2013

Othello's "Malignant Turk" and George Manwaring's "A True Discourse": The Cultural Politics of a Textual Derivation

Imtiaz Habib
Old Dominion University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english_fac_pubs

Part of the Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture Commons, and the Literature in English, British Isles Commons

Repository Citation
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/english_fac_pubs/59

Original Publication Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@odu.edu.
Othello’s “Malignant Turk” and George Manwaring’s “A True Discourse”: The Cultural Politics of a Textual Derivation

Imtiaz Habib

I

“Othello,” declares a modern study, “remains a textual mystery.”1 Although the essay is a useful review of existing scholarly knowledge on the complicated publication history of the play, its characterization of the play as “a textual mystery” resonates with the origins of a particular allusion in it that has remained unacknowledged and ignored. At the end of Othello, just before killing himself in remorseful self-punishment for his Iago-induced murder of his wife, to affirm his continuing civic uprightness and integrity as an officer of the Venetian government the title character alludes to an incident in his past that happened in Aleppo:

And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turbanned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by th’ throat the circumcised dog
And smote him—thus! He stabs himself.

(5.2.350–54)2

The source of this allusion has remained unremarked in the play’s critical exegeses, and has been regarded silently as an instance of Shakespeare’s literary imaginativeness in keeping with the rest of the geographic references (to Arabia and Judea or India) in the lines preceding the passage in the same speech.3 Yet, just a few years before the staging of the play, there may have circulated in some circles in London a manuscript account of an Englishman’s recent journey to Aleppo with the following passage in it:

At the sixth days end, we came safe to Aleppo, where we were kindly received by one Mr. Colthurst then being consul for the English merchants, and also of the merchants themselves who lodged us in their houses and furnished us with such things as we did want but the Turks did use us somewhat ill for we could not walk
in the streets but they would buffet us and use us very wildly; except we had a
Janisary with us; for it is the fashion there that all strangers hath commonly a Janis­
ary in ther house with them for ther safety; one day it was my hap to walk alon in
the streets, where to my hard fortune I met with a Turk, a gallant man he seemed
to be by his habit, and saluting me in this manner took me fast by one of the ears
with his hand, and so did lead me up and down the streets, and if I did chance to
look sour upon him, he would give me such a ring that I did think verily, he would
have pulled of my ear, and this he continued with me for the space of one hour,
with much company following me, some throwing stones at me, and some spitting
on me, so at the last he let me go, and because I would not laugh at my departure
from him he gave me such a blow with a staff that did strike me to the ground; So
returning home to the Consul house the Consul's Janisary seeing me all bloody
asked me how I came hurt I told him the manner of it: he presently in a rage did
take his staff in his hand, and bade me go with him and shew him the Turk that had
used me so; Within a small time we found him sitting with his father and other
gentlemen, so I did shew the Janisary which was he; who ran fiercely to him, and
threw him on his back giving him twenty blows on his legs and his feet, so that he
was not able to go or stand; he was clothed in a cloth of gold undercoat and a
crimson velvet gown but his gay clothes could not save him from the fierceness of
the Janisary's fury; and in this sort our men were served diverse times.4

The account in which the passage appears was written by George Manwar­
ing, a gentleman in the retinue of the notorious Elizabethan aristocratic ad­
venturer, Sir Anthony Sherley, in what is the most well-known of the latter’s
many dubious political capers: his journey with his brother Robert to Shah
Abbas’s Persia in 1599 supposedly on the encouragement of the Earl of
Essex to forge an Elizabethan alliance with Shah Abbas against Ottoman Tur­
key.5 The lives and careers of the Sherley brothers are too well known in
historical scholarship to require any further enumeration here.6 Only one fact
needs to be repeated here and that is the extreme displeasure with which An­
thony Sherley was regarded by Elizabeth at the time of his journey to Persia,
stemming from allegations of Sherley’s acceptance of foreign allegiance in
the form of a knighthood from the French Henry IV in his earlier mission to
France in 1591, allegations for which he was briefly incarcerated. This was a
monarchic displeasure that was to last for the rest of Anthony Sherley’s life,
including with Elizabeth’s successor, who while initially relenting also re­
fused to let him return to England. Sherley’s penurious death in Spain in the
1630s was the final consequence of the ignominy that surrounded his ill-fated
adventuring life.7 Of the four accounts of the Persian journey that were writ­
ten by other members of Sherley’s group, including that of Anthony Sherley
himself,8 Manwaring’s account is by scholarly consensus the fullest and the
most interesting. It is also the only account that contains the passage in ques­
tion. What is curious is that the striking correspondence between the Othello
passage and the substance of the incident described by Manwaring has totally
escaped critical explanation, partly perhaps because the account did not ap­
pear in print until the nineteenth century, and that too, anonymously.9

The similarity between the incident described in this account, particularly
from the sentence beginning “One day it was my hap to walk along the
street” to “he gave me such a blow with a staff, that did strike me to the
ground,” and Othello’s invocation of “a malignant and a turbanned Turk”
“beat[ing] a Venetian” and “traduc[ing] the state,” in Aleppo “once,” is
arresting enough to merit critical attention. If to traduce is among other
things to “dishonour” according to Thomas Cooper’s Thesaurus Linguae
Romanae et Britannicae dictionary of 1584, or to “defame” according to
Robert Cawdrey’s A Table Alphabetical of 1604, or to “disgrace” according
to Randle Cotgrave’s A Dictionary of the French and English Tongue of
1611, there is a perfect fit in tone and meaning between the political insult
(the “traduc[ing]” of the “state”) that Othello recounts avenging and the
personal and national humiliation that is implied by the speaker of the
Manwaring passage (“in this sort our men were served diverse times”).10
Shakespeare himself uses the word “traduce” four other times in his writing
in exactly this sense: “A strumpet’s boldness, a divulged shame / Traduced
by odious ballads: my maiden’s name/ Sear’d otherwise;” (Helena, All’s
Well That Ends Well 2.1.781); “He is already / Traduced for levity; and ’tis
said in Rome / That Photinus an eunuch and your maids/ Manage this war.”
(Enobarbus, Antony and Cleopatra 3.7.1948); “Rome must know / The
value of her own: ’twere a concealment / Worse than a theft, no less than a
traducement, / To hide your doings;” (Cominius, Coriolanus 1.9.787); “If I
am / Traduced by ignorant tongues, which neither know / My faculties nor
person, yet will be / The chronicles of my doing, . . .” (Cardinal Wolsey,
Henry VIII 1.2.398). Among Shakespeare’s colleagues, the word appears in
their plays in this same sense a total of thirty-three times between 1607 and
1650.11

Othello’s lines stand out in sharp contrast to the rest of his speech in terms
of their spatial, temporal, and tonal character. In them the passage switches
from a generalized poetic landscape that sweeps across the Indian Ocean with
its fabled “pearl” divers, to Arabia with its mythic “medicinable” gum, sud­
denly to a particularly identified place, Aleppo. The abrupt shift from an
imaginative landscape to a real geographic location is accompanied by a
sharp narrowing of the fluid memorial time of his speech up to that moment
to the precision of a specific day, the immediacy of the contraction imposed
by a new imperative tone of “Set you down this,” in itself another instanta­
neous substitution of the soft tonal supplication of his dialog’s beginning:
“Soft you, a word or two before you go.” These textural disjunctions profile
the distinctiveness of Othello’s reference to the malignant Aleppine Turk,
who also appears in Manwaring’s text with the same specificity if not singu­
larly.
Although the precise reason for the Turk’s assault of Manwaring is not detailed, the rest of Manwaring’s travel account as a whole, as well as other contemporary texts of this class, make it quite clear that the Turk’s behavior is typical of the violence singled out for Christians by the Turks. If national identity in this historical moment is still based in part at least on religious affiliation as it was in the Middle Ages, and as it is at this moment particularly for the Turks (for whom all of Europe is simply the land of the Christians),\textsuperscript{12} the Turk’s battering of Manwaring in his text is a stateist rather than a local community gesture, precisely what is the nature of Othello’s retaliatory violence against the Turk who has traduced the “state” of Venice that Othello has loyally served. The two Turk figures in Manwaring’s text are reflected in their single counterpart in Othello’s lines in a creative transformation that bears the traces of its operation, in the correspondences of the “malignant” Turk to the “traduc[ing]” civilian Turk in Manwaring and the neutral exoticism of the “turbanned” one to the janissary who punishes him. Furthermore, the particular identities of Manwaring’s two Turks, as miscreant and as officer of the law, are fused in the next line in the similar actions of “beat[ing] a Venetian” and “traduc[ing] the state” for both, their plurality finally transformed into the single figure of the last line’s “circumcised dog.” As this essay will show, buried in these dynamics of the transformative operation are the cultural politics of the derivation of Shakespeare’s lines from Manwaring.

II

The question of how Manwaring’s account got to England, and more importantly, to Shakespeare, is a difficult but not impossible question to answer. All that Hans Sloane, in whose collection the manuscript of Manwaring’s account turned up before permanently ending up in the British Museum, himself said about its origins, is that he got it in 1693 for one shilling.\textsuperscript{13} Even who George Manwaring was, and how and when he got back to England, are uncertain. As one scholarly source on Anthony Sherley’s Persian trip, Denison Ross, put it, after the Persian trip “he [George Manwaring] is never heard of again”\textsuperscript{14} He may, however, have been from Edstaston in Shropshire, where according to Shropshire local historians, in 1561 resided the Manwarings, a younger branch of the Manwarings of Ightfield. Since the time of Henry VIII, when “T. Manwaring esq.” purchased “two copyhold estates,” the family’s home was in Edstaston Hall in the manor of Wem, “a large timber house” which a “George Manwaring” inherited on April 29, 1591, together with “the estate above the Chettal Wood.”\textsuperscript{15} This may be a likely identification, since Anthony Sherley’s wife, Frances Vernon, the Earl of Essex’s cousin, was also from Shropshire, from the parish of Hodnet, which is only seven
miles from Wem, and George Manwaring was her kinsman. He may thus have been her appointee in her husband’s staff.

The title of the anonymous True Report detailing Sir Anthony’s government credentials, that was published illegally in 1600/1601 and quickly suppressed, mentions “two gentlemen” as its source for the information it presents. So, could the other gentleman have been Manwaring, i.e., could Manwaring also have returned to England with Parry in 1601? Given the dangerous government displeasure with which Anthony Sherley was held, and given the fact that the entire Persian enterprise was one of the many clandestine and often dangerous projects that the Earl of Essex frequently initiated throughout his public career to leverage influence with Elizabeth, and considering the extreme political sensitivity of the Sherley mission, namely to forge for England an expedient political alliance against the Turk with another Muslim country, it is very possible that George Manwaring and his account were both under an extreme pressure of silence minimally from Essex himself, when either he or the document itself reached England.

Alternatively, because Essex himself was in serious trouble with Elizabeth by 1600, Manwaring may have been under a double fear of persecution from the authorities, for having been involved in Sherley’s politically dangerous mission, and for being a client of Essex. So, upon returning to England or while in transit to it, he may have decided to enter surreptitiously, after entering England may have laid low, and then may have disappeared into obscurity in Shropshire, taking his manuscript and his memories of the Persian trip with him. While this does not explain how and why the other accounts of the Persian trip, such as that of William Parry in 1601 could nevertheless find normal publication, it does offer a plausible scenario for the strange total invisibility of the Manwaring account in its own historical moment. As the fullest, i.e., the most unexpurgated of all the accounts, it may have been deemed by the trip’s principal backer to be a document unfit for public release. Ultimately, the document’s suppression may also have been a personal choice of its author, who may have had personal reasons to feel his own vulnerability in that dangerous moment far more than did Parry. There is a distinct possibility that for his personal security and to ensure the safekeeping of the document, he may have turned it over to members of the Sherley family, still resident at the family home in Wiston, Sussex, and elsewhere.

All of the above could explain how the Manwaring account could have been secretly available in London in 1600/1601 despite not actually being published before 1820 in the Retrospective Review and in the anonymous Three Brothers in 1825, neither of which explain the history of the manuscript. That the document did reach England is suggested by the fact that it became a part of the state papers, since it is listed without comment in the Calendar of State Papers for 1599. The document may have been returned
to the Sherley family afterwards, in the process of which Hans Sloane may have acquired a copy which then ended up as part of the Sloane collections in the British Museum. Two centuries later, the Sherley family may have released the Manwaring manuscript cautiously for anonymous publication, in the interests of publicizing the family's adventurous history. This is to say that enroute to his deliberate disappearance others may nonetheless have had private contact with Manwaring, and hence access to the contents of his manuscript.

The various ways by which hack writers and printers could acquire manuscripts in popular or surreptitious circulation has long been well known. News, in and of manuscripts, traveled invisibly in a variety of informal and instantaneous ways, so that the "simultaneous existence of regional, familial, and wider-ranging interest-based networks of exchange, all frequently overlapping with one another, meant that texts could travel with astonishing speed throughout the country." One such way was through the congregation of carriers at busy inns, such as the Rochester Inn, the Bell Inn in Carter Lane, and the Bosome's Inn in Lawrence Lane. The Bosomes, which was the inn for carriers from Chester in Cheshire immediately adjoining Shropshire, is of particular interest here as it would have been the transit point for the Manwaring material, if not for Manwaring himself, enroute to Shropshire and Cheshire. As Mark Shaaber put it, in an important detailed study of the procurement practices of Elizabethan media more than seven decades back, "There is no doubt that some news were taken out of the mouths of witnesses (possibly of others too, such as travelers, who were merely telling what they had heard) willing to narrate their experiences, but unwilling or unable to write them out." In direct confirmation as it were is the statement on the title page of Richard Hasleton's 1595 travel account that Shaaber cited, declaring "Penned as he delivered it from his own mouth." There were manuscript brokers, what a past scholar called "an embryonic version of the literary agent," such as Ferdinando Ely and John Sherley in Little Britain, and Christopher Barker and John Walley in St. Paul's churchyard, some of whom, as H. R. Woudhuysen has shown, were also booksellers, and generally dealers in both kinds of materials.

As Harold Love and Arthur Marotti have observed, the manuscript text afforded authorial anonymity and protection. Since manuscript culture could both "preserve and imperil texts," a now-lost anonymous copy of the Manwaring manuscript in surreptitious circulation is a feasible possibility because it would not be intrinsically objectionable to Manwaring himself. Anonymous manuscripts would allow the author's work to circulate, while preserving what Brian Vickers describes as his "freedom to disclaim authorship should it prove contentious." Ephemeral things such as manuscripts would then, and in subsequent times, be very hard if not impossible to track, since in the culture of manuscripts texts, readers were a closed circle of initi-
ates, i.e., a coterie circle, for which the lower or rougher the social level of the clients the more obscure and intangible would be their circle of participation. Furthermore, despite official hostility to it, such as Treasurer Buckhurst’s fulmination against it in 1599, there was no effective way to prevent illicit manuscript text transmission. The pervasiveness of the culture of informal, or illicit, or surreptitious, manuscript circulation is evident in the fact that even notables like Francis Bacon were immersed in it, and Shakespeare himself was closely connected to the carriers’ system. Even though Love and Marotti focus on literary manuscripts, their findings are even more applicable to non-classifiable texts such as Manwaring’s.

In this murky landscape, two figures are of particular interest in terms of the connections they have to Shakespeare. The first is Thomas Thorpe, publisher of Shakespeare’s Sonnets in 1609, and regarded until recently as one of the most unsavory traffickers of news and manuscripts. Thorpe likely was in contact with Francis Bacon, who was “the lifelong friend” of the most probable dedicatee of the Sonnets, William Herbert. The second is John Jaggard, illegal publisher of the A True Report. John Jaggard was not only the brother of William Jaggard, and uncle of Isaac Jaggard, both publishers of Shakespeare, but he was also a central figure in Francis Bacon’s publishing arrangements, and Bacon had connections to Anthony Sherley through Essex, who was a patron of both the Bacons and the Sherleys, and who was one of Essex’s closest confidantes and counselors in the late 1580s and the 1590s, even if he became the chief legal counsel for the prosecution of Essex in the trials of 1600 and 1601. If anyone would be automatically privy to any secret reports or papers of Sherley, including an illicit copy of Manwaring’s account, it would be Bacon. Indeed, Bacon’s own Persian allusions in his New Atlantis may have come from his perusal of one of the many accounts of the Sherleys’ Persian enterprise, or from the letters Anthony Sherley wrote to Francis and Anthony Bacon, or as one study of Francis Bacon has suggested, even from his personal conversations with members of the Sherley family in England. At the same time, the menacing impress of Essex, behind Manwaring’s silence, or his dangerous notoriety after 1600, would have effectively killed in both Thorpe and John Jaggard any thoughts of their illegal publication of the Manwaring manuscript or of its contents that they might have acquired access to and/or retained from memory. This situation could have afforded Shakespeare access to the contents of the Manwaring account, since he was already involved with the Jaggards in the publication of his works and he must have had by this time connections to Thorpe if Thorpe was to publish his sonnets a few years later.

In addition, Shakespeare himself had links to the Sherley family’s older branch in Warwickshire via the Underhills in Stratford. The Underhills had leased the property of the Sherleys in Stratford, including New Place, in 1509, after the head of the Sherley family had married into the Staunton fam-
ily of Staunton Harold in Leicestershire and relocated there permanently. Since it is this branch of the family that starts the compilation of the family’s history, initially by Thomas Shirley in the seventeenth century and continued by Evelyn Philip Sherley in the nineteenth century, including memoirs of the Persian adventures of Anthony Sherley and his two brothers, clearly the Warwickshire Sherleys were fully informed of the careers of the Sussex branch at the time, and to which the Underhills through their presumable closeness to the former were also privy. The Underhills sold the property to Shakespeare for £60 in 1597 when they were facing financial difficulties.

Shakespeare’s purchase of New Place from the Underhills was the result of the close relations of his in-laws, the Ardens, who were located in Wilmcote, a few miles outside Stratford, to the Underhills. The Underhills had property in Wilmcote, and like the Ardens were recusant Catholics. The Underhills were also known to Francis Bacon through William Underhill’s father who had been an Inner Temple lawyer. Thus, a double—rather than a single—web of relations extended between the Sherleys, the Underhills, the Ardens, and Shakespeare, and between Bacon, Anthony Sherley, Underhill, the Jaggards and Shakespeare. Through either network or both, Shakespeare would very probably have been aware of the activities of the Sherleys, at home and abroad, and would have been within a very likely circle of accessibility specifically to Manwaring’s manuscript and/or its contents however and whenever it reached London.

There is the further possibility that Manwaring’s account could have reached Shakespeare through one of his most famous theatrical colleagues, Will Kempe, even if Manwaring never returned to England and instead had remained in Spain with Anthony Sherley until his death. Since Will Kempe met Anthony Sherley in Rome in 1601—he could have talked to Manwaring if the latter was still with Anthony Sherley then. In a letter of Sherley to Robert Cecil written in March 1602, Anthony Sherley mentioned that he had sent back to England with Henry Wotton, whom he called his cousin, and whose paternal aunt, the editor of Wotton’s *Letters* explains, was Sherley’s maternal aunt, an “account” of his “proceedings,” which he fears is “lost” since Wotton has disappeared. These “proceedings” could have contained the Manwaring manuscript, and Kempe—not Wotton—may have been the carrier. Unknown to Sherley Wotton had to conduct a secret trip to the Stuart court in Scotland on behalf of Ferdinand the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and when after his visit with Sherley he embarked on this assignment, he may have expediently handed over to Kempe what Sherley had given him to carry back to London. If Sherley’s purpose in giving the “proceedings,” including the Manwaring account, to Wotton to take back to London, was part of his many desperate attempts to win back favor from the English government, and permission to return to England, by offering as proof of his service to England a more detailed and authentic account of his work in Persia than what
he felt may have reached the government’s ears otherwise, that purpose would be compatible with a general instinct on his part to also publicize his enterprise in London by other means as well, such as the popular stage, given that the stage was also an effective platform for broadcasting sensational “news of the world.” This, in fact, was precisely what Sherley asked Anthony Nixon to do some years later in 1607. According to E. K. Chambers, Kempe regularly carried documents for the government from the Low Countries from as far back as 1585, and Kempe was desperate for money from 1599 onwards, including when he met Anthony Sherley in Rome in 1601. 42 Thus, in more ways than one, Kempe would have been a perfectly appropriate expedience for Wotton, for transmitting the Sherley papers to London.

Shakespeare may then have accessed the manuscript from Kempe, who was one of the most trusted actors of his plays when both were in Strange’s Men and in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men throughout the 1590s. Kempe may have left the latter company, not in the traditionally assumed date of 1599, but after 1600 and as late as 1602–3, as some scholars are now arguing. 43 That he appears in The Return from Parnassus with Richard Burbage would point to the fact that the authors of that work still associated Kempe with Shakespeare’s company in 1602–3, as James Nielson has pointed out. 44 In any case, Kempe was still active on the stage, appearing in performances by Worcester’s Men in 1602–3, according to E. K. Chambers, who asserted from entries of payments to Kempe in Phillip Henslowe’s Diary that “during the winter of 1602–3 he [Kempe] was certainly one of Worcester’s Men.” 45 Even if Kempe left Shakespeare’s playing company in 1599, there surely would have been continuing communication between them after that date, given their close professional association in the past. It is plausible, then, that Shakespeare, on receiving the Manwaring material and deciding to use it carefully, given the dangerous reputation of Sherley, would only have cannibalized from it. It must be significant that of the few people who met Sherley and possibly Manwaring immediately after their Persian trip, one was a prominent figure of the popular English theater industry, and one of Shakespeare’s closest professional colleagues, Will Kempe. That he returned to London immediately afterwards in 1601 or 1602, that is, in time for whatever news and reports he was carrying to be disseminated in the theater industry, possibly clandestinely and for profit, is equally worth noting. If Kempe did bring back Manwaring’s manuscript, it may have been as an illicit item, and it may have become one of the many illicit manuscripts circulating in early modern London discussed earlier. That Shakespeare received news of Sherley’s trip from Kempe and incorporated it into Twelfth Night is a frequent modern scholarly assumption. Perhaps, to this needs to be added the possibility he also used a part of it some years later when he started to write Othello.

The multiplicity of the highly probable circuits of transmission sketched above makes unnecessary the exact identification of how Shakespeare could
have known Manwaring’s manuscript and the episode about the “traducing” Turk in particular. But that he must have, is mandated by the strong fit between the episode in Manwaring and the “malignant” Turk incident that otherwise appears suddenly and mysteriously in the closing lines of *Othello*. Furthermore, given the surprising absence of any explanations so far in the history of the play’s commentary about the source of the lines, Manwaring’s manuscript deserves serious consideration. There are also considerable scholarly dividends in connecting Manwaring’s manuscript to the lines in Shakespeare’s play.

III

An interesting difference between the Manwaring account and the passage in *Othello* is that the person who helps Manwaring in his account becomes in Shakespeare the violent individual who Othello kills in a self-identifying act of retributive justice. In fact, Manwaring’s account may have been blocked by Essex from public release specifically because the passage in question contained two elements that were contrary to the prevailing political opinion in England regarding the Ottoman regime. The first was the account’s favorable descriptions of civic arrangements in the Ottoman regime, such as the scrupulous punishment of the Turk in question by one of the Ottoman regime’s most typical law enforcement figures, the Janissary officer. Janissaries, who were the Turks most feared military officer corps, were also in effect Ottoman policemen or law enforcement officers performing a wide range of civic functions at the behest of the state. They were frequently attached to foreign delegations as a measure of the state’s guarantee of their security, as other contemporary English accounts of Ottoman Syria and Aleppo also reported:

one Janizarye of the least, is sufficient to guard a man against a thousand Mores, or Arabians or Plebean Turkes in respect of his awfull authority ouer them, as also against all other Soldiers or Janizaries in respect of their brotherly agreement, and feare to breake their law by fighting or quarrelling among themselues. Therefore the Christian Ambassadors at Constantinople haue assigned to each of them, fower or six Janizaries, and the Consulls of Christian nations lying in other Citties and Townes, haue one or two of them to guard their houses and persons from all Wrongs, neither will any Christian having meanes to spend, goe abroad in Cittyes and Townes or take a ioumey without a Janizarie to guard him . . . myself haue by experience found them faithfull, courteous and faire Companions

*(Fynes Moryson’s Itinerary, 54–55)*

At our return from Tarsus, Edward Rose our factor Marine, provided us horses to ride to Aleppo, and a Jenesary called Paravan Pasha to guard us

As modern historians have explained it, by the end of the sixteenth century, "Some orta (regiments) [of the janissary corps] had won the right to certain traditional duties, such as guarding foreign embassies, policing Istanbul harbor and custom houses, and acting as a fire brigade," and that generally "They provided security, law and order, or similar municipal duties." All of this is exactly confirmed by Manwaring's directly observed explanation that "all strangers have commonly a Janisary in the house with them for their safety."

The presence of the Janissary in Manwaring's account and his prompt and strong intervention in the violent harassment by a Turkish civilian of a member of the visiting foreign party that was his official responsibility to protect, reflected the strictly maintained security of life and property in the Ottoman domains for all people, including its tolerance and scrupulous protection of people of all faiths who submitted to them. Indeed, as one of the most respected historians of Ottoman history, Daniel Goffman, has observed, "The insertion of the janissary corps into the body politic [in the 1590s] . . . encouraged the development of a sophisticated civil society." The point here is not that the Ottoman state was a perfect one. It was violent, and Christians were harassed in it, as reports like Moryson's and Biddulph's frequently describe, and that is Manwaring's overall point in his narration of his harassment. But what such indictments are unable to conceal is that the Ottomans weren't simply a barbaric regime either, and that they had elaborate mechanisms of providing security in civil life, of which the janissaries were a prominent example, irrespective of how well or completely such arrangements worked, and which would probably compare favorably to the law and order protocols of early modern Europe as a whole. In fact, the elaborate structures of stability and protection in Ottoman civic life were much valued commonly (if not officially) across Europe, and that reputation was what made the Ottoman regions in general, and Constantinople in particular, the dreamt-of haven of refuge for all persecuted European religious minorities, including Jews.

The attractiveness of migrating to Ottoman lands and to Constantinople, even for Anglo-European Christians, was the reason for the steadily increasing exodus of ordinary Europeans to Ottoman urban regions throughout the sixteenth century, especially in England in the late Tudor and early Stuart regimes, including even for their willing conversion to Islam (for tax benefits). That act of betrayal for Christian thinking coined the popular phrase "turning Turk," as well as a word that was the origin of the modern word renegade: "renegado."

This feared, and what was to some, apocalyptic, trend, inspired many popular English plays, notably Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk* and Phillip Massinger's *The Renegado*. Even if for a struggling Protestant England, the Ottomans' power and influence made it a useful if secret ally against Catholic Europe, and which may have made possible, according to
one scholar, the very survival of England (because of the relentless military pressure against the Catholic regimes that the Ottomans kept up from the southeast that sapped the former’s resources and strength), that was a nervous, expedient, and secret, alliance that did not visibly permeate the overall public status of the Ottomans in Elizabethan England as a menacing presence looming over all of Europe. A positive public depiction of the Ottomans and their civic life as is obliquely visible in Manwaring’s account was thus directly contrary to the compulsive official English stereotype of the Ottoman regime as a barbaric and savage Islamic empire oppressing Christendom.

The second unacceptable element in Manwaring’s narrative was its graphic portrayal of the humiliation of an Englishman by a Turk. Such a portrayal would not only be hurtful to the national psyche, it would also embarrass Essex in an enterprise he had supported. It is therefore a probable inference that Essex, as one of the “hawks” in Elizabeth’s cabinet (compared to the Cecils), would have suppressed the publication of Manwaring’s narrative on both counts, even if and perhaps especially because he was already in trouble with the government himself at the time. If James in 1601, before he had become King, could in a letter cited by Evelyn Phillips, advise Sherley to “remain quiet” in view of the fallout from Essex’s failed rebellion and execution, that must have been an even more urgent if secret effort on Essex’s part in the months preceding his death, through however much of his personal network that remained available to him, to discourage any further dissemination in London of news of Sherley’s trip such as that of Manwaring, irrespective of whether such a suppression would have been in Sherley’s own interests in trying to create a favorable enough atmosphere with the English authorities to enable his return.

Generally, it is also worth noting the status of Aleppo as the principal site in the popular English imagination for the enactment of the victimization of the innocent Englishman at the hands of the malignant Turk, that Manwaring’s account represents and that Othello’s lines replicate. As is well established in modern scholarship, Aleppo’s ancient history, as a natural trading crossroads between Europe and Asia, located as it was on a route that provided a short land transit for Mediterranean commercial traffic to the Euphrates valley and points farther East, ensured its importance to the political regimes of the regions through the ages, down to the Islamic Arab Mamluks of Egypt and the Ottomans who succeeded them in West Asia in the early sixteenth century. Thus, as Peter Stallybrass has recently shown, Aleppo in the early modern moment was known as a city of traffic and commerce, and of diversity and multiethnic coexistence. The reputation stemmed perhaps from the coexistence in Aleppo of the older Egyptian Arab civil population derived from late Mamluk times and professing the new strict Islamic culture of the early medieval philosopher Al-Ghazali, on the one hand, and the Turkic Ottoman administrators with their history of a necessarily inclusive multi-
ethnic cultural and political life who ran the city, on the other (and which two
groups of Aleppines are reflected, as it so happens, by the aggressive civilian
Turk and the avenging Janissary respectively, in Manwaring). 58

The commercial attractiveness of Aleppo for England is manifest in the
stationing of a line of English consuls and trade representatives in the city
between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One testimony of that attrac­
tiveness is that of the English traveler to Aleppo, shortly after Manwaring,
John Cartwright, who according to Stallybrass, not only observed that,
“Aleppo is now become the third capital of the Turkish empire. And well
may it be so accounted, since it is the greatest place of traffic . . . for hither
resort Jews, Tartarians, Persians, Armenians, Egyptians, Indians, and many
sorts of Christians, all enjoying freedom of conscience, and bringing together
all kinds of rich merchant life . . .,” but who concluded his observation drily
with the remark that “the trade and trafficie of which place, because it is so
well known to most of our nation, I omit to write thereof.” 59 It is precisely
this cosmopolitan diversity, albeit commercially necessitated in part perhaps,
that Stallybrass says surprised English travelers, because there was little in
their home life that compared: “The shock that Renaissance English travelers
registered in Aleppo was the shock of the toleration of such diversity . . .
that had only the remotest echo in England in the stranger churches—of the
Huguenots and other Protestant exiles.” Cartwright’s view was untypical
however, not just of the European or Venetian views of Aleppo that Stally­
brass cites, but also of the English media of the moment, published as it was
a decade later in 1611. 60 Consequently, it is precisely this reputation of
Aleppo that was inadvertently visible in Manwaring’s account that would
have made it unsuitable for public consumption in the eyes of a Tudor gov­
ernment nervous like the rest of Europe about the rising tide of the Ottoman
empire’s military and cultural renown, and especially dangerous for Manwar­
ing’s already beleaguered principal backer, Essex. It would have been another
element in need of suppression or modification, if the document was to be
used at all, most expeditently as a site for staging the harassment of Christian
English strangers instead of as a well-known locale of their profitable busi­
ness endeavors, that is, to be used to blacken the image of Ottoman urban
life, and not broadcast its cosmopolitan allures.

The re-shaping of news or information about Protestant England’s adver­
saries, Catholic or Ottoman, or to appropriate a prevailing English term for
such phenomena, the “turning” of such material, into conformity with the
official hostile view of such parties was a principal characteristic of late
Tudor and early Stuart media. As Nabil Matar has shown, one of the most
convenient platforms for the inimical public projection of the Ottoman was
more often than not the popular theater. 61 If, as one of the most well-known
foreign observers of Elizabethan drama reported in1599, the Elizabethans re­
ceived their news of the world from what they saw on the popular stage, such
“news,” then as now, would be subject to direct or discreet control and manipulation by the authorities. Thus, if Manwaring’s account was to be salvaged at all for popular consumption—and news about foreign lands and people was a highly saleable commodity for the popular theater—that could only happen with its selective transformation.

Shakespeare himself was inevitably a part of the overall hostile, even if at points complex, English political climate regarding the Ottoman Turk, in the conflicted ways he alludes to the Turk throughout his works. As has been demonstrated elsewhere, in the steady stream of references running throughout the Shakespearean oeuvre, the Turk is a persistent spectral figure, a presence that can neither be accepted (represented on stage as a character) nor denied (completely excluded from the framework of political and historical references required by the topical, popular nature of the plays), and whose associated attributes change and grow across the two decades of the playwright’s career in a rough parallel to the fluctuating fortunes of Anglo-Ottoman relations at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. One of the climactic points in this line of spectral but ubiquitous representations is the sudden but catastrophic emergence of the Turk in Othello’s self-avenging suicide.

The Manwaring material may have reached Shakespeare through any of the routes suggested earlier, including most likely through Will Kempe and the hands of one of the Jaggards, and because Sherley was a politically sensitive topic, all that was used from the Manwaring account was the figure of the “traduc[ing]” Turk, but not his instant and severe punishment by the Ottoman law officer. Jonathan Burton has suggested that “If English texts of the early modern period develop an imperial rhetoric, the defining mode of that rhetoric is appropriation . . . where the foreign is grasped, translated, and puffed up beyond its original consequence” If this is correct, then what could have happened to the Manwaring account in the text of Othello, may not only be a perfect confirmation of that process, but also an extension of what Burton describes: what is inconvenient in the “foreign,” especially in an inimical foreign power, is silently expunged, and the invocation of the inimical foreign is reshaped to accentuate its negative contours. If the text of Othello was in process as early as 1601–2, that would make it contemporary to the moment of the arrival in London of the news of Sherley’s Persian adventure, since that is when Parry returns to London and his account, as well as the illegal, anonymous, and quickly suppressed True Report, are published. This is also the moment when Ottoman Turkey is a particularly prominent subject in the popular imagination, as is witnessed by the appearance in print of Robert Carr’s The Mahumetane or Turkish Historie in 1600, Richard Knolles’s History of the Turks in 1603, and the republication of a poem by King James titled Lepanto in 1603 to proclaim the new king’s interest in Anglo-Turkish relations. As the Turkish scholar Salih Ozbaran has found,
in London between 1590 and 1609, books on the Turk, which were published intermittently over the previous two decades, rose to a frequency of one book on the subject each year. This phenomenon represents the intensity of a mixed English angst about the Turk at this moment, it should be understood, rather than any simple public admiration of that regime.

IV

In a stimulating recent study Jonathan Sell has sketched the possible outlines of the process by which the contents of illicit manuscripts were molded by several anonymous editorial interventions for commercially successful public dissemination, where one of the determinants of commercial success is the perceived political or cultural imaginary of the community, projected by its authorities and absorbed by its members. The manuscript in question is William Biddulph’s account of Ottoman Syria and Aleppo, cited earlier:

Over a period of time, Biddulph writes a series of letters in Aleppo. The letters are delivered to a relative Belaziel Biddulph in England. Belaziel dies and the letters are discovered by some third parties, read by them, and passed on to the editor. The editor knocks them into shape and publishes them. Finally a reader reads them. By the time the first page of this wonder text is turned by the reader’s thumb, it has already passed through four other pairs of hands and bears the marks of a by-now familiar piece of consensual reality. How much of this metatextual apparatus is true is beside the point. What is clear is that, together with the ‘travail’ and the ‘reluctant travel writer’ topics, the text is being generically situated and the reader’s expectation cued: the genus of the works . . . is the admirabile genus, this particular species of which is the travel account. Our editor, this small-scale compiler, is quite consciously and deliberately working within a tradition to which he further nods when counters the common charge that ‘travellers may lie by authority’ by appealing to the traveller’s god fearing nature. . . .

What makes Sell’s outlining of the process particularly relevant here is that he works with a text that is of the same class of writing as Manwaring’s, the travel account, notwithstanding the difference between Biddulph’s background as an English preacher assigned by the Levant company to its factor in Aleppo and Manwaring’s as an aristocrat’s secretary on a secret diplomatic mission abroad. An authorial reluctance comparable to Manwaring’s authorial absence also surrounds the publication of Biddulph’s work, comprising as it does the compilation by several nameless editors of a series of private letters he wrote from Syria to his brother in England in 1600, and to the publishing of which he was initially opposed. Arguably, Sell’s hypothetical outline of the “metatextual apparatus” of the publication history of Biddulph’s work could be said to speak generally to the degrees of manipulation involved
in the textual derivations and assemblages of all popular English printed material of the time. The editorial insistence of the "truthfulness" of Biddulph’s descriptions that prefaces the work, which Sell says identifies its travel-writing genre, could also indicate an earlier cultural convention of the truthfulness of works presented to the public, by which the contents of such works were held to be true precisely because they had been shaped (perhaps as in checked, or filtered, or amplified), by many hands, not one. If so, that also points valuably to the coexistence of the earlier technology of manuscript production with the newer one of book production, as well as to the synchronicity of the medieval tradition of collective authoring with the emerging fashion of individual authorship at the end of the sixteenth century in England. As such, the process by which Biddulph’s writing appeared in print points feasibly to the same process by which the details of the Turk episode in Manwaring’s were modified and put into Othello, in a lingering cultural practice that was normative rather than fraudulent.

Sell’s delineation of a hypothetical process of transformation of textual content during a Tudor or Stuart work’s publication invites a consideration of the specific points of divergence between the details of the malignant Turk episode in the Manwaring account and in Othello. Such a consideration helps to reveal a protocol of conversion that matches the late Tudor agenda of reshaping for domestic consumption an inimical view of the Ottomans sketched earlier, and is valuable because, uniquely perhaps for the popular English stage, it clearly profiles such a practice at work, and in doing so makes further credible a directly derivative connection between A True Discourse and Othello’s lines about the malignant Turk.

Drawing on a frequently invoked critical context for Othello’s lines about the malignant Turk, it can be said that at the play’s end the Turk lives in Othello—that’s what the latter is trying to exorcise in his last speech, in a terminal gesture of expiation before the Venice that he has served. So too, the Manwaring text lives in the text’s closing lines, the latter’s garbling of the incident in Manwaring being its exorcism of the corrupting presence of the law enforcing Turk in the Manwaring text—the deliberate or inadvertent positive picture of the strictly upheld justice of Ottoman civil life. The act of textual exorcism occurs specifically in the shift between lines 350 and 353, as the visibly double Turk identities of “A malignant” and “a turbanned Turk” (emphases added) of the earlier line corresponding to the two Turks in Manwaring as was noted before, coalesce in the single figure of “the circumcised dog” of the latter line, via the intervening line’s silent transformation of the opposed actions of the civilian Turk’s misdemeanor and the janissary’s retributive intervention in Manwaring into the commonly punishable offenses of “beat[ing] a Venetian” and “trad[ucing] the state” for both in Shakespeare. As perpetrator and punisher are folded into each other in a syntactical homology wherein both become offenders, the possibility of law and
order and civic life in the Ottoman world is dismissed and a strongly functioning civil order is painted over as a lawless barbaric one.

As “turning” functions in the English lexicon of the moment to connote transformation, change, seduction, betrayal, these valencies may be tracked metaphorically in the changes cohering between the Turks in Manwaring’s account and in Othello, including in the title character’s closing lines. Generally, over the course of the play the Ottoman is “turned” from menacing to fragile (blown away in an offstage storm), from being overwhelming to something that is simply put away, “smote him thus,” where “smote” connotes in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century usage the deadly finality of a terminal act of violence of Biblical character. Likewise, Othello is “re-turned” to both Venice and the Asiatic-African other, the former posthumously in the penitently self-exorcised figure of the dead Othello that is the stage’s final offering to its historical audience, and the latter in the dismissal of the inimical exotopy that has lain in his being that Othello acknowledges and to which he implicitly surrenders in his invocation and execution of the malignant Turk in himself.

All this together might constitute the Shakespeare play text’s “turning” of the Manwaring account, and in that signal Shakespeare’s “re-turning” of the Turk that is “turning” his Christian Anglo-European world. That, in turn, might reflect the lines’ symbolic “re-turning” of the residue of its historical origin in Manwaring, its creative masking of its formal source, otherwise the surreptitious cooptation that is the general practice of early modern English illicit manuscript culture and that is the specific necessity mandated by the dangerous political content of the passage in the manuscript’s moment of availability in London. There is also the turning or conversion of Ottoman Aleppo (the city of flourishing trade, international commerce, and ethnic coexistence) into Christian Venice, even if this is a double conversion—that of Aleppo into Venice, and of Catholic Venice (i.e., Cesare Vecellio’s Venice, for instance, which admires and emulates Ottoman material life)—into a Protestant London inimical to the Turk.

Such fluid “turnings” confirm, not contradict, the instability of identity and identification that Lawrence Danson has found binding expediently Protestant English and Ottoman Moor against the idolatrous Catholic and infidel Turk in the travel-writing imagination, and that by implication underlies the deployment of Othello the Moor to strike down the “circumcised dog” in Shakespeare’s play. If the historical cultural politics of Othello’s last lines, and the critical poetics of our times (in Danson), can flexibly “accommodate” a view of the Turk as both “fix[edly]” barbaric and not “absolute[ly]” so, that is if they can articulate an animosity simultaneously of Christian towards Turk and of English Christian towards fellow European Christians, if they can make legible a heuristic for the play as hostile to the other and as hostile to oneself, that reversibility can point back to a practice of popular
writing in which an allusion is both of the text and outside it, in which Manwaring’s clumsily split Turks can live in Shakespeare’s smoothly unified malignant figure without remembering or evoking their origins.

To track these “turnings” is therefore also to locate Othello in the “turns” of its critical history, to “re-turn” the play from its historically antiseptic readings divorced from history, or from the anxious defenses of its awkward ethnic hostilities, to its situation in the political moments of its time and ours, to in effect “re-turn” Shakespeare’s “re-turning” of the Turk—from civil and helpful to lawless and barbaric—back to the urgent exigencies of a historical writing moment in which not to be Christian is compulsively, necessarily not to be civilized, to in fact “re-turn” literature to material history.

V

The murky circumstantial relationship between Manwaring’s account of the malignant Turk and Othello’s allusion of such an episode that this essay has tried to suggest may be the textual archeology of Shakespeare’s lines, falls within the purview of David Scott Kastan’s recommendation of a return to material history in Shakespeare studies, in a work tellingly titled Shakespeare After Theory. As James Knapp puts it, in his citation of Kastan, “He [Kastan] seeks to incorporate . . . [the] values [of a “material,” empirical method] into a historicism made all the more confident by its having learned the lessons of theory once and for all:

If theory has convincingly demonstrated that meaning is not immanent but rather situational, or, put differently, that both reading and writing are not unmediated activities but take place only and always in context and action, the specific situations, contexts and actions—that is, the actual historical circumstances of literary production and reception—cannot be merely gestured at but must be recovered and analyzed.76

In the fractious disputes, however, that have attended the turn to material history in contemporary critical practice, over the double bind of the “constructedness” of both the “facts” of history and its fictions, what may be partly overlooked is that in a post-Kantian millennia a return to the autonomously accessible objecthood of facts, to an uncontaminated, directly available facticity, cannot be a tenable proposition. This is why, in the view of a recent scholar of the cultural history of archives, “Distinguishing fiction from fact has given way to efforts to track the production of and consumption of facticities as the contingent coordinates of particular times and temperaments, places and purposes.”78 Material history can thus only be a con-
structured modality that aims to destabilize and expose the fashioning of master histories by appropriating the latter's high ground of facticity with competing verities, to reveal as it were the back life of "facts," their always-already-contaminated phenomenology. In thus implicitly extending the claim of constructedness across the phenomenological level material history aims at a new, more equitable, historicity where "high" truths can exist coequally with "low" ones, and the meaning of the past is forever a discourse of competing values. This is not to say that material history is a judgment-neutral heuristic, or that it is not. On the contrary, the substance and interest of material history is the occluded excess, the supplement, of the phenomenology of time that the fiction of history or its literary re-telling, its narrativization, leaves out, and that is always the contestatory alterity of its narrative life, its silent other, and the destabilizer of its facticity. Put slightly differently, these "are the 'arrested histories'—histories suspended from received historiography—that are its effects."

Thus, the supplement of early modern English defensiveness against the Turk's unstoppable ingress into Europe (or Spain's aggressive world presence), is the reflex of English assertion in world trading projects (transoceanic and transcontinental trading ventures as in the enterprises of the Virginia, the Levant, and the East India companies and the military accoutrements that they bred), and which impels English history in the late sixteenth century toward an emerging protocoloniality, what, following Etienne Balibar, has been described as colonialism without or before colonization. In this view the effect of the Ottoman empire, and Spain, on England is to turn it to dreams of dominion to thoughts of world presence and penetration, to what will materialize eventually as the idea of empire. The "turning" of the Turk in Othello also marks, then, the "turning" of England in its early modern history, the birthing of a rhetorical style that is the outrider of a political stance that will become colonialism.

If the Turk is seen in the Tudor-Stuart political imagination as something that must be matched and exceeded in his re-enactment, that is, overturned rhetorically on the popular stage, if the Turk is seen as a rhetorical style, that is precisely what is manifest in the divergences between Manwaring's account of the Turk in Aleppo and Shakespeare's representation of the malignant Turk who must be, and is, struck down terminally, "smoted, thus." The finalistic "smot[ing]" of the Turk, in Othello's closing words, is the culminaton of the rhetorical reduction of the Turk in Shakespeare over his oeuvre, beginning with his first reference to him as an example of a rhetorical style worth emulating in 1 Henry IV, in Joan Pucelle's (Joan of Arc's) sharp reprimand of William Lucy's expansive eulogy of the English commander John Talbot whom her forces have slain "The Turk that two and fifty kingdoms hath, / Writes not so tedious a style as this" (4.7.75–76). This trajectory articulates not just the growth of a steadily hostile attitude towards the Turk
in Shakespeare, as suggested earlier, but also the very semiosis of political rhetoric and national intention. For between the first invocation of the Turk in *1 Henry IV* in 1591 and the last in *Macbeth* in 1606, England has moved from Elizabeth’s cautious defensive posture and discreet diplomacy to James’s international ambitions for England to be a major European power, which is the distance between the careful detachment of Elizabeth’s *semper eadem* outlook and the grand interventionism of James’s *rex pacificus* mentality. To invoke Jonathan Goldberg’s precise description of this phenomenon, from his masterful study of the style of James I’s monarchy, “language and politics . . . are mutually constitutive, [and] society shapes and is shaped by the possibilities of its language and discursive practices . . . [because] the real requires realization; representation, understood in its full complexity—both as restatement and as recasting, replacing representation—realizes power.” These connections are especially valid for James’s accession and reign, in which “the links between the state and the theater were particularly strong . . . not only because the theaters had come under direct royal patronage . . . [but also because] the theater was the public forum in which [James’s] royal style could be most fully displayed.”

If, as Neill has suggested, the performance of *Othello* in 1604 bears the impress of the new Jacobean regime’s cultural tastes, a part of that impress would include complimentary adherence to that regime’s political ideology. Such adherence would underwrite Shakespeare’s quick importation, modification, and deployment of the Manwaring material at least by the play’s end (especially into what some scholars have hypothesized was the text of the play that was in process in 1601–2 that was mentioned earlier), to express a national stance matching that ideology, one in which an English-ed Venetian empire triumphs over the imperial Turk. This verbal outreach is perfectly congruent with the replacement of Elizabeth’s uneasy and conditional support of English sea ventures by James’s sweeping royal cooptation of all the trading companies on land and sea, and by his adoption in October 1604 of the title of Great Britain for England, less than a fortnight before *Othello* is performed before him at court. Both, James’s initial refusal to sign any trade agreements with the Ottoman regime in 1603 because it would be unbecoming of a Christian prince, as well as his subsequent acquiescence to such an initiative in his new charter to the Levant company in 1605 on the grounds that it would yield expedient profit to England that Daniel Vitkus has detailed, exude the same assertive national stance that Shakespeare’s reshaping of the Manwaring material projects. *Othello*’s performance in 1604 is followed by the establishment of the first English colony in America in 1607, and by the start of the first English trading activity in India in 1608 that will culminate in the British Indian empire two centuries later, even as the vanquishing of the menacing Turk continues to be staged before the monarch and his court, as in the spectacle of a sea fight in 1610 on the Thames to
celebrate Prince Henry’s investiture as the Prince of Wales, and then again in 1612–13 to celebrate Princess Elizabeth’s marriage to Frederick, Elector Palatine of Germany, the latter according to an eyewitness account moving the king to “delight.”87 The unverifiability of the relations of the Manwaring account to Othello are precisely what make the former a supplement of the latter, and a part of the supplementarity of material history to literature, with the widening ripples of effluences binding them, such as those just sketched, serving to authenticate the Manwaring passage’s signature in Othello’s lines as a pointillist presence and not an apodictic one.

Othello’s last speech has itself been described recently as a supplement,88 and as a teleological afterthought of the text, a kind of interruptive textual stepping forward in the plot’s closing operations,89 to control and correct its final thematic legacy as it were, and which is an effect of the cumulative body of the play’s action, where effect is understood not just as a natural progression but as an antithetical consequence. If this exemplifies what Michael Neill has described as the deliberate “designs” of the play’s ending,90 it would be as an altered design, signaling Shakespeare’s working into the play he was writing the material from Manwaring that he had come across. As the speech as a whole “inscribes,” in Maurizio Calbi’s words, “what Jacques Derrida would call the sur-vie ‘an after life,’ ‘life after life,’ . . . some kind of ‘living on,’ that effectively problematizes textual boundaries,”91 the malignant Turk lines in particular can be seen as embodying that “living on.” In them, at the very moment of the vindication of a Londonized Christian Venice that Othello’s self-punishment aims to achieve, the ongoing history of the Turk’s domination which that vindication necessarily has to suppress springs up to mock it with the threat of its survival in the future. Correspondingly, at the very instant of the domestication of the Manwaring allusion into Shakespeare’s play, the allusion floats away into the text’s future life, into its imaginative critical paratext, as a ghostly reminder of the mystery of its origins.

The supplementarity of literature and history is also at once a complementarity, their relationship projecting both a convergence as well as a divergence, a confirmation and a refutation, a validation and a denial, an antithesis as well as a synthesis, asynchronously of the one by the other. Thus, material history as literature supplement is simultaneously literature as the supplement of material history, their cohabitation being a symbiosis rather than causality. That symbiosis can serve in Shakespeare’s early modern moment to underline the ambiguity of relations between history and literature, the one not yet fully understood as a specific discipline of learning and the other unrecognized still as a master instrument of culture. The fluidity of writing practices, of literature and history, that is, their mutual permeability, may afford some insights into the nature of the relationship between the account of the “malignant” Turk in Manwaring and in Othello, and the meaning of the differences between them.
Appendix: The manuscript of George Manwaring’s *A True Discourse*  
(BL Sloane ms. 105 f.8. 35)  
[Reproduced with the kind permission of the British Library.]  

Extract of the Turk episode, 1 (beginning indicated by square bracket)
him and shew him the turke that had hit me, and in female time we found him sitting with his father and other gentle men, for I did shew him familiarly, and was his, who ran fiercely to him and shewed him on his back giving him twenty blows one his legs and his feet, for he was not able to go or stand; he was clothed in a cloth of geese under cote and a chinon velvet gown; but his gay clothes could not save him for 6 terges of the Herefore fury; and in this sort our men were sent divers times I will write on change a fashion of turkes although it be knowne visually to our merchants yet if it not commonly knowne to all men, first concerning the liberie and freedom the great turkeboth give to his soldaires called Tauraris and as they were in liberie to take Sitnakes for them selves or their noses not our prynce ever a penny for it; in what town or one they came in tobacco turkish government, and if they will not come them to ther content they will beat them like begers.  Yet if they chance to rest ther death for all ther goods the Great turke; in my bense in ture suil is showed you of a particular example contated by Samuel who was taken of them travelling through the country came to a town, and did of them selves in most with fashion with the people, of men or townes beinge tres abuses did not tend them, so in the second one of the Tauraries weare flame, the other 3 left of townes present and came to Aleso beinge but 20 miles to this place; and town of Tauraries or the castle neare had happened; theyinge all wavers in the castle 200 the next day the most forth, 6 last 200 of them to a town where as the Tauraries was laine; and coming the tier they did kill man woman and child, pulling down after horses and carrying away the meanes of all ther goodes; the townie - Fajny fell 4th and 5 dayes after this happened where - did
Notes


4. Transcription of a section of George Manwaring, A True Disourse of Sir Anth­ony Sherley’s Travel to Persia, British Museum Sloane Ms. 105 f.8. 35 (spellings partly modernized). See photocopy of of the original text of the Turk episode in the Appendix.


7. For a detailed discussion of the downturn of Sherley’s life in the closing decades of Elizabeth’s reign see Ross Sir Anthony Shirley, 32–45, Evelyn Philip Shirley’s The Sherley Brothers, 32–40, and Scott Frederick Surtees, William Shakespeare of Stratford Upon Avon: His Epitaph Unearthed (London: Henry Gray, 1888), 18, 21, 34–35 (containing extracts of Anthony Sherley’s letter to Robert Cecil in 1600 pleading for permission to return to England, and notations in the State Papers of the Queen’s refusal to relent, taken from The Sherley Brothers).

8. William Parry, A New and Large Discourse of the Travels of Sir Anthony Sherley Knight, by Sea and Overland, to the Persian Empire (London: Valentine Simmes for Felix Norton, 1601); Anthony Nixon, The Three English Brothers (London: J. Hodgetts, 1607); John Cartwright, The Preachers Travels (London: Thomas Thorpe, 1611); Sir Anthony Sherley, His Relation of his travels into Persia (London: Nathaniel Butter for Joseph Bagfet, 1613); Abel Pincon, “Relation D’un Voyage De Perse Fait Es Anees 1598 Et 1599,” ed. Claude-Barthélemy Courbé Augustin Morisot (Paris: Augustin Courbè, 1651). Nixon’s account is generally regarded as unreliable. The earliest account, however, which was illegally and anonymously published and quickly suppressed, and which contained only Sherley’s letters of credentials for his journey, was A True Report of Sir Anthony Sherley’s Journey overland to Venice, from hence by sea to Antioch, Aleppo, and Babilon, and soe to Casbine in Persia (London: R. B[lore] for J. J[aggard], 1600).

9. First in The Retrospective Review vol. 2 (London: Charles and Henry Baldwin, 1820), 351–81; and then in the The Three Brothers or the Travels and Adventures of Sir Anthony, Sir Robert, and Sir Thomas Sherley, in Persia, Russia, Turkey, Spain (London: Hurst, Robinson and co., 1825), 34–35; the incident appears only in the latter version, which according the volume’s anonymous editors, is the most complete one, containing material “that is now for the first time made public” (23). Subsequently, the incident was also extracted in Major General Briggs’s “A Short Account of the Sherley Family,” Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland 6 (1840): 77–104, on 84–85. It is only modern Iranian and Turkish scholars who have consistently pointed to the usefulness of the Manwaring account for Shakespearean and early modern English literary and cultural studies. See, for instance, the electronic essay of Gonul Bakay, “The Turk in English Renaissance Literature,” (2003), 11.20.2011 <http://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-turkey/article_982.jsp>. The most recent Western discussion of the account is Jonathan Burton’s essay, “The Shah’s Two Ambassadors,” in Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture, ed. Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing co., 2009), 23–40, which, however, is curiously silent about the parallels between the account’s text of the episode of the Turk’s manhandling of George Manwaring in Aleppo and Othello’s lines about the “malignant Turk” in Aleppo in Othello.

10. See the head words for “traduce” in Thomas Cooper, Thesaurus Linguae Romanae & Britannicae Tam Accurate Congestus . . . 1584; Randle Cotgrave, A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues (1611); Robert Cawdrey, A Table Alphabetical, Conteyning and Teaching the True Writing, and Understanding of Hard Vsuall English Wordes, (1604), all in Lexicon of Early Modern English (LEME) at http://leme.library.utoronto.ca/search/results.cfm.

11. Number derived from a search of the electronic full text data base of English

12. For most Ottoman and non-Ottoman Muslims, Europeans were Christians and Europe was the simply “Lands of the Christians,” or the bilad al-nasara; for some discussion of the primary sources on this topic see Nabil Matar, *In the Land of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003), xvi–xviii, xxx. Some related primary sources on this would include: Sidi Ali Reis, *Mira-ul Memalik or The Mirror of Countries* (Dersaadet, Istanbul: Ikdam Matbaasi, 1895), and Eveliya Celebi, *Seyahetnama or Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Joseph von Freiherr Hammer-Purgstall (London: Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1834)


16. Francis Gastrell and Francis Robert Raines, *Notitia Cestriensis Or Remains Historical and Literary Connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester*, vol. VIII: V.1 (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1845), 209n201. The note says:

The Vernons were Lords Paramount of Baddiley (Bedilei in Domesday) in the 16th Edward I., and the mesne Lords were the family of Praers of Barthomley, whose descendent and co-heiress, Joan Praers, about the time of Richard II married Willian Mainwaring of Peover, and conveyed a moiety of the manor to this family, . . .

After the death of Sir Henry Mainwaring of Peover Bart in 1797, this Manor was sold by his executors.

Peover is in Cheshire, which adjoins Shropshire on its northern border.

17. For a recent detailed, if at times defensive, account of Essex’s increasing troubles with Elizabeth by the turn of the century, see Paul Hammer, “Shakespeare’s Richard II, the Play of 7 December 1601, and the Essex Uprising,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2008): 1–35.


20. *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series East Indies, China, and Japan*


22. John Taylor, The Carriers Cosmographie: Or a Briefe Relation, of the Innes, Ordinaries, Hosteries, and Other Lodgings in, and Neere London, Where the Carriers, Waggons, Foote-Posts and Higglers, Doe Usually Come, from Any Parts, Townes, Shires and Countries, of the Kingdome of England, Principality of Wales, as Also from the Kingdomes of Scotland and Ireland with Nominacion of What Daises of the Weeke They Doe Come to London, and on What Daies They Returne. (London: Printed by A[nne] G[riffin], 1637), section “C.”


27. Ibid., 70.


31. Sidney Lee, in his Shakespeare’s Life and Work (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 72–73, and in the Dictionary of National Biography (New York: Macmillan, 1898), 56: 323–24, was the chief proponent of Thorpe’s reputation as a predatory dealer of manuscripts, and held that the sonnets were a ms illicitly acquired by Thorpe’s assistant William Hall (reading the dedication’s “begetter” as procurer) and that he is the dedicatee, not William Herbert, and Katherine Duncan Jones in “Was the 1609 Shakespeare Sonnets Really Unauthorized?” in Stephen Orgel, ed., Shakespeare’s Poems (New York: Garland, 1999), 111–46, argues the manuscript was a straight purchase offered by Shakespeare to Thorpe in 1609 and that Thorpe was not an unsavory dealer but a perfectly respectable publisher; for a good survey of the history of the scholarly debates on the meaning of the dedication of the Shakespeare Sonnets, and including on Thomas Thorpe’s reputation, see Donald W. Foster, “Master W. H., R. I.,” PMLA 102, no. 1 (1987): 42–54. Thorpe remains a figure whose business reputation is difficult to satisfactorily ascertain.


33. For a detailed documentary study of Bacon’s relationship with Essex, based on their letters, and including of Bacon’s complicated divergence from Essex by the end of the decade, see Andrew Gordon, “‘A Fortune of Paper Walls’: The Letters of Francis Bacon and the Earl of Essex,” English Literary Renaissance 37, no. 3 (2007):


43. Juliet Dusinberre, “Pancakes and a Date for As You Like It,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44, no. 44 (1993): 371–405; see 380 n35.


45. Qtd. in Nielson, 467.


50. Stallybrass, “Marginal England,” 28. For historical sources, see for instance, Morison’s and Biddulph’s references to the thriving multiethnicity of Ottoman Aleppo and Constantinople.

51. For sixteenth century notations of this etymology see the entries for the word


56. See for example his letter to Robert Cecil of March 5, 1604, where he cites the successes of his Persian adventure for England, cited by Evelyn Philip Shirley, *The Sherley Brothers*, 48–49.


58. Stallybrass, “Marginal England,” 27–39; Eldem et al., *The Ottoman City*, 23–25. Abu Hamid Muhammad Al Ghazali was a highly influential 11th century Islamic philosopher whose brilliant demonstration, in his *Tahafut al Falasifa* (The Incoherence of Philosophy), of the inadequacy of (western) rationalism for understanding revelation, and his concomitant advocacy of faith as the exclusive instrument of understanding the ultimate truth of creation, led unfortunately in subsequent centuries to a rigid, intolerant, and literalist Islam, including in modern times to fundamentalism, even though, ironically, Ghazali himself was a rationalist sufi mystical thinker, discernibly influenced by Platonic thought and opposed to the literalist bookish Islamic theology of his times. See Roy Jackson, *Fifty Key Figures in Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 89, and Anthony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 106.


60. Stallybrass, “Marginal England,” 29. Stallybrass points out on the same page, citing another English account of Aleppo, a negative one from more than a decade earlier, that of John Eldred, who on arrival in the city was imprisoned as a spy, on the instigation of Portuguese and Venetian merchants angered by English piracy of Catholic ships on the high seas, that if the English had reasons to fear for their safety it was from Catholics and not the Turks. That the Turks entertained the Venetian and Portuguese view of the wrongness of English piracy also points, though, to the Ottomans’ valuation of legality in the conduct of international trade.

61. Matar, “The Renegade in English Seventeenth-Century Imaginations,” 495. For a brief acknowledgments of this phenomenon, see Lisa Hopkins and Matthew


64. Charry and Shahoni, Emissaries in Early Modern Literature, 39–40.


67. Vernon J. Parry, Appendix 1, 95–104.


69. As described, for instance, by David Scott Kastan: “Plays were not autonomous and self-contained literary objects . . . [they were] inevitably subjected to the multiple collaborations of production . . . where of course, actors, prompters, collaborators, annotators, revisers, copyists, compositors, printers and proofreaders all would have a hand in shaping the play-text” Shakespeare after Theory (New York: Routledge, 1999), 33.

These [early modern] texts were open to penetration and alteration not only by Shakespeare himself and his fellow actors but also by multiple theatrical and extra theatrical scriveners, by theatrical annotators, adapters and revisers (who might cut and add), by censors, and by compositors and proof readers. (431)

71. Even on a syntactical level it may be possible to read “A malignant and a Tur­banned Turk” as two figures, since Shakespeare’s linguistic practice includes the deployment of separate articles to denote a single figure as well as two separate figures or entities, at least two instances of the latter of which include the following: “let/ A Roman and a British ensign wave/ Friendly together;” Cymbeline in Cymbeline, V.v. 480–82; “Enter a King and a Queen, the Queen embracing him and he her,” Stage directions for the Dumb Show, Hamlet, 3.2.

72. For some instances of this association, see Bible (Coverdale), 1535, Job xiv. 2; J. Sylvester tr. G. de S. Du Bartas Deuine Weekes & Wks. (new ed. 1606), ii. iii. 78, both cited under the head words for “smote” in the Oxford English Dictionary online edition at http://www.oed.com; and Thomas Wilson’s A Christian Dictionary (1612) in LEME.

73. For a slightly different deployment of the critical metaphor of “re-turning” in Othello, see the recent essay by Dennis Austin Britton, “Re-‘turning’ Othello: Trans­formative and Restorative Romance,” English Literary History 78, no. 1 (2011): 27–44.

75. See the last group of scholars named above in n. 57.
77. This is a debate aptly summed up by the title of Knapp’s essay, although Knapp’s point about the problem with Kastan’s ignoring the always-already theorized nature of the “actual historical circumstances of literary production and reception” that the latter calls for (in his quotation from Kastan cited above), may be in itself problematic, as I point out here.

79. Ibid.

The long-held scholarly view of James’s imperial style of kingship has not been much affected by recent studies of James’s reign that have sought to rehabilitate his reputation, such as the last three studies named here, as a politically shrewd and experienced rather than an inept king, with scholars explaining his ambitious monarchical stance as the result of conflicts in the evolving history of English monarchy over the necessity of absolute governance from Yorkist times and especially from the Reformation onwards, and as the result of James’s anxieties about challenges to his right to the English throne in general and to the unified throne of Britain in particular.

84. See note 61.
85. The event of James’s self-titling is obliquely recorded in the diary entry of the religious squire, Adam Winthrop for October 24, 1603: “it was proclaimed that England and Scotland should be called Great Britain,” cited by Nicholas Canny in “The Origins of Empire: An Introduction,” in William Roger Louis, Alaine M. Low, Nicholas Canny, The Oxford History of the British Empire vol. 1 (Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press, 1998), 5. Winthrop’s date is wrong. The year should be 1604. See the Calendar of State Papers: Domestic Series The Reign of James I 1603–1610, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans and Roberts, 1857), 159, and James Larkin and Paul F. Hughes, ed., Stuart Royal Proclamations: Royal Proclamations of James I 1603-25 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 94. Louis et al., however, argue defensively against the notion that the title represented English expansionism. For more recent and less defensive views see, Kevin Curran, Marriage, Performance, and Politics at the Jacobean Court (Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009), who shows that James’s interventions in the way the kingdom was represented was rhetorical and administrative (22), and W. B. Patterson, King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), who points out that James’s appropriation of the title of “King of Great Britain” was connected to what the monarch saw as “exciting opportunities of peace for Europe.” (31). For the date of Othello’s performance at court before James on November 1, 1604, see Othello in The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works, ed. Richard Proudfoot and Ann Thompson (London: Thompson Learning, 2001), 941; Honigmann, ed., Othello, 344, and McMillin, “The Othello Quarto,” 72.
87. In the firman (decree) that the London merchant John Mildenhall seeks and gets from the Mughal emperor Jahangir for trading in Gujarat, on the west coast of India. See John Stewart Bowman, Columbia Chronologies of Asian History and Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 280; and Thomas Goddard Bergin and Jennifer Speake, Encyclopedia of the Renaissance and the Reformation (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 154. For the staging of the sea fights before James, show-


91. Calbi, “*Othello’s* Ghostly Reminders,” 342.