

**Representation of Turks in George Farquhar's Play *The Beaux Stratagem*
George Farquhar'ın *The Beaux Stratagem* adlı oyununda Türk'lerin temsili**

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Özet:

Bu makale George Farquhar'ın *The Beaux Stratagem* adlı oyununda Osmanlı Türklerinin nasıl temsil edildiği üzerinedir. Türk imajının var olduğu u pek çok Restorasyon tiyatrosu bulunur. Türklerin negative imajı o zamanın edebiyatına bile yansımıştır. Bu makalede Batılı bakış açısına göre Türk erkekleri ve kadınlarının nasıl bir perspektiften görüldüğü üzerine tartışılacaktır. Edward Said'in doğ u bilimci söylemlerine göre, baskın Batı kültürü doğ uyu ve doğ u uluları "öteki ler" olarak görür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Türk imajı, öteki, Doğ u bilimi.

Abstract:

The representation of the Ottoman Turks is thoroughly analysed in George Farquhar's play *The Beaux Stratagem*. There are several Restoration dramas in which Turkish image appears. The negative image of the Turks is reflected in the eighteenth century literature. This essay discusses how Turkish men and women are viewed according to the Western hegemony. According to Edward Said's Orientalist discourse the orient and the orientals are displaced as "the other/s" in the Western dominant culture.

Key words: Turkish image, the other, Orientalism.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the image of the Turks and their existence as the "Other" in Western culture in one of the Restoration dramas of George Farquhar, *The Beaux Stratagem* (1707). I will attempt to analyse the way Turkish men and women are represented in the play. My purpose in this article will be to demonstrate and analyse a Restoration play, in which Turks are superficially mentioned. I will discuss the potential reasons why negative connotation is imposed on Turkish characters. Are they in the position of the 'other' hated or desired as Oriental objects?

The Beaux Stratagem is not a typical Turkish play, like the other Turkish plays of the Restoration drama with Turkish characters and settings throughout the entity. It is significant that this play includes an indirect reference to Turks as in Shakespeare's play *Othello*. In *The Beaux Stratagem*, neither the theme nor the locale takes place in Turkey. The reason why I have chosen this play is to depict the Turkish image as the 'other' and to demonstrate the great interest of Westerners in unfamiliar objects. This play has not been

examined in this perspective before. Many critics wrote about contemporary Restoration plays in which Turkish history, settings, and characters had already existed. I assume that Farquhar was also influenced by the existence of Turks like the other Restoration playwrights.

There are over forty plays in which the Levant and settings in Asia appear on the early English theatre. The earliest plays about Turks trace back to 1580. Topics such as Turkish history, Turkish characters, conflicts between Turks and Christians mostly appeared in the Restoration Drama. The dominant characteristics of the Turks on the Restoration Stage are portrayed as sensual, cruel, and negative. In this respect, Western fears of Turks are inevitably reflected in the literature of the era. As an example to Turkish plays, we may count Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1592), *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), Mason's *The Turks*, Fulke Greville's *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1609), Delariviere Manley's *The Royal Mischief* (1696), Ladowick Carlell's *The Famous Tragedy of Osmand the Great Turk* (1657), John Mason's *The Turks*(1610), *Nevile Payne's The Siege of Constantinople* (1675), Elkonah Settle's *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa* (1677) and many others. It is significant that so many Turkish characters and Turkish plays with Turkish settings appeared during the Restoration, the reason might be, as Bridget Orr states,

. . . those English plays using Asian and North African locales during the Restoration and into the early years of the eighteenth century were inflected by a newly urgent sense of cultural and political difference from Orient and Islamic societies, as the English entered into unprecedented relations with such states through trade, war and diplomacy. Plays were often produced in the context of a new trade or military initiative, drew on current geographies, histories and *relazione* and thus helped circulate received wisdom about various Asian and African states. . . . (Orr, 2001, p. 131-32).

English playwrights mostly introduced Turkish characters to satisfy the popular European demand and the curiosity to present subjects of a different religion, social and political structure. It not only fascinated but also disturbed the popular demand as the image of Turk was reflected in negative connotations.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979), which centered on the existence of a coherent Western discourse on the Orient, contributed to new perspectives to frame the colonial and postcolonial discourse. Said argued that the 'Orient' and the 'Occident' - a term for the developed West, England, France and U.S.A. - worked as oppositional terms, so that the orient was seen as a negative inversion of western culture. According to Said, "the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority" (Said, 1979, p. 42). The West saw the Islamic Orient "with its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability. . .", (Said, 1979, p. 42) as a place requiring Western reconstruction, even redemption. "The Eastern Question" aroused

by the Ottoman Empire was related to the problems presented by their weakness and withdrawal. For most Europeans, Ottomans were regarded as “the source of danger and invasion from the first Persian vanguard to the last Ottoman rear guard . . .” (Lewis, 2004, p. 252). The Orient and Orientals were always in the position of the “outsiders” and were considered to be the weak partners for the West. This displacement lamented Orientals as aliens, as backward, and as standing in the peripheral world in Western hegemony.

There was a tendency of Western colonial and imperialist dominion over the Islamic world. The technological development and success of the West failed them to comprehend the spirit of the Orient especially in its moral power. Still, it did not prevent Western interest in the Orient. There was an inclination to contest assumptions of European politico-cultural superiority over the East. In this sense, the Eastern Question was basically regarded as a threat to Western superiority, as Nash pointed out there were efforts “to prevent the Ottomans from enforcing their authority” (Nash, 2005, p.13).

One should perhaps take a brief look at the Turkish history and Islam in order to comprehend how the Turkish image is established according to the Western point of view and how Westerners appreciate Orientalism. One cannot separate history from literature, because the historical background somehow reflects the literature of its time. The historical image of Turks and the Ottoman Empire in Europe emerged as early as the 15th century. The expansion policy of the Turkish sultan aroused terror especially in the sixteenth century Europe. In the Western point of view, Turks were not only real danger to Christendom but were also a barbaric eastern nation.

The image of the Turk that first emerged in 1088 at the time of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus was certainly a negative one: “the image of an enemy”, who was “cruel”, “barbaric”, “devastating”, as somebody who was considered a “threat for Christianity”. The letter that the Byzantine Emperor Comnenus had written played an important role in starting the first Crusade (Kuran –Burcoglu, 1999, p. 188).

Historically, Islam was always a problem for the West. Dynasties drawn from the Turkish people, the Saljuqs in Anatolia, later the Ottoman Empire figured as part of the so-called eastern Question. Edward Said emphasized, “the unbroken relation in European thought, profound hostility, even hatred, toward Islam as an outlandish competitor” (Said, 1976, p 2). This hostility and hatred engages with not only the religious affairs, but also controlling the route of the trade. As Albert Hourani (1991) emphasized the relation between Muslim Turks and European Christians did not consist merely of the holy war, *Jihad*. There was trade across the Mediterranean onwards into the Italian ports in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the sixteenth century the traffic moved mainly from lands of Islam to those of Christendom. Valuable works of science, philosophy, and medicine were translated into Latin. On the other hand, the most commonly held view was that “Islam is a false religion, Allah is not God, Muhammed was not a prophet, Islam was invented by men whose motives and characters were to be deplored, and propagated by the sword” (Hourani, 1991, p. 10). Western power justified the domination over Muslim societies by creating an image of oriental societies as “stagnant and unchanging, backward,

incapable of ruling themselves or hostile; fear of the ‘revolt of Islam’ haunted the mind of Europe during the imperial age . . .” (Hourani, 1991, p.57-8).

The expansion of the Ottoman Empire between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from the Persian Gulf up to the Balkans into eastern and central Europe, and twice sieges of the city of Vienna (1529 and 1686) worried Europeans deeply. Thousands of Turks and Moors traveled to England during the early seventeenth century. The Anglo-Ottoman economic relations started with the establishment of the Levant Company by merchants from London. Then, the English were acquainted with Turkish literature, culture, history, and religion through travel books. The most pressing threat to Europeans was the non-Western empire, the Ottomans. The Koprulus grand viziers, namely, Mehmet, Ahmet, and Huseyin, were in major campaigns against the west from the 1650s to 1710. The territorial expansionism characteristics of the Ottomans can be observed in *Europe Moderna Speculum* (1665). Therefore, the English attitudes to the Ottomans were inevitably affected from direct attacks causing popular fear and hostility towards the great Turks of that era (Orr, 2001, 62-3).

Richard Knolles’s *Generall History of the Turks* (1603) and Paul Rycaut’s *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1666) were works that influenced the eighteenth century images of the Turks. These histories are important sources for most of the plays about the Ottomans. Rycaut’s perception about ‘Oriental despotism’ in the eighteenth century gained importance in the idea of the Turks having a slavish disposition. According to Orr;

the representation of the problems of Ottoman expansion, preservation of the problems of Ottoman expansion, preservation, and absolutism, however, also provided a template of Oriental despotism which served as a negative exemplar not simply of statehood, but of empire. (Orr, 2001, p. 66)

The negative connotations about Turks did not change in the eighteenth century. It inevitably became visible in its literature. The playwrights portrayed Turks as ruthless, brutal villains, lustful, and treacherous on the English stage. As Kamil Aydin (1999) points out, the Turkish characters’ sensuality appeared as their dominant characteristic. It is followed by cruelty, pride, passion and treachery, often depicted as a wicked tyrant – such as a Turkish Sultan, a Pasha, or a General who separates virtuous lovers and captures the girl stealing her from her lover. Orr emphasizes the dramas consisting of Turkish characters that draw attention to Western Christians, because their own histories share the stage of global history with Islamic Orientalists. The difference “in religion, in social and political structure and in gender relations disturb and fascinate Europeans but such differences are explored with some seriousness, not yet having solidified into signifiers of inferiority” (Aydin, 1999, p. 132). The image of Turks in most of the English dramas appeared as negative and inferior compared to the dominant Western Christian culture.

The nature of Eastern people was affected by the climate while developing collective. This climatical influence inevitably shaped their customs, culture, and moral as a

whole. According to Montesquieu, human beings' temper, passions, character and physical state were under the influence of the climate where they lived. Montesquieu suggested that people who lived in cold weather were stronger than the people who lived in warmer climates, because their blood moved more freely towards the heart. The effects of physical strength were "courage, greater sense of superiority, greater opinion of security; that is more frankness, less suspicion, policy and cunning" (Montesquieu, 1966, p. 221). People living in Western climate comparatively had exquisite sensibility, whereas the idea that "[L]ove is the only cause of happiness" (Montesquieu, 1966, p. 221) appeared as the basis of oriental characters. They displayed the strongest passions, committing crimes, "each man endeavoring, let the means be what they will, to indulge his inordinate desires" (Montesquieu, 1966, p. 221).

The reason why Eastern people were considered as inferior and the "other" according to Western dominant culture is that, according to Montesquieu, Eastern people did not use their logic and were unable to act reasonably. People in cold climates were motivated by reason, whereas desire played an important role in the actions of people who lived in warmer climates. This difference is mostly reflected in the Restoration plays. The Restoration playwrights drew attention to such passionate Eastern characters, who were motivated by their senses. They also established the western fear of Turkish nations, and their consequent curiosity and interest created "devastating" and "sensuous" figures. Ahmed Alam El-Deen declared that "playwrights portrayed the Turks as ruthless, brutal villains, and this portrayal drew large audiences to the theatres . . . The gruesome, malicious Turkish character became extremely popular on the English stage" (Alam El-Deen, 1984, p. 56).

After a survey of Eastern representations through the lens of Westerners, I will analyse the existence of Turks and their representations in Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*, although there is a slight mention of Turks in this play. *The Beaux Stratagem*, Farquhar's last and best play, was written around the middle of December 1706 when he was in debt, miserable and ill. He wrote the play during his sickness in 1706 at the age of thirty. As in most Restoration plays, Farquhar took the theme of love affairs revolving around the financial considerations of marriage and the choice of the most socially suitable partner. The other themes consisted of recruitment and country life.

The plot of *The Beaux Stratagem* revolves around deception and finding a wealthy wife. None of the characters in the play is honest. As Norman Jeffares states, surprise is an important element in the play and Farquhar is "contrasting life in the scrupulous, the sottish sullen and polished count Bellair, innocent Dorinda and realistic Mrs. Sullen" (Jeffares, 1996, p. 82). In the first act, we learn the motives and plan of Archer and Aimwell, two fortune hunting and flirting young men. In the second act, we learn how Mrs. Sullen's marriage is insufferable. Actually, she has a stratagem in which she flirts with Count Bellair to take revenge on her husband. In the developing act, we learn that Boniface (the innkeeper) and his highwaymen are frauds planning to rob Lady Bountiful. In the third act, Aimwell falls in love with Dorinda. Scrub fears Foigard's relations with Gipsy the maid, and Mrs. Sullen begins to think of Archer rather than Count Bellair: Dorinda becomes

interested in Aimwell. This act involves love and intrigue. In the next act, Aimwell who is pretending to be his brother Lord Aimwell, fakes illness in Lady Bountiful's house in order to propose to Dorinda, while Archer proposes to Mrs. Sullen. The highwaymen arrive to rob the house at midnight. In the final act, a very complicated situation takes place: Mrs. Sullen's brother, Sir Charles Freeman, meets Sullen at the Inn and arranges for his sister to part from Sullen, and all agree to aid him. Aimwell tells Dorinda that he is not Lord Aimwell, but recent news that Aimwell's brother is dead, confirms that now he is, in fact, the new Lord Aimwell. Cherry becomes maid to Dorinda, and Archer and Mrs. Sullen lead the dance. Both couples are happy at the end of the play.

Outward conduct of society played an important role in the Restoration Comedy from its beginnings of the reopening of the theatres in 1660 to the end of the century. As Montgomery (1966) declared, the materials of experimental science took part in influencing the thinking of the period. This was reflected to successful plays of the era (p.35). The new discoveries of science inevitably affected the thought and conduct of people. People started to question then, and this inquiring mind affected the morality and in comedy this appeared within the "representation of this questioning attitude, there marches a distinct desire to know how to live in a suddenly altered external world" (Montgomery, 1966, p.36). The Restoration Comedy in general tended to deny everything – of values and beliefs – thus in the comedies marriage was mercenary, friendship was treacherous, religion was for those who need to cover their sharp and secret practices.

Farquhar, like all other dramatists of the era, was affected by the Ottoman Empire and Turkish people. Still, the image of the Turk appeared ideologically in the play, although *The Beaux Strategem* was neither about Turks nor a Turkish setting. In Act Three, Scene Three, Count Bellair, a Frenchman and prisoner at Lichfield in the play, comments on Turks:

COUNT BELLAIR. Most certainly I would, were I a prisoner among the Turks; dis is your case: you're a slave, madam, slave to the worst of Turks, a husband.

MRS. SULLEN. There lies my foible, I confess; no fortifications, no courage, conduct, nor vigilancy can pretend to defend a place where the cruelty of the governor forces the garrison to mutiny.

COUNT BELLAIR. And where de besieger is resolved to die in the first place. – Here will I fix (kneels) – with tears . . . (Act III, iii)

The image of the Turk appears here as a tyrant who captivates Westerners. Turks in the passage are compared to a tyrant husband who captures his wife and makes life a prison for her. Turks appear as people to be feared and avoided because of their 'barbaric' nature. The words 'prisoner', 'slave', and 'worst' describe the negative image of Turks. Here, we see the territorial expansionism of the Ottomans threatening the Christian Europe.

In the 1620s and 1630s, British men and women were held captive in Ottoman territories, while the Turks were attacking British territories by the sea. As Lowenthal emphasized the Turks were a military rival equal to and mostly greater than any other European forces that Britain encountered. Thus, they were never perceived as a target for British imperial wishes (Lowenthal, 2003, p. 14). It is obvious that “English attitudes to the Ottomans” were not affected by “their relative insultation from direct attack but there was still plenty of popular fear and hostility directed towards the great Turks . . .” (Orr, 2003, p. 63). The fear of expansionist Ottomans appears in Mrs. Sullen’s speech while she is describing the place where, “the cruel of the governor forces the garrison”. The Ottoman Empire is called a “cruel” government a term that also embodies the common fears of the British Empire.

In the very beginning of Act IV, Mrs. Sullen comments on Turks and on the situation of Turkish women as prisoners of a harem:

MRS. SUL. Were I born a humble Turk, where women have no soul nor property, there I must sit contended. But in England, a country whose women are its glory, must women be abused? Where women rule, must women be enslaved? Nay, cheated into slavery, mocked by a promise of comfortable society into a wilderness of solitude? I dare not keep the thought about me. – Oh, here comes something to divert me. (Farquhar, 1969, Act IV, i).

Mrs. Sullen draws our attention to the conditions of the Ottoman women of harem and as participants in polygamy, which is inevitably discussed in the Western culture. Thus, the stereotype of the Oriental woman appears as “docile, ignorant, inactive and uneducated” (Lewis, 2004, p.102). Before the radical Westernisation and modernization project, supported by elite and governmental initiatives, Turkish women were invisible in the public arena. They were subject to the laws of Islam. As Lord Kinross states no woman could be seen walking in the street or in a carriage with a man in Istanbul even if he were her husband. If they went out together, the man walked ahead of the woman. A woman did not appear with her husband in social gatherings; there was a curtain that divided women from men which was known as “haremlık” and “selamlık”. In some parts of Anatolia, peasant women were freer and unveiled before all but strangers. Women, otherwise, had to wear “çarşaf”: the veil that covered the whole body. (Kinross, 1964, p. 418-19). This religious prohibition of Turkish women from public life inevitably brought a negative image of Turkish women as well. This biased belief makes an impression of Turkish women having “no souls nor property”. I disagree with this idea, because the Ottoman women especially living in harem who were mostly the wives or mistresses of the Sultans, had a great rivalry among them in placing their sons as rulers. Women were influencing the sultans in taking decisions in governmental issues and intrigue was the main subject in the closed doors of

harem. Therefore, Turkish women in harem were neither passive nor naïve as Farquhar stated.

Mrs. Sullen compares and contrasts the situation of both British and Turkish women of the era. England as she states is a place where women rule, which reminds me of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Women in England had to stand up for their rights for centuries. Still, not all the women having legal rights in England obtained women's emancipation perpetually.

The sexualized display of the 'Oriental woman' – Ottoman, Turkish, Muslim, – was a central subject of Western Orientalism. Ottoman femininity and beauty engendered objects of the gaze presenting the problems of gender and racial identities. The female Oriental body, as Lewis emphasizes, played a noteworthy role for Western women travelers, who argued that not all of the women in harems were beautiful. The objectification of harem women as eroticized bodies in a magical atmosphere is attractive:

The obsessive detailing of Oriental female physiognomy and dress that this quest involved was, as Roberts suggests, a mechanism by which Western women were able to access a moderated version of the stereotypically masculinist scopic pleasure involved in the objectification of Ottoman women. (Lewis, 2004, p.102)

Authority of the women present in the harem was transformed into a fantasy. By practice, Orientalism was entirely controlled by a male authority. As Edward Said declared, this situation was evident especially in the writing of travelers and novelists:

women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing. Flaubert's *Kuchuk Hanem* is the prototype of such caricatures, which were common enough in pornographic novels (e.g., Pierre Louys's *Aphrodite*) whose novelty draws on the Orient for their interest. Moreover the male conception of the world, in its effect upon the practicing Orientalist, tends to be static, frozen, fixed eternally. The very possibility of development, transformation, human movement – in the deepest sense of the word -- is denied the Orient and the Oriental. As a known and ultimately an immobilized or productive quality, they come to be identified with a bad sort of eternity . . . (Said, 1979, p. 207-8).

Most polygamous unions consisted of mostly two wives where religion allowed having four wives. Both seclusion and polygamous life were associated with Islam in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. This segregation, and by implication polygamous life, was central to the dominant Western Orientalist fantasy. It is important to note that "the West expects to hear unwholesome stories when it reads of the Eastern homes . . ." (Ellison qtd. in Lewis, 2004, p. 100). Ellison recognizes women's oppression in the East but also engages in a strategy which "aimed to disabuse the West of its misapprehensions about the harem" (Lewis, 2004, p.100). The idea behind it was to endorse sympathy and understanding for Turkey, and thus the question of Ottoman women could only be resolved

within Ottomans. The status of women since Tanzimat reforms (1839-76) had become the central issue against the sultanate following national struggle for liberation.

Historically, Islam, the Arabs, thereafter the Ottoman Empire formed the basis of the “the Eastern question” positioning the Orient in the position of both outsiders and as a weak partner of the West. Displacement of Orientals continued with Western hegemony of the non-European, non-Christian, undeveloped peripheral of the world. Inevitably, in fragmenting, dissociating and decentering the Orient, there dwelled the European thought of “profound hostility, even hatred, toward Islam as an outlandish competitor; one finds it in Dante (who placed Mohammed in the eighth circle of the Inferno), in Voltaire, in Renan” (Lewis, 2004, p.100) as well as in Restoration drama including Farquhar’s *The Beaux Stratagem*. The image of Turk still signified negative and displaced personalities among the European world.

The situation of Orientals (thus Turks) from the 1870s on through the early twentieth century, as Said (1979) illustrates, remained stable. The Orientals were described as “alien” and were analyzed “not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or – as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory – taken over” (Said, 1979, p. 207). According to the western point of view, the Orient was mostly described as “feminine, its riches as fertile, its main symbols the sensual women, the harem, and the despotic – but curiously attractive – ruler” (Said, 2000, p. 357). This widespread image of Orientals and the Turks has not changed so far still displacing the Turks and Turkey on the periphery. As Eissenstat declared Muslims were consistently seen as outsiders and the term “race” in Turkey has been misinterpreted by the Westerners because communities of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds combined under one nation that inhabited in its nature neither violent repressions nor assimilation (Eissenstat, 2005, p. 250). Still, the despotic and the devastating image of the Turk coming from the fifth century played an important role in the consideration of Turkey not as a European country but as an undeveloped Eastern country, although the Western reforms of Atatürk in the 1920s completely converted the country by establishing a more modernized Turkey.

As a result, the racialization of the Turkish Muslims and their negative image as the “devastating” Turks can be clearly observed in British literature, especially on the Restoration stage. Orient and the Islamic culture were always in the position of “outsider” and “the other”. Displacement of Orientals continued with Western hegemony of the non-European, non-Christian, undeveloped periphery of the world. Inevitably, in fragmenting, dissociating and decentering the Orient, there dwelled the European thought of “profound hostility, even hatred, toward Islam as an outlandish competitor; one finds it in Dante (who placed Mohammed in the eighth circle of the Inferno), in Voltaire, in Renan” (Said, 1976, p. 115) as well as on the Restoration stage. Said states that, “Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves early in the nineteenth century with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality” (Said, 1979, p. 206). History repeats itself: even today, it seems most possible that the idea of Islamic marginalization and displacement of Turks prevent Turkey from joining the European

Union. There is an inevitable tendency to weaken Turkey by making negative campaigns against the Turks and by placing them as the “others” in the dominant Western culture.

Endnotes:

i The harem (meaning sacred or forbidden) is seclusion of women from the social life in Islam; especially in the era of Ottoman Empire. The codes of honor and shame encouraged the seclusion of women either by means of the veil or by confinement in separate apartments. This part was forbidden to men who were not close relations. For detailed information on harem see Edip, 1926, p. 144.

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