

TRAVELLING SEXUALITIES, CIRCULATING BODIES, AND EARLY MODERN
ANGLO-OTTOMAN ENCOUNTERS

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ABSTRACT

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explores intricate networks and connections between early modern English and Ottoman cultures. In particular, it traces connected sexual histories and cultures between the two contexts with a focus on the abduction, conversion, and circulation of boys in cross-cultural encounters during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It argues that the textual, aesthetic template of the beautiful abducted boy—i.e. Ganymede, the Indian boy of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Christian boy in Ottoman poetry—intersects with the historical figure of vulnerable youths, who were captured, converted, and exchanged within the global traffic in bodies. It documents the aesthetic, erotic, and historical deployments of this image to suggest that the circulation of these boys casts them as subjects of servitude and conversion, as well as objects of homoerotic desire in the cultural imaginary.

The project thereby uncovers the tensions and dissonances between the aestheticized eroticism of cultural representations and the coercive and violent history of abductions, conversions, and enslavements of the boys. *Traveling Sexualities* also highlights the significance of the Ottomans to the project of queering the Renaissance in early modern studies. It uncovers connected histories between seemingly different spaces and cultures with discursive and material crossings, cross-cultural transferences, movements, interactions, and encounters with a focus on the figure of the boy through queer-historicist contrapuntal readings of multiple genres (English plays, poems, travelogues, chronicles, maps, and paintings; Ottoman poems, historical

chronicles, prose works, festival accounts, miniatures) from mid-fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries. Ultimately, the project enriches our understanding of the global Renaissance by disrupting binaries (self/other, Islam/Christian, European/Ottoman), thereby provoking a re-imagination of what the East and the West signify, as the lines between the two worlds are blurred and rendered permeable. Looking afresh at early modern sexualities through a global perspective, it offers additional queer and postcolonial methodologies for a historicist contrapuntal analysis. The transcultural and the queer converge through the figure of the boy as he circulates within the aesthetic, commercial, and erotic economies shaping Anglo-Ottoman interactions, which in turn highlights a Renaissance without fixed cultural borders. This, therefore, brings to our attention a queerer Renaissance that provides us with valuable insights into our contemporary problems regarding sexuality, gender, race, Islamophobia, orientalism, and cultural imperialism.

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To Siddik Arvas, my father and greatest role model,
who left the world so early... His memory always
reminds me of who I am, and what it means to
pursue knowledge no matter where.

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INTRODUCTION

Queering The Global Renaissance: Traveling Boys in Anglo Ottoman Encounters

I. The Beautiful Boy in Connected Histories

In Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (staged in 1623 and printed in 1630), Vitelli, a Venetian gentleman disguised as a merchant, rents a shop in the Tunisian marketplace to sell, in his servant Gazet's words, "Your choice of China dishes, your pure Venetian crystal of all sorts, of all neat and new fashions, from mirror of the madam to the private utensil her chambermaid, and curious pictures of the rarest beauties of Europa. What do you lack, gentlemen?" (1.3.1-5).¹ Set in Tunis, the play puts "Turks" at its center, and especially after the appearance of the Ottoman princess Donusa in this scene; it figures Ottoman spaces, politics, characters, and customs.

Like other early modern English accounts about the Ottomans—whether travelogues, chronicles, or plays—Massinger's *The Renegado* offers revealing inter-textual deployments in its representation of the Turks. Its probable sources include Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612), Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605) and "Liberal Lover" (1613), George Sandys's *A Relation of a Journey* (1615), and Richard Knolles's *General History of the Turks* (1603) (Vitkus, *Three* 40-41). Such an amalgamation of Spanish, English, and French sources (numerous accounts about the Ottomans were translations from French), which depict Italian, North African, and Turkish characters in the Mediterranean world of the play, uncovers the transcultural nature of the "Turkish" world as imagined on the English stage.

Massinger's play offers an instance of the English gaze on the Ottoman Empire—the Islamic "other" with its expansive power—that has been the focus of the early modern histories

¹ All references to the play are from Vitkus, ed. *Three Turk Plays*, 241-339.

of English exploration, trade, and cross-cultural encounters.² These cross-cultural encounters, as Jyotsna Singh notes in her introduction to *The Global Renaissance*, “generated not only material exchanges within varying and uneven power relations, but also a rich and complex cross-pollination of art, culture, belief systems, and technologies between England and its ‘others,’ both within and outside Europe” (6). Similarly, literary representations of these encounters produced “a new cosmopolitanism” that brought home “the world elsewhere” (6). Global expansion transformed England through material, military, and diplomatic cross-cultural exchanges. Particularly after England joined the Mediterranean marketplace, and experienced first-hand contact with the Ottomans in the late sixteenth century, we see an increasing number of accounts of cross-cultural relations between England and the Ottoman Empire. While English imaginings marked the Turks as the cultural “other,” stressing their religious difference from Christian Europe, the political, commercial, and social exchanges call for a further exploration of such a “rich and complex cross-pollination of art.”

Massinger’s play includes a cosmopolitan global character that offers such cross-pollinations. The marketplace in this transcultural world, for instance, includes various cultural artifacts ranging from China dishes to “curious pictures of the rarest beauties of Europa” that Massinger imagines as objects attracting the Turks as putative customers. What are these “curious pictures” and “rarest beauties” that Gazet mystifies? The objects not only convey the marketplace rhetoric, but also suggest how Massinger perceives and creatively imagines the Ottoman subjects. While Gazet repeats “China dishes, clear crystal glasses, a dumb mistress to make love to” (33-34) in the same scene, we will hear later the list of “rare beauties” from Vitelli, who exhibits the items to the Ottoman princess Donusa. After showing her a mirror “that

² For literary analyses of *The Renagado* in the context of Anglo-Ottoman encounters, see Malieckal, “Wanton;” Fuchs; Burton; and Vitkus, *Turning*.

Narcissus might/ (And never grow enamored of himself)/ View his fair feature in it” (1.3. 112-13), Vitelli exhibits other pieces from Europe:

VITELLI. Here crystal glasses, such as *Ganymede*

Did fill with Nectar to the Thunderer

When he drank to *Alcides*, and received him

In the fellowship of the *gods*: true to the owners.

Corinthian plate studded with Diamonds,

Concealed oft deadly poison; This pure metal

So innocent is, and faithful to the mistress

Or master that possesses it: that rather

Then hold one drop that's venomous, of itself

It flies in pieces, and deludes the traitor.

...

Here's a picture, madam;

The masterpiece of Michaelangelo,

Our great Italian workman; here's another

So perfect at all parts that had Pygmalion

Seen this, his prayers had been made to Venus,

To have given it life, and his carved ivory image

By poets ne'er remembered. They are indeed

The rarest beauties of the Christian world

And no where to be equaled. (1.3.115-36)

The long description reveals the “curious pictures of the rarest beauties of Europa” that were evoked earlier mysteriously: a mirror that makes the beholder feel like Narcissus, a crystal glass comparable to Ganymede’s wine cup, a Corinthian plate, one of Michelangelo’s works, and a sculpture that generates passions like Pygmalion’s. Vitelli uses famous Greco-Roman icons to sell “the rarest beauties of the Christian world” in the Ottoman setting of the play.

While the non-Christian characters from diverse nations mark this Ottoman market as an exotic space of religious difference (as suggested by Vitelli’s use of “the Christian world”), the Greco-Roman references challenge religious binaries, offering common cultural grounds between the European and the Ottoman, the Christian and the Islamic worlds. Donusa does not show any unfamiliarity with Vitelli’s references to these mythological characters; instead, she finds him “Poetical” and “moving” in his rhetoric (114; 126). The “things” circulating in this marketplace are artifacts for sale; moreover, they circulate through aesthetic templates, mediating cross-cultural negotiations between the seller and the customer: Narcissus, Ganymede, Alcides, Pygmalion—representative figures of youthful beauty, and also often evoking same-sex male erotic desire in early modern England. Vitelli employs a language of mediating objects via these aesthetic figures of youthful male beauties to make his elite Ottoman customers desire the objects in the supposedly homosocial marketplace.³ His rhetoric is a prepared strategy to sell items, as the play starts with Gazet’s affirmation that he “studies speeches for each piece/ And, in a thrifty tone, to sell them off” on a street near the bazaar (1.1.6-7). Recalling the youths as a part of the well-studied and memorized speech hints at sodomy discourses that attribute the sin to the Ottoman space through youthful boys (the play evokes this through references to “catamites” and “eunuchs” (2.5. 13; 3.4.43). While the play generates a gaze upon Ottoman characters and lives

³ Before the marketplace scene, Donusa states, “Christian ladies live much more freedom/Than such as are born here. Our jealous Turks/Never permit their fair wives to be seen” (1.2.17-19).

on stage, it highlights images of youthful male bodies through circulating stories about these beauties of the Greco-Roman world.

Within the broader history of the Anglo-Ottoman encounters, traveling youths offer a useful point of entry into the cross-cultural interactions between the two cultures, highlighting a “rich and complex cross-pollination of art,” or in Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s terms, “connected histories,” that present striking parallels between the cultural imaginaries of the Ottoman world and Europe. Subrahmanyam argues that while historians have comparatively explored the flow of things, people, and technologies in the early modern world, “ideas and mental constructs, too, flowed across political boundaries in that world, and—even if they found specific local expression—enable us to see what we are dealing with are not separate and comparable, but connected histories” (“Connected” 748). Challenging comparative early modern histories looking retrospectively from the cultural borders of the modern-day-nation-state, Subrahmanyam charts similarities, intricate networks, processes of circulations, and possible connections to better comprehend the early modern world beyond nationalistic and historical ethnographic perspectives that emphasize differences.⁴

Traveling Sexualities, Circulating Bodies, and Early Modern Anglo-Ottoman Encounters searches for such parallels and connections through a contrapuntal reading strategy that involves reading across historical, geographical, and religious boundaries. One important entity of these encounters—commercial, political, personal, or imaginary— that blurs cultural dichotomies is embodied by “traveling” youthful persons circulating both on the discursive level of representations (such as the traveling mythic boys in Massinger’s play), or on the historical level

⁴ For more on the concept of connected history, see Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories,” “On World,” “A Tale” and *Explorations*.

of actual travels, voyages, forceful exchanges, enslavements, and abductions. This dissertation thus traces the literary and visual representations of youthful male figures through the abduction, conversion, and circulation of boys in the transnational Mediterranean traffic during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. I argue that the textual figure of “the beautiful boy”—often eroticized as an object of desire in both English and Ottoman representations—intersects with the historical phenomenon of vulnerable youths, who were captured, converted, and exchanged within the global traffic in bodies. While I use the term “beautiful” as way of stressing the aesthetic, corporeal, and erotic deployments of this image, my project acknowledges the tensions and dissonances between the aestheticized eroticism of cultural representations and the coercive and violent history of abductions, conversions, and enslavements of boys. I document the aesthetic, corporeal and erotic deployments of the figure of the traveling boy to suggest that the circulation of these figures casts them as subjects of servitude and conversion, as well as objects of desire in the cultural and homoerotic imaginary that informs Anglo-Ottoman cross-cultural encounters.

The figures of abducted, dislocated, or traveling “beautiful boys” have received less attention in critical scholarship than widely explored critical tropes regarding the traffic in women, women as objects of exchange, possession, and in the Ottoman context, a captives in the Sultan’s harem.⁵ What stories do these beautiful traveling boys narrate as they cross boundaries between nations and empires both as captives and erotic beloveds? To what extent does the beautiful boy represent a dynamic, culturally specific and erotic figure within the economies of

⁵ Rubin’s influential article, “The Traffic in Women,” and Sedgwick’s *Between Men* started new ways of exploring women as objects of exchange and possession in patriarchy. For more on women as objects of exchange, exploration, possession, enslavement in the early modern period, see Hall, *Things* and “Objects;” Newman; Stallybrass “Patriarchal”; Kolodny; Montrose; Matar “Wives”; Andrea; Malieckal “Slavery.” On captive women in Ottoman harem, see Peirce *Imperial*; and Zilfi.

exchange in the global Renaissance? What does the abducted boy reveal about racial, sexual, and gendered hierarchies in a global context? As the following chapters shall demonstrate, the abducted boy often made a transition from servitude to ruling elite, from being the object of an erotic gaze to the subject of conversions, while destabilizing gender, sexual, as well as national categories with his ephemeral status and identity. His “exotic” otherness in turn opens up new directions for exploring early modern multi-ethnic communities, while problematizing national boundaries. Reading English representations of the abducted boy alongside Ottoman texts and contexts demonstrates not solely the religious dimensions of the abduction of boys, but also the aestheticized erotic dynamics within early modern cross-cultural transmutations as well as the homoerotics of emergent colonial discourses.

Bringing into proximity the Ottoman and English cultural contexts through the abducted, converted, and sexualized boys of the Renaissance, *Travelling Sexualities* capitalizes on cross-cultural transferences, discursive and material crossings, and connected histories that enrich an understanding of the global Renaissance beyond self/other, Islam/Christian, European/Ottoman dichotomies. To better introduce and explore traveling sexual discourses and circulating boys, and to contextualize their representations within the cross-cultural Anglo-Ottoman context beyond sodomitical discourses, I first address questions such as the following: Why do the Ottomans matter in the Renaissance? How do we compare their cultural productions of the abducted boy to the European/English representations of a similar, eroticized figure? What are the connections between the two seemingly different cultures? Thus, in what follows, I first draw on the term, the Ottoman Renaissance, as highlighted by Walter Andrews, to emphasize the connected histories between the two cultures. Next I focus on specific Anglo-Ottoman encounters, showing how the Ottoman cultural representations uncover discursive crossings and

circulations between the Ottoman and English worlds in novel and unexpected ways. Finally, I return to the figure of the abducted boy within this larger, global context to suggest the ways in which *Traveling Sexualities* deploys Ottoman discourses and practices in the project of queering the Renaissance.⁶

II. The Ottomans in the Renaissance or The New Romans

Does *Traveling Sexualities* compare two incommensurable worlds in its exploration of early modern English texts and contexts alongside the Ottoman ones? Did the Ottomans have a Renaissance? Did the Ottomans share a cultural connection with the English? These questions, albeit legitimate, stem from a perspective that has historically imagined the early modern period from a modern nationalist point of view. Such a scholarly approach imprisons early modern cultural imaginations and their artistic products within the spheres of strictly divided, ostensibly unconnected Eastern and Western literatures, or Oriental and Occidental studies; and these demarcations, as we know, have had a long history going back to the nineteenth century orientalist project of creating the West *vis a vis* the Orient. As an example of this trend, one has only to examine the first orientalist English anthology of Ottoman literature that shows how and why early modern Ottoman and European, or Ottoman and English, cultural productions have been considered “naturally” incompatible.

Published in the early twentieth century in six volumes (1900-1909), E. J. W. Gibb’s *A History of Ottoman Poetry* provides invaluable English translations of Ottoman poetry from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century alongside biographies of major poets, poetic movements and

⁶ My use of “queering the Renaissance” alludes to the major collection of essays by Goldberg under the title, *Queering the Renaissance*. These essays explore queer aspects of the Renaissance from Italian to Dutch, English, and French texts to reveal discursive sites of homoerotic desire and sodomitical discourses in Europe. Borrowing from him, I use “queering renaissance” as an umbrella term for projects from the scholarship in early modern sexuality studies.

tropes, and critical analyses. In terms of comparing early modern Ottoman and European traditions, Gibb's conclusion to the first volume and his preface to the second volume create the West/East dichotomy that renders it impossible to compare cultural productions from the Ottoman and Western contexts—temporal, intellectual, and moral—in the Renaissance. Initially, though, Gibb begins by seeing correspondences between the Ottoman and Western cultures in the Middle Ages. For example, in concluding the volume on pre-1450 poetry, Gibb dramatically draws the reader's attention to "an aspect of the subject" that he believes his reader must have noted: "namely, the close similarity that exists between the intellectual and moral culture which I have endeavored to describe and that which prevailed during the same centuries in Western Europe" (444). Medieval culture in both halves of the world is almost the same, if not analogous; he remarks:

In the fields of philosophy and science there is not merely similarity, there is identity. And in those directions where there is not identity, there is a very remarkable analogy. The civilization of the Muhammedan East in based upon the Arabic Koran, that of medieval Europe upon Latin Bible. The Eastern poets had the monopoly in the histories and legends they inherited from the ancient Persians, the Western in those they learned from the Roman classics. These are the two chief sources of such difference as exists, and the analogy in both cases is complete. (444)

He later notes that "the identity" in philosophy and science is due to the fact that the original sources are the same for both East and West, and most of these sources in Europe were either translated from or inspired by "the works of Muhammedans or of Jews who wrote for the most part in the Arabic language" (445). "From whatever source medieval Europe received these

matters she held in common with the East, she did not learn them from her Roman teachers” (446). While the philosophic learning is identical, religions are not; yet religious difference in the medieval period is not too big a deal for the nineteenth century orientalist:

The points of agreement between Bible and Koran are greater and more numerous than the points of variance, the divergence in culture that hence resulted was superficial rather than essential. For the rest, the religion of ‘the men of heart’ was the same in East and West. Change a few names and phrases borrowed directly from the prevailing positive religion, and it would be hard to distinguish between the effusions of the dervish mystic and those of the ecstatic monk or nun. (445)

From a modern secular position, Gibb “find(s) the poetry of the medieval West to be inspired by the same ideals as that of the medieval East” (446).

The “parallelism in culture” Gibb provides for medieval literature, however, was interrupted when “the Renaissance diverted the whole current of intellectual and moral life in Europe” (446). The separation occurred as a result of the “sudden” shift from the “genius” of The Middle Ages to the Renaissance in Europe, as Gibb opines:

Under the guidance of the new-found Hellenism, the West turned aside from the old road, and pursued a way which led in a new and very different direction. The East continued to follow the old path; and so by the sixteenth century, they who had for long been fellow-travellers among the same road, were to one another as aliens and barbarians. Until then, though they had met most often as foemen, they had understood one another; but when Europe broke away the mutual understanding ceased. *The genius of the*

Middle Ages and the genius of the Renaissance are so opposite that mutual comprehension seems impossible. In the West the latter killed the former; but into the East it could not pass. (446-47, my emphasis)

The impossibility of “mutual comprehension” because of the advancement, or striking leap, that the West achieved makes the two cultures incompatible. They are now “the other” to each other not in terms of geographical and linguistic differences but differing temporalities and periodization. Gibb’s use of “the genius” of the age beside “the guidance of the new-found Hellenism,” refers to the nineteenth-century signification of the term not only as a descriptive historical phrase but also as it evokes a spirit of civilization and modernity, going back to the conceptualization of “the Renaissance” articulated by Jules Michelet’s *La Renaissance* (1855), Jacob Burckhardt’s *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), and Walter Pater’s *The Renaissance* (1873). Following these 19th-century critics’ visions of the Renaissance in a period when European imperialism was at its peak, Gibb’s separation also creates a civilized, secular West vs. a barbarous, religious East. This incommensurability becomes even more evident when he ends the volume with the following sentence: “to this day the typical European and the typical Oriental never truly understand one another; for in the East, at least in the unsophisticated East, it is still the Middle Ages” (447).

Gibb does not use the Renaissance or the Middle Ages as solely historical period terms; he also stereotypically attributes “civilization” to the West (that which experienced the Renaissance) and “backwardness” to the East (that which is imprisoned in the Middle Ages), as he further highlights in the second volume that extends between 1450 and 1600:

What we have called the Second Period in the History of Ottoman Poetry—
witnessed the rise and triumph of that wonderful movement known as the

Renaissance, which revolutionized the culture of Western Europe. But, as we saw in the last chapter, no ripple of this great upheaval, which changed the whole current of intellectual and moral life in the West, reached the shores of Islam. East and West, which hitherto had followed the same road, now parted company; the West struck off at a right angle, the East continued on the old path. And so while the European of the close of the sixteenth century was intellectually and morally a very different man from his fathers of the fourteenth, the Turk of 1600 was in those respect to all intents and purposes the same as had been his ancestors of the days of Osman [early 14th c.], and, for the matter of that, the same as are to be his children for two hundred years to come. (5)

In the second volume, Gibb employs more adjectives in his rhetoric of delayed development to further emphasize the difference between West and East: “wonderful movement,” “great upheaval,” “whole current,” “Western Europe” “intellectual and moral life,” “right angle,” “intellectually and morally different man.” Turks who are Eastern were stuck in the fourteenth; they are “descendants of these rude savages.” “Simple minds of those barbarians” created “west Asian Muhammedan” literature” that cannot be compared to literature produced by the intellectually and morally superior Renaissance man who killed his medieval father (xxxv). Stressing the “Muhammedan” nature of Turkish literature, Gibb has in mind the fiction of a secular Renaissance—a new, morally and intellectually higher code—which would become the basis of western modernity.⁷ While he brings into close proximity medieval “West and East”

⁷ As Bruno Latour notes in *We Have Never Been Modern*, “crossing out God” is a constitutive component of Western modernism. For more on religion and modernity, see Laour 32-35; and Taylor.

through religion and philosophy, his claims about the innate difference after the Renaissance evince that his attempt is not to connect two seemingly different cultures by showing parallels, but to further separate them out more clearly after the Renaissance, imprisoning European medieval literature as backward. While the two were considered to share cultural similarities, even “identical” imaginings in spite of linguistic and religious differences, an ideologically constructed imperialist notion of the Renaissance began to separate the two cultures in hierarchal terms: namely a modern, developing civilization versus a premodern stasis.

Gibb’s *History* is symptomatic in revealing how Ottoman literature is considered incompatible with European cultural productions. In Walter Andrews’ words, “In the ensuing one hundred years, no other work on Ottoman literature has supplanted or has had the enduring impact of Gibb’s *History*,” which has influenced Ottoman literary studies in Europe and Turkey to this day; and Gibb’s “conclusions about Ottoman literature continue to be reproduced in many forms and to ground the dominant modern literary historical tradition as regards the Ottomans” (Suppressed 19; 21). It does not allow for any comparisons between European and Ottoman literatures showing how the Ottoman Empire, the largest and most powerful empire of the early modern world, has typically been excluded from Renaissance studies. Andrews addresses this issue in his “Suppressed Renaissance, Q: When is a Renaissance Not a Renaissance? A: When It Is the Ottoman Renaissance!” He notes the term “Ottoman Renaissance” has never been used in explorations of Ottoman cultural and literary history; “the *History of Ottoman Poetry*, with its monumental display of erudition, is without doubt among the prime reason why the Ottoman Renaissance became an unthinkable concept” (19). Highlighting racist statements Gibb and his followers deploy, Andrews writes, “The story of Renaissance, because it implies the story of the

origin of western modernity, does not allow even for considering a modernity emerging from the transformation over time of Ottoman culture” (29).

Instead, Andrews defines “the Ottoman Renaissance,” from approximately 1453 to 1625, as “a period of intense and creative cultural and artistic activity” (25), when “Ottoman Turkish culture burgeoned spectacularly, paralleling the broader burgeoning of culture(s) in Europe commonly called “the Renaissance” (17). Parallel to Europe, Ottoman society witnessed the emergence of new cultural and aesthetic forms: these include architectural achievements, monumental historiographies, translations, the emergence of unique Ottoman literature breaking away from Persian imitations, the elite patronage of arts and literature, artistic productions of Italian artists and artisans in Istanbul, and secularization of cultural imaginings. The concept of the Ottoman Renaissance with such cultural exchanges, he suggests, “breaks down artificial barriers that separate East from West, Ottomans from Europeans, barriers that are constituted more by the structure of our present scholarly institutions than by actual conditions during the renaissance” (31).

Indeed recent literary and historical explorations in the field of the global Renaissance studies have demonstrated that cultures and cultural imaginings in the early modern world were actually quite connected and intricately interlinked. The complex set of factors, which contributed to the technological, military, and cultural florescence in Europe, impacted, and were affected by, other cultures in the same timeframe. While the Ottomans figure prominently in the cultural as well as political, economic, and social life in Europe, western cultural re-formations and social developments in turn travel into the Ottoman Empire from the mid-fifteenth century onwards. These interactions, not despite the political and religious divide, produced a cross-pollination of cultures in historical interconnections. Emphasizing military, social, economic,

diplomatic, and cultural relations and exchanges between the Ottoman Empire and European polities, Cemal Kafadar in his groundbreaking article, “The Ottomans and Europe,” persuasively shows “clear signs of a ‘modern’ mentality” emerging in the Ottoman Empire in parallel, and intricately connected, to Europe. Such shifts are evident in new bureaucratic establishments, in diplomatic relations, in military and mercantile patterns and technologies, as well as in arts and architecture. They are further evident in the secularization of the cultural forms, the rise of literacy, and the re-workings of classics in translations, especially in the circulation of Greco-Roman discourses from Galenic medicine to Aristotlean philosophy, among others.

Highlighting such mutual exchanges and transformations in a shared period and space—of ideas, persons, objects—and refusing to see the Ottomans and Europeans in wholly antithetical and oppositional terms, a recent body of comparative historical scholarship has illustrated significant shifts occurring in the Ottoman Empire as a result of cross-cultural interactions. In contrast to works that have stressed Ottoman cultural, religious, and ethnic differences from their European counterparts —be it early modern ethnographies or twentieth century scholarly approaches—this body of historical scholarship has persuasively argued that the Ottoman Empire has been wrongly deemed as the distinctively Islamic, non-western other, and thus peripheral, to European culture and history. They have done so by showing the striking parallels between Ottoman and European societies, particularly in Venice, France, and the Habsburg Empire.⁸

⁸ While Virginia Aksan explores changes in military strategies and technologies in the new emerging state-building process in her “Locating the Ottomans among Early Modern Empires,” historians such as Suraiya Faroqi, Baki Tezcan, Kaya Sahin have demonstrated changes in political and social structures of the Empire as they intersect with universalist imperial claims and emerging modern ideas. Kate Fleet, and Palmira Brummett among others offer dynamic forms of mutual exchanges and interactions through international co-operations and cross-border commercial settlements beyond the Mediterranean. Focusing on international trade and

This body of comparative historical scholarship, in stark contrast to Gibb and earlier histories of the European Renaissance, presents a history of the Ottomans, as connected with Europe, that goes beyond Islam/Christian, East/West, Europe and the Rest divisions, and situates the Ottomans at the very center of not only of the Mediterranean but also Europe. As Daniel Goffman suggests: “the early modern Ottoman Empire constituted an integral component of Europe,” and neither the Ottoman polity nor Europe makes a lot of sense without the other. In a move that interrupts some strands of an exceptional Eurocentricism, Goffman acknowledges that “an Ottomancentric perspective would reveal a relationship in which the ideological walls that seemed to divide Christian Europe from the Ottoman Empire instead become the framework to a rich and intricate representation” (7). The comparative approach that includes the Ottomans in studies of European histories has productively offered new ways of re-imagining cultural, social, and political conditions, while revealing connected histories beyond national boundaries in the global Renaissance.

Literary critics have also questioned the exclusion of the Ottomans in European literary and cultural studies, challenging Gibb’s portrayal of the Ottomans as isolated with no cultural exchange with Europe. For example, while highlighting cross-cultural exchanges and the

diplomatic activities in *Venetians in Constantinople*, Eric Dursteler argues that the fluid nature of identity enabled a coexistence between Venetians and Ottomans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Challenging narratives of an exceptional Western dominance over oceans, Giancarlo Casale describes an Ottoman Age of Exploration with military and commercial strategies, as well as intellectual and political exchanges in the form of translations from Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian with a global awareness of the world. While Pinar Emiralioğlu brings forth the circulation of cartographic knowledge, Aksan and Goffman’s collection, *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, shows emerging modern conceptualizations of space and time in the Empire. Richard Bulliet, Cornell Fleicher, and Tijana Krstić show the common religious patterns and discourses in the Empire and the Christian West at the turn of the seventeenth century. Historians Eric Dursteler, Madeline Zilfi, Leslie Peirce, and Stephen Ortega bring forth gender dimension by pointing at women crossing borders and boundaries, complicating the binary of women of the east and women of the West.

influence of the Ottomans on the period, Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton have argued how the so-called East and West get blurred in Renaissance art; and evoking Goffman's call for challenging Eurocentricism in early modern European studies, Brotton suggests that early modern studies should "orient an understanding of early modern Europe and its boundaries [by placing] the Ottomans as central, rather than peripheral, to the political and intellectual preoccupations of the period" (*Trading* 91). Similarly, Bernadette Andrea and Linda McJanet note the long-held lack of interest in the Ottomans within the field of early modern English studies, and they call for centralizing the Ottomans in any exploration of early modern European literature and culture. Indeed when we look at the Ottoman context, the multicultural structure of the Empire itself that amalgamates its Turkic-Islamic background with the Byzantium and European institutions and conventions blurs the Ottoman/European dichotomy, while enabling multiple ways to comparatively explore early modern literature and culture.

Thus, it is important to consider the Ottoman interaction with the Byzantine Empire since its foundation in the turn of the fourteenth century, when the Ottoman state amalgamated Turkic, Persian, and Byzantine institutions and conventions in the state-building process.⁹ Specifically, after taking Constantinople and replacing the Eastern Roman Empire, the Ottoman Sultans declared themselves as "kayser," "Emperors" or "Universal Monarchs," claiming their imperial dominance over Asia and Europe, as well as over both Islamic and Christian worlds. Starting with Mehmet, therefore, the Ottomans shaped their political identity not simply in exclusively Islamic terms but also Roman contexts, enabling a cohabitation of multiple ethnic communities, religions, languages, and cultures. The Ottomans' self-conscious claim of the

⁹ Stressing cross-fertilizations, Gulru Necipoglu's *Architecture* reveals influences of Byzantium-Roman and the Italian Renaissance alongside Turkic, Persian, and Arabic influences in Ottoman architecture in her examination of Ottoman architecture and ceremonial practices.

Roman heritage in their empire building process as well as their geographical coordinates—their capital city as well as one third of their territory was geographically located in Europe—also invites a challenge to the conventional cultural boundaries and assumptions that exclude the Ottomans in the studies of the European Renaissance, on the basis of seeing them as an essentially Islamic empire under solely Persian and Arabic influences.¹⁰

So too did the Ottoman literary elite amalgamate Arabic, Persian, Greek and Latin traditions as the poets of *Rum* [Roman lands]. Cemal Kafadar, in his “A Rome of One's Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum,” argues that terms like Turk, Turkey, Turkishness were less Ottoman terms than highly ethnicized European references; the Ottomans did not use these terms for themselves in the early modern period, instead, they identified themselves as Romans, or *Rumi*.¹¹ While Rum/Rumi foremost signified the geographical location of Asia Minor, including the Balkans or the west of the lands of Acem [Iran] and north of Arab lands, it nevertheless designated “a novel social and cultural constellation, namely the identity of those from a variety of backgrounds but with a shared disposition toward a certain style of expression in the arts as well as quotidian life” (15). As Kafadar cites, the Moroccan ambassador to Istanbul, for example, notes in his 1589 observation how the Ottomans related themselves to Romans, not Turks: “That city was the capital of lands of Rum, and the seat of the empire, the city of Caesars. The Muslims who live in that city now

¹⁰ Gibb, for instance, states Ottoman poetry is “a branch than as an imitation of “ Persian poetry; “the two are in reality one” (*Vol 2 xxxvi*). Gibb, Andrews remarks, “poisons the whole project of characterizing Ottoman poetry” (Suppressed 19).

¹¹ Metin Kunt also notes that “though in Europe the [Ottoman] empire was often referred to as “Turkey,” such a term itself—either as a political or geographical entity—was totally unknown in the Ottoman Turkish language in any of the many languages spoken by its subjects within its order” (4).

call themselves “Rum” and prefer that origin to their own. Among them, calligraphy too is called khatt rumi” (16).

Rumi, or Rumice [in the Roman manner] henceforth became a signifier for Ottoman cultural productions alluding to and combining Persian, Arabic, Hellenistic, Roman, and late antique concepts and figures, calling for a reconsideration of the origin of a national literature that starts within the narrow confines of Turkish literary history. In this vein, it is noteworthy to remember Jakab Nagy de Harsany, a seventeenth century Transylvanian humanist, who warns his European readers against an essential Turkish identity. Posing the inquiry, “what is the Turkish character,” the humanist asserts,

This is a most difficult question, since it is not one nation [*millet* in the Turkish text; *una gens* in the Latin] but consists of all sorts of people of the world: Germans, Poles, French, English, Dutch, Hungarians, Muscovites, Czechs, Rus, Cossacks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Albanians, Abkhazians, Georgians, Kurds, Persians, Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, Tatars, Wallachians, Moldavians, Circassians, Croatians, Italians, Jews, Indians, and many others. Whoever wishes to speak of the Ottoman character (Osmanlinin tabiati), he must know the character of all [these] people [*nation*]. Those who are born Muslim have different customs than those who have converted from Christianity; the educated have their way, the uneducated theirs; people of the frontiers develop different customs than those who are born in the central lands of the empire; everyone learns both good and bad things from Christians and [other] neighbors. (qtd. in Kafadar “A Rome,” 14)

As much as Islamicate cultures of Persia, Arabic, and Kurdish, as the quote suggests, European culture(s) was intricately embedded in Ottoman society and cultural productions—whether through cross-cultural encounters, conversions, neighborhood interactions, or imperial multiculturalism. As Goffman suggests, “the Ottoman Empire was the Byzantine Empire reborn ... as the successor to a major Christian and Mediterranean civilization, both European and Ottoman considered the new state very much a part of the European world” (12).

Considering this complex multicultural structure of the Empire, we can see how the early modern Ottomans offer diverse venues in our exploration of the culture and literature of the period. As Kafadar suggests, “if the essentialized bi-polar view of the world—western and other—ought to be abandoned, the unique qualities of modern European history are to be understood rather than merely assumed, and if representations of otherness are to be studied as historical constructs, then Ottoman history can provide some of the most fruitful comparative agendas to historians of Europe” (“The Ottomans” 625). It would surely offer fruitful agendas not only in comparative history, but also in literary studies and cultural histories. *Traveling Sexualities* capitalizes on these comparative historical explorations, introducing and inserting the Ottomans’ own discourses and representations in an exploration of the global Renaissance, which, this study argues, spanned Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Transgressing retrospectively created cultural borders, going beyond the anachronistic blindness that stems from the nineteenth-century ignorance in studies of early modern European literatures and cultures, *Traveling Sexualities* uncovers material and discursive crossings and connected histories—with distinct sexualized inflections—between the Ottomans and European nations and cultures. In order to push connections further westward, it brings into closer proximity Ottoman and English cultures that began having intense interactions as a result of trade privileges given to Elizabeth’s

England by the Ottomans. These in turn led to a range of interactions between the two worlds, including the abduction and conversion of boys.

III. The Ottomans in the English Imaginary

Representations of Turks in England actually have a long history going back to the Western Christian encounters with Turks during the First Crusades in the Middle Ages; in the medieval representations, the Turk is often linked with the more popular term, Saracen.¹² Following the fall of Constantinople and further Ottoman advancement into the European territories, numerous accounts about the Ottomans circulated in Europe, in which “the Turk” becomes a figure with diverse and composite signification, variously referring to the Ottomans, Saracens, Moors, and Mohammedans, among others. After 1579 when the Levant Company initiated official trade relations in the Mediterranean as a result of Catholic hostility towards England, numerous English travelers and ambassadors to the Ottoman court left varied impressions of their encounters, and works such as Richard Knolles’s *The Generalle Historie of the Turkes*, George Sandys’s *A Relation of a Journey*, Paul Rycaut’s *The Present State of Ottoman Empire*, and Thomas Roe’s records of his ambassadorship produced a dense account of many aspects of the Ottoman court and society.

These accounts also created a rich archive for Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, which produced popular images of the Ottomans on the English stage. In England, from 1580 to 1620, over sixty dramatic works featuring Islamic themes, characters, or settings were produced, alongside more than three thousand texts which appeared in print dealing with Turks, Islam, Moors, or the Ottomans (Burton 22).¹³ Overall, the English responses were marked by a

¹² For more on Turks and Saracens in the middle ages, see Tolan; Akbari; Cohen, “On Saracen” and his edited volume, *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*; Strickland; Kabir; and Jahanara.

¹³ For a list of these plays, see Burton, Appendix, 257-58.

combination of fascination, awe, as well as moral repugnance at the supposed decadence of Ottoman sexual mores and practices (I will return to difference in sexuality later).

This archive of early modern English representations of the Ottomans has produced considerable scholarship in the past decade or so, which has brought to light some rich cultural cross-pollinations produced by Euro-Ottoman and Anglo-Ottoman cross-cultural relations.¹⁴ While scholars such as Daniel Vitkus, Jonathan Burton, and Jane Degenhardt have investigated religious conversions, as well as extensive social, military, commercial, and personal trafficking between England and the Ottomans, Nabil Matar and Gerald MacLean have uncovered close relations between England, the Islamic world, and the Ottoman Empire in particular, through crossings, interactions, cohabitations, and communications.¹⁵ Highlighting the role of the Ottomans in diplomacy, trade, piracy, and military relations, Anglo-Ottoman studies also importantly reveal the cultural appropriation of Ottoman goods, styles, and images in England, from Henry VIII's interest in Turkish fashion and investment in more than eight hundred Turkish carpets, to the personal exchanges of letters and gifts between Elizabeth I and Safiye Sultan, to the circulation of the portraits of the Ottoman sultans and Ottoman commodities and objects in the marketplace and on the English stage.¹⁶ Although religious difference between Christianity

¹⁴ Some of the exemplary critical works on cross-cultural encounters are Burton; Vitkus; Dimmock; Barbour; Matar; MacJanet; Andrea; Birchwood and Dimmock; Sebek and Deng; Brotton; MacLean, and Singh.

¹⁵ "Traffique" as an English word appears in the sixteenth century to signify trade relations between distant and distinct communities. For more on the use of the word in early modernity, and how it might inform us about bilateral merchandise and cultural exchanges, see, Burton 15-16.

¹⁶ A report from 1533 states, "the King, prepared a good banquet, in the Parliament chamber at Westminster, for all the Ambassadors, which then wer here, out of diverse realms and countries...and shortly after, his grace with the Earle of Essex, came in appareled after Turkey fashion, in long robes of Bawkin, powdered with gold, hatter on their heddes of crimosyn Velvet... girded with two swords, called Cimiteries" (MacLean, *Looking* 34). For circulation of Ottoman portraiture, objects, and popularity of carpets and Turkish fashion, see Maclean,

and Islam seems to determine to a certain degree conflicts and rivalries in English representations and accounts of Anglo-Ottoman encounters, which ubiquitously set Islamic Turks against Christian Englishmen mostly as a means to criticize English politics, commercial and diplomatic relations after the Reformation overshadow such concerns and bring the two together.

Encounters and interactions, crossings, circulations, and exchanges highlight the permeability of borders between religions, geographies, and cultural discourses in the global Renaissance. As a result, encounters with the Ottomans—real or imagined—result in a multifarious and fluid image of the Turk in England. This is an image that, I suggest, not only perpetuates religious otherness based on preexisting templates, but also conveys the Ottomans' own discourses and practices that cross boundaries, reaching the English audience. *Traveling Sexualities* thereby deploys a new approach to and methodology for analyzing such representations, a perspective that takes into consideration the Ottoman context—their own voice and perspective—to explore the richness of these accounts. In what follows, I offer an exemplary text, a collection of alleged letters, published in 1607 in London to be sold at the Swan in St. Paul's Churchyard. In the letter format, the collection seemingly conveys realistic impressions and reliable political content for its reader. It shows preexisting discourses about the Ottomans as the Islamic "other"; nonetheless, it informs us about realities of the Ottomans by conveying their discourses to the English audience. The subject of the letters is Mehmet II, whose reign (1451-81) marks early modernity for the Ottomans, and whose image is a popular one in Europe. His imperial vision would create the legitimate ground for his processors to connect the East and West under their Universal Monarchy as the new Romans.

Looking; and MacLean and Matar. For letter exchanges between Elizabeth I and Safiye Sultan, see Andrea; for stage props regarding Turks, see Dimmock.

Titled “The Turkes Secreterie, Containing His Sundrie Letters Sent to divers Emperours, Kings, Princes and States, full of proud bragges, and bloody threatnings: With severall Answers to the same, both pithie and premtorie,” the text is composed of letter exchanges between the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II and other rulers of diverse nations from the mid-fifteenth century. Claiming to have been “translated truly out of the Latine Copie” on the title page, the text starts with “the Epistle” by M. Hermann Vastellab, who narrates the significance of these letters written more than a century before its publication in English. The Epistle commences with “the birth and growth of Mahomets tyranny... that Arabian impostor and false Prophet” and notes the appearance of another Mahomet: “Mahomet the second,” referring to the Ottoman sultan (sig. A2v).

Countering such negative associations with “Mahomet,” the real Mehmet, from broad historical accounts, is generally considered a humanist emperor—with knowledge of multiple languages including Ancient Greek, Latin, Italian, Arabic, and Persian, and with fame as the young conqueror of Constantinople. Mehmet was a prominent figure in the early modern world, accounts of whom would circulate in Europe centuries after his reign, as the translation evinces. For instance, in many English accounts about the Ottomans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a large space is devoted to the biography of Mehmet which include his portraits, oftentimes aligning with other European portraits such as the Italian artist Gentile Bellini’s famous 1479 portrait of the Sultan, ordered by Mehmet himself (Fig. 1), as well as an unknown Florentine artist’s “El Gran Turco” (Fig. 2). Vastellab’s Epistle observes his appearance, “exceeding paleness of his countenance, having swolne cheekes, and a crooked nose which touched almost his lippes,” but also notes that Mehmet had “a monstrous nature” (A3). While Mehmet indeed had a crooked nose, the writer uses monstrosity as an othering mark on the body

of the Sultan. Overall, however, from his accurate description of Mehmet's physical appearance as well as details of the Ottoman history in the Epistle, Vastellab shows a great familiarity with the accounts about the Ottomans that circulated in Europe in previous centuries. While he gives a detailed description of Mehmet's many remarkable and exemplary attributes, this is also an image of the "other"—one that sometimes aligns with the negative stereotypes of pre-existing templates.



Figure 1. "Sultan Mehmet II." Gentile Bellini. 1479. National Gallery, London. Qtd. in Bagci et. al. 12



Figure 2. "El Gran Turco." c. 1460. Album. TSM. H2153, y.144a.

Topkapi Palace Museum. Qtd. in Bagci et. al. 11

But why would Vastellab translate the letters of Mehmet more than a century after his reign? What is the significance of these letters, putatively written in the fifteenth century, now circulating in the early seventeenth century in English? What else can these letters tell us about the perceptions of the Ottomans other than marking them as the heretic others? Of course we do not know if the letters are authentic, but nevertheless they present an image as perceived by

Europeans, and this representation constructs a particular image of Mehmet for the English audience—an image that both evokes a fascination with and a resistance to acknowledging Mehmet as truly admirable. The collection starts with “The Argument of these Letters” that notes these letters were written “partly in the Syrian and Greek tongue, and partly in the Scythian and Slavonian”; they allegedly ended up in the hands of a Knight of Jerusalem, who “understandeth these languages perfectlie” and translated them into Latin (B3). This pretty scrupulous history nevertheless does not change the fact that the letters in English contributed to the creation of discourses about and the image of the Ottomans, as the argument further reveals: they are translated into English “for the good of those that desire to know the affaires and proceedings of the Turke” (sig. B3r).

To satisfy the desire of his audience, Vastellab’s collection show Mehmet not only as a military genius—“The first and fearfullest feate of warre he did, was the winning of Bizantium the most renowned and famous Citie of Constantine the great, which is acknowledged of all, to have beene the glory and beauty of Christendome” (A4)— but also as a successful rhetorician and student of the arts. Since his mother was a devout Christian, Mehmet, he claims, was instructed “in the rules of Pietie and Christian Religion” by his mother who “[was] holding in deepe detestation the wicked heresies of the Saracens, and the savage cruelties of the Barbarous Turkes” (A3). Yet, “Naturam expellas furca, &c.,” Mehmet “tooke no care of religion. In private he was an absolute Atheist” (A3). Therefore it seems from this narrative, what motivates Mehmet in conquering other territories is not religion but a desire to “enlarge his dominions,” for which he uses “Mahometane slaverie to oppresse those kings and people he subdued” (A4).

While the text starts with the “impostor Prophet,” seemingly making religion the basis of his argument, it marks a shift in describing Mehmet as atheist and worldly ruler, not with

religious but political ambitions. This representation reflects some contemporary accounts about Mehmet as an atheist in early Greek historiography.¹⁷ He aimed not to “convert” the lands he invaded (or planned to invade), but to rule in tyranny as the “maister of the whole world” (A3). Hence, “in the space of 32 yeares, that he reigned, many Kingdomes, Dukedomes, and Cities were conquered, and became subject of his tyranny. For which cause he was compared to Alexander the Great, and for his noble and great exploits, surnamed the great among his people” (A4). Noting the fact that he was described as “Alexander the Great,” Vastellab implicitly praises the Sultan’s power in the Epistle through the title “the great” attributed to his name by his subjects. Mehmet was titled not as “the great” but as “the Conqueror” by the Ottomans after the fall of Constantinople, and oftentimes associated with Alexander the Great. Removing Mehmet from an Islamic framework, the writer puts the Sultan in a secular realm of political tyranny to be the “maister of the whole world,” which was indeed a title the Ottoman Sultans claimed as the aforementioned historians showed. Other English representations also recognize this imperial claim, as we can see in George Peele’s *The Battle of Alcazar* (1594) in which Sultan Murat III is called “the Emperor of the World” and “God of earthly kings.” George Sandys likewise lists imperial titles of the Ottoman Sultan when he mentions Sultan Ahmet’s letter to James I: “God on earth, shadow of God; sole Monarch of the world, King of kings, Commander of all that can be commanded” (47).

While Mehmet had a tyrannous nature, Vastellab next notes, he was different from other “Barbarians.” “He burned always with an incredible desire to understand all good Arts and Histories” (B). He had “The Histories of all Nations” gathered and translated, he studied them,

¹⁷ According to such accounts, Raby notes, Mehmed was accused by his son Bayezid of “not believing in Muhammad”; and by others, of not believing in any one faith (“A Sultan” 8). For Mehmet’s poetry that problematizes religious orientations as they intersect with sexual desire, see the third chapter.

and learned political and military strategies. This also helped him to learn how to “express his minde in a full and plaine kind of speech, without vaine and needlesse circumstances” (B). Praising Mehmet’s rhetoric and concise style in his letters, the writer states: “For they that are wise indeed, are ever accustomed to deliver much matter in few words: which praise Homer giveth unto Menelaus the Spartan, and many other great personages are commended by others, for the same quality and virtue (B). Mehmet’s letters therefore show a certain degree of “wit” as well as become a map showing how he “conquered all places... so that he may truly say of himself, as once said Julius Caesar: Veni, Vidi, Vici. / I came, I saw, I overcame” (B). The writer combines the depiction of Mehmet as Alexander the Great with his Homeric lineage, and finally associates him with Julius Caesar. Just like Mehmet learned from Histories of great persons, the writer expects his readers will learn from Mehmet’s language. Despite marking the Ottomans as the religiously inferior, politically and militarily superior “other,” Vastellab’s association of Mehmet with Greco-Roman figures in the Epistle offers a complex image of the Sultan and the Ottomans within the contexts of European history and culture.

The story of Mehmet that I have sketched is crucial in the way in which it interrogates any simplistic Ottoman associations with Islam. While the Ottomans as an Islamic power are the religious “other”—just like the Orthodox Greeks are—they are nevertheless politically and culturally attached to Greco-Roman sources that feed the English imagination and scholarship. It is indeed not surprising—nor a literary fantasy—that the writer links Mehmet to Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar. Declaring himself the new Roman Emperor, Mehmet imagined Constantinople to be the Roman capital flourishing through both Eastern and Western institutions and architecture, including the cohabitation of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish

communities.¹⁸ He created a multicultural, multi-religious Empire despite the fact that, as Julian Raby notes, “many resented Mehmed's advancement of foreign talent, voicing the complaint: If you wish to stand in high honour on the Sultan's threshold, You must be a Jew or a Persian, or a Frank; You must choose the name Habil, Kabil, Hamidid” (“A Sultan” 8). His conscious attempt to patronize Italian artists, attempts to bring Renaissance artists and scholars to Istanbul, his design of Topkapi as a synthesis of Persian-Turkic-Byzantium-Italian traditions, are all indicators of the Empire’s prospect of creating a multicultural and multi-religious state with a Greco-Roman heritage.¹⁹

Additional indication of this multicultural aspiration in to be found in the Vastellab’s evocation of Mehmet’s scholarship in the arts and histories, which accurately reflects Mehmet’s training in Euro-Asian, Greco-Roman cultures. Mehmet was trained in the Ottoman *enderun*, the imperial school for the princes and *devshirme* boys. As Julian Raby notes in his “A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts,” aside from Muslim teachers, Mehmed had two tutors, one schooled in Latin, the other in Greek, who just prior to the fall of Byzantium read to him daily from “Laertius, Herodotus, Livy, Quintus Curtius, Chronicles of the Popes, Emperors, the Kings of France and the Lom-bards” (4). His library included Homer’s *Illiad*, *The Anabasis of Alexander the Great and the Indica*, Ptolemy, Hesiod’s *The Theogony*, and Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa contra*, among others in diverse languages from Latin, to Ancient Greek, Arabic, Persian, and Italian.²⁰ In sum, while on the one hand, Vastellab’s account presents stereotypical discourses about the Ottomans as barbaric tyrannous Muhammedans, on the other

¹⁸ For more on Mehmet’s imperial vision in constructing and populating Istanbul, see Inalcik; and Kafescioglu.

¹⁹ For more on Mehmed as a Renaissance ruler and scholar, see Raby “A Sultan,” and Brotton, *The Renaissance*. For architecture, see Necipoglu.

²⁰ On Mehmet’s library, see Raby “Mehmed.”

hand it shows a familiarity with the Ottoman discourses about themselves, as well as a fascination with their imperial power and Mehmet's liberal training as a Prince and a poet.

Mehmet's own rhetoric in the letters also reflects his secular imperial tone that informs Vastellab's Epistle. In a letter to "Sancassan, king of Persia" [Uzun Hassan, the sultan of Ak Koyunlu dynasty], Mehmet writes "we have already matched Alexander in the glorie and fortune of our exploits" (2). As a response to the Pope's letter that calls him a tyrant in "cruelty, wickedness and lust" upon his letter informing the Pope about his plans to invade Rome, Mehmet writes, "as for cruelty, and lust, two things thou hast so burdened us withal, know thou, we therefore practice them upon our captives, because we would not have our fame to belie us but that men may find me the very same indeed, whom fame reports me in words" (7). Or in his letter to "the Delphians," Mehmet refers to the oracles of Apollo, Aesculapius, and Minerva, showing his knowledge of Greek culture (20); his letter to "the Amazonians" refers to female warriors (22). In the letter to "the Athenians" Mehmet writes,

Your School, O Athenians, whereby you have attained to a most
flourinshing Estate, and to the chieftest name and reputation of all good
learning and Philosophie, doe persuade mee much to spare your citie, as
well as the reverence which I beare to the wisdom and honour of our
ancestor, as also through the love which I have ever carried to the studie of
those good Arts, which I have heard were first invented, and afterward
made perfect in Athens. But on the other side I consider your malice
against me, I cannot but thinke, my kindness doth rather provoke you to
hate me, then move you any way to be thankful. (32)

While Mehmet warns the Athenians to surrender before his army sacks the city, the Athenians'

letter replies: “We beare no hatred to thee, for our liberty saved; what cause have we?... Have we offended thee? Sylla forgave the Athenians; and twice was Alexander pleased to pardon them... Therefore thou oughtest to save us for an example of thy clemencie, that so thou maiest allure all men to love thee, rather than exercising thy cruelty, lust, and furie, upon poor captives, to provoke all Greekes to abhorre thee” (33). Mehmet conquered Athens in 1458.

The evocation of Greek philosophy and figures of Apollo, Aesculapius, Minerva, and Alexander in the letters offers a secular portrayal of the Ottoman Sultan who often uses a familiar humanistic rhetoric. This mirrors contemporary chronicles that report that Mehmet called himself a Trojan when he visited Troy as Caesar.²¹ As Kafadar notes in his account of this moment, “he seems to have been aware of the explanation of Ottoman successes by the theory, upheld by some in Europe, that Turks were, like the Romans before them, vengeful Trojans paying back the Greeks” (*Between* 11). Indeed, while the Ottomans were on the one hand represented as non-Christian others, on the other hand, they were linked with Trojans in contemporary European chronicles from the fifteenth century onwards.²²

While the focus on this particular collection is Mehmet (whose poetry will be the subject of my third chapter), Mehmet was not the only exemplary Ottoman nobleman praised for liberal humanist training in European accounts. All Ottoman princes and elites were trained in the *enderun* with similar courtly education. In Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), Mehmet’s son Prince Cem (Jem/Djem), who spent many years in European courts in exile as a result of contesting for the throne with his brother Bayezid, appears as an ideal courtier. The anecdote narrates:

²¹ For more on Mehmet’s evocation of Trojans, see Kafadar *Between*; and Raby “A Sultan.”

²² On the notion of Turks as Trojans in Europe, see Spencer; MacMaster; and Harper. For humanist reworking of the Turkish identity through classical terms as well as of the East/West division, see Bisaha.

Djem Othman, brother to the Grand Turk, being a captive when Djem Othman, brother to the Grand Turk, being a captive at Rome, said that jousting as we practise it in Italy seemed to him too great a matter for play and too paltry for earnest. And on being told how agile and active King Ferdinand the Younger was in running, leaping, vaulting, and the like—he said that in his country slaves practised these exercises, while gentlemen studied the liberal arts from boyhood, and prided themselves thereon. (141)

The Ottoman prince is not the cultural other, but an ideal courtier, an exemplar for Christian princes in Castiglione's account. While Mehmet's reign marks the emergence of the state and interactions with Western Christian states, Suleyman's reign (1520-66) shows even more intensified relations with European states as the Empire's borders reach Vienna; in Goffman's words, "under Suleyman, then, Ottoman authorities proposed to reinvent a Europe in the empire's own image." Suleyman indeed competed with European princes not only militarily but also symbolically by adapting the crown and scepter—regalia associated not with the Middle East or Central Asia but Roman and Catholic imperial traditions (Goffman 107). Suleyman also exhibited his imperial power through a magnificent crown that was designed by Venetians; the illustrious crown combined the motifs from the crowns of the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope.²³ When returning victoriously from the 1526 campaign in Hungary, Suleyman's vizier, Ibrahim Pasha, brought back with him statues of Apollo, Hercules, and Diana, and set them up in front of his palace in Istanbul.²⁴ Considering just these few instances of connections between the Ottomans and Europeans—humanist training, discourse of universal monarchy over Christian and Islamic dominions, claims of a Roman heritage, artistic patronage of Renaissance painters,

²³ On this majestic imperial crown, see Necipoglu, "Suleyman"; Goffman 107-108.

²⁴ On statues, see Andrews and Kalpakli 240.

among others—one cannot help but ask: were the Ottomans essentially different from Christian Europeans, or is it purely an orientalist modern fantasy of an era before orientalism?²⁵

Within this context of cultural and political connections between Ottoman and European or English worlds, *Traveling Sexualities* traces the circulations of cultural discourses through exchanges of texts, images, objects and people. While there was a stereotypical image of the Turk on the English stage or in the English mind, such a transportation of materials and representations also seems to have incorporated the Ottomans' own discourses in their luggage, thereby engendering traveling ideas and imaginations. *Traveling Sexualities* therefore explores such representations about the Ottomans *through* the Ottomans' own perspectives alongside English ones as a way to pursue “connected histories” and “connected imaginings” to further explore early modern *cultural* history in a comparative context. The Romanesque common ground that feeds the English and Ottoman cultural imagination highlights different aspects of cross-cultural encounters, going beyond a self/other distinction.

IV. Queering the Renaissance with the Ottomans

In tracing such connected discourses, I focus on “sexuality,” which, I argue, was a prominent aspect of cross-cultural encounters, mediating socio-political and cultural concerns and negotiations. Mehmet underscores the cruelty in tyranny and lust towards captives, which are mentioned together in the letter by the Pope. From western perspectives, religious and cultural differences were often connected to sexual differences, as evident in Edward Coke's “infernal trio of sorcerers, sodomites, and heretics” in the seventeenth century (qtd. Bray, *Homosexual* 19). As Alan Bray asserts, feeling a “reluctance to recognize homosexual behavior,

²⁵ On the Renaissance as an era before Orientalism, and critiques of the application of Edward Said's *Orientalism* to early modern Anglo-Ottoman encounters, see Barbour; Cirakman; Bisaha; Burton; Dimmock; Vitkus, *Turning Matar*; Maclean *Looking East*.

the English were quick to find it among people, like Turks and renegades, whose actions were considered heretical and disruptive of the Christian heterosexual social order” (*Homosexuality* 76). The image of the Turk in particular conveyed such sexual transgressions. As Gregory Bredbeck notes, “homoeroticism is contained within a mythology of the unnatural, the alien, and the demonic,” as is obvious in the definition of sodomy as “this sin being now Translated from the Sodomitical Original, or from *the Turkish* and Italian Copies into English” in the 1631 preface to the trial the earl of Castlehaven Mervin Touchet for sodomy (5-6).²⁶ Sodomy henceforth is a prominent trope in English representations of the Turks, almost all of which attribute sodomy to the Ottoman lands.²⁷ Rendering the Ottomans sodomites, and their spaces sodomitical, Goran Stanivukovic suggests, “English writers defamed the Ottomans” (64).

Stigmatized sodomitical attributions to the Ottomans, however, are only one side of the story in exploring sexuality in the Anglo-Ottoman context. To what extent did Ottoman

²⁶ Mario DiGangi also draws our attention to the sodomite, the sorcerer, and the heretic triangle in his study of early modern male homoeroticism: “The Renaissance category of sodomy derived its stigmatizing power from threateningly exotic significations: the sodomite was devil, heretic, New World savage, cannibal, *Turk*, African, papist, Italian.” (13, my emphasis). Major critical works in early modern English sexualities start with references to other spaces or peoples, which performatively draws the readers’ attention to the importance of the other people and spaces in the formation of discourses and practices at home. Alan Bray’s influential work, *The Friend*, commences with the story of two English knights in 14th century whose tomb was found in Galata/Istanbul. Jonathan Goldberg’s *Sodomities* starts with contemporary rhetoric of attaching sodomy to Saddam Hussein—the production of an image of Saddam as sodomite in the US during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. And Valerie Traub’s book begins with Giovanni Battista Guarini’s *Il Pastor Fido* and Italian, French, Dutch, and Flemish examples of erotic myths. Even the anecdotal beginnings through references to other spaces and peoples in these three groundbreaking books underline—albeit implicitly—the powerful interlink between sexual difference and racial/cultural difference—an interlink that is yet to be fully explored.

²⁷ For a list of examples, see Matar. Unfortunately, he adopts a defensive strategy by suggesting sodomy is simply a stereotyping derogative term, and that it is strictly prohibited in the Islamic lands: no sodomites in the East. He argues that sodomitical discourses in the New World had been transported to the East. All indicators, however, show the opposite: American Indians were called moors or sodomites probably because of preexisting discourses attributing sodomy to Turks and Muslims. See Goldberg for sodomy in the New World.

discourses inform such narratives? As Burton asks, “If the English increasingly participated in bilateral relations with Muslim peoples, can we reasonably speak of a network of forces informing the English discourse of Islam without including Muslim voices?” (14). Following Burton’s call, I explore a network of intersections operating in traveling discourses of sexuality, asking: What can be unveiled through the fact that one of the West’s most vilified forms of sexuality—sodomy, and its corollary, same-sex male eroticism—were commonplace tropes in the Ottoman literary tradition? More importantly, to what extent do Ottoman sexual discourses complicate what we know about transgressive sexualities and homoeroticism in early modern Europe? What do English homoerotic representations look like with the Ottomans? Is the global Renaissance that includes the Ottomans *queerer* than what we have thought of so far?

Early modern Ottoman literature is mainly homoerotic. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, same-sex male erotic desire is central to various genres from *gazel* [lyric poetry] to *mesnevi* [narrative poem] and shadow theatre, from *şehrengiz* [catalogue of beautiful men] to *tezkiye* [biography], *dellakname* [catalogue of bath-house boys], and *bahname* [medico-erotic treatise]. It was not until the last decade that—in contrast to earlier criticism, which read homoerotic representations in Ottoman poetry as either a form of Ottoman perversion, or a purely metaphoric and transcendental convention—literary scholars and historians have begun to explore diverse sexualities and sexual discourses in the Ottoman Empire.²⁸ Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı most significantly have uncovered this homoerotic literary tradition through their historically grounded *The Age of Beloveds*. As opposed to conventional metaphorical

²⁸ Two names exemplify those views: Zeki Eyuboglu declares the Ottomans as perverts, while Atilla Senturk ignores the gender of beloved to point out that it is love not the beloved that matters. According to him, all such representations seek a unity with God by divorcing love strictly from sex. Gibb sees these figurations of boys in poetry as a part of Persian tradition while he silently changes the personal pronoun “he” to “she” in reference to the object of love in poems in his translations.

readings that have been blind to same-sex desire as well as to translators who “translate the gender of the beloved as *she* when every indication is that the beloved of this poetry was most often a *he*” (19), Andrews and Kalpakli persuasively show that these representations reflect homoeroticism embedded in the Ottoman society, in which “sexual or erotic relations between men and men and boys were seldom punished, especially if they were carried on in private” (80).

The boys represented in this body of literature were not just literary characters, but often times real persons, including famous beauties of early modern Istanbul.²⁹ The beloved boy’s name, in these examples, is hardly a secret. Zati writes poems to his bath boy Nimet, who “stripped us, Oh Zati, he who shaved us” (101), or publicizes Muharrem, whose mouth’s vial makes “[Zati] lose [his] mind” (103). Similarly, a poet and a judge, Vasfi, who is under the patronage of the grand vizier Ali Pasha, explicitly declares his love for a janissary named Memi: “Don’t praise the sun or moon to me saying they are loved/ No beauties of this world do I love but Memi Shah” (104). Another boy, Kaya, was so popular that there were at least fifty-six poems directly addressed to him.³⁰ Some young men were so popular that certain poetic catalogues—the genre of *şehrengiz* [city-thrillers]³¹—ubiquitously circulated among people describing the disposition and physical beauty of these young men.³² These beloved boys, as they

²⁹ For more on real life boys, see Andrews and Kalpakli 38-43, and 95-106.

³⁰ On naming beloved boys in *gazels*, see Kuru, “Naming.”

³¹ *Şehrengiz*, mostly an erotic genre of obscene catalogues of beautiful men of the cities, is borrowed from Persian models; it evolved to include different countries as the Empire expanded its boundaries. For more on the genre, see, Levend; Stewart-Robinson; Oztekin; Tugcu. On how this genre is transformed into a visual cataloguing by European modernist artists, see Boone.

³² *Bahname* [book of libido] or medico-erotic treatises were famous examples of erotic literature from thirteenth century onwards. See Bardakci for exemplary passages from *Bahnames*. Some other genres to observe such representations are highly obscene shadow theatres [*Karagoz*], jokes [*Nasreddin Hoca*], mani, sarki [song], *hamamiye* [on bathhouses], and biographies of poets. For an excellent overview of sexuality and gender in Ottoman-Turkish literature from medieval to contemporary, see Schick.

note, “come from artisan, shopkeeping, and lower-level religious classes” or they are sometimes a “student, a merchant’s son, a log-maker’s son, the son of a muezzin” (41).

In this sexual culture, Andrews and Kalpakli assert, it was not the sex of the sexual object of choice, but the sexual role that determined the societal norms of sexual relations: “in the patriarchal Ottoman society it was a given that older men should dominate young men and boys, a man could take the role of passive beloved in his youth and then, on being recognized as an adult (symbolized in the poetry by the growth of a full, dark beard), he could move into a dominant role without being stigmatized or censured in any way” (49). Similarly, Dror Zee’vi’s *Producing Desire* has influentially offered the history of pervasive (homo)sexual practices and categories in the early modern Ottoman Empire, and a hierarchy-based (age and class) sexual understanding.³³ Showing pervasive homoerotic patterns in literary, religious, and political texts, Ze’evi posits that “the early Ottoman attitude to male ‘passive’ intercourse was one of indifference as long as the hierarchy was sustained. This was some people’s preference, it was part of the spectrum of normal sexual behavior, and it was not to be considered deviant in any way” (39).³⁴

These histories of Ottoman sexualities have not only challenged conventional, or sweepingly metaphorical, readings but also brought into proximity the so-called eastern and western sexual cultures. Indeed, sexual discourses do not travel in unidirectional ways neither in the early modern period nor in the twenty-first century. Recent studies in transcultural sexualities have shown such travels of sexual discourses. While some queer scholars in the twenty-first

³³ For more on early modern Ottoman sexualities, see Bardakci; Ze’evi; Schick; Peirce “Writing”; and Arvas.

³⁴ More on sexual negotiations in the Ottoman religious and legal culture, see Andrews and Kalpakli, Chapter 9. More on Islamic negotiations in Islamic writings, see Ze’evi and El-Rouayheb.

century have stressed the significance of a transnational approach to sexuality studies and the effects of globalization on indigenous sexual cultures, others, deploying postcolonial perspectives, have pointed at imperialistic and neocolonial motivations operative in globalizing sexualities as a new form of cultural imperialism.³⁵

Perhaps the most significant example of the latter is Joseph Massad's *Desiring Arabs*, which challenges orientalizing and exoticizing Western approaches to Middle Eastern sexualities and raises serious concerns against universalist Western LGBT activism in non-Western societies. Exploring the recent oppression of gay men in the Middle East, particularly the 2001 Queen Boat case in Egypt, Massad notes that there exists no "gay" identity in these cultures, and that LGBT activism, or the "Gay International" as he calls it, transfers, in a colonizing move, European sexual identities to these societies without taking into consideration its negative oppressive effects. He states that "by inciting discourse on homosexual and gay and lesbian rights and identities, the epistemology, nay, the very ontology of gayness is instituted in such discourse, which could only have two reactions to the claims of universal gayness—support them or oppose them without ever questioning their epistemological underpinnings" (174). Massad argues that imposing Western sexual identities on other societies, wherein a gay or lesbian identity does not exist ontologically or epistemologically, destroys native sexual culture and practices in these places, and reduces them to sexual categories. That reduction raises resistance in the native culture against those imported sexual categories, and hence the oppression and punishment of these persons identified as gay. For Massad, the gay rights discourse of the "Gay

³⁵ Some exemplary transcultural and postcolonial queer approaches are Champagne; Babayan and Afsaneh; Manalansan; Patton and Sanchez-Eppler; Lim; Nguyen; Hawley; Hayes, Higonnet, and Spurlin Altman; Povinelli and Chauncey Inderpal and Kaplan; Puar; Eng, Halberstam, Esteban Munoz; Spurlin; Hayes; and Boone.

International” to “liberate” Arabs from oppression is just another form of cultural imperialism (white men saving brown boys).

Massad’s critique is important in showing some orientalist and neo-colonialist sexual politics; however, it does not take into consideration the long history and complexities of cross-cultural and transnational transferences. It thereby risks generating another East/West binary. As Valerie Traub astutely puts in her critique of Massad, “the cultural imperialism implicit in any unidirectional importation of a conceptual apparatus derived largely from European and Anglo-American perspectives” should not lead us to ignore previous histories of homoeroticism or create absolute binaries that categorize and exclude sexually oppressed people (“The Past” 14). Strict dichotomies between the so-called East and West, as William Spurlin also reminds us, “[do] not entertain the possibilities of reciprocal interchange either in same-sex sexual relations between Arab Muslim men or as a more general form of cultural mediation through international travel, the media, the internet, and social networking sites, the latter of which were key forms of communication and textual sites of the democratic struggle in the recent Arab Spring movements” (“Shifting” 75). Considering the long history of transcultural encounters and interactions, and the circulation of people and ideas between the two halves of the world, particularly in the Mediterranean, it is historically inaccurate to posit a native, pure, stable culture untouched by other cultures.

In his critique of Massad, Spurlin instead calls for a comparative approach that highlights the specificities and historicities of cultural and sexual differences:

Reading culture as circulatory, and as always already relational and mediated, can help destabilize and queer fixed cultural identities and challenge national cultural hegemonies both in the West and in the

postcolonial world, and expose new sites of heterogeneity and difference.

Examining the spaces and the movements between national borders

enables a tearing in the fabric of nationalism and new ways of exposing

and loosening its hegemonic hold. (73)

Spurlin resists an approach that analyzes indigenous sexual acts and subjectivities as self-contained and autonomous; instead, he stresses “relationality” as a more relevant and fruitful basis for analyzing sexual differences and the indigenous societies and cultures they emerge from. Similarly, in their introduction to *Cinsellik Muammasi: Türkiye’de Queer Kültür ve Muhalefet* (*The Sexuality Conundrum: Queer Culture and Dissidence in Turkey*), Cuneýt Cakırlar and Serkan Delice propose to revisit “queer analytics” as a response to Massad: “Queer goes beyond a monolithic East/West dichotomy. It makes possible to rethink history(ies) of sexuality, to produce creative methodological approaches so as to understand relationality between local and global sexualities” (27, my translation).

Andrews and Kalpaklı’s work exemplifies a history of interrelations, crossings, and connections between seemingly different cultures: “There are informative and interesting commonalities to social and intellectual life in the Mediterranean world that extend far into Europe and the Middle East and transcend perceived cultural and religious boundaries” (30). In spite of all the misunderstandings between the two worlds, they propose that there is much textual evidence that suggests that peoples in the East and West actually lived in similar ways, loved in similar ways, and experienced/shaped their sexualities in a similar manner. They study the Ottomans as a component of the early modern European scholarship, stating “If Istanbul of the sixteenth century seems distant from Europe and the life of European society, this is more a product of our own myopia and the blind spots of scholarship than a representation of Ottoman

realities. For Ottoman Istanbulites, Europe was always just a boat ride away, and Muslims seem to have caroused with, loved, and had sexual relations with Europeans on a regular basis” (65). While reading the Ottoman lyric poems to elucidate social practices and arguing that these social practices find their equivalence in the European context, they note that the similarities between the two worlds “result, neither from biology, not from direct influences or borrowings, but in some degree from similarities in the way existing political and social systems structured relations among groups and individuals” (268). Tracing similar sexual discourses, they highlight friendship, masculinity, power relations expressed through love, Petrarchan sonnets, spiritual love, and hierarchical gender roles as common grounds between the Ottomans, Venetians, and English.³⁶

V. Reading Contrapuntally

Traveling Sexualities owes its comparative perspective (as well as translated materials) to Andrews and Kalpakli’s work, to Subrahmanyam’s historiographical concept of “connected histories,” to Kafadar’s and Goffman’s explorations of such histories, and to Spurlin’s emphasis on intercultural relations. However, it also importantly takes its place next to, and implicitly in conversation with, another recent contribution in comparative sexuality studies, that is Joseph Boone’s *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*. Boone has most recently highlighted such connected significations of sexuality through a wide array of literary and visual materials (246 visual images, hundreds of literary references) from various cultural contexts (English, French, Arabic, Ottoman) while deploying “a model of reading across, between, and ‘besides’ cultural and disciplinary divides” (49). Following works such as Andrews and Kalpakli’s or Sahar Amer’s comparative examination of French and Arabic sexualities, *Crossing Borders: Love Between*

³⁶ Although they provide English examples, the majority of their comparisons are between Ottoman and Italian traditions.

Women in Medieval French and Arabic Literature, and Mary Robert's exploration of cross-cultural interactions between European women artists and their Ottoman female patrons from Ottoman harems in *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature*, Boone employs a "contrapuntal" reading strategy that fruitfully reveals connected histories of sexualities in Europe and Islamicate societies.

Borrowed from Edward Said's use of the term, "contrapuntal" reading as Boone describes, refers to a mode that "allows one to attend, as in music, to 'various themes play[ing] off one another with no privileging of the one over the other' in order to grasp a 'composite' built of atonalities. In such overlaps one can begin to perceive those affective desires and queer affinities that 'we moderns hear in archive' but cannot quite name" (xxii). Such a reading strategy thereby aims, in Boone's words, "to undo the binary pairings that have tended to define East and West... [and] to illuminate the myriad, rather than singular, forms of sexuality and eroticism that have in fact always traversed these politically freighted, ideologically constructed divides from a number of directions" (xxiv-xxv). Therefore, while uncovering the sexual politics of Orientalism, Boone also persuasively shows the extent to which Islamicate sexualities have historically informed such representations, as well as cross-cultural encounters.

This comparative body of scholarship exemplifies the contrapuntal reading strategy employed in *Traveling Sexualities* as I uncover the circulating tropes, figures, as well as discourses in two seemingly different early modern cultural contexts. As Massinger's play imagines the travel of mythological boys into the Ottoman world, Ottoman boys were carried into Europe through Ottoman erotica, which, as Tulay Artan and Irvin C. Schick argue, were highly demanded by European visitors and customers, as simply evident in the fact that most Ottoman erotic illustrations have been found in European collections (the erotic image, Figure 3,

is only one example of circulated Ottoman illustration in Europe³⁷). Taking onto consideration such exchanges and suggesting a re-orientation of the Ottomans and English through a connected history in the Mediterranean as well as within a Romanesque framework, *Traveling Sexualities* also strives to bring into proximity the two seemingly distinct cultural contexts—contexts that are dynamic and plural in the ways that stress the Anglo/European interactions as fluid—through a queer-historicist contrapuntal mode. Early modern literature is predominantly a literature of comparisons, re-workings, intertextual allusions, adaptations, translations and mis-readings—not only in the Ottoman context of harmonizing Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Greek, and Latin cultures (as evident in the Ottoman language itself), but also in English context of Italian, Greek, Latin, French influences. Because such literature resists national-literary boundaries, it necessitates a contrapuntal mode of reading.

Thus, the aim of my explorations in the preceding pages was to lay out the different strands of this project, building upon of an Ottoman Renaissance as a corollary to the European one; showing how the traveling figure of the “beautiful boy” not only traversed the literal boundaries between the two worlds in abductions and conversions, but also, as objects of male desire, “queered” the cultural landscape of West and East via a rich visual and textual representational repertoire. My contrapuntal readings in the following chapters inscribe not only a cross-cultural, but a cross-genre and cross-period pattern that addresses a wide array of texts and genres to better uncover discursive formations and cultural imaginings: Ottoman poems, historical chronicles, prose works, festival accounts, miniatures, together with English plays, poems, travelogues, chronicles, maps, and paintings from the mid-fifteenth to the early

³⁷ The image was brought to scholarly attention by Artan and Schick’s article that explores the erotic illustrations in the Ottoman Empire. For a reproduction of the image, see Artan and Schick (178).

seventeenth centuries.³⁸ My contrapuntal mode of reading is intent on illuminating similarities without losing sight of nuances, cultural alterities and peculiarities. In spite of differences and putative otherness, cultural productions demonstrate complex parallels and connections between the two societies, highlighting the circulation of discourses alongside persons traveling beyond imagined cultural borders.



Figure 3. “A Pornographic Scene.” From *Tuhfet Ul-Mulk*

[The Gift of the Kingdom], 1773. Alain Kahn-Sriber

Collection, Paris. WikiCommons.

³⁸ For the Ottoman context, I focus on materials produced in Constantinople in the Ottoman language, because it would be impossible to include Arabic, Greek, Armenian, Jewish, Kurdish, and many other cultural productions from vast territories of the Empire in the space of this project.

VI. The Abducted Boy

Traveling Sexualities focuses on traveling boys who were erotic objects of same-sex male desire, crossing borders of nations and empires in the early modern world. Anglo-Ottoman relations were political and commercial, but they came together in an embodied linkage via the figure of the abducted boy, who was also the “beautiful boy” of both the English and Ottoman imaginary, albeit in nuanced ways. The boy is a visibly distinct figure as well as a gender category in the early modern period, complicating a simplistic man/woman or hetero/homo gender and sexual matrix. He stands in a liminal space between manhood and womanhood as an object of desire. Following Michel Foucault, scholars of early modern sexuality have demonstrated sexual alterity of the early moderns in terms of the lack of a homo/hetero sexual matrix. The early moderns likely did not identify themselves, and their sexual relations, based on gender of the object of sex. What really mattered, David Halperin announces, was the hierarchy in sexual relations, proposing that “hierarchy itself is hot” for the premoderns (118). And the boy travels within this hierarchy, from childhood to adolescence, to adult manhood. Early modern sexuality scholars—both in English and Ottoman studies—have convincingly demonstrated the boy is not a stable, coherent, and fixed figure. In the period, we can find boys serving as actors, apprentices, servants, ingles, ganymedes, or pages. What constituted, commenced, and terminated the stage of boyhood changes according to the account under analysis—i.e. age, kinship relations, sexual availability, employment and service, hierarchical power relations, class-ranked order.³⁹ Therefore the boy as a distinctive category had the instability and fluidity to transgress gendered and sexual borders and differentiations.

³⁹ For a good discussion on the shifts in the significations of the term “boy” depending on determining factors such as class, age, and power, see Smith 189-224; and Brown. For Ottoman category of the boy, see Peirce, “Seniority.”

English scholars have explored the figure of the boy on English stage. As early as 1952, Alfred Harbage, and Gerald E. Bentley examined boy actors and noted that these boys were chattels with no agency. Feminist critics such as Lisa Jardine, Jean Howard, Laura Levine, and Gina Bloom have further traced the object status of boys and boy actors to highlight the gender dynamics functioning on the early modern stage. Queer scholars have highlighted the boy as an erotic category and as objects of male erotic desire: Stephen Orgel's elucidation of the gender performance of, and homoerotic desire for, boys on stage (*Impersonations*); Bruce Smith's cataloguing of boys as a classical trope, reflecting homoerotic desire in pastoral and romance narratives; Mario DiGangi's analysis of favorite boys in courts; Mary Bly's work on boy actors and the queer repertoire of the Whitefriars Company; and Jonathan Goldberg's (*Sodometries*) and Peter Stallybrass' analyses of boys as a separate erotic and gender category in the early modern sexual matrix, among others. Most recently, Emily Bryan's dissertation on the appropriation of boys for stage performances problematizes the subject/object dichotomy with regard to these "taken-up boys," and evinces how these boys function at differing social and performative levels in schools, courts, universities, theatres, and plays.⁴⁰ In Joseph Campana's words, "If the boy actor, with his suggestion of gender transitivity and his participation in networks of homoerotic appeal and homosocial power, was central to the erotic politics of the early modern stage, the boy, as a potential subject or object of literary pleasure, was central to an understanding of early modern poetics" ("Boy" 471).

⁴⁰ For more on boy actors, see Munro, *Children* and "Coriolanus;" Shapiro; Lamb; Belsey. On the complex category of child, adolescent, and boy, Campana "Shakespeare;" Brown; and collection of essays edited by Chedgzoy, et. al.; Witmore. For boys as commodity, see Busse; and Fumerton. On boy prostitutes, see Savvadis. On children and sovereignty, see Campana. I should also add to this list Jeffrey Masten's forthcoming book on boys and queer desire in book history.

Correlatively, Andrews and Kalpakli, Ze'evi, Leslie Peirce, and Khalid El-Rouayheb have uncovered the homosocial and homoerotic structures in the early modern Ottoman society, and in Islamicate cultures in general. For instance, as Andrews and Kalpakli demonstrate, the boy predominantly appears as the main figure of the beloved in Ottoman poetry from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. Pressing beyond the conventional and theological approach that perceives the prevalent image of the boy as a metaphor for divine love, standing in for the Quranic eternal youths of the Paradise, they rightly ask, is the image of the boy the same as the images that has been represented in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, or Turkish languages for centuries without a change? In ahistorical accounts of these Islamicate cultures, which conceive all cultural productions as exclusively related to Islam and its universal transcendental claims, there seems to be an impression that “the identical images are used by an eleventh-century mystical poet writing in Arabic in Baghdad, a twelfth-century court poet in Spain, a thirteenth century Persian, a sixteenth century Ottoman, and an eighteenth-century Urdu poet in Delhi all evoke the same thing without a reference to changing times and circumstances” (157). Reading the figure of the boy in Istanbul—in both historical and literary contexts—they argue that each period and place had its own specificities; in particular the boy of the early modern Ottoman literature is more of a reflection of the homosocial culture than of the metaphoric tradition. Similarly, Khalid El-Rouayheb shows that contemporary bibliographies, historical accounts, court records, letters, and certain Sufi discourses offer contrasting examples of physical love relations with boys in the early modern Arab world during the Ottoman period.⁴¹ In particular, erotic writings and

⁴¹ Early modern accounts also discuss the relationship between the boy as the object of love out of lust or religious convention as El-Rouayheb's quote from the sixteenth century Arabic writer, Ibn Hajar al Haytami shows: “Amorous verse is not an indication of having looked with lust... the composition of amorous verse is a craft and the aim of the poet is to produce attractive discourse, not carry out what is mentioned” (“Love of Boys” 11-12). For more on such accounts

illustrations like the homosexual orgy in the figure above (Fig. 2) challenge conventional blindness to representations of same-sex male relations.⁴²

Drawing from Andrews and Kalpakli's, El-Rouayheb's, and Ze'evi's spotlight on boys as erotic objects across genres, *Traveling Sexualities* contextualizes the history of boys in terms of abduction, conversion, and eroticism. I further scrutinize the category of the boy, questioning, are all boys the same? The prominent sixteenth-century scholar, courtier, bath-house owner, and dervish, Deli Birader Gazali, for instance, not only challenges metaphorical readings of male homoeroticism, but also provides a complex portrayal of various categories in terms of sexual preferences between adult men and boys in *Dâfi'ü'l-gumûm ve Râfi'ü'l-humûm* [Repeller of sorrows and Removers of cares], an erotic prose work, written when he was in the court of Prince Korkut.⁴³ Gazali begins by noting that love is a melancholic sickness that "Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Galen, and others" were not able to cure in a chapter on desire and pleasure after providing a dispute about what the most desirable to penetrate is between a *gulampare* [boy-lover] and a *zenpare* [women-lover] (a dispute that boy-lover wins). He next narrates different and unstable same-sex male sexual categories (187): one group loves "fresh" young boys whose "cocks are sweeter than sugar cane/Their shit tastier than jelly/Their small balls are like rock/ And their penises shaped like fresh almonds" (188). Sugar cane as an active phallic image, reinforcing "cocks," complicates active/passive roles, making it difficult for readers to

and disputes, see El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*, and "Love of Boys"; Andrews and Kalpakli; and Ze'evi. We can observe a similar move in English studies as Joseph Campana notes regarding the image of the child as an either spiritual or historical figure: "When we think of child figures, in Shakespeare or in early modernity generally, we need not imagine them as necessarily religious or spiritual figures. Rather, we must consider these children as historically and materially grounded figures compelled to signify, strenuously laboring with respect to the futurity of cultural fulfillment. To witness that labor is to understand Shakespeare's children" ("Shakespeare" 12).

⁴² On erotic writings and illustrations, see Artan and Schick, and Schick.

⁴³ All references to Gazali's work are from Kuru's *Scholar*.

make the generalization that the boy is always the penetrated passive one. Another group of men loves *guzeshte* [young men with beards]. Lovers of young men, not prepubescent boys, ask if boys are really men, praising love among equals: “Guzeshte beauties are able to appreciate the worth of a lover” and know how to have a good sex (190). The final group is comprised of lovers of old men who don’t like boys or young men with black mustaches, but rather men with white beards: “One loves bearded boys other loves jasmine-faced boys.../ [But] I fell for a white bearded one in order always to be alone with him” (191). And there stands another type: *mukhannes*, a man with a disease stemming from having a young boy’s sperm inside his anus, which irritates and causes the anus to itch, as a result of which he desires to be penetrated for a cure. While in the sexual culture, the young boy can be penetrated temporarily—it is quite acceptable because of his young age—and the adult man’s desire to be penetrated is a taboo or a disease, Gazali’s depiction reveals instabilities pointing at the “risk” for an active man to be penetrated in same-sex relations and to become a *mukhannes* because of the boy’s potential for altering roles. As evident in a late eighteenth century Ottoman erotic illustration, when it comes to sex, distinction between ages and status might become blurred (Fig. 3).

While the illustration and Gazali’s account note the transference between ages and hierarchical social positions during sex, Gazali’s categorization of certain types based on sexual preferences and the age and status of the boy nevertheless calls for further consideration of nuances between certain groups of boys. Beside *guzeshte* and *mukhannes* that Gazali evokes, there existed other youthful male categories like *ubna* [catamite], *müşteha* [sexually desirable], *emred* [beardless youth], *ergen* [young bachelor], or *levend* [adventurous].⁴⁴ While boyhood is an

⁴⁴ For more on *ubna* and *mukhannes* as sexual categories, see Ze’evi; El-Rouayheb; for other categories, see Peirce “Seniority,” and Andrews and Kalpaklı 59-84.

ephemeral, transitional identity, some boys remain as boys—imprisoned in that category due to their social roles.

Within the complex network of social and sexual roles and identities as regards to the boy, *Traveling Sexualities* especially focuses on the figure of the abducted boy as a separate erotic, aesthetic, ethnic, and historical figure that reveals nuanced differences from other boys by circulating between men and beyond borders. While the boy is the predominant trope of erotic embodiment in Ottoman poetry, the Christian boy of Mehmet's poetry (Chapter 3) and the European boys in Ali's catalogue (Chapter 1) reveal further social tensions within Ottoman imperial and ethnic discourses that the native boy does not. Similarly, the stolen Indian boy of *A Midsummer Nights Dream* (Chapter 2) and the traveling boy of *Hero and Leander* (Chapter 1) reflect cross-cultural anxieties and politics that Shakespeare's fair youth in his *Sonnets* does not. Hence, *Traveling Sexualities* explores the boy within a particular scenario, who shares object-status with other boys in aesthetic and erotic deployments, yet differs from them as historically vulnerable youths—as traveling boys crossing borders—in a global economy of enslavement, abduction, captivity, and conversion.⁴⁵

With their powerful presence in the Mediterranean market, the Ottomans practiced an institutionalized policy of abducting boys that brought to and converted thousands of European boys in Istanbul. At the dawn of the slave trade, Indian, African, Native American boys were trafficked by Englishmen, but in cultural representations in England the abduction of boys was

⁴⁵ The early modern use of the term “economy” connects household management, domestic, state, and global economies, which highlights the intricate interrelation between the domestic and the global, across trans-spatial exchanges. I use “economy” to signify not merely domestic, commercial aspects, but also various other notions of exchange, including military, political, colonial, and discursive. Thus, economy refers to both material and libidinal practices, which I suggest, play out in English and Ottoman cultural scenarios. For more on the interrelations between domestic and global economies, see Deng, 245-63.

consistently posed as a concern related to the Ottomans. Tracing together representations of these boys in the Ottoman and English cultural imaginations reveals the abduction of boys as a practice—institutionalized and not—that demonstrates an erotic matrix of political and military power relations imagined through a homoerotic bond between a hierarchically superior man and a submissive boy abducted from “other” lands. These abducted exotic boys, as I will argue, unveil early modern cross-cultural conversion politics, imperial discourses, and ethnic differences, marking homoerotic desire as a constitutive element of early modern socio-cultural and imperial politics as represented in the literary and cultural imagination.

Throughout, I use the term “boy” to refer to abducted youths who are transported from one place to another, who are hierarchically at the bottom of power relations, and who are sexually available and objectified. In early modern literary, cultural, and visual representations, the image of the abducted boy is a prevalent trope that proliferates and bifurcates in the form of either the captured, enslaved, exotic boy or the cup-bearer associated with Ganymede. Often times the two images—the abducted beautiful boy and Ganymede—are blended into one another, evoking sexual desire in abduction plots. My use of the term “the beautiful boy” emphasizes both the aesthetic, corporeal, and erotic deployments of this image that evokes Ganymede while highlighting the tensions and dissonances between the aestheticized eroticism of cultural representations and the coercive and violent history of abductions, conversions, and even enslavements of the boys. Similarly, I use abduction to signify kidnapping, stealing away, or forcibly carrying off as a means to refer not only to violent dislocation, transportation, transference, and exchange, but also to erotic desire motivating and embedded within the violent act.

VII. Chapter Outlines

Over four chapters, I explore the sexual, cultural, social, aesthetic, and political aspects of the figure of the traveling and dislocated boy through the practice of abducting boys on both sides of the Mediterranean, converting boys in certain contact zones, and finally fashioning boys to desired shapes and roles. Chapter I, “Ganymedes, Ganimets, and Traveling Boys in the Renaissance Mediterranean,” starts with Christopher Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, and zeroes in on the beauty of Leander that engenders his abduction in the Hellespont by Neptune. The chapter notes the significance of the geographic space as well as the Ganymede imagery in the poem to demonstrate how the early modern Mediterranean was a space in which the beautiful boy was always vulnerable to abduction and conversion. I project this Ganymede imagery specifically on the dislocated boys of the Ottoman Empire, while exploring the Ottomans’ institutionalized form of conscripting boys and its erotic aspects as represented in literary and visual representations. Like Ganymede, abducted by Zeus as booty of the post-Trojan War, the beautiful Christian boys from Europe were taken by the Ottomans as *ganimet* (booty). Putting into dialogue the boy and an object of desire in Ottoman poems and Leander in Marlowe’s poem through the iconic Ganymede in the Mediterranean, the chapter reveals how the beautiful boy operates centrally in exchanges between nations and empires in this shared yet contested space.

While English accounts are highly critical of the Ottoman practice of abducting boys from Europe, Chapter II, “Indian Boys in England,” traces those boys abducted by the English from foreign lands. The English practice of abducting and converting boys extends the argument from the first chapter to blur an English/Ottoman, West/East binary regarding the forceful practice of abduction and conversion. Although not formally institutionalized and thus on a smaller scale, the Englishmen also abducted and converted native boys from Africa, India, and

the New World. Often these *exotic* boys remained in the status of servants, who, as early modern queer historiography has demonstrated, were vulnerable to their masters' sexual advancements. Within this hierarchical paradigm, I analyze the image of the "stolen" Indian boy of exceptional beauty in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* alongside English portraiture, wherein the trope of white master/black servant emerges in the seventeenth century. I put into dialogue exotic boys in the portraits by Anthony Van Dyke and Daniel Mytens with the Indian boy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to argue these boys highlight the homoerotic dynamics of territorial domination in the nascent colonial discourse in the period.

These abducted boys in the Ottoman Empire and England appear as more than objectified servants. Their bodies, I suggest in Chapter III, "Homoerotics of Conversion: Beautiful Boys on the Horizon of Cross-Cultural Encounter Zones," signify the spaces they were abducted from in spatial representations of the spaces of cross-cultural encounters. In this chapter, I focus on topographical representations and the boy appearing in Ottoman representations of Galata—the Christian neighborhood in Istanbul—as well as on the margin of the European maps of the river Danube—a space of contact between the Ottomans and Europeans. I argue that early modern territorial representations conceptualized spaces as embodied in the beautiful boy on the horizon. In doing so, I also examine how this male-gendered and eroticized embodiment is subject to the homoerotic gaze of the poet, the cartographer, and the reader, while probing subject/object, active/passive dichotomies. This chapter also questions the traditional trope of the land-as-female, thus showing the early modern sexual economy goes beyond a heteronormative matrix of male/female; instead it operates through a wide sexual spectrum, including the eroticized boy.

In Chapter IV, "Circumcised Boys," I further explore the bodily conversions of abducted boys. Focusing on Thomas Sanders's account of two English boys, who were captured and

forcefully circumcised in the Mediterranean, within the frame of popular discourses about circumcision in plays, travelogues, and ethnographic treatises, the chapter reveals that early modern England, and Europe in general, experienced an anxiety about circumcision that intersected with a fear about their boys being abducted and converted. Ottoman bodies and their everyday practices were a great threat to the male bodies in Europe, and Christian boys—imagined as abducted, castrated, refashioned, and sodomized—evoked a nightmare that manifested itself particularly in circumcision narratives. In contrast, the same practices were celebrated in entirely positive terms in Ottoman accounts of the forty-day circumcision festivities as demonstrated in Ottoman festivity books like the 1582 *Surname-i Humayun*, which functioned constitutively in the formation of European discourses. The conversion of boys, I conclude, necessitated conversion of their bodies, which became a site of negotiations—cultural, religious, economic, political, and erotic.

My Coda, “Traveling into the Future,” moves from the early modern period to nineteenth century to conclude with a dialogue with contemporary queer explorations of the boy in our (post)modern global context. While in the early modern period the boy operates prominently in Ottoman and English cultural representations, the Orientalizing modernity of the nineteenth century rendered perverse the expression of boy-love in both cultures, while transferring the existence of homoerotic deviance onto eastern cultures. Hence, we witness the extinction of beautiful boys in both European and Ottoman representations. As recent queer scholars like Eng-Ben Lim show, boy love is attributed to the oriental by this colonial ideology; and the brown boy is an object to be saved by the white master from the oriental pederast. Predating this, the abducted boy of the early modern period highlights continuities to and ruptures from this

pederastic modernity, offering a coeval history wherein white boys were objects of servitude and love for brown men, and brown boys for white men.

The dialogical paradigm of reading early modern English and Ottoman materials together ultimately provokes a re-imagination of what the East and the West signify and how the lines between the two halves are blurred, fluid, and permeable. As I demonstrate in my opening reflections, the Ottoman Renaissance was as richly prolific as the European imaginative revival, and the two worlds came together both literally and imaginatively. In sum, *Traveling Sexualities* complicates and interrogates the familiar Eurocentric archive of travel writing. It does so while pluralizing early modern and contemporary productions of Islam in entering the Ottoman world via the aestheticized, erotic figure of the boy—a metaphor for both Islamic heavenly pleasure and human desire. Reading the boy in multiple genres, and at the intersection of connected histories and geographies, I offer additional queer and postcolonial methodologies for a historicist contrapuntal analysis of a variety of texts and contexts. Going beyond the self/other dichotomy through the image of the dislocated, transported, abducted, or stolen boy, my project traces movements, interactions, encounters, and transferences between different spaces. The transcultural and the queer thereby converge through the figure of the boy as he circulates within the aesthetic, commercial, and erotic economies shaping Anglo-Ottoman interactions, which in turn highlights a Renaissance without fixed cultural borders. This, therefore, brings to our attention a queerer Renaissance that provides us with valuable insights into our contemporary problems regarding sexuality, gender, race, Islamophobia, orientalism, and cultural imperialism.

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CHAPTER I

Ganymedes, Ganimets, and Traveling Boys in the Renaissance Mediterranean

*“Smooth-cheeked lads are loving friends and companions to their masters
both on campaigns and at home.”*

Mustafa Ali

“These darts of Cupid are shot through all the Empire, especially Constantinople.”

Paul Rycaut

“They speak not but of the perfections of their Ganimesdes.”

Michel Baudier

*“A hundred handsome youths compelled to turn Turks, or
made subject to more vile prostitution, and all English.”*

John Ravis

Leander, the beautiful boy of Christopher Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, dwells in the city of Abytos at the eastern point of the Hellespont; he is in love with Hero, the beautiful woman of the western city of the Hellespont, Sestos. In order to see his beloved, Leander dives nude into the sea to cross the boundary that separates the two. Swimming, his alluring body attracts the attention of the sea-god Neptune, who thinks “that Ganymede, displeased/ Had left the heavens” (641-42).¹ The sea-god confuses Leander with the beautiful cup-bearer of Jove. Charmed by the boy’s beauty, Neptune abducts the boy, dragging him down to the depth of the sea, where “The lusty god embrace’d him, called him ‘love’/ And sure he should never return to Jove” (651-52). Although he later realizes the boy is not Ganymede, Neptune continues to

¹ All references to “Hero and Leander” are from *The Collected Poems of Christopher Marlowe*, eds. Cheney and Striar.

seduce him verbally and erotically by caressing his body. Yet, Leander does not surrender, and his commitment to Hero's love frees him from captivity.

Marlowe objectifies Leander under the erotic gaze of Neptune as well as of the reader, making the enticing youth vulnerable to abduction. As "critical boy studies" have shown, the youthful male, or the boy, is a distinct yet incoherent gender, sexual, and social category—determined by age, kinship relations, sexual availability, employment and service, hierarchical power relations, and class-ranked order.² As a youthful erotic object of desire and abduction associated with Ganymede, Leander fits into the category of the beautiful boy who is vulnerable to the power of a hierarchically superior man. The abduction of Leander by the sea-god in the midst of the Hellespont is Marlowe's own invention, while his sources for the story are Musaeus and Ovid.³ Indeed, the figure of the abducted boy itself is a classical trope, as Bruce Smith cogently demonstrates in his exploration of early modern romance narratives (117-59). Leander's association with the abducted Ganymede, therefore, follows this prototypical aesthetic imagery.⁴

Taking into consideration the reworking of classical conventions, I query the spatial-historical implications foregrounded in the poem as regards the abduction and eroticization of

² I give an overview of these works in Introduction under the subtitle, *The Abducted Boy*.

³ The narrator makes it explicit saying "tragedie divine Musaeus soong" (52). Ovid's account of the story of Hero and Leander comes from his *Elegies*, which were translated by Marlowe. For more on classical, particularly Ovidian, influences in the poem, see Ellis, Bromley; Cheney; Haber.

⁴ In Robert Greene's romance narrative, *Menaphon* (1589), for example, Ganymede is a template for the abduction of the beautiful boy, Pleusidippus. A Thessalian pirate named Euroliochus "driving before him a large booty of beasts to his ships" sees the beautiful boy on the shore of Arcadia—another Mediterranean space—and "gazing on his face as wanton Jove gazed on Phrygian Ganymede in the fields of Ida, hee exhaled into his eyes such deepe impression of his perfection, as that his thought never thirsted so much after any pray, as this pretty Pleusidippus' possession" (91). The boy's beauty delights the pirate's eyes and enchants his heart, and finally he kidnaps the boy and presents him as a gift of peace to the king of Thessaly. The beautiful boy becomes an object of admiration, and is therefore abducted and exchanged.

boys in the Hellespont: Why does the poem give pause to the classical love story to include a homoerotic abduction plot in this space? How does the setting contribute to the abduction? Why is Leander, travelling in the Mediterranean waters, so vulnerable to abduction? Evoking Greco-Roman tradition, Marlowe, I suggest, uses Ganymede as a literary persona to imprint Leander's body with a libidinal cultural history in this Mediterranean space. I trace this representation of the abducted boy within the historical framework of the early modern transcultural economy of exchange in the Ottoman Mediterranean. I argue that the aesthetic template of the boy is not just a popular reworking of classical representations in abduction narratives, but also a reflection of the erotic motivations operating in the practices of abducting, kidnapping, and enslaving boys. The boys were abducted and eroticized as a part of imperial and socio-economic practices, revealing connections between the domestic and performative re-figurations of the identities of boys, and the global, cross-cultural, and material circulation of their bodies. Mythical boys who were abducted in imaginary landscapes evoking a range of desires have found their analogues in histories of these abducted boys in the sexual, social, and cultural economies, whether in England or the Ottoman Empire. In certain ways we have yet to acknowledge, the abducted boy is as much a historical figure as a classical prototype.

In tracing these abducted youths who are hierarchically at the bottom of power relations—sexually available and objectified—I focus on the aesthetic, corporeal, and erotic deployments of the figure of boy who evokes Ganymede. This figure points at the tensions and dissonances between the aestheticized eroticism of cultural representations and the coercive and violent history of abductions, conversions, and enslavements of the boys. I call these deployments in abduction plots the “Ganymede-effect.” Stressing the aesthetic/historical interlink, the Ganymede-effect refers not only to the widespread appearance and influence of the

icon and figure of Ganymede in the accounts about abducted boys—imaginary or real—but also to an affective mode, a homoerotic aura, that circulates in these abductions and their representations.⁵ Ganymede in such stories does not represent a singular figure, but rather evokes multiple historical configurations of “boys” possessed, desired, abducted, and sexually claimed as a part of Mediterranean trafficking. Exploring this Ganymede-effect in what follows, I first provide a brief history of the iconic image of Ganymede in the European tradition; then, before investigating how Mediterranean space operates in Leander’s abduction, I swim to the other side of the Hellespont, to the Ottoman world, where the Ganymede-effect appears in the widespread practice of abducting boys from Europe as *ganimet* as well as in European travel accounts of these boys who are called Ganymede, conflating the Ottoman *ganimet* into mythic Ganymede. These two histories finally contextualize Leander’s abduction within the larger cross-cultural Mediterranean traffic and sexual discourses—bringing together cultural associations and social practices.

I. Ganymede

Ganymede, a Trojan boy whose beauty excited Zeus’s desire, was abducted by the god in the form of an eagle, and carried away to Olympus, where he was deified and became the cup-bearer to the gods. The story of Ganymede as narrated by such Greek and Roman authorities as Homer, Plato, Virgil, and Ovid presents the abducted boy as the embodiment of both spiritual love and homoerotic desire. In Homer’s *The Iliad*, Zeus gives to Ganymede’s father “the finest” horses “in payment for his son,” and takes “Ganymede who was comeliest of mortal men” to

⁵ The term *Ganymede-effect* is modeled on Jonathan Gil Harris’ “Tamburlaine effect.” For Harris, Tamburlaine is an image on the stage that blurs ethnic and linguistic distinctions, collapsing Turks, Moors, Persians, Scythians, and Saracens among others into one another. For Harris, the “theatrical Tamburlaine effect is generated primarily by excessive bodily techniques and stage properties”(78). The Tamburlaine effect signifies an acting style associated with all other oriental despotic types.

Olympus (113, V: 265; 503, XX: 230). Plato in his *Laws* claims that the Cretans were “the inventor of the tale Ganymede” because of an institutionalized practice of abduction of boys and pederasty among them (636d). Plato’s *Symposium*, however, reveals Ganymede as an ideal companion and exemplar to show the superiority of boys over women as lovers.⁶ In Xenophon’s alternative *Symposium*, similarly, Socrates represses the pederastic associations of the myth by declaring that it is Ganymede’s “spiritual character that influenced Zeus to carry him up to Olympus. This is confirmed by his very name,” which in Socrates’ words means “to rejoice in wise councils” (Barkan 35).

The story of the abduction and ravishment of Ganymede, from the classical period onwards, has two overarching, yet conflicting, interpretations as Leonard Barkan and James Saslow have demonstrated: a Platonic approach that neglects the carnal elements of the myth, taking it as signifying a spiritual union with God (*amor spiritualis*), and an erotic signification that relates the myth to homosexual love and pederasty (*amor carnalis*). These two competing interpretations of Ganymede, swinging between a figure of ideal love and an object of pederasty, shape the medieval and Renaissance explications of the myth. During the Christianization of the myth in the Middle Ages, Ganymede transforms from a transcendental love story into a mundane, worldly image as in the *Ovide moralisé*: Jove appears as a warrior who carries an eagle as his standard, defeats his enemies, and seizes Ganymede as a war prize.⁷ Divine love is another main theme in the medieval transformation of the myth that equates the eagle, a symbol of Jove, with Jesus, and Ganymede with St John the Evangelist. Yet, as John Boswell has shown in his *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, Ganymede continues to figure in many Medieval Latin homoerotic poems despite the Christianization of the myth (243-66).

⁶ Barkan 36.

⁷ Barkan 39.

While the Ganymede myth went through many mutations, visual and literary representations from the late fourteenth century onwards coalesce around Ganymede as a recognizable icon of homoerotic male desire, with the popularity of the image reaching its apogee in the sixteenth century.⁸ The most famous version of the myth in the early modern period is from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In Arthur Golding's influential 1567 translation, Ganymede's story as narrated by Orpheus (a character also associated with homoeroticism) makes most visible the homoerotic aspect of the abduction for Ovid's readers, including Marlowe:⁹

But now I néede a méelder style too tell of prettie boyes
That were the derlings of the Gods: and of vnlawfull ioyes
That burned in the brests of Girles, who for theyr wicked lust
According as they did deserue, receyued penance iust.
The King of Goddes did burne erewhyle in loue of *Ganymed*
The *Phrygian* and the thing was found which *Iupiter* that sted
Had rather bée than that he was. Yit could he not betéeme
The shape of any other Bird than Aegle for too séeme
And so he soring in the ayre with borrowed wings trust vp
The *Troiane* boay who still in heauen euen yit dooth beare his cup,
And brings him *Nectar* though against Dame *Iunos* will it bée. (X. 157-67)

⁸ The myth's association with "spiritual ravishment" continues in early modern English interpretations. For the figure of Ganymede signifying a spiritual ravishment in devotional poetry by male poets, see Rambauss' "Symposuim." On homoeroticism of the myth in literature and visual art, see Barkan, Saslow, Smith, DiGangi, Bredbeck, Brown, and MacDonald. On the use of Ganymede in representations of same-sex female eroticism, see Carter, 81-114.

⁹ For more on the influence of Golding's translation on Renaissance writers, see Lyne, 232.

In Ovid's depiction, the abduction plot is generated by Jove's burning desire for the boy. Jove, in the form of an eagle, the only bird whose wings can endure Jove's fire/desire and the thunderbolt, "trusts up" the Trojan boy.¹⁰ Ganymede becomes the cup-bearer for Jove, replacing his daughter Hebe as cup-bearer.¹¹ Golding's Ovid, one of the most influential authorities in the Renaissance, puts at the center of the abduction Jove's "burning love of Ganymede." A more explicit homoeroticism is visualized in Michelangelo's *Ganymede* (Fig. 4), one of the early visual representations of Ganymede as sexually dominated by Jove. Michelangelo depicts in a highly sexualized mode the moment Ganymede is being taken aloft by Jove in the shape of an eagle. This drawing can be read as, in Barkan's words, "an image of anal penetration" (89). The eagle, aggressively thrusting the boy's body, grasps Ganymede's legs with his talons and surrounds his body with his wings while Ganymede's legs are parted, suggesting penetration.¹² In Peter Paul Rubens, Ganymede's abduction is painted as *The Rape of Ganymede*, clearly offering the aggressively erotic dynamics of the abduction through grasping talons of the eagle and phallic quiver thrusting the boy's buttocks (Fig. 5).

¹⁰ In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ganymede is kidnapped not by Jove himself, but by an emissary eagle sent by Jove (5. 249-57).

¹¹ His occupation will give him another name, Aquarius, in zodiacal charts.

¹² Barkan and Saslow persuasively argue that this sexual representation generates similar Ganymede icons in visual arts. Ganymede's erotic body does not appear solely in literature and visual arts. As I discuss in the third chapter, the topos of Ganymede seen from behind, for example, also emerges as an image that is used in cartographic representations on the margins of maps, and Ganymede as Aquarius appears in astrological depictions.



Figure 4. *Ganymede*. Michelangelo, Windsor Castle, Royal Library. Qtd. in Barkan 80.



Figure 5. *The Rape of Ganymede*. Peter Paul Rubens, 1636-1638.

Prado Museum, Madrid.¹

¹ <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-rape-of-ganymede/6e81bf30-a422-4c69-88af-c0368c7bf17c>

This association of the boy and homoerotic love became so popular a trope in the Renaissance that Ganymede came to refer to any beautiful boy, including popular youths such as Orpheus, Cupid, Hercules, Adonis, and Hermaphrodites.² Moreover, the name Ganymede itself became a common noun, “ganymede.” Thomas Blount’s 1656 dictionary *Glossographia* defines Ganymede as “the name of a Trojan boy, whom Jupiter so loved (say the Poets) as he took him up to Heaven, and made him his Cup-bearer. Hence any boy that is loved for carnal abuse, or is hired to be used contrary to nature, to commit the detestable sin of Sodomy is called a Ganymede; an ingle.” As a corrupt form of the name, “catamite” starts to be used in the English language to signify boys hired for sex by men, and passive male in same-sex male sexual intercourse as it appears in Blount’s definition: “a boy hired to be abused contrary to nature, a Ganymede.”³ Varying interpretations of Ganymede continued to coexist in the early modern period: an icon of divine love as well as a figure of the catamite or the servant boy to be sexually used. For example, Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage* begins with the stage direction, “Jupiter dandling Ganymede upon his knee, and Mercury lying asleep;” Jupiter entreats, “Come, gentle Ganymede, and play with me” (1.1.1). Like the nameless beloved of Marlowe’s pastoral poem, “Come live with me and be my love,” Ganymede is the object of Jupiter’s attraction, enjoying the gifts his beauty and love brings. In Richard Barnfield’s sonnets (i.e., Sonnets 4/10/15), Ganymede is the beloved boy in the world of the pastoral; in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, he is the name for a seductive and saucy cross-dressed; in Alexander Gill the Younger’s poem, he is a destructive royal favorite “Whose whorish breath hath power to lead/ His Majesty which way it

² For more on how these youths are conflated with Ganymede, see Saslow.

³ Also see the entry, “catamite,” in *The Oxford English Dictionary* for the etymology. For more discussions about the link between “catamite” and Ganymede, see Saslow 29; Bredbeck 18.

list” (qtd. in DiGangi 106).⁴ In Henry Peacham’s 1613 *Minerva Brittana*, Ganymede is linked to buggery, incest, murder, counterfeiting, and witchcraft (in the emblem in Peaham’s *Minerva*, eagle and wine cup are replaced by a cock and poison cup; he is on the back of a cock viciously holding poison-cup (Fig. 6); in John Marston’s 1598 *Certaine Satyres* Ganymede is “One who for two daies space/Is closely hired...an Open Ass” (48; 52).”⁵



Figure 6. “Ganymede upon a Cock.” Henry Peacham, *Minerva Brittana* (48), 1613.

Such popularity of the iconic Ganymede, as Barkan, Saslow, and Christopher P. Scott suggest, is intricately related to the classical education and curriculum of which Ovid is a significant component. A more secular form of literature opens a venue for reworking of classical myths, which shows the prevailing eroticism in humanist philosophy. However,

⁴ For more on the homoerotics of royal favoritism, see DiGangi 100-133.

⁵ Ganymede even appears emblematically in the bookseller Walkley’s sign, “The Eagle and Child” probably to attract certain book-buyers. For the bookseller Walkley’s sign, see Masten, “Ben Jonson’s Head” 163.

focusing on how Ganymede operates in abduction plots within the cross-cultural interactions and mercantile and military practices, I suggest the figure of the abducted boy shows how aesthetics and practices are deeply interlinked. The myth itself originates from a violent encounter between the Greeks and the Trojans, wherein Ganymede is raptured and seized as plunder or booty. So too in the Renaissance is Ganymede associated with stolen honor, rapture, ravishment, rape, transport, theft, plundering, seizure as prey.⁶ Ganymede is carried away from one place to another, and then becomes a metaphor for being carried away by someone or by his feelings, giving new life to the trope of the encounter. He embodies transportation and transference from one place to another—be it horizontal or vertical—while his new identity as the beloved cup-bearer signals a form of conversion—a topic to which I will return.

II. Ganimet Boys in the Ottoman Empire

The intricate interrelations between the aesthetic and historical aspects of the beautiful boy are most explicit in the Ottoman practices of abducting boys as *ganimet* in the Mediterranean. A historiography of these boys reflects the erotic nature of power relations where mastery and service as well as Christianity and Islam are hierarchically ordered in an active/passive sexual matrix based on the *ganimet* status of these boys. Deriving from the Arabic word “ghanima,” *ganimet* refers to any sort of property, land, people, or weapons gained from non-Muslim enemies.⁷ While the term has a strong connection with its Arabic etymology, “ghanima” (الْغَنِيْمَة) that signifies “spoils of war, booty” that are gained from the infidel (lands, properties, animals, and human subjects) in accordance with religious license, it also recalls the

⁶ For more in-depth discussions of these associations, see Barkan, 19-20, Scott, 2-4; Saslow 25.

⁷ For the definition and the Arabic etymology of “ganimet,” see *Türk Dil Kurumu Sözlüğü*. *Ganimet* as war spoils as well as boys taken for sexual pleasure is reminiscent of the English usage of “booty” which also signifies both plunder and a person’s desire for sexual intercourse. I thank David Halperin who brought to my attention the signification of “booty.”

erotic aspect of Ganymede, particularly in representations of *devshirme* boys, as eroticized companions and cup-bearers.⁸

Devshirme (collecting) was developed by the Ottomans in the fifteenth century as an institutionalized form of conscripting boys from conquered territories in order to form a new military force, the Janissaries (*Yeniçeri*/The New Corps), and an administrative body for the rule of the Empire. One of the earliest Ottoman accounts about *devshirme* boys is Asik Pasazade's fifteenth century chronicle, *Manakib u Tevarih-u Al-i Osman* [The History of the Ottomans], that describes how the idea of *devshirme* came into being in the early fifteenth century: A wise man, Rustem, advises the vizier Candarli Halil to benefit from the divine license that permits the sovereign to assert rights over one-fifth of all war spoils. Consulting Sultan Murad, Candarli appoints Gazi Evranoz to collect one-fifth of war slaves as the Sultan's property. Upon seeing all the boys Gazi collected, Candarli takes them to the Sultan, counseling, "Let's give these boys to Turkish households so that they can learn Turkish. After they learn the Turkish language, we can bring them up as Janissaries" (382-83).⁹ All these boys, Pasazade further notes, were to be converted, sent to serve in Turkish households as a process of Turkification, and finally brought back to the imperial city as loyal slaves ready to serve in the military. Thus starts the formation of the new elite army by abducting boys from the conquered lands in Europe. The boys, mostly taken from newly captured, non-Muslim Balkan populations, such as the Greeks, Hungarians, Bosnians and Albanians, were brought to the imperial capital, Istanbul, and transformed into the slaves (*kul*) of the Sultan.¹⁰

⁸ For derivations of the word, see the entry "gh-n-m" ("غَنِيْمَة") in Ibn Manzur's *Lisan al-Arab*. For more on "ganimet" in religious discourse as a motivating drive for Ottoman army, see Ertas.

⁹ All translations of Pasazade from Turkish are mine.

¹⁰ *Kul* would be translated as "servant to God." Although I translate "kul" as "slave," it has different connotations signifying power dynamics of Ottoman Absolutism similar to that

In a celebratory tone, Pasazade finishes his narrative with two couplets, the last of which reads: “Know that they are Sultan’s rightful boy-properties, / No other soldiers can hereabouts be found, but Janissaries” (383). The editors of the modern-Turkish edition of Pasazade’s *History*, Kemal Yavuz and Yekta Sarac, translate the first line, “Sultan’s rightful boy-properties,” into modern Turkish as “Sultan’s *ganimet*”: “*Hukumdarlari icin ganimetten alinmislardir*” [They are taken out of *ganimets* for the Sultan] (115). The original word Pasazade uses is “mal,” which refers to any property, goods, and possessions.¹¹ The editors’ term “*ganimet*” rightly encompasses all these meanings, particularly considering Pasazade uses “mal” and “*ganimet*” together and interchangeably throughout his account such as in the form of “mal u *ganimet*” (333; 346; 458). These boys are indeed the Sultan’s rightful *ganimet*. Considering Pasazade’s stress on *boy-properties* [*mal oglidur*] to refer to *ganimet*, the term provokes the image of the beautiful boy. *Ganimet* as a conceptual framework thus demonstrates the Ganymede-effect embedded in such practices, as well as in Ottoman and European representations of abducted boys, military captives, and slaves who prominently figure in the trope of beautiful beloved boys.

between God and human, and creator and the created. I must note that Ottoman slavery is different from the conventional understanding of slavery which mostly connotes a slave who is a chattel deprived of his or her civic rights, and his or her slave status is inherited by their children. Ottoman slavery in general, on the other hand, is more similar to early modern servitude and bondage in Europe. These *devshirmes*, *kuls*, were servants of the sultan, but at the same time they had privileges that other subjects of the empire did not. They were considered to belong to the Sultan’s household and were paid salaries. They were exempt from taxation, and had the right to own properties and slaves. As for other forms of slavery, such as purchased slaves, slaves had legal rights to negotiate their contracts or change their master if they wished. Slavery is not inherited; the sons and daughters of the slaves are free. Also the slaves are liberated upon their master’s will or upon their conversion. They were paid and had opportunities and means to rise to positions of power and influence. Yet, keeping these differences in mind, I use “slave” to signify enslaved and captive people in this chapter for the sake of convenience. For more on peculiarities of Ottoman slavery, see Toledano; Kunt; Erdem.

¹¹ “Mal u *ganimet*” (333; 346; 458).

The beauty of these *ganimet* boys is crucial, resulting from the central role the body of the boy plays in the practice of *devshirme*, as can be seen in the guidebooks of recruiting boys such as *Kavanin-I Yeniçeriyan* [The Janissary Laws]. Chosen Christian boys, generally between the ages of ten and eighteen, had to be good looking, uncircumcised, healthy, clever, and unmarried.¹² The boys with bodily perfection were marked and dressed in a red robe and a hat (*kizil aba ve külah*) in order to prevent any kidnappings and escapes—as is suggested in a miniature by an unknown painter from Arifi's *Suleymanname*, one of the most important courtly accounts of the reign of Suleyman I (1520-66) (Fig. 7). Following their arrival in Istanbul, these boys were stripped and examined for any bodily defects by the chief of the Janissaries. Finally, they were converted to Islam, circumcised, and given an Islamic name.

Arifi's ordering of the illustration of the recruitment of boys highlights the significance of the *devshirme* boys in the rule of the Empire (Fig. 4). The miniature, one of the sixty-five plates in *Suleymanname*, is the first one appearing right after the scene of Suleyman's accession to the throne, signifying the prominent status of these boys, who would rule the Empire as the slaves of the Sultan. As a result of the practice of *devshirme*, two of the most powerful elite classes—the Janissaries and the ruling bureaucratic class—were both based on bodily perfection and merits. The most talented and handsome boys were first sent to various palaces in Istanbul to serve as well as to be trained in academic, administrative and courtly matters, while the rest remained in the army and were registered as *acemi oglans* (novice boys). The *acemi oglans* first served in a

¹² It was forbidden to conscript the only son of a family or more than one boy from the same family. It was permitted to take only one boy from every forty households; generally such abductions took place every three or four years. The details and rituals of abduction are described and institutionalized through *Kavanin-I Yeniçeriyan* [The Janissary Laws]. For the facsimile and transliteration, see Akgunduz, 128-134. For more on *devshirme* system, janissaries, and military structure, see Yilmaz, 119-34; Uzuncarsili; Akkutay; Kunt, *The Sultan's*; Kafadar; Inalcik, "Military;" Menage. On female slavery, see Faroqhi, "From" and *Stories*; and Zilfi.

Muslim family (as a form of assimilation into Ottoman-Muslim culture) for five years, then in Anatolian and Rumelian villages for domestic, public, and military work. The selected palace boys, on the other hand, were trained both as soldiers and as scholars with an intense education in Turkish and Arabic languages, literatures, theology, and law. Every three to seven years, the most talented among these palace boys were transferred to the imperial palace to continue their education in *Enderun*, the Imperial Palace School, while the remaining few joined the elite army as *kapikulu* (slaves of the Porte). Those taken to the imperial palace were subject to strict discipline and further courtly training to become courtiers. Learning the highly coded palace culture, these beautiful boys were able to catapult their careers as high as becoming *vezir-i azam* (grand viziers), second only to the Sultan in power.¹³



Figure 7. “Devshirme boys.” Arifi, *Suleymanname* (94), 1558.

¹³ The Grand Vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, for example, was a conscripted Bosnian *devshirme* who held the highest office of the Empire from 1564 to 1578. According to Fernand Braudel, thirty-three of the forty-eight Grand Viziers of the Ottoman Sultans from 1453 to 1623 were *devshirme* boys (159).

The image and the Persian poem surrounding Arifi's miniature evoke both the desire and anxiety circulating in this practice. The poem begins, "Those who have two beloved sons are saved from being needed by one of them." Justifying the practice of abduction as helpful for parents, the poem then describes how conscription is a result of royal order that sends two officials to every European corner of the Empire. As Arifi's line implies, whether due to the success stories of these boys or the poverty of the rural households, some families requested the conscription of their sons. Yet, the miniature shows how a Janissary tries to console the people's grief while their boys are taken away in red clothes.

Indeed there was also great anxiety and resentment in these Christian lands, evident in sources such as a song from Epirus: "Be damned, Emperor, thrice be damned / For the evil you have done and the evil you do. / You catch and shackle the old and the archpriests, / In order to take the children as Janissaries. / Their parents weep, their sisters and brothers, too / And I cry until it pains me; / As long as I live I shall cry, / For last year it was my son and this year my brother" (qtd in Vakalopoulos 36-37).¹⁴ The miniature illustrates such anxieties of the parents on the one hand and the gaze of the two officials over these boys on the other. The lines below describe these boys in celebratory metaphoric language: "Red roses, red dresses, more than green blossoms/ Dresses in rose colors are layered like roses."¹⁵ Arifi links the red color of their garments to mark these boys as *devshirme* with red roses, which metaphorically signifies love in the Islamic-Ottoman literary tradition (the rose and the nightingale particularly invoke the

¹⁴ For more on how *devshirme* practice is reflected in the folk culture and songs in Eastern Europe, see Yermolenko.

¹⁵ I thank Nagehan Gur for her help in translating these lines from Persian to Turkish. English translations are mine.

prominent imagery of the beloved and the lover who sings his sufferings).¹⁶ Each piece of the dress is a rose leaf, and together they compose a rose garden. Singing his song to the rose like a nightingale does, Arifi marks these boys as the beloveds of the Empire.

These boys, now elite officers and ruling figures of the Empire, were, on the one hand, a target of the critical eyes of Turkish elites, and on the other, at the center of love stories as the beloveds of poets or of the Sultan himself. Ibrahim Pasha's well-known story is an exemplar of how the paradigm of desire/anxiety is a part of the lives of these boys. Known as the Favorite and the Slain (Makbul ve Maktul), Ibrahim was enslaved at a young age from Parga and brought to the palace.¹⁷ As a brilliant, ambitious, and attractive boy, he became the personal servant and a close companion to Suleyman, the heir apparent to the throne after his father, Selim I. After Suleyman became Sultan, he first appointed Ibrahim as his chief chamberlain and later as his grand vizier, the highest ruling status after the Sultan. Ibrahim Pasha's close companionship with the Sultan enabled him to stay as a member of the Sultan's household, and provided him with the privilege to enter private units of the imperial palace. Having his own room in the palace, right next to Suleyman's chamber, was a sign of his intimacy to the Sultan of which many were jealous, including the Sultan's beloved concubine Hurrem Sultan.¹⁸

¹⁶ For a brief survey of the rose imagery in Ottoman literature, see the entry "gul" in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 14, 219-22.

¹⁷ For a detailed biography and career of Ibrahim Pasha, see Jenkins.

¹⁸ Ibrahim remained in power successfully, and effectively shaped the Ottoman expansion towards Europe. However, The Favorite was slain for treason with the Sultan's order. The slave of the Sultan yet the vizier of the Empire is now posthumously known as The Favourite and the Slain. Most critical works connects his murder to Suleyman's beloved concubine Hurrem Sultan's [known as Roxelana in the West] jealousy of his intimacy with Suleyman. For the erotic dynamics between the three, see Andrews and Kalpakli, 237-250. For them, Ibrahim's death and Hurrem's victory is also the victory of heretieroticism over homoeroticism, and marks the birth of a new erotic era. While I don't agree with their speculation due to the fact that homoerotic desire operates centrally in the Ottoman poetry till the early nineteenth century, I agree that it is a

While Ibrahim was envied by more experienced viziers, Turkish elites, and poets, he was also loved by others due to his generous patronage of artists and investment in arts.¹⁹ Being an abducted boy, he was also at the center of sexual innuendos, as it is evident from the conflict between him and Deli Birader Gazali, one of the famous poets under his patronage, as narrated by the sixteenth century biographer of poets, Asik Celebi. Celebi cites one of his couplets, which is unclear whether it refers to Ibrahim or male visitors of his bathhouse, in the context of a problem about Gazali's bathhouse that angers Ibrahim. The couplet is "Ne mahkum orada belli ne hakim/ Dugundur ki calan kim oynayan kim" (933) [It's not clear who is ruled and who does rule these days/ It's a wedding fest, so who dances and who plays (Andrews and Kalpakli 239)]. The words "mahkum" (dominated/ruled) and "hakim" (dominating/ruler), as well as "play" and "dance," signify penetrating/penetrated roles in sex. It is not clear who "rules" and "plays," blurring Ibrahim's role in the sexual act. Celebi informs that this couplet was interpreted by some of Gazali's rivals as his mocking of Ibrahim's close relation with his young male friend, Cesmi Bali. Gazali's double entendre in those lines, for some critical readers who complained to Ibrahim, evokes a conflation of Sultan and Ibrahim, because Ibrahim exercised the Sultan's power with an absolute authority as his plenipotentiary (*vekil-i mutlak*), while also raising the question of who "plays" and who is "played upon" in a probable sexual triangle between Ibrahim and Cesmi or Suleiman. As a result, Ibrahim sends a troop of newly abducted boys, *acemi oglans*, to tear down Gazali's bathhouse, a revenge taken by the sexualized boys.

The institutionalized practice of abduction was not the only form of seizing boys as *ganimet* in the Ottoman context. Islamic law allowed the Ottoman Sultan to capture one-fifth of

shift in Suleyman and Hurrem's life, and in his court. For more on Hurrem and harem politics, see Peirce, *The Imperial* and "Domesticating."

¹⁹ For literary circles around Ibrahim and his patronage, see Tezcan.

war captives, a practice known as *pençik* [one-fifth]; and according to one of the earliest historical narratives about the *devshirme* system, it is this one-fifth law that enabled the system. While *devshirme* was a practice of capturing boys among *zimmi* population [non-Muslims under the authority and protection of the Islamic state], the *pençik* system allowed the Ottomans to capture people [male and female] of *harbi* status [non-Muslims living outside the Empire, in *daru'l harp*—the domain of war]. These war captives—taken under *pençik* law—were not subject to the same education and opportunities offered to *devshirme* boys, and were exempt from some obligations. They did not have to convert—more accurately, they could not be forced to convert—and they were not obliged to assimilate into the Muslim-Ottoman culture. These captives mostly maintained their native cultures and religions. Also the Crimean Khanate, which practiced a slave trade, regularly sent war captives to Constantinople as presents to the Sultan.²⁰

Apart from war captivity and piracy, dervish groups also facilitated by human trafficking and abduction in the Ottoman Empire. The famous sixteenth century poet Hayali, for example, was one of the boys kidnapped by a dervish group and brought to Istanbul.²¹ As Andrews and Kalpakli have noted, the dervishes were known, deservedly or not, as “notorious for seducing young men and sexually exploiting them” in the sixteenth century (140). As we can see in the miniature of “a fox disguising as a dervish” in Arifi’s *Rawzatu-l-Ussakk* from the mid-sixteenth century, the fox’s dexterity in deceiving is represented through a dervish (Fig. 8). The erect penis of the dervish reflects the presumed sexual reception of dervishes.²² Hayali’s biography as

²⁰ For more on slave trades by the Crimean Tartars, see Ivanics.

²¹ For more on Hayali’s sixteenth century biography, see Asik Celebi, 368-70; Andrews and Kalpakli 138-40; for Hayali’s *Divan* [collected poems], see Tarlan.

²² A focus on dervishes’ penis is not missing in the accounts of the European travellers. In Nicholas de Nicolay’s travelogue, there’s a woodcut of a dervish, whose tunic/dress has an opening so that the viewer can see his scrotum pierced with a ring.

narrated by Asik Celebi informs us about sexual dynamics played out in abducting boys by travelling dervish groups (368).



Figure 8. “A fox disguising as a dervish.” Arifi, *Rawzatu-l-Ussakk*, 1550, Topkapi Palace Museum, CHUAM, 1895.216.15A, fol. 41b. Qtd. in Bagci, et.al. 72

As one group of these dervish groups was passing through the town of Yenice in the European part of the Empire, one of the dervishes seduced the little boy Hayali, and kidnapped him. He taught Hayali about the mystics and poetry, and brought him to Istanbul where the boy's beauty drew the attention of a high city officer. His good looks and talent in rhetoric helped him penetrate into the higher social circles, circulating from one patronage to another: first to the circle of the chief finance minister and a prominent scholar, Iskender Celebi, and later to the company of Ibrahim Pasha, the grand vizier. He ended up at the court and gained the patronage of Suleyman himself. Hayali's biography demonstrates how a boy materially circulates from one

space to another, from one group to another, and how his beauty and talents pave further career paths. The beauty of a boy makes him vulnerable to more powerful men. But his boyhood that makes him an object of seduction and love later helps him to be the subject of such erotic power relations as Hayali's poem for a beautiful cup-bearer, or magian boy, shows: "Passion for that magian boy/ in Hayali's bosom lies/ As dwells 'neath heaven's canopy/ the monarch of the skies" (Andrews and Kalpakli 158).

Whether as statesmen, soldiers, poets, or servants, these boys were at the center of critical eyes and the Ottoman literary imagination, appearing as the beauties of the city. The prominent courtier and poet in the court of Mehmet II, Ahmet Pasha's love for one of the imperial pages was widely recorded in the contemporary accounts.²³ When he heard that the palace page he was deeply attached to had been imprisoned by the Sultan, he composed a poem for the boy: "Y-brent be earth! You Taper sweet and bland/ A-weeping lieth, bound with iron band/ Would he but sell his Shiraz-comfit lips,/ 'T would fetch Cairo, Bokhara, Samarcand" (Gibb, *Vol 2* 42). A *devshirme* boy and Janissary himself, the poet Yahya eroticizes one Janissary boy in his sixteenth century *sehrengiz* (beauties of the city).²⁴

The Janissary Safer too is one

His brow the moon, his face the world's sun

If golden headdress be this moon's attire

Its sun-like glow would set the earth afire

²³ For more on Ahmet Pasha's poetry, and his attachment to the page boy in contemporary accounts, see Gibb, *Vol 1* 41-46.

²⁴ *Sehrengiz*, mostly an erotic genre of cataloguing beautiful men of the cities, is borrowed from Persian models, and it evolves to include different countries while the empire expands its boundaries. For more on the *sehrengiz* genre, see Levend; Stewart-Robinson; Oztekin; Tugcu. On how this genre is transformed into a visual cataloguing by European modernist artists, see Boone 2010.

Wherefore is that distinguished eyebrow double?

Two nights to one moon's head is trouble. (42)

A janissary boy in his tall hat with golden drapes (a ceremonial costume), Safer's beauty shines like the sun over the city. The Janissary boys grew up together as abducted cohorts, and were raised with a bond of fraternity, loyal to the Sultan. As Gulay Yilmaz notes, "sharing similar experiences in the early phase of their lives in Ottoman society, the boys developed special attachments to each other. This attachment was referred to as *acakdas* or *hocadas* — being in the same regiment or trained under the same tutor. Every regiment had its own symbol, etched as a tattoo on every janissary's body" (124). This attachment included erotic bonds as well; as Andrews and Kalpakli assert, the army was a place "where young men developed romantic and sexual relations with each other" (138). The Janissaries, all male and unmarried, were highly eroticized in the popular imagination, particularly due to their intimacy with one another and their proximity to the Sultan as his slaves, servants, and guards. Yahya's affectionate depiction of the beauty of a fellow Janissary clearly evokes such homoerotic attachments. Similarly, Vasfi, a poet and a judge, explicitly declares his love for a Janissary boy named Memi: "Don't praise the sun or moon to me saying they are loved/ No beauties of this world do I love but Memi Shah" (104). Some Janissary boys, as the records of bathhouses [hammam] evince, served sexually as shampoo-boys in bathhouses alongside boys from other lands, Albanian boys in particular. These boys were not only objects of the poetic gaze but sexual partners for men in bathhouses.²⁵

²⁵ On shampoo-boys in bathhouses, and the Janissaries as sexual objects in bathhouses, see Delice.

These boys, just like Ganymede in European accounts, generated many arguments regarding homoerotic relations, spiritual love, and homosociality. Mustafa Ali of Gallipoli, a famous courtier and historian, provides a clear picture of the eroticization of these boys. Composed in 1587, Ali's *The Etiquette of Gatherings (Kava'idu'l-mecalis)* offers a critical observation of social interactions among elite men inside and outside the court as well as an invaluable account providing a lively and detailed picture of sixteenth century Istanbul. In his chapter entitled "About the Situation in the Palaces of the Sultan and about Boy Servants in Harem," Ali complains about the degenerate lives of boys serving in the private quarters of the imperial palace:

Hereafter they [the palace officials] should not take into the harem impudent converts who rush about madly in the service of shameless lowlife types and especially not those hair-waisted ones whose hidden treasures have been shared with snakes, that is to say, those who mingled with levends and hooligans of the city-boy class, and those notorious for going to taverns and being sold [for sex]. Let them [also] view separation from them as preferable to union, for in the likes of them manners, modesty, honesty, and faithfulness are rare indeed. Even supposing that one of them might be an honest and faithful [beloved], the defects related to his having sold himself will become apparent. Then the class of boy slaves is generally infamous for things other than self-ruination. This is to

say that they turn irresistible snakes of their lust into deadly speckled
serpents in the steaming-hot buried treasure of its coffer. (144)²⁶

Ali complains that during the reign of earlier Sultans, the palace boys were selected very carefully in accordance with the scientific criteria of physiognomy; yet the selection criteria are no longer morally upright.²⁷ Ali defines these boys as a class by itself: “the class of boy slaves,” which as Andrews and Kalpakli suggest, refers to the Sultan’s servants. The palace is now full of lustful slave boys who pursue other boys, as well as a life of pleasure in taverns.²⁸ Ali’s

²⁶ The translations of Ali’s work are from Andrew and Kalpakli. For the English translation of all text, see Brookes. For a simplified Turkish translation, see Seker. For Ali’s biography, see Fleischer.

²⁷ In the late sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, the structure of the Janissary army changed. The Muslim population started to be conscripted, and rights like marriage and trade were given to the Janissaries, which brought an end to the practice of conscripting only non-Muslim boys for the elite army. For more on changes in army structure in the late sixteenth century and seventeenth centuries, see Kunt, *The Sultan’s*. For more on general changes taking place during this time including military, economic, and social, see Faroqhi, *Towns* and “Politics;” Inalcik, *An Economic*; Goffman; Abou-el Haj; Pamuk.

²⁸ Actually, in a section on Ottoman taverns, Mustafa Ali depicts a unique aspect of Ottoman sexual culture as associated a space like tavern. He notes that there are mainly two prominent groups in wine taverns. One is the group of young prominent men, eloquent speakers, successful businessmen, artisans, and government officials, who come to the tavern with their beloveds to eat, drink, and return to their private places at night “to spread out their bolsters, mattresses, and bedclothes and take their beloveds or smooth-cheeked servant [boys] in their arms” (70). The other group consists of “despicable black-faced Arabs and lowborn characters of Russian descent,” who waste their lives in taverns. These men accord their sexual lives in an order that they have sex with women on Friday nights, with beardless youths on Saturday nights, and with young male slaves on feast day eves (70). While Ali is very critical of the elite men who do not pursue a moral life away from taverns, he seems to hold officers as responsible for the moral decay in the empire rather than the promiscuous slave boys. Apart from taverns, bathhouses are another popular space for erotic contact, as it appears in the accounts of Aşık Çelebi, and Evliya Çelebi. Aşık Çelebi describes his and other poets’ visits to bathhouses to flirt with and watch beautiful young men. Evliya Celebi, in his travelogue, also mentions erotic atmosphere in the bathhouses and how lovers and beloveds enjoy each other’s company in the warm waters. Some of the other sexual spaces are Tophane and Galata taverns such as Efe Meyhanesi and Yani Meyhanesi, the banks of Bosphorus and Marmara, gardens, coffee houses, picnic areas such as Goksu, or Kagithane. For the sixteenth c. poets’ biographies, see sixteenth-century writer Asik Celebi. On Asik Celebi, see Aynur and Niyazioğlu. On sexualized spaces, see Andrews and Kalpaklı 63-84. On garden as sexual space, see Hamadeh 2007; 2008.

observations reveal a vibrant “queer” sexual culture with levends (adventurous young adults), city-boys, slave boys and prostituting boys.

In another chapter, Ali’s cataloguing of boys continues with ethnic categorizations. He complains that it is mostly “bastard boys of Arabia and the illegitimate sons of Anatolian peasants [Turks]” who are the beardless youth serving the pleasure of men. Criticizing these two Muslim-originated groups of youthful sexual objects, Ali praises gentle European boys in the Empire: “thick-lipped slave boys of Bosnia and Herzegovina” are gentle and amenable to service; their beauty lasts longer because they do not have any facial hair even when they reach the age of thirty, he asserts (140). Considering that facial hair is a sign of adulthood, which releases the boy from his status as an object of same-sex male desire,²⁹ Ali’s praise of these European boys primarily marks them as the passive objects of sexual relations. Likewise, the boy dancers from Balkan regions are idealized for their built silver bodies as cypresses with fair faces; and the Janissaries, particularly those from Croatia, are so perfect in their beauty that they compete with “Joseph,” the paragon of male beauty in Islamic tradition.³⁰ While Albanian boys are impertinent but good lovers, the Georgian, Russian, and Gurelian boys are the most impure among those available for erotic pleasure. Ali’s account suggests that these boys are at the very center of multiethnic, homoerotic sexual culture of the Empire.

²⁹ Bodily hair, especially facial hair, as a sign of transit from boyhood to adulthood, from submissive to dominant role is well established in ancient Greek pederasty. Similarly, bodily hair indicates a new stage in a male’s identity and sexual (un)availability in Ottoman discourses. For the relationship between body hair, and facial hair, masculinity, and sexual availability in Islamicate societies, see El-Rouayheb; Ze’evi; Peirce “Seniority;” and Andrews and Kalpakli. For similar arguments regarding how facial hair determines masculinity, see Fisher.

³⁰ Story of Joseph, a prophet, is the subject of the Sura (chapter) Yusuf [Joseph] in *the Qur’an*, and Joseph appears countless times as the ideal male beauty in Islamicate traditions, particularly in Persian and Ottoman mystic and literary writings as well as in miniature representations.

These boys stand out exclusively as cup-bearers in Ali's narrative. On the necessity of boys in all-male wine parties, Mustafa Ali writes:

It is no mystery that, in a gathering intended to be a wine party, there should certainly be [young men] from among those who have beautiful voices in speech and song, especially those [youngsters] with rosy cheeks, who would serve in the role of saki and look after those at party. And surely there must also be a popular beardless youth ready to do what he can by way of actions conforming to the temperament of the master of revels. (144)

A beautiful boy's presence is most important in social gatherings for the best erotic enjoyment. By stressing the roles of boys as serving, singing, and entertaining, the popular beardless youth's need to conform to the temperament of "the master," Ali highlights the power dynamics in these gatherings.

Similarly, courtly miniatures make the abducted boy visible by portraying him as a cup-bearer to the court. Haydar Reis's miniature of Prince Selim with his companions shows (on the left side) Selim with a handkerchief and a wine cup in his hands (a sign of kingship), with his youthful attendant, a *devshirme* boy, behind him (Fig. 9). On the right are poets, entertainers, and musicians with two boy cup-bearers in the middle. The servant boy seems an inevitable component of the court hierarchy, while at the same time evoking the backgrounds of the once-serving boys, now the ruling elite, who figure in such representations.

The abducted boy as a cup-bearer in such images follows the prevalent trope of the immortal youth as cup-bearer in Islamicate literary and visual conventions (Figs. 10, 11).³¹ Not only in Ottoman tradition, but also in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu poetry, there is a recurrence of the image of the immortal youth in the wine party as a metaphorical tradition as is evident in such poets as Hafez, and Abū l-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī, among others. The imagery of the Islamic paradise itself is often a constitutive element of such representations of boys as cup-bearers, as well as constructions of gardens and popular garden parties with beautiful boys (Figs. 9, 10, 11,12). The Islamic Paradise, *Jannah* (which means garden in a literal translation), is described in *the Qur’an* as a garden where rivers of wine flow, people are always happy and young with luxurious clothes and surrounded with gold, silver and precious stones, and eternally young boys serve cups of pure water (56:10-24).³² As the miniature depicting the Heaven and the Hell in *Ahval-I Kayamet* shows, the paradise is a heavenly garden of pleasure with boys as cupbearers and virgin women (*houris*) as company (Fig. 13). Reminiscent of the heavenly garden, literary images of gardens were materialized through Ottoman gardens; as Gulru Necipoglu notes, gardens became a constitutive component of Ottoman palaces and the imperial capital, marking these spaces as the Paradise on earth hosting the absolute imperial power.³³ Ahmet Pasha’s poem to the Topkapi Palace, for example, compares the palace garden to the Paradise: “No House within the skies may be auspicious as thy roof/Nor any throne in Paradise high as the floor of thee... Yon Eden-bower fulfilled of houris and celestial youths/ Meseems the most High Ka’ba

³¹ For wine parties with immortal boys in the *Quran* and Arabic poetry, see Stetkevych. For a general overview of the tradition in Ottoman, Persian, Urdu and Arabic literatures, see Andrews and Kalpakli, 156-162. For boys in premodern Sufi traditions, see Ze’evi; and El-Rouayheb.

³² For description of paradise in *the Qur’an*, see 3: 133-36; 13: 23-35; 18: 31, 107; 38: 49-54; 35: 33-35; 52: 17-27; 56: 10-24. References to *the Qur’an* are from ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Alī’s translation.

³³ On notion of garden and garden parties, see Andrews, *Poetry’s*.

‘this, athrong with angelry” (Gibb, *Vol 2* 59-61). While Ahmet sees the page boys and harem women as the paradisical in the Palace, the miniatures show the cup-bearer boy as an inevitable component of the homosocial garden scenery. As Andrews and Kalpakli suggest, the cup-bearer boy of Ottoman poetry reflects not only neo-Platonic idealism, but also homoerotic male culture—just as Ganymede does for European cultures(s) (159-60).



Figure 9. “Prince Selim with his companions.” Haydar Resi, c. 1561-62. Aga Khan Museum Collection. Qtd. in Fetvacı 42

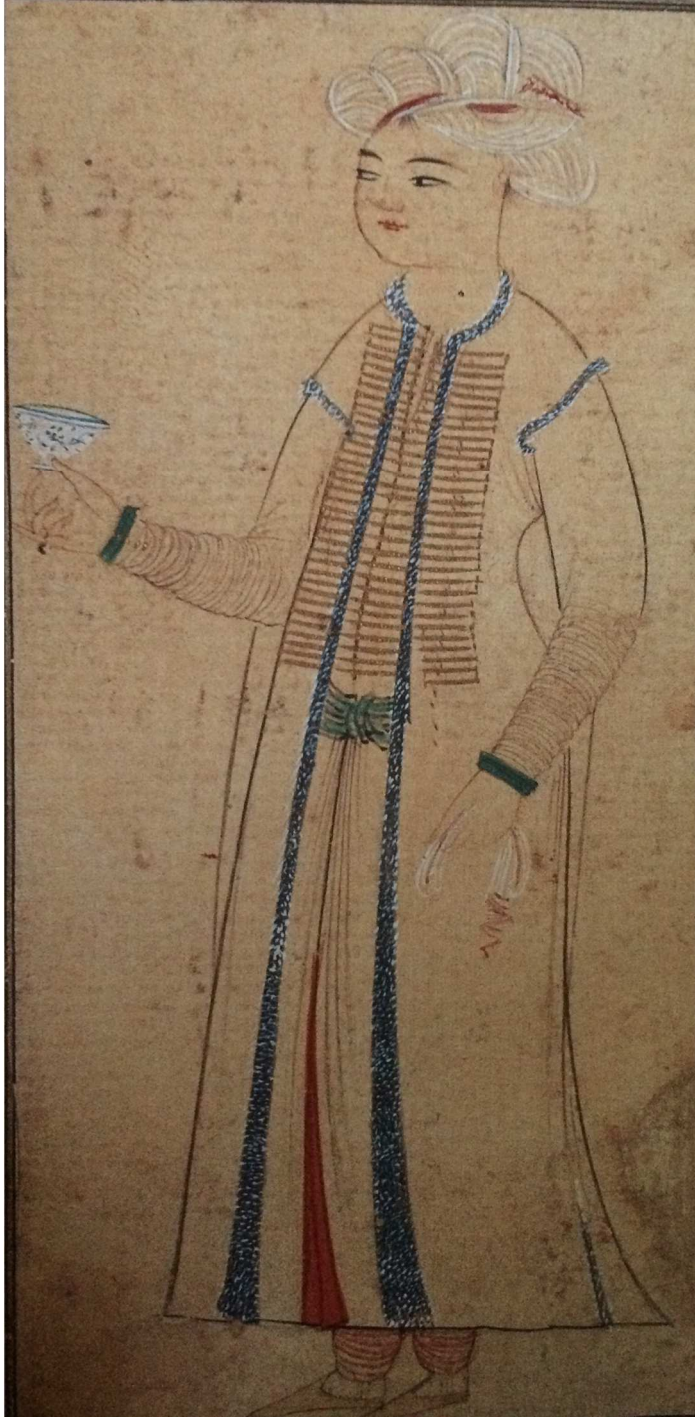


Figure 10. "A Beautiful boy with wine-cup." 17th c. Topkapi Palace Museum, EH2836, *Album*. Fol. 85a. Qtd. in And 427



Figure 11. "The poet Figani with a beautiful cup-bearer boy in a garden." 16th c. Millet Library, Ali Emiri 722, Asik Celebi, Mesairussuara, Fol. 267a. Qtd. in And 171



Figure 12. "A Garden Party." 17th c. Album of Ahmed I, TSM, folio 16a



Figure 13. Heaven and Hell, *Ahval-i Kayamet*. SK,
Hafid Efendi, 139. Qtd. in And 85

Evoking the Ganymede-effect, the cup-bearer boys in Ali's account and in the miniatures accommodate the prototypes of paradisiacal enjoyments in the mundane world. Yet, Ali's

account shows that wine gatherings with the cupbearer boy at the center are not simply metaphorical representations, but part of everyday practices. The boy brings into proximity the figuration in culture and configuration in actual social practice. Indeed, Andrews and Kalpakli persuasively assert that the trope of the beloved boy is prominent in early modern Ottoman literature not simply because of literary conventions, but because of the real life practices and the homosocial structure of Ottoman society: beloved boys are beyond a mere trope; they are a distinctive social class in early modern Istanbul.³⁴ Within this sexual economy, the abducted boys appear as the cup-bearer of the Empire, signifying the hierarchical superiority of their masters as well as the erotic dimension of the imperial rule—a mastery over the subjugated who are destined to serve.

Moreover, similar to the Neoplatonic interpretations of the Ganymede myth as a symbol of spiritual union and the best sort of friendly companionship and love, the servant boy appears as the best beloved, superior to women. Following a common poetic dispute over whether it is men or women who best represent love, Mustafa Ali notes the preference and convenience of boys as love companions:³⁵

³⁴ The beloved boy's name, in many Ottoman poems, is hardly a secret. Zati writes poems to his bath boy Nimet, who "stripped us, Oh Zati, he who shaved us" (101), or publicizes Muharrem, whose mouth's vial makes "[Zati] lose [his] mind" (103). Another boy, Kaya, was so popular that there were at least fifty-six poems directly addressed to him. Some young men, furthermore, were so popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that certain poetic catalogues—the genre of *şehrengiz* [city-thrillers]—ubiquitously circulated among people to describe the disposition and physical beauty of these young boys. For more on real life boys, see Andrews and Kalpakli, 38-43, and 95-106. On naming the beloved in poetry see Kuru, "Naming."

³⁵ *Tezkire* [biographies of poets] is a particular genre where these disputes are a commonplace. The early modern biographers, like Aşık Çelebi and Latîfî, stresses the poet's boy-loving or woman-loving disposition when describing a poet, evincing that erotic preference was something worthy to record about poets. For example, the famous poet Fevri writes: "the man of [true] love doesn't look at the women of this world/ Does an accomplished man conform to one 'deficient in reason and faith?'" (135). Similarly, another famous and influential sixteenth-century poet, Taşlıcalı Yahya Bey, who was a *devshirme* boy, expresses his distaste for traditional narrative

In our time, the popularity of beardless youths, smooth-cheeked boys, and well behaved lads, whose sweet beauty is apparent, exceeds the popularity of the unmanly from the class of women possessed of beauty and loveliness because a mistress from the sect of female beloveds is [only] ready [for love] in a concealed manner for fear of vicious gossip, while keeping company with a young man is a door connected to the gate of sociability, a door either secretly or openly unlocked and ajar. Furthermore, smooth-cheeked lads are loving friends and companions to their masters both on campaigns and at home. But from that perspective, those moon faces of female gender are neither constant friends nor close companions. (138)

Ali presents boys as the best companions who are superior to women for manly relations. Ali's celebration of the companionship of boys stems from the homosocial patriarchical structure and ideology that defines woman as inferior. Women's "concealed manner for fear of vicious gossip" and "keeping company with a young man is a door connected to the gate of sociability, a door either secretly or openly unlocked and ajar" reflect homosocial anxieties, whether it is because any non-marital encounters between men and women should be kept from sight in accordance with Islamic laws or because an affectionate companionship is looked down upon and an object of social inquiry or gossip. While the boy is celebrated as a trustworthy "friend" and "companion," this Platonic intimacy is still linked with the boy's "smooth-cheek," "sweet beauty and lovely" face, as opposed to women's "moon faces" that constantly change in form.

poems about female-lovers (i.e. *Hüsrev u Shirin*, and *Layla vu Menjun*) in his own *mesnevi* (narrative poem), *Sah u Geda*, stating, Those, woman-chasing, lacking taste/These, suffering, cure-less, and chaste/What do they know of love's mystery/Of the rapture of love and its ecstasy."

The prominent sixteenth-century scholar, courtier, bathhouse owner, and dervish, Deli Birader Gazali, provides the most explicit example of this dispute about the boy in *Dâfi'ü'l-gumûm ve Râfi'ü'l-humûm* [Repeller of sorrows and Removers of cares]. Stressing how love is a melancholic sickness that “Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Galen, and others” were not able to cure (187), Gazali discusses many practical reasons why the worthiest love is between males:

Beautiful boys are always with you on campaigns. Moreover they don't have any guardians. You can take them into an empty room, or accompany him to a promenade. You can put your arm around him, or pull him into your arms and kiss him. Touching his face with your face, you can suck his lips, or you can get him drunk in your arms. Neither judge nor master would stop you. Is there anything better than this in the world? (177-78)³⁶

For Gazali, the object of love has the power to emasculate or enhance the masculinity of men; and same-sex male relations enhance masculinity. This probably stems from the humoral conceptions of gender and platonic ideas of same-sex male friendship as apparent in his reference to Galen, Plato and other classical authorities.³⁷ The inequality between sexes is an underlying component of these discourses; and for that reason it is especially important to note

³⁶ References to Gazali's work are from Kuru's translation, *Scholar*.

³⁷ Indeed, these classical figures are evoked in many other narratives on sex. One such example is from *Kabusname* [Mirror of Princes] by Keikavus, a major eleventh century Persian work, translated into Turkish in the fifteenth century by Mercimekli Ahmed with the order of Sultan Murad II. Part 15 of the book is devoted to the arrangement of the sexual life, where it describes sex evoking Galenic notion of cold/hot bodies: “Avoid having sex in hot baths, hot days, and cold places. Spring is the best time for sex. Just like nature flourishes, waters rise, your blood (and sperm) flourishes as well. Blood has lust within itself to get rid of. When one has too much blood, it is better to flow some of it; and if one has insufficient blood level, it is dangerous to flow the blood. Likewise, sex is arranged in accordance with your blood level, which peaks up in the spring. *Have sex with girls in summer, and with boys in winter*. For boys are hot, and in summer two hot bodies warm your body up; and women bodies are cold, and in winter two cold bodies make the body dry” (112-23, my translation).

that both accounts evoke Greek ideas of male-friendship and homosociality, with Gazali specifically referencing “Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Galen, and others.” After giving a lengthy chapter on a dispute between a *gulampare* [boy-lover] and *zenpare* [woman-lover], Gazali further notes that women lovers are dressed “ladylike” and their bodies “grow weak and soft” and feminine, while the boy-lovers are masculine and heroic with their manly attire. The object of love, for Gazali, has the power to emasculate or enhance the masculinity of men. The boys in Ali’s and Gazali’s descriptions educe Ganymede of Plato’s *Symposium* who signifies the best form of companionship—ideal same-sex friendship which increases masculine bonds.³⁸

As these depictions reveal, the boy is at the center of the narratives *of* and *about* the Ottomans. Abducted boys and their beauty mark many of the political, economic and military relations of the Ottoman world. The beautiful boy, both a captive and erotic beloved, crosses boundaries between nations and empires, and stands as a multifaceted and dynamic erotic figure at the very center not just of Ottoman representation but also of European accounts of the Ottomans, while recalling homosexual love relations, master/slave dynamics, platonic ideals through the prototype of Ganymede’s abduction.

III. Ganymede/Ganimet/Catamite in Travelogues

In European accounts, the *devshirme* practice oftentimes appears within a religious framework as regards Western anxieties around religious conversion, or “turning Turk.” *The*

³⁸ On Greek sexual hierarchies, see Halperin. On similar poetic disputes about the preference of boys over women as ideal objects of love in Arabic tradition, see El-Rouyheb “The Love of Boys.” This discourse shares similarities with English discourses as well. John Donne’s epigram shows this clearly: “Thou call’st me effeminate, for I love women’s joys;/I call not thee manly, though thou follow boys” (152). On similar discourses of same-sex male friendship and masculinity in English context see, Sinfield, *Shakespeare*; Bredbeck; Smith; Bray, *Homosexuality* and *The Friend*; DiGangi; Shannon. On similar medieval conceptions, see Zeikowitz.

Estate of Christians living under the subjection of the Turke printed by John Wolfe (1595), for example, describes this practice:

All the male children of Christians are written up at the day of their birth,
and coming to ten or twelve yeres of their age, presented to the Turkes
officers, who take all such as they find well made, and like to prove fit men
in service in warre, from their parents, and convey them to the Turkes... to
become Turkes, and enemies to God, and their own fathers and mothers,
and kinsfolke, standing the Turke in more sted than his own natural people.

(A2-A3)

These boys “become Turk,” and hence, “enemies of God.” Wolfe cannot hide his surprise in how these boys are totally transformed into new beings, totally oblivious of their native people.

Considering the sexual signification of “becoming Turk” associated with the Ottoman decadence, such concerns over conversion of these boys are not free from sexual discourses in such narratives that blend the abduction practices with imagined sodomy and the Ganymede imagery.³⁹

Similar to the Ottoman accounts, these writers voyeuristically make the bodies of boys the object of their readers’ eyes. Displaying considerable knowledge of classical, particularly Platonic ideas, travel accounts see resemblances to Ganymede and Greco-Roman perversions when they observe these boys. The English secretary to the ambassador in Constantinople in the seventeenth century, Paul Rycaut, for example, recalls “Platonick ideas of love and friendship” when he describes the abducted boys in the Ottoman Empire. First he describes the palace boys that he claims to have seen:

³⁹ For more on conversion/perversion paradigm, see Chapter 1.

These youths must be of admirable features, and pleasing looks, well shaped in their bodies, and without any defect of nature; For it is conceived that a corrupt and sordid soul can scarcely inhabit in a serene and ingenuous Aspect; and I have observed, not only in the *Seraglio*, but also in the Courts of great men, their personal attendants have been of comely lusty youths, well habited, deporting themselves with singular modesty and respect in the presence of their masters: So that when a *Pascha, Aga*, or *Spahee* travels, he is always attended with a comely equipage, followed by flourishing Youths, well clothed, and mounted, in great numbers. (25-26)

Rycaut's description underscores the bodily perfection of the boys, stressing their "admirable features." These boys lack "any defect of nature." Listing in a single sentence such bodily qualities as "admirable feature," "pleasing look," "well shaped in their bodies," "comely," "lusty," "well habited," "well clothed, and mounted," Rycaut objectifies these boys under the gaze of his readers. Reminiscent of the Renaissance blazon that appropriates the objectified female body, Rycaut's focus on the boys' bodies submits them to another subservient role in addition to their servant status. They are not just the servants of their masters, but also the object of the readers' (and Rycaut's) gaze.

Positioning the boys as objects of observance and analysis, Rycaut next introduces their education. These youths study romance, and as a result of these studies, what they learn, Rycaut observes,

endues them with a kind of Platonick love each to other, which is accompanied with a true friendship amongst some few, and with as much gallantry as is exercised in any part of the world. But for their Amours to

Women, the restraint and strictness of Discipline, makes them altogether strangers to that Sex; for want of conversation with them, they burn in lust one towards another, and the amorous disposition of youth wanting more natural objects of affection, is transported to a most passionate admiration of beauty wheresoever it finds it. (31)

Highlighting “true friendship” within the platonic paradigm of spiritual, non-sensual love, Rycaut’s use of “gallantry” blurs the implication the word suggests. While “gallantry” appears as a term of praise in the first sentence, considering the definitions of the word as “fashionable people” (OED1), “splendor” (OED2), “bravery” (OED3), “courtly” (OED5), the very next sentence that moves to their “amorous” relations shows that Rycaut uses the term signifying “amorous intercourse or intrigue” (OED8). By cataloguing their bodies, and positively stressing “True friendship” with platonic love, Rycaut surprises his readers by connecting their “gallantry” not with women but with each other. For Rycaut, it is not the literary materials these boys are exposed to, but the exclusively male social structure that creates an environment for generating same-sex sexual relations.⁴⁰ Because of the absence of women in their environment, these boys are more inclined to develop affection not for “natural objects” (i.e., women) but for each other and for men.

⁴⁰ Rycaut’s reasoning that gender segregation—lack of women in the social sphere—generates such homoerotic attachment and same-sex male sexual relations is a discourse re-born in the nineteenth century Ottoman studies by Orientalists that tried to find the reason of this common “perversion.” Interestingly, in the republican literary criticism that defined the Ottomans as backward to celebrate western republican ideas used the same reasoning as Rycaut’s [although we cannot know if they know Rycaut or not, but we can assume the nineteenth century orientalist would have known Rycauts’ work]. More recent, post-Foucauldian Ottoman sexuality scholars still ask the same question: “Why homosexuality?” as if there needs to be a good reason for homoeroticism/ homosexuality. For a critique of such questions in Ottoman studies that naturalize heterosexuality while anachronistically approaching early modern Ottoman literature through a homo/hetero matrix, see Arvas.

Situating the relations between these boys in an “unnatural” matrix, Rycaut comes back to “Platonick love” only to show that the Platonic becomes a form of perversity in

Constantinople:

The Doctrine of platonick love hath found Disciples in the Schools of the *Turks*, that they call it a passion very laudable and virtuous, and a step to that perfect love of God, whereof mankind is only capable, proceeding by the way of love and admiration of his image and beauty enstamped on the creature. This is the colour of virtue, they paint over the deformity, of their depraved inclinations; but in reality this love of theirs, is nothing but libidinous flames each to other, with which they burn so violently, that banishment and death have not been examples sufficient to deter them from making demonstrations of such like addresses, so that in their Chambers, though watched by their Eunuchs, they learn a certain language with the motion of their eyes, their gestures and their fingers, to express their amours; and this passion hath boiled sometimes to that heat, that jealousies and rivalries have broken forth in their Chambers without respect to the severity of their Guardians. (33)

Alluding to the Sufi tradition of love that seeks to reach divine love by the means of a medium (mostly the beautiful youth), Rycaut opines this form of platonic love is just a cover for their “depraved inclination,” in ways similar to discussions around platonic love in seventeenth century England. For instance, in his *Collection of Miscellanies* (1687), John Norris notes the popularity, yet misunderstanding of, Platonic love in England in the section devoted to “Platonick Love.” Norris writes, “Platonick love is a thing in every bodies mouth; but I scarce

find any that think or speak accurately of it. By platonick love seems generally to be meant, a love that terminates in itself... that does not proceed to the enjoyment of its object” (305). A truly Platonic lover “loves at a distance” and does not seek “fruition of the object” (305). For Norris, such kind of love is called “Platonick” because it stems from the dialogues wherein Plato treats love “mystical and allegorical.” (306). However, a misunderstanding of this doctrine is so widespread that Norris devotes a section to remind his audience of the spiritual aspect of this superior love. Rycaut makes a similar claim. Having claimed to narrate what he had seen, Rycaut’s eyes are on the boys to unveil their “libidinous flames each to other” and “eyes, gestures, and fingers to express their amours.” All these “deformities” are conveyed under the veil of the “doctrine of platonic love.”

Such representations of the boy, particularly in the context of platonic love, recall the reception of Ganymede: a Platonic approach that neglects the carnal elements of the myth, taking it as signifying a spiritual union with God (*amor spiritualis*), and an erotic signification that relates the myth to homosexual love and pederasty (*amor carnalis*). What is expected to be spiritual, Rycaut notes, is carnal, passionate, sensual, and sexual in the Ottoman Empire. And the “Persons of eminent degree” are so much “enamored of these boys” that they are like “Companion(s) of the Empire”:

Persons of eminent degree in the *Seraglio* become inveigled in this sort of love, watching occasions to have a sight of the young Pages that they fancy, either at the Windows of their Chamber, or as they go to the Mosque, or to their washing or baths; offer them service and presents, and so engage them as to induce them to desire to be made of the retinue of him that uses Courtship towards them... The great Signours themselves

have also been slaves to this inordinate passion. For Sultan Murat became so enamoured of an Armenian boy called Musa... at another time fell in love with a boy from “Galata”, promoted him to higher offices; and even a son of slave who became “his chief Favourite” he made him clothe like him, ride by his side, and commanded all to present and honor him, in the same manner as if he had made him Companion of the Empire. (33-34)

All men, including the Sultan himself, are enchanted by these boys, observes Rycaut. They promote, offer service, or “presents” to win their love. Recalling the figure of “the royal Favourite,” Rycaut also strikingly probes the subject/object dichotomy. Their love, their “inordinate passion,” renders these eminent men “slaves” to these servants. These boys become the subjects according to whom their lovers shape their actions and arrange what they would do by “watching occasions to have a sight of the young Pages that they fancy.” Commencing with the beauty of the boys, and moving to their education and homosocial environment, Rycauts concludes that these boys are erotic objects at the center of the imperial court and the Empire. “These darts of Cupid are shot through all the Empire, especially Constantinople,” he concludes (34).⁴¹

Rycaut’s was not the only account of beautiful boys in Ottoman lands available in England. English writers often focused on the boy to depict not only this practice of abduction, but also the Ottomans in general, within the matrix of sodomy. George Sandys claims in his

⁴¹ The foreign travellers and ambassadors are, of course, vulnerable to these darts of Cupid once they are in this space in terms of the implications or indications of boy love as the case of the English ambassador to Istanbul evinces. In a letter to the ambassador Thomas Glover on February 7, 1611, John Sanderson writes, it is rumored in England that “you keep there a poor boy, which you have put up in fine apparel, and that you lie with the said boy” (273). As Burton argues, there is always a danger of going “the way” of the Turk for Christians when they interact with them (97).

narration of the Ottoman court in Constantinople, for example, that there are “800 boys and virgins” reserved for the Seraglio in Constantinople (17). He directly relates the existence of the boys in the court with their use as sexual objects. And these boys are, of course, the abducted Christian youths, Jemoglans: “Jemoglans [who] have their faces shaven (the token of servitude) wearing long coates and copped caps, not unlike to our idiots, [are those Christian youths] taken in their childhood... instructed in Mahometan religion (changing their names upon their circumcision)” (47). Sandys further writes: “Many of the slaves that the Turkes do buy, (for these markets do afford of all ages), they castrate, making all smooth as the back of one hand” (70). Just like smooth cheeks of the boys in Seraglio, the purchased slaves are made smooth through castration/circumcision with the suggestion that they are to be used sexually, for “sodomy [is] an ordinary crime, if esteemed a crime, in that nation” (73).⁴²

Similarly, J.M. Gramaye reports in Purchas’ *Pilgrimes* that the Christian children captured by pirates were sent as presents to “Turke or his Bassas [to satisfy their] Sodomitical lusts for Boyes” (Matar 117). Thomas Coryat also states, “The Turkes are exceedingly given to Sodomie, and therefore divers keep prettie boyes to abuse them by preposterous venerie” (Matar 127).⁴³ And John Ravlis, in Purchas, narrates tales about “a hundred handsome youths compelled to turn Turks, or made subject to more vile prostitution, and *all English*” (Burton 24, my italics). John Sanderson reports that a traveler is afraid of his 21-year-old “beardless” son being captured and sodomized by Turks during their travels into “Sodomiticall places” (Matar 118). All these accounts describe the Ottomans as sodomites by means of their treatment of boys—either abducted or to be abducted. They also show concerns about how Ottoman spaces

⁴² For more on the interrelation between abduction and circumcision/castration in these accounts, see Chapter 4.

⁴³ On preposterous-sodomy relation, see Parker.

make one vulnerable to the abduction and how Englishmen, particularly English boys, are in danger of enslavement.

European, particularly English, writers of the period see classical homoeroticism and Ganymede in these boys. Recalling Greek pederasty, Sir Henry Blount in his *Voyage into the Levant* claims that, apart from their wives, “each Basha hath as many, or likely more, Catamites, which are their serious loves; for their wives are used (as the Turkes themselves told me) but to dresse their meat. To launderesse, and for reputation” (19). Just like ancient Greeks, the Ottomans have boys for love, and wives for domestic and social concerns. While Blount calls them “catamites,” the servant boy as Ganymede appears more explicitly in other accounts. Michel Baudier’s *Historie générale du Serrail, et de cour du Grand Seigneur* [*The history of the imperiall estate of the grand seigneurs...*] (1626), translated into English by Edward Grimeston in 1635, notes that almost all “twenty Emperors which have carried the Turkish scepter, you shall hardly find two that were free from this vice” of “the love of men” (156). Baudier later notes in his chapter, “Of filthy & unnatural lust of the [Pashas] and of the great men of the court,”

they abandon their affections to young Boyes, and desperately follow the allurements of their beauties... This abominable vice is so ordinary in the Turks Court, as you shall hardly find one [pasha] that is not miserably inclined toward it: It serves for an ordinary subject of entertainment among the greatest when they are together; they speak not but of the perfections of their *Ganimedes*. (162, my italics)

Baudier evokes Ali’s narratives of the wine gatherings of eminent people, at the center of which stands the beautiful boy. His use of “Ganimede” in reference to the conversations of these people

blurs the line between *ganimet* and Ganymede. These boys are ganimets of these men, while at the same time it may be read as Ganymede to these men from a European perspective, that is, Baudier appears to see the iconic Ganymede in these boys.

If we believe that Baudier witnessed these conversations, it is most probable that he conflates *ganimet* with Ganymede, as becomes evident when he further narrates the details of the men's conversation: "One sayes, they have brought me from Hungarie the most beautiful and accomplished Minion... Another saith, I have lately bought a young Infant of Russia" (162). These "masters" might have referred to these boys as "ganimet," yet they appear in Baudier's text as "Ganimede." Richard Knolles similarly evokes Ganymede in his story of the stay of the brother of Wladus Dracula in the court of Mehmet II: Wladus Junior "became his Ganimede, and was of him [for a] long time wonderfully both beloved and honoured" (363).⁴⁴

IV. *Hero and Leander* Revisited: Leander as the Traveling Boy

In conflating Leander with Ganymede in the Hellespont, *Hero and Leander* uncovers the Ganymede-effect in the abduction plot. This story, as some have observed, has reverberations beyond the literary realm. For instance, Kate Chedgzoy argues that "the significance of Marlowe's treatment of the relations between men and women, and men's relations with one another, lies in his acute perception of the entanglement of their encounters with the political structures and everyday practices of his social world" (245). I would add that cross-cultural encounters and the larger Mediterranean world are also part of Marlowe's perception. Marlowe's

⁴⁴ Ganymede appears in the account of Thomas Herbert, the ambassador to the court of Shah Abbas in Persia in 1626-1629, who calls the boys in the court as "Ganymede boys" (249). Even in later periods, in the 19th century, we see the image of Ganymede used to refer to the boys in the East in travel accounts. Adolphus Slade, for example, narrates the moment he was entertained by the grand vizier of Adrianople, and how a boy is serving to their pleasure: "with such an apparatus [smoking pipe], presented by a youth á la Ganymede, you may imagine you are inhaling the spirit of nectar" (168).

1598 epyllion is set in the Ottoman Mediterranean space, known for its trafficking in abducted boys; it narrates the abduction of “Amorous Leander, beautiful and young” through the icon of Ganymede (51).⁴⁵ Reported to have said, “all those who loved not Tobacco & Boys were fools,” Marlowe locates boys in a homoerotic frame in many of his plays and poems (qtd. in DiGangi 18).⁴⁶ *Hero and Leander*, “the most openly licentious of Marlowe’s poems,” to use Stephen Orgel’s phrase (“Tobacco” 576), radiates an energetic homoeroticism through the abduction of the beautiful boy, which highlights not only the figure of Ganymede, but also the historical Mediterranean context.

While the homoeroticism in *Hero and Leander* was noted in early twentieth century criticism,⁴⁷ queer studies on early modern sexualities have further highlighted its erotic significations. Bruce Smith focuses on Leander’s body to argue that ambiguous gender and the erotic allure of the boy is more appealing to Renaissance readers than those of definitively gendered heroes and heroines (136). In his exploration of Ovidian erotics in the Elizabethan epyllion, Jim Ellis calls the homoerotics of the poem “the homoerotic basis of Renaissance humanism, and the violence implicit in the emergent heterosexuality” (108). More recently, in *Intimacy and Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare*, James Bromley has explored the early modern understanding of intimacy in male-male relations through *Hero and Leander* to discuss how

⁴⁵ There is a debate about when the poem was written. I follow 1598 as the year of the first print of the poem, but it is widely argued that the poem was created between 1593 and 1598. For more on the textual history, see Darcy, and Cheney.

⁴⁶ More on this saying attributed to Marlowe, and Marlowe’s sexuality, see Goldberg, “Sodomy;” Orgel, “Tobacco;” DiGangi.

⁴⁷ As Robert Darcy notes, J.B. Steane, for example, reads Neptune’s amorous advances as “the nightmare intrusion of the homosexual into a normal man’s life” (45). Bredbeck notes that earlier criticism “re-read” the homoerotic scene, and generated allegorical readings (131-32, fn 70). The reception history of *Hero and Leander* shows the widespread platonic readings of the poem. As early as the late nineteenth century, William Minto, and George Saintsbury read the rupture in the poem as conflicting drives between ideal and sensual love, between the soul and physical beauty. See Cheney for a brief history of the poem’s reception.

Neptune's erotic play with Leander is a form of short-term, situational intimacy that does not necessitate a commitment or consummation. Neptune's play and pursuit, Bromley states, is governed by the logic, "What happens in the Hellespont stays in the Hellespont" (43). A more material focus on the Hellespont, however, would recognize that the poem invokes the (homo)erotics of the practice of abducting boys as part of everyday reality in the Mediterranean.

Marlowe starts his epillyon with an inverted opening structure that makes the "Hellespont" the entry to the poem's world:

On *Hellespont* guiltie of True-loves blood,

In view and opposit two citties stood,

Seaborderers, disjoin'd by *Neptune* might:

The one *Abydos*, the other *Sestos* hight. (1-4)

The Hellespont is not just the entry to the poem, but also the fluid center that separates and borders the cities Abytos and Sestos, and thus Hero and Leander. In Ellis' words, "The Hellespont" as the first words of the poem is "conjuring up the story before the story takes place, telling (or acting as a site of memory for) the poem from within the poem itself" (96). For Ellis, who queries, "How does the Hellespont figure in the poem?" (95), the space metaphorically represents "a passage" to desire, separating homoeroticism from heterosexuality (96). Analyzing the narrative structure of the poem, Judith Haber states the poem "begins, preposterously, with its foregone conclusion" (39). While "Hellespont" would be the ending of a traditional narrative structure, it is at the very beginning of this sentence. Such an inversion in the first line as well as throughout the poem, Haber suggests, is a means of "enabling the poem to radically question the sexual and textual order upon which conventional sense depends" (39). Indeed the poem complicates sexual and textual orders; but in doing so, it puts the Hellespont at the very center of

this disorderly world. It is what separates Hero and Leander; it is what sets cities in opposition to each other—east and west; it is a passage to desire; and it is where Leander’s vulnerability to the abduction is contextualized in the everyday social world.

In the Hellespont, the references to Jove’s abduction of Ganymede emphasize how homoerotic attraction operates through the abduction of boys. In the poem, Ganymede first signifies Leander’s beauty when the narrator compares Leander to Jove’s cup-bearer: “Jove might have sipped out nectar from his hand” (62). Both the narrator’s and Neptune’s evocations of Ganymede contribute to the creation of the homoerotic world of the poem in which Leander, during his swim to the other side of the Hellespont, becomes Ganymede, an object of abduction, possession, and seduction.

Neptune, whose presence seems to complicate this Mediterranean reality of abduction with a mythological intervention, appears as a mundane character in the poem. Particularly at the moment of the abduction, the narrator mixes the mythological with the real, framing Neptune’s pursuit, as well as his interaction with Leander, as an everyday encounter. Seeing Leander, Neptune

... puld him to the bottome, where the ground
Was strewd with pearle, and in low corall groves,
Sweet singing Meremaids, sported with their loves
On heapes of heavie gold, and tooke great pleasure,
To spurne in carelesse sort, the shipwracke treasure.
For here the stately azure pallace stood
Where kingly *Neptune* and his traine abode. (644-50)

The undersea world of the Hellespont is Neptune's realm. Yet the narrator does not limit his description of this world to mythic characters and settings. Alongside mythical mermaids are evoked earthly "pearls," "gold," "palace," and "shipwreck treasures." In this mythical, yet real, space, which is not the unreachable realm of gods but "the bottom" of the Mediterranean with shipwrecks, promised treasures, pearls and gold, Neptune becomes "kingly" with his "trainee," which further portrays him as a mundane ruler, whom Leander shows no signs of surprise for having encountered. Specifically, Leander's association with "shipwreck treasure" is reminiscent of abduction practices occurring in the same space as a result of piracy activities and trade relations. Such metaphoric language also evokes European anxiety about the vulnerability of travelling boys.

Following the imagery of "pearle" that appears multiple times with reference to Hero and one maid (33; 297; 376; 389), there comes "the bottome [of the Mediterranean], where the ground/ Was strewd with pearle." Pearls are associated with the orient ("pearl of the orient" *OED*). In Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Faustus envisions to have spirits "fly to India for gold/ Ransack the ocean for orient pearl" (1.1. 83). Edmund Spenser uses "pure Orient perles" (2.12.78) in *The Faerie Queene* to depict the exotic seductress Acrasia in the Bower of Bliss. The pearl imagery is further enriched with the repetitive use of "orient" in the poem. The narrator links Leander's body with "oriental" space when he describes his beauty: "my slack Muse sings of Leander's eyes, / Those *orient* cheeks and lips, exceeding his / That leaped into the water for a kiss / Of his own shadow and, despising many, / Died ere he could enjoy the love of any" (72-76, my italics). Leander's beauty is illuminated through a stress on his "eyes" and "orient" cheeks and lips. From the fourteenth century onwards, the "orient" has signified the East, and what is from the East (*OED* "orient"). Just as the narrator uses "orient cloud" (804) to

refer to the eastern light in the poem, he uses “orient” to evoke Leander’s “oriental” beauty. The use of “orient” adds to the Roman, Mediterranean context the Ottoman, “Eastern” context.

The multiple references to the “pearl” and the “orient” throughout the poem evoke the Hellespont with which the poem opens. It is at the very moment that Leander’s oriental cheeks are mentioned that he is blazoned as an object of other men’s desire, although the narrator claims to “hardly blazon forth the loves of men” (71). With orient cheeks and lips, Leander is not like Narcissus, but “exceeding” him. He is not mythological, but beyond mythic beauty, a beauty that would convince “wild Hippolytus,” who preferred hunting to love, of love (77). Framing such a speculation through mythic evocations, the narrator makes a shift to everyday life, suggesting, “His presence made the rudest peasant melt,” and “the barbarous Thracian soldier, moved with nought, / Was moved with him, and for his favor sought” (79-82). Leander, “in his looks were all that men desire” (84). Reminding us of Shakespeare’s “A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted” in Sonnet 20, Leander is “a maid in man’s attire” as some “swore” (83). In his description of Leander’s oriental beauty within this space, Marlowe erotically orients his readers’ gaze upon the boy’s body, and as Bredbeck notes, describes Leander’s body with the rhetoric of the Renaissance blazon that describes the female body in detail. Leander’s body is associated, almost fused with, the oriental, Mediterranean territories through which he swims.⁴⁸

As Nancy Vickers has shown in her analysis of *The Rape of Lucrece*, inherent in the Renaissance blazon is the violent appropriation of the objectified female through a close-up description, which is “a gesture of display, a separating off and a signaling of particulars destined to make visible that which is described. Its object or matter is thus submitted to a double power-

⁴⁸ For more on the Renaissance blazon in *Hero and Leander*, see Bredbeck, 110-115. Bredbeck shows how the description of Leander’s body follows female blazon, yet does not assign Leander’s body femaleness.

relation inherent in the gesture itself: on the one hand, the describer controls, possesses, and uses that matter to his own ends; and on the other, his reader/listener is extended the privilege or pleasure of ‘seeing’” (96). Vickers argues that when it is men who are blazoned, a similar violent appropriation is in practice, where the male is “incongruously placed in a ‘normalized’ female position, that of a commodity in the traffic between men” (97). This “traffic” can specifically be seen through the all male-admirers listed in the poem: Hippolytus, the shepherd, the barbarous Thracian soldier, and finally Neptune. As the object of the male sexual gaze and desire, Leander is literally being trafficked and exchanged between men when he is kidnapped by Neptune. After Neptune “seized” Leander, the narrator states, “The lusty god embraced him, called him love,/ And swore he should never return to Jove” (651-52). From gazing and desiring the beautiful youth, this “seizure” takes a further step making the boy an object of exchange. Neptune not only steals the boy, but also claims mastery and ownership over him, as is evident in the phrase “swore he should never return to Jove.” Jove abducts Ganymede from Mount Ida as a spoil of war, and now Neptune kidnaps the boy as a “shipwreck treasure.” The beautiful boy, therefore, becomes an object of exchange, trafficked between men, in the Mediterranean Hellespont.

The power dynamic in this space is further suggested through transformation of Neptune to a shepherd. When Leander replies, “You are deceav'd, I am no woman I” (676), Neptune offers a homoerotic pastoral story to persuade him:⁴⁹

Thereat smiled *Neptune*, and then told a tale,
How that a sheapheard sitting in a vale,
Playd with a boy so faire and so kind,
As for his love, both earth and heaven pyn'd;

⁴⁹ For more on pastoral and homoeroticism, see Bredbeck, 187-232; Smith, 79-116. On homoeroticism in this scene in particular, see Bredbeck 132-34, Smith 132-36.

That of the cooling river durst not drinke,
Least water-nymphs should pull him from the brinke.
And when hee sported in the fragrant lawnes,
Gote-footed Satyrs, and up-staring Fawnes,
Would steale him thence. (677-85)

Neptune tries to gain Leander by offering him a homoerotic pastoral world of a shepherd and a fair boy. Reminiscent of Marlowe's own "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," this story puts the sea-god in the position of the shepherd while transforming the Neptune/Leander relation to Shepherd-Boy dynamic. And in this pastoral world, the boy is available to the others whenever he is alone, "water-nymphs, Gote-footed Satyrs and Fawnes." He becomes an object of "stealing," or abduction (like servant boys in paradisiacal gardens of the Ottomans). Focusing on this scene, Bromley notes "Neptune's story certainly relies on the nexus of eroticism and power pervasive in Marlowe's England" (43). Yet, this erotic-power dynamic, when read in relation to Mediterranean references and the trafficking in boys, is a reflection not only of Marlowe's England, but also of the Mediterranean, in which "stealing" happens everyday.⁵⁰

Hero and Leander emerges from Marlowe's re-imagination of not just classical works, but also the Mediterranean trafficking and exchanges, as well as geography and history (with which he is familiar as can be seen from his *Tamburlaine* plays). His interest in the sexualized figure of the classical Ganymede as evident in the opening scene of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is here inflected with a historical engagement with Mediterranean traffic. The poem thus demonstrates how everyday realities and literary conventions coalesce around the beautiful boy as a part of early modern sexual economies. This highlights not only the mimetic dynamics

⁵⁰ I must note that, besides abduction, transformation of boys is also apparent in the poem as the reference to Sylvanus's beloved Cyparissus who transforms into a cypress tree suggests (54).

operating in historical practices, but aesthetic practices shaping representations of such abductions. Within the Mediterranean Ottoman context, the beautiful boy is at the center of male desire—like Leander, he is “made for amorous play”—and, as a result, vulnerable to abduction like Ganymede. And wherever we see a Ganymede, there appears a Jove. Ottoman poets have their own *ganimets* sitting next to them offering wine under trees, and the Sultan has his own beautiful cup-bearers. Marlowe’s Leander, on whose body is imprinted an appearance and history of Ganymede, blends the mythic boy with abducted beautiful boys appearing as ganymedes/ganimets. It is no accident that this occurs in a historical moment when England just commenced her global trade relations in the Mediterranean with the Ottomans, participating in the economy of captivity—being captured or capturing other “boys.”⁵¹

⁵¹ The following chapter specifically addresses English practices of abducting boys.

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CHAPTER II

Indian Boys in England

Around the same time as Marlowe's Leander in the Hellespont, there appeared another boy absent-present on stage, yet at the very center of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the Indian boy. Similar to the beautiful boy abducted on shore in romances, or travelling boys captured in the Mediterranean, the Indian boy is "stolen from an Indian King" and now placed in a fairy world of the English woodland (2.1.23).¹ This Indian boy, as well as the motif of India he brings forth in the play, reveals English discourses of cross-cultural mercantilism, emerging colonialism, race, and the embeddedness of homoeroticism in these discourses.

Uncovering the global aspect of abduction practices in this chapter, I explore abducted boys in England through English accounts and representations. On the increasing number of representations of circulating children in the early modern period, Joseph Campana states in "Shakespeare's Children,"

Perhaps it is no surprise that Shakespeare's drama, which was produced in an era fond of stories of changeling children, would find such interest in the mobility, transferability, and exchangeability of children. If this is a development especially prominent in plays featuring shipwrecks or sea voyages—*Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Tempest*, *Pericles*, and *The Winter's Tale*—the preponderance of lost and found children suggests that we inquire as to how we might best describe the economy of the child, monetary and otherwise ("Shakespeare's Children" 10).²

¹ All references to the play are from Greenblatt et.al. *Norton Shakespeare*.

² Campana includes boys in the category of children, emphasizing the complexity of terms such as child, boy, infant in the early modern context (11).

Indeed, sea-voyages not only informed such representations but also generated the mobilization and transference of boys. While English sources are critical of the Ottoman practices of abduction (as I discussed in the previous chapter), we see a rise in the presence of abducted boys from other lands in England, shortly after her appearance in the Mediterranean in the 1580s with the Ottoman trade privileges. By 1610, the English started to have substantial control over Mediterranean trade and piracy activities.³ Indeed English piracy became a problem for the Ottomans themselves who in 1607 sent an emissary to London for the first time for a formal complaint about English seamen. These cross-Mediterranean activities, as well as the well-documented cross-Atlantic and African investments of England, generated a global circulation of exotic boys. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, figures of Oriental, Indian, Moor, African, and Saracen boys appear in English representations as well as on the streets of London, as servants, grooms, pages, and slaves.

As stories of changeling boys increased in England in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, we see, as Steve Brown notes, the first appearance of “ganymede” (1591) and “catamite” (1593) as proper nouns in the English language. Ganymede, Alan Sinfield reminds, “translates, approximately into the early modern page boy” (*Shakespeare* 113). Indeed, as we saw in the previous chapter, English travelers remember Ganymede in the figure of the serving boy in the Ottoman court and households. Pursuing abducted boys into England, the premise of this chapter builds on that of the previous one: that the abduction of boys *is* a practice—*institutionalized or not*—that demonstrates an erotic matrix of political and military power relations imagined through an intimate bond between a hierarchically superior man and a

³ For more on English existence in the Mediterranean, and her piracy activities, see Vitkus, *Piracy*; Jowitt; Godfrey Fisher; and Skilliter. On Ottoman captives and other Mediterranean piracy activities, see Fodor.

submissive boy abducted from “other” lands. To highlight the Ganymede-effect in abduction practices as well as in other power relations, I focus on individual accounts about these boys, the figure of abducted boys on stage and in portraiture, as well as the interactions of boys and their masters through biographical readings. In my exploration of these historical, literary, and visual objects of analysis, I am less interested in documenting numbers or showing “here is one boy, here is another,” than making visible the homoerotics of global investments in these representations. The abducted “Indian” boy is a gendered, aestheticized, as well as a historical figure whose exoticized and racialized body under the domination of his master reveals the homoerotics of nascent colonial discourses and practices, as well as the eroticization of social and racial male hierarchies.

I use the figure of the “Indian” boy as an aesthetic template to refer to boys abducted and transported from other lands—whether Indian, African, Native American, or Asian—by Englishmen. In the early modern imagination, “India” signified locations extending from South Asia to the Americas and Africa; the term “Indian” was an all-encompassing word for the exotic and unknowable places and cultures, bringing into proximity Asian, African, and American as racial and colonial figures different from white Englishmen.⁴ I use the term “Indian boys” particularly to refer to foreign, exotic, racialized boys (whether from India, the Americas, or Africa), who “will always be boys” due to their hierarchical subservient status, within the larger category of the boy.⁵ In what follows, I explore Shakespeare’s Indian boy within a contextual history of transported boys within master/servant power dynamics, whose representations in

⁴ For various significations of the term “India” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Harris, 1-20.

⁵ For more on the category of “boy,” see the Introduction.

literary and visual imagery reveal the underlying homoeroticism embedded in practices of abduction.

I. Exotic Boys in the Master/Servant Hierarchy

Similar to the Islamic license of *ganimet* that allowed the Ottomans to seize lands, property, and people in the lands of the infidel enemy, Pope Nicholas V's Romanus Pontifex Bull of 1455 allowed the Portuguese king to conscript non-Christian peoples and resources, to "invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery" (qtd in Blackmore 49). The Pope's allowance does not discriminate between human and non-human properties, and "reduces" the non-Christian to slave status. The license, issued with religious investments in "conversion," appears in a period of Europe's emerging trade activities in cross-Adriatic regions.⁶ With the rise of trans-Atlantic traffic, however, this license was used to enslave people under the guise of conversion. The political and military practice of abduction, captivity, and enslavement of persons began to take on global dimensions with Europe's engagement with colonialism.

From the sixteenth century, England joined these activities of human transportation and enslavement, as is evident in the rising population of the non-Europeans in England. Imtiaz Habib, in his investigation of "black lives" (a term Habib uses for all non-white populations) in *Black Lives in the English Archives*, finds 448 records of "black lives" in legal, taxation,

⁶ As Kate Lowe notes "conversion" is the key motivation in this allowance. For a discussion of conversion and slavery, see Lowe, "Introduction" 12-13, and Hall, *Thing*. For English endeavors to convert Muslims, see Matar "Muslim Conversion." Tracing rising conversion activities by the English in the Mediterranean, Matar notes "in early Modern Europe, the mission to convert Muslims to Christianity was a spiritual means to an imperial end" (212).

medical, and civic archives between 1500 and 1677. They first “started arriving initially as curiosities, the residue of their function as market commodities, through which they became items of miscellaneous consumption in the English domestic market” (67). While some of these people were trumpeters, divers, and entertainers, most of them were personal servants, pages, and maids in aristocratic households.

Since slavery was not recognized in English law—at least till 1677 when a London court for the first time declared Africans to be slaves—these people were unrecognized and invisible to laws. These people, states Habib, “miss the minimum humanizing visibility of legal definition” (5). However, their non-white bodies were visible enough to cause trouble for the English. As Kate Lowe states, “arrival in Europe as slaves meant systematic erasure of all the more significant aspects of their past, starting with their names, their languages, their religions, their families and communities, and their cultural practices, but it did not erase their appearance” (“Introduction” 2). The trouble because of their bodies is evident in the decrees of Elizabeth I to expel *black* people from England (1596, 1601) because, as the 1596 decree announces, “there are of late divers Blackmoores brought into the realme, of which kinde of people there are all ready here to manie” (qtd. in Habib 112).⁷ Yet, the decrees would not stop this circulation; the colonial agents, aristocrat households, and merchants continued to keep servants from other lands—Africa, America, India—as nameless chattels.

Although not as institutionalized as the Ottoman *devshirme* system, England as an emerging colonial power carried off boys in order to train, convert, and assimilate them for future

⁷ For decrees, see Habib 112-114. On critical discussions on race and historical presence of black people in early modern England, see Habib, *Shakespeare*; Neill, *Putting History*; Erickson, “The Moment of Race;” Bartels; MacDonald; Thompson; Hendricks and Parker; Loomba, *Shakespeare Race*; and *Gender, Race*; Little; V. Vaughan; Amussen, *Caribbean*; Fryer.

international policies, as well as for personal service.⁸ In order to strengthen its current and future trade relations, England, for example, trains a king's young son by first converting him to Christianity. An entry in the parish register of St. Milfred Poultry, dated the 1st of January, 1611, reads as follow:

Dederj Jaquoah about ye age of 20 yeares, the sonne of Caddi-biah king of the river of cetras or Cestus in the countrey of Guinny, who was sent out of his cuntrey by his father in an English ship called the Abigail of London, belonging to Mr. John Davies of this parishe, to be baptised. At the request of the said Mr Davies, and at the desire of the said Dederj, and by allowance of authority, was by ye parson of this churche, the first of Ianuarie, baptised and named John. His suerties were John Davies haberdasher Isaac Kilburne Mercer, Robert Singleton Churchwarden, Edmund Towers Paul Gurgeny and Rebecca Hutchens. He shewed his opinion concerning Jesus Christ and his faith in him; he repeated the Lords prayer in english at ye fonte, and so was baptised and signed with the signe of the Crosse. (qtd. in Knutson, "A Caliban" 111; Habib, *Black* 337)

As the register entry shows, Dederj, Christianized as John, is a Guinean African king's son who is sent by his father to England with the English merchants trading there to develop economic relations between the two countries by learning more about English culture.⁹ This is, as Imtiaz

⁸ Indeed, England had its own practices of appropriating boys for particular kinds of servitude, such as medieval oblation through which the monasteries took boys from their families, and in the early modern period, boys were seized for cathedral choirs or for the stage by play companies, and for apprenticeship. For a detailed description of oblation, see Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*; Orme. On boys taken up by theatre companies, see Bryan.

⁹ For a detailed analysis of the event, Knutson "A Caliban."

Habib asserts, “the auspicious beginning of the training of an international African diplomat” (*Black*, 142).

While the story of Dederj is apparently a diplomatic assimilation, and a conversion putatively “desired” by the boy, we see rising numbers of abducted, transported and converted boys in England: the chaplain of the East India Company, Patrick Copland, brought a youth from India in 1614, who was later baptized with the name Peter Pope; Sir Walter Raleigh transported many boys—an 11-year-old Guyanian boy, Charles, Leonard Ragapo, Harry Pedro, Christopher— from the New World to England as servants and exotic objects; Robert Cecil had a blackamoor servant Fortunatus; the Virginia Company got a governmental warrant in 1618 to take up American-Indian children to educate them; and other “Moor” boys were captured for conversion.¹⁰ While Dederj was brought back home from Africa for future trade interests, other boys were transferred from many parts of the globe to England as properties, servants, and decorative objects. Correlatively, we see an increase in representations of “the Indian boy” who began to appear in literary works, visual culture, and even as head-signs for bookshops.¹¹ But, I query: how were these boys selected? To what extent did the bodies of these boys matter in their abductions?

One account makes explicit how their bodies were of vital significance in their selections. The director of the Royal Adventurers, a mercantile company trading in the west coasts of

¹⁰ For more on taken-up boys in the new World, see Bryan, chapter 4. On boys brought from India, see Habib, 239-60. For Raleigh’s transference of boys, see Habib 252-53; A. Vaughan, “Sir Walter Raleigh.” On Native Americans brought to England, see A. Vaughan, “Trinculo’s Indian.” On conversion of “Moor boys” see Matar, who notes, “two young Moors not above 13 or 14 yeares of age” were captured by the English ship in 1636 because of “tenderness of their years” (“Muslim Conversions” 215).

¹¹ The image of black boy was a bookshop sign, called “Black Boy,” from 1550 to 1553 according to St Paul churchyard records. For the record, see Blayney 82. I thank Jeff Masten for bringing the book-sign to my attention.

Africa, instructed their ship captains “to buy 15 or 20 lusty Negers of about 15 yeares of ages, bring them home with you for London” (qtd Habib 127). The instruction demonstrates the practice of “bringing” boys to England. Why do they want to have “lusty” boys? What are the ramifications of “lusty Negers” within the context of this letter? *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines “lusty” as “pleasing, pleasant” in terms of pleasing in appearance, beauty (2). So the boy should be a beautiful, eye-pleasing boy according to this definition. *OED3* and *OED4* show the connection of the adjective to “lustful,” defining “lusty” as full of desire, lust, and sexual desire. While this definition signifies the sexual and energetic aspect of the boy, *OED5* puts bodily strength at the center of the term, defining it as “full of healthy vigour.” Evoking this signification, Sir Thomas Cooper uses “Strong, lusty: in health” as synonyms in his definition of the Latin word “firmus”; his use of lusty in “That beautie and that strength that was in youth they had lost: or they had lost all their valiant and lusty young man” in his *Thesaurus linguae Romanae & Britannicae* in 1578 also notes the youthful energy and healthy body signified in the term lust. Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* most clearly shows the body-sexual interlink through “lusty” as Neptune’s excessive desire for Leander is depicted: “The lusty god embrace’d him, called him ‘love’/ And sure he should never return to Jove” (651-52). All these significations—pleasing, energetic, youthful, strong, desirable and desiring—put at the center the *body* of “Negers” as the single condition for the selection of boys for the Englishmen: “lusty Negers of about 15 yeares of ages.” Bringing the body of the abducted boys to the fore as a selection criterion offers a venue to consider the erotics of the practice. To what extent does the body of the exotic boy operate as an erotic subtext for political and social power on the representational level? What do representations of these boys conceptually evoke if we take into consideration the

master/boy hierarchy, in which erotic relations are structured in accordance with social roles in the period?

In historical documents, we find accounts of black servants who were sexually abused, impregnated, and who gave birth to “bastard” children, or black women who were forced into prostitution, as Habib shows (76-112). However, when it comes to materializing same-sex male eroticism, it is not an easy task to prove—or disprove—whether the boys were involved in same-sex sexual relations, considering that sodomy generally goes invisible in master/servant relationships. Jonathan Goldberg argues in *Sodometries* that sodomitical acts “emerge into visibility only when those who are said to have done them also can be called traitors, heretics, or the like, at the very least, disturbers of the social order” (19). Sodomy appears in legal cases, mostly linked to other crimes such as treason or witchcraft, and remains invisible in such bonds as friendship, patronage, bedfellows, servants and masters, students and teachers, and kings and their minions. Among the rare court accounts of sodomy, there is one case that, as Alan Bray reveals, addresses one Domingo Cassedon Drago, “a negro”, who was put on trial on charges of committing “buggery” on “a poor boy” in Essex in 1647 (*Homosexuality* 40). As Bray notes, his race is repeated multiple times in the short entry in the Order Book concerning him, which shows Domingo with his non-white skin “brought to mind the image of the sodomite” (72). While such historical accounts inform us about the regulation of sexual behavior, these records, as Bray suggests, “are far more limited source for the history of homosexuality” (41). Evoking Muslim and black slaves charged with sodomizing Christian youths in Spain, Domingo’s case shows how foreign bodies generate anxieties regarding sodomy in England.¹²

¹² On sodomy cases regarding Muslim and black slaves in Spain, see Berco; and Savvadis 51-55.

This chapter accordingly does not offer historical cases of sexualization of boys, nor claim that all servant Indian boys were sexually used; instead it suggests that the visible/invisible paradox embedded in same-sex sexual relations, especially in master/servant relations, offers a conceptual venue to search for an intersection of homoeroticism and masculine domination in representations of these *(in)visible* boys. I use the visibility/invisibility paradox as associated with the homoerotics of the Indian boy's body not only in Goldberg's sense to convey "sodometries," but also through Peter Erickson's use of the term to complicate the status of black subjects. In his article "Invisibility Speaks," Erickson notes that "in early modern portraiture, the black servant is placed in an anomalous position" (24). This anomaly results from the paradox of (in)visibility of the black servant:

The portrait is of the white patron; the servant is secondary but nevertheless "portrayed." This portrayal is shaped by paradoxical interrelations between visibility and invisibility. The purpose of the role is display: hence the servant is a prominently visible object. Yet the display is simultaneously meant to signal a seen-but-not-heard subservience: hence the servant is invisible as subject. (24)

Within this frame of the boy's *invisible visibility*, Erickson focuses on shifts in the visual dynamic that "provide openings through which we glimpse the servant as a partially independent subject" (24). Similar to early modern queer studies scholars who made visible homoerotic dynamics through a queer lens, Erickson's emphasis on shifting the perspective makes the invisible boy visible. Following these strategies makes it possible not only to uncover exotic boys, but also to highlight erotic dynamics embedded in their representations.

II. “A lovely boy stolen from an Indian King”: Shakespeare’s Indian Boy

The portrayal of an Indian boy of exceptional beauty in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* from the last decade of the sixteenth century exemplifies the abduction of boys on the English stage and responds to the logic of abduction connecting the practice to trade and mercantilism. Although the Indian boy of *A Dream*, the “lovely boy stolen from an Indian king,” is invisible (and generally never appears on stage) with no lines to speak, he is nevertheless at the center of the conflict between Titania and Oberon, which engenders the dreamy love plots in the fairy world of the play (2.1.23).¹³

The centrality of the invisible Indian boy to the play’s plot and the underlying ideological framework of the play has drawn the attention of new historicist, feminist and postcolonial critics, who have explored the ways in which the boy reveals the play’s gendered power dynamics, and emerging and circulating racial and colonial discourses in early modern England.¹⁴ Margo Hendricks, for example, asks:

What are we to make of the Indian boy? On the textual level the Indian boy is simply a plot device: he figures as the origin of the conflict between Oberon and Titania (a conflict that presumably begins in India). But why does he have to be Indian? Why not describe the boy merely as a

¹³ There are no stage directions for the Indian boy in the play-text; and he does not appear as a character in neither Quarto (1600) nor Folio (1623) editions of the play. He is missing in most productions. Yet studies in performance history of the play note that the boy sometimes appears on the stage. Gary Jay Williams claims the Indian boy was present on stage in Purcell’s 1692 opera (24). For a history of the appearance of the Indian Boy, see Williams; and Johnson-Haddad.

¹⁴ Hendricks, ““Obscured by dreams”,” Raman; Loomba, “The Great Indian;” For the Indian boy as a symbol of economic deviancy, see Sen. A reading of the Indian boy as an object of exchange in colonial activities in the New World, see Bryan. For feminist readings that stressed female submission in the play as a part of “natural” sexual and gender economy, see Gohlke; Desmet; Garner; Traub, “(In)Significance”; Callaghan.

changeling child? Or, if critical tradition is correct that all the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are taken from English folklore, why not identify the changeling as the English boy? ("Obscured" 41)

As one of the earliest critics to situate the play within a framework of racial discourse, Hendricks points out the significance of the boy's non-English identity, which does not affect the dramatic structure but highlights the racial and the global/local tensions in the play. If we change the Indian boy with an English boy, "obviously the dramatic structure and characterization would not have been affected by such a change and, in fact, would have been made more definitely local" (41). The Indian boy, as well as Shakespeare's use of India, opens up a venue to recognize "implications about race and early modern England's mercantilist and/or colonialist-imperialist ideology" (41). She argues that "the figurative evocation of India localizes Shakespeare's characterization of the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and marks the play's complicity in the racialist ideologies being created by early modern England's participation in imperialism" (43). India in this racialist ideology becomes a space of "exchange": "whatever exchange occurs, regardless of origin, is mediated through the discursive space that is India" in the play (44). Within this frame, Hendricks indicates the intersection of racial and gender dynamics in the period, analyzing the exchange of the Indian boy as a demonstration of gender conflict between Oberon and Titania: "Like the growing number of non-European (particularly African) children who were imported into England to serve as badges of status for England's aristocracy, the 'changeling boy' is desired as an exotic emblem of Oberon's worldly authority" (54).

In a similar move, Shankar Raman sees "the absent presence" of the Indian boy as a crucial part of the play's dramatic action, revealing English commercial activities in India and nascent colonial fantasies (242). Ania Loomba also stresses the Indian identity of the boy who

“evokes the merchandise of the east, the riches plundered from Americas, and the human traffic of Africa and the Indies” (“The Great Indian” 169). The Indian boy, therefore, is “both the commodity-form that enables, and the dream of colonial possession that signposts, the transition from feudalism to capitalism” (184); he is “personification of colonial possession” (184). Like Hendricks, Loomba further situates the boy at the intersection of colonialism, mercantilism, gender, and familial structure, and shows how colonial power dynamics operates on a gendered patriarchal level: “gender ideologies in the play and in the culture are shaped by fantasies of racial otherness which were molded by contact with worlds outside Europe; in this play, these fantasies and processes can be recovered by tracing their imprint on the relations between men and women” (181). These scholars have persuasively elucidated how the racial and colonial discourses and practices alongside human trafficking intersect with gender power dynamics between men and women; however, these “fantasies and processes,” I argue, can also be traced through relations between boys and men.¹⁵

The homoerotics of Oberon/Indian boy relation has been noted, but not analyzed. Alan Sinfield, for example, notes “boy trafficking” without further exploring the Oberon/boy

¹⁵ Indeed, gender and sexual politics of the play, particularly the female homoeroticism, have been explored by many scholars.¹⁵ While cross-sex relations (i.e. Oberon-Titania), or same-sex female erotics (i.e. Helena-Hermia) are vital to realize the heterosexist ending of the play, the Oberon-boy relation is yet to be explored. While Hendricks sees the boy as “the object he [Oberon] desires” (“Obscured” 54), she interestingly, critiques the 1991 stage production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by the Shakespeare Santa Cruz, for which “the director chose to highlight the sexual tension of the play from a different angle” (59 fn 65). The different angle was to make the Indian boy visibly an attractive object on stage. Hendricks calls the director’s choice to stage the Indian boy as “in his early twenties, six feet tall, tanned, and naked except for a gold lamé loincloth” as “instrumental in reaffirming an aspect of orientalist ideology” (38). While a focus on this production is beyond the scope of this chapter, I would suggest the Indian boy is “instrumental” in the play for Oberon’s erotic authority. And as I discuss in the previous chapter, historical practices and documents evince how boys’ bodies play an important role in their abduction and enslavement, and oftentimes they become the erotic objects of their master.

relationship; similarly Shirley Garner states, “Oberon, like Titania, is attracted to the child” (“Cultural” 130). Most explicitly, remembering “the young man in the sonnets,” Jonathan Crewe, in his epilogue to *Hidden Desires*, notes that the Indian boy “is potentially the love-object of each fairy, implicitly the single “master-mistress” of each one’s passion” (148). And he asserts that “in Oberon’s view he evidently remains a pathic” (148). Likewise, focusing on the queerness of the Bottom/Titania relation, Douglas Greene traces “the homoerotic significations,” the moments of “queer disruptions” in the play, and calls “Oberon’s obsession with the changeling boy” sodomy (370; 376): “The fairy king is getting the bottom he desires, the ass he wants” (378).

Drawing on these assertions and the long-lasting suspicion over Oberon’s homoerotic desire for the boy, I contextualize male homoeroticism not in an orientalist framework, but within the prevalent master/servant matrix, dominated by the Ganymede-effect. Building on my argument about ganymedes in the previous chapter, the Indian boy figures not only as an object of exchange and an exotic emblem of the man’s authority, but also as a submissive object of erotic desire. From his entrance into the Fairy world, the invisible Indian boy inverts the hierarchical order that gives the male master access to the objects under his power—a disorderly structure yet to be corrected by Oberon’s plot to win the boy.

How the Indian boy ended up in the fairy world is evoked twice from two somewhat contradictory points of views in the second act: Puck’s and Titania’s. First Puck narrates how the boy is taken when he explains how the invisible “lovely boy” has destroyed the patriarchal hierarchy by being at the center of conflict between Titania and Oberon:

For Oberon is passing fell and wroth

Because that she, as her attendant, hath

A lovely boy stolen from an Indian king.
She never had so sweet a changeling;
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild.
But she perforce withholds the lovèd boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy. (2.1.20-23)

Reminding us of other aforementioned abducted boys such as Sir Walter Raleigh's or the convert boy Dederj Jaquoah, Puck's narration evokes the practice of "stealing boys" from other lands and situates the "lovely boy" in this economy in which the boy is circulated from one place to another, from one master to another. The boy, who was once probably a prince or a pageboy to an Indian king, is now an object of possession, a changeling, and an "attendant" in a foreign land. The evocation of love through "lovely boy" and "loved boy" highlights the affections towards the boy. Particularly his depiction of the "sweet" changeling boy as "the lovèd boy" opens to question the subject of this love. Is it Oberon or Titania who loves the boy? Or both? Nevertheless, it is "love" for the boy that generates the conflict between the two.

Whereas in Puck's account, the boy is "stolen" from a foreign land and became their "lovèd boy," Titania provides a different version of the story. She describes the boy's fate by calling up his mother's memory:

His mother was a vot'ress of my order,
And in the spicèd Indian air by night
Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking th' embarkèd traders on the flood,

When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
 Which she with pretty and with swimming gait
 Following, her womb then rich with my young squire,
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land
 To fetch me trifles, and return again
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die.
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
 And for her sake I will not part with him. (2.1.124-137)

Evoking an exotic setting with sensual affection between women, Titania's version of the boy's story shows maternal care as the generative cause of her insistence on the boy whom she would not give away, as she tells Oberon, "Not for thy fairy kingdom" (2.1.144). The boy is brought to the fairy world because he is the memory of his mother, who was sincerely and immensely loved by Titania; and Titania wants to "rear up" the boy, raise him from boyhood. He, as Valerie Traub puts it, is "the manifest link of a prior, homoerotic affection between women" ("(In)Significance" 159). In Titania's version, therefore, we don't see an act of "stealing," but what we might call today an international adoption.

Yet her use of "my young squire" pressures a mother/son dynamic, bringing in a mistress/servant or mistress/lover relation. While squire at once implicates a servant to a knight, Titania locates herself in a masculine knightly order defining the boy as her squire. Or if we take into account the *OED*⁴ definition of the squire as "A man, esp. a young man, who attends upon, accompanies, or escorts a lady; a gallant or lover," then the account comes closer to Puck's

narrative that puts at the center “love” as a driving motif of the conflicts around the boy. Similarly, the exotic references (spiced Indian air, yellow sands, wanton winds) and the mercantile metaphors (ship, voyage, merchandise) in her description also evoke the abduction and possession of boys. Interestingly enough, Titania’s narration of how the mother imitates the merchant’s ship equates the boy with merchandise, linking him to England’s overseas ventures and trade activities. The boy embodies the riches of the womb (signified as the ship enriched by “wanton winds”) while merchandise represents the riches of the ship. Relating the boy to affairs of trade, Titania brings to attention the objectification of boys as exotic possessions in the global maritime economy. The boy is an exotic object taken from India; he circulates from one hand and land to another, from the mother to the Queen, from India to Fairyland, and finally from the Queen to the King.

While the story of his origin is different in the two accounts, the use of the boy echoes each other in both narratives through similar motifs of trade, exchange, and mercantilism. All these motifs are structured around “love” within the main theme of the comedy’s world. Noting Oberon’s “wroth” for “A lovely boy,” Puck’s narrative is reminiscent of that of Ganymede, who causes trouble as the cup-bearer between Jove and Juno after joining Jove’s train (Ovid’s description noted in the previous chapter). Similarly, the lovely Indian boy generates a conflict between Titania and Oberon. He is the “sweetest” changeling Titania ever had. The boy is “loved” and “Crown[ed] with flowers.” He becomes “all” her joy. As Shirley Nelson Garner notes, “Titania’s attachment to the boy is clearly erotic. She... accord[s] him the same attentions as those she bestows on Bottom when, under the spell of Oberon’s love potion, she falls in love with rustic-turned-ass” (129). The erotic nature of Titania’s affection for the boy, as many critics

have noted, is reflected through Bottom's substitution of the boy.¹⁶

This erotic dynamic between the two, however, is also a reflection of the unseen, and yet to be accomplished, eroticism between Oberon and the boy. His jealousy results from Titania's erotic attachment to her "squire"; he substitutes the boy with Bottom to achieve his desire to have the boy as his own attendant. It is "jealous" Oberon's adoration of and attraction to this specific boy that generates his plot for abducting the boy away from Titania to his manly realm. Oberon wants to have the boy as "Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild." Like Neptune who wants to take Leander down in the bottom of the sea to add him in his "traine" (650), Oberon wants to have the boy in his "train" to trace deep the wild forest with him. Oberon furthermore begs Titania for "a little changeling boy/To be my henchman," to which Titania replies, "The Fairyland buys not the child of me" (2.1.120-23). This exchange between the two evokes one more time the exchange of boys by masters—be it through buying, abducting, or stealing. A compound of the word which appears in Old English as *hengest* [male horse] and man, "henchman" etymologically "point[s] to the sense of 'attendant on a sumpter-horse'; perhaps the original meaning was simply 'attendant on a horse', 'groom'" (OED). In this sense, the position of the boy as a henchman signifies a position of honor, reminiscent of young royal groomsmen in the early modern English court. Using Oberon's speech as one of the examples, the *OED* defines the word: "A squire, or page of honour to a prince or great man, who walked or rode beside him in processions, progresses, marches, etc." Indeed this position for the Indian boy hints at what many abducted boys were doing in England.

¹⁶ Margo Hendricks writes, "The displacement of the changeling child and the substitution of the adult changeling foreground the problem of unregulated female sexuality and its effect on the existing concept of race" (58). More on Bottom as erotic substitution for Titania's desire for the Indian boy, see Montrose, *The Purpose*; Schwartz; Lamb; Paster and Skiles; and Garner and Boehrer.

Such boys were appearing in the role of the exotic servant or attendant, often figuring quite distinctively in the portraiture of the period. For instance, the exotic servant as groom appears in a number of seventeenth century portraits. Daniel Myten's *Charles I and Henrietta Maria Departing for the Chase* (c. 1630-32), for example, portrays the exotic servant as groom in native costumes holding the horse while it places other animals—dogs, monkey—in the setting (Fig. 14). Abraham van Diepenbeck's engraving, *Machomilia en Turk* in William Cavendish's 1657 book, *Methode et invention nouvelle de dresser les chevaux* (A New Method and Invention to Dress Horse), shows the servant as groom with a Turkish horse (Fig. 15). Paul van Somer's portrait of *Queen Anne of Denmark* (1617), similarly, shows the black servant as groom holding a horse with dogs surrounding Anne (Fig. 16).¹⁷ These images make visible the subordinate, invisible status of the exotic boy during the seventeenth century: the native boy becomes the exotic signifier for the horse, or animals, they attend. However, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* shows that their roles as hench-boys might be in practice in the late sixteenth century as well.

¹⁷ For an analysis of these images, see Hall, *Things* 235-39.



Figure 14. *Charles I and Henrietta Maria Departing for the Chase*. Daniel Myten, c. 1630-32, Royal Collection Trust. Web



Figure 15. *Machomilia en Turk*. Abraham van Diepenbeck. In William Cavendish, *Methode et invention nouvelle de dresser les chevaux*, 1657



Figure 16. *Queen Anne of Denmark*. Paul van Somer, 1617. Royal Collection Trust. Web

Oberon's desire to have the boy as a "henchman" reveals his objectification and appurtenance status as his knight, page, and attendant, which in turn also entertains erotic

possibilities within the patriarchal household. Garner suggests, “Oberon’s wish to have the boy is consistent with the practice of taking boys from nursery to the father’s realm so that they can acquire the character and skills appropriate to manhood... But Puck describes Oberon as “jealous,” and his emphasis on the “lovely boy,” the “sweet” changeling, and the “loved boy” suggests that Oberon, like Titania, is attracted to the child” (129-30). While Garner separates the boy’s entrance to the father’s masculine realm from homoeroticism, I would suggest combining the two precisely because the boy’s transition at first is not from nursery to the father’s realm, but from his native Indian land to Oberon’s kingdom. Both Puck’s language and the transportation of the boy as the exotic other, as well as the serving-boy, from one space to another are very revelatory regarding Oberon’s sexual attraction for the boy. Oberon is surely not the boy’s father, and his affection is not paternal, nor incestuous—at least never stated explicitly the way Titania reveals her maternal concerns for her “squire”—but it is a claim of mastership over the dislocated boy to “make him all his joy.” The Indian boy, like the almost invisible boys of portraiture, is to be a “henchman,” a silent, subordinate, and submissive position that gives Oberon all rights over him. It is also a means to secure his domination over the boy by strengthening his masculine hierarchical superiority.¹⁸

Taking into consideration this position that Oberon states as the reason to demand the boy, we can see how Oberon’s desire is a reaffirmation of his hierarchical superiority over Titania and the boy in his patriarchal household. As Cynthia Herrup notes, “An intricate hierarchy of gender, age, and status designed to include obedience and self-discipline structured life within most genteel households in early modern England” (13). The aristocratic household was an administrative organization with hundreds of dependents, which brought responsibility

¹⁸ Bruce R. Smith notes, early modern manhood, within the social hierarchy, demanded that men define themselves, “*vis-à-vis* men above and below them” (118).

for the head of household who “encompassed the spiritual and civic as well as the economic well-being of every person in his care” (13). Within this structure, “relationships between masters and mistresses and servants, albeit temporary, could be more continuous, more dependent, and more intimate than those between parents and their offsprings” (13). Herrup’s work focuses on the household of the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven, showing how Castlehaven sexually dominated members of his household, particularly his boy-servants. She argues that what Castlehaven’s contemporaries were more anxious about was not Castlehaven’s sexual transgressions, but behaviors that endangered the fundamental structure of the early modern aristocratic household by not fulfilling his patriarchal obligations of protecting women, children, servants, and other dependents.¹⁹

In his survey of page boys as Ganymedes, Sinfield further shows “the page, or other youthful minion, was understood as contributing to the erotic system of the household” (*Shakespeare* 115). Indeed, early modern queer scholars such as Alan Bray, Jonathan Goldberg, and Bruce Smith have shown that master/servant sexual liaisons were a part of everyday life; servants were positioned as passive partners in sexual acts with their masters who had access due to their hierarchical power.²⁰ Alan Bray in his *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* notes that servants figure in major same-sex scandals of the early modern England: Francis Bacon and his intimate relationship with his servant was one of them, for example (48-53).²¹ Bruce Smith,

¹⁹ Herrup’s work offers a complex network of sexual plots in Castlehaven’s disorderly household. He was charged with encouraging his favorite servant Skipwith and other servants to have sexual intercourse with his wife and daughter in law as well as with sodomizing his servants. The affairs came to trial initiated by his son Lord Audley, and the Earl was found guilty of sodomy and rape.

²⁰ One famous example of the master/servant sexual relation is Francis Bacon’s relation with his servants, who are called “catamite,” and “Ganymede,” as Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart show (436-66).

²¹ For more on such scandals and cases, see Goldberg, *Sodometries: Smith, Homosexual Desire*.

furthermore, states that Renaissance Englishmen, like the ancient Greeks and Romans, eroticized the hierarchical power distinctions that set one male above another in their society: “Sexual desire took shape in the persons of master and minion; sexual energy found release in the power play between them. The subject of the Myth of Master and Minion is, indeed, the very subject of Renaissance legal discourse about sodomy: power-bedeveled sexual relations between a man and a ‘boy’” (195). Of course, not all servant boys were used sexually; however, they are all potential sexual objects within the social hierarchy, as Brown points out: “For a good many adult men in position of mastery over boys, boys represented closely available and passive partners of considerable erotic interest” (246). The ubiquitous accounts of sexual liaisons between masters and their servants engender “the inevitable conclusion” that, in Lisa Jardine’s and Alan Stewart’s words, “the only true emotional bond was between master (or mistress) and servant” (513).

Belonging to the aristocratic households as chattel, foreign boys were at the bottom of the household hierarchy. One example that shows how such hierarchies were coded can be found in the household books on the estate of Edward Stanley, the third Earl of Derby, who had several black servants. The household instruction sheet dated 12 February 1568 reads: “No Slaves nor boyes shall sitt in the Hall but in place therefore to be appoynted convenyetnt” and “The Yeman of Horses and Gromes of the Stables shall not suffre anie boyes or Slaves to abyde about the Stables *nor lie theym nor in any place aboute theym*” (my emphasis, qtd in Habib 305). Stanley commands a strict hierarchy organizing who should accommodate where, and forbids his hierarchically senior personnel to “lie” with his slaves and boys. As the instructions in this document show, there is a strict hierarchy in aristocratic households. It is important to note that “slave” and “boy” are mentioned together, which strongly links the two: neither can sit in the Hall. They are under the threat of sexual exploitation in accordance with their hierarchical status.

They are evidently vulnerable to the sexual advances of anyone who is hierarchically superior, as the rules in Stanley's letter forbidding such liaisons suggest.

Within this master/boy contextualization, Oberon's attempt to abduct the boy as his "henchman" from an all-female space and his jealousy for the "sweetest, lovely and loved boy" are not contradictory, but complementary. This is a result not of the transition from the nursery to adult male, but from his movement from his native land to a foreign site as an object of possession, exchange, and service. In this site he transforms into an object of desire. As Kate Lowe notes, "Once in Europe, black African slaves were at the mercy of the sexual advances of their masters" (31).²²

Oberon's desire to steal the boy represents a desire to set the patriarchal structure right, in which Oberon as patriarch stays on top dominating the woman and the boy. Importantly, his domination is both sexual and gendered. While the play starts with an inverted, disorderly Oberon-Titania-Boy triangle, in which Oberon does not have access to the boy while Titania is in between the two males, the play ends with the expected social order, a triangle of Titania-Oberon-Boy, in which Oberon as the male master has access to both Titania and the boy, both of whom are the objects of his socio-political power and erotic desire. His homoerotic attachment comes into visibility in his adoration for the boy and desire to put the boy in the site of master/servant hierarchy in which sexual dominance of the master goes invisible, yet remains.

²² This objectification of the other boy as a result of his displacement, and transformation into a servant role, evokes Ganymede and other beautiful boys. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Orsino/Cesario recalls such a master/servant homoeroticism. In *Edward II*, Marlowe provokes a similar master/minion relationship between the King and his favorite, who generates conflicts in the play, as implicit in Isabella's assertion that "[N]ever doted Jove on Ganymede / So much as he on cursed Gaveston" (1.4.180-2).

III. Indian Boys in Visual Arts: Daniel Myten's *Prince Rupert of the Rhine*

In this part I put into dialogue Shakespeare's accommodation of the boy in the topsy-turvy world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the cultural imagination in the following decades, which saw an increasing circulation of Indian boys. Oberon's claim of masculinity via the Indian boy and the early colonial implications in the play adumbrate how the figure of the "other" boy elucidates the homoerotics embedded in colonial practices and discourses. While in the late sixteenth century England is yet to be a global power, in the seventeenth century she expands her global engagements through trade relations beyond the Mediterranean, colonial settlements in the New World, and exploitation of goods and people in Africa. Coterminously, there appear a larger number of boys in literary and visual representations. Within seventeenth century portraiture, the trope of the exotic boy becomes almost a sub-genre. The seen-but-not-heard boys in the portraiture echo the unseen and unheard boy—as well as the homoerotics of domination—of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Reminiscent of Oberon's Indian boy and his desire to trace the wild forest with him, for instance, Sir Anthony Van Dyck's *William Fielding, first earl of Denbigh* (1633) stands out as a representation that most strikingly shows an Indian boy with local dress (Fig. 17).²³ The portrait, representing Fielding's 1631 trip to India, creates a dominant/submissive bond between the white master and the Indian servant. The boy in Indian dress, standing in front of a coconut tree with a parrot on it, becomes an embodiment of oriental exoticism and space, or in Titania's words, of "spiced Indian air." As Kim Hall suggests, in this portrait the boy, like Shakespeare's Indian boy, "is subtly associated with foreign commodities... [he] stands at the site of riches and seems to offer more" (*Things* 232). Like Prospero's Caliban, or potentially Oberon's future henchman, the

²³ For analyses of this portrait, see Wendorf; and Gilma.

boy guides Fielding to his native land. The Indian boy's turban and robe create a contrast with Fielding's English attire. The frontal opening of Fielding's tunic, the dangling girdle, and his parted legs suggest his domineering masculinity. With the phallic flintlock in his right hand, Fielding's masculine and military power is fortified by his dominance over the boy and the space he inhabits.



Figure 17: *William Fielding, first earl of Denbigh*. Sir Anthony Van Dyck, 1633. National Gallery. Qtd. in Wendorf 1

While this portrait is unique in representing a brown “Indian boy” wearing local dress and embedded in an exotic landscape, most white patron/exotic page boy portraits represent the boy as black. The image of the other boy, who oftentimes appears as a servant in Renaissance

visual culture, has been at the center of many scholars' work that traces race in early modern period.²⁴ While the image of the black servant rises as a trope in the mid-sixteenth century in Italian and Dutch art, it is in the seventeenth century that the trope starts to appear in English portraiture. As Paul Kaplan and Peter Erickson have shown, the black servant role created in Titian's *Laura Dianti* (c.1523, fig. 18) and *Fabrizius Salvaesius* (1558) migrated northward via Anthony van Dyck's *Marchesa Elena Grimaldi* (1623) and *Henrietta of Lorraine* (1634, fig. 19). Erickson and Kim Hall have astutely explored numerous paintings and portraits in England that incorporate the trope of the black servant with a white patron.²⁵ Tracing the image of the black servant in such portrayals, Hall argues, these representations "chart the ongoing commodification of black bodies as England becomes more dependent on an involvement with Africa for economic expansion and symbolic definition" (*Things* 227). Similarly Erickson notes, "The overall tendency in Renaissance portraiture is to present the black attendant primarily not as subject but as object—appurtenance, status symbol, exotic touch" ("Representation of Race" 4-5). Black boys in these paintings exist as objects in relation to their patrons; the patron's masculine and colonial authority is created through the exotic embodiment of the boy.

²⁴ T. F. Earle and Kate Lowe's collection, *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, posits that "the black servant" appears in the visual culture of almost all European traditions, including Spanish and Portuguese, in the Renaissance. See Paul H. D. Kaplan for the motif of "the black servant" in Italian art, and Allison Blakely in Dutch art.

²⁵ Among Peter Erickson's many publications on the subject are "Invisibility Speaks," "Representations of Race," "Representations of Blacks," and his edited work with Hulse, *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*. For the ubiquity of the practice in the late seventeenth, early eighteenth centuries, see Aravamudan. For an invaluable multivolume collection that brings together all western images of the black, see Bindman and Henry Louis Gates (for early modern images, see v. 3. pt. 1 and 2).



Figure 18. *Laura Dianti*. Titian, c.1523, Collezione H. Kisters, Kreuzlingen. ARTstor



Figure 19. *Henrietta of Lorraine*. Anthony van Dyck, 1634. Kenwood House. ARTstor

While a wide array of visual representations has been uncovered by these historians of art, literary critics, and scholars of race, the implicit or sometimes more explicit homoeroticism of boys in these representations is yet to be explored. Noting how sexuality is missing in discussions of race and how race is absent in scholarly debates of sexuality in his “Epilogue” to *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance England*, Erickson calls forth “a comprehensive framework able to encompass and coordinate the elements

of homoeroticism and race as parts of the same larger critical conversation” (381).²⁶ While critical issues like objectification, gender dynamics, and slaves as properties are more visible in the portraiture than erotic aspects (particularly considering how the reputation of the patron is at stake), contextualizing these images in the larger master/servant matrix and putting them into dialogue with literary representations opens up a space for considering the interrelations of sexuality and race.

Tracing the embodiment of the black servant, I emphasize the homoerotic dynamics of international trade and nascent colonial investments through intimate relationships between the white master and the exotic, dark, native boy in such representations. To what extent is masculine authority reflected through a desire for Indian boys? I am aware of the fact that the portraiture as a genre would not lend itself easily to trace explicitly sexual significations. As Erickson notes,

In the simplest version, a portrait is assumed to be a transparent translation and reflection of the patron’s wishes; the portrait is conceived as a direct result of the patron’s commission and the patron’s financial control means interpretive control. According to this view, the artist’s hands are tied because the artist cannot do anything to offend the sitter’s self-image. Yet painting is more than a financial transaction. The literalistic economic model underestimates not only the power of the artist’s resources but also the nature of that power. (“Representations of Race” 5)

²⁶ Answering this call, Erickson traces sexual politics in Rubens’s *Diana and Callisto* by focusing on how female bodies function in homoerotic, all-female imageries. Kim Hall has similarly explored gender dynamics operating in English portraiture by focusing on the use of black female bodies in her *Things of Darkness* and “Objects Into Objects.”

Nevertheless, he suggests, “multiple and unpredictable meanings are built into the structure of the genre through discrete layers of fiction involved in the concept of pose” (5). So while the patron’s reputation and approval are important points to consider, they cannot be the final say in interpreting these works of art. Especially, an explicit homoeroticism that would make sodomitical implications visible, and thus endanger the patron’s reputation, seems incredible; yet what Erickson calls “discreet layers of fiction” are the interpretive motivations these representations generate. These discreet fictions, and the gaps and deviations from conventions, uncover what might be veiled in these portraits.

Also considering the dynamic relationship between portraiture and biography—following William Hazlitt’s remark, “Portrait-painting is the biography of the pencil” (qtd. in Wendorf 7)—one can argue that biographical information and other intertextual references to the patron and the black boy become vital to further elucidate the dynamics between the two.²⁷ Therefore, when the master/servant representation is framed within the larger sexual discourse of this hierarchy and put into dialogue with literary and biographical narratives, these portraits might further reveal the sexual objectification of these boys as means through which larger political claims are made. One such example is Daniel Myten’s *Prince Rupert of the Rhine* (Fig. 20).

Prince Rupert was the son of Elizabeth of Bohemia, nephew to Charles I and cousin to Charles II. He was a favorite youth in the court of Charles I, a popular figure in seventeenth century England, the commander of the King’s forces during the civil war, and one of the founders of both the Company of the Royal Adventurers of England Trading into Africa, and the Royal African Company.²⁸ In Daniel Myten’s *Prince Rupert of the Rhine*, Prince Rupert stands with his black servant whom, according to Kim Hall and biographers of the Prince, Rupert

²⁷ On the interlink between early modern portraiture and biography, see Wendorf.

²⁸ For Rupert’s biography, see Morrah; Spenser; Wilkinson.

captured when he pirated ships around Gambia and Guinea (*Things* 228). As a result of the conflict between Rupert's party and "a tribe of Mohammedan nomads," the boy's parents, who were presumably Muslim, escaped the scene after their camel was shot by Rupert's men, and left the boy behind on 1 January 1652; and although they demanded the boy be returned, the Prince refused this request.²⁹ Rupert considered this boy "as a New Yeares gift," according to a contemporary account of the incident (qtd in Morrah 264). Patrick Morrah notes that Rupert "kept with him this little native hostage, who stayed with him until after his return to Europe" (264). Not only this little boy, Morrah notes, but also there were other "blackamores" whom Rupert brought back home after his voyages; evidently "his 'blackamores' added to the glamour of his reputation" (287). His glamorous reputation contributed to the popularization of the practice of keeping black servants (280). However, this little Indian boy that Rupert abducted from his parents stands out as a special boy in the Prince's life. Similar to Titania's affection for the Indian boy, Rupert "treated him with an almost fatherly tenderness" as noted in the accounts of the boy (Morrah 288).³⁰

While the African boy is mentioned with several references in Rupert's biography, he had another "Boy" in his life that finds more space and reference in almost all biographies of Rupert: his dog, named Boy.³¹ The dog that was given to him by one Lord Arundell, and according to an early account, "these dogs were so renowned that the Great Turk gave it in a particular instruction to his ambassador to endeavor the obliging of one of them" (qtd. in Morrah 54). The dog becomes an object of exchange like other boys, as his name also suggests, as though "boy" becomes a reference for the exchanged goods and people. Interestingly, during the civil war, the

²⁹ Spenser notes this abandoned boy is the same page boy in the portrait (229.)

³⁰ Morrah notes the Rupert disposed of the boy; he gave him to his cousin who had him baptized and educated.

³¹ Wilkinson, 117-19; Spencer, 126-28;

Prince's affection for Boy becomes a significant part of satirical pamphlets. The pamphlets by the Roundheads especially propagandized against Rupert by using his "unnaturally close" affection to Boy, who ultimately was killed during a battle by the Roundheads.³² Why was the dog named Boy? Srivanas Aravamudan argues with regard to "petting Oroonoko" that black servants and pets, particularly dogs, were equivalent displays of aristocracy in seventeenth century England. In other words, boys were seen as domestic pets. Aravamudan reminds us, "Africans seized for the slave trade were also transported to England and sold as pets and domestic servants" (34). Boy is henceforth what unites the stolen child and the dog, which is an object of exchange, an object that even "the Great Turk" desires to own.

The dog's name signifies the category of the boy as an object of exchange, and as satirical pamphlets suggest, a subservient role that is always vulnerable to the master's sexual advances. One of the Parliamentary pamphleteers describes their relationship as such: "he [the dog] salutes and kisseth the Prince, as close as any Christian woman would, and the Prince salutes and kisseth him backe againe in favorily, as he would (I will not say any Alderman wife, but) any Court-Lady... Then they lye perpetually, in one bed, sometimes the Prince upon the Dogg, and sometimes the Dogg upon the Prince." (qtd in Morrah 105). As a once-favorite boy in the court of Charles I, the charismatic and handsome prince, who never got married, is attacked through an attribution of transgressive sexuality.³³ In another pamphlet published in 1643,

³² For the poems celebrating his death and implying satanic aspects of the dog and the relationship between him and his master, see Morrah, 105-106, and Spenser 127-28

³³ Interestingly, biographers of Rupert are either silent or defensive about his sexuality. Morrah for example sounds resentful about homosexuality attachments to Rupert, and states, "Nothing in his career gives the slightest suggestion that he was not a man of perfectly normal passions" (400). Whatever these perfectly normal passions would be, one might just ask about his intimate closeness to his loyal soldier, Honest Will Legge, who was, Morrah notes "Rupert's most faithful servant... As time went on the trust and intimacy between the Prince and Legge grew steadily, as is revealed in their correspondence. Legge wrote to Rupert with uninhibited candour, always

entitled “*An Exact Description of Prince Rupert’s malignant She-Monkey, a great Delinquent: Having approved herself a better servant, then his white Dog called BOY,*” provokes a sexual relationship between the Prince and a she-monkey who “was formerly some proud dame, that pulling up her cloathes, and setting her looking-glasse a good distance from her, would needs view her white belly in that imitating mirroure; whereupon the gods being angry at her obscene wantonnesse, did convert her into the shape of a lascivious she-monkey” (A2). The pamphlet further gives details of their relationship, “but let that passe, certain it is that the prince doth love this Monkey exceedingly; and the Monkey doth by all her gestures, and actions tempt the prince to lascivious desires... and if he were anything effeminate as it is not to be doubted but he is foreward enough in expression of love as well as valour” (A3). Similarly, in another pamphlet, the effeminate Rupert “had a minde to peep into the Monkeys black Art or Arse” (A4). Puritan reaction to female beauty, effeminacy, anality, sodomy, and arts are all reflected in these pamphlets connecting them all to Rupert’s “uncontrolled” lust during his time in Oxford (*An Exact*, A5).

Although these writings are propaganda tools whose accusations cannot be taken seriously, the language they use is suggestive of the relationship between service and sexuality, animals and servant boys in the seventeenth century. These animals are called “servant” in the title, and evidently their service is mainly to satisfy the sexual pleasures of the Prince. What is more interesting, however, is the striking print of the dog’s name, “BOY” in capital letter, putting at the center “BOY” and probably evoking boy servants and sodomy via the dog’s name as evident from the sexual content of the pamphlet. The boy’s replacement by a half human, half

with his best interest in heart. Rupert wrote to his beloved Will with an informality which he seldom showed in letters to anybody else” (104). So Morrah’s own language makes one wonder about Rupert’s heterosexuality. If Morrah presses against abnormal passions, he can find passions that went invisible during the period because of their normalness very well.

monkey creature, furthermore, reminds one of the asinine Bottom who replaces the boy as an erotic substitution for Titania. Focusing on the Bottom/Titania intimacy, Bruce Boehrer shows that in the early modern period we can notice an intricate connection between homophilia and zoophilia. These pamphlets, by evoking servant boys through the dog, Boy, generate such an association in charging the Prince with bestial sodomy.

Following this biographical context and the representation of Rupert in these satirical pamphlets, I ask: what does affectionate touch in Myten's portrait suggest? (Fig. 20). While the black boy is almost invisible in his *Charles I and Henrietta Maria Departing for the Chase*, Myten's portrait of the Prince makes the boy visible at the center, more similar to female mistress/servant portraits. The portrait interestingly shows a slight shift from the conventional trope of the master/black boy imagery by creating an intimate connection between the Prince and the boy, as evident in the Prince's touch as well as the boy's responding eyes. While the image of the black boy being touched by female patrons is relatively common (as in the mistress's touch on the boy's shoulder in Titian's or Van Dyck's portraits above), there is no other example of a white master/ black servant portrait, to my knowledge, that shows a physical, bodily connection in early modern English portraiture. This conspicuous intimacy, the touching of the exotic, makes the boy more visible, and further provokes a closer proximity between the master and the servant, and the significance of the boy to the Prince.



Figure 20. *Prince Rupert of the Rhine*. Daniel Mytens, 1665. Wikiimages

In her reading of this painting Kim Hall notes, “the painting offers a standard colonial dynamic of dominant, powerful white with the submissive, even adoring, subaltern” (228). This dominant/submissive power dynamic in the portrait, or “militaristic/phallic power” in Hall’s

words (228), is at the same time a reflection of a sexual master/servant hierarchy. While the boy's gaze on the level of Rupert's loins orients us towards Rupert, the sitter, and centralizes him, the baton Rupert holds urges the spectator's gaze to notice Rupert's grasp on the boy's head and the scenery outside the window that evokes a horizon of global trade and trafficking. Also, the boy's adoring eyes contrast Rupert's confident look at the viewer. Rupert as a subject looks at our eyes; the boy, on the other hand, is dependent on Rupert. The boy's look, furthermore, mirrors the viewer's own gaze as well. When the viewer looks at the boy, the boy functions as a medium directing the viewer's gaze towards the Prince. In Erickson's words, "the prince's dual gesture of one hand grasping the baton and one hand resting atop the black boy's head proclaims a dominance whose acceptance is signaled by the servant's adoring eyes" ("Representation of Race" 6). While Rupert's hand functions to generate a touch that signifies Rupert's recognition of the boy's presence, the boy's responding eyes mediate the viewer's gaze towards the Prince.

The boy becomes the subjugated passive object of not only the viewer's gaze but also Rupert's authority as signified by the commanding baton, his dominant hand, and his massive body size as compared to the boy's small size. Indeed, his hand over the boy's head (as opposed to shoulder as we see in other portraits) proclaims a dominant authority that is reminiscent of the Armada portrait of Elizabeth I whose hand is over the globe. A similar hand gesture can be seen in Nicolaes Elias Pickenoy's portrait, *Man with a Celestial Globe* (1624), within which the man looks at the viewer while his hand confidently grasps the globe (Fig. 21). Also, the globe and the baton with similar sea imagery in the background can be seen in such portraits of admirals as *Portrait of Lieutenant-Admiral Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyte* by Ferdinand Bol (1677) as well as *Portrait of Aert van Nes, Lieutenant-Admiral* and *Portrait of Vice-Admiral Johan de Liefde* by Bartholomeus van der Helst and Ludolf Bakhuysen (1668), which proceed Myten's portrait

(Figs. 22,23,24). Considering the function of baton, globe, and sea trio in portraiture, in Myten's portrait the boy's head seems a metaphor for the globe. It is not only a hand over the head, but over the globe with evocations of the global engagements of trade and exploration suggested by the horizon on the background scenery.



Figure 21. *Man with a Celestial Globe*. Nicolaes Eliasz Pickenoy, 1624, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. ARTstor.



Figure 22. *Portrait of Lieutenant-Admiral Michiel Adriaenszoon de Ruyte.*

Ferdinand Bol, 1677, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. ARTstor.



Figure 23. *Portrait of Aert van Nes, Lieutenant-Admiral and Portrait of Vice-Admiral Johan de Liefde*. Bartholomeus van der Helst and Ludolf Bakhuysen, 1668, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. ARTstor.



Figure 24. Portrait of Vice-Admiral Johan de Liefde. Bartholomeus van der Helst and Ludolf Bakhuizen, 1668, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. ARTstor.

Furthermore, the calm, stable scenery behind Rupert is in contrast with the wilderness portrayed behind the boy, reminiscent also of the wilderness depicted in Fielding's portrait. This orientation of the spectator's gaze towards the background scenery and to Rupert's hand over the boy's head further equates Rupert's superiority over the boy to his dominance over the wilderness. Additionally the sea evokes the sea-trade and the piracy activities that brought the

exotic boy into the Prince's household. Moreover, while the boy's European dress indicates his appropriation and conversion, pearls around his head and his pearl earring still signify his exotic land, making him an embodiment of his native space and its material riches. The pearls surrounding his head alongside his black skin offer an exotic identity, contrasting with Rupert's English masculinity in armor. As Kate Lowe notes, "For Europeans, wearing clothes was not a matter of choice but a sign of civility... In Europe, material was directly related to status... Once in Europe, Africans wore European clothing"; however, "in Renaissance images of black Africans in Europe, Africans (even though usually slaves and servants) are often depicted wearing beautiful and expensive jewelry" to show off the status of their masters (Lowe, 21; 23-24). While white servants did not wear similar jewelry, exotic boys did, which further illuminated not only the prosperous status of their master but their master's interactions with the boy's native land. Also, while the boy's pearl jewelry points at his exoticism, his European dress, white ruffle and the color of his dress mirror Rupert's own clothing, signifying their shared maleness and his belonging to the Prince, and highlighting *homosocial* interaction between a hierarchically dominant master and submissive boy. As evident from the boy's adoring gaze, he is taken by and protected under Rupert's wing-like arms and phallic-militaristic authority as signified through the Prince's baton.

These literary and visual representations show that the Indian boy functions as a medium through which the master's masculine claims over the subordinate male are made evident. The kind of intimate economy between the adult man and the boy with an unequal social relationship recalls the literary tradition of drawing the reader to become a voyeur of the young man's face and body (i.e., Marlowe's Leander, Shakespeare's fair youth, and Richard Barnfield's beautiful boy). While the speaker's attachment to and desire for the boy in this tradition is evident in these

literary and visual representations of Indian boys in terms of their objectifications, the Indian boy's different body negotiates patriarchal and colonial claims of masculine domination.

Both Oberon's and Prince Rupert's (as well as Sir Anthony's) displays of such masculine authority are achieved through Indian boys whose non-white bodies extend beyond English borders. As an exotic object with no agency, the Indian boy of *Dream* embodies the "spiced Indian air," which English ships started to penetrate in the sixteenth century. First associated with India and later equated with the Fairyland ("Not for thy fairy kingdom"), the stolen boy becomes a representative of the land while an authority over him keeps safe the patriarchal order in Oberon's multicultural household. Similarly, the background of Rupert's boy evokes his transcontinental travel through the imagery of the sea, wild nature, and exotic riches. The Prince's authority over the boy's body through domineering hands conveys his transcontinental claims. In all these examples, the exotic boy becomes the embodiment of the exotic space from which he is taken, most likely by force or coercive exchange. And his body appears as an erotic subtext for colonial masculine desire to possess and dominate exotic lands. While the sexualization of Indian boys may not be always the case in the historical sense, the Indian boy in English representations evokes the Ottomans' desire to own multiethnic youthful boys as a way of exhibiting imperial masculine power (as explored in the previous chapter), and makes visible the Ganymede-effect embedded in over-seas investments of England within which the boys are abducted and carried off from one place to another as objects of imperial masculine desire.

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CHAPTER III

The Homoerotics of Conversion: Beautiful Boys of Cross-Cultural Encounters

In the previous two chapters, I suggested that the body of the boy plays a central role in abduction plots. The boys abducted from other lands were objectified and eroticized in literary and visual representations, which deployed the classical trope of the beautiful boy. Taken from their native lands, the bodies of these boys underwent a process of “conversion,” as they were placed in differing representational repertoires, evoking historical conditions of servitude and/or captivity while appearing in highly attractive sexualized forms. In Ottoman texts, the boys are at once dressed in new clothes, circumcised, and trained as soldiers and scholars. A similar bodily conversion process appears in English narratives, wherein the boys abducted from Africa, India, or the New World are baptized with a Christian name, and refashioned in English dress, as the portraits I have discussed make visible. In this chapter I further zoom in on the signification of their bodies in the moment of encounter by highlighting both European and Ottoman spatial imaginaries, and in this contrapuntal mode, evoking the connected histories of the two worlds. My focus is on the body of the beautiful boy as an erotic embodiment of his native land, as he emerges in the poetic imagination of the Ottomans and the cartographic imagination of the European map-makers. Thus in recounting these narratives about boys in varied moments of cross-cultural encounters, I underscore what we might call the homoerotics of conversion, highlighting the objectification of boys, both sexual and territorial.

My use of “space” evokes the critical role of representation to gender and sexualize a place.¹ Space as a critical concept in relation to such analytical categories as gender and

¹ The space/place distinction has been at the center of theoretical debates on the production of space. For Henri Lefebvre, space, like text, can be read, decoded, and interpreted; to do so means to “trace the genesis of a space,” implying a process of signification (17). Exploring the

sexuality has been the subject of scholarship in recent years.² For instance, in his analysis of social space as regulated through “prohibitions,” Henri Lefebvre argues that sexual reproduction is at the center of the production of social space; it is for this reason that transgressive sexual relations are pushed out of the public space. These repressed, forbidden, inadmissible practices have their “own hidden space on the near or the far side of a frontier” (36). While Lefebvre examines reproduction-oriented-sexuality in the formation of social spaces, Massey, in *Space*,

production of social space, Lefebvre generates a conceptual triad of spatial practice or daily realities, representation of space, and representational space or lived space. Representations of space are tied to the relations of production, and hence “to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to “frontal” relations.” Likewise, Michel de Certeau relates space to representation. For de Certeau, while “a place (*lieu*) is the order” with the law of the “proper” —stability, physical reality, and a single function—space is not stable, and is related to multiplicity, fluidity, directionality, and movements; “space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities... In short, *space is a practiced place*.” (117). And it is movements, stories, and speech-acts that actually engender spaces and transform places into spaces: “Stories thus carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places. They also organize the play of changing relationships between places and spaces” (118). Space is a narrated place, a place in story and movement. In this sense, space is intricately interrelated with personal attachments, affect, bodily movements, and extensions. For Edward Soja, space is both local and global, inside and outside, stable and unstable, and real and imaginative; hence, he describes *thirdspace* as “an all-encompassing worldview” (46). Focusing on margins together with centers, Soja invites us to think through the construction of space spatiality. Everything is constructed not only “socially” and “historically” but also “spatially,” creating the triad of “Spatiality-Historicity-Sociality” (81). Doreen B. Massey’s three propositions for space (interrelated, coexisting, and never-ending) also put space in relation to social production, experiences, and movements. Massey defines space as (a) “the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from immensity of the global to the intimately tiny”; (b) “the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality, as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist...coexisting heterogeneity”; and (c) “always under construction... always in the process of being made... a simultaneity of stories so far” (9). Space is thus the “sum of our relations and interconnections, and the lack of them” (184). Disagreeing with a fixed place vs. space dichotomy, Massey deconstructs the binary of space/place, claiming that place and space are interrelated, and her argument “is not that place is not concrete, grounded, real, lived etc. It is that space is too” (185). For Massey, both space and place are real, lived, everyday, grounded; and they both constitute themselves as a reflection to one another while bound to each other as well.

² See, for example, Barnes and Gregory; Bell and Valentine; Nancy; Grosz, and Eisenman; Higgs; Johnston and Longhurst; McDowell; Colomina, and Bloomer.

Place, and Gender, analyzes the gendering of spaces and places, asserting, “space and place, spaces and places, and our sense of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through” (186). Early modern scholars have uncovered historical processes of gendering and sexualizing spaces such as houses, alehouses, theatres, markets, barbershops, and churches.³ Exploring gendered conceptions of territory and territorial conceptions of gender, for instance, early modern feminist investigations show that representations of territory as the *female* body perform the “work of gender,” in Louis Montrose’s terms, within discourses of discovery, exploration, exploitation, possession, and the use of land.⁴

Drawing on studies that unveil the gender dynamics in discourses of geopolitical domination in early modern spatial representations, I explore the conversion of boys through conversion of spaces that are gendered male and sexualized as homoerotic. My focus is on early modern literary and cartographic representations of two particular spaces of cross-cultural encounters—Galata and the river Danube. Galata appears as the European space of difference in the Ottoman imagination while the Danube stands for the threshold of Europe, insofar as it is a border separating Christendom from the world of the Ottomans. These two geographical places, I argue, are “converted” to imaginary thresholds that generate as well as probe in their representational dynamic such dichotomies as self/other, Islam/Christian, Ottoman/European,

³ On gendered and sexualized spaces, see Hiscock; Sanders; Boulton; Burford, and Wotton; Crane Flather; Friedman; Fumerton; Howard, *Theater of a City*; Turner; Wall; Helgersen, *Adulterous Alliances*; Capp; Gowing; Guy-Bray; Mullaney; Johnson; Dabhoiwala; Gilles; McJannet, “Genre;” Stanivukovic, “Cruising;” and Bly. For gendered spaces in the Ottoman Empire, see Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*; Zilfi, *Women and Slavery and Women in the Ottoman Empire*; Booth; Hamadeh, *The City’s Pleasure*.

⁴ Montrose, “The Work of Gender.” Some other exemplary works that presented a land/woman association in early modern cultural imagination are Kolodny; Hulme, “Polytropic Man;” Vickers, “The blazon;” Stallybrass, “Patriarchal Territories.”

converter/converted; they do so by creating a horizon at the center of which is located the beautiful boy. I use “horizon” to refer to an *imagination* of a place, which is anchored in a geographical location that is close enough, within eyesight, to promise the fulfillment of desire, yet always far away and unreachable.⁵ The horizon calls up the idea of travel and traffic. To better reveal this horizon and highlight the operative representational dynamics in spatial representations, I read contrapuntally European cartographic images alongside Ottoman poetic visions within the context of the Euro-Ottoman contests for imperial power. In the representations that follow, I examine how the horizon makes possible what seems impossible through heterogeneous significations, generating a homoerotic affect through the boy who is under the gaze of the poet, the cartographer, and the viewer. Subject to a homoerotic gaze in a male-dominated world, the figures of the boy of Galata and the boy of the Danube with their ephemeral gender status display a wide spectrum of sexualized power plays between men, while challenging male/female, subject/object, East/West, and desire/anxiety binarisms.

I. The Boy of Galata in Mehmet’s Poetry

Located across the Imperial Palace in the historical city of Istanbul, Galata was a town where non-Muslim (mainly Christian and Jewish) communities lived under their own laws and customs after the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II in 1453. As a multicultural quarter of the capital, it was particularly famous for its Italian and Jewish wineries and taverns. Besides

⁵ My use of horizon is influenced by Sara Ahmed’s explication of horizon as an imaginary phenomena that generated and is generated by a directionality in her *Queer Phenomenology: Orientation, Objects, Others*. Ahmed traces the “orient” in Orientalism and orientation to map out how desire functions in construction of race, gender, objects, and the environment. Also, Bronwen Wilson’s reading of Lorck’s mapping of Istanbul in the sixteenth century by focusing on the horizon and prospect in her forthcoming manuscript “Inscription and the Horizon: Melchior Lorck’s Prospect of Constantinople” helped my conceptualization of horizon as an edge blurring what is here and what is not. Yet, I use “horizon” more in terms of an imaginary space, including allegorical and iconographic representations, which Wilson excludes in her use of the term.

being home to European embassies, some Ottoman elites had villas in Galata for entertainment, social gatherings and events; some Sufi orders that saw wine and love as a means to unify with the divine were located in this neighborhood as well. As a place of daily cross-cultural interactions between nations, ethnicities, religions and various classes of peoples, Galata is spatialized in the Ottoman cartographic as well as poetic imagination as a microcosmic Europe at the heart of the Empire, a distinctly transgressive yet desirable space inseparable from Istanbul.

One of the earliest cartographic representations of Galata is the 1532 panoramic map by Matrakci Nasuh, an influential courtier in the court of Suleyman I (Fig. 25). Galata and Istanbul are represented in the same map alongside each other with the same color. Galata on the left hand side is the part around the tower. Istanbul stands across from Galata on the other side of the Golden Horn, where Matrakci represents multiple ships to evoke its commercial significance. On the upper right hand side, the surrounded construction facing Galata is the Topkapi Palace [the Imperial Palace], built by Mehmet II's order after the Conquest. Nasuh strikingly maps Galata with a paradisiacal garden lying behind the walls of the town. Galata is rendered not as a separate space but seems inseparable from Istanbul, separated only by a thin margin of water. Most importantly, the horizon of Galata exists only in relation to, and by looking from, Istanbul. Matrakci's picturesque map offers a symbolic representation of Galata that evokes the poetic tradition in which Galata appears as a central location for earthly pleasures, in opposition to the restrictive character of Istanbul.



Figure 25. “Galata.” Matrakci Nasuh, 16th c. Topkapi Palace Museum. Web.

In the early modern Ottoman language, there is no single word that corresponds to “map,” with the connotation of precision and factuality that the English term bears. Ottoman terrestrial maps were termed *resm* (drawing/picture) or *suret* (representation/image/face), signifying the representational, topographical, and artistic aspect of cartography. Clearly, then, map within the Ottoman context connote an improvisational fluidity. Topography is what is common to a cartographer and writer, as Tom Conley asserts:

Topography, a field in which cartography and literature cross paths, brings forward an immediate and compelling sense of what is “same” or “self” and also alterity. Who and what is other, and how does that other—be it a

stranger, a supposed infidel, an inhabitant of new-found lands—summon
the demarcation of the boundaries of the self? (405)

The topographer—whether a writer or cartographer—finds new ways and means to represent the world by distinguishing one geographical space from another, based on difference in location as much as culture and religion. The cartographic and the poetic imagination are thereby closely related.⁶ While Nasuh's map presents a poetic world of Galata with its paradisaical garden, the poetic language depicting Galata functions like a cartographer's rhetorical device, visualizing and dissecting the place by gazing from a specific point of origin. In poetry, Galata is described through movements, actions, and topographical entities, standing distinct from Istanbul with a border to be crossed in order to access and experience life there.

In many Ottoman poems written in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Galata represents a space embodied by the figure of a beautiful Christian boy. The trope of Muslim/Christian amorous encounters is a thematic hallmark of Arabic love poetry and the Persian *ghazal* tradition from the tenth century onwards.⁷ In these representations, the Christian boy is usually a wine-server, a cup-bearer, destroying the pretentious Muslims, diverting them from the right path of religion and thereby reducing them to abasement. As Franklin Lewis notes in his exploration of tales and topoi of love for Christian boy, these narratives “may be said to explore the boundaries between god-fearing piety and the temptations of the flesh, but they also tend to undermine religio-didactic authority in favor of a situational morality, privileging some degree of tolerance for human nature over rigid adherence to social propriety (707). In such accounts, Lewis observes, “transgression does not arise primarily from the

⁶ See Helgersson's “Land” for such representational aspects concerning English chorography and cartographic tradition.

⁷ For more on the Persian and Arabic tradition of representing conversion through gendered Muslim/Christian encounters, see Lewis.

pederastic nature of the desire depicted;” the transgression is conversion itself that is associated with shame and lust. The Christian boy of Galata in Ottoman poetry shows common traits with this conventional Arabic-Persian figure through imageries of the sun, moon, cypress-tree, golden girdle, and wine-server. However, the Christian boy in Ottoman poetry is almost always from Galata, a real space with Christian boys at whom the Ottomans gazed from Istanbul. This poetic combination of the tradition and the realities of the time offers us an interpretative sphere that uncovers larger spatial-political discourses, conveyed through the beautiful boy of Galata.

The boy of these poems generates an erotic game that highlights a masculine imperial desire for political dominance over Christian lands. One example is the famous “Galata” poems of the Conqueror himself, Mehmet II. In the poem, “Bir güneş yüzlü melek gördüm,” Mehmet, who uses the pen-name Avni, writes about a beautiful *Frank* [Christian] boy from Galata who not only embodies all Christendom, but also is a reflection of Jesus, whose lips “give life anew,” yet whose “glance kills”:⁸

Bir güneş yüzlü melek gördüm ki alem mahıdır. □

Ol kara sünbülleri aşıklarının ahıdır.

Karalar geymiş meh-i taban gibi ol serv-i naz,

Mülk-i efrengün meğer kim hüsn içinde şahıdır.

Ukde-i zünnarına her kimse kim dil bağlamaz, □

Ehl-i iman olmaz ol aşıklarının güm-rahıdır.

⁸ “Frank” [Freng] is a term used by the Ottomans to signify Christian nations in Europe geographically, particularly west of the Mediterranean. It also appears in early modern European travel accounts with this meaning, although it goes etymologically back to Old English signifying Germanic people (OED1). The term is defined in OED2 as such: “A name given by the nations bordering on the Levant to an individual of Western nationality.” Also, the term *franġ* or *il-franġ* is common in medieval Arabic sources simply meaning white, or from western Christendom.

Gamzesi öldürdüğüne lebleri canlar virür, □
Var ise ol ruh-bahşün din-i İsa rahıdur.
Avniya kılma güman kim sana ram ola nigar,
Sen Sitanbul şahısun, ol (da) Kalata şahıdur (Dogan 55).

A sun faced angel, I saw,
the moon of whom is the universe
Dark hyacinth curls
of whom are sighs of his lovers,
An alluring cypress
like moon in black dress
Lure of whom alone
reigns in Frank realms
Whoever is not devoted
to his girdle's knots
No man of faith he is
but a heathen amidst his lovers
His lips give life anew to those
whom his glance kills
The faith this bestower of life follows, if any,
is the path of Jesus

Do not assume, O Avni⁹, to you
that beauty will submit,
You are the lord of Istanbul,
he is the lord of Galata.¹⁰

The poem starts with the moment when the speaker, Avni, sees the sun faced angel, who is the source of light for all other beauties of the universe, and whose dark hyacinth curls are actually swirling, winding-like-sighs of his lovers. As a literary trope, the sigh “*ah*” refers to the lover’s suffering, burning in the fire of love, and these sighs are metaphorically addressed through the smoky curls of the beloved. This beautiful beloved boy becomes the object of Avni’s first sight, his dissecting gaze, and for him, the boy’s beauty is not only the light of this world (angel, sun, moon), but also what reigns over *the Franks* (Euro-Christians). From describing the irresistible and incomparable beauty of the boy, Avni topographically associates the beautiful boy with the space he inhabits.

The poem then zooms in on the boy’s religion. “His girdle knot” (*zünnar*) signifies the belt Christians wore in early modern Galata as a marker of their non-Muslim status. In the poem, this belt is metaphorically a knot of devotion for lovers; those who are not devoted to the boy’s girdle knot are called heathens. (This is paradoxical with Islamic belief since if a Muslim

⁹ Mehmet uses Avni as his penname (*mahlas*) in his poems. It is a common practice for an Ottoman poet to use a penname and use it as a signature in the last couplet; hence the change in the pronoun addressing the speaker. Most poets are known by their pennames rather than real names.

¹⁰ My translation. For an alternative translation, see Andrews and Kaplakli, 3. Andrews and Kaplakli creatively fictionalize the poem in the historical context of the story of Mehmet and Lukas Notaras as narrated by the Byzantine Greek Doukas. Upon the conquest, Mehmet demands the youngest handsome son of Notaras, who, after refusing the demand is executed together with his sons. They read the poem imaginatively to probe historical/metaphorical distinction (2-8). For Mehmed’s *Divan* [The Collection of Poems], with facsimilies in Ottoman Turkish and transcriptions into modern Turkish, see Dogan.

is devoted to this girdle knot, he loses his faith because it signifies devotion to Christianity.) The beautiful boy further becomes Jesus himself through a reference to Jesus' miracle of bringing back the dead in Islamic Sufi tradition; like Jesus, the boy's kiss has a life-bestowing, transformative power.¹¹ The boy resurrects those who were killed by his glances. Avni claims to recognize Christianity as the boy's religion only after he sees the similarities between the boy and Jesus, between their lips/kisses.

This depiction of the boy through religious imagery follows Persian tropes. For instance, included in the *Divan* [Collected Works] of the influential twelfth century Persian poet Farid al-Din 'Attar, the famous story of the Shaykh San'an offers a conversion narrative through a Muslim men and young Christian women whose beauty threatens the man's piety: "She was a sun, but one that never sets.../ All who delved into the curls of that heart-ravisher/ Chasing the image of her curls, tied on a *zunnar*" (qts. in Lewis 698). In Mehmet's poem, instead of "a Christian girl," the Frank boy of the Galata is the object of love with his golden girdle described through conventional metaphors of sun, cypress-tree, hyacinth curls, and Jesus. Within this tradition, Mehmet's poem makes erotic encounters and the physical desire for the boy as a means to reach or divert from the divine love.¹² However, rather than emphasizing the physical attraction for the religious other as a threat, Mehmet shows religious adoration for the boy, suggesting a conversion for love. Yet, in the concluding lines, wherein the speaker addresses

¹¹ On Jesus' miracles, especially breathing life, see *The Qur'an* 3:49. Particularly in Sufi tradition—in writings of Rumi or Ibn al-Arabi—Jesus's miracle of bringing back to life by his breath or kiss is depicted as love's power of healing. Hence the beloved's life-bestowing kiss appears ubiquitously in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu poetry. For more on Jesus's kiss in Sufi tradition, see Leirvik, 92-94; and Ridgeon.

¹² For early modern Arabic examples for the boy as a medium to achieve the divine love, see El-Rouayheb, "The Love of Boys;" for Persian examples, see Lewis; for comparative readings of Arabic, Hebrew and European traditions, see Roth.

himself as Avni, the poem goes beyond the trope of Christian boy; it brings forth Galata evoking an imperial game of domination between the Empire and Europe.

Following the boy/Jesus association, Avni then moves to another comparison when he announces in the last couplet that this boy is the lord (*shah*) of Galata who would never submit to another lord—including the imperial lord of Istanbul. Using the second person pronoun, Avni reveals his own identity as the ruler of Istanbul, making a connection between himself—the speaker—and the poet, Mehmed II. The conclusion, by using a hierarchical ruling reference (i.e. lord) and separating the two spaces, emphasizes imperial and dominating motives after setting the territorial attachment of the boy to the Christian realm within the imperial capital. Avni makes Galata the equivalent of Istanbul by referring to himself and the boy as “lord.” The encounter or the first sight between the speaker and the boy in the first few lines is later described in terms of a religious encounter between a Muslim and a Christian, which is finally depicted as an incommensurable, non-submissive, equality-based encounter between rulers in the conclusion couplet: an Ottoman and a Frank. All these three relations (personal, religious, political) are imagined through an erotic dynamic that is grounded in the boy’s beauty.

The alluring boy of Galata appears in another poem by Mehmet, who, inscribing Galata upon the body of the beautiful boy, compares this space to the Islamic paradise:

Bağlamaz Firdevs'e gönlini Kalata'yı gören
Servi anmaz anda ol serv-i dil-arayı gören
Bir firengi şiveli İsa'yı gördüm anda kim,
Lebleri dirisidür dir idi İsa'yı gören
Akl ü fehmin din ü imanın nice zabt eylesün
Kafir olur hey müselmanlar o tersayı gören.

Kevseri anmaz ol içdüğü mey-i nabi içen
Mescide varmaz o varduğu kilisayı gören
Bir firengi kafır oldugun bilürdü Avniya
Belde zünnarını boynunda çelipayı gören (Dogan 202)

Never would they desire Paradise,
on Galata, those who lay eyes, but once
Never would they praise a cypress,
on this pleasing hue, those who lay eyes, once
I saw a Jesus, Frankish¹³
he was to the ears and eyes
“Jesus anew” would say lips
of those who on him lay eyes, once
How can they keep their mind and deed,
their faith and creed,
On this Christian, O Muslims,
those who lay eyes, once.
Never would they bethink of Kevser¹⁴
those who taste the pure wine he drinks
Never would they approach the mosque
those, on his church, lay eyes, once.

¹³ “Firengi” [Frankish] is the person who has the dispositions of the Franks—accent, dress, look, etc.

¹⁴ *Kevser*, or *Kausar* in Arabic, is the fountain of paradise in Islamic tradition.

All those would know, Avni,
a heathen he was,
On his girdle and cross
those who lay eyes, but once.¹⁵

At the beginning of the poem, Avni creates a dichotomy between Galata and the Islamic Paradise (*Firdevs*): those who see Galata but once would never again dream of the Islamic paradise. He then shifts his focus towards the pleasing sight of the boy who is compared to the paradisiacal cypress tree. In comparing Galata to the Islamic paradise, Avni positions this space and its inhabitant, the Frankish boy, as superior to the traditional Islamic paradise and its inhabitants. Also, the two contrasted spaces are gendered differently: *Firdevs* as female (space of female houris) and Galata as male (space of boys). The boy in Galata seems like a conventional figure, love for whom love mediates divine love. Yet Mehmet's comparison challenges this. Unconsummated passion for the boy was not a transgression in this poetic tradition, as Khaled El-Rouayheb discusses through early modern discussions of the saying attributed to the Prophet: "He who loves passionately and is chaste [variants add: 'and conceals his secret'] and dies, dies a martyr" ("The Love" 14).¹⁶ Unconsummated love for another man or woman therefore promises paradise immediately after death as a martyr. Yet Mehmet's boy rather seems a medium that is dangerous to figure as the object of love because even gazing

¹⁵ My translation. In the original, the repetition is on "gören" [one who sees]; yet taking into consideration the conditional and momentarily implication of the word as well as the repetitive use of "anda" [that moment], I used "once" or "but once" to a) emphasize the sense of "the moment" or the "abrupt" in the act of laying eyes, b) to convey conditionality [once/if one sees the boy], and c) to follow the rhyme.

¹⁶ See El-Rouayheb for contemporary discussions concerning boy-love, passionate infatuation vs. sexual consummation and transgression, and this Prophetic saying as a justification for figuring boys as object of love in Arabic poetry of the early Ottoman period.

upon him makes one forget the Islamic paradise. Love for this boy, as well as Galata, therefore, results in heresy, not martyrdom.

Although the poem begins with a focus on “Galata,” Mehmet quickly blends this space with the boy by suddenly shifting his poetic gaze from Galata towards the boy’s adorable body in the rest of the poem: those who see his pleasing body would not look for a cypress tree. The poem scripts qualities of Galata upon the boy’s body; his body with distinct clothes, looks and accent becomes a “spatial body,” which, according to Lefebvre, is a body with gestures, accents, clothing, fashion, and style, thus carrying on its relation with the space. It is “a body so conceived as produced and as the production of a space [that it] is immediately subject to the determinants of that space” (195). The beautiful boy not only is a product of that space, but also produces that space; through this transference and extension of the space to the body, he becomes the embodiment of a Euro-Christian space with churches, girdles, cross-pendants, wines, and love. The slightest gaze upon his body would risk one’s religious orientation because it contains all temptations. Similar to the Jesus/boy relation in the previous poem, in this poem the beautiful man is explicitly called Jesus; and those who see him, or hear his beautiful voice, his *Frengi* (European/Christian) accent, would think he is Jesus himself, or that Jesus the Prophet came to life by the kiss of this Jesus (the boy) from Galata. The poem leaves ambiguous whether the real name of this boy is Jesus (*Isa*), or whether this is exclusively a metaphor to connect him to Jesus. Either way, his beauty, life-giving lips, and alluring body are all so irresistible that Muslims who see this beautiful boy but once, would lose their religion.

In the following lines, Avni again connects paradise and the body of the boy by stating that those who drink from the cup of this boy would never dream of the holy fountain of wine flowing in paradise. His lips, his cup, and his drink exceed the paradisiacal drink, and the

church he goes to has a converting power, because those who see “his church” would never go back to their “mosque.” However, the last couplet multiplies the initial meaning of the poem even more. One reading can be that those who see his girdle around his waist and the cross on his neck would know he is a Frankish heretic. In the original Turkish, the line reads: “Bir Frengi kafir oldugun bilurdi Anviya/ Belun u boynunda zunnar u celipayi gören.” Here the attribution of the girdle (*zunnar*) and the cross (*celipa*) can also be read as attributions of Avni (the speaker, poetic voice) as well. Therefore, the lack of “he/his” as gendered personal and possessive pronouns in the Turkish language adds double meaning to the couplet. Because Turkish is an inflectional language, the possessive meaning is conveyed through the personal endings that are identical for the second person singular and the third person singular. It is thus not clear whether Avni refers to the girdle and the cross of the boy who is a heathen or refers to himself as the direct addressee in the second singular, wearing the girdle and the cross himself. In this case, Avni would seem to have converted in the process of gazing and describing the body of the boy, becoming precisely the Christian heathen he warned about throughout the poem. The conditionality as well as gaze emphasized through repetition of “gören” (gör: to see; gören: one who sees) first makes the boy as the object of the erotic gaze; next makes Avni as the converted object of the gaze. Avni laid eyes on the boy but once! The boy as the object of the gaze in turn has become the subject who converts the poet.

It is important to note that Mehmet’s poetic persona is not only that of a poet, but also of the sultan of the Empire; the two are indistinguishable in the poem. The emperor and the conqueror of the promised city Constantinople, Mehmet II as a poet illustrates how he imagines

his domination over Christendom by describing it through the body of a European boy.¹⁷ While his poems express a certain degree of anxiety about religious conversion as a result of adoration for the Christian boy, Mehmet's gaze upon Galata, his objectification of this space through its embodiment in the beautiful boy, is a way of orienting his readers' desire, as well as his own, towards this space and the bodies that inhabit it. In his two Galata poems, the territory and the body thus become inseparable.

Mehmet's representation of European lands through the beautiful boy who both inhabits Galata and represents it becomes emblematic in the following century during the Ottoman expansion further into European territories. Galata plays a central role as a horizon with homoerotic attachments, signifying and sometimes exceeding Europe, in both poetic representations and chronicles of sixteenth-century Ottoman literature. In these texts, as Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli show, Galata juxtaposes multiple sites like churches, wineries, and bathhouses, in a single place. The poetic voice stands in Istanbul gazing at Galata, and constitutes his self in opposition to it. In his sixteenth-century prose work *Esvaf-i Istanbul* [Description of Istanbul], Latifi depicts Galata as such:

For wine and beloved [boys] it is without peer, and it is proverbial as a place of pleasure and amusement. Every corner of it glows like sunrise with moon-bright faces of Frankish [European] idols, yet its location and its every cranny are superior and preferable to a thousand Frankish realms [...] This heart-captivating town is so generous with its pleasures and so stimulating that its merriment goes on without stopping; its

¹⁷ In Islamic tradition, Constantinople was considered as a promised city because of the belief in a hadith, in which the Prophet Muhammad promises its conquest by praising the future commander of the conquest prospectively. Muslim rulers had tried to conquer the city several times from the seventh century to the fifteenth century, when the Ottomans finally captured it.

pleasure gatherings are continual, and its wine parties in any other place would be forbidden. Because most of its people are of the community of Jesus and the nation of the Messiah, like the ancient Shah Cem, the wine cup never leaves their grip, and, because they always have a goblet in hand, worries and dark thoughts never swarm about their heads. They are sensualists and wine bibbers, worshippers of the grape and sellers of wine. (Andrews and Kalpakli, 64)

In Latifi's description, Galata is an exotic place without peer, at every corner of which stands a moon-bright faced beautiful boy. This European territory exceeds all European lands in the West because of its location. Latifi associates Galata, and thus its Christian population, with sensuality, pleasure and merriment, symbolized in the imagery of wine. Indeed, Latifi blends his descriptions of Galata with poetic verses, which use the very same literary tropes of Mehmet and many other poets, evoking associations between wine, churches, pleasure, and beautiful boys. For example, he refers to the famous sixteenth century poet Helaki to better describe Galata: "May God permit me, oh Saki, in this worldly home / To sleep and rise in Galata, there drink and drunken lurch, / Oh Muslims! Wine will steal from one religion and belief / From Allah's slave dervish lodge, from Frankish boy in church" (64). Alongside wine, the beautiful boy stands out as a distinct component of this space generating desire and anxiety with his religious difference.

The famous sixteenth century libertine and scholar Revani describes Galata and its pleasures through the beautiful boy from Galata:

Rind iseñ meyli koma cām'ı muşaffādan yaña
‘Ārif iseñ götür ayağı Ġalaṭadan yaña

Mülk-i Rûm içre firengistânı görmek isteyen
Seyre geçsün dāyimā ol şehr-i ra' nādan yaña
Şol fireng oğlanların şōfi göreydüñ bir nazār
Göz açup bakmaz idüñ cennetde havrādan yaña
Şanuram oldu muķārın gökde Pervīne hilāl
Keştīye binüp güzeller gitse deryādan yaña
Dīn yağmasın ider kāfirbeçe maḥbūblar
Şakınuñ varmañ müselmānlar kilīsādan yaña
Bu felek anuñ mücellā kaşrıdur kim āfītāb
Seyr içün revzen açupdur aña dünyādan yaña
Ḥūr u gılmān ile pür olmuş Revānī her taraf
Bakmaz içine giren firdevs-i a' lādan yaña. (7)

If you are blithe, never favor bright wine cups;
Do raise your cups towards Galata, if you are wise,
Those who wish to see Frank lands in the Roman realm,
Ever turn your gaze towards the city of beauties,
O Sufi, were you to see those Frank boys but once
Never would you cast an eye on the houris in paradise.
The new moon met Pleiades in the heavens, I say,
When the beauties sail the skiffs set towards the sea
These beloved infidel boys despoil the faith
Beware O Muslims, go not near the church

Heaven is that beauty's shining palace, wherein the sun

Opens a window to the world to see the beauteous.

Boys and girls, O Revani, at every corner eyes can see,

Never do they desire Paradise, those who enter here but once.¹⁸

Revani's beloved boy from Galata is a European who eclipses not only Ottoman beloveds but also the beautiful *houris* [virgin women in paradise]: "O Sufi, were you to see those Frank boys but once/ Never would you cast an eye on the houris in paradise." While houris are related to the Islamic paradise, the beloved Frankish boy is linked to the mundane space of Galata. Istanbul is "a rose with two colors" (*ra'na*), a city with two beauties, with two parts: the Ottoman and the European. One part is associated with the imperial palace, Muslims, and paradise populated with houris; the other is where churches, Christians, and boys are accommodated. And like Mehmet the Conqueror, Revani orients his desire and gaze towards Galata by putting the beautiful Frank boy at the center of its horizon.

This horizon is, on the other hand, tied up with anxiety about conversion in these poetic representations; the churches are both desirable as structures that house the bodies of boys and fearful as a site of religious conversion. Similarly the boy is both the object of the poetic gaze and the potential subject who will master the poet, or "These beloved infidel boys despoil the faith." While the poems follow the conventional trope of the Christian boy as dangerous temptation on the path to the divine by deploying a cautionary tone, they nevertheless solicit a desire for the boy by voyeuristically depicting him. The Sufi conception of love metaphorically conveyed through the boy as a pathway toward the divine, as well as heavenly reward (in terms of houris), is materialized through the celebratory appraisal of the boy of Galata. In these

¹⁸ My translation. For another translation, see Andrews and Kalpakli, 65-66.

poems, Galata with its beautiful boy is a unique space that complicates subject/object, east/west, desire/anxiety as well as metaphoric/material dynamics.

These poems also evince a political effect of the Ottoman's imperial orientation towards Europe, poetically framed here as an orientation towards Galata. The West and Christendom, signified by Galata in these poems, are objects of desire towards which the Ottomans orient themselves and reaffirm their west-bound imperial ambitions. Paradoxically, Galata was not the most western point of the Empire. Ottoman advancement, particularly from its foundation in 1299 to the early seventeenth century, was mainly towards the West (alongside some eastern campaigns to guarantee their domination in the Islamic territories); in the sixteenth century, Ottoman armies reached as far as Vienna in Europe (Fig. 26). Istanbul was now in the east, compared to other western territories under Ottoman rule. Galata, the west in the east, the Frangistan in Istanbul, is a space already made a part of "home," a part of "Istanbul" during the Conquest. However, as the poems show, Galata is different from Istanbul; it resists a change or conversion. Instead, Galata has a converting power to transform poets. Facing the West from Istanbul, the Ottoman political gaze is on the beautiful boy, revealing the homoerotics of expansion as well as conversion.¹⁹

In these poems, Galata becomes the horizon, the European destination toward which the Ottomans repetitively orient their gaze. It is a horizon that brings together a *mélange* of desires,

¹⁹ While I focus on poetry of the period, there were other genres—travelogues or *sehrengiz*—that also catalogued the beauties of cities and around the world. All these beauties were men, and like the poems, these works attached the male body to the land the person is from by generating a desire to go that place. *Sehrengiz*, a mostly erotic genre of obscenely cataloguing beautiful men of the cities, is borrowed from Persian models, and it evolves to include different countries while the empire expands its boundaries. For more on the genre, see, Levend; Stewart-Robinson; Oztekin; Tugcu. On how this genre is transformed into a visual cataloguing by European modernist artists, see Boone, "Modernist".

ambivalences, proximities and differences, here-ness and there-ness. The beautiful boys of Galata are as close to Istanbul as a short boat-trip; yet, within the poetic eyesight, Galata is distant in character from the Muslim side of Istanbul—it is unreachable outside the lines of the poem. It teases with the promise of union and yet remains distant with each movement of the oar. It is a representation of what is far away, foreign, although it is a nearby neighborhood contained within; it is a supply point for same-sex male love, pleasure, sex, and wine. Its proximity, implicated in the very nature of desire, makes it a paradise with boys on the horizon—an earthly paradise contesting a divine one, a shared imagination.



Figure 26. “The Turkish Empire.” *The Mercator Atlas*, Jodocus Hondius, 1606. Web.

II. The Boy of the Danube in William Bleau’s *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*

If the Ottomans imagine European territories in the body of the beautiful boy, is there a similar imagery of the boy embedded in terrestrial representations produced in early modern

Europe? In what follows I trace early modern maps, the most explicit form of spatial representations in Europe, to explore how youthful male bodies operate in the European imagination of geo-political spaces. I approach maps as texts in dialogue with cultural discourses because mapmaking is a form of cultural poetics that contributes to the making of subjects, cultures, and nations.²⁰ Tracing gendered embodiments on early modern maps, Valerie Traub in her “Mapping the Global Body” astutely notes as regards cartographic bodies, “what seems to be a superfluous aesthetic convention conveys a strategy of spatialization that brings significantly new ethnographic, racial, and gendered relations of knowledge into view” (45). Revealing a universalizing domestic heterosexuality through their placement of male-female pairs on the grids, these maps, Traub further suggests, inform us about the shift in sexual discourses in early modern Europe. Following Traub’s synchronic readings of the bodies on maps, I analyze male bodies positioned on maps of the Danube region not simply as ornamental embellishments, but a homoerotic form of embodiment that associates male bodies with specific spaces.

²⁰ As a historian of cartography, J. B. Harley initiated semantic analysis of maps through his influential articles: “Meaning ‘Silences and Secrecy;’” “Maps, Knowledge, and Power;” “Deconstructing the Map;” “Cartography, Ethics and Social Theory;” and his introduction to *The History of Cartography*. Some exemplary work that traces maps as objects, documents, imperial agents, subject-makers are: Helgerson, “The Land Speaks;” Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, “The Origins,” and “Theory;” Jacob; Crampton; Offen; Withers; Schulten; Akerman; *Cartographies* and *The Imperial Map*; Mukerji; Brückner; and Pedley.



Figure 27. “Danubius.” *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, Willliam Blaeu, 1636. The University of Michigan Library. Personal Photo

Included in Williem Blaeu’s *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the map “Danubius” represents the river Danube, the longest river in Europe and the surrounding territories of the river, running from the Black Forest of southern Germany to the Black Sea (Fig. 27). On the top right hand side of the map, we see the title, “Danubius, fluvius Europa maximus, a fontibus ad ostia, cum omnibus fluminibus, ab utroque latere, in illum defluentibus” [Danubius, Europe’s prime river, from its source to its end, with all the rivers connecting with it from both sides]. The title is inscribed between two couples: on the left, a European couple, the King holding a sword and the woman holding a shield with the image of Jesus on the cross; on the right, an Ottoman couple, the Sultan with turban, pointing his sword at the Europeans while the woman holds an

incense burner, stepping on the cross. If we accept the title of the map as representing the map itself, the content of the map, the most important and the largest [maximus] river of Europe and its surrounding territories, becomes an object of a quarrel, evidenced by the drawn swords between the Europeans and the Ottomans.

Considering in particular the rivalry between the Ottomans and the Austrian Habsburgs for the control of the Danube from the fourteenth to late eighteenth century, this image reveals the significance of the river in the political and military struggles in the region. The locations represented in this map are indeed the European Christian territories that were under Ottoman threat, if not domination. The Danube was the northern border of the Ottoman presence in Europe for many centuries, and many of the Euro-Ottoman wars—Battle of Nicopolis (1396), Mohacs (1526), Siege of Vienna (1529), the Battle of Vienna (1683) and the Great Turkish War (1683-99)—took place around this river. It therefore became a significant border for Ottoman penetration into northern European territories. Indeed, other seventeenth century maps of the Danube highlight these conflicts through a cartouche with the Emperor and the Sultan. In Jodocus Hondius's map of the river, "Maximi Totius Europae Fluminis Danubii," for example, we can see the image of the assertive Hungarian Empire pointing at "Maximi" while the Ottoman Sultan defensively looks at him (Fig. 28). The river itself is the very real border separating the Ottoman realm from Christendom.



Figure 28. “Maximi Totius Europae Fluminis Danubii Cursus per Germaniam Hungariamque Nova Delineatio.” Jodocus Hondius, c.1635, Amsterdam. The University of Cambridge Map Library. Personal Photo

These Asian/European, Islamic/Christian binarisms are more evident in Blaeu’s Danube insofar the Emperor and the Sultan are accompanied by female personifications of the continents. The Emperor in the map is probably the Holy Roman Emperor protecting Europe—which is allegorized as female-personified *Europa*—while the Sultan has *Asia* on his side. Indeed as Rose Marie San Juan highlights in her argument on river gods attached to continents, the Danube itself begins to represent Europe in the sixteenth century. The river in the map as

personified with the highly erotic group of river gods in the cartouche becomes an object of continental belonging: Is the river European or Asian/Ottoman?

The placement of male bodies on European maps goes back to at least medieval world maps—T-O maps, *mappae mundi*. In these maps each continent is linked to a son of Noah through inscribed names or visual images (Fig. 29). This attachment of male bodies to territories and continents begins to shift from male to female in early modern visualization of the continents in the cartographic tradition, in which continents are almost always allegorized as female. However, alongside the prevalent cartographic tradition of representing continents as female personifications, there are examples of male bodies being related to territory.²¹ For example, Jean Rotz's *Book of Hydrography*, a cartographic text presented to Henry VIII, has no female images but all male bodies associated with territories (Fig. 30). (In another map, each continent is represented as a male body standing next to each other, while Europe is a naked man rushing towards Asia) These representations maintain men as the generic representation of humankind that goes back to classical personifications, yet they also provide us with a picture of an all-male competition between male-personified territories.

This competition is sometimes imagined in the frame of sexual aggression, as one can see in the frontispiece of *Speculum Orbis Terrae* by Gerard de Jode (1578), which demonstrates continents in the form of male animals (Fig. 31). These animals, each one attributed to a continent, exhibit different degrees of aggression or passivity. Europe is a horse, rearing up in a display of aggressive virility with a charged and muscular body and raised head, while Asia is represented as a more feminine camel with submissively lower head and softly curved

²¹ For an excellent survey of early modern conventions of representing bodies on map, see Traub, "Mapping."

bodylines. The strikingly masculine body of the horse invites us to look closer and realize that the horse is represented at the moment of sexual arousal. While other male animals (the camel as Asia, or the lion as Africa) are given more submissive and tame postures, Europe as a stallion with erect penis is ready to penetrate.

Other cartographic images in architectural representations imagine lands as male, too. In lunettes of continents from 1595 in a villa near Verona, America is represented as a half-naked male looking at the half-naked crucified image of Jesus, ready to embrace him (Fig. 32). Similarly, in some maps, the virile images of a naked Atlas holding the new and old world also draw the viewer's gaze to the male body (Fig. 33). Many other early modern maps include on their margins naked male bodies such as those of Atlas, putti, cherubim, cupids, or all-male companies. Satyrs, boys, and adult men partake in festivities in Frederick de Wit's map; mostly-naked male bodies lie on the ground while strikingly bowing men, whose buttocks are centralized, demonstrate how these maps not only are a result of the gaze of the cartographer, but also invite an erotic gaze upon these bodies [Fig. 34]. Charles le Brun's *les différentes nations de l'Amerique* shows America as a well-proportioned, half-naked, masculine male with a confident and commanding look directed outside of the painting (Fig. 35). His body is at an arm's length, but the direction of his look does not meet the onlooker's gaze. He becomes an object on the horizon, enticing the viewer's gaze.



Figure 29. *Dans la Fleur des Histoires*. Jean Marsel
Vans, 1459-1463. The University of Michigan Library.
Personal Photo

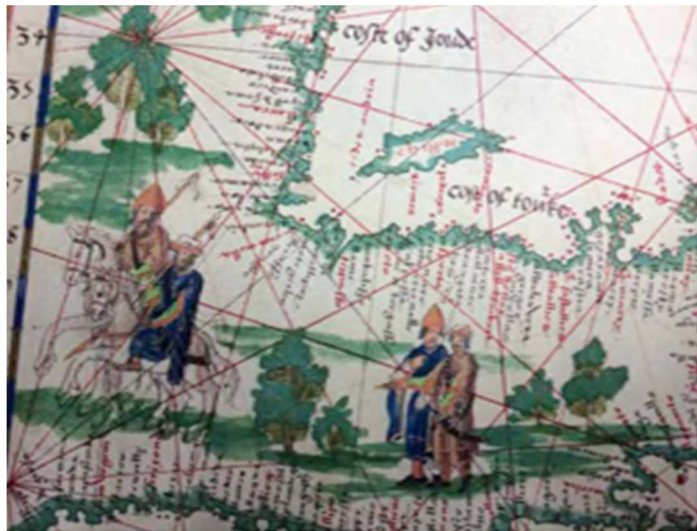


Figure 30. "Jean Rotz's *Book of Hydrography*." 1535. The
University of Michigan Map Library. Personal Photo

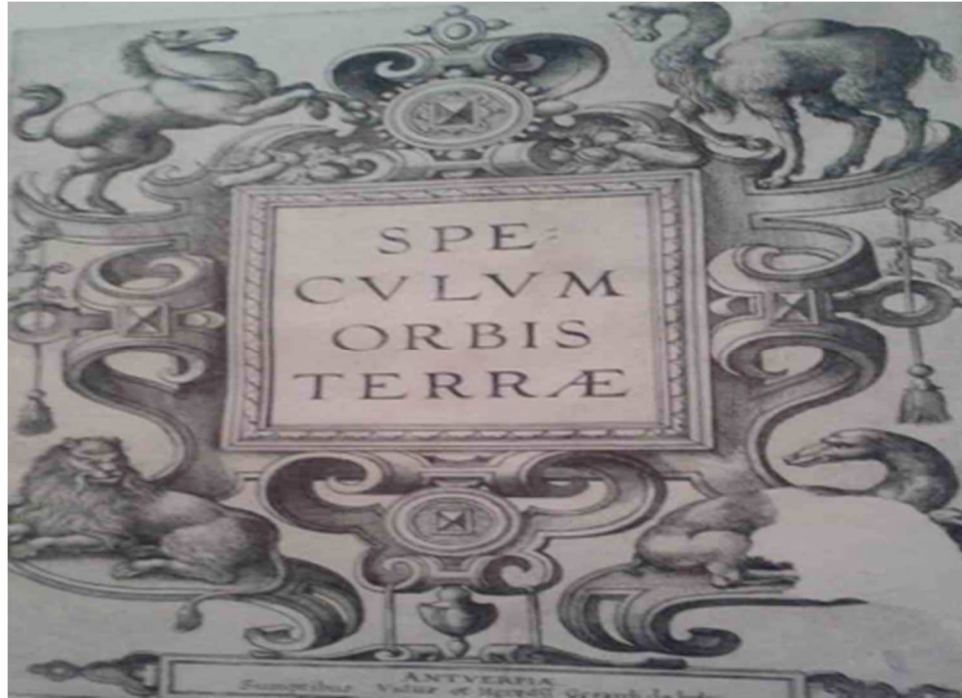


Figure 31. *Speculum Orbis Terrae*. Gerarde de Jode, 1578. The University of Michigan Map Library. Personal Photo



Figure 32. "America." Paola Farinati, 1595 [lunettes of continents in a villa near Verona]. The University of Michigan Map Library. Personal Photo



Figure 33. "World Map." Ottavio Pisani-Pieter Verbiest, 1637,
Antwerp. The University of Michigan Map Library. Personal Photo

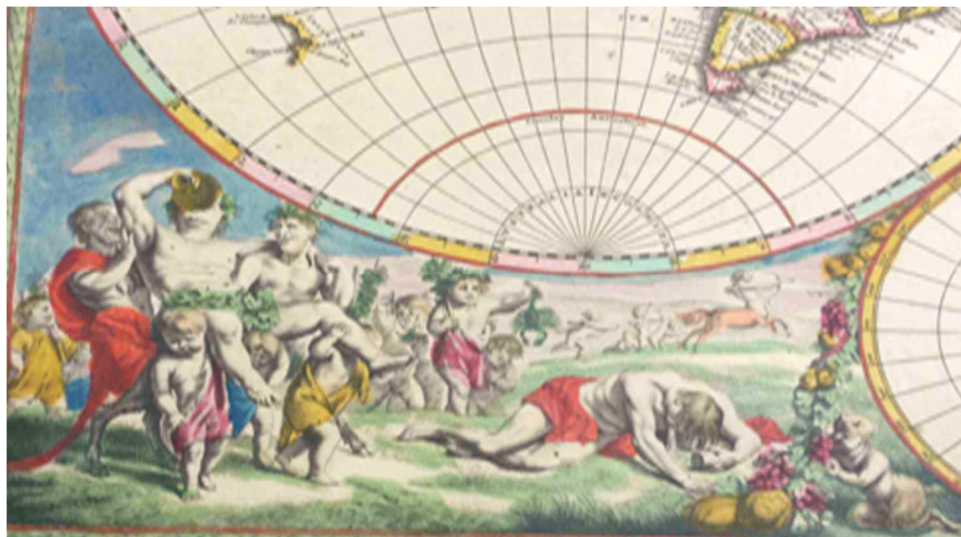


Figure 34. "Map." Frederick de Wit, 1670. The University of Michigan Map
Library. Personal Photo



Figure 35. *les differentes nations de l'Amerique*. Charles Le Brun, 1674. The University of Michigan Map Library. Personal Photo

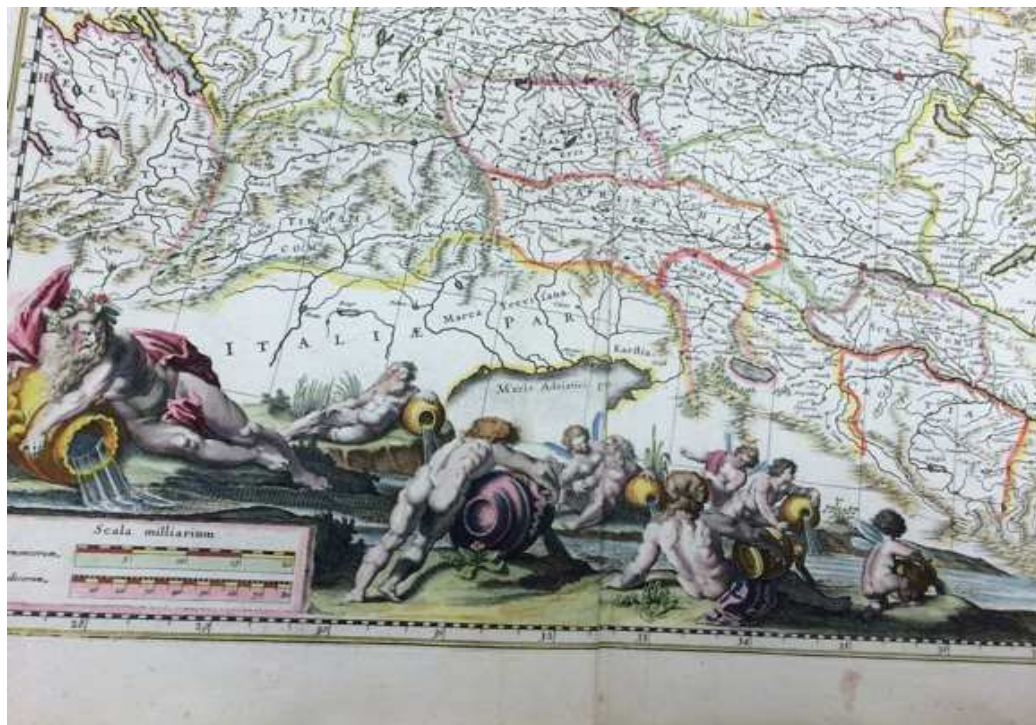


Figure 36. Close-up of “Danubius”

Blaeu's map of the Danube provides an image that invites a bolder gaze upon the naked youth while at the same time making him central to the territorial quarrel between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. On the bottom left hand side of the map, positioned above the scale, is a group of naked men (Fig. 36). At the center of the group bends a youth whose light-enhanced rear draws the viewer's attention. The party of the naked men creates a contrast between the fully dressed Europeans and the Ottomans in the upper right cartouche, as they are symbolically attached to the river and territories represented. The men with beards are river-gods that were quite popular images after the fifteenth century in visual representations of spaces and installed in and around Renaissance buildings (Fig. 37). As Claudia Lazzaro notes, following the discovery of ancient statues of river gods in the fifteenth century as well as Michelangelo's template for the water-poring river-god Eridanus in his *Fall of Phaethon* (Fig. 38) contributed tremendously to popularity of the image in fountains, gardens, buildings, festivities, political propaganda, and triumphal entries; they became references to territories ruled and to the alliances between states.²² As Lazzaro states, "The river gods, whether theatrical characters or images, stood for their respective geographical states through their association with symbols...and with personifications of the cities themselves" (78). Exploring personifications of nature through these figures, Lazzaro suggests,

In the sixteenth century, river gods became vehicles for contemporary notions about natural science, artistic creativity, and political hegemony... Renaissance artists invented new river god types for local rivers, which allowed them to signify not just aspects of nature—gendered, animate, abundant—but also

²² Lazzaro draws attention to Michelangelo's influence in the ubiquitous representation of river gods (94). For more on the discovery and popularity of river gods in the period, see Rubinstein; Bober and Rubinstein 99-104, and San Juan.

particular places and together with other personifications of nature, a region in microcosm... Unlike characters charged with telling a story, river gods

demonstrated artistic license, but artistic style was also inflected with place. (94)

It is therefore not surprising to see the image of river gods on a map of a river that is personified through these images. However, while river gods were oftentimes accompanied by nude female figures that represent the territory through which the rivers flow, in this map the boys surround the river gods as the embodiment of the territories represented.



Figure 37. "River Gods." [Interior decoration of the Villa 'Este],

16th c. Web



Figure 38. *Fall of Phaethon*. Michelangelo, 1533. Web

This particular boy, who we see only from behind, tells the story of the spaces and the territorial quarrel represented above. Water flows from a large container the river gods hold, while the boy at the center holds another container. His rear and the rear of the container are contrasted with the frontal view of the rest of the men. This positioning creates an analogy between body and vessel (Figs. 36, 39). By generating a gaze upon male bodies, the map objectifies not only the territory but also male bodies. As Patricia Rubin posits in her consideration of male buttocks and desirability of beautiful bottoms in visual representations and costume books, buttocks of young men “provided striking silhouettes that could capture attention. They act to energize, if not also eroticize the act of beholding” (437). In this map, it is the boy who eroticizes the act of beholding as the object of the viewer’s erotic gaze.

In his exploration of Ancient Greek boy love in *Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault suggests,

This attention to the period of adolescence and its boundaries no doubt helped to increase people's sensitivity to the juvenile body, to its special beauty, and to the different signs of its development; the adolescent physique became the object of a kind of cultural valorization that was quite pronounced. That the male body might be beautiful, well beyond its first bloom, was something that the Greeks were not blind to nor inclined to forget; classical figure sculpture paid more attention to the adult body; and it is recalled in Xenophon's *Symposium* that in choosing garland-bearers for Athena, they were careful to select the most beautiful old men. But in the sphere of sexual ethics, it was the juvenile body with its peculiar charm that was regularly suggested as the "right object" of pleasure. (200)

So too in the Renaissance, as Michael Rocke notes, the boy in age-differential relations, and the beardless boy with a soft and curving body evoking tenderness, is always feminized as a sexual object. Amongst the party, the bending boy with the peculiar charm of his body and pose is marked as an object of pleasure.

The naked party in the map is located at the Adriatic Sea, as if they are pouring the water of the Adriatic, bordering central Europe and Italy (a space to which sodomy is attributed in the period).²³ While the mythological river gods personify the river, the vessel-bearer boy

²³ This is particularly because of Florence's reputation. In Germany "florenzen" was used as a term for "to sodomize" (Rocke 3). On sodomy and Italy association, see Rocke, Bredbeck; DiGangi; Jones "Italians and Others;" and Daileader.

reveals the Ganymede-effect in the image. In his work on the Renaissance images of Ganymede, the abducted boy from Troy, James Saslow argues that an increasing number of representations portray Ganymede from the back within the sexualization of the Ganymede icon in the visual arts. In Parmigianino's *Ganymede Serving Nectar to the Gods*, for example, a nude Ganymede, holding a cup, is viewed from the rear. The angle highlights Ganymede's buttocks, thighs, and his back (Fig. 40). As Saslow suggests, this image of Ganymede from the rear [*da tergo*] is itself a formal imitation of the Hellenistic sculptures of Apollo. Parmigianino's drawings of nude men seen from behind become a prototype for many images that follow, such as his *Nude Man Seen from Behind* and *Ganymede and Hebe*, Andrea Schiavone's *Ganymede and Hebe*, and Damiano Mazza's *Rape of Ganymede* (102-119). Danubius's boy bending naked evokes this formal conception of Ganymede seen from behind among naked gods. Indeed because of his service as cup-bearer, Ganymede appears as water pouring cup-carrier Aquarius, and the constellation Aquarius in astrological depictions.²⁴ Latin writer Hyginus, for example, notes in his *Fabulae*, "Ganymede, son of Assaracus, [were made] into Aquarius of the twelve signs" (224). Symbolized mostly with a water pitcher, Aquarius/Ganymede among gods is clearly evoked in this river imagery; the boy is a cup-bearer or water-bearer to the gods pouring river water.

²⁴ For more on Ganymede as Aquarius, see Barkan, Saslow, and Trzaskoma 105.



Figure 39. Close-up of the Boy in “Danubius”



Figure 40. *Ganymede Serving Nectar to the Gods*.

Parmigianino. Qtd. in Saslow 103

We see a similar imagery of the erotically revealed bottom and the boy with river gods on another map in Williem Blaeu's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*: the map of the Rhine River (Rhenus Fluviorum Europae Celeberrimus), dedicated to Andreae Bickero (Fig. 41). In this map, which centralizes the river with surrounding territories, a row of putti hold coats of arms of the regions surrounding the river on the top left hand side of the map; there is an allegory of Justice next to the dedication; and on the bottom right hand side is a party of naked males, including Bacchus with a wine cup. The row of little boys holding coats of arms is positioned outside of the map proper, above the scale, and thus on the margin, as is the lady Justice next to (probably Bickero's) coat of arms. However, the title of the map, with river gods surrounding it,

is blended with the territories. The image of Bacchus associates the river with wine, while attributing, alongside the river gods mythological qualities to the river Rhine.



Figure 41. "The Rhine." *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, Williem Bleau, 1635. The University of Michigan Map Library. Personal Photo



Figure 42. Close-up of "The Rhine"

In this representation, I want to bring into attention two images: one is the older man accompanied by a young boy, and the other a man facing them whose deliciously revealed rear attracts the viewer's attention (Fig. 42). The young boy without a crown accompanying the older man with a crown creates an older man/younger boy coupling that evokes the Ganymede-effect. The older man's beard, denoting his older age and hierarchical superiority, contrasts with the boy's tenderness and secondary position within a master/minion, God/cup-bearer matrix. More strikingly, the rear of the man facing them and the rear of the container are paralleled in an angle and proximity to the viewer as opposed to the frontal view of the rest. His muscular buttocks capture attention. The image makes male bodies, particularly the buttocks of one of the men, subject to the viewer's gaze, further sexualizing these bodies.

Having similar territorial imagery to the one in this map, the map of the Danube, however, extends the land/boy interrelation by situating the naked male party and the beautiful bottom within the frame of territorial contestation between the Ottomans and Europeans. By centralizing the boy, the map uniquely transforms the myth into everyday reality by providing mythical metaphors beside the political conflicts. Particularly taking into consideration how boys from the territories represented in this map were vulnerable to Ottoman abduction (discussed in the first chapter), the map expresses contemporary issues and conflicts via the boy's vulnerable body. The Ganymede-like boy of the map, the bending bottom, becomes implicated in the Euro-Ottoman wars upon European territories. He is attached to the territory represented on the map, while at the center inviting a homoerotic gaze on the part of the male viewer. The boy's body becomes a terrain yet to be charted by the imperial cartographer as a result of the quarrel between Europe and the Ottomans. From a European perspective, his

centrality marks him as the object of the drawn swords between the European man and the Turk as the very embodiment of the territory at issue.

III. Gazing at the Boy on the Horizon

The cartographic narratives examined here reconsider sexualized conceptions of territory and the territorialized conceptions of sexuality by associating beautiful boys with the territories represented on the horizon—of the Danube or Galata. Explaining what was at issue in discourses concerning boy love in ancient Greece, Foucault notes, boys were not simply substitutes for women:

It would be a mistake to think that its [the boy's body] traits were valued because of that they shared with feminine beauty. They were appreciated in themselves or in their juxtaposition with the signs and guarantees of a developing virility. Strength, endurance, and spirit also formed part of this beauty; hence it was good in fact if exercises, gymnastics, competitions, and hunting expeditions reinforced these qualities, guaranteeing that this gracefulness would not degenerate into softness and effeminization. The feminine ambiguity that would be perceived later (and already in the course of antiquity, even) as a component—more exactly, as the secret cause—of the adolescent's beauty, was, in the classical period, more something from which the boy needed to protect himself and be protected. Among the Greeks there was a whole moral aesthetics of the boy's body; it told of his personal merit and of that of the love one felt for him. Virility as a physical mark should be absent from it; but it should be present as a precocious form and as a promise of future behavior: already to conduct oneself as the man one has yet become. (200)

Foucault's conceptualization of the ancient Greek boy-love that does not conflate the boy with the female can be observed in the early modern representations I have discussed. The boy as terrestrial metaphor is not a substitute for the virgin female territory; he suggests "strength, endurance, and spirit" in the manly, masculine realm of territorial conflicts. While objectified, the boy in these representations points at "a promise" of virility by actively converting the poet, or pouring water to the river. While female personifications of territory like Lady America signify gendered forms of possessing and violating a passive land, the boy as terrestrial metaphor highlights the masculine competition between males and a future desire to own the land. The boy's vulnerability still holds power within itself. He therefore stands for a future promise and desire to be achieved: his possession depends on the one who will "win" the boy.

Like the flowing water—of the Danube or the body of water that separates Galata from Istanbul—the boy is an object of voyeuristic pleasure as well as of future conversion; he is in an ephemeral, fleeting status, at a transitional space whose character is to be charted or re-charted. The juvenile bodies of boys with peculiar charm mark them as "right objects" of masculine pleasure—a pleasure of gaining and gazing. The cartographic boy of the Danube beckons from the horizon; he is there, yet mythical amongst gods. He is not only a territorial embodiment who affects the meaning-making of the space, but also an object of homoerotic desire with his tender body. Similar to the poetic boy of Galata that problematizes East/West, Islam/Christian, metaphoric/material separations in the cross-cultural encounter, cartographic boys of the Danube create a geographical boundary between Europe and Asia, between the European and the Ottoman, while simultaneously challenging this separation through the imaginary, mythic space of the flowing river.

Evoking the interrelationships between the boy of Galata and of the Danube, I conclude with one striking poetic example that combines Mehmet's poetic vision with Bleau's cartographic personification: "To the Danube," a poem the Ottoman courtier, biographer, and poet Asik Celebi, who imagines the Danube as a boy within the frame of a Christian/Islamic contestation:²⁵

That who hits his head on the stone, after leaping from the heights,

Who is a crazy lover, is the naked mad Danube.

That who culminates like the water, getting murky when stops,²⁶

Who plays with dirt and dust is the little boy Danube.

...

That who flows from the infidel fields to the people of the Faith,

Who faces the Kibla, is the Muslim Danube.²⁷

That who trails his chains, running free from infidel thralldom,

Who comes to the King of Islam is the man of faith Danube (12)

...

That who gives all service prostrating himself on the ground,

Who, like a servant boy, is the compliant Danube (16)

That who throws cold gazes to his lovers, freezing they are,²⁸

²⁵ My translation. I thank Tyler Alan Smart for his valuable suggestions for bettering this translation.

²⁶ The line is a translation of an idiomatic term. Water gets dirty when it stops running, yet while getting murky, it at the same time culminates to flow faster. This refers to the young person's maturation through mistakes; one cannot be mature unless getting dirty/naughty.

²⁷ The Qibla is the direction, referring to Ka'aba in Mecca where one turns one's face and whole body towards during prayings.

Who yet melts the hearts of beauties, is the burning fire Danube.

That who plays chest to chest with silver-toned bodies, yet

Who is content with naked limbs, is the chaste boy Danube.²⁹

[Yarlardan atılup taslara urur basını / Âsık-ı dîvâne vü Mecnûn-ı uryândur

Tuna./ Su bulanmayınca turılmaz acep midür eger / Tas u toprak oynar ise

dahi oglandur Tuna /.../ Kisver-i kâfirden î mân ehline akup gelür /

Kibleye tutmıs yüzini bir müseldandur Tuna / Habs-i kâfirden bosanmıs

gibi zencîrin sürür / Sâh-ı Islâma gelür bir ehl-i î mândur Tuna /.../ Yüzi

üstine sürinerek ider her hidmetün / Bir yumus oğlanı gibi bende-

fermândur Tuna / Gerçi tongunlğla ussâka sovuklık gösterür / Hûblar

nerm eylemekde nâr-ı sûzândur Tuna / Sîne-ber-sîne olur sîmîn-bedenlerle

velî / Sâde pehlûyile kâni' pâk-dâmândur Tuna. (qtd. in Kilic 34-35)]

The river is first personified as a crazy lover running from one corner to another, flowing fast, jumping from the height, creating the waterfall. The river's movement is depicted through the imagery of a playful energetic boy. Later the boy is described as standing facing the Ottoman Empire, referring to the direction of the river running from Germany towards the Ottoman Black Sea, from Christian realm to the Islamic; the change in the boy's direction metaphorically signifies the conversion of the river within the context of the aforementioned Euro-Ottoman contestation over the river and surrounding territories. The boy is a Muslim; hence he should be free. The slavery of the boy is noted by evoking "chains" in reference to the wavy movement of

²⁸ This is a reference to the winter periods when the river freezes.

²⁹ The river has an erotic mingling with the naked youths swimming; yet he is satisfied only enjoying the naked limbs, not more than this. Hence he is chaste.

the river. Free from locked chains, though, the boy/river now runs wildly towards the Ottoman realm, “the Sultan of the Islam.” This moving river, moreover, is an obedient servant to the ruler; he submissively prostrates, or lies on the ground on his face (a sign of respect, humility, service, as well as sexual submission), to follow the master’s command. Asik further eroticizes the river in the form of the boy who enjoys naked youths swimming and bathing within “him.” Asik’s personification of the Danube as the fleeting, energetic, erotic boy combines Mehmet’s boy of Galata with the cartographic boy of the Danube; all these boys signify a change, conversion, and spatial difference, embodying a homoerotic desire to be fulfilled in the future. The boy becomes the medium to convey imperial contestation between men.

The boys as the embodiments of the spaces mapped in the Ottoman poems and depicted on the maps generate a desire to reach what is on the horizon. The conqueror of Istanbul objectifies Galata, putting it on the horizon of the poem, through the medium of the cypress-like Galata boy. He orients the poet’s gaze and desire, as well as the reader’s, towards this specific space, *Frangistan*, a microcosmic Europe in Istanbul, by repeating the act of seeing. The Danube, the symbolic threshold to the European world, is also imagined through beautiful boys giving life to it by feeding its waters. These two spaces necessitate an affective distant encounter; the boys always escape from a touch in these representational spaces through their unrealistic, mythical aspects (whether as Ganymede or Jesus). These boys on the spatial horizons are *there*—in Galata, at the banks of rivers—yet not reachable because they exist only in relation to the viewers’ location and desire. They appear only through a gaze from a specific point and stance; a gaze, a desire that is not independent from anxiety against conversion and submission, which are embedded in the boy’s fleeting, ephemeral and yet-to-be-adult body.

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CHAPTER IV

Circumcised Boys

In Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, an account of the ship *Jesus* by Thomas Sanders appears under the title, "The voyage made to Tripolis in Barbarie, in the yeere 1584, with a ship called the *Jesus*, wherein the adventures and distresses of some Englishmen are truely reported, and other necessary circumstances observed" (192-200). Sanders describes the voyage, the crew, and their relations in the Mediterranean, offering his readers minute details. After the ship arrives in Tripolis, and achieves a profitable trade with the King there, a quarrel occurs between the crew and locals; as a result, the crew of the *Jesus* is condemned to slavery by the despotic King. While the English party suffers under violent bondage, Sanders's narrative digresses from the main plot that describes his own (adult male) captivity and related diplomatic and economic exchanges between England and the Ottoman Empire to describe a particularly violent encounter. The son of the King coincidentally sees them and "greatly fancie[s]" the two young Englishmen of the crew. He becomes "very desirous to have them to turn Turks"; yet, the two young men resist conversion. The king's son, therefore, "violently use[s]" them, and with the help of his men, circumcises them and forcibly "ma[kes] them Turk" (197).

Sanders's narrative highlights masculine tensions in cross-cultural encounters in the Mediterranean space through forceful conversion and circumcision. Indeed Sanders's account exemplifies widespread accounts about the Ottomans in England that reflect the growing threat of conversion through circumcision, putting an emphasis on the mutability of male bodies in the process of encountering and interacting with "the Turks." In such representations circumcision serves as a form of fashioning a new identity, a religious-cultural mark on the male body,

connecting religious identities with sexual desire, acts, and possible identities. As Jonathan Burton notes, in the West ubiquitous masculine anxieties against “turning Turk” were conveyed through a conversion-circumcision-castration matrix (106-26). Male conversion from Christianity to Islam in the early modern period meant losing both a man’s religion and his “prick,” his masculine identity. Thus, as Bindu Malieckal suggests, conversion itself was considered a form of castration (25-43). The conversion-circumcision- castration matrix, henceforth, highlights, in Dennis Britton’s words, “the body as a visible and accessible repository of religious faith” (74). These scholars have persuasively highlighted the bodily aspects of conversion through circumcision, while emphasizing sexual discourses operating in conversion narratives that frequently shaped Anglo-Ottoman encounters. Yet, taking into consideration the youthful objects of circumcision and conversion in Sanders’s account, I ask, what is the specific role of figurations of boys in such conversion narratives? Why is the bodily signification of conversion conveyed through the the boy’s body? If circumcision narratives reveal religious, economic, and sexual anxieties in England, to what extent do these anxieties intersect with trepidations about travelling boys who were abducted, enslaved, and converted in the Mediterranean contact zone?

In this chapter, I unpack the meanings of Sanders’s story of the two English boys through an exploration of discourses about circumcision in popular religious, ethnographic, and literary accounts. Taking into consideration the figuration of boys in such narratives, I argue that the youthful male bodies appear as sites of economic and religious conflicts imagined within a sodomitical sexual economy. The subplot of the two boys who forcefully undergo conversion and circumcision against their will suggests that such a fate faced other English boys taken captive in the era of travel, exploration, and Mediterranean trade. Exemplifying such an anxiety,

Sanders's story is reminiscent of the abduction narratives analyzed in Chapter 1—of John Sanderson's fear about his own 21 year old "beardless" son who might be captured and sodomized by Turks during their travels into "Sodomiticall places," or of John Ravlis's tales about "a hundred handsome youths compelled to turn Turks, or made subject to more vile prostitution, and all English." In dialogue with these accounts, Sanders's story reflects great concerns over "cutting pricks" through abduction and conversion of boys as a practice in the region, which was a nightmare for Englishmen, a nightmare that manifested itself most explicitly in such circumcision narratives.¹

In what follows, I contextualize the circumcision and conversion of boys in Sanders's account within larger discourses about circumcision in England and the Ottoman Empire. Circumcision, just like abduction, is not solely an "othering" device in cultural imaginings, but an everyday practice in the Mediterranean. While circumcision signifies castration and effeminacy in the early modern Christian West, it signifies the opposite in Islamicate Ottoman society. Circumcision was (and still is in contemporary Turkey) considered the very first step to masculinity and manhood; it was thus celebrated with grandiose public festivities as a transition to adult status. In the Ottoman society, circumcision was a gendered practice, a religious rite; its courtly celebration was political spectacle, presented before both Turkish and European audiences. The Ottomans' own circumcision ceremonies that celebrated their masculine imperial power, I suggest, contributed to English concerns over "cutting pricks." A shifting and often confused category, circumcision evokes religious and masculine anxieties as evident in some Western travel accounts about the Ottomans, in John Bulwer's medical treatise, and Robert

¹ I use "cutting prickles" to refer to circumcision because the term was used in the period signifying circumcision. For more on use of "cutting prick" in the period, see Holmberg 88; and Shapiro 265 fn14.

Daborne's play *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612). Counterpointing Ottoman representations with English depictions of circumcision within the castration-conversion-circumcision matrix, I return to Sanders's account to further emphasize connected histories in the production of circumcision discourses as related to abducted boys.

I. "Magnificences of the Circumcision of the Turkish Princes"

Circumcision for the Ottomans signifies more than the Islamic, religious practice of the cut of the prepuce. Combining the practice with public celebrations marks circumcision with religious, imperial, sexual significations. Indeed Ottoman accounts of royal circumcision festivities show that such celebrations are not only an exhibition of religious commitment, but also a venue to internationally exhibit their political interests and imperial power through the transition of the Prince into the adult male world. The grandeur of the court celebration of the circumcision of *sehzades* (princes) or, in Michel Baudier's words, "Magnificences of the Circumcision of the Turkish Princes" (77), attracted all layers of society in festivities that lasted multiple days, ever since the 1365 circumcision festivity of the son of Murad I, Prince Bajazed, which was the first one of such royal celebrations (Arslan 169-89). In subsequent years, the Ottomans used the circumcision of princes as opportunities to publicize their religious, imperial, and masculine commitments both to their subjects and to the world.

One of the earliest accounts of such courtly celebrations is from Asik Pasazade's fifteenth century chronicle, *Manakib u Tevarih-u Al-i Osman* [The History of the Ottomans], which narrates the 1457 circumcision celebrations of the two sons of Mehmed II, princes Bayezid and Mustafa Celebi. Taking place in Edirne, the circumcision festivities, Asik Pasazade notes, lasted for three days; it was a grand event for which numerous lords, significant persons of every city, and people of Edirne were all invited (495). The scholars and higher administrators were hosted

on the first day of the gathering during which the Sultan showed his generosity by presenting gifts to the attendees (496). The second day, dervishes and sufi orders were invited; on the third, lords of other cities and statesmen were as well. These events, Asik notes, are opportunities for sultans to demonstrate “their magnificent majesty” [*azamet-i sevket*] (225). Mehmed, who had just conquered Constantinople, uses the circumcision of his sons as an avenue to show his majestic power through an order of scholarly, religious, and governmental hierarchy as evident in the day-by-day invitation schedule. Edirne appears to be the site of royal palace for these events, considering Constantinople was still under construction three years after the conquest. However, in following decades, courtly circumcisions would be moments celebrated in Constantinople, sometimes in three-week long (as Suleyman I did for his sons in 1530) and other times almost two-month long celebrations.

For example, in 1582, Ottoman Sultan Murat III ordered an illustrious ceremony for the celebration of the circumcision of his son, Crown Prince Mehmet, which lasted for more than forty days from May to July. As one of the most widely described events in Ottoman history, this celebration was the subject of an account recorded on a day-by-day basis by Imtiyazi under the patronage of Sultan Murad III in *Surname-I Humanyun* [The Book of The Imperial Festival].²

The *Surname* depicts the complete story of the festivities with more than 400 miniatures.³

Starting with the Sultan’s procession into Atmeydani, the festivity area that was the old

² Metin And claims that there is no other festivity that is recorded in as much detail as this celebration, neither in Islamic nor in the European world (*16. Yüzyıl*, 145). Such celebrations generated the emergence of a new genre called “Surname” (the Book of the Festival) that narrates imperial celebrations of circumcision, marriages, victories, etc. For more on the surname tradition, and 1582 circumcision celebrations, see And, *Osmanlı; Kirk Gün*; and *A History*; Stout; Gökyay; Terzioğlu; and Atasoy.

³ Since there are numerous extant manuscript of the *Surname* in various museums and libraries, I am referring to the manuscript in the Topkapı Palace, which is considered to be the complete copy presented to the Sultan. For a facsimile of this copy with selected miniatures, see Atasoy.

Byzantium Hippodrome, the celebrations continued with parades of various classes, guilds, international visitors, as well as with generous public meals and performances (wrestling, dances, songs, sports, fireworks, etc.). While circumcision as a religious practice was celebrated by the primary procession of the Prophet's descendants on the first day, the political and imperial implications embedded in these public exhibitions were present in parades of trade guilds, Christian slaves, converts, Galata Christians, wild animals like lions and elephants from distant locales, as well as the staging of certain victories over other Kingdoms. On the fortieth day, the Prince was circumcised; and the festivity ended with circumcision of hundreds of poor boys and further public performances.

The performances, the setting of the celebrations, and the audience reveal how the circumcision became a means to exhibit Ottoman state power and imperial claims. The space for festivity was mainly the Byzantium Hippodrome, an arena traditionally used by the Eastern Roman Empire to display their political power.⁴ Besides such a symbolic setting, the festival itself was a blend of Turkic and Byzantine conventions, mixing Islamic circumcision and Quranic recitations with parade and performances of artistic and political shows by Arab, Indian, Persian, Jewish, and European figures. These included ballet performances of Christian subjects, procession of young boys of Galata as Cupids with bow and arrows and as cross-dressed couples, or the exhibition of models of conquered European castles and impressive architectural structures like the newly completed Suleymaniye Mosque by the guild of Architects. Circumcision thereby became a venue showcasing the Ottomans' multiethnic imperial grandeur and claim of domination. It also showcased the amalgamation of East and West as princes were figured as

⁴ On the Roman influences in Ottoman celebrations, see And, *40 Gun* 73; Atasoy 20-22; and Tansuğ.

new Roman Emperors following the Conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Thus, the religious and the political, as well as the purely sensational, spectacles and agendas were intertwined during the celebration of the masculine transition of the Prince and other boys into the adult male world.

Ottoman chronicles of circumcision celebrations used the opportunity to eroticize boys who paraded, entertained, served, or simply attended the festivities. A chronicler of the 1582 festival, for instance, describes the procession of the boys of Galata:

Then came the Christians, European-born infidels of European mien who dwell in Galata, dressed in all sort of adornments and finery. Their young men, all prettied up, look like virgin girls. Their tousled locks and hair-thin waists, their delicacy, which had not a hair missing, was all in place, and they were such cruel infidels that they lacked any trace of true belief.

(Andrews and Kalpakli 151-54)

In this narrative, the parading Christian boys with their uncircumcised bodies become an object of erotic gaze for the poet. Overall, these varied displays of circumcision activities did not represent purely religious imperatives, but coalesced within its ambit spectacles of Ottoman political and cultural power as well as the valorization of male sexuality embodied in the young boys.

Moreover, this was a spectacle that aimed to transgress the borders of the Empire. *Surname-i Humayun*, for example, depicts foreign ambassadors every single day of these events watching the parade from the box reserved for them (Fig. 43). Sitting in the first box on the left hand side on the first floor in each miniature, these figures are easily recognizable by their costumes and hats as Europeans (either ambassadors, Kings, or other diplomats). As Metin And notes in his *16. Yuzyilda Istanbul* [Istanbul in the Sixteenth Century], almost all European

countries sent representatives to attend these celebrations. The French traveler Michel Baudier's account of the celebration observes, "In the third and lowest they had made places for the Embassadors of Kings and Christian Princes... That of the French Embassadeur was in the first Ranke, the Emperours had the second, the Polonians the third, the Bailisse of Venice the fourth... They were all in Cloth of Gold, and their Gentlemen in like manner" (78-79). The celebration's display of Ottoman power was directed not only to Ottoman subjects but also to the larger world. Such a strategy led Baudier to write about the first day of the royal procession: "all the wealth not only of the East, but of the whole World had beene transported to Constantinople" while calling the Sultan "the most powerfull and rich Monarch of the Earth" (78).



Figure 43. "The Parade of Handsome Boys From the Saddlers Guild." *Surname-i Humayun*, 1582. Repr. in Atasoy

Numerous other accounts describe these celebrations in detail, including those of

Nicholas von Haunolth, George Lebeliski, Michel Baudier, Johannes Lewenklaw, Reinhold Lubenau, and Jean Palerne in German, French, and Polish. In the same year of 1582, one Italian named Le Vigne de Pera sent an immediate account of the celebrations to Elizabeth's court.⁵ Some of these firsthand accounts were later translated into English as well. Baudier's long description of these celebrations, for example, appears in Edward Grimeston's translation in 1635. George Lebeliski's account in Polish was translated to English in 1585 under the title, *A True Description of the Magnificall Tryumphes and Pastimes, represented at Constantinople, at the solemnizing of the Circumcision of the Soldan Mahumet, the sonne of Amurath, the third of that name, in the yeare of our Lorde God in 1582, in the Monethes Mai and June*. Also passages from Georg Lebeski are included in Grimeston's translation of Simon Goulart's *Admirable and memorable histories* that refers to some performances during the celebration (39-43).⁶ Grimeston's citation to "Georg Lebeliski, a Polonian in the discription of things done at Constantinople, at the Circumcision of Amvraths Sonne in the yeare 1582" in Goulart's text shows that Lebeski's firsthand accounts in Polish were already in circulation under various titles (39). Such accounts demonstrate that grand circumcision celebrations like the 1582 royal festival contributed to discourses about the Ottomans and circumcision outside the Ottoman realm as well. These descriptions seem celebratory and awe-inspiring, but such royal celebrations also publicized circumcision in Europe. Their accounts contributed to producing discourses about circumcision as a threatening component of "turning Turk," associated with the moral and sexual threat posed by Ottoman power.

⁵ For the list of European accounts and the letter, see And, *Osmanli* 259-60, *History* 118-30; Robert E. Stout, *The Sur-I Humayun of Murad III: A Study of Ottoman Pageantry and Entertainment*. PhD Diss. Ohio State University, 1966; and Terzioglu.

⁶ For English translation of Lebeski, see And, *A History* 118-30; Stout 17-17; Terzioglu 97 fn2.

II. Circumcision as Conversion and Fashioning the Body

While Western accounts authentically represent these grand Ottoman circumcision celebrations, they nevertheless connect them with other discourses—religious, gendered, sexual, racial—blending previous European discourses about Islam and circumcision with the Ottomans' own celebratory practices of circumcision. Narratives about circumcision as a mark of cultural and ethnic difference actually go back to Herodotus in the 5th century, who described Egyptian circumcision: “In this country also the manner is to circumcise and cut round about the skin from their privy parts, which none other use except those that have taken letter and learned the custom from the Egyptians” (qtd in Loomba and Burton, 41). In the early modern period, this ethnic and cultural difference is combined with religious difference.

Circumcision as a threat first appears foremost as a Jewish practice in Europe, but from the sixteenth century onwards, mainly as a “Mohamedan” perversion.⁷ In almost any text about Islam and Turks—from plays to travelogues, medical treatises to poems—circumcision stands out in particular association with Turks. In Marlowe's *Tamburlaine I*, for example, it is associated with the Ottomans in particular. Bajazeth refers to the Ottoman army, “As many circumcised Turks we have,/ And warlike bands of Christians renied” (3.1.8-9). While *Tamburlaine*'s army is also a circumcised party, it is the Turks to whom the practice is primarily attributed. The popularity of circumcision narratives as linked with the Ottomans reveals the Ottomans and their male bodies as threatening “others,” marked with circumcision, particularly considering that “there is no evidence that circumcision took place in early modern England” (Shapiro 115). This fear of circumcision is also associated with “Christians renied” (renegades), as the quote from *Tamburlaine* shows. As described in such narratives about circumcision, this

⁷ For circumcision and Jews in England, see Shapiro; and Holmberg.

conversion is depicted through contradictory assessments: it can be a form of baptism as well as a gendered and sexual perversion. Thus, a complex picture emerges out of the practices of circumcision in Ottoman society, as well as the wide-ranging responses to them, ranging from a fascinated curiosity to anxiety.

What was common to many Western accounts was a desire for knowledge about this practice. Ricardus Graston in *The Order of the Greate Turckes courte*, which was translated from French in 1524, for example, writes, “Instead of Baptisme they ben circumcised... Their children are often five or seven yeres of age or more” before their circumcision “at which they make a greate feaste and assemble” (Iiiii). Circumcision as a form of “baptism” is depicted in terms of a Christian analogy; it is a threshold passed to gain a Muslim identity. Graston authentically describes circumcision festivities arranged by the family of the circumcised boy to celebrate this “religious” practice. However, circumcision, according to Graston, is also a moment of conversion, of becoming not only an adult man but Muslim.

Graston further links circumcision to masculinity and male superiority: “The women gooe not in to the churches wyth the menne, because they ben not circumcised. Wherefore they ben count unclean” (Ib). Graston presents this all-male practice as a gendered equivalent of Christian baptism. By noting the mosque as an all-male space that excludes women, Graston relates the origin of the constitution of this gendered space to circumcision. Female bodies are unclean because they are uncircumcised, he attests. If circumcision creates a hierarchy of bodies, it is not only women, but also Christians who are inferior due to their uncircumcised bodies: “It is a great despyte amonge them to when they call on *Sunet* that is uncircumcised” (Ib). Graston mistakenly uses the Turkish word “sunet” for “uncircumcised” while the word (*sunnet*) means “circumcision.” Indeed, the uncircumcised others were called among the Ottomans *sünnetsiz* [the

uncircumcised], a pejorative word for uncircumcised persons. After a comprehensive narrative of the ceremony, rules, and feasts that follow the operation, Graston further asserts that although the Turks despise “uncircumcised” people, “they have the Italians in good estimation” (Iiii).

Whether related to close trade relations between the Ottomans and Venetians, or to sexual attributions about the Italians in English discourses (considering Italians were associated with transgressive sexual practices and particularly anal sex),⁸ the Ottomans and Italians stand close to one another in Graston’s translation, a proximity delivered through the account regarding the practice of circumcision.

Garston’s depiction of circumcision as a gendered baptism also appears in the accounts some decades later. *The Offspring of the House of Ottomanno* (1569) by Bartholomeus Georgijevic also describes circumcision as a form of baptism, making it the sole means to become a “Musulman”:

They use circumcision called in their proper speech *Tsuneth*, not on the eight day, according to the custume of the Jews, but after the childe birth when he is in the age of seven or eight yeares, then skilefull in speaking their language: and that ceremony is observed amonge them at that time, for the words of confession, whiche are required before circumcision... first of all their friends are called together at a bankete, for whom of daynty dishes, ther are sufficient prepared, of all kyndes of fleshe, suche as they may lawfully feede upon...[in the middle of the feast, the child is

⁸ Italian way or back door sex signified anal sex in early modern England. More on early modern English ideas on Italians and anal sex, see Celia R. Daileader’s “Back Door Sex.” Also on sodomy and Italy relation, see Bredbeck, *Sodomy*; DiGangi *The Homoerotics*; and Jones “Italians.”

brought up and circumcised] thenceforth he shall be called Musulman,
which is circumcised. (D1)

Georgijevic starts his description by differentiating it from the Jewish practice. Like Graston's text, this narrative authentically uses the Turkish word *Tsuneth* [sünnet], and describes circumcision as baptism with confession. Only after this ceremony can the person be called "Musulman" [Turkish word for Muslim]. While this is one of the rare moments that we see the use of "Musulman" to refer to Muslims in an early modern context, its usage reduces the term to refer to circumcised male Muslims alone, implying women can never be Musulman. Following this gendered description, the text also informs us quite accurately about how the surgery takes place, the feasts following the ceremony, tradition of using henna in celebrations, and so on.

So too does George Sandys's account, *A Relation of a Journey* (1615) describe circumcision in terms of baptism/conversion and gender relationships and hierarchies. They do not circumcise women, he writes,

nor circumcise they the males until they be able to answer the Priest, and promise for themselves: which is for most part at the age of eight. They are circumcised in the houses of their parents, as a festivall meeting, and in the midst of the essembly, the child holding up his forefinger, in a token that he is a Mohametan. As soon as cut, the priest washeth the wound in water and salt, and bindeth it in linen. Who changeth not his name but is from thenceforth called a *musselman*: which is a true believer... then they put him a white Turbant; and for returning with drums and hoboys, is with great solemnity conducted to the Mosque, and presented with gifts according to his quality. (55-57)

These narratives—whether English translations of French accounts or firsthand accounts that blend previous discourses with their own observations—describe circumcision by making an analogy with what is familiar. Circumcision becomes baptism in church-like mosques with priest-like figures. Considering Islam was thought not to be a separate religion but a deviation from Christianity in the period (as evident from calling Muslims “Mohemmedans”), these narratives use the term *Musulman* not to signify Muslim persons, but as a gendered signification specifically referring to the circumcised male. Therefore, women who are unclean due to their uncircumcised bodies can never be truly Muslim; nor are boys before their circumcision. Circumcision is a conversion moment particular to males who carry their conversions as a mark on their bodies.

These descriptions of circumcision in Western travelogues and chronicles contribute to a popular discourse about the practice as is evident in Christian church sermons. In 1628, two sermons were published together under the title of *A Returne from Argiers: A Sermon in 1627 and the Readmission of a Christian who turned Turk*. One of the sermons, a 45-page long document by Edward Kellet, is specifically devoted to circumcision in a context of conversion. The sermon occurs during the conversion of an Englishman, who had “turned Turke” after being captured by “Turkes” and now decided to “turne Christian” after being brought back to England by an “English Captaine.” Marking this conversion moment, the sermon mainly notes how unchristian circumcision is; and that it is a form of idolatry. Comparing it to Christian baptism, Kellet excitedly announces that choosing “the blood of circumcision” over the “crystal-clear water of baptisme” is worse than being a Jew and killing Christ, or being Cain and killing Abel (18-19). “If you be circumcised,” he declares, “Christ shall profit you nothing” (2).

Kellet continues his sermon condemning circumcision by calling Muhammad a false prophet, adulterous, lustful, and a sodomite. He associates circumcision with the sexually aberrant icon of Muhammad, and Turks. It is interesting that the convert in Kellet's account is still in Turkish clothes at the moment; the preacher is angry with him because Turkish clothes are barbarous, and resembling Turks by dressing in their manners is a great sin. If he really wants to repent, first he has to change into Christian fashion because Turkish attire, particularly the turban, is "nastie" (32). To be Christian is to dress in a Christian way, to make the body stand out as differently from non-Christians. As we have seen, Sandys also mentioned that right after circumcision "they put on him [the circumcised] a white Turbant." The Ottomans are "circumcised Turkes" and the foreskin is symbolized as the turban on the head; Gerald McLean and Nabil Matar provide a striking analogy, the turban was a symbol "of a diseased skin...turban and circumcision went together" (220). Furthermore, in a well-worn image from *Othello* the "turbaned Turk" is described as "a circumcised dog": Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk/...I took by the throat the circumcised dog" (5.2. 362-65). And King James' poem "Lepanto," which he wrote in 1595 in Scotland upon the Ottoman defeat at the Battle of Lepanto, was republished upon his coronation in 1603 with such additional references as "circumcised Turban'd Turkes" and "the baptiz'd." As these examples demonstrate, bodily practices and clothes were not free from religious identity; nor were they considered independent, as I discuss below, from sexual discourses as regards feminized, castrated, sodomitical, and monstrous male bodies.

III. Circumcision As An Utterly Confused Category

Western travel accounts depict circumcision as gendered baptism, but it is also considered a sexualized practice, frequently confused with castration and associated with

sodomy.⁹ In these accounts, it becomes a medium to mark the religious “others” as sexual “others” with different bodies. In particular, early modern physiognomy texts and medical pamphlets confirm such interlinks between religious, bodily, and sexual differences. John Bulwer in his *Antropometamorphosis*, a “corporal philosophie, being an Historical tract of the Use and Abuse of Parts,” devotes a chapter to the ordering of privy-parts in “divers Nations,” especially to circumcision as practiced in Egypt, Guinea, the Cape Good Hope, and Arabia. Tracing Galenic notions of the body, he writes that “for Galen in the same book doth constitute the testicles to be next to the heart, a fountain of heat and strength; so that the testicles cut out, not only the other fountain destroyed, but the heat of the very Heart is lessened and debilitated” (203). Castration thus “affect[s] the voice and very form [eunuchs] become womanish” (204). His example for such practices is the Ottoman court:

The eunuchs in the Great Turk’s seraglio, who are in number about two hundred, they are all of them not only gelt, but have their yard also clean cut off, and are chosen of those renegade youths which are presented from time to time to the Great Signior. (206)

Bulwer confuses castration and circumcision in his account quite skillfully, making the two indistinguishable by recalling circumcision of abducted boys while describing castration (cutting out testicles) and eunuchs. Jim Shapiro notes, “Shakespeare’s contemporaries used circumcision as a metaphor for castration” (114). Bulwer’s metaphoric language, however, refers to genitalia as a “yards” of renegade youths who are to be presented to the Sultan. Evoking a “presentation” to the Great Seignior, he frames circumcision as a means for the sexual use of these “circumcised” boys.

⁹ On conversion and sodomy relations, see Parker, “Preposterous Conversions.”

He further makes explicit the connection between circumcision and sexuality when he writes that circumcision is supposed to “help to bridle and restrain inordinate lust and concupiscence of the flesh; but the contrary doth appear; for no nation is more given to carnal lust then Egyptians, Saracens, and Turks that are circumcised” (211). Yet, while he points at circumcision as related to lust, circumcision is nevertheless a burden and a problem for “enlengthening” sex, and giving pleasure to the other sex:

that part which hangeth over the end of the foreskin, is moved up and down in coition, that in this attrition it might gather more heat and increase the pleasure of the other sex; a contentation of which they are defrauded by this injurious invention... circumcision detracts somewhat from the delight of women, by lessening their titillation. (213)

This is why it is a “commonly passeth opinion...that Jewish women desire copulation with Christian, rather than their own Nation” (214). As of circumcised Turks, he states, they use opium to “extimulate them [women] to venery” (214). It is because of circumcision, which results in premature ejaculation and failure to give pleasure to women, that “Mahomet well knowing this their beastly and inordinate affectation, promiseth them that the felicity of their paradise should consist in a jubilee of conjunctions, that is, a coition of one act prolonged unto fifty years” (214). Bulwer’s account blends the discourse of circumcision with common understandings of excessive sexual desire and failure in cross-sex sexual relations in the East.

For the English, circumcision denotes as much sexual as religious connotation. In his exploration of Anglo-Ottoman encounters with the rising global traffic in the Mediterranean, Jonathan Burton points to the interrelationship between conversion and desire on the English stage, noting “the Turkish plays enact a fantastic recuperation of imperiled English masculinity

by situating heterosexual desire at the center of Anglo-Islamic relations” (93). Similarly, in her exploration of conversion as a trope intersecting with sexual discourses, Jane Degenhardt argues that early modern religious conversions were imagined on stage within the frame of the sexual intercourse, and “conversion [was] a matter of bodies and outward materiality” (2). Circumcision as an outward, bodily sign in such representations highlights masculine anxieties through a failure in heterosexual couplings, which marks putative sodomitical dispositions and ostensible femininity of Ottoman men as well as converts. As Daniel Vitkus reminds us as regards the term “turning Turk,” “to turn” could mean to change, to transform, to convert, to pervert, to go back on one’s word, or to turn through space; religious conversion was often conceived as a form of sexual perversion in England (Turning 84). He further observes that “circumcision emphasized the sexual significance of the change in faith, imagined both as a kind of castration or emasculation” (104).

Dramatizing similar complex associations between religion and sexuality via “turning Turk,” Robert Daborne’s play *A Christian Turned Turke* (1612), for example, puts circumcision at the very center of the (religious as well as sexual) conversion of the popular Captain Ward. The scene where Ward undergoes circumcision as a required ritual of “turning Turk” is dramatized as a dumb show because, as the chorus notes, the act is too horrible a deed to be acted on stage:

Enter two bearing half-moons, one with a Mahomet's head
following. After them, the Mufti, or chief priest, two meaner priests
bearing his train. The Mufti seated, a confused noise of music, with
a show. Enter two Turks, one bearing a turban with a half-moon in
it, the other a robe, a sword : a third with a globe in one hand, an

arrow in the other. Two knights follow. After them, Ward on an ass, in his Christian habit, bare-headed. The two knights, with low reverence, ascend, whisper the Mufti in the ear, draw their swords, and pull him off the ass. He [is] laid on his belly, the tables (by two inferior priests) offered him, he lifts his hand up, subscribes, is brought to his seat by the Mufti, who puts on his turban and robe, girds his sword, then swears him on the Mahomet's head, ungirds his sword, offers him a cup of wine by the hand of a Christian. He spurns at him and throws away the cup, is mounted on the ass, who is richly clad, and with a shout, they exit. (198)¹⁰

Turban, sword, robes: three necessary accessories are shown to become a Turk in accordance with the aforementioned early modern English narratives of circumcision. The play suggests that to become a Turk/Muslim, one needs to be “baptized” in the Turkish way; that is, to be circumcised, and denounce Christian wine. However, the scene and the following dialogues present sexual facets attributed to the practice.

While Ward must be laid on his back during the circumcision (all because it makes cutting possible as can be seen in Figure 44), the dumb-show exaggerates this scary act by making Ward “laid” on his belly, bent forward and his rear at the center of attention. Interestingly, after Ward converts, Rabshake, the Jewish character of the play, makes fun of Ward implying his circumcision resulted in penetration: “Poor fellow, how he looks since Mahomet had the handling of him! He hath had a sore night at “Who’s that knocks at the backdoor? Cry you mercy, I thought you were an Italian captain” (210). Rabshake makes an

¹⁰ All citations to the play refer to page numbers from Vitkus, ed. *Three Turk Plays*, 148-239.

association between circumcision and anal-sex, referring “knocking at the backdoor” and the Italian. Celia R. Daileader in her “Back Door Sex: Renaissance Gynosodomy, Aretino, and the Exotic” notes that anal sex was called “back door sex” in early modern England (304). She further notes that “the form of difference English Renaissance culture most frequently associated with back door sex was not gender (women, after all, have anuses too) but ethnicity” (304). Anal sex was associated with the Italians particularly considering “Venice [was] acting as the geopolitical and mercantile door to the East” (305). As I noted earlier, while describing circumcision, Graston too implies Ottoman-Italian intimacies through circumcision. So Rabshake suggests that Ward’s circumcision/castration prevented his intercourse with his wife; instead, he was handled anally “by Mahomet,” implying that conversion/circumcision is to be sexually dominated by Muhammad.



Figure 44. “Circumcision.” *Cerrahiyetü'l Haniyye*, Sabuncuoğlu Şerefeddin, 1465. Fatih National Library, no. Tib 79

Later, Rabshake makes anal fun of Ward once more by noting, “the best is behind” (211). He further makes a connection between Jews and Muslims through their bodies, suggesting one’s religion shapes one’s body and sexual abilities:

Rabshake: ...The newcome pirate is a reasonable handsome man of a Christian.

Agar: Why? Doth religion move anything in the shapes of men?

Rabshake: Altogether! What’s the reason else that the Turk and Jew is troubled (for the most) with the gouty legs and fiery nose? To express heartburning. (174)

As Jonathan Burton notes, Jews and Muslims are always associated in English representations of the Ottomans: “Both Jews and Muslims rejected the Trinity. Both practiced circumcision and claimed physical descent from Abraham. Both considered Semitic languages their sacred tongues and both dressed in *caftans*, or long robes, and turbans” (202). These similarities, for Burton, encouraged a linkage between Judaism and Islam that we can see in Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, where the two evil characters, the Jew Barabas and his Turkish slave Ithamore, complement each other in evil. Theirs is a partnership created through circumcision, as Barabas notes: “We are villains both; Both circumcised, we hate Christians both (2.3.216). Similarly, Rabshake’s argument similarly connects Jews and Muslims through their “gouty legs and fiery nose.” Dennis Britton also remarks in his reading of this scene, the body appears “as [a] site that can signify religious difference” (72).

All the references to castration, anal sex, and their permutations in the above discussion are suggestive of how religions mark bodies and how bodies act in specific ways as a result of religious thoughts and practices. Exteriority becomes a reflection of the interior faith, and “sickly” bodies of circumcised men offer a contrast with the body of the “reasonable handsome man of a Christian.” In this context, circumcision is generative of bodily failures; in the case of

Ward, it brings forth castration and sexual inability. Right after Ward converts and is circumcised, Voada, for whom he converts in the first place, suddenly loses her love for him. Reminiscent of the aforementioned announcement by Bulwer that Jewish and Muslim women prefer to “copulate with Christians” because circumcised men do not sexually satisfy them, Voada leaves Ward for a “handsome” Christian man. Captain Ward was a real life convert, popular in England; a ballad titled “The Seaman’s Song of Captain Ward” sings, “This wicked-gotten treasure / Doth him but little pleasure / The land consumes what they got by sea, / In drunkenness and lechery, / Filthy sins of sodomy, / these evil-gotten goods so waste away” (Vitkus, *Three* 346). While Ward’s sodomy is associated with piracy in the ballad, the Turk play conveys Ward’s “filthy” sodomy through emasculation symbolized by circumcision. Ward’s conversion/circumcision becomes a bodily, sexual, as well as a romantic failure, evoking similar discourses of circumcision other narratives.

These representations demonstrate that circumcision was intricately embedded in what Foucault calls the “utterly confused category” of sodomy (75). Circumcision is an *utterly confused practice* represented as castration, failure, and effeminacy. On the other hand, the Christian body in the early modern period, with its premise of intactness, operates as the counter-category, the opposite of the castrated/circumcised Ottomans. Valerie Traub also observes that “early modern travel accounts, in particular, contribute significantly to the construction of the contours and meanings of the early modern [Western] body” (*The Renaissance* 196). The exoticized and circumcised bodies of Ottoman males in such accounts function to construct the opposite: the intact Christian body as the perfect form. And in these representations circumcision is not simply a bodily difference; it is a signifier of religious as well as sexual demarcations shared by “effeminate Asians” (Sandys 78).

While circumcision marks religious and sexual differences in English narratives, it is youthful bodies that convey such discourses. Adult bodies are already complete or incomplete; youthful bodies, however, are still vulnerable to bodily transformations. John Bulwer's medical treatise, for example, evokes *devshirme* boys while depicting eunuchs "presented to the Grand Signior": "The Turks that dwell in Europe and Asia do use the very same *castration on such young boys* as they can seize on in the Christian countries" (206, italics mine). Sandys also describes circumcision as related to boys as he notes Turks "castrate [boys], making all smooth as the back of one hand," to use them sexually. Furthermore, Baudier's account of the forementioned 1582 royal circumcision celebration ends with connecting circumcision to the conversion of boys:

But if the description of this Royall Feast hath beene a pleasing diuersion vnto vs in the toile of this Historie, let vs end it according to the naturall course of pleasure, by the grieve which followes. Doubtlesse it will be great enough to impart it to those which shall read the issue of this Chapter, where we obserue than during the spectacles of this solemnity, the wretched Grecian [...]y troupes in this place to make themselues Mahometans: Some abandoned Christianitie to auoid the oppression of the Turkes, others for the hope of priuate profit: The youngest and most beautifull were sent into the Serrail, with the Ichioglans, and the rest among the Azamoglans: This hope of better fortune drew the Idlenesse of many young men, so as they could hardly find Masters enough to cut them: This detestable troupe of Rascals, went to shew themselues before the Grand Seigneur, their Bonnets vnder their feet, in signe that they did

tread their law and honour vnder foot: There a Turkish Priest did cause them to lift vp the demonstratiue finger of the right hand, in signe that they did not beleeeue but one God in one person, & to say with a loud voice, Laila ey lala alla Mehemer Rasoul alla; Then they led them into certaine Pauillions, which were erected expresly at the end of the place where they were circumcised: The number of these cast awayes was found to bee aboue foure thousand souls. (93-94).

Baudier cannot resist connecting the celebration, and the circumcision of city-boys to the circumcision of *devshirme* boys to generate a horror after having described at length his fascination with the celebration in previous pages. Such descriptions reflect European concerns about the Ottoman practices of abducting and enslaving Christian boys.

IV. Circumcised English Boys

The varied European narratives that I have examined connect Islamic bodily transformations to boys within an economy of conversion and captivity, which was a part of the traffic in the early modern Mediterranean. Thomas Sanders' narrative of the ship *Jesus*, with which this chapter opens, blends such conversion discourses within an economy of cutting pricks as he mentions the monstrous act of circumcision done on the bodies of English youths. The conversion of the two young Christians through circumcision in Sanders' story clearly raises the specter of abducted and sodomized boys. In what follows, I focus on this story to highlight how it reflects contemporary anxieties around circumcision and abduction while making the youthful bodies vulnerable objects of desire and transformations.

Sanders's account narrates not only commercial activities of the Englishmen in the Mediterranean, but also captivity, conversion, human trafficking, and debt policies that occurred

with this traffic in the region. The voyage of the *Jesus*, Sanders notes, “was set forth by the right worshipfull sir Edward Osborne knight, chiefe merchant of all the Turkish company” (192). Leaving for “Tripolis in Barbarie” from Portsmouth in 1583, the ship makes it to Tripolis and the crew was “very well enterntained by the king of that country” (192). However, in spite of these good relations and a profitable oil trade with the king, the crew ended up in slavery because one Romane Sonnings, the French Factor in the crew, had disputes with an Englishman from another trading ship. When the said Frenchman Sonnings tries to help escape one Patrone Norado, “who the year before had done this Sonnings some pleasure there” yet “was indebted to the King,” the ship was attacked by the king right after it left the shore (193). Hence, the 23 members of the crew fell into captivity and slavery while three, including the captain, were killed. After this point, Sanders’s account of English trade becomes a conversion tale with a religious and nationalist moral conveyed through English boys.

In his narrative of “miserable bondage and slavery” of the Englishmen as well as other slavery practices such as Spanish human-traffic in Africa “to steal negroes,” English boys figure in terms of bondage and conversion (195). Sanders mentions the King’s son who “was a ruler in an Island called Gerbi” where arrived an English ship called Green Dragon “of the which was master one M. Blonket, who having a very unhappy boy in that ship, and understanding that whosoever would turne Turke should be well entertained of the kings sonne, this boy did runne a shoare, and voluntarily turned Turke” (197). Without explaining why the boy was unhappy, Sanders moves to the detailed story of the two English boys on the crew of the *Jesus*:

Shortly after the kings sonne came to Tripolis to visite his father, and seeing our company, hee greatly *fancied* Richard Burges our Purser, and James Smith: they were both yong men, therefore he was very desirous to

have them to turne Turkes, but they would not yeeld to his desire, saying:
 We are your fathers slaves, and as slaves wee will serve him. Then his
 father the king sent for them, and asked them if they would turne Turkes?
 And they saide: If it please your highnesse, Christians we were borne, and
 so we will remaine, and beseeched the king that they might not bee
 inforced thereunto. The king had there before in his house a sonne of a
 yeoman of our Queenes guard, whom the kings sonne had inforced to
 turne Turke, his name was John Nelson: him the king caused to be brought
 to these yong men, and then said unto them: Wil not you beare this your
 countreyman company, and be Turke as hee is? And they saide, that they
 would not yeeld thereunto during life. (197)

Besides the “unhappy boy” of the Green Dragon, there is another youthful convert, John Nelson, in the King’s household. Noting the conversion of boys to prepare his readers for what follows, Sanders’s use of the term “fancy” hints at the erotics of this conversion economy. As *OED* defines, “fancy” means “to take a fancy to; to entertain a liking for; to be pleased with; to like” (*OED*8) while in its early usage in the 16th century, the verb followed by a personal object signifies “to be or fall in love with” (*OED*8a).¹¹ Sanders’ use of “fancy” with the adverb “greatly” to refer to the King’s son (“greatly *fancied* Richard Burges our Purser, and James Smith”) implicates the son’s erotic motivations. The reader has already been prepared in the description of the son’s famous entertainments with converted boys; this desire for two English youths therefore emphasizes the son’s amorous drives, which he seeks to fulfill through forceful conversion.

¹¹ Cite oed.

In the conversion process, circumcision becomes a means to gain control over the bodies of these boys. The two truly Christian boys, Richard and James, resist conversion and the son's "desire," and prefer slavery to "turning Turk." However, the King's son cannot control his desire for these two boys whom he carries to his home in Gerbi "being six score miles from Tripolis." According to their letter to Sanders, the two boys "were violently used" there, and forced to agree to convert. However, when the two resisted again, the son uses "force" upon them:

Then the kings sonne very angerly said unto him [Richard]: By Mahomet thou shalt presently be made Turke. Then called he for his men, and commanded them to make him Turke, and they did so, and *circumcised him*, and would have had him speake the wordes that thereunto belonged, but he answered them stoutly that he would not: and although they had put on him the habite of a Turke, yet sayd he, A Christian I was borne, and so I will remaine, though you force me to doe otherwise. (197)

The son applies the same force on John as well, and both boys are forcibly "made Turk." As Sanders's language (i.e. "force," "violently used,") implies, the conversion in this scene becomes, in Jonathan Burton's words, a picture of "male-male rape" (96-97). The encounter between the English youths and the King's son is imagined in terms of a Turk's coercive sexual domination over the boys. This story is delivered within a language that, in Patricia Parker's terms, "combines the territorial threat of Turkish conquest with sodomical invasion of which circumcision functions as the outward bodily sign" (4).

Yet, the divine intervention that Sanders sees operating in English relations in the Mediterranean disrupts such tyrannous domination of the King. As Sanders notes, "Here may all true Christian hearts see the wonderfull workes of God shewed upon such infidels, blasphemers,

whoremasters, and renegade Christians, and so you shall reade in the ende of this booke, of the like upon the unfaithfull king and all his children” (195). God’s will as well as the Queen’s care for her subjects will finally liberate the English party—albeit half of them are dead now. Sanders claims to have written a letter to his father in Devonshire, which was delivered to the Queen; upon the Queen’s intervention, the party is set free, thanks to the English Ambassador in Constantinople with the commission he gets from the Ottoman court to liberate them. While the English party, now free, demand liberation of the two boys, the King refuses, saying “it was against their law to deliver them, for they were turned Turkes” (198). Indeed, conversion would have made one free from slavery; however, Sanders does not mention the contradiction about how the boys continued to be in captivity while they were converted, thus liberated, albeit forcefully. The boys are not amongst “infidels, blasphemers, whoremasters, and renegade Christians,” who willingly convert; they were forced to convert, so they must be saved as an exemplar to God’s will and those Christians who became “renegade” in Sanders’s story.

While the English party is “set at liberty” in 1585, Sanders continues to tell the story of the boys. In Tripolis, a plague occurs, and the soldiers kill the king. As a result, Sanders notes, “the Kings sonne, according to the custome there, went to Constantinople, to surrender up all his fathers treasure, goods, captives, and concubines, unto the great Turke, and tooke with him our saide Purser Richard Burges, and James Smith, and also the other two Englishmen, which he the said kings sonne had inforced to become Turkes” (198). Reminiscent of J.M. Gramaye’s report that the Christian children captured by pirates were sent as presents to “Turke or his Bassas [to satisfy their] Sodomitical lusts for Boyes,” the two English boys becomes circulating objects from one space to another. On the journey to Constantinople, the four English youths on board heroically organize an uprising to kill the King’s son; yet they fail, and as a result, “Master

Blonkets boy was killed, and the sayde James Smith, and our Purser Richard Burges, and the other Englishman, were taken and bound into chaines, to be hanged at their arrivall in Constantinople.” But with a Venetian intervention, the boys are saved:

As the Lordes will was, about two dayes after, passing through the gulfe of Venice, at an Island called Cephalonia , they met with two of the duke of Venice his Gallies, which tooke that Galley, and killed the kings sonne, and his mother, and all the Turkes that were there, in number 150. and they saved the Christian captives, and would have killed the two Englishmen because they were circumcised, and become Turkes, had not the other Christian captives excused them, saying, that they were inforced to be Turkes, by the kings sonne, and shewed the Venetians also, how they did enterprise at sea to fight against all the Turks, and that their two fellowes were slaine in that fight. Then the Venetians saved them, and they, with all the residue of the said captives, had their libertie, which were in number 150. or thereabouts, and the saide Gallie, and all the Turkes treasure was confiscated to the use of the state of Venice. And from thence our two Englishmen travelled homeward by land. (198-99)

In the Mediterranean economy of captivity—which is also a sodomitical sexual economy—Venetians capture the Ottoman ship, intending to kill all “circumcised” men. Thus, circumcision appears as a mark that liberates or enslaves men or brings their death. Sanders’s account however probes a simplistic circumcised-body-as-heretic discourse by highlighting how certain bodies can be marked in spite of the subjects’ will. The two English boys were circumcised against their will; they were innocent of this monstrous mark on their body; as a result they were not killed by

the Christian Venetians but saved. Sanders does not leave his reader in wonder about the fate of these boys, later noting that "...within two moneths after our arrivall at London, our said Purser Richard Burges, and his fellow came home also" (199). As "the Lord's will was," Richard and James were now free in England, yet they carried a mark on their body.

The anxiety over circumcision that Sanders's account reveals is intricately embedded in the Ottoman threat over Europe and Englishmen's fear of being captured, abducted, and converted by Turks in the Mediterranean space. Recalling Baudier's, Sanderson's and Ravlis's tales, the story of the *Jesus* with many struggles but a happy ending therefore shows trade relations were not free from Mediterranean risks of captivity, enslavement, and death under cruel rulers. It ends not only with the moral of Christianity winning over tyrannous Islam, but also with a nationalist twist, as if encouraging further relations in the Mediterranean space. He notes that liberty, "[for] which we are bound to praise Almighty God, during our lives, and as duetie bindeth us, to pray for the preservation of our most gracious Queene, for the great care her Majestie had over us, her poore Subjects." The Queen always cares for her subjects, and saves them when they are in need.

Indeed, Elizabeth was involved in this conflict: in 1584, she sent a letter to the Ottoman Sultan Murat III, requesting "the restitution of the shippe called *Jesus*, and the English captives detained in Tripolie in Barbarie, and for certaine other prisoners" (200). Included in Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations*, the letter shows that trade and traffick in the Mediterranean was not free from troubles: "Most noble and puissant Emperor," writes Elizabeth,

about two yeeres nowe passed, wee wrote unto your Imperiall Majestie,
that our welbeloved servant, William Hareborne, a man of great reputation
and honour, might be received under your high authoritie, for our

Ambassadour in Constantinople, and other places, under the obedience of your Empire of Musulman: And also that the Englishmen, being our Subjects, might exercise entercourse and marchandize in all those Provinces, no lesse freely then the French, Polonians, Venetians, Germanes, and other your confederats, which traveile through divers of the East parts: endeavouring that by mutuall trafique, the East may be joyned and knit to the West. (200)

Evoking the trade privileges given to the Englishmen by the Ottomans to freely engage in commerce in the Mediterranean under Ottoman control, Elizabeth notes how some of her subjects are ill-treated in “Tripolis in Barbarie, and at Argiers,” requesting, “wee doe friendly and lovingly desire your Imperiall Majestie, that you will understand their causes by our Ambassadour, and afterward give commaundement to the Lieutenants and Presidents of those Provinces, that our people may henceforth freely, without any violence, or injurie, traveile, and do their businesse in those places” (200). As Sanders’s account shows, the Ottoman administration actually intervened for their liberty, and Hakluyt includes after Elizabeth’s letter the commandment of the Ottoman court and two other letters sent from Constantinople to the ruler of Tripolis to let the Englishmen free (200-201).

Hakluyt’s placement of Elizabeth’s letter as well as letters from the Ottoman court after Sanders’s account also encourages Mediterranean trade in spite of risk factors, and evinces how the English start to appear as a power in the Mediterranean with Ottoman privileges through intense diplomatic exchanges. What is striking in the letter is Elizabeth’s 1584 prospect that “by mutuall trafique the East may be joyned and knit to the West.” When the East and the West join

through such interactions in the Mediterranean, in such accounts as of the *Jesus*, imbricated within these relations are enforced bodily transformations within an economy that marks pricks.

In the early modern period, circumcision—whether its celebration or condemnation—was not simply related to the removal of prepuce. Rather, it had various and shifting sexual, religious, and political connotations. It was a practice that English writers condemned as foreign, non-Christian, heretical, barbarous, sodomitical, and feminine, while European travelogues expressed both a curiosity and fascination for circumcision festivities. The Ottomans in turn praised the practice, and poets used the celebrations as a moment not only to acclaim Ottoman imperial power but also to praise the beauty of uncircumcised European boys. With his youthful and vulnerable body, the boy emphasizes the mutability of bodies in religious and sexual conversions. His body and ephemeral youth not only entertains possibilities of shifts in religious orientations but also signifies erotic possibilities in the gender hierarchy. The traveling boy becomes an object of an erotic gaze and desire, materialized through a mark on his body.

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Traveling into the Future

Nev'izade Atayi, a seventeenth century Ottoman poet, narrates the story of two youthful friends Tayyib and Tahir in his *Heft han* [The Seven Stories].¹ Tayyib and Tahir pursue love, wine, and music in the taverns of Istanbul and spend their nights in pleasure with boys. Soon, they find themselves in poverty and decide to join a Sufi order in Egypt. During their sea voyage, these two friends are captured by an infidel ship and sold as slaves to two handsome European noblemen, Sir John and Sir Janno. Brought to European lands, Tayyib and Tahir, whose “hearts consumed with flames of passion,” fall in love with their masters, and “bonds of affection grew among the four” in beautiful European gardens (61). Soon, gossip about their erotic relations circulates in the town, making them suffer at the hands of the authorities. Now separated, Sir John and Sir Janno are imprisoned, and Tayyib and Tahir are condemned to slavery at the oar of a galley, which is later attacked by Muslim galleys. This fortunate attack liberates the two Muslim friends. John and Janno, on the other hand, convert to Islam in prison, which miraculously unlocks the gates of the prison and frees them. Soon they find themselves at sea, and they reunite with Tayyib and Tahir due to their magnetic affection. Now in Istanbul, they all live happily ever after before having “passed from this world accompanied by their pure love” (62).

Atayi's story represents the erotic dimensions of power relations whereby mastery and service, as well as Christianity and Islam, are hierarchically imagined within an active/passive matrix. Tayyib and Tahir actively pursue younger boys in Istanbul; yet they become objects of

¹ Citations to the story are from Andrews and Kalpakli's translation. Also, for various stages of boyhood as related to homoeroticism, see Andrews and Kalpakli 58-69; for an alternative translation and homoerotic analysis, see Boone, *The Homoerotics* 10-16. For an edited version of *Heft Han* in modern Turkish, see Karacan.

love once they are slaves in Christian lands. It is only when John and Janno convert to Islam that all four are happily united as equals. This story highlights abduction, slavery, and conversion politics operating in the Mediterranean, and quite strikingly within Islamic and Christian contexts. In this dissertation, I have demonstrated how the Ottomans used various ways, particularly *devshirme*, to abduct boys from Europe, who appear as eroticized servants in the Ottoman cultural imaginaries. Similarly Englishmen brought many boys—perhaps fewer in numbers—from Africa, India, and the New World to England, where they were categorized as both exotic and alien. I have also explored the phenomena of the abduction of boys at the intersections of the emergent literary trope of the changeling boy and the imagery of Ganymede, the cup-bearer, as the eroticized servant boy. Atayi's story suggests that the abduction of boys was a common practice within which the Ottomans were also objects of servitude, abduction, captivity, and enslavement by Europeans in the global trafficking within the Mediterranean, though perhaps not always in equal measure. My point nevertheless is that the exotic foreign boy, both as a literary trope and as historical subject—abducted, converted, and often eroticized—cannot be considered simply a curiosity, or an esoteric figure of desire, but rather as a site of imperial, racial, religious, and emergent colonial trajectories, as well as male hierarchies in the early modern Anglo-Ottoman dynamic.

The beautiful boy in these early modern works also uncovers the homoerotics of a literary imagination that marks him as an object of desire and love. While Atayi's story imagines circulating youths, I would next like to offer another example, of an Ottoman Prince, who describes what can be considered actual boys as objects of erotic admiration in his poetry that he penned during his long stay in European courts. After an unsuccessful contest for the throne with his brother Bayezid upon the death of his father Sultan Mehmet II in 1481, Prince Cem

(Jem/Djem) took up residence in Christian realms to secure his life and gain support for his claims for the Ottoman throne.² He first resided in Rhodes under the control of the Knights of St. John, then in safe custody in France, followed by Papal custody in the Vatican; he was finally handed to Charles XII of France upon his entrance to Rome, who demanded Pope Alexander Borgia give him Cem before his march upon Naples—during which Cem suddenly fell ill and died in 1495, most probably as a result of being poisoned by order of the Pope.

The Ottoman Prince wrote a poem, today known as “European Eulogy,” during his seven-year long stay in the French city of Nice (1482-89). The Prince describes daily pleasures, beauties of the city, as well the social life in a European court, exemplified for him by the beautiful boys, in particular one unnamed French Prince:

Drain, O Jem, thy Jemshid-cup;³ here in Frankish land are we!

...

Look thou lose not the occasion; make thou merry with all cheer;

Fortune bideth aye with no man, fleeting is the World, ah me!

Make thou merry in this city in this city of the French Prince,

For that he's a wondrous lovesome chieftain of the fair and free.

Cypress-figured, silver-bodied, fair the Frankish beauty is;

Dazed for love of his bright beauty, sun and moon reel giddily!

That he with all this grace offers thee the wine-filled cups,

China's throne is, Yemen's kingdom, yea, or Persia's empery! (Gibb 90-91)⁴

² For the biography of Jem, see Altınay; and Okur.

³ Jemshid is a literary figure standing for the mythic inventor of wine, evoking Bacchus in early modern Ottoman poetry.

⁴ I silently corrected E.J.W. Gibb's translation of the poem where necessary. For the poem in Turkish, see Ersoylu.

Here, Cem describes a French nobleman with exceptional beauty who makes the sun and moon drunk. While the poem seems to be addressing a particular persona—the French prince who is “silver bodied” and a cup-bearer—later in the poem the speaker describes other beautiful boys, “vassals,” “sons of high noblemen,” “twelve sons of Bans” who entertain him, and “dancing boys,” all of whom remind the Ottoman Prince of the paradisaical boys, making the French city a paradise: “Kingship can be naught beyond this, O Prince Jem, I tell thee true,/ Drain the bowl and glad thy spirit, ‘tis the revellers’ feast of glee” (91). Later the speaker notes, after describing these beautiful boys in his company: “O thou youthful Prince, O Jem, to pass one joyous night with those/Midst of fair delice were sweeter than aught else on earth to thee.” Spending a night with these beauties is worth a kingdom, he announces. The poem reflects Cem’s *carpe diem* mode after his unsuccessful endeavors to gain the Ottoman throne, and ending up as a hostage in European courts; the Prince gave up his ambition for the throne, and he passed his days with European boys.⁵ It also gives us a glimpse of Cem’s observation of the European courts as represented with minute details of foods, fruits, music, dance, attires, and youthful noblemen while spotting one particular young Frenchman as the beloved.

While Cem Sultan describes the beautiful boys as poetic objects of same-sex male desire in the French city in the late fifteenth century, a Muslim traveller of the nineteenth century notes the repression of boy love in the same country. A young Egyptian scholar, Rifai’ah al-Tahta’wi, spent the years 1826–1831 in Paris, as part of a scientific delegation sent by the modernizing ruler of Egypt Muhammad Ali Pasha. Tahta’wi produces a description of the manners and

⁵ Since Cem was in Europe with his courtiers including poets, contemporary biographers has disputes about which poems really belong to the Prince, and which to the poets in his circle. This poem is widely accepted as Cem’s; even though it is not, it still reflects observations of one Ottoman elite in a European city. For an overview about the poem’s authorship, see Cinar, who considers the poem as Jem’s.

customs of the Parisians, in which, as Khalid El-Rouayheb shows, Tahta'wi was surprised that the French were "not inclined to youths" and considered boy love disgraceful: "In the French language a man cannot say: I loved a youth (ghulam), for that would be an unacceptable and awkward wording. Therefore, if one of them translates one of our books he avoids this by saying in the translation: I loved a young female (ghulamah) or a person (dhatan)" (Rouayheb, "Love" 16). As El-Rouayheb notes,

European Arabists in the early 19th century disapproved of this theme [of boy love] in Arabic love-poetry, and sought to conceal its very existence. At around the same time as Tahta'wi was in Paris, the great British Arabist Edward Lane was in Egypt, collecting material for his seminal *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. Lane, who also produced a heavily bowdlerized version of *The Arabian Nights*, clearly considered pederasty to be an unmentionable vice, and had nothing to say about the phenomenon in his Account. (16)⁶

Around the same time as the Egyptian traveler wrote his observations, a remarkable turn had taken place within Ottoman sexual culture. The Ottomans adopted the Western conceptualization of homosexuality as perversion in the nineteenth century, and, as Dror Ze'evi shows, attempted to repress the homosexual component of the literary and social life as a part of the modernization of Ottoman Turkey. Within the new Western sexual discourses, which dissected sexual acts and desires, "the homosexual" appeared as a pathologized identity. Thus ironically, after a long acceptance of the expression of homoerotic desire, particularly among

⁶ For more on the changing discourses in Arabic speaking regions under the Ottoman Empire, also see El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality*. On a similar shift in Iranian context, see Najmabadi.

men, heterosexuality was now the norm in the Empire. Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, a leader of the nineteenth century reforms, for example, reports in his autobiographical *Maruzat* he written for Sultan Abdulhamit II the salient change taking place in the moral conduct of people in the 1850s:

As the number of women-lovers increased, that of boy-lovers decreased. It is as if the people of Sodom [the sodomites] disappeared off the face of the earth. The well-known love for and relationships with the young men in Istanbul has transformed to young women as *the natural order of things*...

We don't see people like Kamil or Ali Pashas or those similar to them who were well known as boy-lovers in the higher offices. Yet, Ali Pasha had always tried to hide his love for boys because of the disapproval of the foreigners. (9, my translation)

[Zen-dostlar cogalup mahbublar azaldi. Kavm-i Lut sanki yere batti.

Istanbul'da oteden беру delikanlılar icum maruf u muted olan ask u alaka, hali tabisi uzre kizlara muntahil oldu... Kubera icinde gulamparelikle meshur Kamil ve Ali Pasalar ile anlara mensub olanlar kalmadi. Halbuki Ali Pasa da ecanibin itirazlarindan ihtiraz ile gulampareligini ihfaya calisirdi.]

Cevdet Pasha acknowledges a shift in the sexual conduct of people in Istanbul, a move from same-sex relations to cross-sex ones, from homoeroticism to heteroeroticism, in accordance with “the natural order of things.” Cevdet Pasha’s use of this phrase sets forth a categorization of sexualities by declaring procreative sex as natural and the norm, hence identifying all non-procreative sexual inclinations as deviant. This nineteenth century paradigm shift in sexual

discourse generated a selective integration of certain Western discourses (sexual, gendered, racial) into the discourses of the westernizing state at the height of European colonialism.

In the process of prompting this new “natural” order of things, textual materials that explicitly addressed matters related to sex such as dream interpretations, medical and legal texts, and shadow theatres, were all censored.⁷ As marriage and the family became institutionalized, and as there was a shifting emphasis on heteronormativity, literary representations now promoted monogamous heterosexuality.⁸ By eradicating homo-erotic-friendship, affection, and its affective expression through the beautiful boy, heteronormativity replaced the homoerotic tone in literary works. Moreover, these changes suggested a desire not only to be like westerners, but also to be liked by Westerners, as the second part of Cevdet Pasha’s accounts strikingly shows: “Ali Pasha had always tried to hide his love for boys because of *the disapproval of the foreigners*.” Ali Pasha’s attempts to have his homoerotic affairs in secret to avoid the critique and disapproval of (Western) foreigners—travellers, diplomats, ambassadors—indicates how the changes from a homoerotic to heteroerotic matrix also occurred on the level of collective self-fashioning as a result of interactions with the Europeans.

Considering the colonial, orientalist European narratives that attributed sodomy and all other sexual deviances to the Ottomans from the sixteenth century onwards, we can see how nineteenth century Ottomans were well aware of these stereotypical representations, and kept their guard up under the European gaze in order to prove them wrong about their presumed sexual practices. This self-transformation and auto-correction to avoid orientalist European lenses was most visible in the new Turkish republic that defined itself as a western, civilized,

⁷ See Ze’evi’s excellent history of changing sexual discourses in medical, religious, legal and as theatrical spheres.

⁸ For more on heterosexualization in the process of modernization, see Kandiyoti’s articles, “Some Awkward Questions”; “Patterns of Patriarchy”; and “Gendering the Modern.”

modern, and national state in contrast to the backward Ottoman past. Within this republican condemnation of the Ottomans as perverts, Ismet Zeki Eyuboglu's 1968 *Divan Şiirinde Sapık Sevgi* [Perver Love in Divan Poetry], one of the earliest explorations of Ottoman homosexuality, uncovered the homoerotic nature of the Ottoman literary tradition to claim how deviant the boy-loving Ottomans were as opposed to the new secular, moral, and heterosexual Republic (the title itself is unironic). The modern project of heterosexualization henceforth reached its peak with the newly-born Turkish Republic's nationalist discourses of sexuality, which attributed all non-normative sexualities to the imperial "perverted" "boy-lover" Ottomans, in a way similar to orientalist European discourses.

Tracing the aesthetic image of the abducted boy within early modern Ottoman and English historical contexts, previous chapters show the male adult/boy dyad as an important component of the early modern erotic economy. This cultural history challenges modern colonial conceptualizations that attribute boy-love only to so-called oriental cultures. Recent critical work from postcolonial perspectives on pederastic cross-cultural erotics, sexual practices, and their temporal and geographical imaginaries have highlighted how pederastic discourse operates in the modernizing colonial representations.⁹ Tracing eroticized native boys within the colonial Asian context in *Brown Boys and Rice Queens: Spellbinding Performance in the Asias*, Eng-Beng Lim argues that Asia itself is cast as an actual and conceptual native boy; according to him, an eroticized native boy is a component of "a pedophilic Western modernity bearing the homoerotics of orientalism," awaiting a civilizing Euro-North American white savior (4). While this body of scholarship emphasizes modern discourses and explores the disavowal of pederasty in a Euro-North American context, *Traveling Sexualities* returns to the early modern context to

⁹ See Aldrich; Boone, "Modernist" and *The Homoerotics*; Lim; and Pérez.

show that native boys were abducted, exchanged, and circulated as a part of larger imperial and nascent colonial practices in Europe including the Ottomans. The homoerotics of modern European imperialism is embedded in early modern Ottoman and European representations of the eroticized abducted boy from the “other” culture.

My readings of Ottoman discourses and representations beside European ones offer connected histories through circulating discourses and common genealogies that have contributed to modern sexual notions. Indeed the nineteenth century European influence on Islamicate societies is undeniable, as Leslie Peirce notes, “whether by force of intellectual inspiration and imperialist aura or on the ground in the form of colonial administrators, missionaries, commercial agents, governesses, young Muslims returning from European educations, and so on” (1336). Rather than predominantly a colonial or imperialistic imposition by the West, a history of changing sexual discourses suggests that the changes taking place in Turkey were also *self-imposing*, and consistent and concurrent with widespread indigenous cultural concepts and trends. As I have argued elsewhere, while in Europe the older categories of sodomite, catamite, or effeminate man reemerge in the formation of the abnormal, pathologized homosexual identity—“the unrationalized coexistence of different models” in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s terms (47)—the Turkish discourses produce homosexuality as a new category blending with and often including the older categories while simultaneously disowning homosexuality as European “immorality” (145-63). Thus, ironically, and in a peculiar twist of definitions, the employment of the Western-originating categories of gay, lesbian, or homosexual to refer to all queer categories brings forth the danger of exclusion and oppression of queer people as Westernized, immoral perverts by the Turkish state and some other political groups. However, carefully studying *older* categories and their historical changes in literature (i.e.

abducted boy, *gulampare* [boy-lover], *emred* [boy], *guzeste* [man with beard], *levend* [adventurous young man], *luti* [sodomite], mukhannes [passive/bottom], *ubna* [catamite], *kocek* [dancing men], beautiful men, the feminine, the androgynous, the eunuch, the hermaphrodite, or the masculine woman, the unmarried woman, the dildo using woman, the intimate friend) will not only limn a strong literary history of and for sexually marginalized people and their expressions of same-sex desires, but also help us show the complexities of same-sex relations and representations.

In my endeavor to map traveling sexual discourses, as well as carefully trace distinct erotic figures, the preceding chapters provide an early modern picture of boy-love by zooming in on the abducted boy within the older man/boy erotic hierarchy; in doing so, *Traveling Sexualities* also challenges modern colonial sexual discourses that have attached pederasty solely to the Islamic world. The early modern pederastic erotic matrix reflects and informs, both in Ottoman and English accounts, the emerging colonial and cross-cultural imaginings through the figure of the boy who reveals the eroticization of social, colonial, and racial male hierarchies. The beautiful boy in *Traveling Sexualities*, *Circulating Bodies*, and *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters* tells us a compelling story that challenges homo/hetero, East/West, Christian/Muslim dichotomies in an era when Anglo-Ottoman encounters started with the prospect of, in Elizabeth II's words, "endeavouring that by mutuall trafique, the East may be joyned and knit to the West."

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