

POWER AND VIRTUE IN ELKANAH SETTLE'S IBRAHIM

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So very often, when European authors, both historians and literary writers, fix the spotlight on Oriental states, they tend to attribute despotism as the major characteristic of the Oriental ruler. Typically portrayed as a lusty tyrant, he acquires his position and maintains his power through violence, ruling his subjects with a sword in one hand and a whip in the other. In his relations with the non-Muslims, he, as Mita Choudhury observes, is depicted as “the holy warrior” who shoulders the obligation of warfare against the “infidels”, who are “for the most part, Christians” (2000: 70). Although the Oriental ruler is shown as harboring strong animosity to Christian nations, he is, paradoxically, infatuated with a Christian woman. This infatuation mainly poses a threat, if not to the life of the woman in question, at least, to her exercise of free-will and her chastity. The goal of this “facile and stereotyped tableau”, as Geoffrey Marshall points out, is to establish the assumption “that Christianity is heroic” (1975: 64).

Even though the Orient is present in several Renaissance plays, Renaissance dramatists did not devote a whole play to the Orient, except for Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587) in which Bajazeth, the Turkish sultan, is depicted as a staunch Muslim ruler and conqueror of Asia, Africa and Europe. However, the stereotypical portrayal of the Oriental ruler is particularly evident in travel accounts like those of Dr. Leonhart Rauwolf, Master Thomas Dallam, George Sandys, Jean Dumont, and Paul Rycaut. Restoration and eighteenth-

century playwrights who chose to set their plays in the Orient drew heavily on these accounts. To take random examples, Sir William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1663), John Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), and the Earl of Orrery's *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1668) all depict the ruler as a holy warrior. On the other hand, Aphra Behn's *Abdelazer; Or, The Moor's Revenge* (1693), Mary Pix's *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* (1696), and Joseph Trapp's *Abra-Mule; Or, Love and Empire* (1704) focus on the role of lusty tyrant. The rulers who appear in Samuel Johnson's *Irene* (1749), Aaron Hill's *Zara* (1760) and Hannah Cowley's *A Day in Turkey; Or, The Russian Slaves* (1792) combine the two traits, the holy warrior and the lascivious tyrant. Such portrayals should not come as any surprise since they reflect the contemporary view of the Orient, based on a body of writing covering two hundred years.

Elkanah Settle, in his play *Ibrahim, The Illustrious Bassa* (1676) challenges the standardized image of the Oriental court by presenting an inherently good-natured Oriental ruler. In the play, the ruler conducts his dealings with his family members and his subjects with a sense of solidarity and kindness, something that is reflected in the dealings of the subjects with each other. Solyman, the Turkish ruler, is a loving husband, caring father, and just ruler. His inherently good temperament obliges the people around him not only to love him in his days of glory, but also to remain loyal to him when he deviates from the track of righteousness and unwillingly inflicts suffering on them. This positive portrayal was probably one of the reasons why Mr. Dibdin describes Settle as a person who "wrote and acted in defence of every species of contradiction" (1800: 187). Mr. Dibdin plainly characterizes Settle as an anomalous or intellectually confused man, overlooking the fact that Settle lived in the Restoration period, that is to say the period in which England had been witnessing a significant transformation in all aspects of life. Embracing the principles of the new era, Settle was not overwhelmed by the cumbersome inheritance of a long succession of negative portrayals of rulers of the Orient.

Settle does not portray Solyman in *Ibrahim* as Oriental rulers are popularly portrayed —sensual and Machiavellian males who rely on violence to have their orders and desires executed. Rather, Solyman appears as a ruler who employs kindness in his interaction with his family members and his subjects as well. Solyman does not misuse his patriarchal power in its two dimensions: "the power of a parent over his children and the power of a husband over his wife" (Weil 2001: 108). These two manifestations of patriarchal authority are not brought into action in the play. They are replaced by the power of love and solidarity. In the early scenes of the play, Settle impresses on the audience the idea that Solyman is a loving husband. Roxolana is a proud woman, for she is a wife to the Sultan, not a

concubine, as was the Turkish tradition, and “sharer in a Throne”, something, as Solyman says that “[t]o all my Predecessors was unknown” (2, 38). Her social role as a wife and political role as a queen are equally important to her; she is depicted as exercising monarchic power. She gives equal weight to her concern for her political status and the health of her marital life. When Ulama, the captive Persian prince, seems to mourn her fading glory, she asks, “Is *Roxolana*’s power/ Disputed?” (2, 23), wondering why he talks about her this way. Settle here projects on the Oriental woman what the Englishwoman of the period was starting to consider to be important. James G. Turner points out that the “prospect of women speaking their political ambitions, and acting on their theories by assuming power, seemed real enough in the mid seventeenth century” (2002: 102). Secondly, Solyman is characterized as a caring father, lending his support to his daughter Asteria in her love for Ibrahim. The offer he makes to Ibrahim —“she shall call you Lord” (1, 7)— is by no means a “commodification” of Asteria or an attempt to “scapegoat” her for personal gain. It is a move from a caring father to help his daughter wed the man she is deeply and secretly in love with.

The autonomy the Sultan secures for Roxolana and Asteria is also apparent in their bold confrontation of Solyman when he deviates from the track of honor. Their freedom to challenge his course of action is remarkable. Their confidence in his love for them allows them to challenge him, and to try to dissuade him from pursuing his ignoble love for Isabella, and when he insists on his resolution, they chide him. Asteria asks him to “Summon” his “Vertues” to overcome his passion and revoke his decision to kill Ibrahim, his general and rival. When he describes Ibrahim as a criminal, she says, “Your passion is that Criminal, not he” (4, 52). Roxolana, for her part, reminds him of his “Sacred Promise” and of his “bright Vertue” (2, 38); when he persists, she feels bold enough to describe him as a “false King” (4, 52) and “despicable King” (4, 55). Both characters here gain the admiration of the audience and the confrontation in itself is an attempt, on Settle’s part, to liberate the female discourse from the traditional codes of patriarchal privilege. Roxolana and Asteria, like Isabella, become two forces that attempt to pressure the deviant Solyman into honor and rationality. Solyman makes no attempt to use rank to refute their arguments. By representing Roxolana and Asteria as challenging and questioning Solyman’s behavior, the playwright brings to the surface the clemency of the Oriental ruler as well as the autonomy of the woman in the Orient. He dismantles the stereotypical image, leaving it vulnerable to audience critique. Settle here defies Edwards Said’s argument that “Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a verdict discourse about the Orient” (1979: 6) and supports Srinivas Avaramudan’s argument —in her book *Enlightenment Orientalism*— that Orientalism “also aimed at mutual understanding across cultural differences” (2011: 18).

In Britain, the philosophy of John Locke, as Lois G. Schwoer argues, “had the effect of weakening in theory the notion of the subordinate role of women in the family” (in Evans 1996: 152) and thus made it possible for characters such as Roxolana and Asteria to appear on the stage. Generally speaking, the civil war had contributed to transforming the role of the English woman. “During the 1640s and 1650s”, as Kevin Sharpe points out, “women emerged as petitioners and lobbyists to the Parliament, as fighters and preachers” (2007: 15). The freedom Isabella, Roxolana, and Asteria are granted in talking to Solyman reveals the clear connection, made by the English people, between “women’s freedom and political liberty in general” (Browne 1987: 19) in Restoration and eighteenth-century England. Susan Staves in *Players’ Scepters* maintains that toward the end of the seventeenth century “the hierarchical ideals had been too seriously weakened” and that “the new orthodoxies were accepted [...] by the new generation” (1979: 42).

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In addition to being a magnanimous husband and father, Settle’s Solyman is close to his subjects, undermining the Hobsian justifications of absolutist monarchy. From the outset, the relationship between Solyman and Ibrahim, his Christian general, is portrayed as ideally one of open friendship. The joy of victory does not blind him to the “sullen Cloud” (1, 5) visible on Ibrahim’s brow. He correctly identifies his psychological condition and encourages him to disclose the “killing sorrow in his Eyes” (1, 5). He talks to him as a “Friend”, not as a sultan to his subject. The Sultan’s sensitivity leads him to search for the cause of Ibrahim’s sadness among his own actions, thinking that he might not have rewarded him adequately for his victories or perhaps unintentionally offended him. Ibrahim tries to lay rest to each of Solyman’s suggestions, saying, “Give not a Loyal heart so deep a wound” (1, 5), assuring him that his sadness has nothing to do with Solyman. Even in Solyman’s anger, later in the play, Ibrahim does not fear tyrannical retribution from Solyman. He tells his sovereign that he has “reverence, but no fear” (1, 15) when the latter asks him if he trembles upon seeing him.

The Sultan’s kindness in dealing with the people he interacts with extends to his enemies. Ulama, the son of the Sophy, Solyman’s “most pow’rful Foe” (1, 4), is grateful to Solyman because he has been brought to serve in his court, something that makes the Persian prince “Heav’ns blessings call” (1, 5), being fully aware that his fate would be much worse at the hands of a vindictive captor. His commendation of the Sultan indicates that Solyman merits the throne by worth as well as by birth. Therefore, Ulama views his captor’s victories as Heaven’s recompense to this man for his virtues.

It is clear from his treatment of all those around him in the early part of the play that Solyman is inherently good. The pain he later inflicts on his loved ones is unintentional, a product of his all-consuming passion for Isabella. He makes a

sincere attempt to keep his love for her as that of a father for a daughter, but as she draws physically closer to him and praises his "conquests" (2, 17), he realizes that his passion has become "resistless" (2, 17), that he has promised more than he can fulfil. He tries to limit contact with her so as not to "enlarge the wound" (2, 18) her eyes have made in his heart. To put an end to his rising passion, he asks Isabella to stop talking, gives her to Ibrahim, and bids them to leave "whilest", as he says to them, "I have power to bid you goe" (2, 18). His struggle with his passion is particularly blatant when he says to Ibrahim "Quick, flye with your rich prize, lest you delay,/ Till that storm rise, will drown you if you stay" (2, 18). Aggression, which is usually an essential part of the stage-Eastern ruler, is absent from Solyman's character. His errant behavior is due to what he acknowledges to be "an impious and devouring flame" (2, 19) that eclipsed the good things in him. What happens to the Sultan is in line with the prevailing trend in the genre: "the chief effect of love in Restoration serious drama", is that it "takes men and women out of themselves" (Marshall 1975: 58). His feelings of his greatness and honor are now replaced, as he puts it, by "Torments and Hell" (2, 19).

Thus, he is not a lascivious villain, but a protagonist who maintains the audience's admiration as well as sympathy throughout most of the play. He is transformed into a love-crazed man who must be judged not by the traditional standards of love and honor that define Ibrahim and Isabella, but by his own code of love. According to him, his pledge of constancy to Roxolana is a pledge to all women, not to her individually: "When to those eyes I swore I would be true,/ 'T was to the Worlds Variety in you" (3, 38). This adoration of the gentle sex, in the persons of Roxolana and Isabella, proves unique in Oriental plays where Eastern rulers usually view women simply as objects of pleasure. The lack of any wicked intent is clear when he says to his wife:

Why is your Fall and Death by Solyman wrought?
By Heav'n I've no such malice in my thought.
My thoughts flow purer: No black stream runs here. (3, 37)

It is also apparent that he is unable to do anything other than pursue Isabella, even though he is aware that he is in error, and this makes him a pathetic figure. His sense of pollution as opposed to his wife's confidence in her continuing purity weighs heavy on him. He can find no moral justification for his actions and desperately seeks advice from Ulama and Morat, his Bassa, about how to enjoy this new love without the taunting feeling of guilt. This is how Solyman asks for help:

O tell me how
I may my Love without a Crime pursue;
Soothe me, and flatter me, deceive me, do:
Hide all those stains that make it an offence,
And cheat me with a glimpse of Innocence. (2, 9)

Staves argues that serious Restoration “plays are often intensely political” (1979: 47), reflecting the prevailing political ideology. She demonstrates how the Tories, at the beginning of the Restoration, when they manipulated Parliament, “attempted to promote a doctrine of divine right kingship” (1979: 44), a doctrine that deprived the subjects of their right to question their sovereign. When they replaced the Tories in Parliament toward the end of the seventeenth century, the Whigs, stressed the “rights of the subject against his sovereign” (1979: 44). Settle in *Ibrahim*, presents a compromise of the two ideologies as the ruler willingly seeks his subjects’ advice and grants them the right to criticize him and assess his behavior.

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Sultan Ibrahim in Mary Pix’s *Ibrahim, The Thirteenth Emperour of the Turks* kidnaps and rapes Morena, the Mufti’s daughter, when she refuses to marry him; Sultan Ibrahim commands his slaves, “I am all on fire! Drag her to yond Apartments” (3, 24). Morena is sent back to her parents lamenting her “violated Honour” and seeking “Death” (4, 26) to rid herself of the shame the lustful Sultan has inflicted on her. Unlike Pix’s Ibrahim, who engages in a violent prolonged sexual pursuit, the notion of raping Isabella never crosses Solyman’s mind even though he is, like Pix’s Sultan, in a position of power which would facilitate rape if he so chose. Rather, he insists on having Isabella’s consent for the marriage and intends to elevate her to the status of a queen; “I’le take the Crown from Roxolana’s Head” (4, 45) he tells her to assure her that he loves her whole-heartedly. Settle is not interested in presenting what Jean Marsden calls “[s]cenes of rape, carefully staged and lovingly detailed” (1996: 185). Even when Settle employs rape, as in *Love and Revenge* (1674), he does not employ it for titillating ends; rather, it is, as Derek Hughes urges, “presented as a problem”, meant to emphasize “the problems of attaining justice in an absolute monarchy” (2005: 228).

Solyman’s intentions toward Isabella are honorable; he wants to marry her and make her a queen. To enjoy her physically against her will would degrade his love and his own character. This nobility of soul leads him to reject Morat’s advice to pursue his love regardless of the consequences, saying to him that “though all that you have said in my defense”, the reasons you present are “remov’d from Truth and Sence” (2, 20). He refutes Morat’s point about the Prophet Muhammed and free sex saying

[...] our Prophet does ordain,
Monarchs with Honour should their Joys obtain:
And when that Rock stops our forbidden way,
Pow’r must not climb where Vertue bids us stay. (2, 20)

Settle here, through Solyman, corrects a misconception about the Prophet (which has been exploited by Eastern rulers in other plays), that he encourages

free sexuality, for Morat has mentioned that his sovereign would be wronging the "Prophet" of Islam if he yielded to "grief" and did not pursue his "joys" (2, 18). Like other sensible characters in the play, the Sultan here gains the admiration of the audience.

Things come to a crux when Solyman finds Asteria instead of Isabella in Isabella's chamber. Before his daughter he feels "all my Guilt and Infamy expos'd" (2, 35). His vulnerability is raw and through it he hopes to be excused and to ease the impact of the shock on his loving wife. Solyman also shows his vulnerability to Ibrahim:

'Tis true, I'm led by passion to disclaim
My Vertue, wrong my Friendship, stain my Fame:
I see the Precipice, but cannot stay. (4, 43)

The Sultan's ability to admit wrongdoing and his weakness make him an admirable character. Laura Brown contends that English serious drama in the 1670s "prefers pity to admiration" (1982: 432), but the five major characters of Settle's *Ibrahim* challenge her assertion. They all show traits that summon up the audience's admiration; Solyman, in particular, evokes a balance of both pity and admiration.

Settle breaks new ground in this play, giving us an Oriental ruler who is comfortable in his own milieu and is essentially good, although with a tragic flaw of weakness with regard to Isabella. His benevolence is a natural part of his character. Other playwrights visibly contrive to build in an element of goodness with their Eastern characters. For instance, Davenant's Solyman, in *The Siege of Rhodes*, is "civil" (part 1, 311), but he is civil as Solyman, not as a prototype. The people around him are prototypes of Easterners: not benevolent, but rather conspiratorial and aggressive. Davenant's Solyman has to detach himself from his people and culture to be eligible for this praise. He describes Easterners as people prone to violence and chaos, something he himself is compelled to cope with. As Joshua Scodle remarks, "Davenant had his Turkish sultan Solyman lament his need for 'new Towns to Sack, new Foes to Kill' as the 'accurs'd diversion' of his belligerent people who would, if not so engaged, destroy 'peace [...] at home'" (2001: 207). In Cowley's *A Day in Turkey*, Mustapha is depicted as a considerate person since he tries to protect the Russian captive, Alexina, from the lecherous Bassa Ibrahim. But in return, he has to proclaim what Choudhury calls "self-condemnation" (2000: 71); he says that "Turks" are different from other nations, for their conception of "a woman's virtue [...] is to CHARM, and her religion should be LOVE" (1, 12). Settle's *Ibrahim* is not a villain-centered play with a blatantly wicked antagonist (ruler or Bassa) —as is the case in other Oriental plays— to be overthrown in the end. The wicked antagonist is the overwhelming passion that temporally takes

hold of the virtuous Solyman and escalates into an uncontrollable passion. The passion is eventually overthrown and virtue emerges triumphant. Morat could be constructed as wicked if judged by his suggestions to Solyman (to ask Ibrahim to give him Isabella, to force Isabella to marry him, or to kill Ibrahim), but when we view his character as a whole, surely these are misguided pieces of advice meant to please his master. No personal motive of this can be detected in the downfall of any of the characters. The furious swordfight that results in killing Asteria is initially triggered by Ibrahim; it has been imposed on Morat. Ibrahim, while drawing his sword in Morat's face, asks him to choose between helping them (Ibrahim and Isabella) to escape and fighting for his own life. Seeing such a help as a "Crime" that will eventually result in his death at the hands of his master, he chooses to fight, saying to Ibrahim, "though your Arm is so renown'd, I'll try/ My chance for Life" (5, 63). After receiving a mortal wound from Ibrahim, Morat kills Asteria for supporting Ibrahim against him. His killing of Asteria must have surprised the audience, for no earlier quarrels or disputes had taken place between the two. That is to say, it comes more as a genre necessity than as a convincing development of the plot. Because there is no actual villain in the play, the sympathy of the spectator extends to encompass Solyman who might appear, to some, as a quasi-villain. Nevertheless, his aberration is punished, and keeping with the principles of the genre, the punishment is a severe one.

In other Oriental plays, envy is usually the driving force that controls the wicked Bassas and leads them to plot against the successful ones or those favored by the Sultan. Villainy is conspicuous in the words and actions of such Bassas. The two Bassas, Haly and Cuproli, in Joseph Trapp's *Abra-Mule* (1704), are envious of Pyrrhus whom the Sultan has favored by promoting them to a higher position; each believes himself to be worthy of that position. They conspire to ruin Pyrrhus by secretly informing their country's enemy of Pyrrhus's battle plan which virtually results in his defeat. After he has lost the battle Pyrrhus says,

[...] I was betray'd
By hidden Treach'ry, and some envious Bassa,
To whom in Council I reveal'd my thoughts
Kept secret Correspondence with the Foe,
And gave intelligence. (1, 23, 24)

They also plot to overthrow the Sultan and replace him with his brother Solyman in order to obtain the positions they aspire to; Haly says to Solyman, to encourage him accept the offer, "'Tis no new thing / To see a Sultan tumbled from the Throne" (2, 32). The same thing happens in Thomas Southerne's *The Loyal Brother* (1682) where Ismael and Arbanes conspire against Tachmas, the Sophy's brother, and his captain Osman. The motive is the same, the bravery of the young

prince and his captain has eclipsed the fame of Ismael and Arbanes. Therefore they team up to destroy them. Ismael declairs,

'Tis *Tachmas*, baneful name to all my hopes,
Who by Giant weight of his deserts,
Presses my fate, and keeps it struggling under. (1, 9)

And Arbanes replies,

Once I was great; my hopes as flourishing
As now declined; my fate erected high
As victory could raise it; till the Prince,
That boy, my Scholar in the trade of Arms,
By treachery despoil'd me of those plumes. (1, 19, 20)

They convince Seliman, the Sophy, that Tachmas is a "Traitor to the State" (3, 42) and set up Tachmas and Seliman as rivals for the love of Semanthe. Cali Bassa, in Samuel Johnson's *Irene* (1749), corresponds in secret with the Greeks, Sultan Mahomet's foes, to bring about the defeat of the young Sultan because he does not look favorably upon the Bassa as his father had done. Looking at a letter intercepted from Cali to the Greeks and deeply disturbed by the crime, Sultan Mahomet says:

His correspondence with our foes of Greece!
His hand! His seal! The secrets of my soul
Conceal'd from all but him! [...]
Our schemes forever cross'd, our mines discover'd
Betray'd some traytor lurking near my bosom. (2, 141)

These examples are stereotypical of the relationship between the Bassas themselves and the Sultan and his Bassas. Hence, Settle's Solyman in his dealings with his subjects emerges as a unique stage-Oriental ruler.

Another outstanding aspect of Settle's *Ibrahim* is that the interaction between the characters is also an interaction between three different cultures: Solyman and his family members are Muslims, Ibrahim and Isabella are Christians, and Ulama is a Shiite. Their lives intertwine, flowing naturally with their ups and downs. Solyman is comfortable with Ibrahim as the general of his army and Ibrahim finds no problem in fighting valiantly for Solyman's cause. Their easy relationship is presented in the scene showing Solyman and Ibrahim coming back from Persia with Solyman commending Ibrahim's bravery, for he, with a small force, has defeated the Sophy, the king of Persia and Solyman's stubborn enemy. "His wondrous Arm such Miracles had done" (1, 4) Solyman tells his wife. Ibrahim is not merely a soldier to Solyman, winning him victories; he refers to him as "my best *Ibrahim*" (1, 6) and my "Friend" (1, 7) and plans to seal the bond by making him his son-in-

law. Ibrahim's being a Christian does not seem to be an impediment for Solyman or any of the members of his family. Asteria herself is deeply in love with Ibrahim. She reveals this love to her parents even before she learns what is in Ibrahim's mind and that is why she says to him that for his sake she "Transgress the Laws of modesty" (1, 9) in her love for him. This would be no forced arranged marriage; Asteria wishes to enter into the union, supported and encouraged by her father, the Sultan. It is only Ibrahim's commitment to Isabella that stands as an obstacle to his becoming Solyman's son-in-law.

The religious rhetoric goes beyond toleration to expressions of solidarity and integration. This rhetoric appears for the first time when the sultan, upon seeing Ibrahim sad, asks him if he unknowingly has "done injury to Christendom" (1, 6) or any of his armies "wrong'd those Altars where you kneel" (1, 6). It is unusual for a powerful Easterner in an Oriental play to concern himself with a Christian's religious sentiments. Ibrahim, for his part, expresses his passion for his faith freely, with no reservation. He does, however, fear to tell Solyman the true cause of his sorrow. He admits to Ulama that the refusal of Isabella's father to consent to their marriage has cast a cloud over him, but does not reveal this to his sovereign whose kingdom he thereby protects, for he knows that Solyman would avenge the wrongs done to him by fighting the prince and he does not want to be "false to Christian cause [...], Nor take such Vengeance" (2, 12). In character, the sultan is charismatic, but obviously not dogmatic. In the end, to reward him for his services and loyalty, Solyman offers Ibrahim the opportunity to "choose [him]self a throne" (5, 74) from among his kingdoms, showing that he believes in the integration of the two religions (Islam and Christianity) in one state. Ibrahim again declines his master's offer and unabashedly says "now/ A Christian Coronet best fits my brow" (5, 74). Solyman respects Ibrahim's choice and does not seem perturbed by such a response.

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Unlike Turkish sultans depicted in other Oriental plays, Solyman does not talk about the need for Isabella to convert to Islam in order to marry him and does not exert any pressure on her to apostatize. In contrast, in Samuel Johnson's *Irene*, Sultan Mahomet puts Irene, his Greek captive, under tremendous pressure to abandon her faith in order to become his wife; Cali reports to Demetrius, "he bad the conqu'ring fair renounce her faith, and be the Queen of Turkey" (1, 123). Unlike Johnson's Mahomet, Solyman assures Isabella that he does not at all mind her keeping her religion while being his wife; "You shall be mine, a *Christian* [emphasis added], and a Wife" (4, 45) Solyman entreats Isabella. Neither Isabella's will nor her cultural identity is violated. Isabella, a heroine with a strong personality, defies Laura Brown's conclusion in *Ends of Empire* that the heroine, in what she calls the she-tragedy, is victimized in order to "provide the essential material of the plot" (1982: 65).

Settle indeed was preceded in such ideas by Slingsby and Owen, who had advanced arguments of religious toleration and liberty of conscience. This concept had a tangible impact on English society, for religion transformed, in England, from “a religion of social cohesion to one of private individual belief” (Wordon 2001: 22). As Gary De Krey remarks, “[t]hat God might lead Christians in different directions within the same state and society was an idea that accorded with recent English experience” (2001: 84). Reflecting the spirit of the period, Sir Heneage Finch went even farther than this to argue, in a lecture in the House of Commons, that joint interest was what brought people together and secured harmonious life among them, not religion: “Joint interests have often secured the peace of differing religions [...] religion never united those whose interests were divided” (in Pincus 2001: 286). Wordon argues convincingly that England witnessed “a growing sense that religion should be what civilizes us, that it should have less to say about salvation and more about integrity in our dealings with ourselves and others” (2001: 32). What Settle does in *Ibrahim* is to apply this concept, not to a Western country, however, but to the East where religious tolerance, according to many Westerners, was stagnantly at its ebb.

Ulama, a Shiite, is another noble character in the play that transcends the limitations of the culture. Being in the court of a just and tolerant ruler, he falls in love with Roxolana, not allowing his faith to stand in the way of his heart. But when he realizes that Roxolana’s “Constancy” for Solyman is unshakable, he curbs his passion and promotes her interests at the expense of his own happiness. He seeks nothing in return for his love and strives to reconcile Roxolana to Solyman, expressing his adoration for her constancy: “Be Constant still, and all my pride shall be,/ To Reconcile thy Faithless Lord and Thee” (4, 41). Ulama’s self-alienated conception of his identity leads him to behave against the inclinations of his heart. As Will Pitchard contends, “When behavior is the measure of identity, one can only and need only act appropriately” (2000: 38). One might expect Ulama, a captive in Solyman’s seraglio, to seek revenge on Solyman and his family like Abdelazer in Aphra Benn’s *Abdelazer; Or, The Moor’s Revenge* who, to avenge the loss of his father’s kingdom, corrupts the Queen of Spain, Elvira, leading to her killing her king and abandoning her virtue.

Yet, Ulama does not try to exploit the situation to his own advantage. Rather, the Sultan’s kindness turns him into a counselor to the Sultan himself as well as to Roxolana. First, he makes clear to the Sultan the social bonds he violates by his love for Isabella and the detrimental impact of such violations on his image if he insists on pursuing that passion:

For his, for hers, for your own glories sake,
Some care of your declining Friendship take.

Her, by your kingly promise, you have made
You Daughter, him your Son; Rights which t'invade,
Will so much stain your worth, eclipse your light. (2, 19)

Failing to dissuade Solyman, Ulama warns Roxolana, out of his love for her, hoping that she can speak in defense of her marriage. Although we could charge Ulama with being false to Solyman's "Trust" in him, we should accept that he acts out of noble intentions: "The early knowledge of this dang'rous Love;/ May give her means her dangers remove" (2, 21). He truly conveys the actual psychological state of his master, asserting that rather than finding solace in his love he suffers deeply: "And that which does his pains increase,/ Is, that this fair Invader of his peace/ Calls *Ibrahim* Lord" (2, 23). Ulama assures Roxolana that he does not try to "stain" the "Fame" of her husband and that what Solyman has done is just "a frail thought" (2, 24) that could be corrected with little loss. Even though Roxolana does not believe him in the beginning and abuses him, he continues to be not only her honest servant but also an honest counselor to her husband.

The environment of toleration and forgiveness that Solyman promotes in his court makes Ulama extend his friendship to Ibrahim despite the fact that Ibrahim has captured him and defeated his father. Ibrahim reveals to him the story of his love for Isabella and that it was the undisclosed reason for declining Solyman's offer—to marry his daughter—that created the conflict with Solyman. Ulama, for his part, works sincerely to reconcile him to Solyman; he hastens to Solyman to defend Ibrahim and justify his behavior: "With this just Love, to *Solyman* I'll go,/ And try what Reason, joy'n'd with Pray'rs can do" (2, 12).

Encouraged by the same truth-telling atmosphere, Asteria and Isabella transcend their rivalry and show respect for one another. They indulge in mutual praise, each extolling the beauty of the other. Isabella offers consolation to Asteria by telling her that she has won Ibrahim not because she is more beautiful than her, but simply because she met him before she did:

The fault's in Fortune, not your want of pow'r:
I saw him first, and in the luckiest hour:
You only came too late to gain that heart. (2, 30)

Asteria, for her part, shows that she would not build her happiness on the misery of Ibrahim—"But know I'd ne're cloud him to make me shine;/ I would not shake his peace, though to crown mine" (3, 30)—and displays great courage and self-sacrifice when she puts her words into action and formulates an escape plan for the couple.

I have argued that *Settle in Ibrahim* does not follow the typical pattern of the English plays set in the East: no lusty rulers surrounded by subjugated women, no

royal brothers feuding for the throne, and no envious Bassas plotting against the court favourites. Revenge and rivalry are banished from this Oriental court and have been replaced by a set of values epitomized equally in the major characters. They all refuse to accept the codes of revenge and deadly rivalry and meet on terms of solidarity and friendship. The ruler who temporarily goes astray is reinstated in the code of love and honor by the love and trust of those surrounding him. Moreover, Settle displays a natural intermingling of three different cultures represented in the major characters. It is a phenomenon which Choudhury calls 'multiculturalism' where each culture retains its identifying chart while interacting with other cultures as distinct from 'interculturalism' where the meeting of different cultures results in a 'melting pot' (2000: 19). Equally important, Settle wittily manipulates and even subverts the stereotypical cultural attitude toward the Orient. He concerns himself with human nature, leaving his characters—Easterners and Westerners—to behave naturally, separating the action from the prejudices of cultures.

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