

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF TURKISH STUDIES**

**MASTER THESIS**

**BETWEEN REALITY AND FICTION:  
THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN MIGUEL DE  
CERVANTES' "LA GRAN SULTANA CATALINA DE  
OVIEDO" (1615)**

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**ISTANBUL 2021**

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OVIEDO" (1615)**

**by**

**NARIMAN NABIL MOHAMAD ABUGHARBIEH**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Turkish Studies**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR**

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**ISTANBUL 2021**

## APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Turkish Studies.

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This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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## ÖZ

GERÇEK VE KURGU ARASINDA: MIGUEL DE CERVANTES'TE OSMANLI  
İMPARATORLUĞU "LA GRAN SULTANA CATALINA DE OVIEDO" (1615)

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Aralık 2021, 90 sayfa

Bir komedi eseri olan “La Gran Sultana Catalina de Oviedo” (bundan sonra zikredilecek yerlerde LGS şeklinde kısaltılacaktır), birçok eleştirmenin Avrupa’da yazılan ilk modern roman olarak kabul ettiği ünlü “Don Kişot” ile tanınan meşhur İspanyol romancı ve oyun yazarı Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616)'in baş yapıtlarından biridir. Kitabın tiyatro hali edebiyatçılardan yeterince ilgi görmemiş olsa da, Akdeniz'in iki farklı dünyasına dair birçok ilginç referans içermektedir.

LGS, on altıncı ve onyedinci yüzyıllarda Akdeniz dünyasının siyasi, sosyal ve ideolojik çatışmalarını özel bir 'Cervantine' tarzında tanıtır. Cervantes oyunda İspanyol Hidalgo, İtalya'da yaşayan bir gurbetçi, İnebahtı Savaşı'na katılan bir asker (1571) ve Osmanlı Cezayir'inde ki bir esirin kişisel deneyimlerinden bahseder. Elinizdeki bu tez, tam da bu sebeple, LGS'yi tarihsel gerçekler ile kurgu arasında asılı kalan bir eser olarak incelemektedir.

Tezde, komedinin ana karakterlerinin derin okuma yöntemleri ve söylem analizlerini kullandım. Ayrıca konuyu Cervantes ve Osmanlı Padişahı III. Murat'ın (1574-1595) biyografisi açısından da ele aldım. Bu yöntemlerin hepsi, oyun yazarının "ham gerçeklik" kavramıyla ne kastettiğini anlamamıza yardımcı olur. Bu araştırma yöntemlerini kullanarak oyundaki karakterlerin neredeyse tamamının ya Cervantes çevresinde yada Sultan III. Murat zamanında yaşamış olabileceği kanısına varmaktayım.

Ayrıca, Catalina'nın Cervantes ve Cervantes'in de Catalina olduğuna inanmaya başladım. Saavedra ise içinde İstanbul şehrine karşı bir takım fantaziler beslemektedir. Hakkında okumalar yaptığı bu ünlü ve harika şeylerle dolu şehri keşfetmek istemektedir. Bu sebeple hayal dünyasında kendini Osmanlı'nın merkezine yerleştirerek imparatorluğun en özel ve erişilmez yeri olan Haremi mekan olarak seçmiş ve kurgusunu orada ilerletmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Akdeniz, Kurgu, Oryantalizm, Osmanlı dünyası, Tutsak.



## ABSTRACT

### BETWEEN REALITY AND FICTION: THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN MIGUEL DE CERVANTES' "LA GRAN SULTANA CATALINA DE OVIEDO" (1615)

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December 2021, 90 Pages

The comedy "La Gran Sultana Catalina de Oviedo" (hereafter LGS) is one of the masterpieces of the well-known Spanish novelist and playwright Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), known by his famous novel "Don Quixote," which many critics consider the first modern European novel. Although the play has not attracted sufficient attention from literary scholars, it includes many interesting references to the two different worlds of the Mediterranean.

LGS depicts the political, social, and ideological conflicts of the Mediterranean world during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, all introduced in a special 'Cervantine' style. In the play, Cervantes refers to his personal experiences as a Hidalgo of Spain, an expat living in Italy, a soldier of the Lepanto battle (1571), and a captive in Ottoman Algiers. Accordingly, this thesis examines LGS as a work suspended between historical realities and fiction.

This thesis utilizes a close reading approach and discourse analysis of the comedy's main characters. I also have approached the subject through the biography of Cervantes and the Ottoman Sultan Murat III (r. 1574-1595). All allow us to see how the playwright filled 'raw reality' with meaning. By using these research methods, I

found that almost all the characters mentioned in the play refer to real persons that lived either in Cervantes' environment or in the circle of Sultan Murat III.

Furthermore, I have come to believe that Catalina is Cervantes and Cervantes is Catalina. Saavedra fantasized about Istanbul. He wished to discover the city of the famed wonders that he had read about. Thus, in his poetic imagination, he placed himself at the center of the Ottoman world, and as his favored site, he chose the imperial Harem, the most private and inaccessible place that he could imagine.

**Keywords:** Captive, Fiction, Mediterranean, Orientalism, Ottoman world.





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ÖZ.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER II LA GRAN SULTANA BY MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SYNOPSIS OF THE THREE ACTS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1. First Act / La primera Jornada.....	5
2.1.1. Second Act / La Segunda Jornada .....	6
2.1.2. Third Act / La Tercera Jornada .....	8
2.2. The Play's Religious Background and Figurative Symbols .....	10
2.2.1. Esther vs. Catalina, Points of Convergence .....	11
2.3. Literature and Theatre of the Spanish Golden Age “El Siglo de Oro”. .....	13
2.3.1. The Image of the “ Turk” in the Spanish Theatre of El Siglo de Oro .....	19
2.3.2. Characters and Symbols: The Identities Game of Cards.....	25
<b>CHAPTER III IS IT A PLAY OF A MERE CRITICISM OF THE WEST AND PRAISE OF THE EAST?.....</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1. Eroticism and Exoticness: Orientalism and Representation of Alterity .....	35
3.2. The Orient of the Comedy “LGS” .....	38
3.3. Speaking the Unspoken: Beyond the Character's Direct Utterances.....	42
<b>CHAPTER IV CERVANTES AND THE OTTOMAN WORLD .....</b>	<b>45</b>
4.1. The Ottoman – Spanish Relations in the 16th Century .....	45
4.2. Miguel de Cervantes in Algiers.....	50
4.3. Sultan Murat III.....	58
4.4. Valide Sultan / Mother Queen Nurbanu .....	60
4.5. Safiye Sultan / Murad III Haseki Sultan .....	65
<b>CHAPTER V THE INTEGRATION OF HISTORY IN THE PLAY “MINGLING BETWEEN TWO WORLDS” .....</b>	<b>69</b>
5.1. Catalina vs. Nurbanu or Safiye Sultan .....	70
5.2. Characters Vs. History / Characters and Events Fitting in the Historical Frame .....	72
<b>CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>81</b>

<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>CURRICULUM VITAE.....</b>	<b>90</b>



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1. Algerian Corsair Captain .....	53
Figure 4.2. Admiral of an Algerian Fleet.....	54
Figure 4.3. Jew of Algiers.....	55
Figure 4.4. Turkish Soldier of Algiers.....	56
Figure 4.5. Algiers of the Seventeenth Century .....	57
Figure 4.6. Nurbanu's Islamic Burial Ceremony.....	65



# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, amid tensions and armed conflicts between the Spanish and Ottoman monarchies, the two great powers of the contemporary Mediterranean, Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), a Spanish nobleman, a brave soldier at Lepanto and a highly regarded captive in Ottoman Algiers wrote a theatrical play, which he called “La Gran Sultana” (hereafter LGS). In his fantastic portrayal of Ottoman mytho-history, the author oscillated between what possibly could have happened - at least in his poetic imagination - and what happened in history.

Cervantes excelled in many genres. He was a novelist, poet, and playwright who managed to combine reality with a magical touch of fiction. This thesis will tackle one of his most remarkable but largely unknown comedies. Compared to other literary works of Cervantes such as *EL Quixote*, LGS has not received the esteem and attention it deserves. After all, it is one of the literary masterpieces of its time, a great representation of multiculturalism and a meeting point of two different worlds and three religions, namely Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Struggling with the trauma of both battle wounds and captivity as well as living all over the Mediterranean world enriched Cervantes’ imagination and allowed him to refine the plot of the play, which we cannot fully understand without comprehending the historical background of the writer and his time.

The play touches upon aspects of the Muslim East and Christian West divide, highlighting positive qualities of the East and in other contexts, criticizing the West. Unlike most literary works of the “Spanish Golden Century,” (El Siglo de Oro) this play does not demonize the Muslim rival. Although it includes some Orientalist framing, the play transcends stereotypes and exposes the rich, tolerant, and brilliant aspects of the Ottoman Empire and the grandees that ruled it.

In the course of this comedy, Cervantes refers to the position of female slaves, the heightened power of the Ottoman sultans, and the struggles among different court factions, producing a subtle amalgamation of various identities. Together, they show the peculiarity of the Mediterranean world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Furthermore, Cervantes implicitly conveys messages to the Spanish monarchy, in which he criticizes the Inquisition and ruthless elimination of the Spanish non-Catholics to ensure political and religious unification. The events and the plot exhibit an exotic atmosphere; but at the same time, they refer to contemporary realities. Cervantes combined the historical events he lived through during his captivity in Algiers with elements of fantasy, which produced visions of a future in which the aspirations of people from different backgrounds might find fulfillment.

This thesis aims to provide a literary-historical analysis of the play “La Gran Sultana,” written at the beginning of the seventeenth century by the famous Spanish playwright Miguel de Cervantes.

Cervantes wrote his comedy LGS, which advertised the name of its female hero Catalina de Oviedo in the title, between the period of 1607-1608 and published it in 1615. The play appeared in print, but there were no stage performances during the author’s lifetime. The only stage performance took place in 1992 by *La Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico*. The main plot was set in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, when Murad III, son of politically influential mother Nurbanu, and favorite, Safiye, was on the Ottoman throne. The Ottoman sultans had slave consorts and since Islamic religious law (sharia) forbade the enslavement of Muslims, the concubines were former Christians or Pagans. This is the reason why the names of these two women, who had non-Muslim roots and became very important in the Ottoman court, have formed the historical backdrop to Cervantes’s play.

In an attempt to find out to what extent Cervantes’s play refers to historical realities, and to identify the most significant implications of the action and the figures, this study begins with the background of the play and its Orientalist and gender-based connotations. In this context, the main sources of the thesis are the articles “Erotics of the Exotic” by Mercedes Alcala Galan (2012) and “Engendering the Orient” by Christina Inés McCoy (2013). Galan analyzed the comedy focusing on its Orientalist

connotations and has investigated Cervantes's vision of the Orient. In addition, she has touched upon the image of *el gran turco* as the lustful and lascivious oriental male, along with the unrealistic description of the imperial Harem, which contradicts the main historical characteristics of this institution.

On the other hand, McCoy highlights the diversity of genders and transgender featured in the play, and shows how La Sultana Catalina emerges as a symbol of imperial power. Catalina appears as the Spanish woman, who can connect the superpowers of the Mediterranean. Yet in many other scenes, she takes on a very submissive attitude. The writer also examines the gender and transgender dilemmas represented by the different characters with more than one and/or changeable genders. Both Galan and McCoy agree that the play exaggerates the gender, transgender, and sexuality dilemma. In this context, they emphasize that Cervantes has invented his Orientalist approach.

To better understand the linguistic discourse used in the dialogues, this analysis refers to the article "A Radical Re-assessment of Miguel de Cervantes' *La gran Sultana*" by Dr. Leyla Rouhi (2021), which has provided insight on how to reflect on the meanings left implicit in the text and thus transcending the written word. To tackle the comedy's historical and fictional background, this study has resorted to the articles of Ottmar Hegyi "Cervantes y la Turquía otomana" (1980) and "Algunas Realidades Otomanas en Dos Obras..." (2001) by Ertuğrul Önalp. Both authors insist on the solid historical background of the comedy, with Ottmar Hegyi focusing on the sources of Cervantes's real or so-called knowledge about the Orient and the Ottoman Empire. Hegyi included some lines from other literary works by Cervantes as well, including "Viaje del Parnaso" to affirm that the author had access to the relevant Italian sources during his stay in Italy. Moreover, Hegyi pointed out the historical events to which Cervantes referred in his play, using information derived from Spanish and mainly Italian sources. Ertuğrul Önalp not only analyzed the historical events highlighted in the play, but also highlighted the Ottoman customs and rituals depicted, focusing on biographical narratives of Sultan Murad III and his court. Both articles have a good reputation among scholars, due to the competent analysis of the play and its historical background, both from Eastern and Western perspectives.

However, Hegyi and Ertuğrul have neglected the references to other literary texts and/or to symbolism implied in the main and minor characters. It is possible to find a more in-depth account in the book *Cervantes en Argel* (2005) by María Antonia Garcés treating the sojourn of Cervantes in Algiers. In her discussion of the five years Cervantes spent in this city, one can find many of the figures the author met or heard about during his captivity; it helped us to make sense of the characters mentioned in the comedy. Thus, I found out that almost all characters in LGS alluded to real figures that Cervantes either met personally in Algiers, heard about from merchants or corsairs, or read about in Italian sources. Thus, I was able to include some real historical figures into my discussion of historical realities.

For information regarding the Ottoman figures included in the play, I have resorted to the book *The Imperial Harem: Women and sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) by Leslie P. Peirce, where I found interesting information about the roles of the mothers of the sultans (Valide Sultan) and the favorites of the ruler (Haseki Sultan). This study contains detailed information about the persons of Nurbanu and Safiye Sultans as well. Further detailed information came from the study by Özlem Kumrular *Haremde taht kuranlar Nurbanu ve Safiye Sultan* (2017). Pınar Kayaalp has highlighted the patronage of Nurbanu in her book *The Empress Nurbanu and Ottoman Politics in the Sixteenth Century: Building the Atik Valide* (2018), and the groundbreaking article by Maria Pia Pedani, “Safiye’s Household and Venetian Diplomacy” published in 2000. I also found useful references in the electronic encyclopedia *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, which contains information on Sultan Murad III and the pashas surrounding him.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LA GRAN SULTANA BY MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SYNOPSIS OF THE THREE ACTS**

La Gran Sultana is a comedy written in about 1607-1608 and published in 1615 by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, a Spanish writer, novelist, and playwright made famous by his novel *Don Quixote*. LGS is one of the many plays of the Spanish Golden Age that have not attracted a great deal of scholarly or popular attention. There was only one stage performance, in 1992.

The story focuses on a charming Spanish captive "Catalina de Oviedo," who belongs to the lower nobility. Taken captive, she ended up in the Harem/Seraglio of Sultan Murad III, where eunuchs and pashas surrounded her. The first time the sultan laid his eyes on her, her charm and beauty captivated him, so he proposed that she be his wife and the sultana of his heart and reign. Catalina in the beginning resisted that affection by all means, but she gradually experienced the tolerance and mercy of the Muslim sultan and decided to accept the sultan's love.

The comedy consists of three acts; the following summary highlights the main events of each act.

#### **2.1. First Act / La primera Jornada**

This act contains an introduction to the Ottoman atmosphere and some of the Ottoman palace's main customs. With the two renegades Roberto and Salec /Saleh the audience is introduced to the seraglio and the greatness of el gran Turco/ sultan. The way he enters the palace is surrounded by janissaries soldiers and pashas, Friday prayer, and many other traditions. They also describe how brave and merciful the sultan is. In this act, Andrea the spy is also introduced, as well as Madrigal, who



shows his disrespect for the Jews of the palace by constantly teasing them with words with pejorative connotations.

The eunuchs of the seraglio: Mami the chief black eunuch “ Kızlar Ağası or Darüssaade Ağası ” and Rusten the white eunuch “ Kapı Ağası or Babussaade Ağası” converse about the ruthless punishment they are expecting from the sultan after Rusten hid Catalina from the eyes of the sultan. Mami insists on talking to the sultan about the beautiful lady, inviting him to see and take her as his favorite concubine. When the great sultan finally accepts to see the captive, he loses his mind and becomes infatuated by her charm. Catalina in return meets that passion with fear and resentment. Although the sultan expresses his love and asks for her hand for marriage, she refuses that love because she believes that a Christian and a Muslim cannot be husband and wife. The sultan replies that love now has authority over his heart, and he does not see any problem in marrying a Christian. Catalina ends the first act by praying to God to save her from the darkness of an unknown destiny.

#### **2.1.1. Second Act / La Segunda Jornada**

The second act starts with the appearance of certain Moors, sinful people that the palace judge/Cadi wants to kill or simply throw in the sea. El Madrigal also gets into trouble after falling in love with a Muslim. He tries to convince the Cadi not to punish him using sweet talk, as he has unusual skills and abilities that enable him to talk to birds and teaching human language to animals, exactly like the ancient Roman and Greek divines. He claims that he is an extraordinary person gifted with wisdom and elegance, similar to the mystic philosopher and mathematician Apollonius of Tyana. After hearing this, the Cadi decides to wait and see if the Madrigal can perform such miracles. If so, he will exempt him from punishment.

In this act, an interesting event happens. The sultan and four pashas surrounding him receive the Persian ambassador. The ambassador expresses the interest of the Shah of Iran in strengthening the political relationships between ‘Turkey’ and ‘Iran’ or as used in the play ‘Embajador de Persia’ and ‘el Soldan’ ‘el Pedorso Estado’. He begins by praising the Ottoman sultan and acknowledging his power and influence in the East and the West, and thus announces his intention to open an embassy in

Istanbul. The two pashas meet his positive attitude with criticism and rejection, describing him as a depraved hypocrite as he follows the Shia doctrine and is not a Sunni as they are, referring to Shiites as practitioners of strange religious rituals that they do not consider as part of Islam. The ambassador expresses his dissatisfaction with the truce made between the Muslim Ottoman Empire and the Christian Spanish Empire, pointing out the disloyalty involved in having Christians as close friends over Muslims. After all, Muslims should unite against the western infidel enemy.

On a different level, the sultan asks the pashas to speak on his behalf, uncertain about the form of relationship he should establish with the Persians. At the end of the meeting, the Ottoman side refuses the request of the ambassador.

In the next scene, Catalina enters, discussing her future as a Christian in the palace, wondering how on earth as a Catholic, she can share the bed with a Muslim?!

Mami advises her not to speak badly of the sultan and points out that she should be delighted and grateful for the glory and happiness awaiting her. If she accepts the love of the greatest sultan of the world, she will be enthroned as the Ottoman sultana of the world as well. Catalina replies that her name is "Catalina de Oviedo" and that she is not Ottoman and belongs to the Spanish nobility, being the daughter of a Hidalgo.

Once the sultan recognizes Catalina's insistence on keeping her original identity intact, he assures her that he will not force her to change who she is. This gesture shows her that he is humble and merciful and will not even make her feel inferior to him. The sultan offers her love, in addition to the most precious jewels of the east and the west and much more; but Catalina continues to beg him to return her to her home country.

There follows the first appearance of Zaida/ Clara and Zelinda/ Lamberto, who expect a ruthless punishment from the sultan when he learns of their real identities. However, they feel happy to have remained Christians; if they die, they die with faith and honor intact. Madrigal tries to convince the Cadi that he will teach an elephant the Viscay language/dialect, which is peculiar to a village in northern Spain in the

region of Asturias. Madrigal insists that this language is an authentic superior old language. He also recounts the many different languages he knows including Latin and an Italian dialect etc... he also claims that he knows how to interpret the tweets of birds. The Cadi consequently promises to exempt him from punishment if he succeeds in achieving all the things he has promised and at the same time, threatens him with merciless retribution if he fails.

In this act, we further encounter El Cristiano, one of the Spanish captives that challenges Madrigal by claiming to be the best *tarasi* / tailor. He managed to convince Rusten that he can design and sew a majestic dress for Catalina, as he used to be the tailor of the Spanish court.<sup>1</sup> Catalina then discovers that the speaker (El Cristiano) is her father, who will design and sew her dress with jewels and ruffles exactly according to the Spanish majestic design. The sultan enters, asking for the reason for the current chaos; he orders the removal of El Cristiano / Catalina's father. El Cristiano declares publically that he is the sultana's father. Catalina cannot tolerate all confusion... she faints at the end of the act.

### **2.1.2. Third Act / La Tercera Jornada**

In this last act, we encounter a series of very fast changes, beginning with the two eunuchs Mami and Rusten talking about Catalina's misery, as her father has been taken away to live in the Jewish quarter and served as the Christian way.

In the meantime, the courtiers decide to prepare a party for the sultan, where all women slaves wear handsome clothes and dance in front of the sultan. Finally, the sultana receives her Spanish dress from the Alarabe or Jew of Algiers.

Before Catalina's father moves to the Jewish quarter, father and daughter have a conversation about the importance of maintaining faith in God and not giving up one's roots and original identity. Catalina emphasizes her total devotion to her religion and that she is willing to sacrifice everything for her belief. The father ends the conversation by admitting that marrying the Ottoman sultan is a great blessing,

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to the Spaniard outfit that was very famous and trendy in Europe during the Spanish Golden Age, "vestir a la Española".

and a fate that nobody can prevent. Even so, he asks his daughter to avoid this marriage until her last breath.

Next, the sultana enters, accompanied by Zaida and Zelinda along with aghas. She wears a Spanish fancy dress and a necklace with a cross. The sultan is greatly impressed by her marvelous look, commenting on how beautiful she looks wearing her style.

In this act Madrigal relates the story of Catalina, detailing how she had arrived in Istanbul as a slave woman captured by corsairs. The famous rich Moor named Ali Izquierdo, who buys Catalina, tries to make her into a Muslim but fails; therefore he sells her to Morato, whom he brings to Istanbul. The Musicos sing and Catalina dances in front of the sultan. Infatuated by her dance and as a sign of happiness, he orders the liberation of all his slaves. Thus, Zaida, Zelinda, Los Garzones, the slaves, and Catalina all kneel before the sultan.

Mami and Rusten prepare a party so the sultan can choose the slave women with whom he wants to spend the night, although the sultan wants only Catalina and feels that she is the only owner of his soul and heart. However, a custom he demands that he has to choose one slave, so he carelessly throws his handkerchief to Zelinda.

According to custom, the eunuchs prepare Zelinda to send him to the sultan, Zaida promptly talks to Catalina and explains how they both came from Transylvania (today in Romania) as slaves to the palace and fell in love with each other. Thus, the only way of staying together was to adopt a disguise and use 'Moorish' (Islamic) names. Catalina promises Zaida to help her and save Zelinda from death.

When the sultan discovers that Zelinda is a man, named Lamberto, he gets angry and threatens to whip him, Lamberto begs the sultan to listen to his story. He claims that he is a faithful good Christian man, but the love and passion he feels for Clara has made him make such a grave mistake. He begs for forgiveness, addressing the sultan regarding his famous attributes of tolerance and compassion. After all, the sultan is a person who very well understands the authority of love and passion.

Feeling the pressure of wishing to help Lamberto and Clara along with her gradual acceptance and understanding of the sultan, the Spanish lady unexpectedly appears, and announcing that she is pregnant. Finally, she appreciates the sultan's love, and he in turn accepts her as she is, a Spanish Catholic Christian. In the meantime, Catalina convinces the Cadi to assist Lamberto in escaping punishment, by assigning him to be the pasha of Rhodes. Madrigal and his lover have been caught and now expect a ruthless punishment. Finally, Madrigal decides to leave Istanbul. The act ends with the renegades expressing their happiness about finally having a Christian sultana in the palace. They are proud that she has not given up her faith and identity.

## **2.2. The Play's Religious Background and Figurative Symbols**

Many arguments refer to *La Gran Sultana* as a clear depiction of the story mentioned in the biblical book of Esther. It was known that the bible has inspired many novelists such as Lope de Vega and Calderon to use some of its stories and mix them with history to come up with a kind of imaginary-biblical version. That possibly fits in some of the similar events that the writer has experienced or just wants to emphasize. There is a clear intertextuality between the Book of Esther and the play, taking into consideration that most of the stories of the Old Testament are implausible and couldn't be considered as historical facts. The book has been thought of as an incorrect part of the Old Testament for numerous reasons. First, it does not mention God at all. Secondly, the protagonist of some stories has kind of strange rituals and customs. Third, the essential factor of showing gratitude and praise to God is absent in many places. In addition, the role of female characters and protagonists is doubtful. Women in many cases are subject to humiliation and oppression, which is considered inconsistent with the biblical connotations and verses.<sup>2</sup>

The book of Esther narrates the story of Ahasuerus and Esther. Ahasuerus was the Persian emperor whose Shushan his wife refused to come to one of the important banquets that he prepared for his people. Thus, he got angry with her and decided to avenge his dignity by dethroning her and finding another wife. Fortunately, the most

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<sup>2</sup> Ruth. Fine, "Los rostros de Ester : Tres versiones dramáticas auriseculares del libro de Ester: 2010", 235.

beautiful lady, known by her matchless charm, was presented before him by two eunuchs of the Harem. Esther is the cousin and the adoptive daughter of the Jewish Mordecai. Since the beginning she refused to show any interest or belonging to Jewish people. Mordecai was facing a death threat; the story goes back to the time when he saved the life of the emperor by revealing the conspiracy plotted by the eunuchs. As a loyal man, he refused to kneel to Haman, the minister of the emperor. That reaction enraged the minister, and he became determined to kill Mordecai and the rest of the Jewish population. Haman, with his cunning attitude and malicious tactics, convinced Ahasuerus that Jewish people, with their different laws and rituals, constitute a great danger and a big obstacle to the Persian Empire in achieving any future prosperity. The emperor issued an edict stating the uprooting of all Jews of the empire on the 13th of March. Mordecai, upon hearing the terrible news, urged Esther to convince the king to stop the termination of the Jews and to speak on the Jews's behalf. She was at first reluctant to assume that responsibility, as it may endanger her life, as it was well known then that presenting before the king without official call leads to immediate execution according to the legislation of the kingdom.

Esther finally agreed to help and appeared before the king, urging him to grant the Jews three days of concession. During that period, Esther asked the Jews to observe a fast where she appeared again before the king, thankfully without punishment. She invited him to the banquet along with his minister Haman and they both accepted the invitation. However, the minister remained with that hidden desire of seeking revenge from Mordecai. Esther, deploying her bravery, intelligence and beauty saved both the Jewish population and her father after she shed light on Haman's intentions. As a result, the king ordered the sinister minister Haman hung in place of Mordecai, which was considered a celebrated victory for the Jewish population.

### **2.2.1. Esther vs. Catalina, Points of Convergence**

The Book of Esther has some thematic cores that Cervantes emphasizes in his play such as: preserving the national identity, survival in captivity, the unification of diasporic communities and minorities, overcoming the threat of annihilation,

perseverance, bravery to achieve victory, authority, and the inexplicable manifestation of hatred to the “Other”.<sup>3</sup>

The Carnavalesque atmosphere is very dominant in the biblical text as well as in the play. Chaos, ups and downs, mixed cultures, banquets, parties, sadness, and happiness were all set in a religious frame. These kinds of celebrations are similar to the Christians as well.

Regarding the similarities between Catalina and Esther, they both start the story by showing rejection and an intolerant attitude toward the different other. However, they experience a shift in tolerance and evolve to become loving at the end of the story to save the lives of their people. However, In the book of Esther the plot closes up with revenge going through some steps backward to create hatred echo. Unlike Catalina who creates peace after convincing the sultan to have mercy on his prisoners.

Literature of the Spanish Golden Age uses several biblical stories and the Book of Esther to showcase the same qualities of bravery, humiliation vs. dignity. In regards to religious aspects, Esther can be seen as a symbol of the Virgin Mary, who comes to save the world. Esther also marries the emperor (God), obtaining unprecedented power and reverence. The biblical intertextuality is obvious in many sentences and phrases. Cervantes has taken many images from the biblical book *Cantar de los Cantares/Song of Songs*.<sup>4</sup> For example, the description of Catalina by Zelinda/ Lamberto as a “rose among thorns/ rosa puesta entre espinas”<sup>5</sup> refers to a characterization of the Virgin Mary by Saint Ambrose (339-397), a text praising her beauty and purity in lines taken from the book *Song of Songs* (2.2). Another reference from the same book, again with an allusion to the Virgin Mary, occurs when the eunuch Mami describes Catalina to Sultan Murad III saying that she is like a “closed garden/ jardín cerrado”<sup>6</sup> 4:12. Catalina also describes herself as a lost sheep

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *Song of Solomon* also called *Canticle of Canticles/ Song of Songs* is an Old Testament book that belongs to the third section of the Bible. According to Britannica (2013), it is considered as a scroll that is read with four other scrolls on various religious celebrations in the Jewish year.

<sup>5</sup> Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *La gran sultana doña Catalina de Oviedo* (2011), 50.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 7.

"que soy cordera de tu aprisco ausente / that I'm a lamb of your absent sheepfold ..."7  
a biblical metaphor taken from Luke 15.

### 2.3. Literature and Theatre of the Spanish Golden Age "El Siglo de Oro"

*El Siglo de Oro of Spain* (1492-1659), the zenith of Spanish prosperity, began with the Renaissance movement emerging from Italy and imposing its ideals and ideologies, the marriage of the Catholic Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, and the unification of the two Catholic monarchs. These major events triggered more political and economic successes to the kingdom, represented by La Reconquista of expelling Moors and the Catholic inquisition against Moors, Sephardi Jews, and other non-Catholic religious minorities. Thus, this newfound power led the recently unified Kingdom to aspire to colonization, which led to the 'discovery' and colonization of the Canary Islands, South America, and the Philippines. Upon the affiliation to the Hapsburg Empire, Spain was referred to as "the empire on which never the sun sets" as an indication of its hegemony and extension.

Advancements took place in art and literature as well. *El Siglo de Oro* was known as the age of the word and literature along with all kinds of fine arts. The best known playwrights were Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca and Luis de Góngora. They depicted contemporary Spanish life, embodied political power, and represented the society's classes issues, along with some topics and themes inherited from Greco-Roman origins. The Spanish theatre too was booming during this period. It was called "el Teatro de Apariencias o Trampatojos" where nobody appears as he/she is.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, Spain had "the great theatre of the world" especially in the Baroque period (1600- 1750 AD).

Unlike England, which only had a secular theatre for a limited time (Renaissance theatre 1562-1642) Spain had great intertwining between religious and secular plays. It was considered the prolific age, where around 30,000 plays were produced in just one hundred years. Many playwrights wrote in both genres, but the most active ones

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Luisa. López Grigera, *La retórica en la España del Siglo de Oro: Teoría y Práctica*, (Salamanca, España: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1994), 53-64.



were the religious or the “autos sacramentales,” which had great overlap with the English plays presenting allegorical themes of morality, virtue, and vice, Eucharist, and many other spiritual themes. However, In England, this type of play disappeared during the Elizabethan Age.<sup>9</sup> When Madrid became the official capital of Spain in 1560, up to four autos were produced each year. On the other hand, secular plays started to have clearer characteristics at the beginning of 1500 with the famous play “La Celestina” of Fernando de Rojas.<sup>10</sup> Toward the end of the sixteenth century, the theatre took more professional tracks, especially upon the translation of some Roman plays into Spanish, such as the comedies of Plautus and Terentius that inspired Shakespeare.<sup>11</sup>

Along with the common general genres of comedy and tragedy, Spanish comedy opened doors for other new genres to be born. There was first the tragicomedy, when tragic scenes were tackled in an ironic and funny way. Second, there was the double comedy that was also known as “quid pro quo” which represents the comedy of ambiguity, double meaning, and the chaos generated by playing with words and characters' identities.<sup>12</sup> Third, we encounter the parody where satire and sarcasm are dominant. In addition to that, playwrights invented numerous sub-genres with various topics including love and romance from different perspectives, the honour of man and woman, manners, mythology, chivalry, minor nobility, corpses, etc. Literature in general at that time was also full of some common themes like the smart slave who later becomes a master, the pimp, the stereotypes and clichés, *el gracioso*/ the funny character.<sup>13</sup> Taking this into consideration, themes adopted from Greco-Roman theatre involve the metaphorical employment of animals and exotic characters to engage the audience and deliver unspoken messages.

Spanish theatre had its special kinds and designs. It started with the public theatre “Los Carros” a kind of play performed through two pageant wagons. The first wagon scoured the city in a parade way pulled by bulls and surrounded by jugglers, musicians, and giant paper puppets. When the wagon arrived at the play site, it joined

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<sup>9</sup> Michael. Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre Plays in Performance*, (Routledge, 2013). 23.

<sup>10</sup> Miguel Ángel. Pérez Priego, “La Celestina y El Teatro Del Siglo XVI.” *Epos : Revista de Filología*, no. 7 (August 29, 1991): 291.

<sup>11</sup> Grigera, *La retórica en la España del Siglo de Oro*, 53-64.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid: Roman comedies deal with quid pro quos as well, and so does Shakespeare.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

another wagon and they opened the stage to start the performance. This kind of theatre remained under strict censorship of the church until 1763 when it was outlawed for being vicious and unholy.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1570s, more professional public theaters were established. The first one was in Madrid called La Corral de la Luz. Then the famous “Corrales de Comedia” emerged with its unique style from the courtyard of the place where it first originated. Its shape is rectangular of three buildings surrounding the patio. It consisted of different parts mainly: *Gradas* for elite people, *Cazuelas*: for women only, and *Aposentos* (box seats) where men and women can sit together if they prove that they belong to the same family. *Los Corrales* used to be licensed from the court and often supported charitable organizations. Another kind of theatre was the “Court Theater,” which appeared during the reign of King Philip III (1598–1621) after it was established at *Alcazar*/ the royal palace. In 1633, the court theatre was taken to *el Palacio del Buen Retiro*, a palace in Madrid that remained supervised by the famous court designer Cosimo Lotti, who designed the garden and many other parts.

The theater of the puppets/ or *opera dei pupi* started in Italy and like many literary modes reached Spain in *el Siglo de Oro*, its main theme centered on three main characters: a beautiful lady, *el baladin*/ a cavalier, and the Moor “the evil man”.<sup>15</sup> The beautiful lady was kidnapped by the moor, and the brave *baladin* fought until he saved her. The story often ended up with the *baladin* marrying the young lady and having a happy life. This theme is present in some literary works of Lope de Vega, Cervantes like in *El Quijote* and also in LGS which has some similarities with the representation of the Turk (Sultan Murad III), who is considered as the bad/ Moor who kidnapped the Christian beautiful lady (Catalina).

Popular social festivities have also inspired writers and playwrights in their themes and styles. In *El Siglo de Oro* especially during the Baroque, there were two main festivities: *El Carnival* and *La Cencerrda*. *El Carnival* (February - March) is a celebration from pagan roots which came proceeded with some parties and rituals

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 23.

that originated from ecclesiastic and universal roots.<sup>16</sup> Everybody celebrated, the carnival elite and popular mixed wearing masks, singing, drinking in the streets showing a kind of rebel to control and authority.<sup>17</sup> It is simply “the world upside down” people disguised acting in contrast with reality, the rich became poor, the religious became secular, the men became women, etc. This kind of festivity was a soft political tool that helped the church and court to reinforce rules and laws. People enjoyed a limited time of freedom to break routines and live through chaos, then returned to stability and discipline. For Mikhail Bakhtin, (1875-1995), Russian literary theorist and philosopher, the term “carnavalesque” implies a historical notion and literary mode/ tendency that started in the Middle Ages. As mentioned above, in Medieval Europe the carnival was a tool used by the church and court to control people, and by the time, the carnivalesque mode in literature “cleared the ground” to open the society to adopt new creative thoughts and set free its imagination Bakhtin went even far to suggest that the carnivalesque mode in literature exactly as its effect on society, broke the normality and the old oppressive thoughts and opened wide doors for human liberation in discourse expression.<sup>18</sup> He also indicated that the usage of this literary mode started to decrease as Capitalism and Individualism started to dominate the new world.

The second common festivity was *La Cencerrda*/ the rough music or *Charivari* in French. It is like a mock parade where people gathered making noise and sounds by hitting pots or pans. It started with people showing resentment and rejection to the unequal marriage that was very common in Spanish society. People used to sing songs criticizing some social norms in the streets. These two main festivities became like a literary mode in the comedy plays especially at the end of the sixteenth till the beginning of the seventeenth.<sup>19</sup>

The comedy LGS is a great representation of the theater of the Spanish Golden Age. With the depiction of the general common themes and touching upon political and societal issues, the audience can understand the life and challenges of the Spanish

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Renate. Lachmann, Raoul Eshelman, and Marc Davis, “Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 11 (1988): 115.

<sup>19</sup> Grigera, *La retórica en la España del Siglo de Oro*, 53-64.

class society. The comedy employs the genres and sub-genres in a way that makes it fit perfectly in the art atmosphere of that time. It is a political romance wrapped with irony and chaos. The theme of a Christian female slave who could reach the Ottoman power through her beauty and acumen, and thus save her people from punishment and death, is a clear manifestation of the circumstances' peculiarity of the East and the West. To some extent, the play is considered ambiguous. Reading it without paying attention to its historical and literary background makes it vague and incomprehensible. It is the Mediterranean world of the sixteenth century tackled by the question of sovereignty, slaves, and identities all in a carnivalesque mode.

Cervantes, in this play, utilizes the Spanish theater with all its unique characteristics. The double meaning created, along with the employment of the characters from different ethnicities make this comedy unique. The crazy/ funny character Madrigal<sup>20</sup> summarizes the plot and reflects its dimensions. He is the only one who dares to reveal the hidden and speak the unspoken which makes him the engaging factor of the play. With his satiric tone, he mocks Jews and comments on situations to highlight implicit messages. In addition to that, the usage of animals such as elephants and birds, and mentioning the old Greek-Roman philosophers and divines emphasizes the limitless power of *el gracioso* character. Having elephants in the court was common in the Ottoman court too- there is even lithography depicting Sultan Suleiman riding an elephant- and Cervantes was aware of that through the letters of Busbecq the Flemish imperial ambassador of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I at Istanbul during the period ( 1554-1562).<sup>21</sup> He described the trips to Istanbul and the motifs he witnessed there, however, Cervantes combined that fact with one of the characteristics of the Roman theatre adopted in some plays of *El Siglo de Oro* of bringing animals to the stage to be used as symbols and as an entertainment factor to the audience.<sup>22</sup>

Like many playwrights of *El Siglo de Oro*, Cervantes was inspired by the common festivities and emulated them in his play; he too used the carnivalesque mode

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<sup>20</sup> **Madrigal** or as in Italian originally **Madrigale**, is one of the lyrical literary subgenre. Started in Italy and spread to other countries of the world especially during the Renaissance period. Its main theme is love, and used to be an expression of its author feelings written in a short poetic composition.

<sup>21</sup> Ottmar. Hegyi, "Cervantes y la Turquía otomana: en torno a La gran sultana," *Bon compañero, jura Di* (1998): 30.

<sup>22</sup> Grigera, *La retórica en la España del Siglo de Oro*, 53-64

inspired by “the disguised world” people of masks, hidden truth, and fake appearances. The comedy includes many of the carnivalesque characteristics such as the reversal of social hierarchy, as Catalina and her father were hidalgos and ended up being slaves of the sultan, and later Catalina got her social status changed from a slave to the great sultana. Another characteristic is the celebration of freedom and equality, almost all the scenes of the play include the renegades, eunuchs, and the musicians celebrating the tolerance and mercy of the sultan and ending up praising his tolerant attitude of marrying his slave and call her his equal without forcing her to change her religion or even outfit. The eccentric behavior of humor and chaos is also one of the obvious characteristics of the play created by Madrigal with the employment of animals.<sup>23</sup> Almost the majority of the play's characters have unclear identities: El Cristiano is Catalina's father, Alarabe by the end of the play is an Algerian Jew, Zeida is Clara and Zelinda is Lamberto disguised under a Moorish female name. Even the renegades Salec/ Saleh and Roberto pretend to be Muslims while they are still Christians in the heart.

Another festivity employed as a mode is *La Cencerrda*/ rough music. Having mentioned in the list of main characters at the beginning of the play “dos músicos/ two musicians” friends of *el gracioso* Madrigal adds musical touch to the comedy and completes the scene of the imperial Harem's parties. In *La Cencerrada*, usually people criticize the current situation or simply highlight some problematic norms. In the play, *los Músicos* keep asking questions to better understand the situation of Catalina and the sultan, and when they are asked to sing they just chant some songs that imply the feelings of the sultan and depict the way he loves Catalina. However, these two *Músicos* as the rest of the palace renegades hide their faith and beliefs and act according to the sultan's orders.

One of the characteristics of the art and literary works of *El Siglo de Oro* especially during the baroque is including the deformity or the weak. This goes back to the customs of the Hapsburg court of including dwarfs or crazy or deformed people. It is a political tool used to show the greatness and mercy of the Habsburg Empire by shedding the light on the opposite and the counterpoint representations. As many

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<sup>23</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhaïlovich,. *Rabelais and his World*. Vol. 341. Indiana University Press, 1984.

customs of *El Siglo de Oro*, this one too is inherited from the Greco- Roman times, the contradictions convey messages of the perfection of the king, a divine creature of God, and that the other/ the weak/deformed/ ugly is just a diabolic form of alterity.<sup>24</sup> It is obvious in many paintings and novels of el baroque employed basically by Lope de Vega, Góngora, Quevedo.<sup>25</sup> Diego Velázquez too with his famous masterpiece painting “Las Meninas” where in 1656 he depicted King Philip IV with his wife and the future of Spain, his daughter Margarita, the painting includes a dog and child dwarf. This painting is a symbolic illustration of using the glamour of the deformed weak in images which is one of the most well-celebrated arts of the Baroque.<sup>26</sup> In LGS Cervantes too employed the other, the court fool / different in the play. Madrigal, although this character is essential for the development of the events and plot, however, it is another sign of the political practice of the Hapsburg era smartly embodied in art and literature.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.3.1. The Image of the “Turk” in the Spanish Theatre of El Siglo de Oro

As a result of eight centuries of Islamic existence in the Iberian Peninsula, the figure of the Muslim has never been new in Spanish culture. Since *La Reconquista*, many literary and historiographical works touched upon both the local Muslims and the Muslims of the Crusades “the medieval Saracen”. Starting the fifteenth century, a new figure of a Muslim “the Ottoman Turk” emerged in European literature although the Saracen did not totally disappear its popularity decreased giving way to the Peninsular Maghrebi, Moor and the Turkish ottoman. During that transition period, the Turk and the Saracen often appeared together in literature until the appearance of the authentic *turquescas* (1595-1610), where Turkish characters within a Turkish setting developed clearly. However, the Turks were not characterized differently from other Muslim ethnic groups: the denomination 'Turk' was a generic term, as 'Saracen' or 'Moor' had been. The word "Turkish", apart from its ethnic meaning,

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<sup>24</sup> Pedro Martín. García, "Locos, enanos y bufones: el glamour de la fealdad," *La Aventura de la historia* 134 (2009): 28-33.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Esteban, Maestro de la fealdad, 21.

<sup>27</sup> There are fools in some of Shakespeare’s plays as well, for example in King Lear and A Winter’s Tale.

would define any Muslim who is subject of the Sultan of Constantinople. Moreover, the tags used for the Saracens and Moors were to be applied to the Turks as well.

The Ottoman Empire since its establishment in the fourteenth century was considered a growing danger in the Mediterranean and a significant Eastern empire that threatens the western superpowers. Thus the Ottomans were subject of interest for the west starting from the kings down to the local people. The Turkish topic was present in politics, historical treaties, autobiographies of captives, travel books including literature especially fiction chivalrous topics. As the Spanish theater reached its peak in the sixteenth century, the Turkish topic also got developed to emulate the unstable relationships and conflicts with the Ottomans. Thus to include historical facts from the past and the present as well.<sup>28</sup>

In comparison with Moors or Moorish plays, the comedies that include the Turkish topic used to have common topics such as the calamities and agonies the Christians faced as captives under the Ottoman Empire. In 1578 after the truce realized between the Spanish Empire and the Ottoman Empire, the real interest in the Turkish subject started due to many reasons: First, Spanish theater started to improve and have its clear characteristics, as before this time staging plays especially the ones that include wars and battles was difficult. Second, The Turkish question began to be more present because of the many clashes and historical wars that happened like Lepanto, thus the historical conjunctures could be represented successfully between the theater companies and the public.<sup>29</sup> Although the treaty was signed and the Ottoman threat decreased, Turkish advancement in Europe did not stop. Turks continued their deployment in the west specifically in the Balkans. They did not stop until the second siege of Vienna in 1683.

Since the Spanish Empire started to decline and lose its glamour toward the end of the sixteenth century. It was no longer considered as *Antemurale Christianitatis*. The Spanish playwrights went back in history in their topics to glorify the old times of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibarra de. Bunes, Miguel Ángel, *La imagen de los musulmanes y del Norte de Africa en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII: los caracteres de una hostilidad*. Editorial CSIC-CSIC Press, 1989:69.

<sup>29</sup> Mehmet Sait. Sener, "El tema turco en el teatro español de los siglos XVI-XVII," (2018), 3.

victories achieved by the Roman Empire Charles V and his son Philip II thus people won't forget their legacy.

In the period between 1595-1610 The plays that include the Turkish questions were called " Obras Turquescas/Turk plays" the majority of Turkish comedies were produced during that period, what came after that period was almost an adaption of the same topics except for the play " El Tirano Castigado" (1671) by Juan Bautista Diamante. Generally, these comedies can be classified into three types according to their main topics: plays of captivity, Plays that depict the Ottoman- Spanish Conflicts or the Ottoman conflicts with other European states and plays including the famous Turkish or anti- Turkish figures such as Barbarossa, İskender Bey, Uchali Pasha and Timur.

The captivity plays include common topics such as the portrayal of Christian captives under the Ottomans and the reach of Christian figures/ captives of power in the Ottoman court. While the topic of conflicts used to have descriptions of battles or clashes and their sites such as the Ottoman siege of Vienna (1529) and the Battle of Lepanto (1571). Along with having a Turkish central character and mentioning some political conjunctures such as the Safad- Ottoman relations as seen from the perspective of renegades or the Christian citizens.

The image of the Turkish character in Spanish plays generally is archetypal. Such as the erotic, lascivious, arrogant, coward and savage, taking into consideration that these qualities are an emulation of the Ottoman Empire as well. The playwrights counted on some main sources to get their information about the Turks such as the books of the history of the Ottoman Empire, travel books and tales of captives, and the exhortations. All playwrights resorted to the popular history sources that were available at the time to be employed in the comedies to make their stories more engaging to the public.

On the other hand, Turks in some comedies are described positively. Represented as loyal Muslims or Turks to their monarch even it is ruthless and following all rules of Islam which is considered ( as was described in comparison with Christianity) as infidels. Some plays have a more balanced image describing the positive and



negative of both sides the Christian and the Muslim. Alberto Mas – the famous scholar of studying *Obras Turquescas del siglo de Oro*- suggests that Turk plays in the Spanish literature during that time mean any play related to Turkey or the Ottoman Empire.<sup>30</sup> Cervantes established the differences between Moors, Moorish and Turks (of profession and nation). However, in general there was no specific way of distinguishing the Moor/ Moorish plays from the Turkish, each play has its own unique characteristics regarding its characters, theme, topic or settings.

The play *la Representación sobre la elección imperial* (1519) witnessed the first appearance of the Turk, and one of the early appearances of Carlos I as well. Written by an unknown writer in the year where the emperor Carlos I was elected as the emperor before the Francisco I of France. This event was received with joy and celebrations in Spain especially in Valladolid. Apart from the obvious literary and propaganda significance of this play, the mention of having an Ottoman embassy in Spain highlights the powerful impact of *el Gran Turco* growing. The image of the Turk in this play appears linked with North Africans or Maghrebi and that was common during that period. As Bunes explains, the reaction of the Spanish court against the Ottoman threat was to create a huge propaganda system that introduces Carlos I as the symbol of church defense against the Eastern Muslim enemy.<sup>31</sup>

*La farsa Turquesana/ y la Farsa de las galeras de la religión de Sanct Joan, La Turquesana* is a farce - a broad satire or comedy- written in five acts by Hernán López de Yanguas during the time of the first siege of Vienna (1529). This comedy mocks the arrogance of the Turks and praise the excellence and perfection of the Papa. The image of Sultan Suleiman in *la Representación sobre la elección imperial* and the play *La farsa Turquesana* is different. In the first play the sultan does not act personally and the ambassadors are depicted fearful of having king Carlos V elected as an emperor, they are afraid of being conquered. In the second play, *El Gran Turco* is portrayed as brutal, furious, warlike and arrogant. Sultan Suleiman was compared with figures such as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Holofernes, Caesar and Goliath to be ruthless and tyrant. In Other scenes Sultan

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<sup>30</sup> Bunes. Ángel, *La imagen de los musulmanes y del Norte de Africa en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII*, 281.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 13-17.

Suleiman is presented with a diabolic image, compared with Lucifer. *La Farsa Turquesca* is considered as a transitional play due to its historical credibility but not for its argument and theme.

*Tragedia de la destrucción de Constantinopla* (1587), a three act tragedy written by Gabriel Lobo Lasso de la Vega. The play, which has the merit of being the first tragedy that represents Turkish characters on the Spanish scene, is directed at the newborn prince of the future Felipe III. As its title indicates the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453. This play was written for moralizing/exhortation purposes, trying to suggest to the Spanish monarchy a hard lesson to be learned from the fall of Constantinople, and that “the Muslim danger” is still threatening the Spanish monarchy. As the image of the Turks is often associated with lust, dishonesty or other negative connotations, the good Turkish character who is depicted as capable of love is assumed to be born to Christian parents or he intends to become Christian. However, in this play, Lasso de la Vega exposes the love and the loyal romance of the Turks as they are able to love and also being aggressors and victors.

The transition from Renaissance theater to the Baroque theater at the end of the sixteenth century also affected Spanish literature. The plays began to include a variety of settings starting from the shores of North Africa up to the Balkans. In addition to that themes and characters got enriched with the rise of the popularity of the Turkish genre. Cervantes himself eventually left the Western Mediterranean to place the settings of his plays in Cyprus and Constantinople without changing the theme and main motifs; moreover, he maintained his famous common characters with some transformations “the Moor, Moorish, Turkish, Renegade, Christian, Muslim, Jew and captive.” As Mas explains, the playwrights of the new genre worked hard to widen the horizons of their themes and settings either with the use of the funny/ fool characters or with some historical allegorical events. Cervantes was aspiring to reach a new model with each comedy he wrote.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Mas, *Les Turcs dans la littérature espagnole du siècle d'or*, 295.

Bunes explains that generally in the Cervantine *Obras Turquescas*, the word “Turkish” defines any Muslim who is a subject of the sultan of Constantinople.<sup>33</sup> Although the term ‘Turk’ appeared in occasions as a hyperonym which includes both Arabs and other ethnic Muslim groups, there was still a general confusion in the theater, where the characters with Arabic names like Abenzafir or Bencusir could be described as Turkish, while characters of Turkish names like Dragut or Uchalí could be called Moors. Thus even the writers who are supposed to be knowledgeable of the Ottoman society fell into the same confusion.

Cervantes in his plays distinguishes “Turks of nation” from “Turks of profession.” He also intentionally involves characters that assimilate to the nationality of his expected audience and that is one of the characteristics of the Spanish theatre that it did not exist in the English theatre. Gradually by time, the profile of the Turkish characters, especially the Great Turk, became more complex and the assigned characteristics got enriched. With the new renegade type that fluctuates between Christian and Muslim, the difference between “I” and the “other,” the “good” and the “bad,” became vague and the Turkish threat took its new definition.

Miguel de Cervantes has his special place among the European playwrights who wrote plays on the Turkish theme. That goes back to the experiences he lived as a soldier of Lepanto and captive under the Ottoman Empire along with the curiosity he had as an intellectual to read different sources of Ottoman history during his stay in Italy. During his years of captivity, Cervantes established good relations with the natives that enabled him to learn some words of their languages and use them in his plays. He learned some of Arabic and Turkish languages.<sup>34</sup> Upon his return to Spain, he wrote many of his literary works mainly tackling the themes of captivity and the long-awaited freedom. Among them, there are four plays: *El Trato de Argel*, *Los Baños de Argel*, *La Gran Sultana* and *El Gallardo español* and two short novels: *El Amante liberal* which is a part of *Las Novelas Ejemplares* and *La Historia del Cautivo* added to the first part of Don Quixote chapters (XXXIX-XLI). The second and fifth parts of the novel *La Galatea* and the tenth and eleventh chapters of the

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<sup>33</sup> Bunes. Ángel, *La imagen de los musulmanes y del Norte de Africa en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> María Antonia. Garcés, *Cervantes en Argel*, (2005): 102.

third book of the novel *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* also include episodes with the Turks and *El trato de Constantinopla y muerte de Selín*, presumably also considered a Turk play.

According to Armando Cotarelo, Cervantes is the first playwright to bring the question of captives to the Spanish drama.<sup>35</sup> Then comes Lope de Vega, as one of the greatest representatives of this genre in the Spanish theater. For example a play named *Los Captivos de Argel* is very close in its theme to *El Trato de Argel* along with many other dramas that used the theme of captivity. Although Cervantes is not the first to employ Turkish language in the Spanish drama with words like *Pilao*, *effendi* and *Terzi* in Spanish literature, the famous novel *Viaje de Turquía* written by Cristóbal de Villalón did include some Turkish words long before Cervantes and with interesting accuracy. The Topography and General History of Algiers and Captivity and the literary works of Diego Galán are great in this regard. Galán is considered as one of the first to include Turkish words into Spanish theater. Also, by introducing new characters like Turkish and Christian masters, renegades and plots that took place in heterogeneous societies, His literary works had a significant impact on after coming playwrights of that period.

### **2.3.2. Characters and Symbols: The Identities Game of Cards**

Cervantes employs many literary techniques to make his play a masterpiece, where he can mock, criticize and highlight some historical facts while hiding others in a way that represents his style of seeing the reality mixed with imagination. The matter of multiculturalism is used in the play, and it is obvious that every character with its different name and last name carries a symbolic significance of a religious or/and historical identity that has its role to be illustrated in the comedy.

LGS starts with Salec/Saleh and Roberto (both renegades) and Alárabe describing the majestic scene of the sultan surrounded by his eunuchs, soldiers, and pashas, moving from the Topkapi palace toward Hagia Sophia Mosque to pray the Friday prayer. Cervantes here wants to shed light on the splendor of the Turk in the eyes of

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<sup>35</sup> Armando. Cotarelo y Valledor, *El teatro de Cervantes*. Madrid: Tipografía de la «Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos», 1915: 30.

Christians and Moors. Salec the Turk renegade demonstrates the Turkish personality in the beginning, but also shows his clear renegade attitude in later scenes. It is similar with others like Roberto, who at the end of the play changes his name to Alberto. He comes to Istanbul to find the lovers (Clara & Lamberto) and considers himself as a renegade while his outfit and attitude affirm that he is not.<sup>36</sup> Because he dresses in Greek costume and speaks the language fluently, he proves that he is perfectly Greek; however, Roberto could be a repentant renegade that still works for the Christians, or a double agent.

El Alarabe dressed in a typical Arabic costume, a character that has no name. Cervantes for some reason chooses to have this character present in the play with only his identity as Moor or Moorish, it is referred to by Roberto as the "ghost". The other interesting character that remains unnamed in the play is Catalina's father. The common thing between these two characters is that they both came from Algeria, which invites a question as to what the hidden implications are. It can be understood that Cervantes wants to draw the reader's attention to the heterogeneity and particularity of Algiers. Unlike Salec, the man of many different backgrounds, attitudes, and beliefs, Cervantes depicts him as a man of several identities, making him flexible to be fitted in any scene or situation moving between cultures with agility. He is a great representation of the Mediterranean man that portrays social, political, cultural, and religious connotations.

The role of a spy is essential to better understand the "other". Cervantes intentionally used spies in this play as he also did in many of his works, most likely to highlight the role of espionage in the great empires of the sixteenth century, and to eliminate the huge obstacle with the unknown other/ enemy, trying to mark the end of the exoticness.<sup>37</sup> The power and glory of any nation should be achieved by knowledge and enlightenment, not by ignoring and demonizing the other. Cervantes smartly drew the attention of the audience to the Ottoman Empire by using spies that spoke

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<sup>36</sup> Morrow, Carolyn. "Nacionalismo y otredad en" Los baños de Argel" y" La gran sultana"," In *Estudios de teatro áureo: texto, espacio y representación: actas selectas del X Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Teatro Español y Novohispano de los Siglos de Oro*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2003, 379-386.

<sup>37</sup> Susan. Skilliter, "The Sultan's Messenger, Gabriel Defrens; an Ottoman Master-Spy of the Sixteenth Century," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 68 (1976): 47-59

about the events they witnessed, moved easily everywhere, knew languages, renegades, dressed differently, etc. The play even began and concluded with scenes including spies.

Andrea the proud spy, is a controversial character, as in one of the scenes she/he meets Madrigal the captive wearing a "Greek costume" and she/he recognized him despite the changes in his outfit. Compared to the other spies Salec and Roberto, she/he explicitly says, "I am a spy." Cervantes gives Andrea a higher position and power distinguishing her/him from other spies. It is unclear if Andrea is a man or woman. In Italy it is a man's name, and in Spain it is a female name. It is possible that in the play Andrea is a man, but again disguised to fit in the Harem. "que he de juntarme allí con otra espía..."<sup>38</sup> This quotation may indicate that Andrea is female but yet not definite.

Referring to Jews in the play has been repeated many times, starting from the place where Madrigal met Andrea and ending with Andrea mentioning Jews of Roma and Sephardic with resentment. Here it is worth mentioning that Cervantes pointed out that Jews of Istanbul showed more love and appreciation for the place where they felt they belonged, unlike the Jews who came from Algeria who did not show the same affection. One can explain this difference by the difficult circumstances Jews experienced in Spain and Algeria, while Sephardic Jews could reach high positions in the Ottoman Empire. All of this reminds the audience of the inquisition and the agony Jews and Muslims faced under the Spanish Kingdom.<sup>39</sup>

There are numerous other references to Jews in the play. Characters like "Zedekiah of the Jews," the doctor whom the sultan called to diagnose Catalina and cure her of depression, and the Jewish tailor are such examples. When Catalina needed a tailor to create a royal dress, the eunuch Rustan headed to a Jewish quarter called "Chifutí"<sup>40</sup> to look for the best tailors. The future great sultana wanted her dress sewn perfectly, so the palace resorted to an Algerian Jew who was in disguise under the name "Alarabe". There in the Jewish quarter, Rustan also met Catalina's father, whose

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<sup>38</sup> Cervantes, *La gran sultana doña Catalina de Oviedo*, 50.

<sup>39</sup> Carolyn, "Nacionalismo y otredad en" Los baños de Argel" y" La gran sultana", " In *Estudios de teatro áureo*, 379-386.

<sup>40</sup> This term also appears in Ottoman Turkish as an impolite way of referring to Jews.



identity is indefinitely mentioned in the play as the old captive or Catalina's father. It is significantly symbolic that Catalina's father remained unnamed, given that proper names underlie the identity and sometimes religion. Cervantes wanted to leave the identity of the protagonist's father open for the readers' interpretations.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the orders the sultan gave to accommodate the father away from the palace in the Jewish quarter, and serving him in Christian style, could raise questions. This led Rusten to say, "That's weird!" All that contradictory atmosphere, along with the chaos created by the diverse identities, adds extra levels of meaning that the reader may comprehend by the end of the play.

The outfits of the characters are a vital factor in the play as well. Catalina's father appeared wearing black like the Jews and Moors of Andalusia did at the time. In the *Don Quixote* novel, Cervantes revealed that after 1492, Jews used to imitate Moors by wearing black so that they could hide their identities and find security in being with the majority.<sup>42</sup> However, It is known that over time the situation of the Jewish population improved under the Ottoman Empire. They became more privileged in Istanbul than Moors, especially the Sephardic Jews. In the comedy, we also noticed that Moors pretended to be Jewish to gain the trust of the sultan as they were considered the people who maintained their religion. That added another reason to be loved and appreciated by the sultan.

The identities of Catalina and her father are centerfold in LGS. Cervantes plays with names' underlying historical connotations to awaken the curiosity of the reader and lead the events towards certain expectations regarding their real religion and origin. Catalina's last name is Oviedo, which refers to Oviedo of Asturias, a well-known city for Jewish presence and quarters. In the eleventh century, Asturias was considered the center of the "Cristiano Viejo" that indicates that Catalina's father is "Cristiano Nuevo" not as he claims. The identity of the father remains unclear; he could be Jewish from Asturias originally which would mean he is a Christian convert or "New Christian" which would be considered inauthentic Catholic. However, in almost all

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Black was the fashion of the Spanish court as well. During the reign of Charles V (1500-1558) and Philip II (1527-1598), which considered the zenith of the Spanish ascendancy, black was a symbol of nobility and power.

scenes, the father refers to himself as an authentic chevalier. Madrigal alludes to this in one of his conversations with the sultan. Explaining how Catalina's father came to Istanbul as follows:

En un bajel de diez bancos,  
de Málaga, y en invierno,  
se embarcó para ir a Orán un tal Fulano de Oviedo,  
hidalgo, pero no rico:  
maldición del siglo nuestro,  
que parece que el ser pobre al ser hidalgo es anejo.  
Su mujer y una hija suya,  
niña, y hermosa en extremo,  
por convenirles así, también con él se partieron.<sup>43</sup>

As Madrigal explained above, the matter of the father leaving his city Malaga to live in Oran and then moving to Istanbul makes this character suspicious, and lead the reader to assume that he is a convert Jew to Catholicism not a hidalgo nor an authentic Christian as he claimed.

LGS is seen as a play based on both history and fiction. However, it is a kind of fiction used to stimulate the imagination and create a parallel world to reality. The author in most scenes uses concepts and facts that reflect his convictions, as he is trying consequently to shed light on certain historical, social, and political issues of the time. Cervantes creates a multicultural atmosphere by choosing the setting and characters carefully. He is thus touching on specific religious and political symbols; the play took place in Topkapı Palace, the center of the Ottoman Empire as if it is used as a political reference. Moreover, starting the play by describing the sultan getting out from Hagia Sophia mosque is also a symbol of the Christian/ captive in the hands of Turks, which points to the presence of Catalina in the Ottoman Harem.

At the time where this play was written, Istanbul was a cosmopolitan place. It was the core of Jews from different identities and ethnicities. Among the latter, there were Ashkenazis, Romans and Sephardim. They were very close to the Ottoman sultans and even reached high-ranking positions. Jews were considered people of trust and so the sultans involved them in political, administrative, and commercial affairs. The majority of these Jews were maltreated, despised, attacked, tortured and finally uprooted from the Iberian Peninsula. They came to Istanbul where they were

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<sup>43</sup> Cervantes, *La gran sultana doña Catalina de Oviedo*, 40.



valued and appreciated and became heroes of the Ottoman Empire by bringing it wealth and prosperity. This play, like many others by Cervantes, emphasizes the important role Jews played in other cultures. In this play they are shown as a key factor to enrich and raise the Ottoman Empire.

Animals as well are used in some of the play's dialogues, adding an extra touch of exoticness to the settings; it is known that the Ottoman Harem includes white and black/African eunuchs and these characters are present and vital in the play too. Madrigal brings the elephant and ironically starts a conversation in which he insists on teaching it the Viscay language.<sup>44</sup> The elephant here (as a part of the characters) could be a reference to Africa. the accent of a city in Asturias north of Spain.

Furthermore, the dark/light technique, or the hide/reveal technique, is notably obvious in the comedy. Cervantes likes playing with cards, hiding the real identities and backgrounds of the characters, and manipulating the events between ups and downs.<sup>45</sup> Thus going gradually toward the end by falling events and reveling cards that lead the reader to discover new secrets and questioning other realities. The sense of ambiguity and suspense he creates with names and symbols leaves the reader in suspense.

The comedy fits perfectly with the Cervantine style. The dominant vagueness of names and figures alluding to the Mediterranean ambiance, the experience he lived in Algiers as a captive, and the inquisition times of Spain. Cervantes wants to convey a message of possible acceptance, love, and peace between different people. Diversity is richness for him and he exposes the details of this like he is fantasizing about the reality of his dreams, encouraging the Spanish monarchy to adopt that level of tolerance.<sup>46</sup>

Interestingly, Cervantes himself wanted to be seen in the play too, playing many roles with flexibility so he could show what he learned in Algiers about Turks and

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<sup>44</sup> Viscay or Biscayan is a dialect of the Basque language spoken mainly in Biscay, one of the provinces of the Basque Country of Spain.

<sup>45</sup> Luciano. García Lorenzo, "Cervantes, Constantinopla y La Gran Sultana," *Anales Cervantinos* 31 (May 11, 2020): 201-203.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

what skills he acquired. Cervantes in this play is similar to the painter Velázquez in his most famous painting of the seventeenth century "Las Meninas." Imposing his presence in the Spanish court with King Philip IV and his wife Mariana includes himself and his perspective in the story, like when Velázquez portrayed the scene vividly by applying his own touch and perspective. The same happened here in the play with Cervantes including himself in the Ottoman scene, representing multiculturalism and depicting the aspired world of Cervantes.

The author also creates another character to represent him, "El Madrigal". This controversial character, with his limitless critics and mysterious identity, can perfectly depict Cervantes and his inner voice. Cervantes also utilizes the spies he created to spread his words. He refers to Apollonius of Tyana - the Greek philosopher<sup>47</sup> - as one of his ancestors from where he inherited wisdom and the skill of talking to birds.

One of the interesting characteristics of this comedy is that it can't be fully analyzed without the "clown", or as it is called "el loco del corte". This character is common in the literature of the seventeenth century, and Cervantes used this character as well to play with events, mock realities and many times exceed the limits. That character in this play is Madrigal the emblematic clown/crazy of all scenes.

Regarding the Ottoman ambiance, Cervantes used his knowledge of the Ottoman lifestyle to fantasize about the Harem, eunuchs and pashas. He was able to use many of historical facts and frame them in a way that added an extra level of tolerance to the sultan's image in the West. It can be thought that Cervantes used Al Cadi to be the one who can issue rules, judge, and show a clear picture of passion and marriage relationship. The Cadi also provides insight on the judicial system worked in the royal court, and to what extent the power of the judge in the Ottoman palace could reach. Although it is exaggerated in some scenes, the Cadi is a multitasking figure that intervened in all the palace matters which was not completely true. In one of the scenes he involved himself in the Harem, advising Catalina to be a devoted wife to

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<sup>47</sup> Apollonius of Tyana is a Greek neo-Pythagorean philosopher, wonderworker and ascetic teacher. His legend has impact on scientific thought, literature and occultism for centuries after his death.

the sultan and produce as many kids as possible. This alluded to the importance Ottoman sultans gave to their heirs and successors to maintain the continuity of the dynasty. Therefore, not only beauty and intelligence mattered in the Harem, but also the ability to produce strong healthy sons.



## CHAPTER III

### IS IT A PLAY OF A MERE CRITICISM OF THE WEST AND PRAISE OF THE EAST?

Cervantes is not an author who only criticizes the intolerance of his country towards other religions and praises the tolerance of the Ottomans. In many of his novels and plays, he exposes the different shadings of the Spanish deformed image regarding the other, which constitutes a polemical matter and a questionable style. Writers of the seventeenth century often showed the worst picture of the different other, and themes of alienation and xenophobia were present in literature. However, in LGS, Cervantes succeeds to put mirrors on all sides so the reader can perceive and judge the history from different perspectives.

‘National’ qualities in the play are also tackled in a Cervantine way. Unlike the similar play “Los Baños de Argel,” he attempted to set Spain a bit far from the center and highlighted other cultures like the Ottoman. In the fifteenth century, Spain was establishing its first nation, aiming to have it unified and strong by the exclusion and expulsion of the non-Catholics. That sense of nationalism increased with adjusting the one nation thus resorting to the Inquisition to uproot the other minorities from different religions and doctrines.<sup>48</sup>

The Spanish society is exposed with less segregation and conflicts in the play. However, the very first scene of the play highlights the might of the Ottoman Empire along with its connection to God's power. In one of the scenes, the pasha, the sultan's minister “refers to the great powers and empires of the Mediterranean.”<sup>49</sup> In contrast with other plays of Cervantes, this play does not underestimate nor disdain any of them. The same pasha also refers to the Spanish monarchy, describing it and its king Philip II with good words that illustrate its magnificence as follows:

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<sup>48</sup> Moisés R Castillo, “¿Ortodoxia cervantina?: Un análisis de La gran sultana, El trato de Argel y Los baños de Argel.” *Bulletin of the Comediantes* 56, no. 2 (2004): 219-240.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

y suspenso; el verdadero  
retrato de Filipo, aquel Segundo,  
que sólo pudo darse a sí tercero;  
aquel cuyo valor alto y profundo  
no es posible alabarle como quiero.<sup>50</sup>

This can be considered a great representation of the Renaissance spirit. the paradigmatic usage of classical sarcasm by Cervantes in the experimental theater was inspired by Lope de Ruedas, but yet not as harsh as of the irony of Lope de Vega.<sup>51</sup> The character of Madrigal is used to show what Cervantes finds hard to say explicitly, regarding Jews and their unstable destiny. Madrigal's mocking tone, alludes to the Jewish question in the Mediterranean in general, and in Istanbul in particular. He touches upon the way they are seen by Turks and Moorish. In other words, Cervantes employs the "Law of Taste" clearly in the play, represented by the reactions of the clown/Madrigal.<sup>52</sup> This fascination with speeches and the verbal festive potentialities are embodied in the play in many ways.

The simultaneous madness of Madrigal, although it is not consistent with reality, tries to judge others from his first appearance on the stage. He constantly has altercations with Jews; Madrigal seems to imply that he is sliding down the slope of insanity when he tries to grant the use of reason to the elephant in charge. As Cervantes wants to highlight some aspects implicitly and freely at the same time he employs el loco character/ Madrigal.

In accordance with the Cervantes theater perspectives, these reproaches reflect the cowardice of "sensible" people, in the face of insolence that here in play has an enormous positive value. At first look, Madrigal limits himself to the most obvious function of the court jester, namely to amuse his patrons, a standing joke whose inconsistencies are represented before those who need to punish someone else's. Thus the warnings that Madrigal receives from the other captives of the seraglio are clarified, but through his words, agility and ease he became an attractive figure.

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<sup>50</sup> Cervantes, *La gran sultana doña Catalina de Oviedo*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> López Grigera, *La Retórica En La España Del Siglo de Oro*, 32.

<sup>52</sup> Jean. Canavaggio, "Sobre lo cómico en el teatro cervantino: Tristán y Madrigal, bufones in partibus." *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 34, no. 2 (1985): 538-547.

### 3.1. Eroticism and Exoticness: Orientalism and Representation of Alterity

This play could be also interpreted from an Orientalist and ideological perspective. Cervantes hyperbolized the Orient with an interesting combination of power and women, but unlike other Orientalists, he undermines common stereotypes about Islam and the Orient. He also tackled the questions of diversity, religions and identities that are highly emphasized in the play. The following is the Saidian perspective that resembles some representations of the comedy:

There are two reasons for this. In the first place, no one finds it easy to live uncomplainingly and fearlessly with the thesis that human reality is constantly being made and unmade, and that anything like a stable essence is constantly under threat. Patriotism, extreme xenophobic nationalism, and downright unpleasant chauvinism are common responses to this fear. We all need some foundation on which to stand; the question is how extreme and unchangeable is our formulation of what this foundation is.<sup>53</sup>

As is can be seen in the comedy, the fear of the other and the continuous changes in politics, social values and economics, along with the form of how the other is defined according to a certain era contribute to form the erroneous vision the West has of the Orient, although it may include some brilliant sides. The representations of the East in LGS include the flawed perspective as mentioned above, yet also embrace the East and touch upon some positive aspects. This is unlike other literary works of the Spanish Golden Age that tend to demonize the other and tackle it with inferiority. According to Said, the Occident sees Muslims of North Africa and Iberian Peninsula as a separate category by themselves. They have different qualities, therefore, they don't fit in the attributes of other Muslims of the Orient.

The Central Islamic lands are defined as excluding North Africa and Andalusia, and their history is an orderly march from the past till modern times, therefore, Islam is a geographical designation applied chronologically and selectively as it suits the experts.<sup>54</sup>

As seen in the play with the mix of identities and ethnicities, the difference between Turk, Arab, Moor, and Moorish in some scenes is not clear. As clarified in chapter 1 regarding the image of the Turk, the majority of the Spanish plays of the Golden age do not distinguish clearly the differences between Muslims “old or new.” However,

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<sup>53</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Facsimile edition, Penguin Modern Classics. London: Penguin, 2003, 333.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 303.

the play as an *Obra Turquesca*. tackles only Muslims under the Ottoman Empire. Which all considered oftentimes (Moor, Moorish, Renegade, Turk) Turk.

This comedy took place mostly in the Harem, a place well-known for its privacy and sensitivity in the Ottoman palace, where no man can enter except for the chief black eunuch. However, Cervantes, like many of the Western writers, creates fantasies about the Harem and attaches unrealistic characteristics to it. According to the description of the play, the Harem is a place where events happen, long conversations take place, and strangers come and go easily. That description is flawed and contradicts the main attributes of the Harem.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the image of the Orient in the Western eyes was ambiguous. Chivalry books included a mix of disdain, admiration, homosexuality, love, fear, and curiosity. The relationship between the West and East was similar to that of rivalry, which explains the creation of an imaginative invasion of the Oriental space, such as the Harem portrayed as the source of love, sexuality, and hidden secrets and stories.<sup>55</sup>

The first Orientalist feature, yet the clearest in the comedy, is the erotic description of Catalina by eunuchs, along with the conversation between her and the sultan. The way the sultan described his passion, without knowing her well, is exaggerated as Muslims/ Orientals/ Moors and Turks were seen as lustful and aphrodisiac. Although Cervantes highlights the power and nobility of the Turk, he also describes the Turk with that irresistible weakness toward women, especially European women.

The exotic dilemma of Zelinda /Lamberto and Zaida /Clara in the Harem is unexpected. The act of having Lamberto as a hidden Christian man dressing like a woman to live in the Harem with his love Clara is hyperbolized. The eunuch sends Lamberto to the sultan as a chosen concubine, but upon his arrival to the sultan's private room, the sultan sees through the disguise. Later, the sultan discovers the love story between Lamberto and Clara, who is now pregnant. That scene adds extra

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<sup>55</sup> Mercedes. Alcalá Galán, "Erotics of the Exotic: Orientalism and Fictionalization of the Moorish in the Early Modern Mediterranean." *Journal of Levantine Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 12-16.

layers of paradox on the function of the Harem and its peculiarity, now Christians too are making use of the Harem enjoying its pleasure.

Another unreal Orientalist fantasy mentioned in the play is the party where the sultan chooses a concubine to spend the night with. It starts with a dance and ends when the sultan throws a handkerchief to the concubine he likes most. The chosen concubine is brought and prepared accordingly to spend the night with the sultan. This narrative is adopted by many of the European travelers as part of the exoticness of the Orient. In literary works like Ricaut's<sup>56</sup> book "Türklerin siyasi düsturları," a similar story was included to indicate the same theme.<sup>57</sup> However, Lady Montagu<sup>58</sup> disagreed with that narrative and affirmed that many of these stories about the sultan are Western myths. The sultan can just order to have the concubine he wants brought to him. Then the eunuchs perfume and dress her up to be ready to meet him.

The question of converting to Islam is tackled well in the plot. Catalina de Oviedo, the slave that is brought to the Harem by renegades who are converted "by hats not by hearts," appears with her Spanish dress to show pride and loyalty to her tradition and religion. Compared to the real sultanas of the Harem, all *Vailde* Sultans and *Haseki* Sultans of the Ottoman Empire came to the Harem as non-Muslims slaves (Hurrem, Nurbanu, Safiye, etc.) then ended up converting to Islam and changing their names. But the case of Catalina, as Cervantes suggested, is different. Catalina is the most faithful and virtuous woman in the play, and the others are all depicted as unchaste. Cervantes is distinguishing the protagonist to emphasize the sanctity of the Catholic faith. Catalina represents the power of the Spanish monarchy and the dignity of its people. The reader of the play can sense the heterogeneous style of presenting the characters in a way that are mixed between fiction and history.

Because the Spanish Captive remained Christian as she wished, Cervantes emphasized the tolerance and mercy of the great sultan. Cervantes is drawing a

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<sup>56</sup> Sir Paul Rycaut (1629–1700) was a British diplomat and historian, and an authority on the Ottoman Empire. He spent more than 15 years in the Ottoman Empire, as between 1660 and 1667 he was in the service of the British Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Heneage Finch, third Earl of Winchelsea.

<sup>57</sup> Sir Paul. Rycaut, and Reşat M. Uzman, *Türklerin siyasi düsturları*, 1970, 132.

<sup>58</sup> Lady Mary Wortley. Montagu, *Cartas desde Estambul*. Vol. 4, La línea del horizonte ediciones, 2017, 172-174.



totally unique picture of the Orient by fantasizing about a different future, aspiring to shorten the distance between the East and the West. He does so by asking himself these questions: “What if the future sultan of the Ottoman Empire is from Christian practicing mother? How would be the future of the great powerful empires? Would peace be achieved in the future where people can enjoy being different and still being accepted? Is it going to be a place in this world where writers can write freely expressing their feelings and perspectives without fear?”

Cervantes' experiences as a soldier in the Lepanto campaign and as a captive in Algiers, along with his years spent in Italy reading about the Ottomans, contributed to the richness of his imagination and helped him shape the main theme of the play. His vision wasn't just realistic and factual, as he also employed his own special style to adopt fantasy and fiction using some historical events and characters to create that ambivalent image. It is worth mentioning that the depiction of the Orient in Cervantes' world is more humanized and closer to reality when compared to other playwrights of the Spanish Golden Age. He emphasized some aspects intentionally to show common points between the West and the East and between Christians and Muslims. Cervantes also highlighted essential qualities like tolerance, love, faith and religious devotion. However, a level of absurdness is still present in one way or another. This kind of Cervantine Orientalism is closer to verisimilitude.

The comedy received much criticism because of the way the author treated history. Even so, the development of its plot and some characters are not wholly imaginary. Francisco Marquez Villanueva, Ottmar Hegyi and Ertugrul Önalp are authors who determined that the play has a solid historical background.

### **3.2. The Orient of the Comedy “LGS”**

New European modality is clearly introduced in the play; as Cervantes adds more ideologies, identities, and places to the Topkapi Palace to create a heterogeneous atmosphere. He attempts to include many religions, identity and gender dilemmas of the Mediterranean. All are used together to take us beyond reality and toward a more hybrid and cosmopolitan world. Cervantes aims to set a new modern Orientalism that reconciles aspects of gender and religion. The play explicitly calls attention to the

categorized characters of diverse identities and ethnicities and the scenes show the human side of all characters.

Regarding the North African atmosphere and the world of renegades and corsairs included, the play with its figures helps the audience better understand the Mediterranean connectedness. Thus, controversial characters such as Madrigal with his antisemitic attitude, Catalina's father and his sudden appearance in the seraglio, and the strange lovers Lamberto and Clara all draw the lines of the complicated plot. It is worth noting that the play was published decades after Cervantes's captivity experience. Unlike other fantasies and stories of Algeria, this play draws a utopian ambiance and a kind of a Cervantine city, where peace and connectivity among its people overcome all the ideological differences.<sup>59</sup>

Mixing between Roman/ Byzantine symbols, this comedy distinguishes itself from other Cervantes' comedies. The chosen setting of Constantinople contrasts the other comedies, which were set in North Africa, because Cervantes had deeper relationship with the Orient than the other writers; he knew Ottomans in the Battle of Lepanto and in Algiers as well. He also mixed with Moors, renegades, and Berbers there; thus, he was closer to the Orient and its nature. In the following quotation Edward Said pointed out how the West always attaches erroneous characteristics on the Orient and how narrow is the perspective regarding its real essence:

The Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. An Orientalist is but the particular specialist in knowledge for which Europe at large is responsible, in the way that an audience is historically and culturally responsible for (and responsive to) dramas technically put together by the dramatist.<sup>60</sup>

The comedy is an obvious representation of how the West confined the East in the Ottoman Palace yet particularly in the Harem; where Cervantes chose the Harem to make it the main stage of his comedy where all adventures, punishment, conspiracies and decisions take place. The Harem included men as well and he added all the

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<sup>59</sup> Carolyn, "Nacionalismo y otredad en" Los baños de Argel" y" La gran sultana", In *Estudios de teatro áureo*, 379-386.

<sup>60</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 65.

characteristics as of his play. Although he is knowledgeable of the Harem and its attributes. In reality, the play includes the binary part of the world, the East and the West, Muslims and Christians. What is interesting about the play's setting is that Cervantes customized Topkapi palace to be a deliberately delightful space for all characters. Topkapi and Harem are not confined to Turks any more.

The characters are described with an affirmation of their identities and ethnicities. "Salec/ Saleh the Turk", "Roberto a renegade wearing Greek costume" "One pasha wearing a Turkish custom"... "one Arab wearing Arabic cloak," all in addition to the description of Topkapi palace and the Friday prayer in Hagia Sophia.

On the other hand, as the dresses of the characters are obvious symbols of their identities in the comedy, some critics insist that Cervantes highlights the characters to draw somatic description to other dimensions. The way "El Gran Turco/ Sultan Murad III" is described in the following lines; show how the West sees the East as a combination of richness and vanity:

Entra a este instante el GRAN TURCO con mucho acompañamiento; delante de sí lleva un paje vestido a lo turquesco con una flecha en la mano levantada en alto, y detrás del TURCO van otros dos garzones con dos bolsas de terciopelo verde.<sup>61</sup>

The sultan appears surrounded by a lot of pashas and aghas. The pasha in front of him comes holding an arrow, and the one behind carries some fancy boxes of green velvet fabric. This portrayal is actually another Orientalist element, where Cervantes emphasized how shallow and materialistic the Ottoman tradition is, unlike the Spanish one. The British historian Reina Lewis, criticized Said for taking Orientalism to its extremes.<sup>62</sup> According to her, he completely binarized the East and the West. She also condemned how gender importance is marginalized and only has negative characterization.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, it is clear in LGS that Catalina is a metaphor of the imperial powers as a woman who plays a significant role in joining different cultures together, which includes economic hegemony. Catalina, by marrying the Ottoman sultan, will bring many benefits to her own country as well.

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<sup>61</sup> Cervantes, *La gran sultana doña Catalina de Oviedo*, 2.

<sup>62</sup> Christina Inés. McCoy, "Engendering the Orient: Cervantes' *La gran sultana*," *Cervantes* 2 (2013): 245.

<sup>63</sup> Reina. Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*, Routledge, 2013, 53.

Gender theories, along with Orientalist theories, often work together to demonstrate power representation, especially in early modern times. Philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler makes a clear distinction between performance and performativity; according to this author, under certain circumstances humans usually show natural reactions, which she calls human-oriented acts. However, performativity is acquiring certain characteristics that are merely an imitation of exaggerated and hyperbolized aspects such as sadism and accordingly bring the chatters to more imaginative and fictive themes.<sup>64</sup>

In consequence, Catalina coming at the beginning of the play wearing a Turkish dress “a la Turquesca” is a kind of reaffirmation of her gender identity. When she interacts with ‘the other’, she shows both refusal and acceptance, mingling between two different identities, “the original” that she holds and is proud of, and the other that is also “attractive and exotic.” Drawing her own boundaries is a struggle.<sup>65</sup> On stage, characters are more visible and comprehensible because of their actions and reactions. The audience won't give big importance to where they belong; it is all about what they do, not where they come from. However, in the written play, as it is analyzed without being performed, the concentration on identities is highly evident.<sup>66</sup>

The issue of gender and sex differences was not present in the pre-enlightenment era. Women were seen as the inverse of men; the only difference was their reproductive organs are placed in different places. In one of the scenes, Catalina and Lamberto both were shown as two Christians with interchangeable sexual identity.

Travelers too fantasized about visiting the Harem and live that experience of being the sultan surrounded by the most beautiful women from different races. Not forgetting that Harem's doormen and black eunuchs are controversial topic too, the role of black eunuchs play in the European literature, and the fact of his charge as facilitator and mediator servant having that privilege of entering the Harem is

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<sup>64</sup> Judith. Butler, "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory," *Theatre journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520-522.

<sup>65</sup> Galán, *Erotics of the Exotic*, 11- 40.

<sup>66</sup> McCoy, *Engendering the Orient*, 245.

appealing. Eunuchs are considered as a third sex; an amalgamation presence in politics, household and Harem.

The religious dilemma is also obvious in certain characters. The Ottoman sultan forewent his predecessors' tradition by not forcing his beloved Catalina to convert to Islam. On the other hand, Lamberto converted to Islam to escape the punishment of hiding his identity, which historically happened in Algiers with slaves when they committed a crime and wanted to escape the punishment. All that paradox in the play is a matter of reflection, brought forth by Cervantes.

### **3.3. Speaking the Unspoken: Beyond the Character's Direct Utterances**

Going beyond the direct discourse of the play from beginning to end, reading between the lines, and focusing on the implied meaning of the characters' utterances, this comedy revealed a deeper meaning that clarifies the factual background of the play and goes farther to show its real intent. The linguistic usage by the main characters of the comedy is also disguised with eloquence to hide the authentic meaning.

Starting with the sultan's dialogues, as discussed before his way of showing love to Catalina since he got his eyes on her is definitely exaggerated. The play depicts him as powerless and totally submissive to the Spanish slave. For example, in the first scene when he says “ A cuanto quieras querer obedezco y no replico ...”<sup>67</sup> he tries to convince her to love and marry him. This contradicts with reality and the fact that she as his owned slave, can be married to the sultan without her consent. Thus, Catalina has all the power and the sultan is weak/ inferior to her. Cervantes here may allude to the power and dominance the Spanish Empire has on the Ottoman. However, moving in Act III, when Catalina declares her pregnancy, she shows acceptance and love to the sultan. Here, Cervantes tipped the scales and constituted an Ottoman dominance over the Spanish/ Habsburg.

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<sup>67</sup> Cervantes, *La gran sultana doña Catalina de Oviedo*, 14.

Although in most of the dialogues the sultan shows his lack of dignity and total humility to Catalina, his words are wrapped with a kind of burlesque tone that imply certain realities. The sultan's imperative mood when he addresses Catalina "Vestídmela a la española..."<sup>68</sup>/. Sélo..."<sup>69</sup> indicates both his power and his impatience. At first glance, the way the sultan answers Catalina with short answers superficially indicates his tolerance. However, upon reflection, one can see that the answers express his impatience, and set out that his interest in her is only sexual: the sultan's main interest is in Catalina's body not in her soul. His words imply that his attitude is only relevant to the current moment, in which he feels excessive desire, which most likely will change quite soon.

On the other hand, the imperative speech the sultan uses in act II " ...El Turco: has de parir, Catalina, hermosísimos Leones...SULTANA: Antes tomara engendrar águilas..."<sup>70</sup> explicitly orders her to marry him and produce Ottoman heirs, which is not consistent with the submissive attitudes he gave before. Catalina's answer in return of having " Águiles" instead of " Leones " symbolizes her affiliation to the Hapsburg Empire over the Ottoman.

Dr. Leyla Rouhi claims that Catalina is very restrained in speech. She does not talk a lot; she is not even being clear regarding her feelings and decisions. Neither enough freedom nor space is given to her. Consequently she does not engage in romantic dialogue even when she does eventually accept the sultan's love. In one of the most private scenes, when Catalina prays mentioning Jesus and the Virgin Mary, the sultan intrudes to insist that his love is quite tolerant to let her pray to Jesus and Mary instead of Allah and Mohammad, " TURCO: Reza, reza, Catalina, que sin la ayuda divina duran poco humanos bienes..."<sup>71</sup> here, the sultan appears like encouraging her to have freedom of worship. However, the way he breaks her privacy affirms his dominant and impatient attitude.

In addition to Catalina's speech restriction, she is under the control of most of the men surrounding her in the play. The eunuchs decide when to hide or show her to the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 31.

sultan, and Madrigal he tells her what to do and not do and how to dance and wear her clothing. Also, her father “el Cristiano” imposes his opinion on her dress style and advises her not to give up her faith and identity. Finally, comes the sultan with his implicit orders and constant intrusions. Although her replies and answers reflect her confidence, it can be seen that in fact Catalina has little space for self-determination.<sup>72</sup>

Regarding *el gracioso* Madrigal, his utterances in the comedy include clear paradoxes, especially in his attitude of showing intolerance towards other groups by criticizing and mocking them. At the same time, he confesses to having an adulterous relationship with a Muslim. Thus, Madrigal as depicted in LGS portrays the instability of the Iberian identity.<sup>73</sup>

Toward the end of the play in Act III, Catalina feigns jealousy to save Lamberto. Ultimately, she does accept the idea of marrying the sultan and loving him, but her felicity and satisfaction are external too. She truly wishes to help the other Christian captives and free some Spanish slaves as an act of “I do for you what I failed to do for myself!” The comedy wraps up with the declaration of *La Gran Sultana*, which marks her ascendancy to the Ottoman throne, and her resignation from the Spanish world.

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<sup>72</sup> Leyla. Rouhi, “A Radical Re-Assessment of Miguel de Cervantes La Gran Sultana,” 28.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 27



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CERVANTES AND THE OTTOMAN WORLD**

Cervantes wrote this comedy based on his personal experiences and knowledge about the Ottoman Empire. He himself witnessed important historical events, and as an intellectual hidalgo of Spain, he read about the Ottoman world and the Gran Turco to satisfy his curiosity regarding the fearful approaching enemy of the West. This chapter, will touch upon the historical background of the Ottoman- Spanish relations in the Sixteenth century, highlight the experiences Miguel de Cervantes lived, and the historical realities he learned about Istanbul that inspired him to shape the plot and the ambiance of this play. It also includes the historical backgrounds of the play's main characters/ Sultan Murat III his Mother Nurbanu / Valide Sultan and his wife Safiye / Hasaki Sultan. Thus chapter four will clarify how they fit in the comedy's.

#### **4.1. The Ottoman – Spanish Relations in the 16th Century**

The Ottoman Spanish relationships had its zenith mainly in the sixteenth century. Although the Mediterranean witnessed active trade movements by Catalan merchants and corsairs during the fourteen and fifteen centuries; however, all relations were limited on the western side. There were neither major political nor commercial relations before the period. The sixteenth century witnessed the born and rise of the superpowers of the western and eastern Mediterranean. It marked the beginning of a religious and political hegemony conflict between the Ottoman and the Habsburg empires.

All started after having the unified Spanish Catholic Kingdome affiliated to the Habsburg Empire. Thus the young prince Carlos got enthroned as the king of Spain in 1516 as Carlos I, and later the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1519 as



Carlos V.<sup>74</sup> That period was very challenging for the new emperor. He had to deal with many problems and issues within the empire first, such as the rising of Protestantism in some German provinces, and second he had to make efforts to unify the western powers of the Mediterranean to counteract the Ottoman deployment. As in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire started its advancement through consecutive campaigns toward Hungary which also exposed Vienna the capital of the Habsburg Empire to the same danger that faced in 1529<sup>75</sup>.

In 1532, Carlos V prepared for a countermove to the Ottoman port Koron to divert the Ottomans' campaign attention who was occupied attacking Hungary and thus protect Vienna from being attacked for the second time. The Spanish campaign succeeded to seize Koron under the leadership of Andrea D'Oria; however, it resulted almost impossible to keep it under the Spanish monarchy as it was far away from its main logistic zone. Later in 1534, the city was re-conquered by the famous Ottoman Admiral Khair Al-Din Barbarossa Pasha under the reign and directions of Sultan Suleiman I, Barbarossa managed to improve the Ottoman fleet and consequently reinforced its capabilities of the attacks tactics.

Both empires of the Mediterranean aimed to achieve hegemony and territorial expansion over the northern countries of Africa, taking into consideration its significant importance and strategic location to be close to the western ports. In 1534, Barbarossa could capture Tunis which irritated Carlos V as he saw the Ottoman Empire approaching the west by imposing its control over the Sicilian channel. That event constituted a great advantage for the Ottoman side to achieve future goals toward capturing more western lands.<sup>76</sup> Consequently, the Hapsburg emperor started to form an army of around 26.000 soldiers moving to Tunis in 1535, Barborasa hearing the news of the big army approaching Tunis, decided to leave it without any defensive attack. Upon the fall of Tunis in the hands of the Spanish Empire, Carlos V opted for keeping the Hafsid dynasty under the tributary system to stay subject to the

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<sup>74</sup> Earl E. Rosenthal, "The Invention of the Columnar Device of Emperor Charles V at the Court of Burgundy in Flanders in 1516," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1973): 198.

<sup>75</sup> Özlem. Kumrular, "Koron Seferi: Uzak Topraklarda İmkânsız Misyon," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 127 (2004), 79.

<sup>76</sup> Andrew C. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier*, University of Chicago Press, 2011, 72.

Spanish Empire. The Spanish emperor was resilient in terminating the Ottoman control over the North African countries, so he decided to attack the last Ottoman bastion in the whole area which is Algeria. In 1541 the Spanish Empire targeted Algeria as it was considered a focal place of Muslim corsairs and a central point that allowed the Ottomans to attack the Spanish ports and the coastal areas. The Spanish Fleet was formed of 65 galleys, 450 auxiliary ships, and 24.000-foot soldiers, while the Turkish side under the leadership of Hadim Hasan, had around 6.000 soldiers. During the battle, the weather took turn for the worse as a lashing storm hit the ships and ruined the plans of the Spanish army. All along with the counteroffensive, the Ottomans employed which resulted in obligating Carlos V to order a prompt military evacuation. As the Habsburg emperor put all his attention on defending the western side of the Mediterranean, Tripoli too fell in the hands of the Ottomans in 1551 under the leadership of Sinan Pasha. Carlos V was not able to restart any naval attack on the Ottomans as he was dealing with the growing Protestantism in the German provinces.

The Ottoman attacks on the western Mediterranean did not stop. As for the Spanish Empire, it stopped the counterattacks and military campaigns in 1535 and 1541. The Ottomans seized the opportunity of having growing issues in the Habsburg Empire and having the king busy with its internal problems, to adjust the timing of their upcoming campaign to start in accordance with the rising rebellion under the Holy Roman Empire. Carlos V decided to withdraw from Hungary, Croatia, Bohemia, and Austria to be ruled by his brother Ferdinand, while he entitled his son Philip II to reign Spain, Italy, and Flanders. During the period of his sovereignty (1556 – 1598) he had to manage many accumulated issues starting with the deployment of the Ottomans in the Mediterranean, the spreading revolts in the Low Countries, and the tense relations between England and France. Thus King Philip II opted for dealing with the Ottoman extension, so Ferdinand would manage the European battleground.

Philip II realized that he first needed to restrain the Ottomans to the eastern side of the Mediterranean. He carried out some strategic plans and tactics and considered them indispensable upon the achieved peace with the French side in 1551. He began with leading a military campaign to Djerba Island in order to suppress the Ottoman corsair's movements against the Spanish coast. However, this campaign did not

succeed as the Ottoman army fought against the Spanish forces and overcame it in 1560. After that vanquish, Philip II realized that he had to enhance the capacity of the Spanish navy and the infantry to adopt better defensive strategies to protect the western Mediterranean and to prevent the Ottomans from achieving their goals of advancement.<sup>77</sup> As the Turks started to impose their control on the naval passageways by having Payle Pasha redirecting the attack to Malta in 1565. Along with this main goal, the Ottoman Empire considered itself as a dominant Islamic power that represents Muslims; therefore, the Ottomans aspired to take over the Mediterranean and terminate the Christian corsairs to secure the pilgrims' route toward the Holy lands. After almost four months of imposed siege, the Ottomans did not succeed in defeating Malta and left the Island. This failure made the Ottomans realize that it was almost impossible to seize Malta with the available insufficient military support and limited time.

In 1568, the Moorish of Spain due to the ruthless inquisition policies and the continuous maltreatment they received as Muslims, they rebelled against King Philip II. Sultan Selim II to hear the support Moorish needed, ordered to send the Ottoman army to reinforce the revolt.<sup>78</sup> Moorish or Moriscos at that time were considered to serve the Ottomans as spies and agents as they know better about the internal Iberian circumstances and issues. Consequently, when King Philip II knew about the uprising, he withdrew his army from Italy and headed to Spain under the commander Don Juan de Austria to finish the revolt. In the meantime, Ottomans seized that opportunity and the military gap left and moved to capture Tunis in 1569 to be later a significant barrier between the Ottoman provinces of Algiers and Tripoli. The Ottoman navy also moved to seize Cyprus in 1570 to ensure the safety of the trade and commerce in the eastern Mediterranean and thus enhancing the Ottomans position.

On October 7, 1571, the largest naval battle in modern history took place between the great powers of the eastern and the western Mediterranean. More than 400

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<sup>77</sup> Fernand. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II: Volume II*, Vol. 2, Univ of California Press, 1995.

<sup>78</sup> For more details see page 84.

galleys and almost 200,000 soldiers clashed in a fight that showed the power of European artillery over the Ottoman navy.

Upon the conquest of Cyprus, Pope Pius V realized the importance of Christian unity to fight the approaching Ottoman enemy. He rushed to sign a treaty to form the Holy League. The alliance was signed by the Papacy, Venice, and Spanish Empires. The famous seasoned leader Don Juan de Austria got assigned the leader of the coalition, and the financial funding was divided on the allies accordingly.

The Holy League armada consisted of 200 galleys and 6 galleasses,<sup>79</sup> led by (Juan de Austria, Giovanni Andrea Doria, Álvaro de Bazán, Alexander Farnese, Luis de Zúñiga, Sebastiano Venier, Agostino Barbarigo, Pietro Giustiniani, Marcantonio Colonna), while the Ottoman fleet was assembled of 230 galleys led by (Uluç Ali Pasha, Şuluk Mehmed Pasha, Müezzinzade Ali Pasha). Turks were famous for having skillful and experienced sailors; however, they didn't have enough army corps of Janissaries. What made the Christian armada superior to the Ottoman was basically the big galleys whose artillery and canons had more guns and arquebusiers. While Turks they put all major trust in marksmen.

The battle ended about 4 pm. The Ottoman armada was unable to beat the Christian fleet and was obligated to have a direct combat in which the Christians had the advantage. The battle resulted in a complete destruction of the Ottoman naval forces except for the thirty galleys taken by Uluç Ali Paşa who was capable to escape through the Christian sides.<sup>80</sup>

After the Ottoman loss at Lepanto, Don Juan de Austria could capture Tunis in 1573, and built a new fort at La Goletta, that quartered the Spanish soldiers, with the aim of preventing any future Ottoman attack. Although the battle of Lepanto is considered a major military defeat for the Ottomans, the Holy League could not take advantage of it and turn it into a tactical success, consequently the Holy League collapsed. In contrast, the Ottomans effectively built a new fleet the next year thanks to their vast resources. The battle of Lepanto marked an era which indicates the end of the

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<sup>79</sup>Advanced kind of galleys that include improved artillery.

<sup>80</sup> Hess, "The Battle of Lepanto and its Place in Mediterranean History, 53-73.

Mediterranean-centric world politics. Though the Mediterranean did not lose its significance immediately, it began to weaken gradually even though it kept its position as a main point of conflict between the East and the West. The battle is seen as a turning point in history that ended the myth of the Ottoman hegemony in the Mediterranean.

#### **4.2. Miguel de Cervantes in Algiers**

In 1571, Miguel de Cervantes fought in Lepanto War with the Holy League countries against the Ottoman and Berber troops. Although he was sick, he fought restlessly and fiercely and showed incomparable bravery. At that time, he was known as the one-handed soldier of the king of Spain. The war was a great victory for the Holy League, which was celebrated in all Europe.<sup>81</sup> At the end of the war, the southern Mediterranean was a chaotic place where continuous attacks by Berber corsairs were growing significantly. In 1575, Miguel and his brother decided to return to their homeland from Italy, and encountered an unexpected raging storm on the Mediterranean Sea. There, a corsairs' ship led by the Albanian renegade Arnavut Mami seized the opportunity and attacked them.<sup>82</sup> After hours of resisting, Cervantes and his brother Rodrigo fell in the hands of the corsairs, and Mami took them as captives to Algiers. Since the first day of Miguel's arrival, he sensed that a mysterious future is awaiting him so he opened his eyes to a city full of charm and exoticness. He was impressed by the white city, its huge fortress, and the diversity of its people where Moorish, renegades, Jews, Christians, and Turks all lived together with a good extent of tolerance and acceptance.<sup>83</sup>

Algiers at that time was under the rule of the Ottoman sultans. The city hosted a rich and prosperous slave market with slaves of different ethnicities and religions. Not all slaves were treated equally; some enjoyed special treatment due to their religious or political status, so their masters kept them as captives until they got ransomed. Mami Dali- Cervantes' master- checked on the health of the new slaves to choose

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<sup>81</sup> Ahmed. Abi-Ayad, "Argel: una etapa decisiva en la obra y pensamiento de Cervantes," In *Actas del II Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Cervantistas (II CINDAC)*. nápoles: Società intercontinentale Gallo (1995), 42-45.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 77-80.

<sup>83</sup> María Antonia. Garcés, *Cervantes en Argel*, (2005): 102.

appropriate tasks for them. When doing so, he realized that Cervantes was one-handed and he looked like a prominent European. While he was checking the clothes of his prisoner, he came across some letters of recommendations signed by John of Austria and Duke of Sessa. While surprised, Dali Mami quickly understood that this captive was different and highly regarded. Consequently, Cervantes received privileged treatment, as he did not need to work as common slaves did, such as rowing galleys or working in the Arsenal.<sup>84</sup>

Cervantes' brother Rodrigo became a slave who accompanied one of the pashas, so the two brothers lost touch with each other. By contrast, Cervantes had a good level of freedom. He moved around the city to discover its secrets, wandered its streets and quarters, impressed by the diverse atmosphere that he had never imagined!<sup>85</sup>

Algiers was a city of approximately 10.000 inhabitants, with the slaves in the city constituting around a quarter of the population. The language they used to communicate with was called "Sabir," the Lingua Franca of the Mediterranean basin. In Algiers, many slaves converted to Islam and accepted circumcision. However, Cervantes refused to convert and showed great faith and loyalty to his religion and did not hesitate to assure his devotion to being a Catholic Christian. He encouraged many slaves not to convert, but the majority tended to go with the flow.

Cervantes was always worried about his destiny in the city, thinking about his family and homeland Spain. He tried to escape four times, but each time he ended up captured by his master Dali Mami. Unlike other slaves who tried to escape, Cervantes was treated with mercy; his punishment was incarceration with a chain on his one hand and later his owner forgave him.<sup>86</sup>

Hasan Pasha, a man known for his ruthless control and cruel attitude, soon came to power in Algiers, and used to punish the slaves by cutting their ears or noses. He heard about Cervantes and his continued escape attempts and decided to meet with him personally. Although Hasan Pasha had no mercy towards others, he treated

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 122-127.

<sup>85</sup> Abi-Ayad, "Argel: una etapa decisiva en la obra y pensamiento de Cervantes," 133.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 123.

Cervantes as a privileged man, and Cervantes received neither punishments nor tutoring. The Pasha's advisor Morato Arráez knew about the status of the famous captive, so he advised him to buy Cervantes to be later ransomed with a fortune.

One of the hypothetical explanations as to why Cervantes was not subject to harsh punishments like the rest of the captives was that Hasan Pasha was a bisexual, and there were rumors that Cervantes was homosexual/bisexual too. Perhaps master and slave had a sexual relationship, after all, homosexuality was very common between masters and slaves at that time.<sup>87</sup>

The last attempted flight ended up with Cervantes handcuffed in a prison where he gave up and realized that the only way to get his freedom was by paying the ransom. He started to write letters to his family, relatives and friends and sending them through freed slaves, merchants or corsairs. Cervantes' family, especially his father Rodrigo, did his best to collect the money required. He went to the Council of Castile for some subsidy but they refused to aid him. Then he went to the so-called "Consejo de Cruzada," whose members used to collect money for captives. However, the older Cervantes only received half the required amount.

Next, Cervantes' father asked the Redemptorist monks for support, as they circulated between Spain and North Africa. One of the monks, known as Fray Juan Gil from the Trinitarian Order, managed to increase the amount of the money collected and set out to buy back some captives from Algiers. His list included first names, last names and some identifying marks that might help him find certain captives. After searching and asking, he could identify Cervantes and his brother. However, the ransom demanded was too high, but the two brothers bargained with Hasan Pasha until the latter agreed to accept a sum of money for the liberation of both Miguel and Rodrigo. That same year, Hasan Pasha was planning to move to Istanbul taking Miguel with him. If that had happened, Miguel definitely would have had a very different destiny, and his liberation could have been more complicated. In 1580, Cervantes reached Spain and was celebrated as an example of the great Catholic who never gave up his religion and identity.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid,123.



In 1610, the German engraver Matthiius Wolffgang went to England. On his way back to Germany, Algerian corsairs captured him and brought him to Algiers. During his stay, the people that he saw in the city inspired him to draw and paint them. Later, his father ransomed him, and upon arrival in his hometown, he started to publish engravings, some in black and others in color, depicting life and nature in Algiers.<sup>88</sup> On the following pages, some images are included of the common social types inhabiting Algiers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some of these characters inspired Cervantes enough that he involved them in his play.



*Capitán corsario argelino*

**Figure 4.1. Algerian Corsair Captain**

Source: María Antonia Garcés, *Cervantes en Argel*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 2005

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<sup>88</sup> Garcés, *Cervantes en Argel*, 214.





*Almirante de la flota argelina*

**Figure 4.2. Admiral of an Algerian Fleet**

Source: María Antonia Garcés, *Cervantes en Argel*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 2005



*Judío de Argel*

**Figure 4.3. Jew of Algiers**

Sourca: María Antonia Garcés, *Cervantes en Argel*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 2005

This image conforms to the description of Antonio de Sosa, who has described Jews wearing clothing that was almost all black. The black headdress falling behind the head indicates that this Jew was a member of the French, Italian or Majorcan community.



*Soldado turco de Argel*

**Figure 4.4. Turkish Soldier of Algiers**

Source: María Antonia Garcés, *Cervantes en Argel*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 2005



that covers only one shoulder and leaving the other uncovered. The woman is wearing a Turkish headpiece and ornamented clothing with long loose sleeves.

### **4.3. Sultan Murat III**

Born in Manisa in 1546, he ascended the Ottoman throne in 1574 and ruled until 1595. A son of Sultan Selim II (1524 -1574) and Nurbanu, Sultan Murad was very much interested in science, art and languages; he gave special attention to artists and scholars, frequently inviting them to the palace. During his reign, he stayed in Istanbul and never left it, just as his father had done. His mother Nurbanu was the first Vailde Sultan in the Ottoman Empire and among the most powerful ones who intervened in the politics and reigned the empire with her husband and the help of Pashas and the famous grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed.

To be the next Ottoman, Sultan Murad, with the support of his mother, killed his 19 brothers. Years into his reign, court gossip claimed that he ordered the killing of Sokollu Mehmet Pasha in 1579 by his rivals in the palace, as he sensed that his power and ascendancy were growing and threatening his authority. However, this narrative remains unproven. Certainly, during that period Mehmed Sokollu Pasha found it difficult to intervene in the affairs of the empire, and his influence decreased significantly. By contrast, Nurbanu was unhappy with the death of the grand vizier, as he was very skillful and wise. He had organized and led many important campaigns in the later years of Sultan Süleyman and throughout the reign of Sultan Selim II; thus Nurbanu considered Sokollu Mehmed Pasha as her right hand and a man of trust. On the other hand, the sultan was more influenced by viziers Lala Kara Mustafa Pasha and Sinan Pasha.<sup>90</sup>

One of the greatest achievements of the Ottoman Empire in the era of Sultan Murad III is the Ottoman- Safavid war (1578-1590). The sultan's advisers were aware of disputes and chaos at the Persian court upon the death of Shah Tahmasp I. In consequence, the sultan sent his armies on a series of campaigns that ended with the

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<sup>90</sup> Pinar. Kayaalp, *The Empress Nurbanu and Ottoman Politics in the 16th Century: Building the Atik Valide*, Routledge, 2018, 26.

Treaty of Constantinople (1590), which led to a temporary significant Ottoman dominance on specific territories (Tabriz, the Caucasus).

The financial situation of that period deteriorated and the inflation reached its highest levels as the influx came from outside caused chaos and social problems, especially among janissaries and officials of the court. On the other hand, the fierce competition for positions was very high that ended up increasing corruption and bribery between officials, eunuchs, and pashas. There were many who claim that the sultan himself received bribery from high officials to change the government between Tripoli and Tunis.

Sultan Murad gave the chief black eunuchs more attention and more privileged positions. He assigned some of them to be responsible for the charitable foundations established by members of the Ottoman dynasty, along with the custody of the holy sites in Mecca and Madina. Mehmet Agha for example, due to the prevailing corruption that reached the palace as well, grew financial and official power that he was receiving bribes from people and built his ascendancy to be highly regarded and feared by people.<sup>91</sup>

Murat before his accession to the throne was very devoted to his concubine, Safiye, the beautiful slave sent to him as a valuable gift from his aunt Mihrmah.<sup>92</sup> He continued to be loyal to his concubine even after reaching the throne; however, Nurbanu his mother was unhappy with his monogamous relationship, as Safiye in the first years could only produce one boy and two girls. Nurbanu did not like Safiye, as she witnessed her growing power and dominance, which constituted a serious future threat for her own ascendancy.

Nurbanu insisted that her son have more concubines to preserve the continuity of the dynasty. The sultan refused in the beginning, but later he accepted some charming

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<sup>91</sup> Jane. Hathaway, "Habeşî Mehmed Agha: The First Chief Harem Eunuch (Darüssaade Ağası) Of the Ottoman Empire." In *the Islamic Scholarly Tradition*, 2011: 179 -196.

<sup>92</sup> Leslie P. Peirce, *The imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1993. 33.

concubines. However, he was unable to have proper sexual relationships with them.<sup>93</sup> In consequence, the Valide Sultan accused Safiye of casting black magic on the sultan. She questioned and tortured Safiyes' eunuchs and slaves, and brought the most skillful specialized doctors to cure him. Nurbanu succeeded in having the sultan cured and later, he became very lustful, spending the majority of his time in the palace Harem.<sup>94</sup>

#### **4.4. Valide Sultan / Mother Queen Nurbanu**

Nurbanu Sultan (1525- 1583) was the first Valide Sultan in the Ottoman Empire and one of the most eminent *Valide* and *Haseki* Sultans in the history of the Empire, the legal wife of Sultan Selim II, and the queen mother of Sultan Murad III.<sup>95</sup> There are many contradicting stories regarding her roots. Some historians, like Ahmet Refik, believe that she was Venetian Jewish and named Rachel Nasi, while some believe that she was a Christian Venetian and came to the palace with the name Cecilia Venier-Baffo. Others insist that her name was Kalē Kartanoua, as a descendant from Greek roots.<sup>96</sup> She was a woman of power and wisdom, who marked and witnessed important shifts, turning points and paradoxes. She also managed the Harem, which was considered a very sensitive position in the palace. All of this led her to be a controversial character and main focus of European writers.

Unlike her famous mother- in-law Hurrem Sultan, Nurbanu could reach more power and ascendancy in many aspects; her hegemony expanded beyond the Harem, and ended up marking important decisions in essential issues. Hurrem was the first Haseki of Sultan Suleiman and an illustrious figure in Ottoman history, she was the one who accepted Nurbanu and had no major clashes with her.<sup>97</sup> Hurrem's marriage was very unusual, as there were few other instances of monogamous partnerships among Ottoman sultans. The late sixteenth century, witnessing major shifts in the female hierarchy and the distribution of roles and charges, Hurrem Sultan paved the

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>95</sup> Kayaalp, *The Empress Nurbanu and Ottoman Politics in the 16th Century*, 51.

<sup>96</sup> Özlem. Kumrular, *Haremde taht kuranlar Nurbanu ve Safiye Sultan*, DK Doğan Kitap, 2017, 54.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 56.



way for later sultanas to reach power and intervene in political affairs. However, she died before reaching the Valide Sultan position.

The unprecedented prestige Nurbanu enjoyed was embodied in the mosque or *Valide Sultan Camii / Külliye* that she ordered to be erected in 1570 Üsküdar before her death in 1583. Her imperial political and social charm was represented in this charitable complex to better reflect her exalted position. She started a part of it during her life and arranged its expansion upon her death by Mehmet Agha. The significance of this *Vakif* underlies many implications of its importance for the society and its major role to shift the attention toward Nurbanu's hegemony, and to highlight the greatness of her husband and son as well. These foundations were a way of gaining popular support and love, while controlling the narrative at the same time by "feeding people, feeding power".<sup>98</sup>

In the Ottoman Empire, there were some imperial conditions the sultana needed to follow to be able to establish a charity or any kind of endowment. First, the money used for the pious foundation should be free money the endower owned, and free of hindrances. Second, the endower should be a freeman/ woman or emancipated big mature person, an adult of sound mind. Third, the amount of money endowed should be used for something valuable and useful. Nurbanu met these conditions, as the fortune she had was her legal and legitimately earned property since she was the favorite concubine of the sultan. She received a fixed dowry along with some allowances for clothes and personal expenses, and after becoming the legal wife the salary doubled from 40 *akçe* to 100 a day. When she became the mother queen upon the accession of her son Murad III to the throne, that amount doubled too. In addition, she received revenues from assets in agricultural, commercial and residential investments.<sup>99</sup>

Upon the reach of Sultan Selim II to power in 1566, Nurbanu came from Manisa to Istanbul as his favorite concubine. Hürrem had been dead for eight years, and Mihrimah Sultan was exercising significant power in politics especially after the

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<sup>98</sup> Nina. Ergin, Christoph K. Neumann, and Amy Singer, *Feeding People, Feeding Power: Imarets in the Ottoman Empire*, İstanbul: Eren, 2007, 17.

<sup>99</sup> Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 64.



death of her husband Rustem Pasha.<sup>100</sup> The relationship between Mihrimah and her brother had always been good; Mihrimah supported Selim many times, and gave him money when he needed it. Consequently, the role of Nurbanu at the beginning was not very clear and effective; Sultan Selim II had placed all his trust in his grand vizier Sokollu, and counted on his pashas and leaders as well. Over time, Nurbanu realized that she had to build a close relationship with them to be more aware of the politics and affairs of monarchy. Thus, she gradually established great power in the palace and plotted to have her son the successor of his father.

Nurbanu proved to be a fast learner and a witty woman. In a short time, she established very good relationships with Istanbul's Jews. For instance, she helped Joseph Nasi - a very influential Jew- Sephardi that was very close to Sultan Süleyman and continued to have even more expanded power in Selim's era - to be the Duke of Naxos. She also had influence over the imperial Harem and dealt with clever agents from outside the palace, whose help she could use for numerous transactions. The agent had to be a non-Muslim woman so that the sultana could deal with her easily and freely with no limits. One of those women was *kira* Esther, a Jewish widow and a financier close to Nurbanu, who had come from Spain with her husband Elijah Handali, a famous Sephardic merchant. These close relationships with Jews made some authors in the West believe that Nurbanu was of Jewish background.

On the same level, she had a strong relationship with Venetians as well. Many Bailos referred to her intelligence for achieving that constructive progress between the Ottoman Empire and *La Serenissima*/ Republic of Venice.<sup>101</sup> Her relationship with Esther developed gradually as she helped the sultana to strengthen her power with the Venetians Bailos. In 1578, Esther asked Nurbanu to send a letter of thanks for the presents she received from Venice. In fact, there was a prior cooperation between her and Jacopo Soranzo, the representative who came to praise the accession of Murad III to the throne. The Viziers of Murad used to accept gifts from the Venetians Bailos; it was Nurbanu who broke the stalemate thanks to the efforts she asked from Soranzo and Bailo Correr. Esther also proved to be a useful friend by sending to the sultana valuable gifts like, jewelry, perfumes and fabrics. The Jewish

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<sup>100</sup> Kayaalp, *The Empress Nurbanu and Ottoman Politics in the 16th Century*, 53.

<sup>101</sup> Kumrular, *Haremde taht kuranlar Nurbanu ve Safiye Sultan*, 54.

doctor Salomon Eskinazi, known as the wise politician and interferer who used to send gifts to pashas, sent her a lot of gifts as well.

Nurbanu had a brilliant image with the Venetians, unlike the negative image her husband had. The Bailos constantly communicated to *La Serenissima* how impressed they were by her glamour and intelligence and found in her a woman with incomparable charm, wisdom and strength. They recognized the elevated position she acquired in the Topkapi hierarchy, and took advantage of that, considering it very beneficial to achieve easy political movements. Sultan Murad III, Nurbanu's son, was portrayed in the Venetian diplomat records more positively than his father had been, but still not to the extent that Nurbanu had reached.

As Haseki and Valide Sultan, Nurbanu enjoyed the most exalted level in the palace. She did not want Safiye to enjoy the same power so she restlessly tried to place obstacles to undermine Safiye and remove her allies from Topkapi's politics. She discharged Sinan Pasha after she realized his close relationship with Safiye, and at the same time worked with her daughter Ismihan- the wife of the Grand Vizier Sokollu and after his murder, the wife of Ali Pasha- to gradually separate Safiye from the political affairs.

In consequence, after the isolation of Safiye, Nurbanu was the only leader of the Harem, Safiye being banished to the old palace due to the allegations of her using black magic and bringing spell-casters to the palace. Nurbanu expelled Safiye's suspected partners to Rhodes, so newcomer slaves were scared to face the same destiny if they acted against the Valide Sultan. Those tensions also affected Prince Mehmet- Nurbanu's grandson who at that time was preparing himself to move to Manisa Sancak to begin his occupancy as princely governor.<sup>102</sup> Before him leaving Istanbul, the prince begged his father to reunite with his mother and encouraged him to marry her legally and bringing her back to the Topkapı Palace. The sultan did not show any interest and decided not to bid farewell to his son in Üsküdar, a gesture considered as an unprecedented act in Ottoman history. Nurbanu interfered to ameliorate the relationship between sultan Murad and her grandson, especially when

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<sup>102</sup> Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 67.

the Valide Sultan fell ill upon her grandson's departure and her son hurried to see her; at that moment, she begged the sultan to take care of the prince.<sup>103</sup>

Despite health problems, Nurbanu insisted to continue being active politically. In 1582, however, these problems became much worse. In that same year she reached a high level of power in the Harem upon punishing Safiye by sending her to the Old Palace, sometimes called the Palace of Tears. On December 6<sup>th</sup> 1583, Murad Sultan rushed to Bahçesaray (Nurbanu's palace in Yenikapı quarter) when he heard that Valide Sultan was dying. There the sultana made her testament, bequeathing two-thirds of her fortune to her son, and the rest went to the charitable institutions and endowments. The next morning, she passed away; Sultan Murad sobbed and shouted considering himself an orphan without his mother's support and love. The news of Nurbanu's death spread quickly everywhere, and a prompt curfew was declared when all stores, institutions and caravansaries were obligated to close.<sup>104</sup>

The funeral ceremony was huge and unexpected in terms of its magnificence. Unlike the graves of previous sultanas, Nurbanu's tomb was at her husband's mausoleum in Hagia Sophia where for forty continuous days, viziers, grandees and judges of the empire held unceasing prayers. Reciters intoned the holy Quran at the beginning and the end, and poor and needy people received limitless bounties and charities.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 88.



**Figure 4.6. Nurbanu's Islamic Burial Ceremony**

Source: Miniature from Seyyid Lokman's *Shahanshahnama*, 1592

(Gamm, 2012)

#### **4.5. Safiye Sultan / Murad III Haseki Sultan**

Safiye's (1550 -1619) origin is a bit unclear. Some claim that she is from Venice like her mother-in-law Nurbanu, and others insist that she had Albanian roots and was brought to Topkapı Palace in 1563 by corsairs. At the age of 13, she was presented to Sultan Murad III as a concubine and later converted to be his favorite where for some time he had a monogamous relationship.

Sultan Murad, upon his accession to the throne in 1574, had her as his only concubine for many years, which enraged his mother. Safiye, until 1581, had only one heir so she faced a lot of clashes with her mother-in-law. This eventually led to her imprisonment and torture along with her slaves, as Nurbanu accused her of casting spells on the Sultan and dealing with witches.

Upon the insistence of his mother, Murad had many sexual relations with beautiful slaves sent by his mother and his sister and consequently produced many children. Venetian documents reveal that Safiye did not show any jealousy of her husband concubines and preferred to stay calm and sober. She even brought some pretty concubines to the sultan to gain his gratitude and trust. Safiye instead turned her attention to the monarchy and the political issues. Murad, on the other hand, continued loving his first concubine and consulted her about political affairs and allowed her to intervene and take part in making decisions.<sup>106</sup>

Upon the death of Nurbanu, who was very close to her son and a significant Valide Sultan in the palace, Safiye regained her husband's trust and love. She gradually occupied the position Nurbanu had left and became again his only beloved woman; following the steps of Nurbanu in enjoying exceptional power, honor and influence.

Safiye the eminent sultana, was well known for her charm and brilliance, and was the mother of Sultan Mehmed III and grandmother of Sultan Ahmed I and Mustafa I. She is one of the most prominent and influential Sultanas that shaped the political decisions during that period. She witnessed the reigns of seven Ottoman Sultans: Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, Selim II, Murad III, Mehmed III, Ahmed I, Mustafa I, and Osman II.<sup>107</sup>

When Sultan Murad III passed away in 1595, Safiye reached the throne of the Harem to be the second Valide Sultana, one of the most brilliant and famous among the well-known Sultanas. Upon his death, the politics of the empire were shaped by herself and Gazanfer Agha. Consequently, Safiye started to have a higher salary of 3.000 *akçe* (asperas) a day. In 1596, when her son Mehmed III campaigned in Hungary, he granted her absolute ascendancy over the empire in general including the palace and the treasury.<sup>108</sup> During her reign, she convinced her son to cancel the appointment of an Istanbul judge and assign the grand vizierate to her daughter's husband Damat Ibrahim Pasha.

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<sup>106</sup> Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 91.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>108</sup> Maria Pia. Pedani, "Safiye's Household and Venetian Diplomacy," *Turcica* 32 (2000): 9-11.

One of the biggest issues Safiye experienced emanated from her dependency on *kira* Espernaza Malchi, a Sephardi woman, who played the role of an intermediary between the Harem and the outside world. Working as a kind of business envoy, Esparanza tried to impose her impact unfavorably on Safiye and thus on the sultan to adopt a different policy toward *La Serenissima* that was in dispute with the Venetian Spy Beatrice Michiel.<sup>109</sup> In 1600, Janissary rebelled against the sultan due to the instigation of the Malchi, and her son who received more than fifty million asperas. Safiye Sultan was considered responsible for that, along with the iniquitous money the Janissary have paid with, and almost suffered the outrage of the soldiers who ruthlessly assassinated Malchi and her son. The reaction of her son Mehmed was to pretend and say that he would advise his mother and rectify the servants, to eliminate any doubts- especially that of the soldiers'- that she had any impact on the sultan, Safiye also convinces her son to get his order written by the grand vizier, rather personally signing it.<sup>110</sup>

The same year of the death of Sultan Mehmed III in 1603, his son Ahmed I ascended the throne and began his reign by making a significant decision to remove Safiye Sultan, his grandmother, from power and send her away to the old palace. Ahmed I also went against the inherited traditions of the Ottoman Empire by not eliminating his brother to ensure his position on the throne. In 1617 Ahmed I died and Mustafa ascended the throne, and his mother Halime only had 3.000 aspera as Valide Sultan, although Safiye was still living.<sup>111</sup>

Safiye followed the steps of Nurbanu regarding the close relationships with the West. In general, she was into Venetian policies and she intermediated in the name of its ambassadors. One ambassador spoke positively of her to the senate, stating that she was a trustworthy woman and her serenity was unparalleled in Constantinople. In addition to that, Safiye had close relationships with England; she convinced her husband the sultan to allow the English ambassador to join the campaign in Hungary. One of the interesting events done by Safiye is that she communicated personally

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Peirce, *The imperial Harem*, 67.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.68-71.



with Queen Elizabeth of England to request the sultan in the name of the queen.<sup>112</sup> Also, they exchanged valuable presents. The matter of exchanging letters and gifts between the two women is very symbolic. It represents the gender power to secure the military and economic alliances and the influence women exercised in politics and diplomatic affairs.

Safiye ordered the Yeni Mosque built in Eminönü- Istanbul, in 1597, and a big part of the Jewish quarter was removed due to the huge space the construction was occupying. The sultana spent a lot of money to cover the huge expenses, which decreased her popularity among the soldiers, who wanted her expulsion. She got transferred to the old palace, and did not live to witness the mosque fully constructed. Upon the death of her son Mehmed III, she lost the ascendancy she enjoyed and got transferred again to the old palace. The mosque construction stopped for years, until Valide Sultan Turhan Hatice in 1665 completed it under the reign of her son Mehmed IV. As a sign of extending power, the sultana also ordered to build a mosque in Cairo, she named it “Al- Malika Safiye Mosque”.

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<sup>112</sup> Susan A. Skilliter, "Three Letters from the Ottoman “Sultana” Safiye to Queen Elizabeth I,” *Documents from Islamic Chanceries* 119 (1965): 157.

## CHAPTER V

### THE INTEGRATION OF HISTORY IN THE PLAY “MINGLING BETWEEN TWO WORLDS”

Many details mentioned in the play regarding the Ottoman Empire were not mere stories and reports of merchants, sailors, and other visitors from Istanbul to Algiers. The comedy includes a lot of detail for that to be true. For example, the description of Istanbul with its quarters and neighborhoods, along with other details related to Ottoman customs, lead the reader to assume that Cervantes lived in Istanbul or visited it at least once in his lifetime. However, the documentation on Cervantes's life is quite ample, and we know that he had never been to the Ottoman capital. As mentioned in chapter 3, he was almost sent there as a slave, but he was fortunate enough to have the Redemptorist monks pay his ransom to Hasan Pasha shortly before that could happen.

Indeed, the source of Cervantes' knowledge goes back to the period he spent in Italy. He lived there intermittently between the period (1570 – 1575) moving between Rome, Naples, Messina, Trapani and Palermo;<sup>113</sup> as an intellectual, Cervantes read the news and perhaps even had access to documents regarding the Orient and Mediterranean countries. While in Italy, he had more sources available to him than he could ever have had in Spain. During the sixteenth century, the Republic of Venice had diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid Dynasty. Archived in the palace of the Doge, ambassadorial reports were often saved as copies and manuscripts, and finally appeared in print like gazettes open to interested readers. At that time, Venice was the center of the modern journalism. In addition, Italy was full of books relevant to Turkish affairs, such as the famous book of Luigi Bassano “I costumi et i modi particolari della vita de' turchi” (1545). Although, the exact number of years that Cervantes spent in Italy is unknown, it is improbable that he missed reading any sources regarding the Orient. Taking into consideration the

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<sup>113</sup> Fernando. Cervantes, "Cervantes in Italy: Christian Humanism and the Visual Impact of Renaissance Rome," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66, no. 3 (2005): 325-332.



experience he lived as a soldier in the Lepanto Battle, and later his captivity period in Algiers, this most likely awakened his curiosity to learn more about the Eastern enemy.<sup>114</sup>

### **5.1. Catalina vs. Nurbanu or Safiye Sultan**

The comedy can be considered a semi-historical play. Though published 1615, the play takes place in the period of 1574 -1580 in Constantinople, specifically in the Harem of the Topkapi palace. Certainly, Catalina, La Gran Sultana of Sultan Murad III, as portrayed in the play never existed. Thus, the plot and the main theme were fictional, due to the imagination of Cervantes. Ottoman history never witnessed a Christian Spanish Haseki/ legal wife. Even the details concerning her arrival and the sultan's immediate infatuation by her beauty are far removed from reality.

The famous Cervantine style of creating chaos by playing with characters and identities is dominant in this play. He mixed fantasy with reality, but many of the main characters and the ones mentioned in the dialogues are indeed real characters. Either they existed in Algiers, the place where Cervantes lived for five to six years as a captive, or elsewhere in Constantinople or the Topkapi Palace. They are characters who surrounded Sultan Murad III, his legal wife, and his queen mother. The author combined these two different lives in a way that merges the real characters of Algiers with the real characters of the sultan's capital, creating one heterogeneous world full of wonders and secrets.

The protagonist, the gorgeous lady Catalina de Oviedo, if she was fit into a historical person, she would be either Nurbanu Sultan, or Safiye Sultan. It is no surprise that Cervantes included these sultanas in his comedy, as they were two of the most powerful and charming women that the Ottoman Empire witnessed, with regards to their political power and their close relationship with European diplomats and rulers. As Özlem Kumrular highlights in her book *Haremde That Kuranlar Nurbanu ve Safiye Sultan*, Nurbanu and Safiye Sultans came to the Ottoman palace as slaves,

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<sup>114</sup> Ottmar. Hegyi, "Cervantes y la Turquía Otomana: en torno a La Gran Sultana," *Bon compañero, jura Di* (1998): 22.

captured by Ottoman corsairs.<sup>115</sup> Nurbanu was probably from a Greek family and Safiye likely a descendent of Albanian Christians. However, as explained above, these two sultanas were among the most celebrated sultanas: European reports of ambassadors, diplomats and queens referred to their personalities, beauty, activities and transactions. These sultanas had more presence and impact than their husbands the sultans did.

On the other hand, some authors have claimed that these two sultanas were of Venetian Jewish backgrounds. Özlem Kumrular also explains that the strong relationships that Nurbanu and Safiye had established with diplomats and important figures from Venice, especially Jewish persons, made people think that they had Venetian Jewish roots.<sup>116</sup>

Nurbanu was the sultana who paved the way for Italian-Jewish relationships; she was as queen mother even more dominant than Safiye, occupying two major positions in the Palace, namely first that of the Haseki and later that of the Valide Sultan, and the first who enjoyed these two sensitive positions. During Nurbanu's lifetime, Safiye was only a Haseki Sultan with very limited power and impact.<sup>117</sup>

According to the play, Catalina's background and description make her seem closer to Nurbanu Sultan in character. Her origin and identity are controversial; some narratives claim that she came from Christian Venetian roots and her birth name was Cecilia Venier-Baffo. Other narratives describe her as originally a Spanish Jewish woman, who came to the Topkapı Palace at the age of twelve, known as Rachel Olivia de Nasi. Upon her conversion to Islam, Hurrem Sultan supposedly noticed her charm and intelligence and facilitated path to become the favorite concubine of Sultan Selim II. Although Catalina appears as the Christian slave who shows incomparable devotion to her religion and identity, Cervantes used some of the surrounding characters, including her father, to allude to her possible Jewish background. Her hometown is Oviedo, a city in northwestern Spain famous for its Jewish quarters. Moreover, her last name and her father's residence in the Jewish

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<sup>115</sup> Kumrular, *Haremde taht kuranlar Nurbanu ve Safiye Sultan*, 61.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 74-75.

quarter of Constantinople, make the identity of Catalina subject to question and doubts, and reinforce the belief that the poetic creation Catalina of Oviedo may be a fictionalized representation of Nurbanu Sultan.

## **5.2. Characters vs. History /Characters and Events Fitting in the Historical Frame**

The protagonist Sultan Murad III was known as the sultan of art, science, poetry and languages; famous for ‘The Book of Dreams’ (“*Kitābu’l-menāmāt*”) <sup>118</sup> and his poems. In the beginning of the play, Catalina arrives in the Harem anticipating a savage and cruel sultan, which may represent how people in the west viewed ‘the Grand Turk’ during that time, given the fact that Sultan Murad III, when ascending the throne, killed his nineteen brothers with the help of his mother Nurbanu. This news spread rapidly in Europe; however, when Catalina met the sultan and got to know him better, she began to see him as a man of tolerance, acceptance and passion. Indeed, this description is not far from reality.

Cervantes was an intellectual curious to know about ‘the other’, and followed available news about the sultan and his lifestyle. The news that Sultan Murad - cured of black magic as Sultana Nurbanu claimed – ended up having many concubines, also rapidly spread throughout Europe. Furthermore, the sultan never participated personally in any battle or war, rarely left the palace, and never left Istanbul. By the end of his reign, he sometimes even skipped Friday prayers in the Aya Sofya Mosque. These features highlighted his concern with personal pleasures, while he left political affairs to his queen mother, his pashas, and later to his wife Safiye. In the play, we notice that in many situations, the sultan is indecisive and hesitant to take decisions, resorting mainly to the Cadi and sometimes to the other pashas for help and counseling.

The sultan is portrayed as a lascivious man who does not want to miss a beautiful slave in his Harem. The way he addresses Catalina at the beginning of the play expresses his sexual interest in her, overlooking all the differences and all the

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<sup>118</sup> Özgen. Felek, ed. *Kitābü’l-Menāmāt: Sultan III, Murad’ın Rüya Mektupları*, Birinci basım, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2014.

obstacles. He wants that beauty to be his own forever, no matter the consequences. The following lines show the attitude of the sultan.

Que seas turca o seas cristiana,  
a mí no me importa cosa;  
esta belleza es mi esposa,  
Y es de hoy más la Gran Sultana.<sup>119</sup>

Regarding eunuchs of the Harem, there used to be both a white eunuch / *Babussaade ağası* and black eunuch / *Daruussaade ağası*. Cervantes was aware of the Harem its function and its people, yet fantasized about it in many scenes by inserting many people who had no business to be there. He consciously hyperbolized its people and characteristics so that they would better fit his imagination. Historically Rustan/Rustem (the white eunuch) corresponds to Gazanfar Agha, and Mami (the black chief eunuch) corresponds to Mehmet Agha. These two characters have major roles in the play by introducing Catalina to the sultan and convincing her to marry him. Furthermore, they introduce other characters and comment on their reactions. It is worth mentioning here that their names imply some realities and historical references. Mami for example, is the name of one of the most significant figures that had an impact on Cervantes's life in general and his life in Algiers in particular. The famous renegade and corsair who attacked Cervantes and his brother's ship was called the Albanian/Aravut Mami, a very strong ruthless man. The other Mami Cervantes knew is the renegade Dali Mami; the Greek renegade and master of Cervantes in Algiers before Hasan Pasha. Interestingly in the play, Cervantes gave this name to the black chief eunuch. Thus, Mami is the master of the Harem, alluding to his vital position as a contoler and supervisor of captives and slaves, exactly like the two 'Mami's of Algiers that used to be the masters of the slaves and captives of Ottoman Algiers. Taking into account that unlike former black eunuchs, Mehmet Agha was highly regarded under the reign of Sultan Murad III to be the first "black chief eunuch of the *Darüssaade*."<sup>120</sup> He enjoyed extra power and privilege because

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<sup>119</sup> Cervantes, *La gran sultana doña Catalina de Oviedo*, 14.

<sup>120</sup> Hâbeşî Mehmed Agha/ Kızlar Ağası (the black chief eunuch), was an Abyssinian or Ethiopian black eunuch. Considered the very first eunuch to serve as the *Darüssaade ağası*, he started his role as the head of the Harem eunuchs during Murad III's ascendancy to power in 1574. By that time, he was already a prominent figure with many clients in the palace, many of whom later became viziers. His mosque and tomb complex in the neighborhood of Çarşamba/ Fatih is still a great witness on his influential role by the end of the 16th century.

he was close to the Sultana Safiye as well and responsible for many tasks outside the palace.

Another character that existed in the Topkapı Palace at the time was El gran Cadi/ the great supreme Judge. The power, wisdom and influence over the sultan that he enjoys in the play correspond to the real-life role of Hoca Saadeddin Efendi, an Ottoman scholar and historian. He was the teacher of Sultan Murad before he reached power and came with him to the Topkapı Palace as his close advisor. Later he occupied the position of *Sheikh ul-islam*,<sup>121</sup> the highest-ranking scholar official who had the authority to legitimize the decisions of the sultan in religious terms. That character is included in the play with hyperbolized influence. Having the Cadi intervene in almost all of the sultan's decisions, whether religious or not, including having him judge superficial love issues and move freely in the Harem again are actions possible only on Cervantes's stage.

As for the Persian ambassador, Cervantes opted for including this character to provide the reader with a picture of one of the most significant historical events that marked the period. In peacetime, Persian ambassadors often came to Istanbul, and having this character in the play implies a lot about the nature of Ottoman-Persian political relationships. As for real life, in 1582, a Persian ambassador attended the festivities celebrating the circumcision of Prince Mehmed, but had to leave after learning of renewed fighting between the two empires. In the reign of Sultan Murad III, a long Ottoman-Safavid war took place from 1578-1590 and resulted in the Treaty of Constantinople (1590), when the Ottoman Empire achieved temporary domination over the Caucasus and Tabriz. Having the Persian ambassador come to Istanbul is a reference to the treaty between Turkey and Iran. The way in which the sultan received the ambassador, along with the ambiance and atmosphere, correspond to a real ceremony of the palace. That event took place in the *Arz odası*, a part of the palace reserved only for men. We may consider this room as a counterpart to the Harem, which is only for women and forbidden to men.

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<sup>121</sup> An Islamic scholar who fulfills certain functions such as assigning judges, advising the sultan especially in religious matters, and issuing fatwas regarding the sultan's policies.

Parece el Gran TURCO detrás de unas cortinas de  
 tafetán verde; salen cuatro BAJAES ancianos; siéntanse sobre alfombras  
 y almohadas;  
 entra el EMBAJADOR de Persia, y al entrar le echan encima una ropa de  
 brocado; llévanle dos TURCOS de brazo, habiéndole mirado  
 primero si trae armas encubiertas; llévanle a asentar en una  
 almohada de terciopelo; descúbrese la cortina; parece el  
 Gran TURCO. (Mientras esto se hace puede[n] sonar chirimías).  
 Sentados todos, dice el EMBAJADOR<sup>122</sup>

The above lines are a description of the reception, with the sultan appearing from behind a luxurious green fabric and four pashas sitting around him on fancy cushions. As for having the ambassador entering the *Arz odası* accompanied by Turks holding his arms, it is an established rule in the case of European ambassadors, yet subject to uncertainty where an Iranian is at issue. During the conversation between the pashas and the ambassador, tension increases and the pashas use some symbolic descriptions:

Ese cabeza roja, ese maldito,  
 que de las ceremonias de Mahoma,  
 con depravado y bárbaro apetito.<sup>123</sup>

The dialogue above carries some religious connotations such as referring to the Shah as the ‘red-headed’ Shah. This is a direct translation of the term *Kızılbaş*, used in Iran by the people concerned but in the Ottoman Empire as a term of vituperation. Moreover, Cervantes may have heard the comment that Iranian religious practices are incompatible with Islam or the Prophet Mohammad. The green color here is also figurative. It is the symbol of Islam that the sultan sees himself as its real representation, so the Red is the representation of the other doctrine of Shiaa (*Kizilbaşı*) that according to the pashas its heretic, barbaric and does not belong to Islam.

In the play there are many spies with hidden identities, but the case of Andrea is different. She/he declares their identity to everyone without showing any fear. This character has roots back in the captivity period of Cervantes as well with the same

<sup>122</sup> Cervantes, *La gran sultana doña Catalina de Oviedo*, 18- 19.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 19.

name "Andrea Gasparo Corso" an Italian corsair leader and a secret agent working along with his brother Francisco.<sup>124</sup> Andrea worked for the Spanish court and later became a very close friend and advisor to the Moroccan Sultan Abd el-Malik<sup>125</sup>. Cervantes knew Andrea and his brother very well. Upon the ascendancy of Abd el-Malik to the throne in 1576, Andrea followed him to the city of Marrakech to be assigned then as the agent of the sultan with the monarchy of Spain and Portugal. Both brothers consequently were famous in the Mediterranean, moving between Algiers, Marcella and Barcelona where they established their commerce.<sup>126</sup> In addition to that, Andrea and Francisco had a good relationship with Hasan Pasha as they both spoke the Tuscan dialect. Cervantes spoke that Italian dialect too due to his various travels and studies he did in Italy.<sup>127</sup>

Greek espionage was common in Algiers, along with the role of spies helping captives to escape with remuneration. It was the same in Istanbul, where spies helping Christian slaves escape Turkey was very common. In LGS we see Madrigal refuse the help from Andrea to escape from the palace. Consequently, the espionage world and the experience Cervantes lived all came together in the character of Andrea with its symbolic name. In addition to that, referring to other Cervantes works like *El Quijote*, we found another Greek spy who helped a captive disguised wearing Albanese's clothing to flee Istanbul. That is a reference tool to the extent of freedom of moving and privilege the Albanians and Greeks used to have under the Ottoman Empire. Cervantes apparently was aware of those details too, which is why chose to cover the spies with Greek and Albanian identities.

Morato Arráez, nicknamed Maltrapillo, was one of the minor characters mentioned in the play. As Cervantes claims in the play, Morato Arráez was the Corsair who

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<sup>124</sup> Las fascinantes labores de los Gasparo Corso en el Magreb y España son descritas por Dahiru Yahya, Morocco in the Sixteenth Century: Problems of Patterns in African Foreign Policy, Atlantic Highlands, Nueva Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981, pp. 46-55". **Quoted** in María Antonia Garcés, "Cervantes en Argel." Madrid: Editorial Gredos (2005), 171.

<sup>125</sup> "Chantal de la Véronne, <<Les freres Gasparo Corso>>, Les Sources inédites de/ 'histoire du Maroc de 1530 a 1845, Première série, Dynastie saadienne (1539-1560), Archives et bib/othèques d 'Espagne, vol. IIJ: 1560-1578, ed. Cbantal de la Véronne, París:Paul Geuthner, 1961, pp. 157-166 y ss.

<sup>126</sup> Sobre los hermanos Gasparo Corso, cf también Mercedes García-Arenal, «Textos españoles sobre Marruecos en el siglo xvi: Fray Juan Bautista y La Crónica [ ... ] de Mu/ley Abde/melec», Al-Qantara, 2 (1981), 168- 169; y Sola y de la Peña, op. cit .. p. 110. **Quoted** in María Antonia Garcés, "Cervantes en Argel." Madrid: Editorial Gredos (2005), 171.

<sup>127</sup> Garcés, *Cervantes en Argel*, 171.



brought Catalina to Istanbul. This figure existed in reality in Algiers too, a famous feared Spanish renegade corsair that accomplished the most important expeditions under the reign of Sultan Murad III. In 1577, he carried out many expeditions to different places like Corsica, Sardinia, Sicilia and Naples. He was known as a strong prestigious and rich corsair; in 1574 he executed a Greek slave revenging one of the Algerian corsairs.

Morato Arráez, saved the life of Cervantes upon his 4th escape try. He convinced Hasan Pasha not to kill him. For Antonio Sosa, that was in Algiers at that same time with Cervantes and a friend of him. Morato Arráez is a “traitor” Dr. Sosa was captured and brought to Algiers by him; he attacked the galley “San Pablo” by Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Another character mentioned in the play is Uchali (Alüj Ali), Occhiali or Kılıç Ali Paşa, These are his common names in Algiers and in Turkey. He started as a corsair and later got promoted to be an Ottoman admiral in Algiers and later became the Grand Admiral of the empire. He is originally an Italian renegade claiming to be from Calabria. In his last years, he decided to invest the money and gifts he had from sultan on Mosques and foundations. Thus in 1578, Sultan Murad III ordered Mimar Sinan to build a mosque holding his name “Kılıç Ali Paşa Cami” on the Bosporus in Tophane area. Upon the Rebellion of the Alpujarras (1568-71), Sultan Selim II sent his orders to Uchali to provide Moorish in Granada with arms and soldiers. He was considered one of the best sailors of the Ottoman Empire, and a great corsair along with being a man of ethics.<sup>128</sup> It was well known at that time that Uchali is the admiral who never abused slaves. Under his governance he promoted Hasan Pasha to be the collector of taxes, the treasurer responsible for the financial affairs. Uchali has a good relationship with Gazanfar Agha the white eunuch/ (*kapı agası*) of the Harem as they both were Italians renegades.

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<sup>128</sup> Some historians affirm that Kılıç Ali Paşa was planning to lead the Algerian fleet to Alpujarras, but he changed his mind as he learned that Don Juan d'Autriche has sent huge military ordnance to eliminate the revolt. The viceroy Marquis of Los Vélez also sent his envoy Francisco Gasparo Corso "Andrea's brother" to convince the beylerbey of Algiers " Kılıç Ali Paşa" to stop arms ammunition to Moriscos.: ‘Abdeljelil. Temimi, *Dawlah Al-‘Uthmānīyah Wa-Qaḍīyat al-Mūrīskīyīn al-Andalusīyīn, Al-Ṭab‘ah* 1. Zaghwān: Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-‘Uthmānīyah wa-al-Mūrīskīyah wa-al-Tawḥīq wa-al-Ma‘lūmāt, 1989.



The reputation of Hasan Pasha was poor. He was described as a cruel and sinister man along with being bisexual. When Uchali was assigned as the kapudan pasha of the Ottoman fleet he went with Hasan Pasha to Istanbul.

Cuatro Pajes ancianos/ four old pashas: this is how they appear in the list of the main characters. However, only two pashas actually speak to the Persian ambassador. In the reign of Sultan Murad III, the most prominent pashas that surrounded him were Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (1505-1579), Lala Mustafa Pasha (1500-1580), Koca Sinan Pasha (1520-1596) and Şemsi Ahmet Pasha (1492-1580). We might expect these pashas to appear in the play, but only two of them have a real presence in the comedy.

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was a major statesman recruited by the levy of boys (*devşirme*) and a very well-known grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire, of Serbian – Croatian origins. He occupied the position of Grand vizier under the reign of three consecutive Sultans Suleiman the Great, Selim II and Murad III. Although he was a Muslim, he never lost interest in his blood relatives, working hard to convince Sultan Suleiman to let him look up his family and even hire them in the palace such as Lala Kara Mustafa Pasha and Mehmet Pasha.<sup>129</sup>

Concerning Lala Mustafa Pasha, the available sources say that he came originally from Bosnian roots.<sup>130</sup> He was taken to the palace during the reign of Sultan Selim I (1512- 1520) and started to work as the head of barbers of Sultan Suleiman. Later he occupied the position of “Lala,” the word preceding his name which means “tutor or private tutor” of prince Selim II. He showed total devotion to the young prince and worked hard to ascend his power over his brother prince Bayezit. It is worth mentioning here the clear hate shown by Sokollu Mehmed Pasha to Mustafa Pasha as he aspired to reach high positions upon the ascendancy of Sultan Selim II to power. Sokollu foiled many of his attempts to do so. However, by the support of the people who loved him in the palace, he finally became the military general and vizier of the sultan, who encouraged him to conquer Cyprus in 1571.

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<sup>129</sup> Bekir. Kütükoğlu, “Lala Mustafa Paşa.” *DİA* 24 (2021),73.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 74

Koca Sinan Pasha was known by the name Sinan the great from Albanian origin. He was a military figure, a grand vizier and a senior politician. In the Ottoman–Safavid War (1578–1590) he led the Ottoman army and thus assigned to be the grand vizier by Sultan Murad III. However, he got discharged and dismissed the next year.<sup>131</sup>

Şemsi Ahmet Pasha, or Chamsi Pasha, was a statesman of Albanian origin too. He served the Ottoman Empire as governor in different places. There were some claims that he is a decedent of Khalid bin Al Walid “an Arab Muslim commander in the service of the Islamic prophet Muhammad” to get prestige among people. He is the husband of the granddaughter of Sultan Suleiman the great Ayşe Hümaşah Sultan.

Some scenes of the comedy include some animals such as birds and elephants; they all existed in the Harem. As mentioned above, using animals in the theater of the Spanish Golden Age was common and it has roots back from Greco- Roman Theater. However, historically it is proven that animals were present too in the Ottoman court during the sixteenth century. In 1582, Sultan Murad III received a rich gift for the circumcision of prince Mehmed III from Buda; it included different kinds of dogs and five falcons.<sup>132</sup> Falcons were great hunting partners; the Ottoman court received them as gifts from friendly rulers, but in addition, employed specialized falconers to capture young birds when still in their nests. In 1560, Turkish governors also sent gifts of dozens of different kinds of falcons like hawks and peregrines to the court as well as to European princes from Transylvania, Walachia and Moldova. In addition, dignitaries and governors were asked to bring a variety of different birds for the court aviary. In 1583, the *vezir* Ibrahim Pasha dispatched up to seventy different kinds of falcons for use in the Istanbul palace.

Exotic animals were part of that gifting as well, the Ottoman court used to have dogs, giraffes and elephants, but elephants specifically were used to showcase the glamour of the Islamic court, Ottomans as other Islamic Empires used elephants mainly to

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<sup>131</sup> Mehmet. İpşirli, “Koca Sinan Paşa.” *DİA* 21 (2021),137.

<sup>132</sup> TSMS . D. 9614.FOL.2 a. The reading for “hound” (zager) is questionable, though. **As quoted in** Hedda Reindl-Kiel,. “Dogs, elephants, lions, a ram and a rhino on diplomatic mission: animals as gifts to the Ottoman court.” *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire* (2010): 276.

express power and impress ambassadors. In 1531, the envoy of Emperor Charles V (1517-1554/55) reported that they saw many dogs and two elephants on their way to the palace audience chamber.<sup>133</sup>



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<sup>133</sup> Anton von Gevay (ed.), *Urkunden und Actenstücke der Geschichte der Verhältnisse zwischen Österreich, Ungern und der Pforte im XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderte: Gesandtschaft König Ferdinands I. an Sultan Suleiman I. 1530* (Vienna: Schaumburg und Comp., 1838), pp. 39-40. **As quoted in** Hedda Reindl-Kiel. "Dogs, elephants, lions, a ram and a rhino on diplomatic mission: animals as gifts to the Ottoman court." *Animals and People in the Ottoman Empire* (2010): 279-280.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Having examined the LGS by considering its religious, political, historical and literary backgrounds, this study affirms how close the comedy of Cervantes is to the reality of the Mediterranean world during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its main theme and plot, along with the characters employed with their symbolic references, all shape the ambiance that leads the audience to understand history in its unique Cervantine style. Using his vivid imagination and literary skills, the Spanish author portrayed the Ottoman capital based on his experiences in Spain, Italy and the Ottoman Algiers in combination with romantic fantasy.

The play provides religious implications that trace back to the Old Testament, and is a great representation of the characteristics of the Spanish Golden Age theater with all its peculiarities, new themes, genres and literary modes. Festivities like the carnival and the rough music, with their noise and chaos and the changing of masks and identities, has inspired many of *El Siglo de Oro's* playwrights to convey the play's atmosphere, counting on paradoxes and heterogeneity to depict reality.

Like the majority of Western literature that tackles the Orient, LGS incorporated some common Orientalist myths and images, such as the lustful Oriental man, the Harem, and some exaggerated rituals and customs. Moreover, the comedy touches upon different themes like love and the controversial relationships between masters and slaves. Through analyzing the dialogues' linguistic discourse, this study made better sense of plays' connotations, which permitted me to reach a higher level of understanding the characters' main intentions.

Upon reflecting on the roles of the protagonists, this thesis found out that Cervantes disguised under the name of his wife "Catalina" to facilitate to himself a journey he aspired to take to the Ottoman capital. Cervantes also experienced life as a captive in Algiers, where he, like Catalina, stood firm to preserve his identity and faith and

refused to convert like the majority of the slaves; he discouraged other captives from conversion as well. Consequently, Saveedera saw himself as the honor of the Spanish Empire.

This study also concluded that Cervantes saw the imperial Harem as a mandatory carnival; where its people, in one way or another, were under the obligation to exhibit gender, identity, religion or ideology that differed from their own, in order to meet the demands of its ambiance. In the palace in general and in the Harem in particular, everyone wears a mask to fit in and move easily with freedom in an atmosphere of parties, dances, clothes and music.

Furthermore, this Comedy can be seen as an expression of nostalgia as well. Cervantes wrote and published this play during the last decade of his life. He wanted to voice out his hidden longing for an exceptional experience he lived in Algiers that marked his life and his literary talent. He also sought for conveying messages of the possibility of achieving tolerance and coexistence between the East and the West by touching upon the glamour of diversity and the richness of the other cultures. In addition to that, this play is a sign of gratitude and immortalization of a distinctive episode of Cervantes' life. Thus in the play, Sultan Murat III palace symbolizes (the Ottoman Empire) while the Harem with all its attributes symbolizes (Algiers). There Cervantes as Catalina comes again to mark historical events and call for tolerance and acceptance.

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## Education:

2002- 2006	BA in Spanish & English Language and literature, University of Jordan, Jordan.
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2011 -2012	ESL (English as a Second Language) One Year/ Two Semesters, Cuyahoga Community College, Ohio- USA.
2014 –2015	Certified English Teacher, The International House World Organization (IHWOW), Jordan.
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2018- 2021	MA in Turkish Studies, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey.

## Work Experience:

2006 –2009	Translator
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2013 –2015	Arabic Teacher for non- Arabic Speakers, Jordan.
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