greedy English neighbours' (although modern scholars have also seen Albumzar as 'a witty social critic' who remains 'loyal to his Eastern origins').[314] It seems reasonable, then, to think that it would have been highly unpolitic of Tomkis to emphasize Albumazar's Persian identity at a time when England was forging an alliance with Safavid Persia.

It is likely that some of the members of the royal audience and James himself, as key figures involved in the Jacobean cultural exchanges with Islamic Persia, were familiar with Abu Ma'shar's scientific heritage. It is also possible that Safavid diplomats were in attendance at the performance of the comedy in Cambridge. In order not to risk offending the English monarch and Persian diplomatic envoys, the playwright would be willing to produce a carefully-refined satire. To this end, Tomkis does make some revisions to his source, *Lo Astrologo*, in order to adapt his comedy for the occasion. He 'chose to cut out […] boisterous pornography', which may well have reflected Tomkis's awareness that the 'prurient King James might be in attendance'. Tomkis also shifted the key satirical focus of the comedy from 'the abuse of parental authority' to 'social climbing'. But the English monarch's presence in the audience and the possible attendance of Persian diplomats were not the only reasons for Tomkis's revisions. It is clear that the 'demands of plot and character kept Tomkis […] from making complete use of the original story'.[315] I argue, however, that Albumazar, as the main character of the comedy, undergoes cautious revisions not only because of his scientific and cultural background but also because of James's concerns over foreign policy towards Safavid Persia.

[314] McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', p. 251.
[315] Andrew Gurr, 'Professional Playing in London and Superior Cambridge Responses', *Shakespeare Studies*, 37 (2009): 43-53 (pp. 51-2); Hugh G. Dick, 'The Lover in a Cask: A Tale of a Tub', *Italica*, 18 (1941): 12-13 (p. 13).

Tomkis maintains a careful criticism of astrology, and his critical view is evident in particular in the way he dramatizes his Persian astrologer. It is clear that for the most part Albumazar stands as an intelligent figure who manipulates his English followers and victims. In Act I, Scene I, he orders his villainous henchmen, Ronca and Harpax, to be mindful, and describes London and Londoners as follows:

> Be watchfull, haue as many eyes as heauen,
> And eares as harvest: be resolu'd and impudent,
> Beleeue none, trust none: for in this Citie
> (As in a fought field Crowes and Carkasses)
> No dwellers are but Cheaters and Cheateez.[316]

After depicting the city as a place of deceivers and dupes, Albumazar portrays a typical Londoner, one of his English neighbours, in order to show how he, a foreigner, sees the city's inhabitants:

> 'Tis a rich gentleman, as old as foolish.
> Th'poore remnant of whose brain that age had left him
> The doating loue of a yong girle hath dried:
> And which concerne's vs most, he giues firme credit
> To Necromancy and Astrologie.[317]

Tomkis clearly touches on several social and cultural factors in these lines. He describes Londoners (in this case Pandolfo) as rich but, at the same time, old and foolish. Pandolfo is a lustful character who firmly believes in Albumazar's expertise in 'Astrology'. By contrast Albumazar is presented as cunning and intelligent. Furbo, one of the thieves with whom Albumuzar collaborates, praises the astrologer in the following lines:

> *Beare vp thy learned brow ALBVMAZAR,*
> *Live long of all the world admir'd,*
> *For Art profound, and skill retir'd*
> *To cheating by the height of starres.*
> *Hence, Gypsies, hence, hence rogues of baser straine,*
> *That hazard life for little gaine:*
> *Stand off and wonder, gape and gaze afarre*
> *At the rare skill of great ALBVMAZAR.*[318]

[316] Tomkis, *Albvmazar* (1615), sig. B1v.
[317] *Ibid*., sig. B2r.
[318] *Ibid*.

Albumazar is represented as a learned scholar admired world-wide. His art and skill in false astrology (‘*cheating by the height of starres*’) suggests Albumazar’s superiority over the hazardous and base witchcraft of gypsies. The playwright attempts, here, to show Albumazar’s dominant dramatic characteristics in order to contrast him with other Londoners. Tomkis’s use of rhyme and alliteration in the latter excerpt is an attempt to present Albumazar in a poetic light, and to describe the Persian with an exquisite language. The playwright draws the audience’s attention to Albumazar’s scholarly characteristics through a pleasant musical manner, creating an elevated dramatic display for the Persian. Clearly, Tomkis’s poetic language contributes to characterizing an Islamic Persian figure as a favourable entity on the English stage. In another example, while setting up the stage in order to win the victim’s trust, Ronca hyperbolically exalts Albumazar’s knowledge before Pandolfo:

> Sir, you must know my master’s heauenly braine
> Pregnant with mysteries of Metaphisickes,
> Growes to an *Embryo* of rare contemplation,
> Which at full time brought forth, excel’s by farre
> The armed fruit of *Vulcan’s* Midwifry
> That leapt from *Iupiter’s* mightie *Cranium*.[319]

Tomkis emphasizes the Persian’s sublime capabilities. Through employing western classical allusions, the writer elevates his character, and, at the same time, familiarizes his audience with Albumazar more fully by associating his Persian character with European mythology. Ironically, without having to bear any punishment, Persian astrologer is pardoned at the end of the comedy for committing theft and fraudulence. Cricca, Pandolfo’s servant, suggests that his master forgive the astrologer,

> […] since *Albumazar* of his owne accord
> Freely confest, and safe restor’d your treasure:
> Since ’tis a day of Iubile and marriage;
> *Antonio* would entreate you to release
> And pardon the Astrologer: Thanking your fortune

[319] *Ibid*., sig. B3v.

That hath restor'd you to your wealth, and selfe.
Both which were lost i'th'foolish loue of *Flauia*.[320]

Pandolfo forgives the astrologer saying, 'since *Albumazar* / By accident, caus'd all this happinesse; / I freely pardon him, and his companions: / And hast t'assist the marriages and feasts'.[321] Tomkis's satirical comedy, then, as the genre dictates, includes a combination of entertainment and criticism. Whilst criticizing corrupt astrologers and ignorant Londoners, the work praises the learned community for their intelligence, and encourages forgiveness on the part of the dramatic victims. The latter element, of course, adds a didactic dimension to the play by valuing reconciliation rather than rancour. The political context in which the comedy was presented makes the play's attitude to Jacobean policies towards the Islamic east hard to read. On the one hand, Tomkis appears to support and endorse the prospect of an Anglo-Persian alliance, deliberately suppressing aspects of the satire that might be seen to criticize such a policy. At the same time, however, Tomkis's satire reminds the English, through the comedy's highly ambivalent portrayal of the Persian Albumazar's character and actions, of the need for caution in forging such an alliance.

As the plot and audience demand, Tomkis's astrologer needs to be imbued with a combination of characteristics in order to serve a range of dramatic and political functions in the play. Hence, he represents both scholarly intelligence and human evilness. He is collaborative and manipulative, while also being an exotic figure praised by the English. He is also an opportunistic character who, at the end of the comedy, still remains forgivable. Albumazar's multi-faceted character stands in sharp contrast to other relatively stock characters in the play, many of whom appear to derive from the stock figures of *commedia dell'arte*. Although the play is set in London, most of the characters in the comedy bear Italian names such as Bevilona and Evgenio. These names remind the audience of Venetian

[320] *Ibid.*, sig. L3v.
[321] *Ibid.*

comedy and the 'Italian […] improvised farce' associated with that city.[322] Tomkis's characterization of the Persian, however, is far from such conventional caricatures. Albumazar's famed mastery of the occult arts, associated with Persia by those members of the audience familiar with the Persian's cultural and scientific heritage, elevates him above the usual cast of farcical characters. He is a 'learned man […] / The high Almanacke of *Germany*, an *Indian*, / Farre beyond *Trebesond* and *Tripoli*, / Close by the worlds end: a rare Coniurer, / And great Astrologer', possessed of 'wondrous secret to transforme men to other shapes, and persons'.[323] Later in this section I compare Tomkis's Albumazar with Christopher Marlowe's Dr Faustus in order to address the ways in which the former was influenced by the latter. At the same time, however, Albumazar plays to Christian fears of the Islamic east, representing in his duplicitousness a threat to Christian Europe. The dramatic scene in *Albvmazar* appears to correspond to the political stage of a Jacobean-Safavid alliance. That is to say, the complication of the relationship between Albumazar and Londoners seems to reflect the playwright's view on the difficulties of an Anglo-Persian liaison. Comic satire, as a genre, was permitted more license to sail closer to the political wind than other genres.

In general, Albumazar's positive dramatic characteristics exceed those of his negative attributes in the comedy. He symbolizes innovative invention and exotic sophistication. In one instance, Pandolfo asks Ronca, 'Are you your Masters Countrey-man?' Ronca replies, 'Yes: why aske you?' Pandolfo tells Ronca 'Then I must get an Interpreter for your language', and Ronca asserts that 'You need not; with a wind instrument my master made, / In fiue dayes you may breath ten languages / As perfect as the Divell, or himselfe'.[324] In order to demonstrate that Albumazar has the magical power to transform a man's physical appearance, elsewhere in the comedy Trincalo, Pandolfo's farmer, attempts to convince Pandolfo to take

[322] Brian Parker and David Bevington (eds.), *Volpone* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 6.
[323] Tomkis, *Albvmazar* (1615), sigs D1v, C1v.
[324] *Ibid*., sig. B3v.

him ‘to th’Astrologer, and there’, he says, ‘transforme, reforme, conforme, deforme me at your pleasure. I loathe this Country countenance’.[325] Whilst Tomkis highlights his hero’s dramatic capabilities, he appears constantly to dissociate the scholar from Jacobean England. Instead, he associates Albumazar with his eastern origins. Albumazar tells Pandolfo, before transforming Trincalo, that ‘First choose a large low roome, whose doore’s full East, or neere inclining: for th’Orientall quarter’s most bountifull of fauours’.[326] Throughout *Albvmazar* Tomkis tends to dramatize the Persian in a good light, perhaps, in order to reflect the historical background of the Persian Abu Ma’shar, and please the royal audience. It is also clear that Albumazar’s positive dimensions are meant to outweigh his evil sides. Until the closing scenes of the comedy, Tomkis’s scholar, whose Persian origins remain implied rather than stated outright, stands as a mysterious, exotic and complicated figure from the east. For Jacobean audiences Albumazar embodies familiar dramatic Persian characteristics such as competently collaborative and cunning as well as strategically diplomatic in dealing with cultures other than his own, these which were also visible in the Sophy, Robert Sherley, and Teresa Sampsonia. Like his contemporary playwrights who dramatized Persian figures in *The Travailes* and *The Description*, Tomkis encourages the relationship between England and Persia by building a picture of Albumazar’s eastern exoticism. He urges caution in England’s foreign policy, though, by portraying Albumazar as a villain. In doing so, the playwright avoids explicit mention of Albumazar’s Persian origins in order to minimize any potential negative impact on English perceptions of Persia.

In fact, to build an encouraging view of Albumazar, Tomkis involves the Persian scholar in the satirical and comic scenes of his work. For those members of the audience who were familiar with the Persian scholar’s heritage, and who endorsed an alliance with Islamic

[325] *Ibid.*, sig. D2v. Trincalo reminds the audience of William Shakespeare’s Trinculo in *The Tempest* (1611) who is dramatized as a jester and drinker. Similar to his predecessor, Trincalo also appears as a drinker as his name ‘comes from the Italian verb, *trincare*, [which means] to drink greedily’. See Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (eds), *The Tempest* (London: A & C Black, 2011), pp. 35-6.
[326] Tomkis, *Albvmazar* (1615), sig. D3r.

Persia, the satirical and comic tone of the Persian characterizes him as a person with a positive sense of wit and humour. For those who were not familiar as such, these characteristics would still make Albumazar an attractive character, because Tomkis employs them in a comic setting and effectively for laughter. In a conversation between Albumazar and Trincalo the playwright emphasizes his hero's wittiness and sense of humour. Trincalo says that 'Doctor *Albumazar*, I haue a veine of drinking, / And artery of lechery runs through my body: / Pray when you turne me gentleman, preserue / Those two, if t may be done with reputation'.[327] Albumazar replies 'Feare not, I'le only call the first, good fellowship, / And th'other, ciuill recreation'.[328] In addition to the comic language that the Persian employs, satirical elements are also present in the lines above. Firstly, it is clear here that a Londoner asks the Persian astrologer to transform him from his current status. He wants dissociation from English characteristics, and to achieve this he demands the help of exotic eastern knowledge and skills, hinting at a hierarchical inferior/superior relationship between the native English and foreigner. Secondly, Tomkis does not confine his criticism of English social norms such as 'drinking' and 'lechery' to the people belonging to the bottom of the master/slave hierarchy. Even an English 'gentleman' tends to 'preserue' such norms as 'good fellowship' and 'ciuill recreation'. In other words, Tomkis attempts to criticize English gentlemen for their 'good fellowship', 'drinking,' and their 'ciuill recreation', or 'lechery'. In this scene Albumazar remains a neutral commentator, and a person who is devoid of these English characteristics. He is capable of transforming the English, having the power to spare what they wish from their previous persona. Tomkis's dramatization of Albumazar here presents the Persian as almost an omnipotent force in control of peoples' lives and identities. He is a powerful scholar with unlimited capabilities and potential, and a character encouraging alliance with the community he represents.

[327] *Ibid*., sig. E1v.
[328] *Ibid*., sig. E1v.

To fit the playwright's encouraging but cautious view of a prospective Anglo-Persian political alliance, however, Tomkis's astrologer has to decline in character and importance at the end of the comedy. To that end, one of the objects of Tomkis's satire is Renaissance astrology itself. Albumazar represents those who abuse their knowledge in order to gain benefits through committing theft and fraudulence. The Persian scholar reminds us of characters such as Ben Jonson's Volpone, and also Subtle in *The Alchemist*. The astrologer resembles, in some aspects, Christopher Marlowe's Dr Faustus and the Welsh mathematician, astrologer, and antiquary, John Dee.[329] In *Volpone*, Jonson associates Volpone (the fox) with 'intriguing villains in general and, by extension, with the Devil himself'.[330] In *The Alchemist*, Jonson satirizes 'greed and social disintegration', and presents alchemists as 'charlatans'.[331] Albumazar is also presented as a villain who exercises his greed on ignorant Londoners. Like Albumazar, Marlowe's Faustus is intelligent, represents a man with 'learning and experience', and symbolizes 'the power of the human mind, which can wrestle with the complexities of logic'.[332] Faustus and Albumazar both employ black magic in order to advance their plans, but are doomed to decline at the end. Albumazar is deprived of social credibility, and Faustus sacrifices his soul to his ambition. The revealing of Albumazar's evil plots at the end of the comedy reminds us of John Dee's arrest in 'May 1555 […] on the order of the privy council' with the charge of 'calculating the nativities of the king, the queen, and the Princess Elizabeth' and 'conjuring and witchcraft'. The Persian scholar's attempts to abuse astrology in order to gain social and financial benefits remind us of Dee's 'astrological calculations' commissioned by Robert Dudley in order to 'name an auspicious day' for Elizabeth I's

[329] R. Julian Roberts, 'Dee, John (1527-1609)', *ODNB*.
[330] Parker and Bevington (eds), *Volpone*, p. 3.
[331] Peter Bement (ed.), *The Alchemist* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 9-14.
[332] Roma Gill (ed.), *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. xxiv-xxix.

'coronation'.[333] And lastly, the Persian's collaborators, the three thieves, resemble Dee's assistant students to whom he promised 'reward' and 'alchemical secrets' if they proved 'apt and diligent'.[334] Such comparisons with Albumazar's dramatic evil predecessors help us to understand the dramatic tradition through which English audiences would have recognized the Persian astrologer's negative characteristics.

Tomkis emphasizes Albumazar dark attributes when Lelio, the son of Antonio, the other old gentleman in the comedy alongside Pandolfo, sceptically asks Cricca, 'How deales Astrologie with transmutation?' Cricca asserts that Albumazar does this 'Vnder the vaile and colour of Astrologie, / [and] clouds his hellish skill in Necromancie'. Cricca's words appear to spare astrology, to some extent, from Tomkis's criticism by describing the practice as 'vaile and colour' under which Albumazar exercises his 'hellish skill'. Astrology does not appear to represent evilness by itself. Nonetheless, the playwright refers to the astrologer as a thief and cheater. Elsewhere in the comedy Cricca tells Trincalo that '*Albumazar* hath cheated my old master of his plate'.[335] However, it is clear that Tomkis attempts to maintain a moderate approach in criticizing his Persian character, which allows him to present his satire with caution and control and with political considerations of the Jacobean period.

To this end, Tomkis shows Albumazar as a victim of his own community of thieves at the end of the play. 'Friends', Albumazar cries to the thieves:

> we haue kept an honest trust and faith
> 'Long time amongst vs. Breake not that sacred league,
> By raising ciuill theft. turne not your furie
> 'Gainst your owne bowels. Rob your carefull Maister!
> Are you not asham'd?

Ronca replies that:

> 'Tis our profession,
> As your's Astrologie. And in th'daies of old,

[333] Charlotte Fell Smith, *John Dee (1527-1609)* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1909), p. 18; Roberts, 'Dee, John (1527-1609)', *ODNB*.
[334] Smith, *John Dee (1527-1609)*, p. 59.
[335] Tomkis, *Albvmazar* (1615), sigs E2v, I1r.

> Good morrow Theefe, as welcome was receiu'd,
> As now your Worship. 'Tis your owne instruction.[336]

While Albumazar emphasizes friendship, 'honest trust and faith', he blames the thieves' disloyalty, and exhorts them to avoid such a shame. The thieves believe that they have been Albumazar's apprentices all this time, and have learnt from him their 'profession', for which he blames them. But Ronca also presents theft as a profession that 'receiu'd' 'welcome' in the old days of London, shifting the playwright's criticism from astrology to civil corruption and social disorientation. Tomkis leaves Albumazar, in this scene, worthy of 'Worship' though. It is evident, therefore, that the writer uses language carefully with regard to sensitive political matters such as Islamic Persia. By contrast the playwright's criticism of Jacobean Londoners remains continuous and unsparing throughout the comedy. It is clear that Tomkis portrays social decadence in a much more negative light than astrology, and Albumazar's abusive impulses in particular. Above all, condemning the English, whether they be affluent Londoners or deceitful thieves, would probably have pleased the Scottish monarch in power in London.

Tomkis's satirical comedy became a notable success in the years following its first performance in 1614. *Albvmazar* was printed several times in 1615, and was 'reprinted in 1634 and 1668, as well as numerous times throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'.[337] The work appears to owe most of its dramatic success and allure to comic elements. But Tomkis's tactful language also plays an important role in making *Albvmazar* popular in the Jacobean and Caroline periods in particular. To this end, the playwright presents the Persian astrologer as a two-sided character in order to critique sensitive political issues. Albumazar's intelligence on the one hand and his villainy on the other provide

[336] *Ibid.*, sig. K1v.
[337] Cerasano, 'Tomkis, Thomas (*b. c.*1580, *d.* in or after 1615)', *ODNB*.

Tomkis with a broad dramatic space for exploration while avoiding crossing political red lines around sensitive issues such as the Anglo-Persian alliance.

To summarize, it is worth remembering that the works discussed in this chapter not only reflected, but also shaped the political atmosphere of the Jacobean period. James's accession to the throne in 1603 brought with it a foreign policy based on strong political and economic relationships between England and Safavid Persia. Such relationships appear in the dramatic art of the period in a positive light in order to encourage and reinforce James's policy. These dramatic works attempt to elicit endorsement from a variety of audiences for the new Jacobean foreign policy towards Persia. Various dramatic genres discussed in this chapter show that the playwrights intended to present and promote amongst the English an Anglo-Persian strategic relationship. The political ties in *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* are illustrated in a fashion that involves royal Persian characters. A few Persian characters, such as Hallibeck and Calimath, oppose an alliance with England, and appear at the end as insignificant obstacles to such a relationship. Individual ties develop alongside political relationships throughout the play. Personal transformations are manifested in hybrid characters such as the Sophy, Robert Sherley, and Teresa Sampsonia. Individual relationships mirror, and, in fact, represent the larger political alliance between the two countries. Thomas Campion's *A Description of a Maske* presents Persia as a glorious kingdom that stands out, and represents Asia amongst other eastern countries. It symbolizes mutual cultural and political influences between contemporary Safavid Persia and Jacobean England. Persia appears as a cultural resource and an eastern political favourite for Jacobean England. Campion dramatizes the Asian country as an eternal eastern Lady who is willing to praise the Earl of Somerset's marriage. At the same time the Persian transforms her English performer, albeit temporarily, in order to suggest England's dramatic intimacy towards contemporary Islamic Persia by possibly employing a high-ranking dancing courtier. In the last section of

this chapter I argue that Thomas Tomkis's *Albvmazar* embodies the writer's cautious approach to the sensitive issue of the Anglo-Persian alliance. Throughout his comedy, the playwright never explicitly states that his witty villain is Persian-born. A Persian astrologer who attempts to dupe ignorant Londoners would not have encouraged an Anglo-Persian political and cultural relationship. I proposed in this section that in contrast with *Lo Astrologo*, Tomkis omits references to Persia for political reasons. Tomkis attempts to keep the mention of sensitive political matters such as Persia to a minimum in order not to deviate from Jacobean foreign policy.

To conclude, I compare briefly the three plays in this chapter. Out of the three, *The Travailes* is the most comprehensive in terms of characterizing Islamic Persians. Unlike the other two plays, it is set in contemporary Persia, and contains a range of dramatized Persian characters including the Sophy, the Governor of Qasvin, and the niece to the Sophy. By contrast, Albumazar is the only Persian who interacts with the English dramatis personae in Thomas Tomkis's comedy. *The Description of a Maske* possesses an unnamed Persian who, despite standing out amongst other honorary guests in the Earl's wedding ceremony, leaves the stage swiftly together with the other symbolic guests who represent different parts of the world. As opposed to the brief appearance of the Persian Lady in the masque, the cunning Persian in *Albvmazar* remains on stage almost constantly, similar to the Persian dramatis personae in *The Travailes*. Despite these differences of genre and style, and the extent to which Islamic Persians are represented in them, all three of these plays centrally resonate and help to shape the political atmosphere of James VI and I's reign including the Anglo-Persian alliance. They allude, more or less concretely, to the new foreign policy of the Jacobean court towards the Persian empire. In the next chapter I focus on the early and mid-Caroline dramatic representations of Safavid Persia and Persians. I argue that, depending on the political milieu of the periods, Caroline playwrights deploy in their works adaptable

depictions of contemporary Persians in order to achieve various purposes. While early Caroline dramatists attempt to impress English elite politicians, mid-Caroline playwrights engage and intersect with English policies by casting Safavid Persian dramatis personae, seeking to shape Caroline English thought through theatre.

CHAPTER 4:

Dramatic Representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in the Early and Mid-Caroline Periods: Entertainment, Warning and Tutoring

Introduction

Charles I's reign and the Interregnum brought with it an increase in dramatic representations of Islamic Persia; the plays written in this thirty-five-year period (1625-1660) which deal in some ways with depictions of Islamic Persia outnumber the sum of those in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras taken together (1558-1625). England's growing diplomatic relations with Safavid Persia in the early seventeenth century made Persia a topical subject and setting for English plays. In the preceding century, Persia had been characterized in English literature by its ancient history of luxury and richness, 'with a glorious imperial past' and as 'a genuinely exotic country, not a malign and unknowable neighbour but a fabulous resource. Like India or Japan, it was not so much Europe's Other as its opposite or foil'.[338] As we will see in the Caroline period in particular, representations of Persian exoticism persist; indeed in many of the plays in this period exoticism is a kind of metonymy to symbolize eastern nations such as Safavid Persia. Towards the end of the Caroline era, however, dramatists used Persia not merely as a source of exoticism and entertainment, but as a topical subject for the purposes of tutoring or advising audiences. This chapter will map these plays in a thematic and chronological order, and will put them in two subsections: the early Caroline depictions of Islamic Persia, in which genre conventions employ representations of Persia for the purposes of entertainment and paying tribute to England in general; the second discusses the plays written in the mid-Caroline period until the outbreak of the English civil wars – these plays frequently have multiple aims, both to entertain and to warn. The next chapter focuses on the late Caroline and Commonwealth Interregnum representations of Safavid Persia and Persians,

[338] Anthony Parr (ed.), *Three Renaissance Travel Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 11.

and, therefore, deals with plays from the beginning of the civil wars until the restoration of monarchy in 1660. As drama responded to political changes, the writers of these later plays focused more on the notions of counselling and admonishing by using Persia as a topical subject; their emphasis turned increasingly to issues such as court betrayals, familial murder and blinding, and generally, corruption of the monarch and his family by evil counsellors.

The following historical background aims to highlight the contrast between ancient and Islamic Persia, and to help shed light on Anglo-Persian political and commercial relations in the early Caroline period. This background substantiates my argument in the second section of this chapter in particular, where I attempt to make a case that William Lower's *The Phaenix in her Flames* (1639) is set during a period in which Persia is a Muslim country, rather than an ancient, Zoroastrian one. To that end, I provide a brief history of the Islamic conquest of Persia in the seventh century which brought about the end of the Sasanian empire and the rising of the successive dynasties that ruled the country thereafter before the emergence of the Safavids. Anglo-Persian mercantile and political relations after the death of Shah Abbas I in 1629 are also worth highlighting as royalist playwrights such as Lower continued to be influenced in their thinking about contemporary Persia by the stories and histories of the political emissaries such as Sir Robert Sherley and Sir Dodmore Cotton.

In the mid-seventh century the Arab armies toppled the Sasanian empire, bringing an end to more than a millennium of Persian rule over large territories of the near east. The death of the last Sassanid king, Yazdgird III (632-651), in the aftermath of the Arab conquest, marked a new era in the history of Persia. The successive Arab rulers, the Umayyad (661-750) and Abbasid (750-1250) Caliphs, 'borrowed heavily' from the Sasanian empire in terms of 'military organization, logistics, tactics, provincial and imperial administration, court culture, and manners'. With the 'weakening of the Abbasid Caliphate', local Persian dynasties such as the Samanids began to dominate Persia in the ninth and tenth centuries. In the mid-tenth

century the Persian Buyid dynasty, 'which followed the moderate Ismaili or Twelver persuasion' of Shi'a Islam, conquered the Abbasid capital, Baghdad. The Seljuk Turks overthrew the latter in the eleventh century, and ruled the country until the Mongol invasion of Persia in the early thirteenth century. The Mongol dynasties such as the Ilkhanate ruled Persia until the late thirteenth century, when they were divided into local states, and then reunited under the founder of the Timurid empire, Timur (r. 1370-1405). In the early sixteenth century the Timurids began to fall. Timur's base in Transoxania fell to the Uzbeks, and the Ottomans conquered the Timurid's territories in Anatolia, Syria, and Iraq. In Persia, the Safavids emerged to rule the country for more than two centuries until 1736.[339]

Anglo-Persian mercantile relations in the Caroline period persisted, but were subject to decline after the death of Shah Abbas I in 1629. For example, the Persian silk trade with the English East India Company decreased in volume partly as a result of the Gilan uprising (1629) which influenced the availability of silk in Safavid Persia. Abbas I's successor, Shah Safi (r. 1629-1642), initially accepted the commercial contracts concluded with his predecessor, but failed to supply the English company with adequate material. In 1631, further attempts were made by the English to gain mercantile privileges in Persia. To that end, Edward Heynes, the agent of the English East India Company at the time, had an audience with the Shah in the summer of that year, but was told that 'due to a silkworm disease, silk was scarce and expensive', and that English commodities such as broadcloth would not be accepted as part of the payment due to the poor quality of such commodities. Shah Safi's unwillingness or inability to comply with agreements, and, more importantly, the 'structurally weak position' of the English in Safavid Persia's market at the time fared the English 'in their silk buying' from the Persians. The English company fully exposed their weakness in 1635 when they lost their supporters in Isfahan, including Imam-quli Khan as an influential figure

[339] Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London: Tauris, 2008), pp. 1-2; Gabor Agoston and Bruce Alan Masters (eds), *The Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Facts on File, 2009), pp. 279-80.

in the Persian court, and incurred the Shah's irritation by forging a 'truce' with the Portuguese in India that admitted 'English ships into Portuguese-held ports'. They would procure their 'last substantial consignment' in 1639-40. Despite the turbulence caused in Anglo-Persian commercial relations after the death of Abbas I, the English persevered in sustaining trade with Safavid Persia in the 1630s and 1640s. Minimized commercial exchanges between England and Safavid Persia, however, 'did not spell an end to political relations' between the two countries as the need to 'negotiate commercial rights and privileges remained unchanged'.[340] This shows that the Safavids held a politically and strategically significant place in England's foreign and commercial policies in the Caroline period.

4.1 Early Caroline Representations of Islamic Persia: Entertainment and Tribute

On Thursday 29 October 1629, the first dramatized Persian character in Charles I's reign stepped on stage before James Campebell, the Lord Mayor of London.[341] The occasion was the celebration of Campebell's mayoral inauguration, and for it the playwright Thomas Dekker had been commissioned by the Right Worshipful Society of Ironmongers to write a pageant. Dekker's *Londons Tempe, or The Feild of Happines* comprises six pageants or 'presentations', described in the title of the work as '*Severall Trees of Magnificence, State and Bewty*'. *Londons Tempe* draws its design and imagery, as might be expected, from specific places and natural features of London, and by doing so aims to glorify the status of the city's new Lord Mayor.[342] The pageant's date of performance is not in doubt, but scholars continue to debate its precise date of publication. 'Both preserved copies [of the pageant]', Bowers notes, are 'the only two known copies: British Museum (C.34.g.11), which wants

[340] Rudolph P. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 123, 134-7, 173.
[341] See Fredson Bowers (ed.), *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 8 vols (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961), vol. 4, p. 97.
[342] *Ibid*., p. 99; see also, Bowers's 'note on the text' (p. 99).

sigs. C 1.2; and the copy in the Henry E. Huntington Library'. *Londons Tempe* (Greg, *Bibliography*, no. 421):

> would have been printed shortly before the Lord Mayor's inauguration on 29 October 1629. […] The cropped imprint in both preserved copies prevents us from knowing anything definite about the details of publication, but Greg identifies the ornamental initial on sig. A3[r] as belonging to Nicholas Okes.[343]

Critics speculate that the pageant:

> provided the Ironmongers with another arbour 'round about furnished w(i)th trees and fflowers are seated in this tempe'. 'Tempe' here signified 'The Field of Happinesse'; it again symbolizes London and the arbour is said to be 'supported by four Great Termes' (i.e. pillars) with pennants flying from them.[344]

It is obvious that this piece of writing is not merely to celebrate Campebell's new position, but also to praise London as the capital of England. This praise is not, however, confined to the natural beauty of the city. In addition to its dominant standing in Britain, the pageant also aims to show London's increasing international importance in Europe. In the play, London's greatness is celebrated through its depiction as a place to which different nations flock, including the near and far eastern countries. In the third of the six presentations in *Londons Tempe*, a Persian is depicted, as a member of one of the eastern countries come to celebrate the mayor's inauguration:

> The third show is an Estridge, cut out of timber to the life, biting a horse-shoe. On this Bird rides an Indian boy, holding in one hand a long *Tobacco pipe*, in the other a dart. His attire is proper to the Country.
>
> At the foure angels [*sic*] of the square where the Estridg stands, are plac'd a *Turke*, and a *Persian*. *A* pikeman and a Musketeere.[345]

The 'Estridge' or ostrich in Dekker's *Londons Tempe* clearly conveyed particular significance. According to Glynne Wickham, 'animals […]could particularize a country. Thus […] the crocodiles of Heywood's *Londini Status* (1639) appropriately figured the river

[343] *Ibid.*
[344] Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660*, 4 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2002), vol. 2 (part 1), p. 212.
[345] Thomas Dekker, *Londons Tempe*, or, *The Feild of Happines* (London, 1629), sig. B2r; see also Bowers (ed.), *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, vol. 4, p. 106.

Nile and Egypt'.[346] The carved bird is said to be 'cut out of timber to the life', indicating the high quality of its workmanship, looking as lifelike as a wooden ostrich could possibly look. 'Sketches survive of Dekker's Ostrich of 1629 […]. Beasts particular to more exotic countries – the rhinoceros, tortoise, camel or crocodile – held their own appeal for the holiday crowd much as they continue to do in Zoos today'.[347]

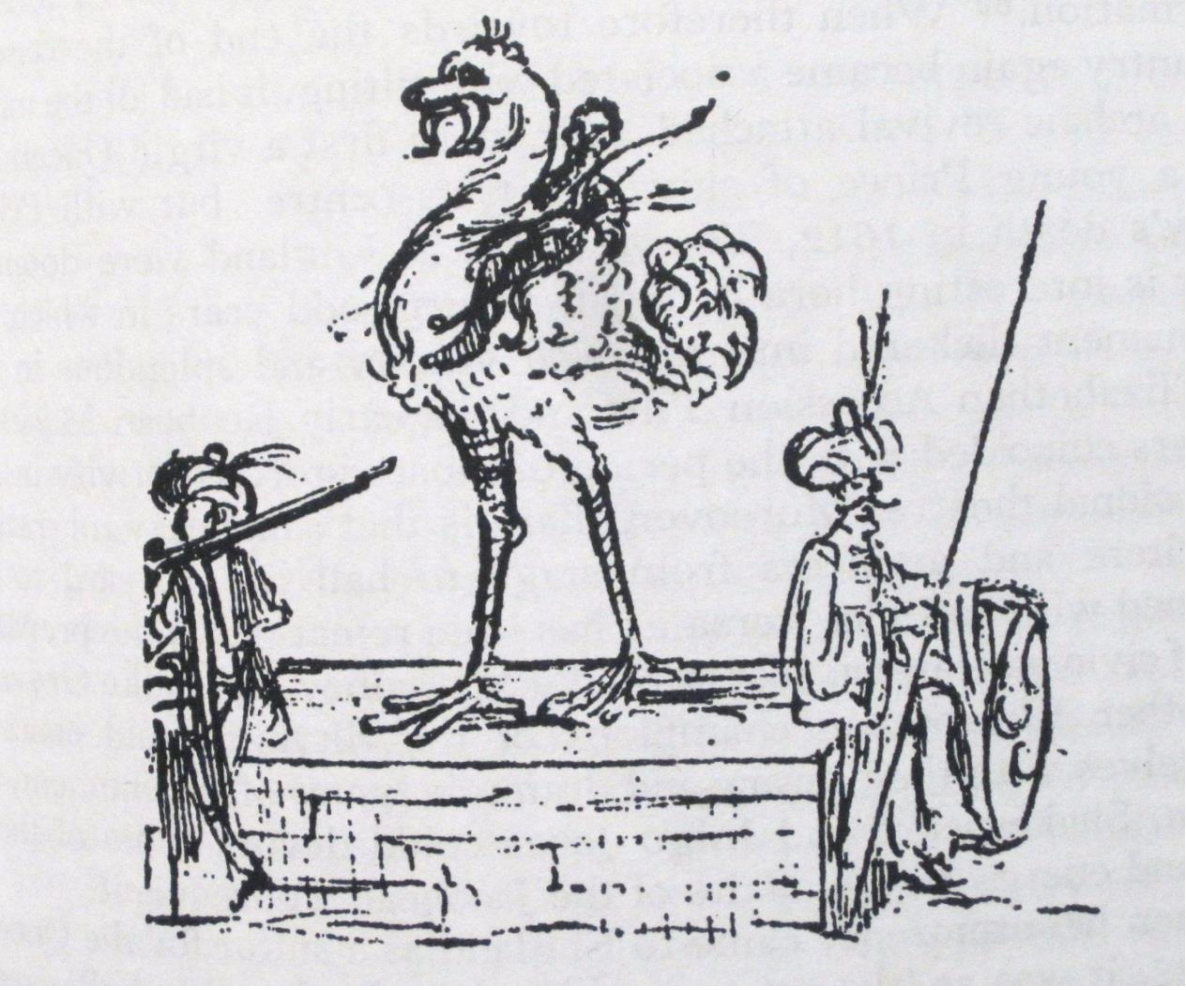

Fig. 1: The Ostrich of Dekker's *Londons Tempe* (1629): from a sketch by Abram Booth[348]

Despite the fact that the ostrich and its rider appear metonymically to represent India, I want to suggest that the symbolism of the carved bird also extends to Persia. It is worth mentioning

[346] Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660*, vol. 2 (part 1), p. 216.
[347] *Ibid*., p. 228.
[348] The image is taken from Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660*, vol. 2 (part 1), p. 229.

that Thomas Dekker's ostrich also appears in the writer's two earlier works, *The Guls Horne-Booke* (1609) and *The Wonderfull Yeare* (1603). In *The Guls Horne-Booke* the writer uses the ostrich in conjunction with the ancient Persian king, Cambyses:

> but on the very Rushes where the Commedy is to daunce, yea and vnder the state of *Cambises* himselfe must our fetherd *Estridge* like a peece of Ordnance be planted valiantly (because impudently) beating downe the mewes & hisses of the opposed rascality.[349]

Here, the author uses the ostrich as military equipment, or 'Ordnance', to beat down the enemy's 'rascality'. In *The Wonderfull Yeare* the ostrich represents a voracious animal: 'so hungry is the Estridge disease, that it will [d]euoure euen Iron'.[350] The image of the ostrich eating iron is also repeated and visible in Abram Booth's sketch of the ostrich in Dekker's *Londons Tempe* (1629) (Fig. 1). In Booth's sketch the ostrich is 'biting' a horseshoe, exemplifying both the bird's voracity and its capacity as a military warhorse. Given that Dekker's pageant was paid for by The Right Worshipful Society of Ironmongers, the horseshoe-eating ostrich must also have been intended as a tribute to the pageant's sponsor.

The ostrich's symbolic significance in Persian culture is of long standing; in earlier Persian mystical poetry, birds, including the ostrich, were symbols of the diversity of immanent love. As united in the shape of a Simurgh (thirty-birds) or phoenix, these birds made a unity by which they could reach the ultimate, transcendent beloved, that is to say, God.[351] Such mystical birds, including the ostrich and Simurgh, were often depicted in the margins of Safavid-period manuscripts of fifteenth-century Persian poetry. In the manuscript in Fig. 2, thought to date to 1557, the mystical poems of the Persian poet Abd-al-rahman Jami (1414-1492) are written, including here:

[349] Thomas Dekker, *The Guls Horne-Booke* (London, 1609), sig. C2v.
[350] Thomas Dekker, *The Wonderfull Yeare* (London), sig. D2v.
[351] The idea of Simurgh or phoenix as the symbol of the unity of love and spiritual flight was first introduced by the Persian poet Farid-ad-din Attar (1145-1221) in his *Mantiq-al-Tayr* or *Conference of the Birds*.

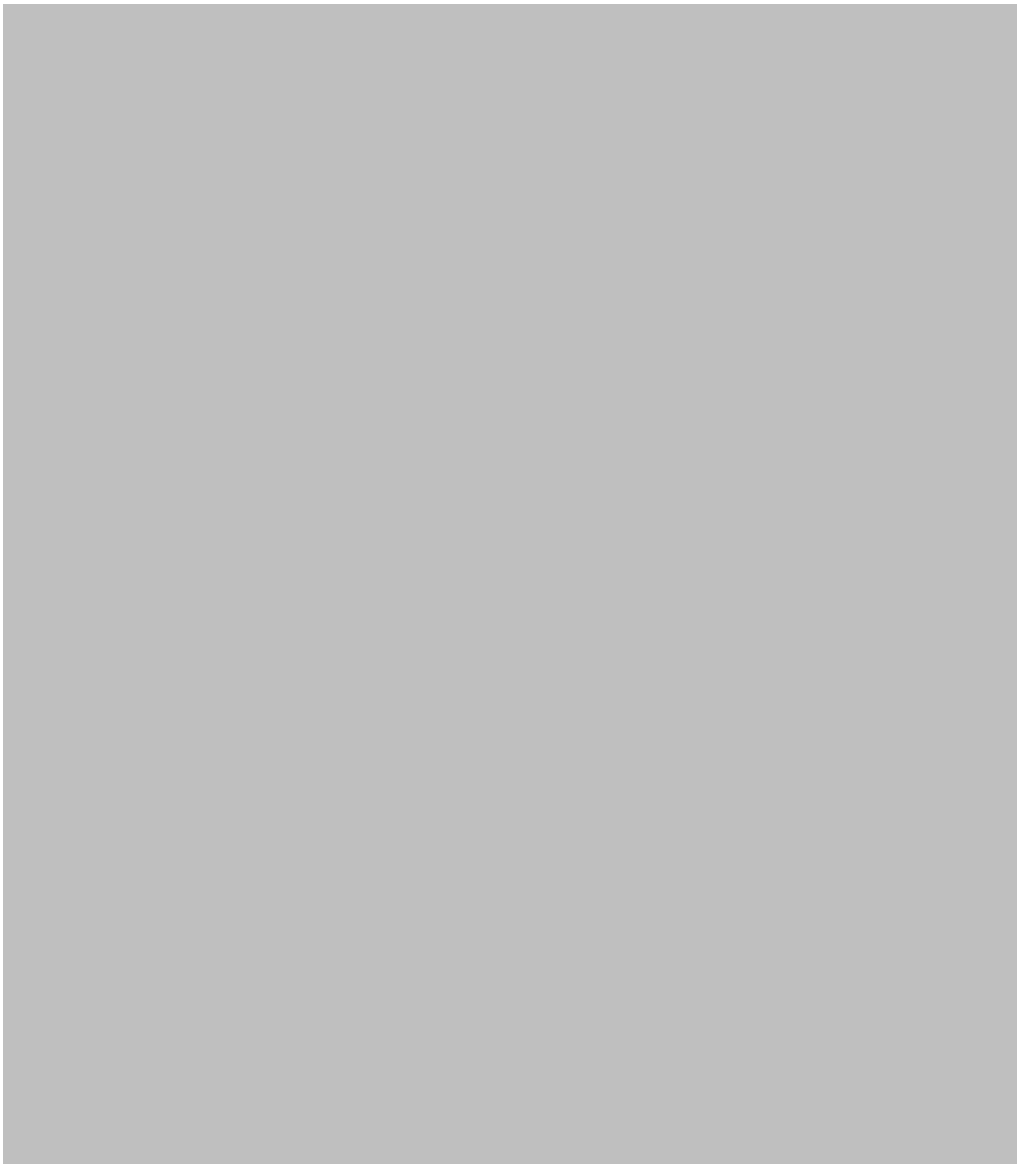

Fig. 2: Folio from *Yusuf u-Zulaikha* by Jami (d. 1492); Origin: Qazvin, Iran. Photograph and description are taken from Freer and the Sackler (Smithsonian) Museums

Jami's *Yusuf u-Zulaikha* (*Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*), is one of the seven stories from the poet's major collection, *Haft Awrang* or *Seven Thrones*. In the right margin of the manuscript the mystical Simurgh is visible, and at the top and bottom the ostriches wander ecstatically in a garden. The poet's praise of Joseph's beauty in this leaf of the manuscript sets the birds and animals surrounding the words in motion, in a joyful dance. The ostrich, then, and other exotic birds such as the Simurgh, clearly held symbolic significance, not only in India, but also in Persian culture. It is likely, therefore, that Dekker's reference to the ostrich here is meant to invest the representations of all three nations – the Indian, the Turk, and the Persian

– with a kind of exotic aura or quality. Thus we find the image of the exotic, ancient Persia, which predominates in early English dramatic representations of the country, continuing to be used in the Caroline period.

This kind of collective dramatic depiction of eastern nations occurs on a number of occasions in Dekker's career. In *The Wonder of a Kingdome* (1636), Dekker presents the same threefold conjunction of nationalities to evoke the exotic wealth of the east: 'the richest hangings *Persian,* or *Turke,* or *Indian* slaves can weave, shall from my purse be bought at any rates'.[352] And earlier in Dekker's career, in *The Wonderfull Year* (1603), such conjunctions (though here with the absence of the Indian) were used again to indicate great wealth and abundance: '*Ianus* made a very mannerly lowe legge, and presented vnto this King of the Moneths, all the New-yeares gifts, which were more in number, and more worth then those that are giuen to the great Turke, or the Emperour of *Persia*'.[353] In *Londons Tempe,* however, although Dekker once again depicted the Indian, the Turk, and the Persian collectively in this third presentation, he took utmost care to differentiate them in terms of their costumes. As Dekker's narration observes, 'his [the Indian boy's] attire is proper to the Country [India]'. And as is clear even from Abram Booth's rough sketch (Fig. 1), the Indian boy's face and clothing differ markedly from the turbans, cloaks, and faces of the Turk and the Persian. Early Caroline drama, therefor, like the late Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, tends to depict contemporary Persia and Persians as contrasted to, rather than conflated with, other nations in the east such as the Ottoman Turks. Dekker's portrayal of Safavid Persia, like that of Christopher Marlowe's in the *Tamburlaine* plays and Thomas Heywood's in *The Foure Prentises of London,* effectively differentiates Safavid Persians from the Ottomans in terms of military, cultural, and political profiles.

[352] Thomas Dekker, *The Wonder of a Kingdome* (London, 1636), sig. D2v.
[353] Dekker, *The Wonderfull Yeare*, sig. B1r.

Having said this, Dekker's narration itself does not make it clear whether the musketeer or the pikeman represents the Persian. Thomas Dekker's syntax, '*A*t the foure angels [*sic*] of the square where the Estridg stands, are plac'd a *Turke*, and a *Persian*. A pikeman and a Musketeere', seems to indicate that the Turk is the pikeman and the Persian the musketeer. However, I wish to suggest the reverse. Extant images of Safavid Persians, high officials and courtiers, show that almost all such men grew long moustaches, and had clean-shaven chins.[354] An illustration in Thomas Herbert's *A Relation of Some Years Travaile* (1634), for example, shows Shah Abbas I, scimitar raised while riding a horse, with the same distinctive style of facial hair (see Fig. 3).

[354] See the Persian miniature (Fig. 2) in chapter 1 where the facial features of Shah Abbas's courtiers are visible. Important members of the Persian court hold Farsi inscriptions of their names.

Fig. 3: *A Relation of Some Years Travaile* (London: William Stansby, 1634), p. 128

It may be argued, then, that the long moustaches of the pikeman in Abram Booth's sketch were intended to identify him as Persian. Furthermore, in the Jacobean and the Caroline eras English drama frequently represented the bravery of the contemporary Persian military. The best example is, perhaps, *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day, George Wilkins and William Rowley. At the beginning of the play, Anthony Sherley praises the warlike valour of the Sophy's army lines:

> Your Wars are manly, stout and honourable
> Your Armes haue no imployment for a coward:
> Who dares not charge his courage in the field,
> In hardy strokes 'gainst his opposed foe,
> May be your Subject, not your Souldier.[355]

[355] John Day, George Wilkins and William Rowley, *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers* (London, 1607), sig. A3v.

Roger Savory and Cyrus Ghani confirm that the Safavids 'thought the use of firearms unmanly and cowardly', and 'adopted them with reluctance, and […] unlike the Ottomans, they never made effective use of them in the field, but tended to restrict their use to siege-warfare'. Savory adds that 'the Safavids did not use firearms at Chaldiran [a battle between the Ottomans and Persians in 1514] because they did not choose to use them'.[356] Moreover, there existed a widespread perception in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries of pikemen as honourable fighters in the battlefield. Timothy Wilks explains the association in the period of the pike with nobility leadership:

> why, therefore, place a pike in the hands of a prince? For a commander to practise with what at the beginning of the seventeenth century still remained the weapon of the infantry mass (though the pike was by then invariably used in combination with the musket) was to become more aware of the capabilities and limitations of one's forces, and so to become a better tactician. To take a position within the ranks, and to fight on foot in actual battle, has always been a prerogative of leadership, but done rarely and only with calculation.[357]

Wilks observes that the pike is a weapon associated with the common infantry soldier. He asks why then would a leader, unusually, be depicted with a pike in his hand? His answer is that it is done to demonstrate the prince's knowledge of the weapon, and its limitations, that his troops have to use. This enables the prince to be a better tactician, because he understands whether his troops can or cannot fight with the pike. Despite all the shortcomings of the pike in the battlefield, the superior tactics and leadership of the warrior possessed of the instrument cannot be ignored. The association of the pike with leadership proves that in England, as in Persia, the pike symbolized political strategy, bravery, and, perhaps, courage. It is likely, therefore, that Booth and Dekker equipped the Persian with a pike in order to suggest the old-fashioned courage of the Persian military, and its unwillingness to use firearms. As Paul Hammer points out, musketeers were the sign of a modern army, and

[356] Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 43-4; see also Cyrus Ghani, *Shakespeare, Persia, and the East* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2008), p. 82.
[357] Timothy Wilks, *Prince Henry Revived: Image and Exemplarity in Early Modern England* (Southampton: Southampton Solent University in association with Paul Hoberton publishing, 2007), p. 193.

Dekker's third presentation appears to associate the Turks with a modern approach to warfare, in contrast to the Persian outdated sense of honour.[358] A combination of the musketeers and the pike men, as Booth's sketch clearly shows, is a devastating mixture with diverse capabilities in the battlefield. Overall, though, whether representing a noble empire, a kingdom possessed of an army with 'potent power', or a conflation of both, the Persian, the Turk, and the Indian serve, above all, as instruments of praise for London.[359]

This kind of praise does not only exist in *Londons Tempe*. The theme of nationhood is also evident in Sir William Davenant's *The Temple of Love: A Masque* (1635).[360] *The Temple of Love* was the first court function after the arrival of Gregorio Panzani, the first accredited representative of the pope, 'who was charged with negotiating the formal exchange of agents between the English court and Rome'. It was an 'appropriate occasion for the Queen to impress on him the part she was playing in advancing her religion', allowing her to 'demonstrate her importance on the stage of international politics'.[361] Commentators have remarked that when Davenant wrote this masque, he was as yet 'unfamiliar with the conventions of the genre, and the entertainment owed its success to [Inigo] Jones's creation of an Asian fantasy', which involved Jones's design of 'fine and gorgeous costumes for the

[358] For a discussion on the development of military arms see Paul E. J. Hammer, *Warfare in Early Modern Europe 1450-1660* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 291.
[359] Day, Wilkins and Rowley, *The Travailes* (1607), sig. B1v.
[360] The masque was 'presented by the Qveenes Majesty [Henrietta Maria], and her Ladies, at White-hall on Shrove-Tuesday, 1634 [i.e. 1635 n.s.]', and printed immediately thereafter. See Sir William Davenant, *The Temple of Love: A Masque* (London, 1634), title-page. In the New Style calendar which came in 1752, 1 January is taken to be the beginning of the New Year. The date of performance and publication of the masque would have changed to 1635 from 1634 since 1752. This is because Shrove Tuesday, the last day before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, always falls before Lady Day (25 March), which used to mark the start of the New Year. I.e. any date in a year from 1 January to 25 March dated 1634 in the Old Style calendar, becomes 1635 in the New Style calendar.
[361] Karen Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 166; see also Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 135.

noble Persian youths and the antimasquers of sprits'.[362] In his masque, William Davenant describes the Persian costumes in the most elaborate way:

> the Noble Persian youths make their entry, apparelled in Asian Coats of Sea-greene embroidered that reached downe above their knees, with buttons and loops before and cut up square to their hips, and returned downe with two short skirts; the sleeves of this Coat were large without seame, and cut short to the bending of the arme, and hanging downe long behind, trimm'd with buttons as those of the breast; out of this came a sleeve of white Sattin embroidered, and the Basis answerable to the sleeve, hung downe in gathering underneath the shortest part of their Coat; on their heads they wore Persian Turbants silver'd underneath, and wound aboue with white Cypresse, and one fall of a white feather before.[363]

In such an allegorical genre as the court masque, costume design, like any other element of the masque, played an important part in the work's meaning and significance.[364] Aside from impressing the audience with the sheer exoticism of the costumes of 'the Noble Persian youths', one of the key functions of Davenant's detailed description was to establish a contrast between Englishness and other nationalities, including the Persians. In particular, the writer makes this distinction to compare favourably English notions of spirituality with Persian exoticism and worldliness, evident in such luxurious costumes. 'The fame of this Temple of Loue' enflames 'a company of noble Persian youths, borderers on India to travell in quest of it [the temple of love]'.[365] Here, Davenant tries to describe 'noble Persian youths' as seekers of ideal spirituality. This pure and true sacredness, however, is to be found nowhere but in the writer's 'pleasant Temple'.[366] Although these 'Nine Persian youths, [with] their habit and their lookes so smooth', are most welcome on Davenant's 'fatall shore', their Persian costume and adornments can stain the temple's holiness and its members' spiritual

[362] Mary Edmond, 'Davenant, Sir William (1606-1668)', *ODNB*; see also Dawn Lewcock, *Sir William Davenant, the Court Masque, and the English Seventeenth-Century Scenic Stage, c. 1605 -c. 1700* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), p. 52.
[363] Davenant, *The Temple of Love: A Masque* (1634), sig. C2r.
[364] 'This masque was much admired for its exoticism, its spectacular Indian and Persian costumes which drew on imagery and rich material goods that were part of a burgeoning trade to the far east'. See Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 161.
[365] Davenant, *The Temple of Love: A Masque* (1634), sig. A2r.
[366] *Ibid*., sig. B2r.

purity:[367] 'we may rid our Temple of all our Persian Quilts, imbroyder'd Couches, and our standing Beds; these (I take it) are Bodily implements; our souls need'em not'.[368] The masque, however, presents a mixed picture of Persian morality and spirituality. While the Persian quilts are associated with carnal love and physicality, the noble Persian youths are represented extremely positively, as 'spirits of the highest ranke', sincerely going in search of the Temple of Chaste Love that lies somewhere, hidden, in England.[369] The Persian youths' aims are entirely noble and pure. After stepping on Davenant's sacred 'shore', the Persian page asserts that: 'For I must tell you, that about them [the Persian youths] all / There is not one graine, but what's Platonicall!'.[370] The Persians are played by English Lords, and are represented as true seekers of divine, poetic, chaste love, even though the court fashion for platonic love is gently satirized by Davenant in several speeches such as the Persian page's speech about the Persian youths' interminable love poetry. The masque also attempts to praise English spiritual purity whose symbol is the sacred temple. It links this purity to a patriotic and nationalistic sense of English greatness.

Davenant's masque uses Persian figures to praise and glorify England. Compared with Thomas Dekker's pageant, Davenant's masque gives a more detailed representation of Islamic Persia in the early Caroline period. Of course, both pieces of work were intended for entertainment, praise, and a way to convey a cultural vision.[371] In a general analysis of the *Temple of Love: A Masque* Karen Britland argues that it is 'a festive occasion which, through the use of mild satire, softens the severity of the monarch's policies and showcases a standard of moderate behaviour more acceptable in its courtly audience'.[372] As far as the Persians of

[367] *Ibid.*, sig. B2v. For a detailed description of these costumes see sig. C2r. Islamic outfits including 'Turbants' are employed as a representation of Safavid Persia.
[368] *Ibid.*, sig. B2r.
[369] *Ibid.*, sig. A2v.
[370] *Ibid.*, sig. C1v.
[371] Wining patronage was obviously one of the other aims that masque writers tried to achieve by using such praises.
[372] Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria*, p. 142.

The Temple of Love are concerned, they represent, from a general perspective, a group of chaste outsiders with exotic appearance. The Persians are portrayed in a fashion to provide a ground for establishing mutual religious values with England, and to contribute to the English queen's attempts to celebrate migrant chastity and purity upon the arrival of Gregorio Panzani, the representative of the pope. In effect, depictions of contemporary Persia and Persians in *The Temple of Love* not only functioned as a tribute to the English court, but also appeared as a defining feature in advancing the English queen's international politics beyond the world of the theatre.

In the next section, I argue that later Caroline representations of Islamic Persia become more sophisticated in their oblique, allusive commentary on contemporary political affairs. To that end, the characterization of the Persians themselves became fuller and more rounded, moving beyond the more schematic allegories of the Jacobean and early Caroline court masque.

4.2 Representations of Islamic Persia in the Mid-Caroline Period: Entertainment and Warning

Representations of Islamic Persia in the mid-Caroline period start with Charles I's three-day visit to the University of Oxford on 29 August, 1636. Charles and his queen, Henrietta Maria, were invited by Archbishop Laud, the Chancellor of the University. The king and queen 'lodged in Christ Church, a royal foundation and the largest of the Oxford colleges, which was to become the seat of their court' during the civil wars.[373] On this visit, three plays were performed before the king, two of which contained representations of Persia. William Strode's *The Floating Island* was the king's first-day entertainment, and William Cartwright's *The Royal Slave* was the second, performed on 30 August 1636. Of the two

[373] John R. Elliott, Jr and John Buttrey, 'The Royal Plays at Christ Church in 1636', *Theatre Research International*, 10 (1985): 93-106 (p. 93).

plays, *The Floating Island* is the only one which contains representations of Islamic Persia. This contradicts Linda McJannet's discussion in 'Bringing in a Persian' where she suggests that William Cartwright's *The Royal Slave* also projects representations of Islamic Persia by employing 'an anecdote about Shah Abbas I [and placing] the action in ancient Persia'.[374] While I acknowledge that there is an anecdote about Shah Abbas I in *The Royal Slave*, I see it as rather fleeting and minor. Cartwright's *The Royal Slave* predominantly includes representations of ancient Persia, and does not involve projections of Islamic elements. In this section, I try to show how representations of Islamic Persia were depicted in William Strode's *The Floating Island*. The play describes the struggles of Prudentius (Charles) 'to bring good government to his people, aided by Intellectus Agens, a wise and active counsellor who was taken to represent Laud', the sponsor of the performance. The play is an attack on the Puritans Henry Burton, John Bastwick, and William Prynne whom Laud wanted to arrest. They are represented in the play by Malevolo, Melancholico, and Irato who attempt to topple Prudentius. In effect, *The Floating Island* is an occasion which shows Charles 'confronting the forces of puritanism' by subduing them through 'the power of wit and reason'.[375]

William Strode, a 'royalist propagandist', was a fellow at Christ Church college and was the official Oxford University orator.[376] His allegorical *The Floating Island* is the first dramatic work in the Caroline period which uses representations of Persia as a contribution to the writer's dramatic warning to the king. It employs a conflation of Islamic and ancient Persian elements to serve this purpose. The warning tone is apparent from the very beginning of the play, in the prologue, addressed to King Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria:

[374] See Linda McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 12 (1999): 236-267 (p. 254). For the ancient origin of the anecdote see Dionis Chryso, *Stomi, Prestantissimi & Philosophi & Oratoris, Orationes Octoginta, in Latinum Conuersae* (Venetiis: Apud Hieronymum Zenarum, & Fratres, MDL XXXV), p. 34. For an English commentary on the Latin text containing the anecdote see Warner G. Rice, 'Sources of William Cartwright's the Royal Slave', *Modern Language Notes*, 45 (1930): 515-518 (p. 517).
[375] Richard Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), pp. 162-3.
[376] Margaret Forey, 'Strode, William (1601?-1645)', *ODNB*.

> Whatever Element we light upon,
> (Great *Monarch* & bright *Queen*) 'tis yours alone.
> Shook from my station on that giddy Shore,
> That flotes in Seas, in wretchednesse much more,
> I hardly scap'd to tell what stormes arise
> Through rage of the Inhabitants: mine eyes
> Behold a wonder; Blustring Tempests there,
> Yet Sun and Moon fair shining both so neer.
> Should your Land stagger thus, I wish the Age,
> Might end such acting sooner then the Stage:
> Yet in these Tumults you shall onely see
> A tottring Throne held firme by Majestie.[377]

Strode's use of 'stormes', 'rage of Inhabitants', and 'Blustring Tempests', is a barely veiled allusion, in 1636, to the danger posed to Charles I's 'tottring Throne' by popular protest against 'ship money', and widespread unrest prompted by Charles's attempt to impose his religious policies in Scotland'.[378] Strode's careful suggestion is that the 'Throne' can only be 'held firme by Majestie'. However, Strode's cautious attempt to urge the king to stand firm did not 'receive the welcome which was solicited for'.[379] Advice on how to rule the kingdom was, certainly, not the monarch's favourite lesson. The king's distaste for the play continued after the evening of the performance, and *The Floating Island* was not published during the king's lifetime.[380] Clearly, the didactic tone and hybrid genre of the play, 'half morality […], half masque', proved to be 'an unfortunate choice', given the royal audience's expectations of entertainment.[381] *The Floating Island* was a terrible play, written by a man who was 'no playwright'.[382] But what role do representations of Islamic and ancient Persia play in such warning or satire?

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[377] William Strode, *The Floating Island* (London, 1655), sig. A3v. Also see Bertram Dobell (ed.), *The Poetical Works of William Strode* (London: Published by the Editor, Charing Cross Road, 1907), p. 142.
[378] For the opposition caused by ship money and the origins of the prayer book rebellion in Scotland see Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life*, pp. 193-4, 226.
[379] Margaret Forey, 'William Strode's *The Floating Island*: Play and Political Propaganda', *The Seventeenth Century*, 27 (2012): 129-56 (p. 129); Dobell (ed.), *The Poetical Works of William Strode*, p. xiv.
[380] The play was first published in 1655. Margaret Forey argues that 'the 1650s saw a relatively large amount of royalist publishing' and that 'the motive for the publication of *The Floating Island* in 1655 was political'; it was to suggest 'a way forward for the nation in the return of the King' ('William Strode's *The Floating Island*': 145). See also Forey, 'Strode, William (1601?-1645)', *ODNB*.
[381] Forey, 'William Strode's *The Floating Island*': p. 130.
[382] Forey, 'Strode, William (1601?-1645)', *ODNB*

Most of the representations in *The Floating Island* involve ancient Persia. The recurrent theme in almost all of these depictions is 'a Persian Cydaris' or cidaris, the royal tiara or cap of state of the ancient Persians:

> *Enter in the midst of the song Amorous ushering the solemnity, Irato bearing the Sword, Malevolo the Scepter; then six others bearing six Crowns, two in a rank. First Audax on the right hand bearing a Crown of Gold, and with him Poet Ovidian a Lawrel: then Desperato a Turkish Turbant, and with him Timerous a Persian Cydaris*.[383]

The '*solemnity*' occurs in the play to honour the coronation of Phancy as the newly instated queen. It is a religious feast or ritual, celebrating a mystery of faith, involving allegorical presentations. Each of the characters in Act II, Scene IV, represents a passion. These passions are restrained by the mighty king, Prudentius, who will be deposed (and restored) in the course of the play. Sir Timerous-Fearall, the character who holds the 'Persian Cydaris', is a cowardly knight. Timerous himself explains his presentation: '*Timerous* brings the Persian Cydaris, / Which drop'd from *Xerxes* Temples in his flight'. He refers to the military defeat and rout of Xerxes which would have aimed to be a joke since, as a coward, Timerous could never have made the mighty Xerxes run or fly for his life. Timerous, then, inherits the degraded 'Cydaris' and, allegorically speaking, the Persian kingdom, and presents it to Phancy, the newly instated queen. In other words, the Persian kingdom is transferred through fear, cowardice, and degradation to Phancy – whose predecessor was the deposed Prudentius. Phancy herself remains unaware of the allegorical irony of being crowned with such a degraded symbol of monarchy, commenting that, 'the Cydaris well fits me'. Phancy tries on all of the proffered gifts in turn. When she places the cydaris on her head, she comments: 'This Persian Cydaris hath made some Sophies / That scarce were wise before: when I sit next / In Solemn Counsel, Ile weare This'.[384] This passage is the only one in the play which conflates the ancient and Islamic images of Persia by using 'the Persian Cydaris' in

[383] Strode, *The Floating Island* (1655), sig. C2r.
[384] *Ibid*., sigs C4v, C2v.

conjunction with ‘Sophies’ – the Safavid kings who ruled over Persia with an Islamic Shi’a doctrine.

But the author of the play makes a dramatic distinction between Islamic and ancient Persia. The ‘Persian Cydaris’ clearly bestows wisdom upon its ‘weare’, for it is said to have made some ‘Sophies / That scarce were wise before’, and Phancy expects it to aid her when she sits in ‘Solemn Counsel’. In Act III, Scene III, Phancy enters wearing the cydaris, and solemnly pledges to ‘Answer this Persian Crown with mutual fitnesse’. She asks Memor, the lawyer, ‘What thing was proper to the Persian Kings [?]’, and Memor replies: ‘Persian Kings did wed their Sisters’. After wearing the crown the newly instated queen notes ‘the Theme which *I* propos’d was Royalty, no lesse then Persian’.[385] Here, Strode mocks both the usurping queen, Phancy, and her stupidity, and the supposed licentious immorality of Persian kings, who ‘wed their Sisters’. The scene develops farcically as Phancy licenses others in her court to marry their sisters, until she reaches a point where even she realizes that the conversation has got off track, and tries to return it to the theme of royalty, ‘no lesse then Persian’. Phancy appears to emphasize the behaviour proper to royalty as much as, or more than, the behaviour proper to Persian royalty in particular. In other words, Phancy realizes that the Persian monarchy is a subject of mockery, and tries to change the subject to save her own dignity. The ancient ‘Persian Crown’, therefore, is presented in a seemingly paradoxical light. While Persia symbolizes sublime royalty and glory, it serves as a device for dramatic farce. By dramatizing the female monarch, Strode attempts to suggest an analogy involving Queen Henrietta Maria. One may interpret this as the playwright’s daring endeavour to warn the royal audience, indirectly, of the presence of a female’s disqualified counsel to the

[385] *Ibid*., sig. C4v.

English court.[386] From a general point of view, the play represents women as rather stupid, a depiction that women in the audience found misogynistic.[387]

Phancy's words in these lines contain almost all of the references to Persia and Persians found in *The Floating Island*. These references are all related to the newly instated queen, and are intended to mock her. Strode uses the representations of Persia and Persians to establish and develop farcical scenes in his play, and to warn the English court of incompetent counsel. The play was principally intended as a satirical attack on Puritan opposition to Charles I, but may well have functioned as a warning to the king too, reminding him to beware of Puritan rebellious factions as well as disqualified and unwise advice. To this end, Safavid Persians are associated with lack of wisdom and greed for royal glory in order to highlight fanciful foolishness in the character of Phancy. Strode's portrayal of the deposed Prudentius, an epitome of the prudent and resilient, but vulnerable king, aims to serve various purposes: through an entertainment, the playwright praises, and, at the same time, cautions the English monarch. By associating the Safavid 'Sophies' with the queen of passions, Strode draws on the depictions of Islamic Persia and Persians for political ends, and reinforces the satirical aspects of his play to emphasize the potential threat of destabilizing ignorance and political meddling within a court. However, William Strode's cautious warning was not welcomed by the monarch, and *The Floating Island* proved to be a failure. This is hardly surprising given the inadvisable depiction of a king deposed, and the potentially offensive parallel, admittedly implied only, between Phancy and Henrietta Maria.

The negative, or rather mixed, representations of contemporary Persians in the late 1630s were not confined to the unwise 'Sophies' of William Strode's *The Floating Island*.

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[386] 'The common perception of Henrietta Maria is one of an ignorant, political meddler, whose love of Catholic spectacle helped to provoke England to rise against its king. […] a woman who had nothing of statesmanship in her, and who wanted only to live the life of a gay butterfly passing lightly from flower to flower. […] a frivolous woman whose nationality, religion and love of pleasure contributed to the downfall of the English king'. See Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria*, p. 1.
[387] Forey, 'Strode, William (1601?-1645)', *ODNB*.

The 'shallow witted' Perseus, the prince of Persia, of Sir William Lower's *The Phaenix in her Flames* (1639) also conforms to such representations.[388] Critical studies regarding *The Phaenix in her Flames* also focus, predominantly, on such aspects. William Bryan Gates notes:

> prince Persius needs little comment; he is something of a braggart, full of impetuosity in love or war, easily transferring his affection from one pretty girl to another. His sense of honour is somewhat peculiar in that he objects to the use of poison to remove his rival, but does not scruple to have men hidden to kill that rival in case the honourable duel happens to go in favour of his enemy.[389]

In another study, Colleen E. Kennedy describes Perseus as 'the destructive choleric', and argues that 'Perseus, like his dramatic antecedents Shakespeare's Hotspur and Marlowe's Tamburlaine, is […] quick tempered, resentful, envious, and generally argumentative'.[390] However, the Persian character, contrary to the claims of older and more recent criticism, is not a projection of negative characteristics only. Rather, Lower's play casts Perseus in both a positive and a negative light, and, more broadly, paints a favourable picture of the Persian empire.

Lower's *The Phaenix in her Flames*, a 'tragic romance', was published in 1639.[391] It seems never to have been performed before its publication, though it was almost certainly meant for the stage:

> although there is no evidence that *The Phaenix* was ever produced, there is every reason for thinking that Lower had the stage in mind as he wrote. Stage directions, matters of entrance and exit, and the words of the prologue and epilogue point to the author's conception of the piece as an acting play. […] The Epilogue is even stronger evidence that he expected stage performance for *The Phaenix*; why it was not produced we do not know.[392]

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[388] William Lower, *The Phaenix in her Flames* (London, 1639), sig. L1v.
[389] William Bryan Gates, *The Dramatic Works and Translations of Sir William Lower: With a Reprint of The Enchanted Lovers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1932), p. 54.
[390] Colleen E. Kennedy, 'Performing and Perfuming on the Early Modern Stage: A Study of William Lower's *The Phaenix in her Flames*', *Early English Studies*, 4 (2011): 1-33 (pp. 17-18).
[391] David Kathman, 'Lower, Sir William (*c.*1610-1662)', *ODNB*.
[392] Gates, *The Dramatic Works . . . of Sir William Lower*, p. 45; see also Kennedy, 'Performing and Perfuming on the Early Modern Stage', p. 12. The play does not appear in Edward Arber's *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London*.

The confusion of Islamic and ancient elements exists in *The Phaenix in her Flames*, just as it does in Strode's *The Floating Island*. The most obvious manifestation of such conflation is the name of the Persian character in Lower's play. 'Perseus' is an ancient Greek word used for a Persian prince; Persepolis, the capital of the Persian empire during the Achaemenid dynasty, derives from the same Greek root.[393] Lower employs various words which relate to Islamic culture throughout the play. For instance, Praedarius, one of the captains of the thieves notes:

> all travellers whatsoever, whether Arabians, Iewes, Turkes, Persians or Egyptians, whose occasions bring them hither either as pilgrims to *Mæcha,* or as convoyers of rich merchandise ever these desarts, must here be content to doe homage, and unload their commodities to enrich the brave montaneers.[394]

Maecha or Mecca is the most important holy place for Muslims. The term is used in conjunction with the 'Persians', revealing the writer's intention to signify Islamic Persia. In another example, Lower makes references to Persia as a destination for the wealthy. In a conversation between Rapinus, another captain of the thieves, and one of his followers, the thief says 'it should seeme they come from *Alexandria*, and are travelling towards *Ormus*, for they take that way'. The captain replies 'then they are rich without question'.[395] 'They' refers to the Egyptians, including Lucinda, princess of Egypt, who are travelling to Persia where the Persian prince awaits them. And *Ormus*, or Hormuz of modern Iran, is both the name of an island and a strip in the Persian Gulf. The island fell out of Portuguese hands in '3 May 1622' as a result of 'the unique experiment in Anglo-Iranian co-operation at Hurmuz'.[396] Various references in the play to Persian place names such as *Ormus* reflect the political significance of Persia in the late 1630s. The battle of 'Hurmuz' in 1622 had been a key instance of the

[393] David Kathman notes that the play 'shows the influence of Greek romances and Marlowe's Tamburlaine' ('Lower, Sir William (*c.*1610-1662)', *ODNB*.
[394] Lower, *The Phaenix in her Flames* (1639), sig. B3v.
[395] *Ibid.*, sig. B4v.
[396] Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 117-18. Savory notes that 'Portugal and England were officially at peace'. However, 'in 1621 Imam Quli Khan [a political and military leader of Shah Abbas I] had requested the English East India Company captains […] to assist him in expelling the Portuguese from the Island of Hurmuz; should they refuse, their trade privileges in Iran and the Persian Gulf would be cancelled'.

Anglo-Persian military alliance mentioned in earlier chapters, and thus, by 1639, would have held a special resonance for an English audience. By the time of Robert Sherley's arrival in England and his audience with Charles I in 1626, the English courtiers must have been quite familiar with England's engagement in the battle of Hormuz. Thus it was quite likely that writers such as William Lower would have heard about the Island.

The playwright, though, knew other things about Persia and Persians. In the first scene of Act II, the Egyptian ambassador rejects Perseus's anxiety that Egypt may have chosen another, more eminent groom for their princess:

> It cannot be
> Your princely mind should harbour such conceit,
> To thinke our land so dull, as not to see
> The greatness of this empire, and the honour
> Egypt receives to match with *Persia*.[397]

In addressing Perseus, the Egyptian ambassador assures him of Persia's greatness; to 'match' with it only brings Egypt 'honour'. Such commendations of the greatness of the Persian empire can be found throughout the play. In contrast, Lower's representation of Perseus is far less consistently positive. On the one hand, Perseus is 'the puissant *Persian*, [and] one of the greatest Monarchs of the world';[398] on the other, Lower dramatizes him as a character beset by fear and anxiety due to his love of Lucinda, the Egyptian princess: Perseus worries aloud:

> But my Propheticall my Delphick minde
> Prompts me alas unto another cause
> More probable, I feare that glorious Orbe
> Where my faire starre moves in (I meane your land,)
> Made glorious by her lustre, and envied
> By all the neighbouring kingdomes round about,
> Should now grow proud, & scorn her beams should grace,
> Besides their owne, another Hemisphere,
> What thinke you Sir of this?

[397] Lower, *The Phaenix in her Flames* (1639), sig. C3r.
[398] *Ibid*., sig. F3v.

Perseus is worried about the delay in Lucinda's arrival, and he starts to imagine the worst with his 'Propheticall' 'minde'. Rather blinded by anxiety, he is unable to see or think anything clearly. In response to Perseus, the Egyptian ambassador asserts that:

> But I interpret otherwise your speech
> Applying it unto the power of love,
> Whose force is such as it will draw a man
> Into Poetick raptures.[399]

The association of prophecy and poetry with Perseus on the one hand, and the Egyptian's admiration for Persia's greatness on the other, make these representations politically and culturally significant and unique. They are unique since terms such as 'Propheticall', 'Delphick', and 'Poetick' never have been used in conjunction with the Persians of the works discussed so far. They are also significant from two different perspectives; the first significance lies in the combination of Persian prophecy and Greek mythology in Perseus's 'Propheticall' and 'Delphick minde'. Clearly, the usage of such terms in the play originates in the writer's interest in Greek mythology in general and 'Greek romance' in particular.[400] Lower's play is modelled on Greek romance, and his conflation of elements derives chiefly from the demands of his genre. In effect, the confusion of ancient mythology and Islamic Persian elements, as I argued in the previous section, appears to make the word of the play understandable for English audiences. In addition, it attempts to associate Persia with an ancient, cultural heritage, and thus present the country as culturally contrasted with other countries in the region such as the Ottoman Turks. Overall, though, by conjoining terms such as 'Propheticall', 'Delphick', and 'Poetick', Lower emphasizes Perseus's unstable mind, a mind which the Egyptian ambassador also criticizes (I will elaborate on the Persian's inconstant mind shortly). Nonetheless, despite Perseus's seemingly turbulent affections,

[399] *Ibid.*, sig. C3r.
[400] Kathman, 'Lower, Sir William (*c.*1610–1662)', *ODNB.*

Lower portrays Persia as a geo-politically favourite destination for both traders and ambassadors.

The second significance connects closely to the first; in the dialogue between Perseus and the Egyptian ambassador, the juxtaposing elements which appear in the Persian's 'Propheticall' and 'Delphick minde' on one side, and his 'princely minde' on the other catch attention. In response to Perseus, the Egyptian ambassador says 'it cannot be your princely minde [which] harbour[s] such conceit'. The 'princely minde' is, thus, put against the Persian's 'Propheticall and Delphick minde'; the former relates to rationality and determination of a ruler, whilst the latter provokes 'feare' in the Persian. 'The power of love', the ambassador suggests, has drawn the Persian 'into Poetick raptures', a state of mind which, as a result of fear, projects instability and inconstancy. In Act IV, Lower's emphasis on such a notion appears explicitly. Phaenicia, the daughter to the king of Arabia, maintains that:

> Farre be it from me; I beleeve he [the prince of Persia] is
> Inconstant in his love, and apt to change
> From one unto another, his large titles
> Shall never winne me to his wavering humour,
> I rather would content me with a match
> Inferiour farre so I might marry vertue,
> In him indeed I cannot, for not only
> Fame but experience manifests his vices.[401]

The Persian's 'wavering humour' is once more subject to criticism. This time an Arab princess blames Perseus's conduct for lacking constancy. Despite his 'large titles', the Persian is passed over for an 'inferiour' possessing 'vertue', rather than Perseus's 'vices'. Perseus is portrayed as a man of inconstant affections and loyalties, both in his own speeches and in the speeches of others as here in Phaenicia's. This inconstancy combined with this high-born nobility presents the Persian as a sophisticated character. Lower's portrayal of the Persian is an attempt to urge English politicians and traders to tread a middle-path in dealing with contemporary Persia. In 1639 Safavid Persia 'concluded a peace treaty with the

[401] Lower, *The Phaenix in her Flames* (1639), sig. K3v.

Ottomans that gave the latter definitive control over large parts of Iraq', including the Shi'a shrine cities of 'Najaf and Kerbala'.[402] It is possible that Lower's depiction of the Persian in *The Phaenix in her Flames* is an attempt to encourage and reflect a cautious approach in England's foreign policy towards a potential Shi'a-Sunni alliance in the late 1630s.

Several pages earlier in the play, however, Perseus is praised for his great nobility. In a comparison with Amandus, the prince of Damascus and the Persian's rival, Perseus is celebrated for his 'ranke and quality'.[403] Amandus describes Perseus to Lucinda as follows:

> O deerest Princesse, take deliberation,
> And enter into thought of what you are,
> Of what *I* am, and what the *Persian* is.
> Then you will soone call home these wandering thoughts,
> And place them where they shall be worth your love:
> *In* me alas they cannot, for although
> *I* had not lost my Country, though my kingdome
> Had still beene mine, and though *I* now enjoy'd
> My former regail dignities and state,
> Yet should *I* count my selfe too meane by farre,
> To match with you the mighty Souldans heire,
> And onely daughter, now *I* scarce deserve
> To wait on you in nature of your servant.[404]

Regardless of the flattering language that he exploits in addressing Lucinda, Perseus's rival explicitly emphasizes the difference between his position and the Persian's. He suggests that, compared with the Persian, he is only a 'servant' to Perseus's princess to be. Even if he had his 'Country', 'kingdome' and 'state', Amandus believes that he would have proved unworthy of Lucinda's 'love'.

By the end of the play, the weakness of Perseus's mental instability and changing humour has undermined his public reputation and standing. In the long fourth act, Perseus's army is defeated and the Persian ends first in captivity, and then in death. With a defeated army and a dead prince, the great Persian empire, praised throughout the play, ends in failure. Lower's play, however, avoids expressing the latter explicitly. Instead, *The Phaenix in her*

[402] Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran*, p. 147.
[403] Lower, *The Phaenix in her Flames* (1639), sig. F3r.
[404] *Ibid*., sig. G1v.

Flames depicts the fall of Persia by way of a comparison; Lucinda addresses her lover Amandus's colonels after his death, and notes:

> Nay rather goe with us, & and live in pleasure
> At the *Egyptian* Court, for I'le assure you
> High honours and preferments for the favours
> You shew'd me once in my captivity,
> And for his [Amandus's] sake, whom yet in death I love,
> But I shall not participate in joy.[405]

Damascus is in favour to the extent that Lucinda promises to honour Amandus's colonels with pleasure and 'preferments' in the Egyptian court. Lucinda hesitates to pointedly downplay Persia and Persians. Nonetheless, Lower appears to represent the Persian empire as a monarchy which goes through a dramatic downfall; after the tragic ending of the play where both Perseus and Amandus die, 'pleasure' and 'high honours' rest in 'the *Egyptian* Court' only; Persia seems no longer in favour.

To follow the argument I made in the beginning of the chapter concerning topical subjects addressed in each play, several notes need to be made. It does not seem plausible for any of the characters in *The Phaenix in her Flames* to signify a member of Charles I's court. Neither does it seem likely that William Lower's play directs a strong message particular at the English monarch: the play offers no applicable model for kingship (to Charles) nor seems to comment on current domestic political or religious affairs in any discernible way. The work does, however, make an effort to entertain as well as to warn of the corruption of monarchy and monarchs in general. By involving different kingdoms of the eastern worlds, and Persia in particular, Lower makes a careful prediction; regardless of their rulers' inherited social status, such great empires fall as a result of their monarchs' unstable personality and inconstant ambition. Perhaps the symbolic image of a Phoenix in flames is also explicable in the context of Persian literature. In Farid-ad-din Attar's *Mantiq-al-Tayr*, for example, one of

[405] *Ibid.*, sigs M3r-v.

the symbols that the Persian Phoenix signifies is unity.[406] The unity by which transcendence becomes achievable, and for which having constancy and stability is essential. The Persian Phoenix, or Simurgh, is the unification of thirty (Si) birds (murgh) who share the same belief. Those birds that show weakness and inconstancy are eliminated; only thirty of them are successful in reaching the ultimate goal. When the birds realize that they have reached their goal, they see nothing but themselves. The Simurgh they are in search of is, in fact, the transcendental value of unity in belief. It should be noted that the Persian of *The Phaenix in her Flames* falls as a result of his inconstancy, and achieves nothing but vanity and death. The Phoenix or unity of Perseus's 'Propheticall and Delphick minde' burns in the flames of the Persian's inconstancy and weakness. While Lower's depiction of Islamic Persia and Persians is, more or less, explicable in the context of the story of the Persian Simurgh, there exists no evidence, or reference, in *The Phaenix in her Flames* that shows the playwright attempts to draw on the notion of the Persian Simurgh.[407]

Caroline dramatic depictions of Persia and the Persians in the works discussed become more detailed and complex the further we go in the period. Such depictions were certainly shaped by Anglo-Persian diplomatic and mercantile exchanges. Among the routes for such exchanges were Robert Sherley's first and second returns to England as a Persian emissary in 1611 and 1623 and the embassy of Sir Dodmore Cotton to Safavid Persia in the late 1620s. The agents of the English East India Company, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, contributed to maintaining Anglo-Persian commercial and political exchanges in the 1630s. In the early and mid-Caroline periods, playwrights tended to conflate Islamic and ancient Persian elements almost consistently, and, therefore, depicted Persia as sophisticated and complex. To that end, dramatists such as Lower attempted to portray the richly conflated

[406] See Farid-ad-din Attar, *Mantiq-al-Tayr* (Bombay: Matba-i Muhammadi, 1863); the book is in Persian, and can be accessed via http://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101076499746

[407] The *Phaenix* of the play's title refers to the Arabian princess, Phaenicia, who commits suicide in imitation of the phoenix.

identities of the Persian characters: part ancient, part Islamic, part classical Greek, and sometimes all three at once. We have also seen that writers have dramatized the Persians at various extremes; on the one hand, the Persians are symbols of royalty and high rank, and the ones who possess bravery and chivalric attributes; on the other, they project lack of wisdom and personal weakness. The writers have used representations of Persia and the Persians in different *forms* of drama, including plays, pageants, and masques, and in a range of *genres*, from William Strode's tragi-comedy, *The Floating Island*, to William Lower's tragic romance, *The Phaenix in her Flames*. In addition, the writers have employed Persia and the Persians to serve diverse purposes; from praising and glorifying the English and England, to entertaining and warning the monarch of potential threats (internal and external) to his continued rule. In the next chapter I argue how later playwrights of the late Caroline period dramatize Islamic Persia and Persians before, during, and after the English civil war.

CHAPTER 5:

Dramatic Representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in the Late Caroline Period and Interregnum: Political Parallels

Introduction

Towards the end of Charles I's reign, representations of Islamic Persia and Persians held an increasingly important place in English drama. Surviving play texts show that Persian characters appeared in plays more frequently in this period than previously in Tudor-Stuart English drama, and Persian dramatis personae became more fully realized. The playwrights achieved the latter in part by dramatizing real historical figures, and by employing characters such as Sophy, Mirza, and Shah Abbas I (d.1629) who were known to English audiences through popular works such as Thomas Herbert's two travel narratives, a first and 'expanded' second edition which were published in 1634 and 1638 respectively: *A Relation of some Yeares Travaile…into Afrique and the Greater Asia, Especially the Territories of the Persian Monarchie* (1634) and *Some Yeares Travels into Divers Parts…Especially the two Famous Empires, the Persian, and the Great Mogull* (1638).[408] In his narratives, Herbert provides detailed accounts of diplomatic encounters with Shah Abbas I, and thereby familiarized readers with contemporary Islamic Persian figures – Herbert had been part of the ill-fated journey of Sir Dodmore Cotton, Charles I's official ambassador to Safavid Persia in 1627-8; Cotton died in Persia in July 1628 after suffering from 'severe dysentery', leaving the mission incomplete.[409] When, in turn, playwrights such as John Denham and Robert Baron conjured up such Persians on stage, they could be sure that their dramatis personae would be recognized by the audiences and readers of the plays. Given the fraught political climate of

[408] Thomas Herbert, *A Relation of some Yeares Travaile, Begunne Anno 1626* (London, 1634), sigs E2v, Q3r, S1r; see also Thomas Herbert, *Some Yeares Travels into Divers Parts of Asia and Afrique* (London, 1638), sigs Ii3r, Oo1v, Oo2r, Z2v; Ronald H. Fritze, 'Herbert, Sir Thomas, first baronet (1606-1682)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[409] Cyrus Ghani, *Shakespeare, Persia, and the East* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2008), p. 89; William Foster, *Thomas Herbert Travels in Persia 1627-1629* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1928), p. xvi.

the period it is also likely that the audiences would have been sensitive to parallels, more or less forcefully implied in the plays, between the Persian and English monarchies. The royalist playwrights of the late Caroline period and Interregnum, in other words, attempted to use Persian analogies in order to criticize, warn, or revive the English monarchy.

In this chapter, I explore the many ways in which, in the late Caroline period, Denham, in *The Sophy* (1642), and Baron, in *Mirza* (1647), handle their Persian characters, plots and settings. I also compare Denham's and Baron's dramatic treatment of Islamic Persia and Persians with that found in two plays from the Interregnum: Henry Glapthorne's *Revenge for Honour* (1654) and John Tatham's *Londons Triumph* (1659). Amongst these four plays *The Sophy* and *Mirza* are the most thorough in terms of dramatizing Islamic Persians in the Caroline period and Interregnum. These two tragedies both present detailed characterizations of the Persian ruler, Shah Abbas I, and refer frequently to Shi'a religious beliefs and practices. *Revenge for Honour* and *Londons Triumph* contain fewer references to Islamic Persia than *The Sophy* and *Mirza*, but they are important in another way; both plays were published during the Interregnum when the theatres were closed, and when the king had already been executed. The survival of these plays with their potential for contemporary political analogy gives rise to several related questions: Why were representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in the Interregnum still used by Henry Glapthorne and John Tatham? How did these depictions differ from dramatic representations of Islamic Persia in Charles I's reign? And just how directly topical were such dramatic depictions of Persia intended to be?

In addressing these questions, the majority of this chapter focuses on Denham's *The Sophy* and Baron's *Mirza*. Both plays contain elaborate representations of Islamic Persia, and these representations play significant parts in the political analogies suggested by the plays. The two parts of the chapter consider, first a comparison of *The Sophy* and *Mirza*; second, an analysis of *Revenge for Honour* and a reading of *Londons Triumph*. The sequence of the two

parts is chronological, although the dating of the four plays is not always straightforward. Of the four, *The Sophy* was published earliest, in 1642 by Richard Hearne for Thomas Walkley. The dating of Robert Baron's *Mirza*, however, is much less certain. *Mirza* was entered in the Stationers' Register in 1655, and David Kathman states that it was published later that year.[410] Linda McJannet, however, observes that the publication 'date of *Mirza* is […] uncertain; some critics date it before 1648 (since it is dedicated to King Charles), and others place it in 1655'. Samuel Chew observes that *Mirza* is 'undated but probably of 1647'.[411] Here, I incline to the earlier dating of the play, i.e. 1647. My evidence lies in Baron's dedicatory poem addressed to Charles I:

> TO HIS MAIESTIE.
> SIR,
> To wait on *YOU* the *Persian MIRZA'S* come
> From the fair shades of his *Elizium*:
> If all the *wrongs* that's Innocence opprest,
> Obtain one sigh from *YOUR* heroick Breast,
> He'l think them *gain*[?], having preferr'd Him to
> *YOUR* Royall *knowledge*; and perhaps done so
> More then his Birth-right had; for he hopes now
> Not onley to *delight*, but *profit YOU*,
> In warning to eschew what spoild his Right,
> The *Flatterer*, and too powerfull *Favourite*.
>
> In old Time, *sacred* was the *Poets Pen*,
> And usefull to eternize worthy men:
> To Rescue Vertue from the Furies spight,
> And lift her *Palm* the *higher* for the *weight*.
> And I could wish it the next Ages Song,
> Had *MIRZA not die'd*, He'd *not liv'd* so long:
> His (written) Ghost looks brighter in his *Bay*
> Then He had in the Crown of *Persia*.
> So shall it be: Gain from His Losse shall flow,
> And *Life* from *Death*, if *YOU*, *Great Sir*, say *so*.[412]

In these lines Baron addresses the living King Charles to honour him, and to pay tribute to the monarch's royalty. The playwright achieves this by employing a Persian parallel, that is to

[410] David Kathman, 'Baron, Robert (*bap.* 1630, *d.* 1658)', *ODNB*.
[411] Linda McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 12 (1999): 236-67 (p. 257); Samuel C. Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 512.
[412] Robert Baron, *Mirza* (London, 1647), sigs A2r-v.

say Mirza. The Persian has 'come from the fair shades of his *Elizium*' 'to wait on' Charles, and Baron hopes that the dead Persian prince will not only '*delight*' but also '*profit*' the English monarch (and, by implication, the play's readers or audience), by reminding the king to avoid the twin evils of 'the *Flatterer*' and the 'too powerfull *Favourite*'. Baron asks in the conventional manner for Charles to approve his play, given that Mirza's tragic example can benefit the king: 'Gain from His [Mirza's] Losse shall flow, / And *life* from *death*'. Baron's dedicatory poem is clearly intended, in part, as a request for patronage, or at least endorsement, by Charles I, and must, therefore, date to before Charles's execution in 1649. Consequently, the earlier dating of the play's composition, to 1647, seems more plausible than a date of writing in the mid-1650s.

There exists, however, a difference in using pronouns connoting Mirza and Charles in the beginning and end of the dedicatory poem. At the outset, the author refers to Mirza with pronouns such as 'his *Elizium*' in contrast with which are Charles's recurrent capitalized letters such as in 'To wait on *YOU*' and '*YOUR* heroick Breast'. But towards the ending lines, words connoting both Charles and Mirza become capitalized as in 'He had in the Crown of Persia', and 'His Losse'. Perhaps, this is as a result of the writer's attempt to differentiate the status of the English monarch and the Persian prince. One may read this, however, in a fashion which conforms to the later publication of the play in 1655. The ambiguity of capitalized pronouns at the ending lines suggests that the dead Mirza and Charles become parallels at this point as though death has captivated both, one in the play and the other outside of it. In the light of Charles's death, one may read these capitalizations in a different way. Despite the king's death, there exists hope in 'His Losse' as from his '*death*', life 'shall flow'. By such reading, it appears that the writer attempts, in these last lines, to persuade and unite the royalists after the king's execution, and that restoring life from death can signify the restoration of English monarchy. These lines, addressed to Charles, would have taken on a

particularly resonant kind of pathos and irony when read in 1655, after Charles's fall and execution. That is, the parallels Baron draws between Mirza and Charles would have seemed all too prescient, and horribly fulfilled by events. The elaborate annotation, the detailed appendix which explains names and terms used in the play, seems to add another dimension to such persuasion. That is to say, not only the writer intends to restore monarchy through his work, but also attempts to educate the readers through his annotation so that they might avoid what led to their king's death in the first place. The playwright's didactic approach in *Mirza*, alluding to fraught and bitterly contested issues of monarchy and governance, is clearly evident in Baron's annotation on the play's setting in the Persian court of Shah Abbas. In sum, we can propose a date of composition for *Mirza* (or even of first publication) of 1647, with a later publication date of 1655 (confirmed by the relevant entry in the Stationers' Register). The following section compares the handling in *The Sophy* and *Mirza* of theme, genre, and plot, their similarities and differences in these regards, and the political significance of the topical references in both plays.

5.1 *The Sophy* and *Mirza*: Persian Analogies for the Corrupt English Court

Thirteen years after the death of Shah Abbas I in 1629, John Denham put on the English stage this most potent Persian king 'who re-established the frontiers of his kingdom, a good deal of the territory of which had been lost to foreign invaders […], and to whom much of the credit for the architectural glories of his new capital, Isfahan, is attributed'.[413] The 'Sophy', a title for the ruler of Persia during the Safavid period, was not Denham's only dramatization of Islamic Persian figures. *The Sophy* features dramatic portraits of the whole Persian court, including the king's grandson, Soffy, who would become the Persian monarch

[413] David Morgan, 'After Abbas', *Times Literary Supplement*, December 7, 2012, p. 9.

towards the end of the play. The following synopsis of the tragedy shows the extent to which Denham employs the Persian court in *The Sophy*.

While at the battle frontiers with the Ottoman Turks, Mirza, Shah Abbas's 'brave sonne' whose 'glory like high *Phoebus* shine', falls victim to the conspiracy off the royal counsellors, Haly and Caliph.[414] These plotters, who 'shew [the king] nothing / But in the glasse of flatterie', betray the king and Mirza, the general of the Persian army. Turned against Mirza by the conspirators, the Shah blinds and imprisons the prince for fear of Mirza's alleged attempts to usurp his throne. Without the king's knowledge, Haly then poisons the blinded, incarcerated prince. The prince dies powerless, begging 'for an houre of life', and forced to 'leave to heaven' 'revenge and justice'. Abbas, now delusional and overwhelmed by 'some fearfull dreame', regrets blinding and imprisoning his noble Mirza. The desperate king dies shortly after his son, saying 'sure one hell's / Too little to containe me, and too narrow / For all my crimes'. Soffy ascends the throne, and starts his 'raigne in bloud' by sacrificing Haly's and Caliph's lives as a sign of the new king's 'dutie and justice'.[415]

In her analysis of *The Sophy*, Parvin Loloi argues that 'the idea that Abbas does in any way represent Charles, or Denham's views on Charles, is dismissed (surely correctly) by O Hehir as fantastically impossible'.[416] My reading of the play, by contrast, adheres more closely to John M. Wallace's and Robert Wilcher's notion that the play does comment, directly and indirectly, on contemporary affairs. A direct parallel between Shah Abbas I and Charles I may not exist, but there are references in the play which remind us of Charles I's 'mistakes made by Denham's arbitrary ruler and good prince – one by letting too much power fall into the hands of evil counsellors, the other by absenting himself from the capital

[414] John Denham, *The Sophy* (London, 1642), sig. B3r.
[415] *Ibid*., sigs B3r, B1v, G4r, H1r, H3r.
[416] See Parvin Loloi, *Two Seventeenth-Century Plays* (Salzburg; Oxford: University of Salzburg, 1998), p. 1xiv, and Brendan O Hehir, *Harmony from Discords*: A *Life of Sir John Denham* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p. 43.

at the crucial moment'.[417] At the beginning of the English civil war, then, *The Sophy* may well have been read as offering a warning counsel to the king, operating as a Persian-Anglo analogy. From the stand-point of such analogy I aim to build on Wilcher's and Wallace's arguments on the play's contemporary significance by examining the representations of Islamic Persia in the play and their topical resonance in 1640s England.

The Sophy begins with a warning. At the outset of the tragedy the Ottoman Turks pose an evident threat to the English and the world of Christendom on the one hand, and to the Persians on the other. In the opening lines, Morat, a loyal Persian courtier, addresses Abdall, a lord and friend of prince Mirza, and warns of the great number of the Ottoman military: 'We know not their designe: But for their strength / The disproportion is so great, we cannot, but / Expect a fatall consequence'.[418] By the time *The Sophy* was written, the Persians had been intermittently at war with the Ottoman Turks for more than a century. Denham's dramatic representation of the Turks in this tragedy conforms to the persistently negative contemporary British and European perceptions of the Ottomans. Indeed, it is true to say that:

> many writers, theatre-goers, and sailors conflated Muslims with Turks, and the repeated confusion of terms, led to a superimposition of the Ottomans' imperial danger onto religion so that Islam became synonymous with Ottoman military expansion. […] Such confusion had a lasting effect on British perceptions of Islam, since this association of a religious creed with an empire cemented the identification of faith with military conquest.[419]

Such perceptions are evident in dramatic representations of Islamic Persians too; anti-Islamic notions in Denham's *The Sophy* are visible in the presentation of Abbas as a powerful Muslim ruler who, due to a tragic flaw, fails in wisdom and kingship and dies. Denham, however, establishes a Persian-Ottoman military confrontation in the play by opposing the Turks to the Safavids, introducing the former as 'fatall' to the latter. Additionally, the fact

[417] John M. Wallace, '''Examples Are Best Precepts'': Readers and Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Poetry', *Critical Inquiry*, 1 (1974): 273-90 (p. 274); see also Robert Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism 1628-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 118.
[418] Denham, *The Sophy* (1642), sig. B1r.
[419] Gerald Maclean and Nabil Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 32.

that both the English and the Persians were enemies of the Ottomans, meant that Denham could present the two nations, England and Persia, as sharing common ground. Denham's attempt to draw political parallels also has a cultural dimension. In a conversation between Abbas's favourite courtier, Haly, whose name is the English distortion of Ali – the fourth Muslim Caliph who ruled after the death of Mohammad – and his confidant, Mirvan, Haly describes his relationship with the prince as follows: 'Have I not found him out as many dangers / As *Iuno* did for *Hercules*: yet he returnes / Like *Hercules*, doubled in strength and honour'.[420] Haly complains that his evil plots, or 'dangers', in order to trap the prince so far have proved futile, and have only made Mirza stronger and more worthy of 'honour'. By comparing Mirza with Hercules and Juno with himself, Haly draws a parallel between figures from Islamic Shi'ism and Roman and Greek mythology. By so doing, Denham makes the world of the play explicable to the English audiences, and by such comparisons finds a way to enlarge these characters. It would have been usual for the audiences to think of Juno as jealous and vengeful towards Jupiter's lovers and offspring, including Hercules, inordinately powerful and heroic mythological figures. It is possible that the play intended to portray Haly and Mirza in the same light, associating them with '*Iuno*' and '*Hercules*' respectively.

Throughout *The Sophy*, Denham characterizes figures such as Mirza in relation both to classical Persian and classical Roman and Greek mythology. Political and cultural analogies are thus intertwined and made inseparable. For example, when Haly and Abbas are speaking of Mirza, Haly asserts: 'I'me sure hee's honoured, and lov'd by all; / The Souldiers god, the peoples Idoll'. The king replies: 'I *Haly,* / The Persians still worship the rising sunne'.[421] This dialogue is significant in several ways. Literally speaking, the lines above show that 'honoured' Mirza is loved by his 'Souldiers' like an 'Idoll' and even more, like a 'rising sunne'. Metaphorically, 'the rising sunne' refers to the heir apparent, or monarch-in-waiting,

[420] Denham, *The Sophy* (1642), sig. B4v.
[421] *Ibid*., sig. C3v.

by whose rise Abbas is frightened. Abbas's allusion to the 'rising sunne' employs a commonplace phrase, certainly, but one that held additional significance in classical Persian culture. Light in general, here represented by the 'rising sunne', had been a holy element for the Zoroastrians of Persia for centuries. This is particularly evident during the Achaemenid and Sassanid empires.

Denham's usage of classical Persian elements becomes increasingly visible throughout the play. Elsewhere in the tragedy the princess, Mirza's wife, addresses him and says:

> Waking I know no cause, but in my sleepe
> My fancy still presents such dreames, the terrors,
> As did *Andromache's* the night before
> Her *Hector* fell; but sure 'tis more then fancie.
> Either our guardian Angels, or the Gods
> Inspire us, or some naturall instinct,
> Fore-tells approaching dangers.[422]

Here, the princess draws on a shared European culture, from Homer's *Iliad,* to further familiarize the audiences with herself and Mirza. She also attempts to suggest a war-like condition from which she struggles, like Andromache, to save Mirza and herself. She fails and the prince is detained and blinded. After he is blinded in his long soliloquy Mirza points to another classical mythological figure:

> Death, and what followes death, 'twas that that stamp't
> A terrour on the brow of Kings; that gave
> Fortune her deity, and Jove his thunder.
> Banish but fear of death, those Gyant names
> Of Majestie, Power, Empire, finding nothing
> To be their object, will be nothing too:
> Then he dares yet be free that dares to die,
> May laugh at the grim face of law and scorne,
> The cruell wrinkle of a Tyrants brow.[423]

By presenting Mirza's speech in this style, Denham tries to accommodate Persian dramatis personae to Caroline English audiences by making the Persians speak like Londoners. Men's fear of death, Mirza implies, is what makes cowards of us all: this fear of death makes a

[422] *Ibid*., sig. D4v.
[423] *Ibid*., sig. E3v.

goddess of Fortune – because men are afraid that, if she turns against them, they might die – and fuels Jove's thunder, as men who fear death cower before his anger. By contrast, when men are unafraid of death, then 'Majestie, Power [and] Empire', which depend upon men's fear of death for their high status in the world, lose that status. In contrast, Abbas, Mirza's father, is associated with Islamic prophecy rather than ancient and classical figures. In the third act Denham shows the Persian king's cultural attachment to the Muslim prophet. Having manipulated Abbas and persuaded him to turn against his son, Haly and Caliph now, ironically, become the reluctant instruments of the Shah's anger against his son. The tyrant Abbas orders Caliph to be absolutely obedient to his will, and when necessary, to 'varnish' his 'actions' with an appearance of religiosity:

> We but advance you to advance our purposes:
> Nay, even in all religions
> Their learnedst, and their seeming holiest men, but serve
> To worke their masters ends; and varnish o're
> Their actions, with some specious pious colour.
> No scruples; doo't, or by our holy Prophet,
> The death my rage intends to him [Mirza], is thine.[424]

Abbas threatens Caliph that his disobedience may lead to his death, and swears to it 'by our holy Prophet', implying, at the same time, that the blinding and death he intends for Mirza is also sanctioned or endorsed 'by our holy Prophet'. But courtiers loyal to Mirza are well aware of Haly's and Caliph's evil conspiracy. In their dialogue, Abdall and Morat condemn Caliph's religious hypocrisy. Morat exclaims: 'But oh this Saint-like Devill! / This damned Caliph, to make the King beleeve / To kill his sonne, 's religion'. Morat means that Caliph has made the king believe that killing Mirza is a religious deed. Abdall replies:

> Poor Princes, how are they mis-led,
> While they, whose sacred office 'tis to bring
> Kings to obey their God, and men their King,
> By these mysterious linkes to fixe and tye
> Them to the foot-stoole of Deity:
> Even by these men, Religion, that should be

[424] *Ibid.*, sig. D1v.

The curbe, is made the spurre to tyrannie.[425]

It is worth noting that the 'Religion', here, is clearly meant to be Islam, and the context is the Persian court. Religion, here, is compared to a curb that is meant to control the horse of tyranny. On the contrary, it functions as a spur to provoke the tyrannical horse of the Islamic Persian court. The 'tyrannie' that Abdall refers to is that of the princes and kings, driven on by evil counsellors. 'Princes' in its plural form suggests that the victims of such counsellors are not confined to Islamic Persia. Perhaps, the playwright intends to imply how other princes of the Islamic world, particularly those of the Ottomans, are also 'mis-led' by the same unscrupulous clerical advisors who induce a monarch, or prince, to take a pernicious religious path. But this may have been understood by Caroline English audiences in a different way. Outside the context of the Persian court, Abdall's lines apply to any princes, 'sacred office[s]', kings and religions. Those who possess such offices are responsible for guiding monarchs and men towards the right way. But with them failing to do so, and with the 'Kings' and 'men' being misled, religious leaders such as William Laud are left to feel Abdall's lashing criticism.

At this stage, Denham's attempt is to emphasize further the differences between various clashing attitudes in the Persian court which he established earlier in the play. In addition, the playwright, by implication, intends to leave Caroline English readers/audiences to draw their own conclusions with regards to contemporary England, allowing them to create dramatic parallels with opposing strands of English political thought in the period, including the fundamental divide between parliamentarians and royalists. By the time the tragedy comes to an end we see that one of the members of Mirza's family, his son Soffy, ascends the throne, and continues the Persian monarchy. All other characters, including Abbas, Haly, and Caliph, associated with Islamic elements are destined to die. Soffy starts his reign by

[425] *Ibid*., sig. E1v.

sacrificing Haly and Caliph in order to revive justice, and by doing so symbolically purges the state. In addition, linking Persian characters with western classical figures such as Juno and Hercules appears to be the writer's ambitious attempt to conjoin Persia and England even more. It is possible that real historical Persians would not use such references to western mythology. But by adapting Persian dramatis personae to such mythology the playwright reduces the cultural distance between the Islamic Persians and the English. Denham, by doing so, prepares the English audiences for the introduction of political parallels. But what are these parallels, and what topical references do they carry?

Haly's representation is multidimensional; firstly, his name has religious connotations; secondly, he is dramatized as an evil plotter; and lastly, he is an influential and favourite courtier. The introduction of Haly into the play reminds the English audiences of an English parallel. O Hehir's observation, then, that 'those so minded could see in the intriguing favorite, Haly, a representation either of Strafford, or of all the ''evil councillors'' about King Charles' is persuasive.[426] Haly succeeds in manipulating the Persian king, and to this end, uses his authority to persuade Abbas towards tragic purposes. In this regard, Haly is clearly a version of Thomas Wentworth (1593-1641), the First Earl of Strafford, whose 'radicalism […] recommended him to the king as chief councillor when Charles realized that the very foundations of his monarchy were about to crumble in the summer of 1639'.[427] A combination of religious authority and evilness, however, is more fully dramatized in one of Denham's other characters. Caliph, as the name immediately suggests, is the religious leader in the tragedy, and the one who attempts to mislead the Lords of the Council and the king by saying that Mirza's 'Ambition, [is] the disease of Vertue, bred / Like surfets from an

[426] O Hehir, *Harmony from Discords*, p. 42.
[427] Ronald G. Asch, 'Wentworth, Thomas, first earl of Strafford (1593-1641)', *ODNB*.

undigested fullness, / [which] Meets death in that which is the meanes of life'.[428] Caliph goes further in raising his own status, and claims divine authority for his words. He declares that:

> Great *Mahomet*, to whom our Soveraigne life,
> And Empire is most deare, appearing, thus
> Advis'd me in a vision: Tell the King,
> The Prince his sonne attempts his life and Crowne

and that these 'are the Prophets revelations'.[429] Caliph accuses Mirza of being ambitious for the throne while his father still reigns. Only an apparently religiously-inspired man, informed by the revelation of 'Great *Mahomet*', could hope to persuade the Lords of the Council of Mirza's alleged treason. Suggesting that he is an Imam, Caliph issues a fatwa, a holy order given by a religious authority, in order to eliminate Mirza. In fact, he attempts to persuade by intimating that his information comes from a divine vision, from the Prophet's revelation, and that these must not be slighted or disregarded. In such apparently holy decision, however, lies Caliph's and Haly's personal achievement in ruining the prince, and thus in violating the Persian monarchy.

Like that of Haly's, the figure that Caliph represents would have been familiar to the audiences of this tragedy during the English civil war. The 'grand *Caliph* shall set a grave religious face / Upon the businesse' of conspiracy against the royal family.[430] 'The evil […], who cloaks with religion the sins of the Shah', and the powerful religious figure in the Caroline High Church 'could be identified with Archbishop [William] Laud'.[431] At the same time, from the royalists' perspective, the general religious prejudice suggested by the person of Caliph could be interpreted as criticism of puritan attributes.[432] Their 'religious face[s]' hide a sinister intention beneath what is apparent. They attempt to dethrone royalty by means

[428] Denham, *The Sophy* (1642), sig. D1v.
[429] *Ibid.*, sig. D1v.
[430] *Ibid.*, sig. C4r.
[431] O Hehir, *Harmony from Discords*, p. 42.
[432] I am aware that, when writing about 'The Puritan Revolution', John Morrill considers numerous types of puritan opposition to 'Anglicanism' during 1640-1660, such as the 'Presbyterians' and 'Independents'. But in this chapter, I simply use the term 'puritan' in its general sense, i.e. in opposition to the high church Anglican party of William Laud. See Morrill, 'The Puritan Revolution', in John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 67-88 (pp. 67-8).

of the 'cloaks' of religious authority. Some of Denham's poetry also reflect his hostility towards religious zeal. For example, in 'The True Presbyterian' (1661) he refers to a '*Presbyter*' as a 'Monstrous thing' who lies 'for gain unto the Holy-Ghost'.[433] In 'The Progress of Learning' (1668), Denham praises 'the Sun of knowledge' and human intellect, while creating a sharp contrast between religious prejudice and intellectual reasoning.[434] In *The Sophy,* the playwright criticizes religious fraud in the state represented by politicians and religious leaders such as Strafford and Laud. By depicting Anglo-Persian religious parallels on stage, Denham prepares the audience for an even more politically sensitive analogy involving the English monarch.

O Hehir rejects the idea, on the one hand, 'that Abbas does in any way represent Charles, or Denham's views on Charles', although he does identify Caliph, on the other, with 'Archbishop Laud'. Although this observation seems contradictory, I find some of O Hehir's arguments persuasive. But I also argue that political parallels do exist between Persian figures in the play and Charles, and are not, at all, 'fantastically impossible'. Such parallels, however, are of a different kind to the one-to-one analogies between Haly and Strafford, or Caliph and Laud. Instead, Denham attempts to gesture towards Charles's errors via two different dramatized royal figures, Abbas and Mirza. In other words, these two royal Persians embody, in combination, some of the mistakes Charles made during his reign and particularly during the civil war.[435] One side of this analogy, that is to say the Mirza-Charles parallel, would be reinforced by Robert Baron a couple of years later in the dedicatory poem of his tragedy, *Mirza*. But how can Mirza and Abbas be parallels to Charles in Denham's tragedy?

[433] John Denham, 'The True Presbyterian without Disguise' (London, 1661), sig. A2r.
[434] Robert Anderson, M.D. (ed.), *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, 13 vols (London: printed for John and Arthur Arch, and for Bell and Bradfute and I. Mundell and Co., 1792-5), vol. 5, p. 687.
[435] It is as equally possible that Denham is critiquing the bad advice that Charles has received from his advisors, including Strafford and Laud, during the eleven years of Charles's Personal Rule. See Richard Cust's discussion on 'Laudianism and the Personal Rule' in Richard Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), pp. 133-48.

As outlined above, there exists a palpable difference between Denham's presentation of the religious approaches taken by Mirza and Abbas. While Denham depicts Mirza and his followers as classical Persians with no inclination to Islamic thought, Abbas is portrayed as a man who sees himself as a transcendental agent on earth whose presence and empire is protected by the holy prophet, Mohammad. Mirza refers to numerous classical mythological Gods in his speech, whereas Abbas repeatedly uses Islamic terms.[436] This kind of religious distinction between the two royal characters mirrors the kind of distinction that existed between Anglicans and puritans. At the same time, a directly political parallel exists between Mirza and Charles, in that both leave 'the capital at the crucial moment', one in the play and the other in reality.[437] 'Charles's decision-making in early January 1642 may have been rational, but this did not make it any less disastrous. […] He had surrendered control of London to his enemies […] by withdrawing from' the city.[438] We also see that Denham favours Mirza's party, as one would expect from a royalist writer, by showing Soffy ascend the throne at the end of the play to continue the royal order despite all disruptions and devastations caused for the royal family. This, in 1642, may have seemed the most encouraging part of a bitter story. On the other side of this analogy the tyrant Abbas and the courtiers around him may well have evoked puritan parliamentarians in the audiences' mind. The common ground between Abbas and his courtiers, and the puritan parliamentarians, is that they both employ religious ideology to advance their own purposes. Perhaps from the English royalists' perspective, the way in which Abbas uses Caliph to maintain the crown by the help of religious authority would hint, later in the period, at the way Oliver Cromwell exploits religious piety to become the protector of the commonwealth. Denham repeatedly and explicitly describes Abbas as a tyrant king. Such a characteristic would conform to 'the concept of parliamentary tyranny' on the side of Oliver Cromwell and other puritan forces

[436] Denham, *The Sophy* (1642), sigs C4r, D1v, E3v.
[437] See Wallace, '''Examples Are Best Precepts''', p. 274; Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism 1628-1660*, p. 118.
[438] Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life*, pp. 326-7.

under his command during the civil war and Interregnum.[439] Abbas, though, is not successful in winning any kind of war against his son, though his emphasized characteristics in this tragedy, such as tyranny, match those of his puritan parallels in the English civil war.

In a conversation between the king and his lords, and in response to an attack by the Turkish army, whose 'numbers [are] five times' more than theirs, Abbas orders his lords to 'let twenty thousand men be raised'. But the king is soon informed by the lords that his 'Treasures / Are quite exhausted', and that 'the Exchequer's empty'. Abbas replies: 'talke not to me of Treasures, or Exchequers, / Send for five hundred of the wealthiest Burgers, / Their shops and ships are my Exchequer'. Abdall, following an aside which reads ''twere better you you [*sic*] could say their hearts', continues 'Sir upon your late demands / They answered they were poor', to which, unconvinced, Abbas replies:

> Sure the villaines hold a correspondence
> With the enemy, and thus they would betray us:
> First give us up to want, then to contempt,
> And then to ruine; but tell those sonnes of earth
> Ile have their money, or their heads.
> 'Tis my command, when such occasions are,
> No Plea must serve, 'tis cruelty to spare.[440]

In the light of the Ottoman military attack the king orders an additional increase in the number of troops despite lack of financial resources. In an act of tyranny, Abbas attempts officially to tax 'five hundred of the wealthiest Burgers', or citizens, in order to supply the money required for military reinforcements. He particularly refers to 'their shops and ships' from which money is to be provided by the lords of the Persian court. Abdall's aside shows his resentment for the king's order to extract more money from people who are already poor. Now delusional, the tyrant Abbas accuses the poor of being in league with the Turks in order to betray the Persian monarchy. Abbas also suggests that he himself is possessed of a God-like transcendental status, far above the ordinary 'sonnes of earth'. But more importantly,

[439] Richard Cust and Anne Hughes (eds), *The English Civil War* (London: Arrowsmith, 1997), p. 16.
[440] Denham, *The Sophy* (1642), sig. B2r-v.

Abbas's reference to 'shops and ships', as the king's 'Exchequer', is likely to have struck a resonant contemporary note in 1642. The mention of ships reminds the audiences of Charles's fiscal expedients with ship money, funds from which financed a fleet of ships launched by Charles in the summer of 1635, to give England 'renewed credibility as a military force'.[441] This was despite the fact that Charles was 'persuaded [that] a ship money levy proposed in February 1628 [was] impracticable'.[442] Denham dramatizes Abbas as an analogy for Charles in order to warn, indirectly, about the English monarch's resented policy. Delusional and desperate Abbas dies at the end while regretting his past decisions, and, thus, leaves a powerful tragic message. The royalist playwright, Denham, however, is aware of the dangers in suggesting death for the English monarch as a result of his despised policies. The parallel between Charles and the Persian Abbas is sufficiently diffuse, and mitigated by the Persian setting, to avoid any danger of reprisal against Denham by more zealous, hardline members of the king's party.

Ship money was the most controversial of the financial devices during Charles's Personal Rule (1629-1640). It had 'ancient origins, for since Plantagenet times the crown had occasionally, in times of special need, required the ports and maritime countries to furnish ships for the navy or money in lieu'. In 1619, James I had levied '£48, 555 in Ship Money'. For the first time, Charles's government extended it to the whole country in 1628, demanding a total of £173, 411 in an attempt to increase the government's revenue. The decision was withdrawn later 'in face of hostile reactions from many counties'. Further attempts were made to attract money in subsequent years, enforcing the policy as an 'annual levy instead of an infrequent expedient', which was followed by a drastic shortfall in payment in 1638, when the Scots 'openly rebelled in a cause that commanded much English sympathy'. In 1639, collection collapsed as the 'counties were facing the simultaneous costs of fielding an army in

[441] Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life*, p. 128; Cust and Hughes (eds), *The English Civil War*, p. 162.
[442] Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life*, p. 70.

the First Bishops' War'. In 1642, Denham used Islamic Persian dramatis personae to mirror Charles's and his government's policy and the widespread opposition it had aroused. This shows that the playwright regarded contemporary Persians as an efficient dramatic vehicle by which financially related politics and concerns could be highlighted in the late Caroline period.[443]

Anglo-Persian parallels were not confined to Denham's tragedy in the drama of the late Caroline period. Five years after *The Sophy*, Robert Baron's *Mirza* would also suggest parallels between Persian and English royalty. McJannet observes that:

> if, as Baron claims in his preface to the reader, he had already written three acts of his play before Denham's *The Sophy* appeared, he may have meant these words for the king's eyes, and the work might even have been published and read by Charles or other members of the court before his defeat in 1646 and his death in 1649.[444]

Baron's dedicatory poem along with McJannet's speculation, support the idea that the play was *meant* to be presented to the English monarch, whether in fact it was presented or not. The very opening lines of the dedicatory poem suggest Mirza as a Persian model: 'To wait on *YOU*, the Persian *MIRZAS* come / From the fair shades of his *Elizium*'. [445] Here, Mirza is depicted as a royal Persian prince whose experience can help Charles to avoid monarchic ruin and downfall.

The Sophy and *Mirza*, as pointed out in the introduction, are very similar in terms of plot, genre, and theme. There are, however, differences in the number of characters employed by the two writers. Baron's *Mirza*'s dramatis personae outnumber those of Denham's *The Sophy*. *Mirza* attempts to introduce more Islamic Persian characters to English readers, and in this regard, is more educational and didactic than Denham's tragedy. Baron explains other key plot differences in his epistle to the reader:

> In his [Denham's *The Sophy*] neither doth the Prince kill any of his *Torturers*; Nor doth *FATYMA* die, which I take to be one of the most important parts of the story, and

[443] Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 67-9.
[444] McJannet, 'Bringing in a Persian', p. 259.
[445] Baron, *Mirza* (1647), sig. A2r.

> the compleatest Conquest that ever Revenge obtained over Vertue. In that King ABBAS dies too […].[446]

Baron also replied to allegations that accused him of plagiarising Denham's work.[447] In addressing the reader, Baron claims that 'I had finished three compleat Acts of this Tragedy before I saw that [Denham's *The Sophy*], nor was I then discouraged from proceeding, seeing the most ingenious Author of that has made his seem quite another story from this'.[448] There are, however, similar notions in *Mirza* and *The Sophy*. Baron seems to have borrowed from Denham's work or used shared sources. Baron's wording in 'what cares the Sea how great the Rivers Swell, / Since all their pride flow into her?' adapts Denham's lines on the same theme:

> Your fame
> Already fils the world, and what is infinite
> Cannot receive degrees, but will swallow
> All that is added, as our Caspian sea
> Receives our rivers, and yet seemes not fuller
> And if you tempt her more, the winde of fortune
> May come about, and take another point
> And blast your glories.[449]

Baron's and Denham's conceits are both meant to praise: the former celebrates Abbas's fame, and the latter glorifies Mirza. Haly, in the latter extract, compares Mirza's fame to the enormity of the Caspian Sea which, though is filled with great rivers, 'yet seemes not fuller', since the sea is perfect as it stands. Similarly, in Baron's *Mirza*, the same imagery is used in asking why 'the Sea' should care 'how great the Rivers Swell' into it, for 'all their pride' is, ultimately, hers. Significantly, Baron's clear echo and reworking of Denham's lines here comes in the first few pages of the first act of *Mirza*. This suggests, *pace* Baron's claim that he 'had finished three compleat Acts of this Tragedy' before seeing Denham's *The Sophy*, that it was in fact very likely that Baron owed a great deal to Denham's ideas while writing

[446] *Ibid.*, sig. A5v.
[447] These allegations include, for example, the charge that *Mirza* is based heavily on Ben Jonson's *Catiline*. See Jesse Franklin Bradley, 'Robert Baron's Tragedy of *Mirza*', *Modern Language Notes*, 34 (1919): 402–8 (p. 402).
[448] Baron, *Mirza* (1647), sig. A5v.
[449] Denham, *The Sophy* (1642), sig. C2r; Baron, *Mirza* (1647), sig. B4r.

Mirza. Nonetheless, there exist two unique characteristics in Baron's work, not found in Denham's. The first is the playwright's employment of the Shi'a term '*Mortys Ally*' (Mortus Ali), Mohammad's cousin and son-in-law, once in his play, for which Baron provides an elaborate annotation at the end of his work. In Shi'a belief, Mortus Ali is held to be the first legitimate successor to Mohammad after his death. The Shi'a belief is in contrast to Sunni ideology which considers '*Mortys Ally*' the fourth caliph and not the first. While both *The Sophy* and *Mirza* are set in a Shi'a Safavid Persia, *Mirza* is the only work that refers to Shi'a terminology. The second unique characteristic of Baron's *Mirza* is the bulky set of 'historicall annotations' at the end of the text of the play, reflecting Baron's wish to educate his English reader about the play's Persian setting and historical context through such a detailed appendix.[450]

Following this brief overview of Baron's *Mirza*, the rest of this section addresses the ways in which the playwright employs Islamic Persians as analogies for contemporary English figures. In order to create Anglo-Persian parallels, Baron uses the same technique as Denham whereby he conjoins classical mythological figures such as Jove and Achilles with Persian dramatis personae. Moreover, in order to suggest a model for sublime royalty, Baron makes use of the symbols of ancient Persian monarchies such as Persepolis. Baron emphasizes Shi'a Islam by using terms such as '*Mortys Ally*', whereas Denham's allusion to Shi'ism is implied by names such as Caliph or Haly, and not directly expressed. Baron's understanding of Safavid Persia, derived, as he acknowledges in his epistle to the reader,

[450] It should be noted, however, that despite being so detailed the annotation does include incorrect information. For instance, after introducing '*Mortys Ally*' Baron notes that '*Ossan* or *Hussan* his Son was proclaimed, but resisted by *Mavius*, and by him poisoned, about the year 657. He had twelve Sons, eleven whereof were murdered with him'. Later on Baron narrates that Persians 'honour […] *Hussan*, whose death they yearly celebrate with many ceremonies, nine severall daies, in great multitudes, in the streets altogether, crying out *Hussan*! *Hussan*!'. By '*Hussan*' Baron probably means Ali's younger son who was not poisoned as Baron says, but killed in a battle with Yazid's troops. See Baron, *Mirza* (1647), sig. M4v; see also Brian R. Farmer, *Understanding Radical Islam: Medieval Ideology in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), p. 13.

from Herbert's *Travells* (1634), appears to be fuller and more detailed than Denham's, evident not only in Baron's relatively accurate annotations, but in the body of his text too.

Baron's dramatis personae include Floradella, the king's concubine, whereby Baron alludes to Abbas's polygamy, an Islamic custom practised in the Persian court. Elsewhere, Baron shows his knowledge of Islamic Sharia law. One of the characters, Met, observes 'What better promises (30) his [Abbas's] irreligion, / In taking needlesse Journeies still in Lent / T'avoid fasting, under pretence of Travell?'[451] Here, Met refers to the fasting exemption, as explained in Baron's annotation, that Sharia allows for those Muslims who have to travel during *Ramazan* and whose duration of travel is less than a week. The character uses the word 'Lent' as an English equivalent for *Ramazan,* an example of an English playwright accommodating his Islamic setting to an English audience by translating an Islamic annual observance into a Christian one, and an Arabic word into an English one. This speech also criticizes Abbas as religiously corrupt and unobservant. *Mirza* contains numerical references throughout the work in order to direct the reader to its elaborate annotation at the end. Such guidance was not practically possible to perform on stage, and was intended to be read rather than performed. In addition, E. Mannyng's commendatory poem 'To the Author' suggests that the play has never been performed when he says 'But might we see it acted on the *Stage*'. The existence and the content of the paratextual materials, as well as the text itself, suggest that *Mirza* was not intended for theatre performance as much as educational purposes.

Baron's references to Shiraz and Hormuz in *Mirza* also serve the playwright's didactic approach. These Persian geographical locations are emphasized in Emangoly's and Alkaham's speeches with Mirza, the prince. Alkaham, a noble man and officer in the army of the prince, maintains: 'these I had into / My Tent, where being well warm'd with (4.) *Shiras*

[451] Baron, *Mirza* (1647), sig. H3r.

wine, / They fell into a freedom of discourse'. Emangoly, the Duke of Shiraz and lieutenant general of the army under the prince, says: 'my treachery to the *English* it alledg's / That help't me to take *Ormus*, when 'tis known / Themselves first broke conditions, and enjoy / Still Priviledges for their services there'.[452] *The Sophy* and *Mirza* both tell the same story, and invite readers to draw political inferences from the implicit parallels between the Islamic Persian characters on stage and the contemporary political situation in England. The major difference between them is a formal one: *The Sophy* is clearly the printed text of the play as performed (or at least minimally adapted from performance for print), while *Mirza* is evidently intended to be studied, and aims to deepen its readers' understanding of the Persian culture and historical setting. Perhaps, Baron simply tries to sell his work by adding something that *The Sophy* does not have; or perhaps, in addition to this, he also hopes that English readers, by better understanding the Persian situation in the play, will be better placed to see the contemporary English political parallels. But what are the signs of such political analogies in Baron's work?

Baron employs classical mythology frequently. In a conversation between Abbas and his privy counsellor, Beltazar, who remains loyal to the king until the end of the tragedy, Beltazar recalls recently hearing a public panegyric 'in adulation of the valiant *Mirza*':

> There were all the deeds
> Of (12) your great ancestors, from *Mortys Ally*
> Recounted, not as copies to be followed,
> But made as foiles, to set off his the better;
> And brought but by comparison, to shew
> How his green valour conquers all example.
> So, said the flattering pamphlet, *Peleus* name
> Stoops to *ACHILLES*, and so *SATURN* joys
> To be ore-topt by *JOVE*.[453]

Elsewhere in another dialogue Mahomet Ally-beg notes 'he [Mirza] is ambitious, and Ambition knows / No Kindred, 'twas a maxim practiced / By *JOVE* himself upon his Father

[452] *Ibid*., sigs H2r, C8v.
[453] *Ibid*., sigs B3r-v.

SATURN'.[454] The playwright's attempt in conjoining Persian characters with classical mythological figures is clearly shown in the above lines. In Beltazar's words there exists a significant combination, and that is employing Shi'a elements together with mythological figures. To turn the king against his son, Beltazar makes use of a double comparison. He reports the panegyric sung by hired eunuchs in adulation of the valiant Mirza, and suggests that not only Mirza has not 'followed' 'all the deeds / Of your [Abbas's] great ancestors', such as '*Mortys Ally*', but has made those deeds as 'foiles', to make his 'valour' shine and seem 'the better'. On the other side of this comparison, Beltazar implies that what Mirza has done is as evil and inappropriate as seeing '*Peleus*' and '*SATURN*' bend to their heirs, '*ACHILLES*' and '*JOVE*'. In other words, Beltazar tries to suggest that Mirza's deeds reveal his ambition to ascend the throne, and to make Abbas 'stoop' to his son. Such ambition, Ally-beg says, is 'a maxim practiced by *JOVE* himself upon his father *SATURN*'. The panegyric compares Abbas unfavourably with his son. It illustrates this comparison by using Greek and Roman examples of fathers subordinating themselves to the sons: Peleus to Achilles, and Saturn to Jove. These classical mythological examples, familiar to the English reader, help both to convey the less familiar Persian father-son relationship to that reader, and, through suitably high-flown mythological imagery, to imbue Persian royalty with an aura of grandeur and majesty. Furthermore, by drawing a metaphorical analogy between Islamic Persian and classical Greek and Roman exemplars, the play prompts the reader to see contemporary political parallels in these historical figures of usurpation.[455]

In his tragedy Baron employs other approaches in order to reinforce the idea of parallelism, and create models for sublime royalty. Having warned the reader of the dangers to monarchy through his portrait of Abbas's fear and jealousy of his own son – a fear stoked

[454] *Ibid*., sigs B5r-v.
[455] For a discussion on how classical mythological figures such as Hercules and Achilles are used in English literature see Geoffrey Miles (ed.), *Classical Mythology in English Literature* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 44-54.

by the evil, ambitious councillor, Mahomet Ally-beg – Baron suggests surrogate models for the plight of contemporary English royalism. Ancient Persia, for example, appears repeatedly in *Mirza*, standing as a model for both Persian Safavid and English kingdoms. In one scene, the greatness of ancient Persian kings is used by Mahomet Ally-beg in order to destroy the image of Mirza in his father's eyes. Ally-beg notes:

> And there exposed they his armed figure,
> In a triumphall Chariot, drawn by (13) *CYRUS*
> And great (14) *DARIUS*, yoak'd, with this inscription:
> As the new Moon the light o'th old devours;
> So do thy actions all thine Ancestours.[456]

Mirza, Abbas's son, sits in a metaphorical chariot described by Ally-beg. In setting the stage to turn Abbas against his son, Ally-beg succeeds in provoking Abbas by describing ancient Persian kings as 'yoak'd' by the contemporary Mirza, showing off a traitorous inscription: 'the light o'th old' are to fade off the face of Persia, by the new triumphant Mirza.

Ironically, it is Ally-beg, Abbas's favourite, who dreams of the throne, and plans to build an empire which will surpass that of ancient Persia. Consequently, he wishes 'the light o'the old' gone, and plots to bring about Abbas's downfall. He unveils this idea to Floradella, Abbas's concubine, with whom he has an affair during the course of the play:

> Mean while, we'l re-erect our marble City,
> (12.) *Persopol's*, far fairer then her founder
> *SOSARINUS*, or rather *JAMSHET* meant her;
> Or then she was indeed when (12) the mad *Greek*
> Swimming in riot, at fair *THAIS* Counsell,
> Did wrapt her pride about with wastfull flames.
> There our bright Pallace I'l repair, and give
> (12) the forty Towers new Resurrection,
> From their forgotten rubbish (12) Th'hundred Pillars
> Of white and shinning marble, shall again
> Erect their pollish'd heads, not to support
> *APOLLO*, as of old, but thy fair statue,
> And mine, adored of the prostrate world.[457]

[456] Baron, *Mirza* (1647), sig. B3v.
[457] *Ibid*., sigs E2v, E3r.

Ally-beg unleashes his evil thoughts in the lines above where hypocrisy and disloyalty, embodied in his hidden relationship with the sovereign's concubine, are dominant. To him the great ancient Persian empire lies lost in 'forgotten rubbish', which, when resurrected, will celebrate and praise Ally-beg's and Floradella's statues replacing the 'old' '*APOLLO*' on its 'hundred Pillars'. Before their statues the whole 'world' will be prostrate out of submission and obedience. According to Baron's note (12) Persepolis contained a statue of the Greek god Apollo during the time the city 'fell under the Macedonian Victor' (i.e. Alexander the Great). Ally-beg talks with insane ambition of reviving the ancient greatness of Persia and Persepolis, but replacing the statue of the god Apollo with statues of himself and Floradella, and thus promising to re-Persianize ancient Persepolis, and rid it of the marks of Greek occupation. Baron depicts Ally-beg as an evil councillor who intends to return the country to a state of ancient greatness, but with himself as its head. In effect, Baron's portrayal of the Persian critiques an ambitious advisor to the king who aims to promote his own status by misguiding the monarch.

Similar to *The Sophy*, Baron's *Mirza* associates classical figures with Mirza and his affiliates in the play. This appears in several instances in the tragedy. Emangoli, the Duke of Shiraz, notes 'though all the Gods were parties, / Our Princes stars are of a cleerer light, / Then so to be eclips'd by th' (2) *Turkish Moon*'. Emangoli believes that despite all the gods' support to the Turkish army, Persian 'Princes stars' outshine the Turkish ones, and cannot be 'eclips'd by th' *Turkish Moon*'. In Emangoli's words then, Persian 'Princes stars' or the Persian gods are superior to the 'Gods' of the Turks. Emangoli expresses his nationalistic feelings through using classical Persian terms, and by doing so emphasizes the loyalty of Mirza and his associates to their country. Elsewhere in the play, Nymphadora, Mirza's wife, talks of the same gods. She says 'in him indeed I am compleatly happy. / But he is so far above all deserving, / As I can plead no merit; yet the Gods / Themselves have sometimes

deign'd a mortall love'. Her strong belief in classical deities is also visible when she addresses Soffie, her son and the king to be: 'Go, Childe, the Gods of *Persia* are thy guard'.[458] It is clear throughout the play that Baron associates Mirza's family and those loyal to him with ancient Persia and *not* with Islamic figures and beliefs. Royalty, loyalty, and the ancient greatness reveal themselves through non-Islamic projections. Baron's negative perception of Islam is therefore evident insofar as none of the heroic figures in the tragedy are Islamic.

By contrast, the Islamic tyrant Abbas is compared unfavourably with the glory of ancient Persia. Tyranny, jealousy, and deceit inhere in the Safavid Persian monarchy. Abbas's obsessive greed and territorial ambition appear in conjunction in his speech. Abbas attempts to marry his granddaughter, Fatima, Mirza's child, to an Arabian king. The Persian king notes 'when aged some two years more, we mene a marriage / 'Tween her and an *Arabian* King: her goodness / Can brook no meaner fortune then a Throne'. Using his granddaughter, Abbas attempts to find a stronghold in the neighbouring country allying with which would be effective in order to overcome the Ottomans. The courtiers, however, have a different idea about such attempts. Elchee, a Duke and vice-roy of *Hyrcania*, believes '*ABBAS* jealousie, / Is no lesse wild then *ALEXANDER'S* wine, / Both perfect madnesse, and the fit once over, / He'l see his error, and be sorry too'. The Persian king is represented as a mad, jealous tyrant in these lines, but yet Baron makes sure to attach such characteristics to Islamic aspects of the court and king. Beltazar, the king's loyal counsellor, says:

> Let not my Soveraign doubt my proved faith,
> (That (15) would ope *MAHOMET*'s Shrine at your command)
> If humbly I play the Princes friend,
> And urge but their objections, as thus,
> What ever glorious actions are atchiev'd
> By him or his, redound to the Kings glory,
> As all the souldiers to the generalls.[459]

[458] *Ibid.*, sigs C8r, C2r, E8v.
[459] *Ibid.*, sigs F1r, F8r, B3v.

Through flattering the king, Beltazar emphasizes the notion of obedience in these lines. First he announces his loyalty and 'faith' to the king, and he proves this by employing Islamic symbols such as '*MAHOMET*'s shrine'. Then, he expresses his admiration for absolute submission to the monarch 'as all the souldiers [show] to the generalls'.

By associating Abbas with Islamic symbolism, Baron represents Abbas as a powerful Muslim monarch who projects negative attributes. Tyranny, as one of these characteristics, is possibly the most notable of all. The explicit usage of the term in Baron's tragedy is in 'GRreat [*sic*] *NEMESIS*! now have I sacrific'd / To thee the best of Creatures *Persia* had; / If the old Tyrant feeleth but the wound, / I have mine ends, and thou a feast of blood'. Mirza calls his father a tyrant who has sacrificed him for the 'great *NEMESIS*'. Abbas himself confesses his tyranny towards the end of the play where he addresses his son and notes 'I've been a Tyrant, nay a monster long, / Which as I have bewail'd, I will redresse, / Repentance has made Rivers of mine eyes, / My eyes weep themselves blind for loss of thine'. After blinding Mirza, the Persian king regrets his past deeds, and attempts to seek his son's pardon before his son dies. In his last speech and of the tragedy, Abbas reminds Soffie to

> learn to be a Prince.
> But (9) when thy hand shall close mine aged eyes,
> And on thy head my Diadem shall shine,
> Learn by my harms to eschew Tyranny;
> It was thy dying Fathers Legacy,
> And shall be mine too.[460]

To 'the *Flatterer*, and too powerfull Favourite', the repentant Abbas adds a third element which is to be 'eschewed': tyranny. Abbas also implies the necessity of the continuation of the royal dominance by appointing Soffie as his heir. It is as if to emphasize that the only way to avoid the three elements that ruin monarchy is to learn from past experience, and continue monarchy.

[460] *Ibid.*, sigs I4r, L5r-v, L8r.

By taking the story of a tyrannical king played upon by an evil councillor, Baron follows Denham's pattern in order to warn and criticize. His clear analogy in the dedicated lines to Charles I, as discussed earlier, suggests Mirza as one of the parallels to the English monarch.[461] The playwright portrays Ally-beg as a political parallel of the misguiding, ambitious advisor to this monarch, who stokes fear and instability in the court for personal gains. Baron, similar to Denham, characterizes Abbas in a fashion in order to embody different projections. By emphasizing the negative perceptions of Islam in the work, Baron presents Abbas as a Muslim tyrant who can be compared with the English puritans. But Abbas also shows a respect for the nobility of royalty, and seeks to make amends for his past misdeeds. In contrast with Denham's Abbas, the Persian king does not die at the end of the play, and becomes a forgiving, repentant figure. He attempts to purge his court from evil characters, and reallocates courtly positions. In one instance, he addresses Methiculi, Mirza's friend and an officer in the army, and notes 'the Treasurer-ship / We do conferr on you, *METHICULI*'.[462] It appears that Abbas attempts to respond to social turbulence and discontent by replacing important positions such as the treasurer. In other words, Baron's Abbas does not tragically fall, and unlike Denham's Persian king, remains alive, and submits to reformation rather than death. To this end, Baron's presentation of Abbas as a submissive king might hint at Charles's surrender to the oppositions during the civil war. There exist, however, similarities and differences between Abbas's submission to reformation and Charles's surrender to the oppositions. Whilst the former is a result of Abbas's repentance and regret, the latter is an outcome of the royalists' defeat against the puritan opposition. But the Persian and English monarchs both fail to make the right decision in order to evade conflict and sustain stability. Given that the two monarchs resemble each other to some

[461] Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642-1660* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), pp. 133-4. From a broader political perspective, it is true to say that Baron's *Mirza* 'would impinge on the world of Charles II' too, encouraging, from a royalist point of view, the revival of monarchy in Interregnum and beyond.
[462] Baron, *Mirza* (1647), sig. K6v.

extent in this respect, the final scenes in Baron's work bears another message for his readers. Baron's play does not end as tragically as Denham's *The Sophy*. Abbas is not doomed to death, and it appears that *Mirza* is a mild and refined version of Denham's tragedy in terms of ending. Baron's Persian monarchy is possessed of a greater extent of stability. The Persian royal court in *Mirza* undergoes less radical changes or death penalties. It is possible that through comparing the repentant Abbas and the surrendering Charles, Baron attempts to show that a failing monarch should not be deprived of his life, but instead be encouraged to reformation and change.

From the royalists' point of view such moderately tragic ending would be, in fact, a more favourable one, for it saves them their monarch rather than exposing him to radical extremes such as death. It is possible that through comparing the Persian king with the English monarch, Baron attempts to suggest reformation with which the English civil war can conclude. However, Abbas's character in the beginning of the play is very different from the end. His words in 'for all Rebellions, throughly suppress'd, / Make Kings more Kings, and Subjects still more Subject', do not conform to his submissive behaviour at the end.[463] At the time of composing these lines Baron attempted, perhaps, to emphasize the king's authority in confronting puritans' 'Rebellions' in the English civil war. It is also clear that there is no sign of the king's submission to puritans, for 'all Rebellions, [should be] throughly suppress'd'. It appears, then, that Abbas embodies one set of attributes at the beginning of the play and another set at the end. In the beginning, his royal authority is emphasized by the writer. In the course of the play the Persian king becomes victim to the corruption and evilness of some of his courtiers, and turns into a remorseless tyrant. Towards the end, the regretful Abbas seeks compensation and reformation, and appoints Soffie as his heir. In the course of the play, therefore, Abbas is meant to symbolize both Charles and the opposition to the royal court. I

[463] *Ibid*., sig. B5v.

propose that Abbas, Mirza, and Ally-beg, and their behaviour and fates, cannot be mapped directly onto the English political situation and figures, but rather represent, in abstract, various aspects of the English civil conflict.

Depicting Abbas as a character who embodies a range of attributes is not unique to Baron. Denham's representation of Abbas is also meant to symbolize contrasting parties, i.e., the royalists and their opponents. But Denham's and Baron's Persian king differ in some ways too. In addition to the endings of the two plays where Abbas dies in *The Sophy* and stays alive in *Mirza*, there is another key difference in the two play's representation of Abbas. Compared with *Mirza*, there is more emphasis, in Denham's tragedy, on the idea that Abbas is an Islamic Persian analogy for Charles. The visible example of this difference is the scene containing the allusion to the ship money levy. The association of Abbas with Islamic connotations is less frequent in *Mirza* compared with Denham's *The Sophy*. Baron's tragedy, however, reveals a more realistic conjunction between the Persian king and Islamic beliefs by weaving in Shi'ite such as '*Mortys Ally*' which are not included in Denham's work. Both writers use ancient Persian elements and western classical mythology. They also use classical Persian elements to glorify ancient royalty against which contemporary monarchies can be compared. As discussed earlier *Mirza*'s didactic dimensions reinforce the idea that Baron's tragedy, in contrast with Denham's, is less likely to have been intended for the stage. By contrast, stage material in *The Sophy* involves a prologue and an epilogue which are immediately followed by the dramatis personae before the outset of the tragedy. John Denham and Robert Baron, therefore, used Safavid Persian dramatis personae for theatrical and nontheatrical purposes during a time when England was in a fraught political condition as a result of internal turbulence and instability. Baron's re-practicing of the Sophy/Mirza story shows that representations of Islamic Persia and Persians were subject to revision to meet the changing needs of the English audiences and readers, and, to this end, were regarded as an

effective dramatic vehicle to contribute to shaping English thought towards various political circumstances in the late Caroline period and Interregnum. Islamic Persians were depicted as both martyr and tyrant, demonstrating a flexible image on English stage in order to reflect and affect sophisticated political unrests.[464] Yet it is not only tragedy that contains dramatic representations of Islamic Persia in the period. In the following section I focus on the ways in which Islamic Persians were handled in pageants as well as in tragedy.

5.2 *Revenge for Honour* and *Londons Triumph*: The Persians of Interregnum

In 1654, the tragedy *Revenge for Honour* was published a year after it appeared in the Stationers' Register in 1653. The title-page of *Revenge for Honour* attributes the play to George Chapman. However, recent and older scholarship attributes the play instead to the playwright and poet Henry Glapthorne. Matthew Steggle, for example, speculates that 'the question is whether one is dealing here with records of one play, or two. [He] refer[s] to the earlier, lost play as *The Parricide* and the later, extant, play as *Revenge for Honour*'. Steggle later observes that:

> the main source of *Revenge for Honour* is a pamphlet, *The Life and Death of Mahomet*, […] which was not published until 1637. Hence the Chapman attribution […] is untenable, as Chapman was dead by the time that the pamphlet was published. […] In his entry of 1653, John Marriott had attributed *Revenge for Honour* to the prolific Caroline playwright Henry Glapthorne. Since 1937, this attribution has generally been accepted, as it certainly reads like Glapthorne's other work. […] further possible refinements of the date include a possible indebtedness to Suckling's *Aglaura*, […] and an internal reference in the play to the suppression of monopolies […]. These seem to suggest the years 1639-40. As for its company attribution: *Revenge for Honour* was printed with a dedication by William Cartwright the younger and Curtis Greville, both of whom worked with Richard Heton at Salisbury Court through the 1630s […]. On the strength of that, it might be identified as a play belonging to the Heton-era Queen Henrietta's Men at Salisbury Court.[465]

[464] Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642-1660*, p. 134.
[465] See Matthew Steggle's argument on http://www.lostplays.org/index.php/Parricide,_The_/_Revenge_for_Honour; also see J. H. Walter, 'Revenge for Honour: Date, Authorship, and Sources', *The Review of English Studies*, 13 (1937): 425-37, Julie Sanders, 'Glapthorne, Henry (*bap.* 1610)', *ODNB*, Mark Thornton Burnett, 'Chapman, George (1559/60-1634)', *ODNB*, and Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose*, p. 503.

The 1654 date of publication places *Revenge for Honour* after *The Sophy* (1642) and before *Mirza* (1655), but various tones of literary indebtedness and allusions to topical events suggest a composition date of 1639-40.[466] Critics suggest that the play was published by Richard Marriot in 1654, attributed to George Chapman, and that this attribution was taken over by Humphrey Moseley 'for the new title-page of his issue of 1659'. While Marriot advertised Chapman as the playwright, he attributed the play to Glapthorne 'when he entered it in the Stationers' Register' in 1653. Advertising George Chapman as the author of *Revenge for Honour* possibly promised a strong market for the play in print while the theatres were closed during the 1650s. It is also argued that there exists 'no record of a Restoration – or any other – performance of the play'.[467] Steggle, however, speculates that the play belonged to Queen Henrietta's Men at the Salisbury Court Theatre, suggesting that it might have been performed. There exists no consensus among critics, therefore, that the play has a performance history. Glapthorne became 'a minor figure on the literary scene, enjoying a modest success as a playwright and poet'. He is thought to have died in 1643, and 'it seems more than probable that on the outbreak of the Civil Wars he may, […] have espoused the King's cause, and have perished fighting for it'.[468]

In one of his nondramatic works, 'White-Hall. A Poem. Written 1642', Glapthorne refers to the 'sterne tyrant Destiny, who flings / His various stormes on Kingdomes, nay on Kings / Who though they heavens immediate figures be / Cannot evade this sad fatality'. In his constant praise of English monarchy, Glapthorne flatters Charles I, 'brave *Charles*', and pays tribute to Queen Henrietta Maria, that 'flower of *France*', but emphatically raises

[466] Randall suggests that the play was composed ca. 1637-1641. See Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642-1660*, p. 72.
[467] See Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), vol. 4, pp. 490-2.
[468] Sanders, 'Glapthorne, Henry (*bap.* 1610)', *ODNB*; see also R. H. Shepherd (ed.) , *Plays and Poems of Henry Glapthorne*, 2 vols (London: J. Pearson, 1874), vol. 1, p. xxi, accessible via http://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924013129592

concerns about 'the dangerous alarms / Of a rude civill-warre'.[469] While Glapthorne urges loyalty to the royal family, he warns his readers of a destabilizing conflict. In *Revenge for Honour*, Glapthorne reveals the same line of thought, even if only implicitly, and, through a bloodthirsty and exotic tragedy, highlights the wider devastation of a conflict by using Islamic Persia and Persians. In light of Glapthorne's thinking, as briefly outlined above, the following attempts to offer a possible reading of his play as a dramatic political allegory.

An Arabian-Persian war overshadows the events of *Revenge for Honour*. The play is set in Arabia, and showcases a conflict in the Arabian court involving the king and his son. While depicting Persia as a foreign threat, the playwright dramatizes an internal unrest through portraying a persistent father-son encounter, highlighting a war-like condition and political turbulence. The Arabian king turns his back on his son, bringing about internal disintegration while exposing the country to international threat. Perhaps Glapthorne attempts to emphasize social unity, and warn England of a national fraction and potential international weakness. Warning through entertainment would have been an additional precaution to using remote countries such as Arabia and Persia in a dramatic political allegory written, if not performed, during Charles I's reign.

Revenge for Honour reappears in the Interregnum, this time in the Stationers' Register, more than a decade after its probable composition date. One reason is, perhaps, to remind readers that there has not been any change in the political milieu, and that civil unrest and conflict still threaten the country. Like Robert Baron's *Mirza*, Glapthorne's play may have sought to encourage its royalist readers to avoid the kind of courtly conflict and social distrust that wreaks such devastatingly tragic consequences in *Revenge for Honour*. In his dedicatory poem in *Mirza,* Baron calls upon the audience and readers to 'eschew' such potentially

[469] Henry Glapthorne, 'White-Hall. A Poem' (London, 1643), sigs A2r, B3r, B4r; see also Henry Glapthorne, 'White-Hall. A Poem', in R. H. Shepherd (ed.), *Plays and Poems of Henry Glapthorne*, 2 vols (London: J. Pearson, 1874), vol. 2, p. 249, accessible via http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b3308597; Wilcher, *The Writing of Royalism 1628-1660*, p. 150.

disruptive forces. Similarly, the publication of Glapthorne's *Revenge for Honour* in the Interregnum may also have sought to persuade its readers to avoid social disintegration. As argued earlier, the publication of the play twice in the 1650s had commercial purposes too as it was an attempt to sell the play in print in the absence of stage performance during the period, and satisfy the demands of the market.

I also examine a second work in this section, John Tatham's pageant, *Londons Tryumph*, performed and published in 1659. *Londons Tryumph*, as the title-page shows, was 'CELEBRATED' on '*The Nine and Twentieth day of October, in the Year 1659*'. It was a version of an annual event, the pageant honouring the Lord Mayor, which took place in October between 1657 and 1664. The pageant was to honour the lord mayor of London, Thomas Allen, 'staged partly on land and partly on the river', and mostly included 'celebrations of the good government and commercial success' of London. It was paid for by the company of 'GROCERS', and '*presented and personated by an* Europian, *an* Egyptian, *and a* Persian'.[470] In this section I compare how *Londons Tryumph* and *Revenge for Honour* represent Islamic Persians and Persia.

In comparison with the previous section on *The Sophy* and *Mirza*, this section contains only minor references to Islamic Persia. Glapthorne's *Revenge for Honour* is set in Arabic Egypt, not in Safavid Persia, and Tatham's *Londons Tryumph* is staged in London to celebrate the city's lord mayor. Glapthorne and Tatham do not characterize real historical Safavid Persians such as Shah Abbas I and Mirza. Instead, in *Revenge for Honour*, for instance, the names of the characters are Arabic rather than Persian, such as Almanzor, the Caliph of Arabia, and his eldest son, Abilqualit. In *Revenge for Honour* Persia is treated as 'an insulting foe'.[471] Abilqualit uses this phrase, while welcoming Abrahen, his brother and

[470] See the title-page of John Tatham, *Londons Triumph* (London, 1659); see also Eric Salmon, 'Tatham, John (*fl.* 1632-1664)', *ODNB*.
[471] Glapthorne, *Revenge for Honour* (1654), sig. B3v.

'Assistant', after Almanzor appoints him as the 'Chief' of the army for war against Persia.[472] Before this scene, Gaselles, one of the captains of the Caliph of Arabia, complains to Selinthus, an Arab courtier, that 'this Peace is worse to men of war and action then fasting in the face o' th' fo, or lodging on the cold earth'.[473] In addition to his craving for war with the Persians, the captain desires an attractive wife, whether or not 'she be […] clad in Persian Silks, or costly Tyrian Purples'.[474] Gaselles uses the 'Persian Silks' and 'Tyrian Purples' – referring to Tyre in southern Lebanon – as metonyms for regions that symbolize luxury and exoticism. The Arab perception of Persia, in other words, is a dual one: both a threatening foe and a land of riches.

Early Caroline representations of Islamic Persia and Persians frequently refer to Persian silk as a fashionable, luxurious clothing material, and such associations continued in the Interregnum. Silk, as discussed in the previous chapters, was one of the major goods which Persia exported to Europe, and to England in particular. This image of Persia as a powerful trading partner reoccurs in John Tatham's *Londons Tryumph*. The Persian in *Londons Tryumph* has a much more active presence than any Persian element in Galpthorne's work. Here, Tatham sets the stage for the Persian merchant to address the lord mayor of London:

> that Stage whereon the *Spaniards* and *Negars* are, being placed on the Right hand of *Commerce*, the *Persians* and *Indians* on the Left, and *Griffins* Flanking of each; In the Front is placed the Ship, and on the Right wing thereof is the *Crookodile* placed, and on the Left a *Camel*, with a *Negar* on his back, having a Pendent in the one hand, […] and on the head of that Stage stands one in *Persian* habit, with a [*sic*] two Attendants, on each side: the several Scens thus placed, and his Lordship with the Aldermen, and their attendants coming nere, […] the Scenes being placed as aforesaid, the person representing a *Persian* Merchant, makes his address in this manner […]:
>
> My Lord,
> […]
> And now my Lord to amplyfy what they
> Before [the European and Egyptian] have spoke, the Candid winds this day

[472] *Ibid*., sigs B1v, B3v.
[473] *Ibid*., sig. A3r.
[474] *Ibid*.

Set me on Shore, as though the Twins had known,
What Tyumphs to your Honour would be shewn.
The *Marriners* their severall voices reare
For joy they safely have arrived here;
And brought their Vessell to their wisht for home
Laden with Easterne Treasure, Spice and Gum;
The Dulcid Trees, whose substances do bear,
Heart pleasing Synamon, Cloves, Mace Nutmeggs are
From fam'd *Arabia* brought, likewise from thence
Comes Casia, Myrrh, and precious Frankinsence,
From *Pharo* Figgs; *Zant*, Currans; *Maligo*,
Affords you Reasons; Dates and Pepper grow
In other places; Sugar and what not
But brings a benefit unto this Spot.
The manner how they grow (my Lord) you'l see,
In th' perfect Figure of each branch and tree.
Then *Sena*, *Rhuberb*, *China*, Rootes that doe
Not onely purify, but strengthen too,
Sarsaparella, *Aggrick*, then comes in
Storax, Aloes, Indico, Benjamin,
And hundreds more, that th' *Indies* and the *Streights*
Heape in to add unto your wealth by freights,
As though the *Company* of which y' are free
With your own *Trade* twisted *Society*
In their *Commerce* and profits doubtles so
And may that linck and firme affection flow
T' inrich this Citie, that the Nation may
Participate the comfort of this day;
For (Sir) the Causes our disturbance bred
Are now Composed, rage and fury fled
To their dark Celles; That by your light we move
The second Subject of Our Hopes and Love.
May to th' addition of your Name and Blood
Be attributed all that fame speaks good;
That so your praises may like lynes from hence
The Center, fill the worlds circumference.[475]

As the third speaker, following the European and Egyptian, the Persian appears to stand as the representative of all eastern states including '*Arabia*', '*China*', and the '*Indies*'. From the east, the Persian offers a range of trading goods, most notable of which are 'Easterne Treasure, Spice and Gum'. These materials are 'heart pleasing' and 'precious' in the English thought for they 'not onely purify, but strengthen too'. There exist benefits for England in trading such goods with the east. The Persian suggests that the abundance of these goods will

[475] Tatham, *Londons Triumph* (1659), sigs C1v, C2r-v, C3r.

‘inrich [the] Citie’ of London, and will make ‘rage and fury’ flee ‘to their dark Celles’. He praises the lord mayor at the end of his speech, referring to the mayor as sublime in ‘Name’ and ‘Blood’. Of course, in a pageant entitled *Londons Tryumphe*, it is no surprise that the Persian merchant, representing the ‘East’, should compliment London and the city’s lord mayor.

Yet the Persian merchant in Tatham’s pageant is different from the way Glapthorne depicts Persians in *Revenge for Honour*. As we have seen, Tatham’s third speaker is a symbol of the exotic east whose trading power and abundance can enrich the city of London. The unrivalled Persian merchant is one who represents a united east, and who promises a delightful future of ‘Hopes and Love’. By contrast, ‘the proud *Persian* Monarchie’ in Glapthorne’s play is not an ally to Arabia, nor is it focused on consolidating a trading relationship with Britain. Instead, Persia, in *Revenge for Honour*, is ‘the sole emulous opposer of the Arabique Greatnesse’, and ‘the insulting foe’ whom Arabs ‘must […] march against’. The differences in representations of Persia and Persians are, at least partly, due to the difference in genre. In *Revenge for Honour,* Arabs oppose the Persians as the last potent monarchy that stands in their way to conquer the east. In fact, not taking part in the ‘*Persian* War’ would be ‘to leave the honour’ behind. Arabs’ opposing force against the Persians in this play is not limited to entering into battle with this ‘emulous’ empire only. Occasional humiliation of the Persians is also suggested by the characters throughout this work. For instance Selinthus brings in an image of Persian female captive abuse. He addresses his ‘Couzens’ and says that:

> if in this *Persian* War you chance to take a handsome she Captive, pray you be not unmindfull of us your friends at home; I will disburse her ransome, Couzens, for I’ve a months mind to try if strange flesh, or that of our own Countrey has the compleater relish.

Selinthus sees a Persian female captive as a ‘strange flesh’ with which he can satisfy his sexual desire. Osman, one of his cousins, replies that ‘we will accomplish thy pleasure, noble

Couzen'. And Selinthus continues that 'pray do not take the first say of her your selves. I do not love to walk after any of my kindred ith' path of copulation'.[476] Osman promises Selinthus that he will satisfy his cousin's craving. But Selinthus is not satisfied finally, and asks his cousins not to have intercourse with the Persian female captive for he wants to be the first to couple with her and 'relish'. The Arabs in *Revenge for Honour* see the Persians as inhuman, and treat them accordingly. The visceral, deliberately grotesque nature of the language and imagery are all part of the genre of the play.

It is evident that Glapthorne's Persians differ from those in Tatham's pageant. Glapthorne's work portrays a Persian-Arabian war, whereas Tahtam's representation of Persian-Arabian relations focuses on trade ('Heart pleasing Synamon, Cloves, Mace Nutmeggs are / From fam'd Arabia brought'). Compared with the Persians depicted in Tatham's pageant, the Persians in Glapthorne's *Revenge for Honour* possess less agency, and despite being 'the sole emulous opposer of the Arabique Greatnesse', Persia, from a position of military weakness, awaits Arab invasion. Yet, given Glapthorne's passing reference to 'Persian Silks', it is clear that both Glapthorne and Tatham are aware of the centrality and trading significance of Persia during the Safavid period. Glapthorne's casting of Persia in *Revenge for Honour* contributes to warning about national fraction as a consequence of a devastating civil conflict. Glapthorne's line of thought and political concerns reappear in his poetry which warns explicitly about a 'rude civill-warre'.[477] In Tatham's pageant, the Persian merchant stands out as the sole eastern trader who offers a variety of goods which can delight London. In this case, then, Tatham represents Persia and Persians as trading partners and brings of prosperity and pleasure, rather than as a potentially hostile alien culture, or even as potential enemies.

[476] Glapthorne, *Revenge for Honour* (1654), sigs B1v, B3v, C1r, D1v.
[477] Glapthorne, 'White-Hall. A Poem' (1643), sig. B4r.

Representations of Islamic Persia and Persians are many and diverse in the late Caroline, civil war and Interregnum periods. From Safavid Persian courtiers to traveling merchants, as well as evil and clever councillors to slaves and confined captives, Persian dramatis personae are clearly visible in the dramatic art of the period. Such different representations of Islamic Persia serve different purposes. Late Caroline royalist dramatists use depictions of Persia to warn and criticize the English monarch as well as to educate their readers and audiences. To this end, the playwrights attempt to draw political parallels between Islamic Persians and English courtiers. I have shown that such parallels include both one-to-one correspondences as well as more diffuse and multi-faceted analogies. For example, I argue that John Denham uses his depictions of two Islamic Persians, Abbas I and Mirza, to set up a parallel with various aspects of the political situation, behaviour and characteristics of the English monarch, Charles I, in order to counsel and tactfully critique the king. Robert Baron's *Mirza* also aims to admonish and educate, equipping the play with an elaborate set of annotations for that purpose. We do not know when Baron added the annotations. Perhaps they were added later, in the time between first composition and much later publication. The dedicatory poem at the beginning of *Mirza*, however, shows that Baron composed the work during Charles's lifetime, and that the play was meant to be presented to the English monarch. *Mirza* and *The Sophy* resemble each other to a considerable extent. It might be possible that Baron adapted and extended Denham's work, or used shared sources in order to write *Mirza*. In *Mirza*, Baron re-practices Denham's *The Sophy* by casting Safavid Persian figures, but moderately refines the story in order to emphasize the continuity of English monarchy. In the Interregnum, Baron's *Mirza* might well have been read by English readers, of every political persuasion and the royalists in particular, as an attempt to revive the monarchy. Aside from this, the publication of *Mirza* in 1655 shows that there was a market for this kind of work, involving the exotic east (complete with informative footnotes).

Moreover, I showed in this chapter that Denham's *The Sophy* commented, directly and indirectly, on England's contemporary affairs, demonstrating that dramatic depictions of Safavid Persia and Persians actively contributed to offering a warning counsel to Charles I on the outbreak of the civil war. By building on Wilcher's and Wallace's arguments on the play's contemporary significance, I attempted to refine O Hehir's and Loloi's analysis of Anglo-Persian political parallels, suggesting that such parallels do exist, and are framed as ono-to-one analogies as well as diffused and multi-faceted parallels. Baron's *Mirza* would reinforce the notion of dramatic political parallelism, albeit partly, a few years later in the period. Overall, representations of Persia in all the four works show the extent to which English imagination and perception engaged Persians in the dramatic art of the period. The next chapter examines the ways in which Restoration playwrights such as Elkanah Settle and Thomas Southerne dramatize Islamic Persians, whether in isolation or in contrast with the Ottoman Turks, in an attempt to change the course of England's domestic policy through commenting on contemporary political disputes.

CHAPTER 6:

Representations of Islamic Persia and Persians in the Restoration: The Safavid Persians and England's Domestic Political Parties, 1660-1685

Introduction

This closing chapter of my thesis presents a brief snapshot of dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians during the reign of Charles II, 1660-1685, following the reopening of the theatres at the Restoration. My examination of such depictions leads to a comparison of English perceptions in this period of Islamic Persians on the one hand, and Ottoman Turks on the other. Such a comparison enables the current study to consider the portrayal of Safavid Persians on the English stage in the light of dramatic depictions of Islamic states more broadly. This chapter argues that English playwrights in the period use Islamic Persian dramatis personae, whether in contrast with the Ottoman Turks or in isolation, in an effort to comment upon, influence public perceptions of, and ultimately to shape the course of England's domestic policy. Unlike earlier periods, when writers employed Islamic Persian figures on stage in an effort to shape England's foreign policy towards Safavid Persia, the dramatic portrayals of Islamic Persians between 1660 and 1685 closely engage with England's internal domestic affairs. In what follows I discuss examples which reflect such an engagement, and by comparing dramatic portrayals of Islamic Persians and Ottomans, this chapter takes a first step towards a larger comparative study of the Safavids and Turks on the English stage, before and after the Restoration period.

The chapter explores two plays performed and published in Charles II's reign: Elkanah Settle's tragedy *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa* (1677), based on Madeleine de Scudery's French prose romance of the same name (1641), and the Irish playwright Thomas Southerne's *The Loyal Brother, or, the Persian Prince* (1682) which is based on Jean Regnauld de Segrais's contemporary French novel, *Prince de Perse* (1676, and translated into

English in the same year).[478] Prior to writing *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa*, Settle dramatized Persian figures in his tragedies *Cambyses, King of Persia* (1671) and *The Empress of Morocco* (1673). Settle's *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa* features an Islamic Persian character named Ulama who is taken captive by the Ottoman Turks in a Persian-Ottoman war. Ulama, the heir to the Persian crown, appears as a waiter in the Ottoman court to serve the monarch's wife, Roxolana. Elkanah Settle characterizes a Safavid royal captive in the Ottoman court who stabs himself when he realizes that his beloved, Roxolana, has poisoned herself. Here, Settle attempts to depict the Persian as a heroic yet tragic lover. The second tragedy, Thomas Southerne's *The Loyal Brother, or, the Persian Prince,* is set in the Safavid court. In *The Loyal Brother, or, the Persian Prince,* Southerne portrays Safavid Persia as a relatively flourishing empire in its far-flung territories, yet vulnerable at its very heart, within the royal court. In an attempt to topple the monarch, disaffected and evil courtiers – Ismael, a villainous favourite, Arbanes, a former military general, and Arbane's sister, Sunamire – attempt to convince the Persian king, Seliman, of the allegedly rebellious designs of Tachmas, his brother and chief commander of the Persian army (who is, in fact, quite loyal to Seliman). The plotters fail in their attempt, however, and are either killed or detained when the Persian captains loyal to Tachmas intercept the evil plot against the royal family. Both of the plays place Islamic Persian figures at the centre of heroic and dramatic interchanges: Ulama maintains his ambitious love for the Ottoman princess until the last moment of his life, and Tachmas stays loyal to his brother, the Persian monarch, despite the monarch's malicious treatment of him. In this general overview, I examine topical references in the two plays, and, in addition, provide a brief comparative study of the Ottoman king and Persian Ulama in Settle's play. In the light of the contemporary British political milieu in which Settle's play

[478] Southerne is chiefly known to modern criticism for his dramatic revision of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1688), and the anti-slavery stance of that adaptation.

was written, the comparison aims to highlight the distinctiveness of the Persians on the one hand and of the Ottomans on the other.

Following the Restoration, England continued to suffer from religious and political conflicts. After 1681, clearly identified contending political parties emerged, and terms such as 'Whigs' and 'Tories' came into common use.[479] On the one side, many dissenters from the Church of England sympathized with the Whigs, and on the other, many Anglicans affiliated themselves with the Tories. Indeed, religious and political issues were inseparable in the period's 'rage of parties'.[480] Through their dramatic art, both Elkanah Settle and Thomas Southerne engaged in such religio-political quarrels in Charles II's reign, and, in different ways, sought to influence the debate over England's domestic policies. It is also worth mentioning, however, that the dramatists' plays aimed at box office success too, and it was partly for this reason that they set their plays in eastern locales, and focused on high-flown themes of royal disputes. Abigail Williams indicates the literary tastes of the time in her comments on Settle's *The Empress of Morocco*:

> The play capitalized on the current fashion for bombastic rhymed drama set in exotic locations, and it was plotted around conflicts of love and honour in the royal house of Morocco. One of the chief attractions of the tragedy was undoubtedly its spectacular staging, and its elaborate palace scenes, fleets of ships, imprisoned princesses, and violent assassinations.[481]

Restoration-period shift in English drama's attention, from foreign to domestic policy matters, in fact began in the late Caroline period. Both John Denham's *The Sophy* (1642) and Robert Baron's *Mirza* (1647/55) draw on Anglo-Persian political parallels in order to warn and counsel Royalists and criticize anti-Royalists before and during the English civil war. Restoration drama continues this practice, of depicting Islamic Persia and Persians to

[479] John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation: Religion, Politics and Society in Britain, 1603-1714* (Harlow: Pearson, 2006), p. 165.
[480] See Pasi Ihalainen, 'The Political Sermon in an Age of Party Strife, 1700-1720: Contributions to the Conflict', in Hugh Adlington, Peter McCullough and Emma Rhatigan (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 495-516 (p. 497).
[481] Abigail Williams, 'Settle, Elkanah (1648-1724)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

comment on England's internal politics, but goes further by making clear and detailed allusions through such depictions to the competing interests and fortunes of English political parties such as the Whigs and Tories. In doing so, tragedians such as Settle and Southerne aimed at nothing less than shaping the political environment of the 1670s and 1680s. Settle's and Southerne's choice of Islamic Persian figures for this purpose reflects their confidence that Safavid Persian plots and characters would be sufficiently popular with and familiar to English playgoers, and could therefore be used to make clear, yet deniable, allusions to contemporary English political affairs. The following section compares the nature of the representation of Islamic Persian characters in Restoration England's political drama with their Ottoman counterparts, focusing in particular on Elkanah Settle's *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa*. Following this comparative analysis, the concluding section focuses on Thomas Southerne's *The Loyal Brother, or, the Persian Prince* in order to examine more fully the relationship between Safavid Persians and the topical references in the play.

6.1 Safavid Persian and Ottoman Dramatis Personae in Elkanah Settle's *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa*

Elkanah Settle held the post of steward at the English court till early 1670s, but, by the time he wrote *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa* in 1675-6, he was, by his own admission, no longer a favourite of the court. Becoming disaffected and disillusioned, Settle no longer felt the need to satisfy the tastes and interests of the court. Indeed, two years later, he devoted 'much of his energy to political propaganda, writing on behalf of the Whig exclusionists' (the Whigs wanted to exclude, on account of his religion, the Catholic James II, Charles II's brother, from the line of succession to the throne).[482] Although out of favour at court, Settle maintained a following among English playgoers. Settle's tragedy, *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa*, was originally acted 'privately for an aristocratic audience', and was, then, 'produced

[482] Williams, 'Settle, Elkanah (1648-1724)', *ODNB*.

for the public stage' by the Duke's Theatre in March 1676 before being published in 1677.[483] In the play, Settle portrays an Ottoman monarch in order to criticize royal ignorance and incompetence. Although magnificent at the outset of the play, Solyman, the Ottoman sultan, causes chaos in his court by falling in love with a 'Christian beauty', Isabella, and bringing about the 'subsequent humiliation' of Roxolana, his wife and queen.[484] Ulama, the son and heir of the Persian Sophy, and Roxolana's loyal lover, forces the Ottoman Solyman to 'renounce Isabella' after 'three virtuous lives have been lost' as a result of the king's love affair.[485] It appears, therefore, that Settle attempts to create a contrast between different members of the court. By presenting the Persians as loyal and the Ottomans as unfaithful, Settle could allude topically to contemporary English royal affairs, and criticize Charles II's propensity for love entanglement and adultery by offering the Persian Ulama, who is loyal in love, as a contrast.

Settle's criticism may expose, to some extent, the playwright's dissatisfaction with the English monarchy in the late 1670s. Indeed, I would argue that *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa* marked the beginning of Settle's disaffection with the court, just as other critics suggest that Settle's *Fatal Love* (1680), 'with its anti-Catholic satire on priests and nuns', produced four years after *Ibrahim*, 'marked the beginnings of the playwright's engagement with the politics of the exclusion crisis'.[486] Like many others, Settle changed his political views and affiliations more than once in this turbulent period, shifting his political allegiances to the Tories at the end of 1682 following the departure of the Earl of Shaftesbury 'for the Netherlands' and 'the effective defeat of the exclusionist agenda'.[487] However, what

[483] See Don-John Dugas, 'Elkanah Settle, John Crowne and Nahum Tate', in Susan J. Owen (ed.), *A Companion to Restoration Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 378-95 (p. 381).
[484] Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage 1660-1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 77.
[485] *Ibid.*
[486] Williams, 'Settle, Elkanah (1648–1724)', *ODNB.*
[487] *Ibid.*

distinguished Settle from other contemporary playwrights was his use of Islamic Persian figures in response to, and in order to shape, the political atmosphere of the period.

In *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa*, Settle depicts the Persian, Ulama, as a pivotal figure in resolving the tensions between the Ottomans and Christians. The Persian achieves this success as a mediator in spite of his subordinate position at the Ottoman court. A measure of Ulama's heroism is that although he appears as a captive, he is trusted by all members of the court. Ulama opposes the Ottoman king by criticizing the monarch's approach towards his courtiers. Ulama appears as an effective figure who eventually succeeds in changing the king's opinion regarding his love affair with a Christian woman. He insists that Solyman maintain his relationship with his wife, Roxolana, and avoid upsetting court affairs. The Persian attempts to settle the turbulent relationship between the king and his wife despite his own ambitious love for Roxolana for whom he gives his life at the end of the play. Settle, therefore, dramatizes Ulama, the Islamic Persian figure, as a captive outsider who successfully adapts to new circumstances, and who is willing to speak the truth in order to ensure peace and stability in the Ottoman royal court.

Safavid Persia appears as an inferior military power to the Ottomans at the outset of *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa*. At the same time, Settle depicts the Safavid Persians as possessing virtuous personal characteristics of trustworthiness and royal nobility. The Ottoman sultan, Solyman asserts that:

> does from Vanquisht *Persia* come,
> From being fear'd abroad, to be ador'd at home.
> By what the Arms of *Solyman* have won,
> The Turkish moon Eclips'd the Persian Sun.

Solyman possesses a strong army. He admits that Persia is a serious rival for the Ottomans. While presenting his chief commander, Ibrahim, to Roxolana after the war, Solyman maintains that Ibrahim has fought 'Against the *Sophy*, my most pow'rful […and…stubborn] Foe'. Solyman also respects and acknowledges Persia's chivalric nobility by sometimes

referring to the Persian captive, Ulama, as a 'Prince'. Ulama is the only character to whom Solyman dares declare, 'The nearest secrets of my soul'. Despite his weak position in the Ottoman court, Ulama is regarded as trustworthy by other characters also. Ibrahim confides in Ulama alone about his Christian beliefs and his love for Isabella. The commander trusts no one else for he intends not to 'provoke his [Solyman's] rage', and 'engage' the king in 'revenge'. Roxolana, a wife of Solyman, also puts faith in Ulama by sharing with him 'the secrets of my heart'.[488] By dramatizing Ulama as a character who possesses close relationships with other figures at court, the playwright intentionally depicts the Persian in contrast to his Ottoman counterpart. While the Persian appears as a sincere, loyal and principled figure in the play, the Turk is shown to be willing to sever his familial and official ties, and abandon his duties, for lust.

Despite his low social position as a waiter to Roxolana, Ulama uses his winning personality first to earn the trust of the Ottoman court, and then to caution Solyman about the dangerous consequences for his rule of following his desires. Ulama addresses the sultan, in Act II, to warn the king about his relationship with Ibrahim. The Persian advises Solyman 'Some care of your declining Friendship take' or expect a day when 'he who once made trembling Nations shake, / Will at his own surprizing Image quake'. Elsewhere, Ulama alerts Solyman to the monarch's weakening power and character. He advises the Turk:

> Recall your wandering thoughts from such false dreams,
> And free your self from all these wil'd extreams:
> This low desire and humble thought surmount,
> And your own happier Scenes of Love recount.[489]

The Persian encourages Solyman, here, to sustain his relationship with Roxolana, and avoid upsetting it with 'false dreams' and 'wil'd extreams'. Ulama prizes 'Vertue' above all, and advises that only through the exercise of virtue can Solyman maintain stability in the

[488] Elkanah Settle, *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa*: *A Tragedy* (London, 1677), sigs B1v, B2v, C1v, C2v, F4v.
[489] *Ibid*., sigs C2r-v.

Ottoman court. Indeed, Ulama goes so far as to declare his willingness to repair and protect the sultan's virtue in the face of his sin of concupiscence: 'I am your Vertues Friend, / And with my Blood that Vertue wou'd defend'.[490] Ulama implies that Solyman's court suffers because of the sinfulness of its sultan, and of the related dearth of nobility, loyalty and honour. In order to halt the decadence of the court, Ulama goes further, and appeals to the Ottoman sultan's religious scruples in order to restrain him from jeopardizing his monarchy. Being aware that Solyman 'swear[s] by *Alla*', the Persian urges the king to 'Be Great, Proud, Glorious, Blest; Live, Love, and Reign, / […] And call your self our Prophets Son and Heir'.[491] Interestingly, in this appeal both to Solyman's vanity and his better nature, Ulama avoids any allusion to longstanding Shi'a-Sunni sectarian quarrels regarding the 'Heir' to the Muslim prophet, Mohammad. This is politic on Ulama's part, in *not* reminding the Ottoman of his religious differences with the Persians, and intriguing on Settle's part. Is the playwright attempting here to show how the subtle exercise of religious tolerance and latitude – exemplified in Ulama's reference to '*our* Prophets Son and Heir' – can do far more for political and civil stability than the kinds of uncivil disputes and quarrels between Whigs and Tories, and dissenters and Anglicans, that characterized the English political landscape of the late 1670s?

Settle represents the Persian, then, as more civilized, moderate and rational than the Turkish monarch in the Ottoman court. In fact, it is only the Persian's deep commitment to social and cultural stability that saves the Ottoman court from collapsing internally. To this end, Ulama sacrifices his life at the end of the play and defends, with his own 'Blood', the virtue he values. The Ottoman military, with all its crippling power on the battlefield, cannot seem, however, to resolve the Ottoman court's inner tensions. Elkanah Settle shows how a Persian with noble heritage defines the course of a foreign court. He attempts to show, by

[490] *Ibid*., sig. H4v.
[491] *Ibid*., sigs B4r, H4v.

characterizing a Persian captive, that unsettled personal and political relationships can be refined through negotiation and non-military resolutions. Compared with their warmongering Ottoman counterparts, the Safavid Persian dramatis personae offered a promising model of conflict resolution to Restoration English audiences, through encouraging social interaction rather than military force in order to deal with serious political and religious divisions. Safavid Persians on stage, then, appeared to symbolize what a disturbed England needed, and wanted, most. England and the English, devastated by civil war, the turmoil of the Interregnum and ongoing religious controversies, longed for the arbitration of bitter differences by peaceful means. By creating a tragic ending for his play, Settle warns of the consequences of dogmatic and inflexible handling of religious and social disputes. Through depicting Ottoman examples of behaviour – such as royalty's willingness to indulge in unbridled desire – the playwright reminds Restoration playgoers of earlier instances of the dangers of absolute personal rule that led to the civil war over three decades earlier.

In creating a dramatic contrast between Islamic Persians and Ottoman Turks, Elkanah Settle appears to follow to some extent the example of late Caroline dramatists such as John Denham. I have argued earlier that characters such as Denham's Abbas were intended, in a variety of ways, to symbolize contrasting parties: that is, the royalists and their opponents. It appears, therefore, that both Denham and Settle turned to such contrasts between Ottomans and Persians in their attempts to avert rapidly developing crises arising from the violent clash of religious and political opinions – in Denham's case, the spiralling out of control of the civil wars of the 1640s, and in Settle's case the growing unrest inspired by the Exclusion Crisis. Both playwrights put Islamic Persians on stage in an attempt to warn the English of imminent social collapse as a consequence of religious and political difference.

6.2 Thomas Southerne's *The Loyal Brother, or, the Persian Prince*: Anglo-Persian Political Parallels in Charles II's Reign

In contrast with Elkanah Settle, Thomas Southerne, in *The Loyal Brother, or, the Persian Prince* (1682), employs Islamic Persia and Persians not in order to take religio-political sides. Rather, his depiction of Islamic figures is, interestingly, pro-Whig and pro-Tory at the same time. Supplied with a 'tory-leaning prologue' by John Dryden, Southerne's play celebrates the triumph of loyalty between members of the Persian royal family, chiefly between the king and his brother, Tachmas.[492] Previous scholarship suggests that the play 'exalts the reputation of James, Duke of York' by valorising Tachmas, the Persian king's loyal brother.[493] As a reward for such literary support, James II, when he ascended the English crown in 1685, promoted Thomas Southerne from ensign to lieutenant in the regiment of Princess Anne.[494] While praising James, the Duke of York, Southerne criticizes political figures such as the First Earl of Shaftesbury, one of the founders of the Whigs, and even dares to admonish the king, Charles II. The playwright's chief concern is to show that provoking a new civil war is doomed to failure. He does so by dramatizing the Persian Ismael as 'a Tory representation of Shaftesbury' who attempts to incite 'a new generation of rebels' who seek to cause a new civil war.[495] Ismael, the villainous favourite of Seliman, the Persian king, attempts to rouse a political rally against the Persian king in Act V, Scene II. Using political rhetoric, Ismael manipulates a rabble of Persians, and persuades them to declare that they are 'all for Rebellion' against the Persian king.[496] Southerne appears to criticize the English monarch for some of his policies too. Through depicting the Persians as 'ungoverned citizens' who attack 'officers [while] calling in debts', the playwright attempts to remind the

[492] Eric Salmon, 'Southerne, Thomas (1660–1746)', *ODNB*.
[493] *Ibid*.
[494] *Ibid*.
[495] See Miriam Handley, 'William Congreve and Thomas Southerne', in Susan J. Owen (ed.), *A Companion to Restoration Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 412-28 (p. 415).
[496] Thomas Southerne, *The Loyal Brother or the Persian Prince* (London, 1682), sig. H1r.

audiences of the '1681 dissolution of Parliament and rumours of the king's negotiations with France over money for a standing army'.[497]

Southerne's criticism of Whig courtiers and royal figures at the same time, perhaps, justifies John Dryden's lines in the epilogue to Southerne's play:

> *A Virgin Poet* [who] *was serv'd up to day;*
> *Who till this hour, ne're cackled for a Play:*
> *He's neither yet a Whigg nor Tory-Boy;*
> *But, like a Girl, whom several wou'd enjoy*.[498]

(Dryden's bawdy commentary on the debut playwright's uncertain political allegiances take their tonal cue from Southerne's own dedicatory epistle to the play, in which he lays down his 'Maiden-head' at the door of the Duke of Richmond, the play's dedicatee.)[499] It is quite evident, then, to Southerne's contemporaries that his fictional world of Persians and Persia functions as a political allegory, presenting on stage, in other words, a version of the English court in Safavid Persian garb.

Thomas Southerne wrote *The Loyal Brother* in a decade when political crisis loomed large in English dramatic art.[500] As the 1660s waned, and in the following troubled years, the role of the monarch altered in plays such as Thomas Southerne's.[501] Both major and minor dramatists were reluctant to celebrate 'restored authority' on stage, and, in fact, began to reflect upon the 'problems inherent in the exercise and very nature of power'.[502] In *The Loyal Brother*, for example, Southerne simultaneously criticizes both royal authority and the Whig's opposition to absolute monarchy. Nonetheless, Southerne's play adopts a more moderate criticism of the Whigs compared with such infamous works as John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), which clearly takes sides with the king while attacking the

[497] Handley, 'William Congreve and Thomas Southerne', p. 415.
[498] See H. T. Swedenberg, Jr (ed.), *The Works of John Dryden: Poems 1681-1684* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 192; Southern, *The Loyal Brother or the Persian Prince* (1682), sig. I2r.
[499] Southerne, *The Loyal Brother or the Persian Prince* (1682), sig. A2r.
[500] J. Douglas Canfield, *Heroes and States: On the Ideology of Restoration Tragedy* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), p. 9.
[501] Jessica Munns, 'Images of Monarchy on the Restoration Stage', in Susan J. Owen (ed.), *A Companion to Restoration Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 109-25 (p. 113).
[502] Derek Hughes, *English Drama: 1660-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 78.

Whigs, and in particular, the Earl of Shaftesbury.[503] In what follows, I will examine the ways in which Southerne's play invites its audiences and readers to see English political parallels in three of its key characters: Seliman, the Sophy of Persia; Tachmas, his brother; and Ismael, Seliman's favourite courtier. With little effort at concealment by Southerne, these characters represent, respectively, Charles II, James, Duke of York, and the First Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper.

The Loyal Brother starts with a clear message for the Whig party. Ismael declares: 'Long have these tempests threatned from the North, / To overturn the fate of *Persia*'.[504] It soon becomes evident that Persia stands in for England, and that the threat from the North alludes to the Scottish Presbyterians, the largest dissenting group in Britain unwilling to conform to the canons and rule of the established Church of England.[505] Yet in putting these words in Ismael's mouth, the alter ego of the Earl of Shaftesbury, Southerne is implicitly criticizing the Whigs for exaggerating and even fomenting threats to national stability and, ultimately, to the rule of the monarch. By contrast, Southerne's characterization of Osman, a commander loyal to Tachmas, paints a favourable picture of those royalists who favour a stable court and the continuity of power. Upon entering the Persian court, Osman declares to the Persian king, as a sign of respect: 'Let *Persia* flourish, and its royal Lord, / Be ever Master of the Asian World'.[506] Osman is presented as one of Tachmas's close associates, and is dramatized as the intelligent saviour of the king's brother at the end of the play.

Long before the play reaches its conclusion, however, Southerne rarely misses an opportunity to emphasize the importance of maintaining one's oath to the king under all circumstances. For example, although banished from the court, and treated unjustly, Tachmas

[503] Paul Hammond, 'Dryden, John (1631-1700)', *ODNB*. Dryden wrote the poem in an effort to win public opinion to the king, while Shaftesbury was on trial for treason.
[504] Southerne, *The Loyal Brother or the Persian Prince* (1682), sig. B1r.
[505] Gary S. De Krey, 'Between Revolutions: Re-Appraising the Restoration in Britain', *History Compass*, 6 (2008): 738-73 (p. 750).
[506] Southerne, *The Loyal Brother or the Persian Prince* (1682), sig. B3v.

insists that he should show patience: 'I must not thus / By disobedience to my Kings command, / Rashly forgo my glory'.[507] The king's brother believes that if the Persian monarch 'think fit / To take my life, or make it yet more wretched', then Tachmas's loyalty still 'ties up my forward Sword, / And teaches silently to suffer all'. Just like Ulama in Elkanah Settle's *Ibrahim*, Tachmas is prepared to sacrifice himself for his honour and king. Elsewhere in *The Loyal Brother*, Tachmas, on a scaffold, bitterly proclaims that:

> Death we shou'd prize, as the best gift of nature;
> As a safe Inn, where weary Travellers,
> When they have journied through a world of cares,
> May put off Life, and be at rest for ever;
> […]
> For death unmask'd shews us a friendly face,
> And only is a terror at a distance.[508]

In such honourable and stoical speeches of Tachmas, Southerne aims to condemn the hypocrisy of those who are not grateful for the 'cares' they receive from their monarch, and who go so far as to turn against their king in an attempt to subvert his monarchy. Compared to such disloyalty, Tachmas asserts, death has a friendlier 'face' for at least it promises rest from 'a world of cares'. By contrast with subversive ingratitude and rebellion, unflinching loyalty and obedience to the king are held up by Southerne's play as the supreme values and behaviour that underpin the stability of the monarch, and in turn of the nation.

Such emphasis on the importance of maintaining the continuity of royal authority was also evident in Robert Baron's late Caroline/Interregnum play *Mirza*. Despite the serious flaws in the Sophy's character in *Mirza*, Baron is careful to ensure that the play ends with succession plans intact, in the form of the Sophy's decree that Soffie (the dead Mirza's son) will inherit the throne when the Sophy eventually dies. In Southerne's *The Loyal Brother*, even Ismael, the most powerful rival of loyal Persians, subsides into loyal obedience, and

[507] *Ibid.*, sig. E3r.
[508] *Ibid.*, sigs E3r, E4r.

proclaims: 'may all disturbers of the state, / Grow blindly popular, and meet my fate'.[509] Southerne appears to suggest that the 'disturbers' of a stable 'state' can be 'popular' for blind eyes only, and not for those who can see the true advantage of living in a tranquil monarchy. In Restoration England, such a portrayal of Persian loyalty would have had a clear message for the English playgoers: through his depiction of Islamic Persians, Southerne urges absolute submission to the king in order to achieve national unity.

Southerne does not confine his criticism to anti-royalists. However, his critique of the king's failings is more sympathetic than his attack on the Whigs, and ultimately he dramatizes a king who reforms himself from within despite his past mistakes. The king pardons Tachmas, and bids him live by saying:

> Live *Tachmas* ! live; come to thy brothers arms;
> Think him no more a Monster, paricide,
> A Wolf, that lives upon the steam of blood:
> I've lost my brutal nature, and am man
> Agen, merciful gentle as the first.
> […]
> My tossing thoughts will soon be rock'd in calms.

The play concludes with modest lines from the Persian Sophy. He advises future monarchs to learn what he failed to do: 'may succeeding Monarchs learn from me, / How far to trust a Statesmans policy'.[510] In depicting the reformed monarch, the playwright emphasizes the misleading and influential power of evil counsellors and their 'policy'. In short, Southerne attempts, first and foremost, to criticize faulty courtiers, and second, to encourage the king to revive public trust through self-reform. *The Loyal Brother* appears to follow earlier plays such as Baron's *Mirza* in its willingness to attempt to counsel a king and educate its audience. In both plays, Islamic Persian characters live out on stage the social and political conflicts of the contemporary English world, in the (often vain) hope that such destructive behaviour and conflict may be averted in the world beyond the theatre walls.

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[509] *Ibid*., sig. I1v.
[510] *Ibid*., sigs F2v, I1v.

This chapter has argued that Restoration dramatists such as Elkanah Settle and Thomas Southerne follow their late-Caroline predecessors – John Denham and Robert Baron – in dramatizing Islamic Persia and Persians in order to comment on contemporary political affairs. In doing so, Settle characterizes the captive Persian prince Ulama as an effective saviour of royal dignity, and Southerne, in sympathy with the king, attempts to provide a dramatic model for royal self-reform. Islamic Persian characters were, on the one hand, politically and sufficiently fluid and flexible to voice the playwrights' intended criticism and warning, and, on the other, to be clearly heard by audiences. Whereas playwrights such as Settle and Southerne depicted Ottoman characters in fairly two-dimensional terms – generally lacking in redeeming qualities – Safavid Persians on stage, by contrast, were more fully realized fictional creations, imbued with a psychological depth and complexity, and nobility of spirit and behaviour, not present in their Ottoman counterparts. In the Restoration, dramatic depictions of Safavid Persia and Persians possess a long English literary history, going back to Marlowe, and thereby stand for something more in the cultural memory than merely the exotic east. In this period there is a wider craze or fashion for 'all things Persian', and Settle's and Southerne's choice of settings, characters and storylines shape and contribute to such enthusiasm.[511] This chapter has shown that while English playwrights in the Restoration put Islamic Persia and Persians on stage for political reasons, these reasons were not the same ones that motivated late-Elizabethan, Jacobean, and early-Caroline dramatists. While earlier writers sought to shape England's *foreign* policy through their representations of Islamic Persia and Persian, Restoration playwrights used such depictions in their attempt to change the course of the country's *domestic* policy.

[511] Parvin Loloi, 'The Image of the Safavids in English and French Literature (1500-1800)', in Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (eds), *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 347-56 (p. 351).

CONCLUSION

As an important feature of early modern English theatre, depictions of contemporary Islamic Persia and Persians fascinated Tudor-Stuart playgoers in various ways. By their appearance on stage and in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dramatic texts, Safavid Persia and Persians participated in and contributed to the constantly changing political currents of the period. Whether in the Elizabethan or Jacobean periods, during the personal rule of Charles I, the fraught period of civil war, in the Cromwellian republic or after the Restoration, dramatic representations of Islamic Safavids responded to, accommodated, and even shaped the changing political landscape of the period. However, while it is true to say that such representations served diverse purposes, in tune with changing political and cultural priorities in early modern England and Europe, it is also the case that certain aspects of English dramatic portrayals of Islamic Persia and Persians remained markedly consistent between 1580 and 1685. Most notably, in contrast with its Ottoman counterpart, Safavid Persia on stage was *not* made chiefly to appear as a threatening and alien Islamic state. In fact, English playwrights depicted Safavid Persia as a politically moderate empire, opposed to more tyrannical and despotic forms of Islam (often associated in English drama with the Ottomans), and a nation tolerant of the Christian world. Known for their much praised classical legacy, symbolized by pre-Islamic, ancient Persian Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties and semi-mythical kings such as Darius and Khosro I, Islamic Persia was distinguished in the early modern English imagination from the Islamic Ottomans and North Africans such as the countries now known as Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. For example, in William Alexander's *Darius* (1603) and John Suckling's *Aglaura* (1638), ancient Persia appeared as an idealized model for contemporary England, wherein various political forces and issues threatened the country's stability and integrity from inside and out. Depictions of classical Persia as such affected the ways in which contemporary Persians were dramatized as a distinguished Islamic

state. Such distinctions helped the Islamic Safavids emerge as less of a stereotypical Islamic 'other' for England, and more as a potential partner, ally and collaborator in the east.

English playwrights were aware that, in the early modern English imagination, Islamic Persia was seen as the most powerful middle-eastern rival of the Ottoman Turks, who in turn were seen as posing the greatest military and ideological threat on Christian Europe in the period. English plays consequently frequently portrayed Islamic Persia as a model eastern ally and supporter for England, and as an implacable enemy of Europe's enemy, the Ottomans. Such depictions, then, clearly stand as evidence contrary to the widely held critical notion of an historical west-east binary, first theorized in detail in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Indeed, surviving Tudor-Stuart dramatic texts showed precisely how representations of Islamic Persia and Persians participated in breaking such binary oppositions. Christopher Marlowe, for example, presented contemporary Persians in *Tamburlaine* as a people, in contrast with the Ottoman Turks, who refused to enter into battle with the Christian world. Through pageants and masques, early modern English playwrights developed and built on Islamic Persia's positive standing in the English imagination, and consolidated and elaborated on Islamic Persia's allegedly pro-Christian sentiments. By the end of Charles II's reign, playwrights had succeeded in establishing fully realized Safavid Persian dramatis personae, with which to engage English theatregoers and readers, and enlist their sympathy. The dramatists, then, through such rich characterization of Islamic Persian figures, sought actively to participate in England's ongoing domestic political debates, such as those between the Whigs and Tories over the successor to Charles II. From late Elizabethan England through to the Restoration, dramatic depictions of Safavid Persians were a powerful instrument by which early modern English dramatists effectively engaged with foreign and domestic policy debates.

For over a century, Safavid Persia and Persian played a significant role in early modern English dramatic depictions of the Islamic east. Their presence on the English stage ushered in a new, appealing image of an Islamic state, one that was attractive rather than alarming to the English public and politicians. Dramatic representations of Safavid Persia and Persians participated in halting, hastening, or heralding changes in Tudor-Stuart England's social and cultural attitudes and foreign and domestic policies. For example, Elizabethan dramatists such as Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Heywood pioneered the dramatization of Islamic Persia as a religiously tolerant empire, fundamentally opposed to the expansionist foreign policies and rigid forms of Islam practised by the Ottoman empire. Such depictions of the Safavids provided the foundations upon which Jacobean dramatists were able to build, and thence to make more overt proposals for Islamic Persia to become England's close political ally and commercial partner. The outstanding peak of such alliances was the first Anglo-Persian joint military operation against the Portuguese in the 1620s, a remarkable political event taking place in the reigns of James VI and I and Shah Abbas I.

Charles I's accession to the throne in 1625 saw, if anything, an increase in the frequency with which Islamic Persia and Persians were depicted on the English stage, and in the variety of the forms and styles of such portrayals. This growth in interest in Persia was inspired in part by Charles I's policies regarding international relations and trade, instructing Sir Dodmore Cotton, as English ambassador, to seek stronger political and commercial relations with Islamic Persia in the late 1620s. Caroline dramatists followed the royal lead, painting a flattering portrait of Safavid Persia in masques and pageants as a prominent country in England's international relations, both in harmony with and respectful of the honour and might of early modern England. Even plays such as John Suckling's *Aglaura*, which focused ostensibly on the ancient Persian world, drew on contemporary Anglo-Persian travel and political exchanges such as accounts of the Dodmore Cotton embassy to Persia.

Towards the end of Charles I's reign, and into the civil war, the Interregnum and the Restoration period, dramatic representations of Islamic Persia tended increasingly to comment on local and internal issues in England rather than on foreign affairs only. That is, Safavid Persians appeared on the English stage more as political analogies or parallels for England and the English monarchy, than as potential political allies. Such analogies were meant both to criticize and praise English political figures on both sides of the political divide, including royalist courtiers on the one hand, and parliamentarians on the other. In Charles II's reign, through their dramatizations of Islamic Persians, English playwrights engaged with fierce debates between political parties such as the Whigs and Tories. In conclusion, this thesis argues that early modern English dramatists turned so frequently to representations of Safavid Persia in order to engage public opinion, comment upon and participate effectively in England's international and domestic political affairs and ambitions. Through such representations, Safavid Persia and Persians played a key role in the cultural and political landscape of early modern England, a role that has yet to be played so positively or productively on the stage of twenty-first century Anglo-Persian literary and cultural relations.

This thesis adds to existing scholarship by contributing to three areas of research concerning early modern English literature. Firstly, my research supplements and extends existing critical enquiries into dramatic depictions of Islamic culture in early modern English literature. Whereas previous critical studies, by scholars such as Gerald MacLean, Nabil Matar, and Matthew Dimmock, focus on English literary engagements with the Ottoman empire and Islamic North Africans, my study explores the neglected topic of allusions to and representations of Islamic Persia and Persians on the early modern English stage, revealing the distinctive place Safavid Persia held in early modern English thought. Secondly, this thesis goes beyond existing research on dramatic depictions of Persia and Persians, by critics such as Anthony Parr, Linda McJannet, and Jane Grogan, by specifically focusing on

representations of Islamic rather than ancient Persia and Persians. In so doing, my research shows the surprisingly prominent place occupied, in a variety of guises, by Safavid Persians in the Tudor-Stuart English imagination. Thirdly, this thesis breaks new ground by showing the ways in which dramatic depictions of Islamic Persia and Persians actively contributed to the foreign and domestic policy debates of the period. I argue that a dynamic relation existed between such depictions and the early modern political interplay between Safavid Persia, England, and the Ottoman Turks. I maintain, therefore, that dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians played a pivotal role in both reflecting and shaping English political and cultural attitudes in the early modern period.

This thesis also contributes to thinking on the ways in which east-west relations were perceived and represented in the early modern period. Through my analysis of a range of early modern English plays, focusing on depictions of Safavid Persia and Persians, my research challenges Edward Said's theory in *Orientalism* regarding cultural constructions of west-east binary oppositions. By contrast, I argue that early modern English drama's positive representation of Islamic Persia constitutes a clear alternative to Said's self-other construct established in *Orientalism*. As I have shown, English playwrights such as John Denham presented contemporary Safavid Persia as a mirror in which English decision-makers and theatregoers could more clearly see the potential effects and consequences of particular courses of political action, at home and abroad. Dramatic depictions of Islamic Persia, then, might be thought of more as an imaginary embodiment of an alternative 'self' for early modern English politics and religion, than as the xenophobic creation of an ideological and military rival and 'other'.

The findings of this thesis suggest that further research into early modern English literary engagement with Islamic Persia and Persians may prove highly beneficial. While maintaining a historical focus on Tudor-Stuart foreign and domestic policies, future enquiries

might examine literary allusions to Persia and Persians in genres such as poetry and the novel. In what ways, for example, might well-known references to Persia in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590) and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) have actively contributed to political debates concerning Safavid Persia in early modern England? How might such allusions have contributed to English perceptions of contemporary Persia and Persians? Or in what way might references to Safavid Persia in the post-Restoration novel have helped to shape England's policy towards the Islamic state? Could it be the case, for example, that Jean Regnauld de Segrais's French novel, *Tachmas Prince of Persia* (1676), pioneered prose fiction's European construction of the image of Safavid Persians? Indeed, how might the novel's depictions of Islamic Persia and Persians have affected late seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century political and cultural relations between Europe and Safavid Persia? Finding answers to such questions could thereby consolidate and build upon the findings of this thesis regarding dramatic representations of Islamic Persia and Persians on the early modern English stage.

Lastly, in researching and writing this thesis I have been struck by the significant potential for critical studies of the reception, adaptation and translation of early modern English drama in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Persian literature. By focusing on the influence of such reception on contemporary Persian-Anglo political and cultural relations, such studies could illuminate the ways in which literature in general, and drama in particular, has the potential to establish, foster and develop mutually beneficial Persian-Anglo cultural and political relations. There is considerable potential in this greatly neglected area of research. As a starting point, for example, researchers could examine the ways in which Persian writers have responded to, adapted and transformed Shakespearean drama on the modern Iranian stage. In analysing such Iranian appropriations and adaptations of Shakespeare, and other early modern English drama, future studies might profitably consider

the ways in which Iranian playwrights and producers draw out and handle potentially controversial political parallels and references in modern-day Iran. Researchers might also profitably reverse the literary critical telescope. That is, they might apply the same approach to study the impact of Persian literature and film on contemporary British drama, and by so doing gain a better understanding of the ways in which such drama attempts to comment on British domestic and foreign policy.

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