Moors in Spain and Ethnic Cleansing

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Abstract

The article focuses on the images of African and particularly Muslim protagonists in an Early Modern dramatic work by Thomas Dekker with the aim of establishing the European perception of Moors, as African Muslims were generally described, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The purpose of analyzing an English play of this period is to discover the kind of attitudes the English government and certain writers and playwrights displayed in their approach to what was considered as the problem of the presence of the Moors in England, and Europe at large. The article also attempts to locate the debate about the European commercial and strategic policy towards the people of Morocco and the East, into the context of the treatment meted out to the Moors of Spain after the fall of their Empire during the fifteenth century. Moreover, the historical repercussions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the expulsion of Moors from Spain and the ensuing concepts of 'ethnic purity' are also discussed in terms of the literary representations of the race and identity of people of colour in Europe. These ideas serve to develop the argument, presented in the article, that the literary propaganda against racial integration paved the way for the prejudicial view of non-European, particularly non-white, people in Europe.

Moors in Spain and the Paradigm of Ethnic Cleansing

Students of Literature and History are at present interested in discovering the sources of the genesis of the modern image of the Eastern people in Europe and the tropes which were used in the very early stage of the modern era to convey these images. Most familiar, in this context, are characters like the Prince of Morocco in Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice and Othello in a play of this title. They were depicted on the London stage during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in a manner which emphasized their significance as the 'Other' against whom European identity and race was established.[1] For Renaissance Englishmen the dramatic figure of the Muslim was personified by the people of Morocco and those that represented the Turkish Empire and its satellite states. They were used symbolically in English plays to develop the concept of the Eastern intruder in Western lands whose role was ambiguous, not only because of their place in the polemical representations of Islamic rulers, but also since they were employed within, and by European states in their own internal and external strategic wars. It is interesting to note that from 1589 to 1610, plays about Africans in European

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[1] Dympna Callaghan, ' "Othello was a white man": properties of race on Shakespeare's stage' in Alternative Shakespeares, general editor, Terence Hawkes, Vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.192-215 (p.196). Callaghan has argued that in regimes of cultural representation, negritude and blackness on stage was presented to intensify, subsume and absorb all aspects of otherness.

lands gained popularity even though they provide evidence of a distinctly antagonistic reaction of some of the prominent playwrights to the idea of Eastern strangers in European societies.

At the time, a sequence of events conspired to turn the attention of the playwrights and the audience to the detrimental implications of the commencement of the English trade with Eastern countries in which the nations of North Africa played an important role as the Berber regions supplied a very important passage for the English mercantile companies on their way to the Middle East and further East. The historical accounts of the period indicate that the ensuing complications with the Ottoman and Barbary regimes did create some measure of disillusionment with Eastern financial ventures.[2] The close and extended proximity of the English traders with the cultures and societies of the African peoples enabled them to learn of nations that had hitherto been known only through Spanish histories of the Moorish Empire or through travel literature of the period. Critics need to be reminded that the plays which presented Moors as foreigners in European lands were conceived against a background of the well known historical expeditions involving merchant-knights of England, like Essex, Drake and Norris whose activities led to complications in East-West relations. I believe that characters of Eastern men dwelling within Christendom reflected the suspicion and mistrust that both the playwrights and the concerned audience felt towards the new English commerce with the East and indeed towards the interference of these strangers in English national projects. According to Emily C. Bartels, the increasing commerce between England and Africa impacted on English perceptions of the North Africans in particular and Muslims in general by the emergence of the character of the Moor who is 'a controversial insider within Euro-Mediterranean domains'.[3]

The following interpretation of Thomas Dekker's play **Lust's Dominion; or, The Lascivious Queen**[4] concentrates on the ways in which the dramatist seems to have opposed the English mercantile approach as well as the perceived complicity of the English establishment with the non-Christian 'strangers' from the East in ambiguous enterprises. When Hakluyt dedicated the 1599 edition of Principal Navigations to Sir Robert Cecil, he implied that there was a section of society that persisted in its hostility towards the English employment and assimilation of the 'strangers' of oriental backgrounds, even after twenty years of Anglo-Ottoman treaties. He vehemently rejected any criticism of English foreign policy towards the East and felt compelled to justify the English traffic with the Moors and Turks as Muslims were generically known:

> Now here if any man shall take exception against this our new trade with Turkes and misbeleevers, he shall shew himselfe a man of small experience in old and

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2 See Lists and Analysis of State Papers : January to December1595, ed. By Richard Bruce Wernham, 6 vols. (London: St. Martins Press, 1994), vol. VI, pp.441. All future references to this series of compilations of British Government State Papers will henceforth be referred to as LASP.

3 Emily C. Bartels, 'Othello and the Moors' in Early Modern English Drama ed. By Garrett A. Sullivan,J, Patrick Cheney and Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp..140-151 (p.143).

4 Lust's Dominion; or, The Lascivious Queen: A Tragedie in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 4 vols (Cambridege: Cambridge University Press, 1961), IV. All further references to the play are from this text.

> new Histories, or wilfully lead with partialitie, or some worse humour[...] who is ignorant that the French, the Genouois, Florentines, Reguseans, Venetians, and Polonians are at this day in league with the Grand Signior, and have beene these many yeeres, and have used trade and traffike in his dominions? Who can deny that the Emperor of Christendome hath had league with the Turke, and payd him long a pension for a part of Hungarie? And who doth not acknowledge, that either hath travailed the remote parts of the world, or read the Histories of this later age, that the Spaniards and Portugales in Barbarie, in the Indies, and elsewhere, have many kindes of Gentiles and Pagans, and that which is more, doe pay them pensions, and use them in their service and warres? Why then should that be blamed in us which is usuall and common to the most part of other Christian nations? Therefore let our neighbours, which have found most fault with this new league and traffike, thanke themselves and their own foolish pride, whereby we were urged to seeke further to provide vent for our naturall commodities.[5]

As I will argue, Hakluyt's apology for trade with the misbelievers indicates some of the themes which can be discerned in the play. His view took into consideration the stirring events that had taken place in the last decades of Elizabethan rule, which had alarmed the concerned public. Later, Purchas also corroborated this high level of English involvement in the 'voluntarie English adventures in the Civill uncivill broiles of .... Sunne-scorched Barbarie, of Turkish and Persian fights by sea, the Mogols by Land'.[6]

However, by the end of the sixteenth century, the official culture of emergent capitalism was too well established to be displaced by traditional values that opposed any league with 'misbeleevers'. There was a tacit acceptance of economic, and even military alliance, with the Eastern people as a necessary evil practiced by nearly all the other nations of Christendom. It is not surprising that the theatrical depiction of the Moorish strangers, as well as their Arabic and Turkish associates, assumed a deep significance against the crosscurrents of social, political and mercantile forces that drove England's foreign ventures.

Like Marlowe and Shakespeare, Dekker debated the question of the assimilation of the Moors and Turks into European society, and questioned their ability to defend the host countries as paid soldiers or mercenaries. These issues were conveyed through the sensational themes of adultery and miscegenation in other well known plays as well, like Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus (1592-4), and Othello (1601), as has already been mentioned. They are of interest here as they are located in the early modern historical and political context, containing few classical allusions.

It is worth noting that these Moorish plays were produced at a time when the ambassadorial visit from Morocco was either expected or had taken place. The arrival of

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5 Richard Hakluyt, The Principal Navigations,Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation, 12 vols (Glasgow: James MacLehose ans Sons, 1903), I, pp.lxix-lxx

6 Samuel Purchas, Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes, 20 vols (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1905), VI, pp.53-54.

Muley Ahmed al-Mansour's representative was a prominent event in London in 1601.[7] The continuing negotiations with the Moroccans on Portugal and on the Eastern trade made this period crucial for English plans to compete with Spain's empire and to emulate the success of the Venetian republic in terms of international business. The following analysis of Dekker's play attempts to explore the sentiments that these works conveyed in terms of contemporary racial and commercial prejudices, which appear to have been prevalent in London at the time.

Although Lust's Dominion is a little known 'Tragedie' based on the theme of the passionate Moor who causes grief and havoc in the Spanish society which harbours him, it is of interest here because it provides the justification for Europe's persecution of Moors and the final solution proposed by both the Spanish, and the English regimes to either exile, or eliminate, them from Europe on the pretext of the imminent danger they presented to the security of Europe at the turn of the century. Bartels argues that Queen Elizabeth herself 'participated in collapsing the Moor into an incriminating category of blackness, even as she was forging important trade relations with Morocco's rulers. In a series of proclamations she ordered that certain "blackmores" be deported from England as part of a prisoner exchange with Spain.' [8]

Dekker's character of the Moor is also shown to be driven by a ruthless ambition for power and kingship which is best understood in the context of Spain and its conflict with the Moors, after the fall of their seven hundred years old empire.[9] Dekker's work represents one view of the contemporary English conception of the conflict between Spain and the Moors, which also had implications for England's own controversial relations with Barbary.[10] In the play, the characters enact a period of Spanish history when the Moors experienced a dispossession and reversal of fortune of such magnitude that it transformed their role reducing them to abject exiles after they had been kings of Spain for centuries. Furthermore, the play conveys an image of the Moors that raises issues of national security, religious imperatives and racial purity associated with their presence in Europe. The theme of the decline of the Moorish Empire is simplistically conveyed by an imaginary plot in which Eleazer, the Moor, tries to regain the Spanish Empire in an orgy of blood and lust until he is finally killed and his followers banished from Spain. The history of the last era of the Moors in Spain is rewritten, justifying their

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7 See E.A.J Honigman's introduction to Othello ed. by E.A.J Honigman, The Arden Shakespeare (Walton-on Thames, Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1997), p.2. All further references to the text of the play are from this edition.

8 See Emily C. Bartels, ' Othello and the Moor', p.149.

9 Norman Housely, The Later Crusades, 1274-1580: From Lyon to Alcazar (New York, Oxford University Press, 1992. In the context of the beginning of the *cruzada* and the persecution of the Moors in Spain (1482), Housely comments on the Spanish 'success in adapting the crusade indulgence to government's financial needs, to such an extent that the Spanish Crown was prepared to fight a long battle against the forces of Catholic reform in order to retain it' (pp. 410-411).

10 See Samuel Purchas, 1905, VI, 99-100. In 1609, the writer of 'A Historie of Barbary' refers to Spain's military and financial support of one faction of the Moors led by Muley Sheck against Muley Sidan who, for his part, had many Englishmen on his side. There is also a reference to Sir Anthony Sherley who tried to incite another Moroccan warlord, Muley Boferes, against the Turks. The King of Spain 'royally rewarded him for his travailes with Boferes' (p.100).

expulsion. The treatment of the Moors by the Spanish is meant to be a precedence for posterity to emulate.

> *Philip*. And for this Barbarous *Moor,* and his black train
> Let all the Moors be banished from Spain (V.iii.182-183).

The dramatic parallels with contemporary history give credence to the view of some critics that the play was initially written in 1600, but revised in 1609 to include references to the final expulsion of the Spanish Moors.[11] However, Hoy believes the play to be based on an earlier work from the Marlovian era and attributes only its revised form of 1600 to Dekker.[12] He is of the opinion that the references to the expulsion of the Moors are inconclusive as evidence of a later date and could refer as much to an intention as to a realized fact.

I suggest that the appearance of the play at the turn of the century indicates the dramatist's complex response to the Elizabethan government's association with the Moroccan regime, although critics like Kathleen E. McLuskie have contended that it is difficult to determine the popular politics of such plays.[13] I contend that the play's didactic purpose lies in the lesson that Spanish history offered to the English. The example of the rise and fall of the Empire of the Moors is clearly meant to remind the English audience of the unpredictable consequences of England's own negotiations with the Moors.

In the play, the exotic protagonist is depicted as a stranger in Spain, with an ambiguous cultural orientation. His dramatic representation is often confused and conflated with references to the 'Blackamores' (III.ii.233) or the 'Indians' who adore the 'Star' (III.ii.245), the emphasis being on his 'base born' fugitive status (III.ii.252). However, his distinctly martial persona and his marital ties with the Spanish aristocracy allow him access to the inner circles of the ruling hierarchy for his 'wife's sake' (I.ii.228).

Instead of merely relying on wealth or subterfuge, the Moor and his servants have a claim to the affections of the ' Rude multitude' (II.ii.117), as the Moors prove their loyalty by their valour and sacrifices on the battlefield where they are employed against the Ottomans (II.ii.120), a cause close to the hearts of the Spanish people. But as Eleazar's plots against the King and his heir succeed, he has the ability to usurp the place of the Christian rulers and become 'Castiles Sovereign' (III.ii.242). The Spanish queen refers to the impressionable public who can easily be moved to support the Moor:

> *Qu. Mo*. Tickle the years of the Rude Multitude,
> With *Eleazers* praises; guild his virtues,
> Naples recovery and his victories
> Atchieved against the Turkish Ottoman (II,ii,117-120).

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11 Larry S. Champion, Thomas Dekker and the Traditions of English Drama in American University Studies: Series IV, English Language and Literature (New York: Peter Lang, 1985), XXVII, p.150.

12 Cyrus Hoy, Introductions, Notes and Commentaries to texts in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 4 vols (Cambridge, London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), IV, 62.

13 Kathleen E. McLukie, Dekker and Heywood (London: St. Martins Press, 1994), p. 23.

Moreover, the Moor's popularity and appeal are conveyed by the common dramatic tropes of lust and violence. The possibility of sexual contact between the alien and Spanish women serves to embody the perceived pollution of the body politic by the intrusion of the Moor and his followers into Spanish society.

It has been suggested by critics that the analogy with Spain was relevant to the enterprises of the Elizabethans and their conduct of relations with the Moors. Morocco formed the site of commercial and imperial rivalry between Spain and England:

> As a model that England both followed and distanced itself from, Spain has a particular complex role: it fostered the lucrative trade in gold and slaves and had its own history of Moorish invasion and conquest. Having no African properties of its own, Spain relied on Portugal for the steady supply of slaves to run the sugar mills and gold mines that were the source of its jealously guarded wealth.[14]

It was also in Spain that the modern form of racism first appeared in the forcible expulsion or conversion of Jews and Muslims, as evident in the crusade bull of Sixtus IV for commencing war in Granada (1482).[15] It became official policy to condone the persecution of all subjects, even the converts known as Moriscos, who were suspected of having a non-Christian faith in their past. The Spanish Inquisition introduced the divisive polemics of "limpieza de sangre" in the 1480s to institutionalize the doctrine of racial purity that sought to exclude and criminalize anyone with an admixture of Jewish or Moorish blood.[16] Non-Christian religious faith ceased to be a question of choice and was transformed into an inherent sin. 'To the consternation of the Spanish nobility, who like common people had in previous centuries widely intermingled with Moors and Jews, the only authentic "old" Christians turned out to be, in the end, very few'.[17] This policy lead to the disputes about national loyalty, lineage and legitimacy in the Spanish Empire, intensifying the revulsion associated with the dreaded 'stain' of Moorishness, even though everyone was, perforce, Christian.

The subject of the Spanish persecution of the Moors continued to be debated in Protestant England, even years after the Moorish expulsion when the Anglo-Spanish peace was made in the Jacobean era. Francis Bacon, in his 'Advertisement Touching a Holy War' (1622), mentioned it with disapproval and stated that 'it seems God was not well pleased with the deed'.[18] Bacon made his condemnation of the event clear by referring to the lack of religious justification: 'for that numbers of those supposed Moors, being tried now by

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14 Kim F. Hall, Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.17

15 Norman Housely, The Later Crusades, p.405.

16 See Verena Stolcke, 'Invaded Women: Gender, race, and class in the formation of colonial society' in Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period, ed. by Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 272-286.

17 Stolcke, p.278.

18 Francis Bacon, The Works of Francis Bacon, collected and ed. by James Spedding and Douglas Denton Heath, Literary and Professional Works, Vol. VII (London: Longman & Company, 1892), II, 20

their exile, continue constant in the faith, and true Christians in all points, save in the thirst of revenge'[19]

Concerns about racial identity were, particularly, expressed by Elizabethans dramatists when the population of Moors rose to such an extent in the country that Elizabeth attempted an expulsion of the 'Moors' in 1596, and significantly in 1601.[20] It is not surprising that this was also the time when the plays about Moors were written. The African presence in England had grown as a direct consequence of the English ventures, commercial and imperialist, that brought English merchants in contact with Africa or with the Iberian slave trade.

It is important to note that it was after Elizabeth's recognition of Don Antonio as King of Portugal that the Guinea Company was established to formalize these English contacts with Africans.[21] The Englishmen who traded in Barbary also made references to the slave trade in Africa, of particular benefit to Portugal and Spain.[22] The importance of Portugal lay in its traffic with Barbary which covered the coastline between Tripoli and the Atlantic. It provided the meeting ground between the Eastern trade and the African lands to the south. The proposed English colonization of Northern Amercia, with the help of slave labour, also added to the importance of this region. England was also threatened by the Spanish manipulation of Moroccan politics through the Moorish exiles who posed a potential danger to the stability of Africa and its markets.

Dekker's play-world suggested the consequences of the assimilation and employment of Moors as instruments in the political and military strategies of the Christian nations with all the sensationalism that ensured the engagement of the Renaissance audience in this topical subject.[23] In my view, the dramatization of episodes of Spanish and Italian history at the time when these nations were in direct conflict with the Eastern Empires, either Moorish or Turkish, represent the dramatists' fear of England's own dangerous liaisons with the Eastern strangers.

Machiavelli had expressed similar fears in his advice to princes on their use of foreign militias. According to him, mercenary captains cannot be relied upon 'for they will always aspire to their own greatness'.[24] He also cites the example of the Byzantine emperor of Constantinople, who, to oppose his neighbours, 'put 10,000 Turks into Greece, who after the war would not go away again, which was the beginning of the servitude of Greece to the infidels'.[25]

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19 Bacon, p.20.

20 Hall, p.14.

21 Hall, p. 21.

22 Purchas His Pilgrimes, 1905, VI, 110. According to Purchas, five thousand slaves were transported every year from the Spanish controlled regions of Africa, and sold in the West Indies with 'a good taxe payd to the Crown of Portugal'.

23 See Purchas His Pilgrimes, 1905, VI, pp. 94-95 where there is a description of the death of numerous Englishmen in the wars fought between Sidan and his rivals in Barbary (1607).

24 Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, translated into English by Luigi Ricci (London: published by Grant Richards, 1903), p. 48.

25 Niccolo Machiavelli, p. 54.

In the play, Eleazer also plays the role of the mercenary, with all the villainy seen in the earlier characterization of Muly Hamet in Peele's Alcazar. In Peele's play, the satanic Moor is balanced by the good and noble Abdelmelec but Dekker's character is more in keeping with turn of the century politics than the Alcazar play. As I have argued, in the earlier play England's initial good relations with Barbary were reflected in the sympathetic approach to the Moors and their wars of succession.

Eleazer's role, on the other hand, symbolizes the corruption and decadence of the Spanish court, headed by a 'lustful king'(II.iii.144), in which the Moors still play a part, however marginal, as servants of the ruling elite. These fighters are ostensibly employed as defenders of the Spanish state but harbour a sense of injustice and persecution in the aftermath of the fall of their Empire. The Spanish characters do not appear in any favourable light either. Their culpability is shown by the prevailing atmosphere of vice and sexual promiscuity.

Eleazer is driven to take advantage of this incontinent court because his supreme desire is to avenge the defeat of the Moors and the loss of their dynasty. He vows to wreak havoc in Spain by gaining access to the lascivious queen of the play's title. The Moor's bestial sexuality enraptures the abandoned Queen and sets in motion the tragic events that destroy the royal family. The frank brutality of the Moor's speech to his Spanish father-in-law introduces his intentions in barely concealed terms:

> The Queen with me, with me, a Moore, a Devill,
> A slave of *Barbary*, a dog; for so
> Your silken Courtiers christen me, but father
> Although my flesh be tawny, in my veines,
> Runs blood as red, and royal as the best
> And proud'st in *Spain*, there do'es old man:
> My father, who with his Empire, lost his life,
> And left me Captive to a Spanish Tyrant, Oh!
> Go tell him! Spanish Tyrant! tell him, do!
> he that can loose a kingdom and not rave,
> He's a tame jade, I am not, tell old *Philip*
> I call him Tyrant; here's a sword and arms,
> A heart, a head, and so pish, 'tis but death (I.i.151-163).

The above lines allude to the revolutionary change in Spain that saw an end to the power and glory of the Moors, and the way in which all signs of the Moors were removed, both from the politics and the genealogy of the Spanish people. The ideas of the purity of the Spanish bloodlines and race is derided by Eleazer in his eloquent inversion of the concept of royalty. His reference to his 'tawny' skin and royal 'blood' mocks the new order of the Spanish royalty, represented by the 'silken courtiers' and the 'Spanish Tyrant'. While there is a dramatic attempt here to play to the Elizabethan audience's hostility to Spain, there is no effort to engage the sympathies of the audience on behalf of the Moor, as there was in Othello.

The ensuing melodrama is based on Eleazer's fatal seduction, physical and metaphorical, of the royal Spanish women. The Spanish husbands, lovers and kinsmen also succumb to the web of deceit and lust generated by the dark oriental. He embodies both satanic and Machiavellian traits which make him irresistible to the Spanish Queen. She is completely enslaved by his charms and admits: 'A Queen hath made her self thy Concubine' (I.i.101).

His equally besotted Spanish wife, Maria, is used by him to allure and then entrap King Ferdnando. To satisfy his unlawful lust, the Spanish king is ready to 'banish by a law all Moors from Spain'(III.ii. 46). This is a dramatic trivialization of the Spanish laws against miscegenation. The King vows: 'It shall be death for any Negroes hand, /To touch the beauty of a Spanish dame' (III.ii.48-49). However, despite all his efforts, the chaste Maria escapes the importunate King, who is in turn killed by the seemingly jealous Moor.

Thus, another aspect of the inclusion of Moors at the highest level, is that they threaten racial purity, the ultimate fragmentation in the eyes of the audience. It is unequivocally visible in differences of colour and appearance (III.ii.164-165). This colour bias is exposed in the speech of Philip, the rightful heir to the throne, when he renounces all allegiance to his mother by alluding to her matrimonial plans: 'I may be well transformed from what I am,/When a black divel is husband to my dam'(IV.i.24). Moreover, he has another grievance against her:

> Thou left'st me to the mercy of a Moor,
> That hath damnation dy'd upon his flesh;
> 'Twas well: thou Mother did'st unmotherly
> Betray thy true son to false bastardy:(V.ii.19-22)

This motif of illegitimacy is brought to the attention of the audience when Eleazer, to justify his own ambition, casts doubt on the legitimacy of the Spanish succession by making the besotted Queen accuse her rightful heir of being illegitimate. She prefers to 'Choose rather to rip up a Queenes disgrace,/ Then by concealing it to set the Crown/ upon a bastards head' (III.ii.230-1). In this way, issues of controversial succession are debated at the instigation of the Moor with the intention of dividing the country and creating a political and moral vacuum. These pejorative references to Spanish royalty also indicate that the play is as sceptical of Spanish pride as it is unequivocally anti-Moorish.

The public, too, are swayed by the Moor's claims of patriotism and have little faith in either their own King or the nobility. The Queen Mother refers to this fickle nature of her people:

> ... the mad people
> Tempestuous like the Sea run up and down
> Some cry kill the bastard, some the Moor;
> Some cry, God save King Philip; and some cry,
> God save the Moor; some others, he shall die (III.iv.10-14)

The ambitious and lustful Cardinal Medoza is also enticed to collaborate with the Queen but falls a victim when his own foolish love for her is exposed. Consequently, both the royalty and the Church are implicated in their insane power struggle and sexual rivalries. The factional strife and bloodshed, incited by the intrigues of the Moors, prove destructive to the Spanish Empire. By exploiting the Queen's illicit passion for him, Eleazer gains her support and that of the entire court in his ruthless bid to attain 'Castiles Crown'. He is fervent in his false declarations of allegiance to Spain and pretends to be the only true servant of the state:

> *Eleazor.* Prince *Philip* shall not be my Soveraign,
> Philip's a bastard, and *Fernando*'s dead;
> Mendoza sweats to wear Spains Diadem,
> *Philip* hath sworn confusion to this Realm,
> They are both up in arms, warrs flames do shine
> Like lightening in the air, wherefore my Lords
> Look well on Eleazer; value me
> Not by my sun-burnt cheek, but by my losse of blood,
> Which I have sacrificed in Spain's defence (III. ii. 199-207).

Eleazer's seems to resemble the historic figure of Prince Nasir al-Ghalib, who was used by Spain in its African and Mediterranean policies to instigate an uprising in Morocco that only ended when al-Ghalib was killed.[26] Eleazer's services to Spain against the Turks are another instance of the contemporary practice of Philip II to support the Moorish contenders opposed to Ottoman influence in Barbary. In this way, the dramatist expresses the fears of some Englishmen that Spanish influence might erode England's own aspirations in Barbary:

This historical allusion is further supported by the queen's references to the deceased Spanish king's exploits in Africa:

> *Queen Mother.* Your deceast King made warr in Barbarie,
> Won Tunis, conquered Fesse, and hand to hand,
> Slew great Abdela, King of Fesse, and father
> To that Barbarian Prince. (V. i. 90-93).

A close examination of the speech of the King of Portugal, in the play, further indicates that the failure of the Portuguese mission and the consequent indictment of the King of Morocco may also have a bearing on the meaning of the lines below as they refer to the influence of Spain over Portugal:

> *K.Port.* Poor Spain, how is the body of thy peace
> Mangled and torn by an ambitious Moor!
> How is thy Prince and Councellors abus'd

[26] See LASP vol VI, (January to December1595), p.441

And trodden under the base foot of scorn
Wrong'd Lords, *Emanuel* of *Portugal* partakes
A feeling share in all your miseries:
And though the tardy-hand of slow delay
With-held us from preventing your mishaps;
Yet shall revenge dart black confusion
Into the bosom of that damned fiend. (IV. i. 1-10)

The untrustworthiness of the Moorish renegades employed as mercenaries, is borne out by Eleazer's boast that he owes loyalty to none. He aims to overthrow the Spanish nobility with the express desire to avenge ' My wrongs, dishonours, and my discontents' (I.ii.185). He has no illusions about either his ideology or his statelessness as he confesses to being a rootless, wandering exile, capable of being bought by anyone willing to pay for his services:

Eleazer. Hah! banish me, s'foot, why say they do;
Ther's Portugal a good air, and has Moors; the Turke
Pure Divell, and allowes enough to fat
The sides of villainy; good living there:
I can live there, and there, and there,
Troth 'tis, a villain can live any where (I. iii. 173-179).

In this way, the play may be viewed as a propaganda of he authorities to distort the image of the Moors and portray the Moorish intervention in Europe as a threat. It is meant to act as a warning against adopting an open policy towards the Moor and promotes the concepts of Ethnic cleansing already being practised in Spain. In this regard, **All's Lost by Lust** (1619) is another early modern play based on the early history of the Moorish conquest of Spain. The plot describes the arrival of the Moors at the behest of an aggrieved Spanish nobleman, whose daughter has been raped by the Spanish King Roderigo:

Julianus, for a wrong done to his daughter,
The fatall engine that hath beat downe Spain,
Revolted from his king, and set that Moore up,
Who now insults, being a captive then. (V.v.69-72)[27]

The character of the fiendish Moor, in his brief appearance, is even more crudely depicted than Dekker's anti-hero. He is dramatically less engaging than Eleazer as he manages to kill the offending Jullianus and his daughter in one diabolic stratagem. As the years from 711 to 714,[28] represent the time of the action in William Rowley's play, it is significant to the discussion here if only to emphasize the issues associated with the

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[27] The Spanish Gipsie and All's Lost by Lust by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley,ed. by Edgar C. Morris (Boston and London: D.C.Heath and CO, 1908). All references to the play text are from this edition.

[28] Ibid, p.138.

popular dramatic role of Moors as mercenaries. Thus, the plays in question provided the dramatic paradigms for the expulsion of Muslims or Moors from Europe, leading to the discriminatory policies of Western regimes that are still current today.

The above analysis of Dekker's play has also revealed how the performance of the role of the dark-skinned villain on the London stage, not only enabled the playwright to contribute to the English establishment's legitimization of the expulsion of the Moors from England, but also to circulate the myths of the presumed African wickedness and devilry, that were influential in forming the public acceptance of the African slave-trade. The character of the Moor and his final defeat, as revealed in Dekker's play, and indeed in others of this genre, plays a significant role in what scholars of cultural, ethnic and social studies consider the function of story-telling to be, in the mind of the western man: 'the triumphant saga of self-fashioning'. [29] It was not a coincidence that such figures of mercenary Moors appeared at a time when the status of African people was undergoing a radical shift from the position of ascendance to abject subjugation in the aftermath of the fall of Granada. The dramatic reconstruction of Moors, dispossessed and available for slave labour, formed, by contrast, the very basis of the early modern identity of the white European man whose possession of colonized lands and its people assumed an integral place in the emergent capitalist and imperial ventures of Europeans in both, America and Asia. The theatre did indeed participate in the symbolic legitimation of European power that became a historical reality in the succeeding centuries of western domination, at the cost of the freedom and identity of other races and nations.

[29] Gargi Bhattacharyya, Tales of dark-skinned women: Race , gender and global culture , (London: UCL Press, 1998), p. 165.