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Renaissance Humanism and the Ottoman ‘Other’:

Discourse Construction, Position and Power

by

Aramis Miranda-Reyes

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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Abstract

Renaissance Humanism and the Ottoman ‘Other’: Discourse Construction, Position and Power

by

Aramis Miranda-Reyes

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The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 had an overwhelming geopolitical impact on Western Europe which included a discursive shift that depended greatly on the ideological construction of this event by its contemporaries for its consequences. In other words, the nature of Western European discourse subsequent to the Fall of Constantinople was rooted in the psychological impact this loss of territory had in contemporary secular and church leaders as well as their functionaries, many of which were key humanist figures. Consequently, Renaissance writers who constructed the Ottomans as ‘others’, were also writing within a context of power relations. In this power binary they were in the weaker position and the Ottomans were the imperialists. This context of power relations will serve as the focal point in this study. As I see it, it is the determining factor in deciphering not only the meaning but the intent of Renaissance humanist discourse and its construction of the Ottoman ‘Other’.

My exploration of this ideologically based intellectual production will deconstruct the concept of ‘Turk’ as linguistic semic code thereby clearly delineating the characters and settings which are most indicative of this opposition. The additional application of Antonio Gramsci’s intellectual framework and Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism to these linguistic and thereby cultural and historical events will ultimately present us with a picture that reveals more about the West itself than it does about the actual people, culture and history of the Ottoman East.

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Introduction:

The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 had a colossal impact on the geopolitical landscape of Western Europe. One of the effects of this event was a discursive shift that can easily be characterized as an ideological construction on the part of its contemporaries. This construction was deeply entrenched and highly dependent on the impact this loss of territory had on contemporary secular and church leaders as well as their functionaries, many of which were key humanist figures. Renaissance Humanist writers who constructed the Ottomans as ‘others’, were also writing within a framework of positional language and thus of political power. In this power binary humanists (representing the Western European perspective) were in the weaker position and the Ottomans (representing the so-called “barbarians of the East”) were the imperialists. This is the context of political and intellectual power relations that will serve as the focal point of this study as it presents a strategically advantageous perspective from which to decode Renaissance humanists’ intellectual output on the Ottoman ‘Other’.

My exploration of this ideological construction in the period post-1453 through the early 16th century will first survey the dynamics and processes involved in humanism itself as the relevant intellectual movement and rhetoric as its main apparatus. Subsequently, the application of the theoretical works of Antonio Gramsci and Edward Said to these linguistic and cultural practices will open the space from which this schema of power can be better assessed. The result of these humanist intellectual pursuits will ultimately present us with less of an understanding of the Ottoman culture and much more of a reflection of the Western European needs, wants and agendas of the time. Gramsci’s cultural theory is most appropriate here because it speaks directly to the nature of Italian humanism as a movement whose philosophy develops in relation to existing political and economic events in Italian life. He speaks of Italian intellectuals of the

Renaissance or humanists as critical figures performing a crucial function in the process of social change.¹ Said's theory on the other hand opens the way for us to analyze and classify the effects and legacies of such intellectual production concerning the indicated cultural divide. Together they will aid us in deconstructing the *imago* of the West as the persistently superior culture that was so prevalent in humanist writings during this period.

Chapter I of this study will focus specifically on the academic history and rhetorical training encapsulated in Renaissance humanism post-1453. Humanism will thus be explored first and foremost from the point of view of rhetoric and language as ideologically charged intellectual tools for the construction and framing of discourse on the Ottoman other. Subsequently the application of Antonio Gramsci's social framework will serve to unify Renaissance humanism as a culture of rhetoric thereby opening the space from which we will examine humanist discursive practices, their agenda of social persuasion and their ultimate goal of western political unification against the Ottomans. We will also look at several contemporary personalities as well as certain ancient Greek and Latin sources to serve as authorities representative of these dynamics at work. Among these are important humanist figures such as Petrarch, Battista Guarino, Rodolphus Agricola, Lorenzo Valla, Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas More.

Chapter II will build on the dynamics presented in Chapter I by extending the analysis in the direction of humanist cultural and ideological constructions of Islam. We will compare perceptions, agendas and realities in order to analyze the Western image of the Ottoman Turk from several perspectives. Our intent will be to discover what amounts to transformative readings and politically charged interpretations of the culture of the Ottoman Turk as "other".

¹ Margaret L. King, "The Social Role of Intellectuals: Antonio Gramsci and the Italian Renaissance," *Soundings – An Interdisciplinary Journal* LXI (1978): 23.

We will use the specific discourses of Petrarch, Aeneas Piccolomini – later Pope Pius II, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Nicholas of Cusa as baselines for comparison. Finally, Chapter III will rate how the dynamics of Orientalism in humanist discourse established an elite discursive binary of power which aimed to politically unify Western Europe in a crusade against the Ottomans. I will summarize the formative aspects of the binary using both historiography and cultural theory in order to present a theoretical model of humanist discursive practices as well as to reach some conclusions in regards to humanism as a culture of rhetoric and as a tool for social persuasion. I will also take the opportunity for some speculation on certain political legacies of the movement affecting present times.

It is important to note that my overall focus in this study will remain for the most part on the secular (Italian) dialogue rather than the religious, even though much of the humanist discourse on the Ottoman is expressed in religious polemical terms. This is not an oversight. I believe religious polemics were indeed a powerful rhetorical tool but they were only one of several strategies used by humanists in their constructions as I will show. And though there is no question they were potent and very effective in polarizing the political atmosphere of the time, they will be treated only insofar as they are relevant to the binary in question. After all, the imaginary and insurmountable cultural division between East and West as an opposition of civilization vs. barbarism was a Herodotean invention² that came about centuries before either Islam or Christianity ever existed. As such religious polemics in our context will for the most part occupy the place of a medieval scholastic continuity adapted with minor changes by the new culture of rhetoric as yet another strategy for unification against the clear and present military danger posed by the Ottoman advance.

² Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 16.

Accordingly, my argument as a whole consists of the fact that humanism as culture of rhetoric, presented a discursive construction of the Ottoman “other” that was in many ways the natural result of the conditions under which it worked. I am presenting the view that the nature of the resulting discourse can be explained in terms of the training Renaissance humanists received and the deep rhetorical consciousness they shared. Of course it is understood that the humanist movement did not speak uniformly nor should we ever assume such a thing. As scholars many humanists pursued varied avenues of academic interest that had nothing to do with cross-cultural contact or political superiority. However, as Bisaha notes, even though they themselves did not write specifically on the subject, most humanists of this period remained secure in the “canon” of distorted knowledge on Islam their predecessors had created.³ This knowledge consigned Islam and the cultures of the East as declining and Western (Christian) Europe as not only the superior culture but also Christianity as the only faith that could lead to true salvation. Their unshakable and naturalized conception of western culture as eternally dominant was undoubtedly an element that fostered the environment in which the discourse of the Ottoman other was made possible.

³ Nancy Bisaha, “Petrarch’s Vision of the Muslim and Byzantine East”, *Speculum* 76 (2001): 285.

Chapter I:

Renaissance Humanism as Culture of Rhetoric

When we refer to humanism or even more specifically Renaissance humanism, we are indicating a larger than life concept, the scope of which must be clearly demarcated if it is to be analytically useful. Humanism as historical term refers to an intellectual and cultural movement but does not itself indicate a unified historical or scholarly entity but rather a network of historical signifiers or perhaps a “cluster of phenomena.”⁴ As such, this designation is used by historians and other academics to specify a common order or structure that runs throughout the varied positions, principles, achievements and events⁵ surrounding its participants. In other words, it serves as a kind of index.

For our purpose we will begin to define this complex and pervasive cultural movement of the early modern era using Ronald Witt’s simple acknowledgement that Renaissance humanism’s origin can be denoted as an “intention to imitate ancient Latin style”⁶ in its intellectual productions. This proclamation of intention presents us with a number of practices which provide us with a somewhat reliable account of the fundamental cultural and intellectual dimensions of the movement during this time period. The first and most important is developed in Battista Guarino’s (1434-1513) *De modo et ordine docendi et discendi* (The manner and order of teaching and learning, 1459). This extensively used educational treatise outlined the foundational methods and procedures through which professional teachers should instruct the imitation (*imitatio*) of classical authorship.

⁴ Eckhard Keßler, “Renaissance Humanism: The Rhetorical Turn,” in *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Angelo Mazzocco (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006), 181.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 22.

Guarino's referential text or as we would refer to it today - manual - called for students to read classical texts and "make excerpts of...those things in particular which seem worth remembering (*memoratu digna*) and are rarely found (*paucis in locis inveniri*)."⁷ The purpose of such textual extractions was so that students could later arrange them under a structure of similar headings thus providing systematic and thematic unification for later memorization. The end goal of such a curriculum was to encourage students to achieve the most varied knowledge (*scientia varia*) or as it was known to the Greeks *paideia* or to the Romans *humanitas*.⁸ In Guarino's time this method was referred to as "education and instruction in the good arts", *eruditio et institutio in bonas artes*.⁹ These acts of systematic instruction and education were in turn meant to generate certain rhetorical qualities in the mind of the student which transcended the literal knowledge of the words that were read and excerpted. They were meant to instill "adequate knowledge of all these matters."¹⁰ In essence, through these methods students were meant to learn to be *eloquent* not only by imitating the ancient Latin style as closely as possible but also to be knowledgeable of life.¹¹ Guarino himself states that "the student will inevitably learn also what life is all about, how to organize his life, and how to behave in the various situations of life, that is, how to live as a virtuous man, *a vir bonus*."¹²

These instructional methods were later expanded to apply beyond such art of prudent counseling and acting in every day life to that of the theoretical disciplines and scientific research¹³ by one of Guarino's former students, Rodolphus Agricola (1444-1485). Agricola himself was a famous humanist who is often credited with bringing Italian humanism to the

⁷ Keßler, *Renaissance Humanism*, 187. In this case and in all subsequent cases I will be using Keßler's own translation from the Latin of Guarino's *De modo et ordine* as used in his chapter.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 192 – I am using Keßler's own translation from the Latin of *Agricola's De inventione dialectica*.

northern countries of Europe. In his efforts, Agricola followed the example set by Cicero (106-43 BCE) who declares that “the perfect orator would be able to speak about everything in copious and varied ways and that there is only one kind of eloquence, which is applied in all areas of disputation.”¹⁴ The idea here was that the professional teacher should always be aware of the most important concepts, *praecipua*, of each discipline.¹⁵ At this point, based on the evolution of these scholarly methods and transcendent purposes, we can argue that by the late 15th century and the beginning of the 16th what we consider as *eloquence* in terms of humanist teaching, thinking and individual development in fact constitutes the method through which an intellectual culture based on rhetoric was being enacted.¹⁶ Eloquence of course being characterized as a ‘harmonious union between wisdom and style [whose] aim was to guide men toward virtue and worthwhile goals...’¹⁷

Rhetoric as Unifying Force and Method

While I have no wish to reduce humanism to any one single formula it is however fair to say that rhetoric occupied a pivotal place in Renaissance humanistic thought and practice. Rhetoric as system and method to achieve eloquence presents the intellectual post road so to speak travelled by humanists in various forms since the thirteenth century towards wisdom, virtue and persuasion. It is for many scholars the identifying characteristic¹⁸ and the unifying force of the movement. Hannah Gray encapsulates the relevant dynamic when she states that rhetoric “provided the humanists with a body of precepts for the effective communication of

¹⁴ Ibid., 192. I am using Keßler’s own translation from the Latin of Cicero’s *De Oratore*.

¹⁵ Ibid., 190.

¹⁶ Ibid., 193.

¹⁷ Hannah Gray, “Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24 (1963): 498.

¹⁸ Ibid.

ideas and, equally important, with a set of principles which asserted the central role of rhetorical skill and achievement in human affairs.”¹⁹

As such, it would be reasonable at this time to characterize humanists of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as a kind of professional group whose thought and action can be explicated on the basis of their immediate concerns.²⁰ In essence, the term "humanist," referred specifically to the professional teachers, orators, poets of the *studia humanitatis* or humanities which included in its curriculum the fields of grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy. These teachers often occupied chairs of rhetoric and wished to be known as men of eloquence.²¹ For them, unlike their predecessors the scholastics, the purpose of education was to inspire man to lead a good life in the active sense. The function of knowledge was not merely to demonstrate truth but to persuade people to accept such truth and apply it in their daily life. They believed that through the art of eloquence man's reason could be informed and his will stirred into action.²²

In many ways the humanists' main point of contention with medieval scholastic logic and scholastic Latin, was in its attitude toward knowledge itself. Their stress on the abstract, on the kind of intellectualism or intellectuality that had no true utility in human life struck men of eloquence as an institutional failure to communicate important truths with persuasive effect.²³ The two movements contrasted each other based on their perceived (both understood and misunderstood) formulas of actualization - "merely intellectual" (scholastics) on the one side,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 500.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 501.

and the "actively persuasive" (humanists) on the other.²⁴ Petrarch (1304-1374) himself expresses the fundamental aspect of humanist thinking:

“... [the great Roman authors] stamp and drive deep into the heart the sharpest and most ardent stings of speech, by which the lazy are startled, the ailing are kindled, and the sleepy aroused, the sick healed, and the prostrate raised, and those who stick to the ground lifted up to the highest thoughts and to honest desire. Then earthly things become vile; the aspect of vice stirs up an enormous hatred of vicious life; virtue and 'the shape, and as it were, the face of honesty,' are beheld by the inmost eye 'and inspire miraculous love' of wisdom and of themselves, 'as Plato says.'²⁵

Following Petrarchian and Ciceronian tradition, eloquence thus aimed to represent a unity of content, of structure, and form, that would never lose sight of the vital objectives that were to be realized through the collaborative efforts of argument and style.²⁶ Without such efforts truth would be voiceless, knowledge would never actively serve the realities of human affairs or address the earthly needs of existence. Accordingly, justice would not triumph and evil would not be conquered. The image of the humanist of this time can be found in the ideal orator who was “master of many arts and governor of his fellow men”, who through the sheer power of eloquence forged an inspirational bond between “the intellectual and practical spheres of human experience.”²⁷ Cicero in *De Oratore* (55 BCE) portrayed the power of persuasion and the influence the great orator could exert as follows:

It is the part of the orator, when advising on affairs of supreme importance, to unfold his opinion as a man having authority; his duty too it is to arouse a listless nation, and to curb its unbridled impetuosity. By one and the same power of eloquence the deceitful among mankind are brought to destruction, and the righteous to deliverance. Who more passionately than the orator can encourage to virtuous conduct, or more zealously than he reclaim from vicious courses? Who can more austere censure the wicked, or more gracefully praise men of worth?²⁸

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Petrarch, On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others, tr. H. Nachod in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Cassirer, Kristeller, & Randall (Chicago, 1948), 104. This is Petrarch quoting in his own work excerpts from Cicero's *De officiis* i. 5. 14.

²⁶ Gray, *Renaissance Humanism*, 504.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Cicero, *De oratore*, II, 35. The translation is that of E. W. Sutton in the Loeb edition of Cicero, *De oratore*, I (Cambridge, Mass., & London, 1948). This is the same translation Gray uses.

These are ideas and concepts of form and purpose which were repeated many times throughout humanist writing. They were truths that required no further proof for their validity as antiquity had already proved them to be wise and virtuous. Humanist eloquence was therefore charged with guiding men through the active life by providing them with the necessary knowledge and wisdom to approach whatever conditions or circumstances were encountered in a comprehensible and useful (*utilitas*) manner. In fact, a display of attention to overly-specific distinctions was often criticized as “word-splitting” on issues of little or no importance.²⁹ The most important goal therefore was to always “instruct by constructive synthesis.”³⁰ Consequently, such a conception did not link humanism with any one school of philosophy. This general method allowed men of different social positions, philosophical opinions, religious concerns or moral outlook³¹ to adapt it for their own purposes and agendas. Ultimately this was a matter of *decorum* – of actively responding to any circumstance by finding a balance between what is naturally called for in the situation and the individual’s character and principles.³²

And so, by now we understand humanist rhetoric of this period to refer to what Victoria Kahn summarizes as a “repertoire of means of persuasion ranging from the figurative language and formal organization of a text to the ethos and pathos of the speaker.”³³ These techniques are ultimately neutral instruments which ideally serve the good but are also available for any other purpose or agenda.³⁴ In simpler terms, this humanist conception of rhetoric is a discursive tool that does not contain an inherent ideology in the political sense. Instead it is a technique that has the ability to simultaneously accommodate both the active as well as the passive modes of

²⁹ Gray, *Renaissance Humanism*, 507.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 506.

³² Ibid.

³³ Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5.

³⁴ Ibid.

language without violating its central matrix. Essentially rhetoric can serve any purpose or agenda and thus may serve contradictory purposes or - as Kahn notes - *in utramque partem* (both sides of the question).³⁵ In this way, rhetoric ties to our on-going purpose precisely because its simultaneous service to multiple and contradictory interests leads to important implications for humanist literary and discursive constructions.

At this juncture it is important to re-iterate that though humanism cannot be reduced to any one specific philosophy, formula or dynamic, rhetoric played a particularly prominent role in humanist culture. Rhetoric was an art of speaking and writing which implied specific methods and rules of composition that are key to understanding and hermeneutically analyzing humanist writings.³⁶ Hence to understand the various undercurrents of meaning in humanist writings it is necessary to also understand the rules they traditionally applied to each effort and the strategic choices made by each author which, to a certain degree, reveal their individual intent. As such, it would be most beneficial at this time to observe two divergent examples of humanist rhetorical expression written around the same time but in different geopolitical spaces. This analysis will be useful because it will clearly illustrate the multiplicity of uses, purposes, agendas and modes of language the rhetorical method opened for all humanist intellectuals of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century regardless of geography.

For our comparison we will consider works by two leading humanist figures of the period - Thomas More (England, 1478-1535) and Niccolo Machiavelli (Florence, 1469-1527). Both of these writers partake in the humanist rhetorical context but they present radically different approaches to the same question - the role of the intellectual in politics. For instance, in Book II

³⁵ Khan, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, ix.

³⁶ John F. Tinkler, "Praise and Advice: Rhetorical Approaches in More's *Utopia* and Machiavelli's *The Prince*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19 (1988): 188.

of *Utopia* (1516) Thomas More adopts the “demonstrative art of praise”³⁷ in which he attempts to ideally reconcile what is useful with what is honorable by presenting his readers with an *imago* of the secular heaven on earth that does not exist.³⁸ An *imago* could be used to either praise or criticize a subject, because it depends on the “rhetorical vividness” or the effective painting of a picture or simile made of words for its intent to be discernible. It is the vivid similitude of an abstraction which by its very nature alerts us not to expect it to be literally true.³⁹ Instead *Utopia* as *imago*, challenges and appeals to its readers by violating the general rules of rhetorical *decorum*. It posits “an adversary context”⁴⁰ which we refer to as utopia. This context in turn asks questions, explores possible answers and institutes an on-going dialogue on important matters with its readers. This dialogue, much like Petrarch’s *Secretum* (1347-1353) is meant to stay unresolved so as to continue in an eternally cogent conversation with its audience.⁴¹

On the other hand, in *The Prince* (~1513) Niccolo Machiavelli presents us with the rhetorical mode of “the deliberative art of political advice.”⁴² Here Machiavelli assumes the role of debater and actively assails certain humanist traditions, including that of praise.⁴³ As we can see, both authors successfully use rhetorically based strategies but with different intent and for their own purposes. Thomas More presents that of the moralist via Raphael Hythloday’s demonstrative oration. Niccolo Machiavelli presents that of the realist via a mode of “discussion of policy [which] embraces persuasion and dissuasion.”⁴⁴ Unlike More, Machiavelli presents us with a critical understanding of what is useful and necessary not with what is normatively ideal or moral. In support of this assessment, Machiavelli himself states:

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 192.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 194.

⁴¹ Ibid., 195.

⁴² Ibid., 188.

⁴³ Ibid., 187.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 189.

As my intention is to write something useful for discerning minds, I find it more fitting to seek the truth of the matter rather than imaginary conceptions. Many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or heard of, because how one lives and how one ought to live are so far apart that he who spurns what is actually done for what ought to be done will achieve ruin rather than his own preservation. A man who strives to make a show of correct comportment in every circumstance can only come to ruin among so many who have other designs.⁴⁵

Here we can observe the fact that Machiavelli takes issue with the idealism of the humanist tradition but nevertheless takes great part in its central tenet - the certainty that classical literature was not only useful in the active life but also presented the kind of exemplarity of wisdom and knowledge that could impel an audience to effective political action.⁴⁶ Rhetorical persuasion is therefore the key to identifying humanist discourse, whether it be literary or political, as it is a strategy relevant to both. It should be noted that though rhetorical eloquence itself never aimed to be specifically political, the fact remains that the real-life (active) expression of its ideals did take place on a grand scale, as we shall subsequently see, in the political praxis of the time.

Simply put, even if an author experienced ambivalence towards certain humanist traditions, such as their tendency to characterize ideals in a utopian way or their rigid adherence to rhetorical rules, this did not prevent him from adapting certain techniques for his own purposes or agendas. This is mostly due to the fact that the authority for all deliberate textual constructions comes directly from the ancient Latin tradition as set forth by Cicero and Quintilian. In *De Oratore* for example, Cicero claimed that “the rules that are to be imparted on the subject of advisory speeches or of panegyrics... are for the most part common to both.” Similarly in *Institutio oratoria* (~95 CE) Quintilian (35-100 CE) observed - “panegyric is akin to

⁴⁵ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, in *The Essential Writings of Machiavelli*, tr. Peter Constantine (New York: Random House, 2007), 59.

⁴⁶ Albert Russell Ascoli and Victoria Kahn, ed. *Machiavelli and The Discourse of Literature*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 7.

deliberative inasmuch as the same things are usually praised in the former as are advised in the latter.⁴⁷

The humanists' belief in the importance of persuasive instruction, of using style and eloquence to lend immediacy, color, and force to their appeals also opened the discursive space for authors to state arguments which they could later claim had not been meant literally.⁴⁸ We see a useful example of this when we consider Lorenzo Valla's (1407-1457) attack on the validity of the *Donation of Constantine* (c. 8th century), titled *De Falso Credita et Ementita Constantini Donatione Declamatio* (The unfounded belief in and the alleged donation of Constantine, 1439). Valla called his work a "declamation," so as to denote it as an oratorical exercise. This kind of exercise called for the orator to construct convincing arguments for both sides of the same question (*in utramque partem*). Valla's primary concern is therefore with the verisimilitude of his argument - with what may be convincingly believed or reasonably taken to have occurred.⁴⁹ In this case, Valla combines argument from authority with a chain of probable truths and moral indignations so as to rhetorically present what would hopefully be received as conclusive argument and historical analysis.⁵⁰

Valla's work is one example of how rhetoric's methods aimed to persuasively present its audience with what was, or is, or will most probably be true.⁵¹ The results of such rhetorical efforts in the service of humanist historiography can thereby be characterized as creative.⁵² The questions Valla asks in his tract are based on a common sense approach that engages with what is most likely to have happened. The answers to his questions are in most respects imaginative

⁴⁷ Cited in Tinkler, *Praise and Advice*, 189.

⁴⁸ Gray, *Renaissance Humanism*, 511. See here for a close textual analysis of Valla's philological strategy.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

reconstructions whose purpose is to convince the audience of something that cannot be proven because scientific results are inaccessible. The success of such rhetoric would therefore be measured by the audience's acceptance of the proposed account of events or picture as a way of displacing or superseding that which is commonly accepted. In simpler terms, the humanist rhetorician engaged in historical analysis seeks to determine probabilities by hypothetical and deductive means as a way of achieving verisimilitude.

He judges situations and events based on a rhetorically based set of standards which predetermine what things are likely to happen, what behavior may be expected of certain men, what outcome may generally be assumed in certain situations.⁵³ Such method is limited however by the fact that it does not allow for the improbable to occur which in turn restricts the scope of that which is credible. In the end and just as Hanna Gray states - "The rhetorical approach to historical materials may, as it did in the hands of Valla, demolish an historical legend while painting a quite fictitious portrait of the institutions and figures of an entire historical period."⁵⁴

Rhetorical Methods as Foundations of Orientalist Constructions

Hanna Gray's characterizations bring to the forefront two important dynamics at play in the humanist rhetorical approach to historiography – we will refer to them as creative interpolation and textual transformation. Both concepts are fundamental to our understanding of rhetoric as the foundational framework of the orientalist discursive field against the Ottoman Empire we will analyze in the following chapter. First, we will address textual transformation for which Nancy Bisaha's analysis will serve best. Bisaha portrays the humanist rhetorical context and method as the indispensable tool through which humanists themselves were able to translate

⁵³ Ibid., 512.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

secular knowledge into a political, religious, military response to the very real Ottoman threat post-1453. This translation included a creative textual transformation in which humanists placed themselves as well as the Ottoman Turks. In her own words, “they stretched their ancient models in some very creative ways in order to make them fit the Turkish advance.”⁵⁵

This transformative reading of ancient texts by humanists meant that they not only engaged with sources in search of solutions to contemporary problems but also, and perhaps more importantly, to significantly alter their context to fit the current military crisis. In this way they extended legitimacy to their rhetoric in defense of their actions and in aggression towards the Ottoman enemy. A perfect example of such a strategic rhetorical response is found in Margaret Meserve’s discussion of Herodotus’ (484-425 BCE) writings as ethnographic source material after the fall of Constantinople. She reasons that the traumatic effect this event had on humanist intellectuals of the time was effectively responsible for the cessation of open-minded scholarship regarding the origin of the Turks. This in turn prompted later generations of humanists to consider the rise of Islam in more combative and less self-critical ways.⁵⁶

In effect, and much like the events of 9/11 in the United States, the fall of Constantinople fueled a discursive construction which influenced political, religious and philosophical thinking for generations to come. The humanist practitioners of the new and violent polemic had no use for the scholarly and therefore neutral approach of the ethnographic studies of those like Herodotus. They simply could not understand or emulate the scholarly detachment the ancients practiced while in the midst of what was now a defensive war against the Turks. Meserve characterizes their response as follows – “as they contemplated the origins and rise of the

⁵⁵ Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 43.

⁵⁶ Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, 17.

conquerors of Constantinople, their responses recall the fear and doubt expressed by fourth and fifth-century Romans, both pagan and Christian, in the face of the encroaching “barbarian hordes” of their day.”⁵⁷

In simpler terms, this psychological state of fear and paranoia, which to a certain degree was warranted, prompted humanist functionaries to contemplate the rise of the Ottoman Empire in terms of the ancient opposition suggested by Herodotus - that of European civilization eternally pitted against Asian barbarity.⁵⁸ We see elements of this discursive binary in Pope Pius II’s letter to Sultan Mehmed II (1432-1481) in 1461 which we will also consider in a later chapter. However, given the fact that Herodotus’ scholarly ethnographic work held no real weight in 15th century humanist thought but his conception of a cultural opposition between East and West did, we can assume there was a certain ideological strategy guiding humanists of this period in their choice of works and the context in which these same works were used. In essence, humanists carefully chose to resuscitate only the works of ancient ethnography, political theory and historical analysis that, in true rhetorical form (or in what they envisioned to be *decorum*), served the specific discursive agenda of the moment. Meserve notes that they recovered certain classical ethnographical and literary conventionalities about barbarians, and also creatively tampered with medieval sources so as to make them sound more historically credible than they actually were.⁵⁹ These efforts were fueled by the need to create a particular and decisive image of the Ottoman Turk as an enemy of Europe in as many different dimensions as possible. Their ultimate goal of course being the cultural and military unification of Western Europe against the aggressor who took the great city of Constantinople.

⁵⁷ Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, 151.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Consequently, when we consider humanist scholarship on the origin and cultural background of the Ottoman Turk what we find is an unmistakable dynamic of ideology at work. By looking to revive only specific ancient references and creatively interpolating content in others so as to make them coincide with the dominant political and intellectual status quo, humanists were purposely propagating a binary of their own. One in which they inspired, persuaded, united and convinced the princes and leaders of the west to take military action, or crusade, against the Ottoman external ‘other’. Professor Anna Akasoy in one of her lectures accurately characterizes this dynamic as “campaigning against an external enemy is always a good way of enhancing inner cohesion.”⁶⁰

This is the crux of the humanist orientalist discursive field described by Nancy Bisaha. It is a form of discourse aimed at creating, fomenting even forcing religious, ethnic and cultural unity in the face of a great military threat. The creation of the Ottoman Turk as the oppositional ‘other’ in humanist discourse hence served a multitude of cultural, discursive and political functions – all of them ultimately designed to bolster the subjective debasing of the Ottoman as the inferior enemy culture. At the same time, this discourse aimed to enhance the internal cohesion of the Western powers in a way that bolstered their political and military frame of mind. The goal was to engage the Ottoman Turk forces not from a defensive or paranoid position but from one of strength, power and above all justified wrath in the most biblical sense. In other words, crusade.

Humanists as Renaissance Intellectuals

So far in this study I have presented the influential institutions of rhetoric and humanism as state apparatuses engaged in a social objective and a political purpose. I have portrayed them

⁶⁰ Akasoy, Notes 3 February: 1453, 5.

as mediums and tools through which a certain kind of ideology found expression in the late 15th century. This perspective makes clear that humanism as culture of rhetoric and as guiding principle in the educational sector was primarily responsible for what Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) denoted as the formation of the intellectual.

Italian philosopher, journalist, and linguist Antonio Gramsci's theoretical framework shows us that the dynamics at play in the creation of the ideas and concepts we use to judge, understand and act towards a particular culture are clearly demarcated in the intellectual positions assumed by state power structures.⁶¹ These positions are influenced by current events and thus act as responses to present challenges to the existing dominant ideology. In our context, the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman military advance serves as the situation or event which most directly influences the intellectual positions and the European foreign policy towards the various empires of the East in this period. As a result, the role of the intellectual – or in our case, humanist - is critical and decisive in the perpetuation of the dominant social discourse. They are not only the product of these institutions but also the future teachers of this ideology.

Unlike Edward Said's (1935-2003) conception, which characterizes the intellectual's work as having little or no policy implications or political significance unless he is a professional politico himself,⁶² Gramsci's theory portrays the intellectual as a vigorous participant in the construction and organization of society. Their task is to conquer ideologically by creating hegemony. The leading organizational intellectuals of the Italian Renaissance or organic intellectuals as Gramsci refers to them, acted as "the managers" attached to the political elites

⁶¹ Antonio Gramsci, "The Formation of the Intellectuals," in *Selections from Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Elecbook, 1999), 141.

⁶² Edward Said, *Orientalism – 25th Anniversary Edition*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 9.

within each city-state.”⁶³ They generated ideas useful to the rulers whose world-view they shared or adopted. They triggered pivotal political processes by incorporating discordant political stances into homogeneous concepts and philosophies that persuaded others to act in similar fashion.⁶⁴ Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-1464) – later Pope Pius II (1458-1464) was one such organic intellectual figure. Piccolomini, before becoming Pope, was a humanist, diplomat and poet. His letters as reports carried not only administrative and organizational information for his masters, one of which was Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III (1415-1493), but persuasive council and recommendation for policies and other types of action based on his hands-on political experience.

Per this example, of which there are many others, one can see why Gramsci charges the Renaissance intellectual with the vital tasks of integrating thought and creating ideology through persuasion. The first task is purely intellectual; the second is political.⁶⁵ In this way intellectuals not only participated in the political process; they triggered and organized it. In his own words:

“The philosophy of an age is not the philosophy of this or that philosopher, of this or that group of intellectuals, of this or that broad section of the popular masses. It is a process of combination of all these elements, which culminates in an overall trend, in which the culmination becomes a norm of collective action and becomes concrete and complete (integral) "history.”⁶⁶

In the next chapter, we will use this conception in its fullest extent as a tool and a lens through which we will see and understand the intensities and the contradictions existing within the “discursive shift” Renaissance humanist intellectuals expressed in the era post-1453.

⁶³ Ibid., 142.

⁶⁴ King, *Social Role of Intellectuals*, 41.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 30

⁶⁶ Gramsci, *Formation of the Intellectuals*, 658

Chapter II:

Humanist Ideology and Early Modern Orientalism

Now that we have a clear understanding of the two pivotal cultural phenomena – the role of the Renaissance intellectual - or humanist - in politics and rhetoric as the method and main instrument of intellectual production – we can proceed to discuss how their interplay furthers our understanding of the western discourse on the Ottoman ‘other’. To begin then we turn to one of Professor Anna Akasoy’s lectures on Renaissance Culture in which she asks an important question regarding central figure Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini. Piccolomini was a celebrated humanist who in 1458 became Pope Pius II – “What was the significance of the humanist interest in grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy (instead of the medieval sic-et-non of dialectics) for his attitude to the Ottomans?”⁶⁷ This question addresses two aspects relating to the role of the intellectual in politics and humanist discourse creation during this period. First is the intellectual formation of an important humanist figure, Piccolomini. And second, but perhaps more importantly, the fact that a humanist rose to the position of central authority within the Christian church.

In modern secular culture, the rise of a man so distinguished in humanistic and classical learning to the top position within a religious institution would pose a contradiction in terms; particularly since, as Professor Akasoy describes, “the holistic enterprise of being a humanist, [consisted in] combining the different learned traditions in a rhetorical as well as moral exercise, personal as well as civic...[Traditions such as letter-writing to and from individuals which gained new popularity at this time were] connected to Petrarch’s (1304-1374) rediscovery of

⁶⁷ Anna Akasoy. “Notes 3 February: 1453.” CUNY-Blackboard, The Graduate Center, 4 (2014); amended on 12 August, 2015.

Cicero's (106-43 BCE) letters, which is sometimes seen to mark the beginning of humanism and the Renaissance."⁶⁸

However and as previously noted, during the 15th century the intellectual in society was not excluded or isolated from political matters as they are by and large today⁶⁹ as illustrated by the rise of humanist Piccolomini to Pope. Becoming Pope, as a rule meant assuming a post which was in many ways an amalgamation of central political, religious and social powers; all of which required a deliberate acquiescence and active instigation of the dominant institutional ideological system. We can surmise that Piccolomini - the humanist - was able to rise to such a position because he was successful in translating his secular knowledge into influence, the basis of which was the sharing of certain goals and values with key figures in the institution of the church. In other words, by actively supporting the unification of the Roman Church with the Eastern Church and fiercely campaigning for an all-encompassing *European* armed response - a crusade - against the Turkish advance, Piccolomini successfully acquired the necessary political and institutional support necessary for his rise to the top leadership position. At the time, both of these ideological positions were considered essential and defining by the curia for any candidate aspiring to such a position.⁷⁰ Ideology thus presents us with an essential component of humanist intellectual output and in particular Pius II's rhetoric against the Ottoman which we will examine later in this chapter. For that reason, it is important to define ideology as a term and as a dynamic, to place it in the appropriate context and discern some of its most basic functions.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ See Chapter I, page 19 of this study.

⁷⁰ Norman Housley, "The Three Turks," In *Religious Warfare in Europe 1400-1536* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 138.

Ideology, according to Louis Althusser (1918-1990), is social structure.⁷¹ It is the structure that is actualized and operationalized by way of “distinct and specialized [state] institutions” - such as churches, schools, and legal institutions. These institutions serve as tools of the state to maintain popular compliance to the dominant political and social ideology within the polity. These institutions encourage discipline within the ranks of followers by promising stability, safety, knowledge and even religious salvation if they comply with their regiments. In so doing, these institutions help secure general consent and thus the maintenance and self-reproduction of hegemony.⁷² By this flow of logic, it is reasonable then to treat ideology as an essential tool necessary for achieving internal group unity, social acceptance of the intellectual innovations of the group and subsequently political power.

An excellent example of ideology as social structure within the humanist movement arises in the figure of Petrarch (1304-1374) himself. For most scholars, Petrarch represents the standard by which all humanists are measured and by which those in the movement measured themselves. Through his attempts to create something different and more useful than the institutionally received knowledge practiced and maintained by the scholastic quest for concordance⁷³ Petrarch pierced many actual and perceived barriers on scholarship represented by previously institutionalized practices of medieval scholasticism. As a result he achieved what Riccardo Fubini called the full ideological consciousness of the movement.⁷⁴ Ronald G. Witt agrees with this assessment and portrays Petrarch as the provider of the clearest conception of the humanist enterprise during this period.⁷⁵ Witt characterizes this so-called enterprise as an

⁷¹ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

⁷² Further explication of this model is presented in Chapter 3, pages 55-56 of this study.

⁷³ Riccardo Fubini, “Humanism and Scholasticism – Toward an Historical Definition,” in *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* ed. Angelo Mazzocco, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 130.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁷⁵ Witt, *In The Footsteps of the Ancients*, 231.

expression of the deeply felt need of Italian intellectuals to find ways through which they could make sense of Italy's distinctive political, urban and lay character.⁷⁶

In his view, Petrarch was the first of the humanists to articulate a theory of imitation (*imitatio*) by way of an eclectic method that urged each writer to create his own personal form of expression. Such an expression was to be based on what he considered to be the most agreeable elements in the writings of ancient authors, particularly those of the Roman republic.⁷⁷ Petrarch thus selected which writers to imitate based on his own criteria. That is why he represented himself as “an imitator of the ones who are endowed either with a more certain verisimilitude or with a greater authority.”⁷⁸ In this way, Petrarch transforms the medieval model of doctrinal “authority” and concordance of institutionally received truths favored by the scholastics into a system of subjective verisimilitude which, in many ways, resembled individual rational judgment.⁷⁹

Petrarch's textual choices and overall method for achieving verisimilitude clashed with and actively refuted the scholastic culture of concordance which, as embodied by Saint Bonaventure (1221-1274) in his commentary to the *Sentences* (1250), had a very specific and limited purpose: “No one must suspect me of trying to construct something new; I shall confine myself to being a poor and humble compiler.”⁸⁰ For the scholastics, authors were texts but for Petrarch, and for many of those that followed, the author reverts to being a person, an individual, with privacy and worth in his own right rather than a representative figure of an institutionally recognized hierarchical schema. This private dimension was conceptualized by Petrarch through

⁷⁶ Ibid., 497.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 498.

⁷⁸ Fubini, *Humanism and Scholasticism*, 130. Translation of Petrarch is Fubini's own.

⁷⁹ Ibid. This is Fubini referencing the work of Rolf Schönberger, *La Scolastica medievale*.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 131. As cited in Schönberger, *La Scolastica medievale*, 89 & 146.

one of his favorite adjectives – *familiaris*.⁸¹ Petrarch’s focus thus remained on secular texts rather than sacred ones so as “not to confuse together so different matters.”⁸² This was in clear contradiction to the established practice as postulated by Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) in *De Doctrina Christiana* (397 CE) which effectively subsumed the quality of all texts under the authority of sacred texts.⁸³ This challenge to the textual authority of theology and the hierarchical order of learning was welcomed and subsequently taken up by Petrarch’s young followers, one of them being Lorenzo Valla.

In Petrarch’s and Valla’s rationale, personal judgment as it related to texts or to life in general was to unfold independent of doctrine and traditions. It was to be tilted toward reality directly and never subsumed under or mediated by theology. In other words, the evaluation of reality was to be based on the logical but subjective (*verisimilitudo certior*) distinction between truth and falsehood, and not on the authority of accepted texts.⁸⁴ In *Elegantiae* (1471) for example, Valla states – “Faith is tantamount to persuasion and as such, it does not require the comfort of proof.”⁸⁵ This statement sets faith and therefore theology apart from that which defines the humanist enterprise. Faith requires no proof because, logically speaking, if you have faith then you believe. And if you believe then you have already been persuaded.

In effect, what Petrarch and his followers were postulating was an alternative to medieval Christian doctrine. Their aim was to free reason, creativity and individual judgment of reality from what they perceived to be restrictions posed by scholastic theological boundaries and their institutionally guided normative methods. Perhaps because of this radical⁸⁶ departure from

⁸¹ Ibid., 131-132.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 130.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 134.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 135.

established scholarship humanism failed to obtain large public support during this time. Instead and for the most part, it continued to be an elite movement, recognized but mostly under the sponsorship of scholasticism which always demanded certain minimum requirements of its own be met before *studia humanitatis* was allowed in higher university curricula.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, its effect on the powerful elite and their functionaries was both palpable and significant. The secular intellectual ideology proposed and espoused by Petrarch came not only to define the humanist movement but also became the ongoing basis and the overall method most prevalent in the work of its participants. It was the measure and the unifying principle that helped galvanize the movement into a discursive field that lasted through the next century and beyond.

In many ways, *studia humanitatis* influenced the political (in terms of European foreign policy towards the East) and the literary output of many of the most recognizable intellectual and literary figures of this time. One such exemplary figure is Niccolo Machiavelli. In the life and work of Niccolo Machiavelli we find an instance of unification of method, purpose and practice as prescribed by Petrarch.

Machiavelli as Exemplary Humanist

Machiavelli's work, in true Petrarchan form, developed to a certain extent as his own individual form of expression but there is also clear evidence that despite creative divergence, it also followed, in many respects, the traditional humanist model. For example, in *The Prince* we find a clear influence by the ancient Latin tradition representing adherence to the standard humanist model. At the same time we also find characteristics common in the vernacular tradition such as the practice of dividing treatises into chapters, which represent divergence into

⁸⁷ Ibid., 136

more original authorial forms.⁸⁸ And while *The Discourses* (~1517) advances the case for further originality due to its lack of precedents in either of those traditions, those like Carlo Dionisotti find Machiavelli's oeuvre to be firmly grounded in the fifteenth-century humanist tradition of critical interpretation as exemplified in Poliziano's *Miscellanea* (1489) and Crinito's *De honesta disciplina* (1504).⁸⁹ Both of these works represent models from which Machiavelli acquired the strategy used by artists and lawyers of the time to reduce the discourse on the quaestio to a base text.⁹⁰ This formation makes Machiavelli's work all the more interesting because it creates a clear equivalency between the political and the literary in his work. The significance of this link between the two genres in Machiavelli's work is fully explored later in this chapter. For the moment, we will assert that in Machiavellian discourse political theory was implied in literary terms with the result being a kind of bilingual literature through which the author addressed his own political concerns. In other words, the format may be a theatrical comedy, as in *La Mandragola* (1518), or a favula, as in *Belgafor* (1518) but the message couched in such works, as we shall see, always aimed at the political.⁹¹

From (and through) *The Discourses* onwards Machiavelli presented a certain commitment to the more geographically inclusive, non-Tuscan, *Italian* literature of his age.⁹² From this point forward we can trace a passage or evolution in style and intent in his work; from the first person style we recognize in *The Prince* and *The Discourses* to a depiction of ideas he promotes and directs from behind the scenes as we see in the proems of the *Florentine Histories* (written ~1520, first published posthumously in 1532).⁹³ It is in fact Dionisotti's other

⁸⁸ Carlo Dionisotti, "Machiavelli, Man of Letters," in *Machiavelli and The Discourse of Literature*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Victoria Kahn (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993), 44.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 47.

⁹² Ibid., 47.

⁹³ Ibid., 49.

contention, and one with which I also agree, that this change should be seen as a result of the author's literary efforts, particularly those within the genre of comic theatre. In effect, the genius of *La Mandragola* for example could not have been made a reality without the author first expanding his frame of reference beyond the rhetorical rules of humanism to achieve an intellectual synthesis between the political and military events of Florentine life and his own personal experiences. This correlation went on to inform and unify in various ways this author's discourse in a way that was not only expressive of his own ideas and concerns but also firmly based on the Petrarchan/humanist tenet of *imitatio*.

John M. Najemy in "Machiavelli and Geta: Men of Letters" considers the "segretario fiorentino" as the intellectual figure which best provides the central connection between the literary and the political traditions of the time. His reasoning is primarily based on the notion that Machiavelli took politics (which Najemy distinguishes from institutionally codified, affiliated, and approved knowledge imparted by political doctrine) more seriously than most of his humanist predecessors (specifically Dante and Petrarch) and literature more seriously than say Bruni. But the key point in his assessment is that Machiavelli faced and revised for his own ends the complexities of humanist literary tradition and real life politics in his work without submitting to such common humanist temptation as encapsulating the goals of politics or literature in any kind of utopian conception of the terms.⁹⁴ Instead, Machiavelli expounds the active life in a philosophy of transformation, adaptation and necessity through which all earthly, human goals can be achieved.

Along the same lines, Giulio Ferroni argues that *La Mandragola*, masterpiece of comedic theater that it is, still manages to articulate a serious underlying anthropology of continual

⁹⁴ John M. Najemy, "Machiavelli and Geta: Men of Letters," in *Machiavelli and The Discourse of Literature*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Victoria Kahn (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993), 56.

change and adaptation to fortune which, in many ways, denies the structuralist hermeneutic hierarchy of low subject matter (comedy) and high seriousness (politics). In this analysis, Machiavelli's comedy is not the intermediate or lesser work of a serious political thinker. Instead, it is a medium through which the author offers a polemical analysis of the corruption and slanderous practices he finds to be so prevalent in contemporary Italian society and politics.⁹⁵ In simple terms, it is an individual rational judgment on the status quo which, stylistically speaking, encapsulates a conception of man looking for ways to exist and thrive amidst opposing life forces that shatter the *dignitas hominis*.⁹⁶

In essence, through his comedy, Machiavelli presents an entertaining commentary on daily man transforming the status quo via a kind of rhetorical exercise in which “gravity and seriousness [become] levity and vanity.”⁹⁷ Comedy then becomes a medium through which people adapt in order to triumph over the kind of individual life circumstances that can no longer be properly evaluated through the general schema of political meditation.⁹⁸ In this way, Machiavelli uses his situational comedy to present the different ways in which people must transform themselves in order to adapt to the treachery, pretense, dishonesty, and deception he observes and experiences in daily life. The necessity (*necessitas*) for the individual to adapt and thereby to transform for survival, for success and for happiness in this world is the key to facilitating and understanding the coexistence of behavioral and moral contraries within Machiavelli's oeuvre.

⁹⁵ Giulio Ferroni, “Transformation and Adaptation in Machiavelli's *Mandragola*,” *Machiavelli and The Discourse of Literature*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Victoria Kahn (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993), 12.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

John F. Tinkler points out that the deliberative topos of *necessitas* recurs often in the infamous chapters fifteen to eighteen of *The Prince*. He cites two of the best known passages within these chapters as evidence. First, at the close of the first paragraph of chapter 15, in which Machiavelli insists that "it is necessary [e necessario] for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn the capacity of not being good, and how to use this capacity and not use it, according to the necessity of the case [secondola necessita]". And second, in which he uses both *necessitas* and *possibile* as the ancients knew them, "[a prince] holds to what is right when he can but knows how to do wrong when he must [come di sopra dissi, non partirsi dal bene, potendo, ma sapere intrare nel male, necessitato]." The idea conveyed here is that a prince must act according to honor, but the crucial perspective acknowledges what Cicero knew, that "if a thing is necessary . . . it must take precedence...of all the remaining considerations, alike of honour and of profit."⁹⁹

Hence in this conception, the topos of *necessitas* is directly linked to what is *possibile*. This is the source of Machiavelli's textual realism and thus the nature of his verisimilitude. Machiavelli rejects any course of action and therefore any advice he considers impossible. And in so doing he follows Cicero's advice which states that "the primary considerations to be kept in view...are what action is or is not possible and what course is necessary or not necessary."¹⁰⁰ As a result, Machiavelli insists on advice that is *utile*, that has a direct practical application in the *negotium* of politics and therefore in life.¹⁰¹ As practical deliberator, Machiavelli presents that which is useful as advisable, and what is advisable as praiseworthy. The implication here is that "to pursue utility at the expense of honor is itself honorable, praiseworthy."¹⁰² It is thereby made

⁹⁹ Cited in Tinkler, *Praise and Advice*, 199-200.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 200

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 205

clear that this kind of advice can rarely live up to the traditional lofty humanist ideal because its priority is not found in its transcendental ethics but in their practicality. In essence, we are being advised to properly adjust our thinking and conform our individual actions to the standards of what is needed in the specific situation (*decorum*) if we are to achieve success in any endeavor and also if we are to be honorable.

This idea brings us back to Ferroni's conception of the "passage from great things to vain things"¹⁰³ in Machiavelli's writings. Understanding as we do now the practical deliberations of the author, we can see the inclusion of comedy in his oeuvre as a serious and strategic move towards a discourse that takes the full measure of humanity, including its various contradictions and shortcomings. For example, in *La Mandragola* the character of Lucrezia is described as a shrewd young woman, much loved by her husband who despite his feelings for her deceives her. This presentation of a character that is both shrewd and deceived if taken at face value would represent a dichotomy, a gratuitous contradiction in terms and a shortcoming in terms of the character's construction. But Machiavelli does not take such an obvious position. Instead he affirms the positive value of such a deception by explaining and justifying it precisely through Lucrezia's shrewdness. Simply put, Lucrezia's astuteness is confirmed by the fact that she accepts and plays along with her husband's deception. Why? Because such an acceptance of the situation will in the end, as Ferroni states, "offer her felicitous adaptation to Fortune."¹⁰⁴ The laughter in such a situation is incited based on a cooperative effort between the audience who knows of the deception, and the actions of the protagonist on stage who also knows but does not admit it openly. It is a kind of invitation to the audience to be complicit in the deceit and to learn from it.

¹⁰³ Ferroni, *Transformation and Adaptation*, 83.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 88

Thus, Machiavelli's oeuvre taken as a whole is in many ways a practical assertion of the equal distinction of the serious and the comic, of the importance of their coexistence in human behavior and thus to Machiavelli's unified thought process. Ferroni theorizes that the coexistence of the comic and the serious in the author's work presents us with an anthropology in which only by the individual's continual adaptation to the variations of Fortune can he survive and be successful. In other words, our good fortune in nature depends on our individual ability to continuously take opposing action in response to whatever extremes life presents to us.¹⁰⁵ The search for this perpetual and happy adaptation to Fortune and to nature is the central dynamic through which all the Machiavellian paradoxes highlighting the necessity for the coexistence of behavioral and moral contraries can be maintained. Machiavelli himself summarizes this in *Chapter Eighteen of The Prince* via the affirmation of the necessity of "knowing how well to use both the beast and the man" and in the mention of the centaur Chiron, as the symbol of the coexistence of different natures and of opposed behaviors.¹⁰⁶ In this way, Machiavelli discovers the space of contradiction and claims it as his own.

This is where the figure of humanity – containing both the magnificent and the comic - finds its place within Machiavelli's discourse. The quest in life therefore is not to resolve the contradictions of human existence, as other humanists would, under an exceptional rhetorical and transcendental unification. Rather it is to strive, to act with the intention of inflicting direct intervention, no matter how impossible our success, in the real world. Again, Machiavelli himself states in *The Prince* that "many have believed and now believe human affairs so controlled by Fortune and by God that men with their prudence cannot manage them... Nonetheless,...I judge it true that Fortune may be mistress of one half of our actions but that even

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 84.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

she leaves the other half, or almost, under our control."¹⁰⁷ It is therefore clear that how we make use of that which is under our control for our own advantage and success is a critical and deliberative nexus of Machiavellian thought.

This is the anthropological conception that operates in and unifies all Machiavellian constructions. The myth of transformation and of adaptation to Fortune opens the space for comedy in the interval between political treatises. The high and low binary of the subject matter thus becomes irrelevant. What is of interest, what is in fact important here is the exploration of Machiavelli's formation of humanity behind the comedy, in which man as individual searches continually for new ways of transformation and adaptation in order to survive the extreme variations of fortune, achieve success and be happy (*felice*). Thus it is clear that his ultimate aim is political. As master deliberator Machiavelli uses his comedy to enter the consciousness of his audience and spark an intellectual catharsis. He wants to challenge people's imagination and thereby transform the existing political order. He recognizes that a change in the mentality of the individual is the most permanent. In Machiavelli's discourse, the first purpose is to transform the political status quo away from the medieval scholastic, institutional, shared, religious mentality via a deliberate adaptation of the soul of the individual so as to make it possible for him to think, act and be in useful and beneficial ways rather than in "approved" ways. After all, and just as Nancy Bisaha notes, Machiavelli's view seems to be in line with that of another humanist, Salutati, who states – "The worth of a nation depends on the character and success of its people rather than its bloodline or religion."¹⁰⁸

This conception of the socio-political allows Machiavelli to consider the added question of the Turks in a less biased manner than most of his contemporaries or even his predecessors.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Tinkler, *Praise and Advice*, 195.

¹⁰⁸ Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 178.

Margaret Meserve points out that Machiavelli is the first humanist to think of the Turks without thinking of and objecting to their religion.¹⁰⁹ While not being completely immune to the fears of the Turkish military threat¹¹⁰ Machiavelli's long career as envoy, diplomat and secretary within the Florentine regime, appears to have provided him with a more realistic view of foreign policy and of neighboring powers.¹¹¹ We can see evidence of his somewhat detached appraisal in Book 3 of *The Prince* where he analyzes the Ottoman style of government in the Balkans and again in Book 4 when he compares the governments of the Turks and the French. In this scenario, it is the French who are presented in a negative, barbaric light. The reason is simple. At this time it is the French who constitute the more immediate threat to Italian geo-political stability. In true rhetorical style, Machiavelli's discourse on the Ottoman was balanced by his own more urgent concerns for the well-being of his own principality.

Western Constructions and The Ottoman 'Other'

In contrast to Machiavelli's balanced rhetorical conception of the Ottoman, central figure Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini – later Pope Pius II, presents a completely opposite view on the matter while still maintaining strong links to the humanist rhetorical traditions of *decorum* and *utramque partem*. Machiavelli's decorum, or active response to what was called for in his situation (as an agent free of institutional concerns) required him to consider only what was best for his immediate principality, Italy. Piccolomini's response, on the other hand had to take into account the institutional and thereby ideological demands of the church of which he was head as well as the whole of Christendom as his principality. Thus all the religious, political, social and military complexities reflected in his discourse make it stand out the most within this context. It

¹⁰⁹ Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, 9.

¹¹⁰ Niccolò Machiavelli, *La Mandragola*, in *The Essential Writings of Machiavelli* ed. Peter Constantine (New York: Random House, 2007), 455.

¹¹¹ Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 178.

is his voice that most clearly frames Islamic culture in general as the opposing ideology to Christendom. For example, responding immediately to the news of Constantinople's fall to the Ottoman advance, Piccolomini labeled the event as a "second death for Homer and a second destruction of Plato."¹¹² Added to this was the loss of security which the city had represented for Western Europe for centuries. For many the "bulwark of Christendom" was a barrier between Europe and the infidel.¹¹³ This puts into clear perspective not only the prevalent fears of Western European powers but also the cultural and intellectual assessment of their enemy.

In other words, in the midst of a golden age of art and learning the presence of the Islamic other incited a fear of a return to the Petrarchan "Dark Ages" at the hands of an eastern enemy. This enemy however was not just a military opponent but instead represented a culture which by all accounts occupied a most sinister corner within the European imagination - as a brutal and libidinous barbarian who had little or no regard for learning or the arts.¹¹⁴ Piccolomini eloquently lamented such losses:

Until today, there remained a record of ancient wisdom in Constantinople, and as though it were the home of letters, no Latin seemed learned enough unless he had studied a while in Constantinople. The fame accorded to Athens as the seat of wisdom while Rome flourished, seemed to apply to Constantinople.¹¹⁵

Venetian humanist and Greek book trader Lauro Quirini (1420-1479) also drives home the conception of the Turks as intellectually unworthy of possessing the great city of Constantinople.

In a letter to Pope Nicholas V (1397-1455) Quirini described the loss as follows:

¹¹² Ibid., 2.

¹¹³ Ibid., 64.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Cited in Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 65.

The overthrow of an entire people has been accomplished—the name of the Greeks has been erased...Consequently, the language and literature of the Greeks, invented, augmented, and perfected over so long a period with such labor and industry, will certainly perish!¹¹⁶

Implicit here is the sense that the Turks are fundamentally opposed to high culture and to learning. In both their minds, the beautiful architecture, learned arts and great center of knowledge represented by Constantinople would only be despoiled or eradicated by the presence of such beings as the Turks.¹¹⁷

Piccolomini further expands this conception in his letter to Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), Roman Catholic Cardinal and Vicar General in the Papal States, where he characterizes the city's military conquest as a significantly worse attack than anything the barbarian hordes of the ancient past ever did or could have inflicted. In his own words:

Xerxes and Darius, who once afflicted Greece with great disasters, waged war on men, not letters. However much the Romans reduced the Greeks to their power, they not only did not reject Greek letters, but they are reputed to have embraced and venerated them so much that a man was consequently considered to be very learned only when he seemed to be thoroughly practiced in Greek speech... Now under Turkish rule, the opposite will come to pass; [they are] savage men, hostile to good manners and to good literature.¹¹⁸

Piccolomini rounds out this characterization by stating – “they are steeped in luxury, study little, and are overcome by laziness. Into whose hands has Greek eloquence fallen, I do not know; who of sound mind does not lament it?”¹¹⁹ And finally, he refutes the mythical Trojan origin of the Turks as it would give them cousinhood to the ancient Romans: “The Turks are truly not, as many judge, of Asian origin, which they call Trojan; the Romans, who are of Trojan origin, did not hate literature.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 67

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 67-68.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

At every turn, Piccolomini and his ilk deny the Turks equal footing with other great adversaries in history. In their view none of their ancient counterparts are as bad as the Turks themselves. Bisaha theorizes a discursive connection for such rationale by way of Augustine and the historian Orosius (~375-418 CE), who situated (Arian) Christian invaders on a higher moral plan than any of the peoples they conquered.¹²¹ And while such a traditional and “authoritative” connection is quite valid and more than likely, I find a more complex and immediate rationale for such constructions to be more fitting. The intellectual output of Renaissance humanists, particularly those of organic intellectuals¹²² like Piccolomini aimed in various ways not just to debase the great military opposition - the Turk - but to create and disseminate an elite definition of Western European culture and power that stood unified, superior, systematically Christian and thus completely apart from the Islamic East. It wasn’t just a political or military binary; it was for the most part an attempt at persuasion based on a complete cultural and linguistic eradication. In other words, the aim was to deny the possibility for any redeeming qualities to surface or be taken seriously.

When we proceed to deconstruct the perception of ‘Turk’ as cultural code we realize that its conception ultimately reveals more about the West itself than it does about the actual culture and history of the people it purports to describe. In other words, the cultural, intellectual and political divide humanists of the Italian Renaissance constructed and referenced in their work was based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction constructed between two geographical divisions - the Orient and the Occident.¹²³ Edward Said in *Orientalism* reasons that this hard intellectual distinction between two global entities led writers, poets, novelists and philosophers to accept this construction as axiom and thus as a starting point for their complex

¹²¹ Ibid., 69.

¹²² See Chapter I, pages 19-20 of this study.

¹²³ Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

theories.¹²⁴ But while Said originally attributed the birth of this dynamic to the political and social processes of the 18th and 19th century colonial period, the fact is we can easily find the same cultural constructions at work centuries earlier.

Daniel J. Vitkus' research effectively opens the door for such *Early-Modern Orientalism* by way of the process of misperception and demonization of Islam in Europe from the Middle-Ages onward. He presents the notion of the "popular" perception of Islamic culture and the "learned account" of Islam during this time as foundations for an entire tradition of polemical misrepresentation that lasted through the end of the twentieth century. These distortions helped to promote Christianity and refute Islam in a material and ideological way that ultimately amounts to a kind of historical singularity.¹²⁵ The phobia of Christian faith being superseded or otherwise subsumed by a competing system of belief from an eastern empire generated terror and denial in the minds of Western Europeans. Their response was then to create a definition of Islam that simplified its teachings down to a "pagan" misbelief akin to idolatry.¹²⁶ Concrete examples of such representations will be discussed in the next chapter.

At this point however, we can assert that the kind of discourse described by Edward Said was not "born" with the age of colonialism. Instead it emerged in an earlier era when Europe was at risk due to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Vitkus posits that such orientalist discourse was the result of the naturalization and galvanization of the many images of Islam that were produced by Europeans in the early modern period as imaginary resolutions to real anxieties about Islamic wealth and might.¹²⁷ For example, accounts of Islamic doctrine and religious

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Daniel J. Vitkus, "Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe," in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early-Modern Europe: Perception of Other*, ed. David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 207-208.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 208.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 210.

practice produced by early modern orientalism bears little likeness to the religion it allegedly describes. In popular fiction and drama Muslims (or “Mahometans,” as they were called) were not only presented as pagans, but also grouped together regardless of their complex and true ethnicity under a linguistic index or label that imposed on them a signified “barbaric” ethnicity - Turk.¹²⁸ Bernard Lewis summarizes the dynamic quite well when he points out that Europeans throughout the continent displayed a certain unwillingness to refer to Muslims by any name which might disprove their popular irreligious character. Instead they used whichever ethnic name they were most familiar with (Saracens, Moors, Turks, or Tatars) as if to reduce the culture and the persons themselves to something with lesser stature or civilization implied; something tribal perhaps.¹²⁹

This cultural dynamic of western self-representation through polemic discourse on Muslim culture can be seen to have continued its ideological replication and discursive naturalization away from Italy and well into the literature of England’s Elizabethan period. Annaliese F. Connolly in her article “Guy of Warwick, Godfrey of Bouillon, And Elizabethan Repertory” dissects two plays - *The Tragical History* and *The Four Prentices* - both of which are dated approximately to the 1590s. These plays belong to the genre of “Turk plays” because they capitalized on the contemporary interest in depictions of Islamic powers, either Turkish or Persian.¹³⁰ As Connolly explains, both of these works turned to medieval history for heroes and stories that fictionally dramatized violent encounters with Islamic forces in Jerusalem.¹³¹ In effect, these plays are examples of pop culture in the sense that they were entertainment vehicles used to reinforce the mainstream Christian worldview in the early modern era as always in

¹²⁸ Ibid., 216.

¹²⁹ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.

¹³⁰ Annaliese F. Connolly, “Guy of Warwick, Godfrey of Bouillon, And Elizabethan Repertory,” in *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds*, ed. Linda McJannet and Bernadette Andrea. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 140.

¹³¹ Ibid.

opposition to the Turk. At the same time these productions addressed issues and questions of the day through a kind of theatrical reflection of popular interests and trends.

In simple terms, the choice of subject matter in these plays and their treatment of the cultural “encounters” between famous and mythical European figures and the Eastern empires reveal an intellectual strategy that is best suited to the exploration of concepts such as shifting national identities in the late sixteenth century.¹³² In essence, the orientalist figure of the Turk facilitates the examination of religious and political anxieties close to home because its static conceptualization as the ultimate evil to be defeated serves the local hero construct by fomenting unity against all that which threatens the dominant ideology of the local polity. In this case, it wasn’t just Christian unity in crusade; it was also British unity against Catholicism and Ireland.¹³³ Ultimately, and just as Said notes, this is the kind of orientalist cultural and intellectual hegemony of power and destiny (i.e. the power to justify, dominate and be victorious) which “can accommodate Aeschylus...and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx.”¹³⁴

From these examples we can clearly see these Elizabethan writers’ intellectual conception of Europe as superior to anything non-European regardless of the situation or encounter. The cultural hegemony of Islamic cultural debasement had been naturalized to the extent that it no longer was a conscious strategy but a common practice found throughout Europe in several different contexts. Said calls this discourse of position and power - *positional superiority*, because it places Westerners in any number of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing the superior hand.¹³⁵ In other words, however the binary is described or presented, regardless of the political, religious or philosophical point of view assumed, the figure

¹³² Connolly, *Elizabethan Repertory*, 141.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

of the West will always be the dominant authority in any real or imaginary encounter with the signifier 'Turk'.

By now it is clear that the context of power relations is the key factor in understanding Renaissance humanist discourse and its intent in creating the Ottomans as 'Other'. The humanist movement was composed of many men of letters who both borrowed and diverged from its canon. But for the most part, humanists and their ilk accepted the superiority of Western culture and religion over that of the Ottoman, or any culture from the East, as an axiom. Even Niccolo Machiavelli who as we have seen, breaks with the humanist universal and transcendental approaches to life, politics and religion still manages to frame his rhetoric of admiration and praise for the military strength and discipline of the Turk from a position of superiority - just like any other humanist. His intentions in praising the Turk are not based on cross-cultural friendship but on his own concerns for the principality which holds the most interest for him, Italy.

In many ways, such positional superiority provided humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with a way to psychologically, politically and religiously cope with the loss of the great city of Constantinople to an imperial power to whom, up until that point, they could not imagine losing. Thus the aims of such discursive construction was as previously stated, always the same – the establishment and or reinforcement of internal power structures by leading individuals such as Piccolomini, and above all the instigation of religious homogeneity across all boundaries as a form of resistance. The tools for such a massive political and social enterprise were, also as previously noted, ideology and discourse; both of which were firmly rooted in an interconnectedness of political, intellectual, cultural and religious power. In essence, power relations during this time were informed, much like they are today, by the efforts of intellectuals and other leading figures that frame current events, create legitimacy based on transformative

readings of historical sources and justify the internal and external actions of powerful institutions via the concept of national interest.

In the next chapter we will further expand the theory of orientalism to analyze other aspects of the East-West binary. Additionally, we will engage with specific linguistic and ideological legacies which were the result of Renaissance humanist discursive practices that still have an effect today.

Chapter III:

Humanism, Discourse and Political Thought

The return to classical texts, rhetoric, and ideas enabled humanists of the Renaissance to shape contemporary attitudes on any number of subjects, including the Turks. Through their writings and other propagandist practices humanists constructed a specific view of Islam which, in many ways, transformed the old enemy of the faith into a political and cultural threat to the utopian vision of a unified *res publica christiana* called "Europe."¹³⁶ To further understand this discourse of alterity we must analyze the intellectual world humanists inhabited. We must, as Nancy Bisaha suggests, understand the route by which humanists arrived at their conclusions. In other words, we must look at humanism itself.¹³⁷

The writings of humanists on the Ottoman Turk during this period are, as previously mentioned, firmly rooted in the Western perceptions of the East. As we have seen so far, they drew on medieval and ancient traditions but also in many ways broke free of their limited models so as to create a new discursive field that was ultimately naturalized as social truth by later generations.¹³⁸ Edward Said explains that this construction of the East as an opposing culture of the West limited all scholarly inquiries to a stereotypical discourse of superiority versus inferiority, or as was often quoted then, civilization versus barbarism. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this does not mean there was one uniform humanist discourse on the Ottoman 'other' to which we can quickly and uniquely allude. Rather, there were many

¹³⁶ Bisaha, *Creating East and West*, 5.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

versions, each substantial and significant in its own way. However, they are all unified into a kind of field by their common attitude toward the imagined ‘oriental other’.¹³⁹

Daniel J. Vitkus suggests that for the people of Western Europe, the worldly wealth and power of Islam in the early modern era inspired feelings of both awe and terror. These feelings in turn lead to the adoption of rhetorical styles and attitudes in literature and art which solidified the image of the “oriental” other as an external enemy of the West.¹⁴⁰ This negative discursive field concerning Islamic culture was then operationalized through humanist writings on several fronts. In this instance, such writings allowed each individual, depending on his immediate institutional affiliation (given that most humanists served as functionaries to the ruling elite), to express his own point of view on the matter. Most affiliated with the curia for example chose to depict Islam as engaged in a Manichean struggle¹⁴¹ against Christianity. Such an image was often justified via a demonization of Islam on many different levels, one of which focused on its overwhelming power as embodied in an Islamic ruler such as a sultan or a king. The authority exercised over subjects by such rulers was equated to that between a slave and his master. In other words, by their very nature Islamic rulers represented an unjust, tyrannical, and oppressive power.¹⁴² An example of this kind of rhetoric can be found in Pope Pius II’s letter to Sultan Mehmed II, where he describes the life of Christians living under Islamic rule:

They are looked upon as the vilest property, pay heavy tribute and are afflicted with injustices daily. They are led off to war against their will, are exposed to death without weapons, and are deprived of their wives and children. Moreover, after they raise their sons, they lose them. Their boys are taken off to the palace, circumcised and instructed in the rites of Mohammed.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴⁰ Vitkus, *Early Modern Orientalism*, 218.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Piccolomini as Pius II, *Epistola ad Mahometem II*, 24-25.

Martin Luther (1483-1546), like Pius II and many other preachers, both Protestant and Catholic, not only believed the popular tales of Christian oppression in Islamic lands, he also believed that the real ‘historical’ Turks were the Biblical people of the wrath of God, come to scourge Christians for their sins. In several of his responses to Papal inquiries, Luther defended the principle that “to fight [the real] Turks is to resist the judgment of God upon men’s sins.”¹⁴⁴ Luther’s attitude toward Islam must be seen in light of the Protestant objection to papal leadership and power, and in the context of the Protestant struggle for survival against forces wishing to stamp it out as a new heresy. Drawing upon the language of the Book of Revelation, Protestants like Luther often portrayed the wars against Roman Catholic rule and the Ottoman Islamic empire as crusades against the “second Turk” or the Antichrist, and the Eastern “whore of Babylon” respectively.¹⁴⁵ In *Table Talk* (1566), Luther is quoted as having said,

Antichrist is at the same time the Pope and the Turk. A living creature consists of body and soul. The spirit of Antichrist is the Pope, his flesh the Turk. One attacks the Church physically, the other spiritually.¹⁴⁶

While Protestants and Catholics referred to each other as infidels and Turks, both still argued for a united crusade against the real Turks. Both groups considered the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and its control of Jerusalem as God’s punishment upon Christian sinners for the selfish and divisive practices which prevented the political and military unification of “Christendom” against the oppressions of the mighty infidel. This call for crusade became a popular rhetorical formula in the fifteenth and sixteenth century but it rarely lead to any kind of large-scale

¹⁴⁴ Cited in Vitkus, *Early Modern Orientalism*, 212.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Originally cited in Setton, *Lutheranism*, 151.

mobilization against the Ottomans. It was, as Vitkus suggests, a subject for imaginative nostalgia rather than for concerted action.¹⁴⁷

In sharp contrast to these religious and institutional perspectives we have that of Niccolo Machiavelli. Machiavelli, whose period of greatest intellectual output (1513-1520) happened to coincide with the publication of Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517) and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, finds a secular perspective from which to praise the Turk rather than demonize him. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli compliments the Turkish strategic genius in dealing with the potential dangers to regime stability arising from the acquisition of foreign lands. He writes:

One of the best and quickest solutions is for the new prince to go and live in his new state. This makes the possession more durable and secure. The Turk did this in Greece. With all the other measures he took to keep Greece in his possession, had he not gone to live there he would not have succeeded, because once the prince is established within his new state he is able to see problems as they arise and can remedy them.¹⁴⁸

The key to understanding such divergence in humanist rhetoric lies in its politically utilitarian purpose. Machiavelli's praise of Turkish governmental practices has less to do with any affable sentiments towards Islamic culture or peoples per se and more to do with his own goals of persuasion. In the stated instance, Machiavelli aims to present a kind of manual through which a ruler or leader can maintain control of conquered lands. Luther on the other hand, aims to equate the evilness of the papacy as an institution with that of the external, real life Turkish enemy as a means to meter or measure the harm they both have caused to his vision of true Christian faith in Western Europe. This is a prime example of two humanists writing around the same time and on the same topic, presenting a different and seemingly opposing conclusions on

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 213.

¹⁴⁸ Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 11.

the subject at hand. This real life expression of the movement's *utramque partem* principle leads us back to the assertion that humanist rhetoric's vital formula for discursive formation begins with an individual assuming an intellectual position or taking a side in a particular issue or dispute. The side that is taken depends on the kind of rational judgment on the part of the writer that Petrarch praised. Such judgment is, in most instances, guided by a utilitarian purpose from which the individual claims the most good can come about for the subject, institution, or principality which most concerns him.

An additional front through which the humanists' orientalist discursive field was enacted revolved around the popular and distorted picture of the Prophet Muhammad. The central figure of the Islamic religion was often described as a renegade, a fraud, or as the founder of a religious heresy that was based on deceit and the spread of violence.¹⁴⁹ These late medieval and early modern polemical biographies claim that Muhammad seduced the Arabian people by way of black magic, convincing them by deceptive means of his chosen status as prophet. The Quran itself was also described in terms of falsehoods and general contempt.¹⁵⁰ This kind of campaign of misinformation directed against the Islamic Prophet and his Book are typified in several passages from Pius II's letter to Mehmed II:

You believe only Muhammad and his Koran. You follow a man who died without witnesses, to no purpose, without miracles; we believe in a living being, Christ, who even in your teachings, is admitted to be alive. We lend our ears to God and are guided by holy writings, proofs and witnesses.¹⁵¹

And again when he states,

¹⁴⁹ Vitkus, *Early Modern Orientalism*, 216.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Piccolomini as Pius II, *Epistola ad Mahometem II*, 41.

Do you not see that the argument of your prophet and of the demons is the same? That the devil envies Christ and detracts from his glory and majesty and that his counsel and persuasion fashioned your religion contrary to the Gospel and Mosaic Law?¹⁵²

Pius II's commentary on the validity of Islamic beliefs, its prophet and its book were in many ways reflections or continuities of medieval polemics. In his own time however, they were reconstituted as a means of propaganda and as ideological support for the fight against the Muslims. The most direct audience for such polemics was the princes of Europe who had so far not heeded the Pope's calls for a crusade against the Islamic threat.¹⁵³

Closely linked to these polemical representations of Muhammad and his book are the circulating accounts of Islamic paradise as another key aspect of the orientalist discursive field - the sexual binary. "Mahomet's paradise" was believed to be comprised strictly of sexual and sensual delights with rivers of wine, and luxurious gardens.¹⁵⁴ This was an old and popular trope which could be found in a variety of texts. One example is presented in a text that began to circulate around 1356 titled *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*.¹⁵⁵ Mandeville describes the Islamic version of paradise as follows:

...if they are asked what paradise they are talking about, they say it is a place of delights, where a man shall find all kinds of fruit at all seasons of the year, and rivers running with wine, and milk, and honey, and clear water;...Every man shall have four score wives, who will be beautiful damsels, and he shall lie with them whenever he wishes, and he will always find them virgins.¹⁵⁶

Such descriptions lacking in spiritual content as they were, provoked Christian writers not only to condemn Islam for offering sexual pleasure as reward to the virtuous but also for the sexual

¹⁵² Ibid., 80.

¹⁵³ Ozden Mercan, "Constructing a Self-Image in the Image of the 'Other': Political And Religious Interpretations of Pope Pius II's Letter To Mehmed II (1461)," *MA Thesis in Medieval Studies* (Budapest: Central European University, 2008), 11.

¹⁵⁴ Vitkus, *Early Modern Orientalism*, 223.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, ed., C. W. R. D. Moseley (London, 1983), 104, Cited in Vitkus, *Early Modern Orientalism*, 223.

freedom Islam allowed in this life.¹⁵⁷ Pius II presents the binary of the Christian spiritual paradise versus that of the Islamic sensual as follows:

Your religion promises rivers of milk, honey and wine in the next world, as well as delicate foods, plentiful women and concubines, relations with virgins, angels to assist in these foul pursuits; in short all that the flesh desires. This is the paradise of an ox or an ass, not of a man!¹⁵⁸

Nicholas of Cusa also comments on this aspect of the binary in his *Cribratio Alkorani* (1460),

I was ashamed to read these vile things. And I said to myself: If Mohammed ascribes to God this book full of vileness, or if he himself wrote it and attributes its authority to God, then I am amazed that those wise and virtuous Arabs, Moors, Egyptians, Persians and Turks who are said to be of this law esteem Mohammed as a prophet...For no one speaks so vilely of such vile things unless he is full of all such vileness.¹⁵⁹

In this way, the superiority of Christianity as a truly spiritual religion offering eternal life was conceptualized. The establishment of such a concept in turn led, as intended, to an opposition or binary to the earthly, carnal and “vile” pleasures promoted by Islam. Pius II and Nicholas of Cusa, as did many others before probably hoped to inspire and persuade their audience to unify and fight for true religion and spirituality. To tear down the teachings of evil Islam and remove all possible points of credibility.

In essence, regardless of the considered aspect or argumentative front presented, the Islamic ‘Other’ was always different than the Christian standard and thus read as a sign of demonic darkness and barbaric ignorance.¹⁶⁰ Jack D’Amico writing about *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* appropriately encapsulates the dynamics of this ideology:

¹⁵⁷ Vitkus, *Early Modern Orientalism*, 223.

¹⁵⁸ Piccolomini as Pius II, *Epistola ad Mahomatem II*, 61.

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani*, 1046.

¹⁶⁰ Vitkus, *Early Modern Orientalism*, 225.

A more potent and seductive foe, Islam had to be represented as a dangerous distortion of the true Church, a parody of civilization, its Mohammed a false prophet, its Jihad a perversion of the Crusade, its book, the Koran, a collection of errors and lies that mocked the Bible.¹⁶¹

In other words, as distortion, parody, perversion and erroneous collection of ideas that applied to all fronts, aspects, ideas and beliefs the debasement of the Turk and of Islamic culture itself was all encompassing and consequently, complete. Christianity would thus emerge supreme and victorious in all possible situations or encounters – be they historical, religious, philosophical, political or military.

There is one other aspect of the orientalist discursive field left to discuss. That of the Turk himself. The person, or rather the conception of the person whose linguistically attributed character clearly delineates that which is most indicative of this binary or opposition at work. The creation of the discursive other, this representative of the inferior ‘East’, this ‘Turk’ - in all its variety of uses and meanings - came to serve as a kind of code or symbol in the discursive power struggle between Christians and Ottomans. Roland Barthes defines this code, which he denotes the semic code of language, as the foremost “discursive device for thematizing persons, objects, or places. It operates by grouping a number of signifiers around either a proper name or another signifier which functions temporarily as if it were a proper name...”¹⁶² In simple terms, the name “Turk” was transformed from an ethnological reference or classification into the actual name of the ‘other’ - the enemy, the heretic and most importantly the subordinate in this power struggle. Consequently, “Turk” as the semic code in Western discursive practice operated as the epistemological strategy for signification and for arbitrary control of those persons and places it purported to describe.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Cited in Vitkus, *Early Modern Orientalism*, 225.

¹⁶² Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 251.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 254.

Thus, the negative and hostile images connoted by the term ‘Turk’ represented a constructed response, an ideological reaction to the military successes of the Ottoman on the part of humanists and the papal curia.¹⁶⁴ In a Christian community fragmented by political, social, and religious conflicts, ‘turkishness’ signaled accusations that went far beyond favoring the cause of the external Ottoman enemy. In popular European parlance, as noted by Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), ‘acting like a Turk’ implied the worst possible behavior or as it did to the people of Croatia, extreme wickedness.¹⁶⁵ The power and shock value of such a label served as a benchmark by which the propriety of international behavior and the adequate operationalization of lordship could be evaluated in a world of rapidly changing diplomatic relations.¹⁶⁶ These extreme judgments of wickedness and evilness were adopted by humanist intellectual minds like Luther as a way of signifying the utter contempt and irredeemability of the person or persons to which they were being ascribed. For example, ‘On War against the Turk’ (1529) he writes,

Just as Herod and the Jews hated each other, though both stood together against Christ, so Turk and papacy hate each other, but stand together against Christ and his kingdom.¹⁶⁷

The implication here is just what Erasmus alluded to in his *Enchiridion militis Christiani* (1501). That ‘turkishness’ was a way of thinking and behaving that was opposite to the philosophy of Christ (*philosophia Christi*), and its displacement from Christian countries and from amongst the Turks themselves, would pave the way for the true kingdom of Christ.¹⁶⁸ In simple terms, the semic code of ‘Turk’ signified a linguistic as well as ideological unity in so far as it was an expression of the devil’s work on Earth. In fact, the Turk was the instrument of evil, Islam and the Ottoman state the devil’s own creation and their purpose together was to undermine the unity

¹⁶⁴ Housley, *The Three Turks*, 137.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 150

of Christianity by spreading heresy and luring the faithful into apostasy.¹⁶⁹ As Catholic thinker, and defender of Christendom Thomas More wrote – “The Turkes are but his tourmentours, for hymselfe doth the dede.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 159.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

Conclusions

It would be most beneficial at this time to present an overarching theoretical semiotic chain in which all the different aspects of humanist discourse we have discussed can be unified in a more apparent formation of the topic. For this purpose we return to rhetoric itself as the intellectual philosophy from which humanism and its conception of the Ottoman ‘other’ came to be. We begin with Aristotle’s own delineation of rhetoric as a method for discovering the available means of persuasion in the particular case or matter at hand.¹⁷¹ Rhetoric aimed to move men to action and thus was ordered to decision making, even when the full facts of the case as we would say today were not available. Rhetoric therefore often dealt with logical probabilities to discern all that could be feasibly discerned from the information that was available.¹⁷²

For our purpose, the key aspect of rhetoric arises from its main intent, persuasion. Rhetoric was in many ways informed by the art of persuasion, and as such the orator who exemplified its training was completely committed to a chosen side; he prosecuted or defended, he pleaded for or against. In this way, rhetorical training produced individuals who always approached subjects from a combative basis. The side taken was not predetermined but there was to be a side taken certainly. This polemical approach was bad for science, but it was beneficial to many kinds of literature, especially those dealing with the hero archetype. After all, a life framed in conflict, even if only imagined, can always be exciting.¹⁷³ Consequently, any discourse or frame constructed by humanists of the Renaissance, began first and foremost from the basis of an assumed position or side on the matter. Objectivity was irrelevant in so far as persuasion could only be achieved by pointed, tilted exposition, argumentation and debate. In essence rhetoric

¹⁷¹ Aristotle, *The “Art” of Rhetoric*, tr. John Henry Freese (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1926), 13.

¹⁷² Walter J. Ong, “Rhetoric and the Origins of Consciousness” in *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology – Studies In The Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 6.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 66

was the overall cultural framework and method from which humanist discourse on any subject was created.

Now we arrive at what I think is a discerning question. What is discourse? So far in this study we have explored and examined several aspects of its matrix, including some of the men who construct and practice it, the institutions that sanction it and the people to whom it is aimed but what can we say of discourse on its own? And what is its specific role in the orientalist practices of Renaissance humanists as presented in this study? To explore these questions we once again turn to Roland Barthes, who in *Mythologies* defines discourse, in its broadest sense, as a form of communication or speech consisting of “any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or visual.”¹⁷⁴ The key in this definition is the word significant; for it is the fact that discourse carries a message, that it means something and therefore points to or “calls for a lexis”¹⁷⁵ that is central to this conception of the term and its real life dynamic.

Basically, discourse is language which is understood as utterance and thereby involves subjects who speak and write and to whom its messages are directed. Discourse includes any number of speech acts and utterances performed as part of social practice, all of which are differentiated by their inherent intentions. In simple terms, discourse’s central function and therefore its relevant feature is as “token for something else”¹⁷⁶ or to be even more specific discourse (as language) “concerns [itself with] objects which belong to different categories. This is why [the relationships it establishes are]...not...of equality but...of equivalence.”¹⁷⁷ Therefore

¹⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* tr. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 109.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

discourse, just like rhetoric, is concerned with unifying ideas under useful and significant schemas.¹⁷⁸

Based on this philosophical understanding of discourse, I find that the most suitable characterization of its formative processes is provided by Michele Foucault (1926-1984). Foucault describes discourse formation as a system of thought and practice marked by certain epistemological assumptions and ideological agencies. These assumptions and agencies in turn lead to specific expressions of power through which the subject is constructed and its position in the social world is determined. This Foucaultian field of study, commonly referred to as power/knowledge, examines how the dominant members of a society construct whole sets of concepts, categories and vocabularies to analyze and classify their subjects.

The paradigm of power and knowledge as it pertains to the humanist movement's construction of the other is formed when the dominant group's conclusions on the subject are classified and culturally accepted as "the truth." This in turn gives them the power to make whatever claims they want on the subject as well as to control what can be said about it or them.¹⁷⁹ In this way a binary or opposition in the structuralist sense is created through which an order of self-presence and of self-preference is instituted. In simple terms, having the discursive power and authority to speak "the truth" leads the dominant group directly towards a mode of political, social, economic and linguistic self-centering which systematically devalues and oppresses those who do not conform to their standards and guidelines. This is the process through which an underclass and an 'other' are created both within a culture as well as without.

¹⁷⁸ Ong, *Rhetoric and Consciousness*, 13.

¹⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge – Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* tr. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mephan, Kate Soper, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

Foucault's conception of discourse as a tool of power/knowledge is most useful in this study because through it he "stresses the interconnectedness of ethnology, psychoanalysis and semiotics" in the study of humanism and culture. In his view, "it is by means of historically circumscribed signifying operations that both are organized."¹⁸⁰ In other words, the key to understanding power relations as articulated by historically determined references in any polity at any given time lies in the particular arrangement of state institutions as well as the public and political policies those institutions maintain in effect. Those policies are expressions of the dominant ideology (hegemony). The arrangement of state institutions includes the educational and intellectual sectors as well, meaning schools and universities, due to the fact that they are responsible for what Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci refers to as the formation of the intellectuals.

As previously mentioned¹⁸¹ Gramsci's theoretical framework presents us with the view that the role of the intellectual in society consists -

...in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, permanent persuader...; from technique-as-work one proceeds to technique-as-science and to the humanistic conception of history...[Thus] One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer ideologically...¹⁸²

In other words, the role of the intellectual in creating the dominant social discourse or ideology is pivotal.

This brings us to the intersection between intellectual formation and politics (as the real world agency through which power is exercised) - ideology. Ideology as defined by French political philosopher Louis Althusser is a discursive "representation of the imaginary relationship

¹⁸⁰ Silverman, *Subject of Semiotics*, 129.

¹⁸¹ See Chapter I, pages 20-21 of this study.

¹⁸² Gramsci, *The Formation of the Intellectuals*, 141-42.

of individuals to their real conditions of existence.”¹⁸³ This representation provides members of a society with “the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what [the prescribed conditions are] and behave accordingly, everything will be all right: Amen -- So be it.”¹⁸⁴ Ideology thus serves as structure. Althusser’s conception of ideology as political and social structure is best explained through his cultural theory of Ideological State Apparatuses or ISAs. Ideological State Apparatuses are specialized institutions (churches, schools, the family, the cultural, literary and legal institutions) which serve as tools of the state through which the political and social stability of the dominant ideology is secured. These institutions encourage “discipline not only [in] their shepherds, but also [in] their flocks” by preaching and instilling within the public a sense of consent towards the dominant social order.¹⁸⁵ It is therefore reasonable by this flow of logic to recognize ideology as essential to the acquisition and practice of state political power.

Subsequently, we are faced with the mechanisms through which such hegemony is perpetually maintained. Althusser reasons that ideology (as discursive and structural system) promotes self-reproduction by establishing the subject as a subject in an imaginary relation to society. Ideology provides the subject with the illusion that it is a center of meaning, so that the subject lives its relation to society in a way that not only reproduces but also maintains the status quo. Foucault “indicates that neither culture nor the unconscious can be approached apart from a theory of signification, since it is by means of historically circumscribed signifying operations [like ideology] that both are organized.”¹⁸⁶ In essence, we are concerned with discursive systems wherein the subject is produced and the dynamics of the existing authority are sustained. Roland

¹⁸³ Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, 162.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁸⁶ Silverman, *Subject of Semiotics*, 129.

Barthes adds to this approach via the concept of linguistic connotation as interpellant speech. Interpellant speech ensures cultural self-reproduction and consequently foments the stable maintenance of the existing binary of power.

Barthes defines connotation as “a secondary operation, one which builds on [the more stable operations of] denotation” to create additional, but less stable, meaning. He further identifies connotation “as an agency of ideology” which furthers the power goals of hegemony by surreptitiously creating a paradigm in which a constant mis-recognition of the self and of the world is encouraged within the reading, viewing or listening subject.¹⁸⁷ In this model, the ideological dimensions of connotation are brought into the open via the semic code of language. The semic code is “the major [discursive] device for thematizing persons, objects, or places. It operates by grouping a number of signifiers around either a proper name or another signifier which functions temporarily as if it were a proper name...”¹⁸⁸

For example, from the late Middle-Ages on the term “Turk” was transformed from an ethnological reference/classification of the Eastern Empires’ Islamic peoples into the humanist’s (as leading intellectuals of the time, and as the group striving for ideological supremacy) name for the ‘other’ - the enemy, the heretic and most importantly the subordinate in the political, religious and military power struggle. Consequently, “Turk” as the semic code operated as the naturalized epistemological strategy “for inscribing what Foucault would call power relations...[which function as agencies] for understanding persons and places which are really ways of signifying and controlling those persons and places.”¹⁸⁹ In essence, we are discussing the question of power as it resides within culture and its texts. For it is clear that such an

¹⁸⁷ Silverman, *Subject of Semiotics*, 238.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁸⁹ Silverman, *Subject of Semiotics*, 254.

exercise can easily be characterized as a propagandist campaign against an external enemy through which the internal cultural and ideological cohesion of the polity could be enhanced.

This is the crux of the discursive binary in question - the creation of the other through ideology as a form of positional discourse. Humanist discourse aimed to create, foment and even force cultural and religious unity in Europe. Its dynamic is best exemplified by a further conception of Barthes' semic code as presented by Kaja Silverman. Silverman states that "the semic code always operates in close conjunction with the cultural codes. Indeed, it is to a large degree an adjunct code, defining person and place in ideologically symptomatic ways... The semic code does not so much initiate as express those power relations which are fundamental to knowledge."¹⁹⁰ Therefore, the creation of the Ottoman 'Turk' as the operational and oppositional 'other' in Renaissance humanist discourse served a multitude of cultural, discursive and political functions. The ultimate goals of these efforts were, as previously noted, to solidify the Ottoman as the inferior enemy culture and to enhance the internal cohesion of the Western powers so they could militarily engage not from a weak and defensive position but from one of unified cultural and religious power.

So far throughout this study I have attempted to trace the creation and the dynamics of discourse as an agent of ideology and thus of positionality. We will now take our analysis to the next step by following Foucault's model as presented in *The Order of Things*:

Man as we know him is the product of certain historically determined discourses and... by challenging those discourses we will deconstruct the conceptions by which we have so far understood that category.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 255.

¹⁹¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1971), 379-80.

And so, as we deconstruct the concept of ‘Turk’ as semic code and clearly delineate the characters and settings which are most indicative of this binary opposition at work, we realize that just as Edward Said concludes in *Orientalism*, the creation of this discursive other, this ‘Turk’, this representative of the inferior ‘East’, ultimately reveals more about the West itself and its fantasies than it does about the actual people, culture and history of the East. In other words, in creating this cultural, intellectual and political divide humanists of the Italian Renaissance adopted what is now a centuries’ long tradition of “thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident.”¹⁹² Said further claims that this hard intellectual distinction made between the two geographical entities has over time led “a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers...[to accept] the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories...”¹⁹³

On this basis we can easily frame these discursive practices as an attempt to intellectually conceive of a unified Europe that is superior to anything non-European regardless of the conditions of encounter. The cultural hegemony previously conceptualized by Renaissance humanist thought over time achieved a consensual and self-replicating mode of existence just as Gramsci suggests. Kaja Silverman expresses the same dynamic in terms of the reproduction of the existing cultural order so as to “create the illusion of stability and continuity.”¹⁹⁴ But however it is expressed what is clear is that the orientalist position and conception of the Ottoman had in fact been naturalized. Said terms this discourse of position and power as “positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with

¹⁹² Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Silverman, *Subject of Semiotics*, 239.

the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.”¹⁹⁵ In other words, however the binary was described, regardless of the political or religious terms or philosophical point of view, the West would always be the dominant authority in any real or imaginary encounter with the semic code labeled ‘Turk’.

It is clear by now that discursive formation, is for the most part an all-encompassing political and social enterprise. Its main tools are ideology and language as discourse. Its dynamics are firmly rooted in a kind of interconnectedness or an exchange with various kinds of power - political, intellectual, cultural and moral. Leading figures in a society or culture use this power to frame current events so as to create the kind of legitimacy that is based on transformative readings of historical sources to make them fall in line with the national interest. Thus the aim of such discursive construction is always the same – positional superiority and the instigation of internal cohesion as a way for a culture or polity to progress in the desired ideological direction.

A clear example of a current affair in which the exact same orientalist constructions and ideological discourse as Renaissance humanists generated takes center stage is presented by Professor Aydin-Düzgit in ‘Europe as Cultural Space’. Here Professor Aydin-Düzgit presents us with a brilliant analysis of the arguments through which Turkey has been summarily judged as a culture that does not fit with the history and culture of Europe.¹⁹⁶ Throughout the chapter she engages with the political rhetoric and various social frames within the European Parliament to uncover three basic and all-encompassing dynamics at work. First, all arguments examined whether in favor or against Turkish inclusion into the European Union are based on some form

¹⁹⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

¹⁹⁶ Senem Aydin-Düzgit, “Europe as a Cultural Space,” in *Constructions of European Identity - Debates and Discourses on Turkey and the EU* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 133.

of Orientalism. Second, all arguments use a strategy which invokes only specific historical narratives when discussing European political and cultural principles and their relation to Muslim populations. This picking and choosing of sources aims to imply that it is because these European historical moments have not influenced the Muslim experience that these populations cannot be considered a part of Europe.¹⁹⁷ Third, and finally, all arguments once deconstructed also present elements of ‘cultural racism’ or ‘meta-racism’ where European superiority is presumed based on a construction of a consistent entity applying to all geographically contiguous European polities but not to Turkey.

Subsequently, Professor Aydin-Düzgit unifies this ‘alignment between territory and cultural identity’ in Derridian ontological terms – “as an act...that is defined as the ontological value of present-being to its situation, to the stable and presentable determination of a locality, the topos of territory, native soil, city, body in general.”¹⁹⁸ In this way a hierarchical contrast has been created around “the nodal points of modern/premodern, rich/poor, Westernised/Eastern (Asian), religious/non-religious, progressive/backward...”¹⁹⁹ through which western superiority can be intellectually propagated and politically maintained.

In this way Professor Aydin-Düzgit’s study reveals the EU’s political and social rhetoric regarding Turkey to be not an affectation of any particular political party but rather a root discursive construction through which they all frame Turkey as a non-European nation and Islam in particular as an incompatible cultural and religious trait that cannot be overcome. In effect, and just as Said noted in *Orientalism*, the fact that European identity attempts to define itself through its recursive discourse of denial regarding Turkey tells us more about Europe’s own

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 161.

agenda than about Turkey itself. In this way we are returned to the ancient notion postulated by Herodotus in which the incompatibility of the East with the West cannot be overcome. And though the Turkish advance is now friendly, political and economic rather than military and imperialist, it seems the power relations and even the questions of religious homogeneity are still the same. To my mind, this is a direct legacy of naturalized Renaissance humanist power relations and discourse construction.

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