"THE TURKE AND SIR GAWAIN": IS THE TURKE AS ALIEN AS THE GREEN KNIGHT?[1]

"THE TURKE AND SIR GAWAIN": TÜRK DE YEŞİL ŞÖVALYE KADAR YABANCI MI?

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Makale Bilgisi
Gönderildiği tarih: 1 Mart 2021
Kabul edildiği tarih: 25 Mayıs 2021
Yayınlanma tarihi: 24 Haziran 2021

Article Info
Date submitted: 1 March 2021
Date accepted: 25 May 2021
Date published: 24 June 2021

Anahtar sözcükler
Sir Gawain; Yabancılık; Romans; Orta Çağ; Kral Arthur; Yuvarlak Masa Şövalyeleri

Keywords
Sir Gawain; Alienation; Romance; Middle Ages; King Arthur; Knights of the Round Table

DOI: 10.33171/dtcfjournal.2021.61.1.22

Abstract

The alien figures of the romances representing the outsider or the challengers to the court of King Arthur usually perform as foil for the knights of the Round Table. In several cases the challengers transform into somebody else to reach a resolution in the end. The Turke and Sir Gawain (c.1500) is a romance that represents both a foil and a transformation. The challenger figure is represented as a more probable character with the Turke figure as he does not look like a magical being like the Green Knight. The influence of the emerging power of the Turks on the imagination of the Western Europe can be traced within the romance. Still, the image of the Turk is an alien one despite the growing concerns about the Ottoman Empire. As a result of this concern the Turke figure within the romance is represented as a magical and cursed figure. This article discusses the alienated representation of a real-life concern for the English people.

Öz

Kral Arthur'un divanına gelen yabancıların veya meydan okuyanları temsil eden romansların yabani figürleri genellikle Yuvarlak Masa Şövalyeleri'nin özelliklerini öne çıkartacak şekilde işler. Birkaç örnekte bu meydan okuyanlar hikâyeyi bir çözüme kavuşturmak için sonunda şekil değiştirirler. The Turke and Sir Gawain (c. 1500) hem şövalyenin iyi yanlarını öne çıkaran hem de bir şekil değiştirmeyi içeren bir romanstır. Meydan okuyan figürü daha muhtemel bir karakter olan ve Yeşil Şövalye gibi büyülü görünmeyen Türk figürü ile temsil edilmiştir. Türklerin giderek artan gücünün Batı Avrupa'nın hayal gücü üzerindeki etkisinin izleri romansta görülebilmektedir. Türk imgesi, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu hakkında artan endişelere rağmen hala yabancıdır. Bu endişelerin bir sonucu olarak da Türk figürü romansta hem büyülü hem de lanetli olarak tasvir edilmiştir. Bu makale gerçek bir endişenin yabancılaştırılmış tasvirini tartışmaktadır.

I. Introduction

The presence of the Turks in the European scene has always been a source of discussion and inspiration in political and literary scenes. However, this inspiration often has been on the negative side. The need to consolidate the warring states of Europe created a drive to seek common enemies, and the Turkish presence on the Asia minor and Balkans gave the Europeans the opportunity to materialize their enmity. The encounters between the Europeans and the Ottomans in the 15th century created political vacuum as the interests of several European forces clashed over trade and political power. Koller states that "*Balkan nobles recruited the aid of the*

[1] This article is the developed form of a paper which was orally presented in British and Turkish Cultural Interactions Conference 12-14 May 2015, Hacettepe University, Ankara/Turkey. (Bu makale Hacettepe Üniversitesi'nin gerçekleştirdiği İngiliz-Türk Kültürel Etkileşimleri Konferansı'nda sözlü olarak sunulan bildirinin genişletilmiş halidir.)

Ottoman troops to defeat their respective opponents in their numerous feuds. Serbian principalities, just like Anatolian beyliks, continued the tradition of political marriages, but now also with the Ottoman dynasty" ([emphasis in original]160). The religious controversy was far more decisive than the political standings as the Catholic *"Curia defined a number of predominantly intra-Christian 'enemies', which in the course of the 14th century was expanded to include the 'Turks'"* (Koller 160). Religion, being one of the primary drives of Europe, as can be seen in the case of the Crusades, was also an important factor in perceiving the Turks and their presence. However, apart from the ecclesiastical point of view, concerning the interactions between the Turks and Europeans from the 12th to the 16th centuries, politics was more complicated and the boundaries between enemy and friend was more fluid and open to change. Considering the political and religious turmoil surrounding the Turks, the reflection of the Turks in literature will bring another perspective to this argument. The complicated relationship between "the Turke" and Sir Gawain evidently reflects this perception.

The Western perception of the Turks in the late medieval age was quite complicated if nothing else. This was the result of various encounters during the Crusades, trading, and later with the Ottoman Empire that was progressively making its way into the heart of Europe and thus providing a fiercer but clearer image. Although the Turks have been included in the term "Saracen," which was used mainly by the West to refer to the entire Muslim world quite often, they managed to distinguish themselves with their prowess in battle which is also reflected within the romance *The Turke and Sir Gawain* (c. 1500). As Şahiner suggests, *"[u]nlike the other oriental races that were not respected at all because of their 'inferiority' to the West, Turks were strong, and their power rather than their race provided the respect"* (6). This image, however, was not always associated with a positive reflection of the Turks. Since the Turks, particularly the Seljuk Turks, who were the frontline of the Muslim communities, in the 11th century during the Crusades, held the lands in today's Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Their martial prowess and military power have not spared them the discrimination they faced, they have always been "the other," the outsider in many terms alongside with religion. This study aims to reflect the image of the Turk in the romance *The Turke and Sir Gawain* while drawing parallelism with the Green Knight figure which can be found as adversary to Sir Gawain in other Arthurian Romances, such as *The Grene Knight* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

II. Turkish Presence in Europe

The geographical condition of the British Isles created an isolated culture except for the invasions. However, this was not always the case. During the high Middle Ages, English -or Angevin- empire had lands in France until the end of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). With the loss of all their lands, the English withdrew to the safety of their island and this isolation became an important factor about their relationship with continental Europe. The participation of English people in the first two crusades also affected their perception of the East and the Turks; yet, since their numbers were not significant compared to their numbers in the third Crusade, this perception was limited. The defenders, the Muslim emirates and sultanates of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Holy Land, in the first two crusades, were also fighting among themselves, which lead to different combinations of interactions such as alliances. The third crusade, which is called "the Kings' Crusade," in which Richard the Lionheart participated, made England play a greater role in the Crusades than it had done in the past. Asbridge states that *"Richard I left Europe with the twelfth century's most organised and best-funded crusading army"* (385). The struggle between King Richard I - the Lionheart - and Salahaddin Eyyubi to seize the control of Jerusalem provided a greater chance for these two cultures to get information about each other. The Middle English romance *Richard Coeur de Lyon* (c. 1240) focuses on this interaction, despite representing particularly an orientalist point of view. The romance puts forward a definition of the enemy through the orientalist representation which reflects the fact that the interaction between the Turks and the English increased for a period. Still, after the Third Crusade, the English retreated to their island and the interaction again decreased. Until the Ottoman expansion into the Balkans, the Turks were not a great concern for the rest of Europe, they were mostly the problem of the Byzantines. However, as they progressed into the Balkans, they were becoming an increasing threat to Western Christianity, which made them a focal point of attention. An early Italian humanist, Coluccio Salutati (1332-1406), in relation to the Turks, states the following observation:

> [they] are an extremely ferocious race of men with high expectations. Do not ignore what I mention here. They trust and believe that they will erase the name of Christ throughout the world and they say that it is in their fates to devastate Italy until they reach the city divided by a river, which they interpret as Rome, and they will consume everything by fire and sword. (56).

With the conquest of Constantinople, the Ottoman threat became a real problem. Especially after the conquest, the reactions of the Western world, particularly the Italians', as the Ottomans were becoming a serious threat to the trade dominance of the Italian city states show the notoriety of the Turks City states like Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa, and Venice were enjoying trading and the welfare it brought to them in the Mediterranean until the rise of the Ottomans (Asbridge 7). Tomas Mastnak reiterates Norman Housley's ideas about the concerns of *"the rising power of the Ottoman Turks, because of which the anti-Turkish crusade emerged and grew in importance[and] in the second half of the fourteenth century the 'Turk' became the most dangerous enemy of Christianity and Christendom"* (qtd in Mastnak 331).

III. The Turk figure in *The Turke and Sir Gawain*

The image of the Turks in the eyes of the English poses an interesting dilemma in the late medieval period. The limited information on the subject led to an understanding which defined the Turks as "most rude and barbarous, and their beginning most base, vile, and ignominious" (Fletcher n. pag.). Taking this perspective into consideration, the approach to the "alien" Turkish figure would be quite sceptic. The Turke was referred simply as a "burne" which would mean either man or warrior. Despite the fact that the identity of the Turke is a kind of "curse" the character still acts like one and looks fight that would eventually become his salvation. Furthermore, Sir Kay – in his usually sullen and sulky manner – overlooks the strength and valour of the Turke:

> […] "Man, thou seemest not soe wight,
>
> If thou be not adread.
>
> For there beene knights within this hall
>
> With a buffettt will garr thee fall,
>
> And groupe thee to the ground." (*The Turke,* ll. 20-24).

Sir Kay's argument enforces the perception of the Turke's identity while acting as the antithesis of Sir Gawain who accepts the Turke's offer of exchanging blows. Nevertheless, as Fletcher expresses in the above cited quotation, this understanding of the Turke's identity can be seen as the result of a more general approach. However, Fletcher also tried to revert this approach in his work stating the following:

> For such as are acquainted with the Histories of the Turkish affaires, and doe aduisedly looke into the order and course of their proceedinges: doe well per|ceiue, that the chiefest cause of their

> sodaine and fearefull pu|issaunce, hath beene the excellencie of their Martial discipline ioyned with a singular desire and resolution to aduaunce and enlarge both the bounds of their Empire and the profes|sion of their Religion. The which was alwaies accompanied with such notable Policie and prudence, that the singularitie of their vertue and good gouernment, hath made their Armes alwaies fearefull and fortunate, and consequently, hath caused the greatnesse of their estate. (Fletcher n. pag).

Fletcher's explanation on the greatness and puissance of the Turks shows that it is not a bare coincidence that the Turks are now a formidable force. Their dedication to their religion and empire, their prudence and virtue is the source of their power. Considering these arguments and the approximate date of the composition of the romance, the representation of the Turke stands on the verge of a certain shift in the perception of this force arising from the East.

As all these arguments provide the context for the discussion of the identity of the Turk in *The Turke and Sir Gawain* (c. 1500), a romance which was found in the Percy Folio Manuscript (half of the pages are burnt which means some information is missing), it presents the reader the image of a Turk with little physical description but a considerable emphasis on his martial prowess and power. The strength and valour of the Turke, of course, cannot be attributed only to the identity of the Turke as there is a Christian transformation at the end. This romance shows strong parallels in plot with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, replacing the role of the Green Knight with the Turke, modifying the story accordingly. Challenging the court of Arthur in a similar manner to the Green Knight, the Turke presents a milder challenge, which is just an exchange of "buffetts," which implies blows, "as a brother" (*The Turke,* ll. 16-17). Again, similar to the instance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* he wishes to receive the blow from Sir Gawain after a certain amount of time, but in this case creating a difference, the Turke just takes Sir Gawain with him through different adventures. Unlike the Green Knight figure in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the Turke becomes the guide and does not leave Gawain in a mystery that he should solve by himself as stated in the romance: *"He led Sir Gawaine to a hill so plaine./The earth opened and closed againe,"* (*The Turke,* ll. 66-67). This guidance shows how the Turke is leading Gawain instead of leaving him to his own devices like the Green Knight did in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and afterwards the Turke tests Gawain with a supernatural storm, which Gawain bravely endures but complains saying: *"Such wether saw I never afore/ In noe stead there I have beene*

stood" (*The Turke,* ll. 73-74). This voyage through a hill and the occurrence of the unnatural storm suggests that the duo arrived at a magic realm, the suggestive otherworld of the Celtic mythology which finds its way to Arthurian romances quite often. As Koch states, *"[a]ccess to the Otherworld could be gained by many means, for example, through fairy mounds, the sídh, or by going across or under water, which was considered one of the boundaries of the Otherworld"* (1671 [emphasis in original]). Furthermore, Jost argues that *"clearly they have stepped beyond the border of ordinary reality, entering a mysterious, supernatural realm"* (56). Moving on to another test, the Turke leads Gawain to the Isle of Man to defeat "a heathen soldan" who is the king of the Isle. After the completion of the final challenge that the Turke presents to Sir Gawain, which is the defeat of the Sultan, he proceeds to receive the return blow, but this time he requests to be beheaded despite Gawain's objections and rises again as Sir Gromer, a Christian knight. This rebirth can be interpreted as the only way to accept the Turke as an equal, since he is converted into Christianity. Focusing on the religious aspect of this action, Taşdelen states that *"the transformation of his religious identity is more significant compared to his ethnic identity"* (257). Another interpretation for the concept of being a Turk is that it is a curse. The curse being more probable, and in fact when the text and the ending of the romance provides the necessary background to prove it being a curse, presents the perception of the Turks by the Europeans of the medieval era. This leads to the demonization of the Turks and their interchangeability with a magical being like the Green Knight.

To represent the adversary in person, the Turke is physically described as follows: *"He was not hye, but he was broad, / And like a Turke he was made/ Both legg and thye;"* (*The Turke,* ll. 13-15). As opposed to the gigantic Green Knight, who was described as having a thick and square body and almost a half-giant, yet the handsomest knight (*SGGK*[2], ll. 136-142), the Turke, as stated by the poet, was made like a Turke, he was broad and short, which just culminates orientalist stereotyping. Accordingly, medieval standards of beauty surely favour the Green Knight, as it is stated by Curry: *"Men should be well-formed, large body, massively built, broad, thick, strong in battle, with aristocratic grace"* (101). The representation of the Turk in the lines above shows that he certainly lacks that "aristocratic grace" as he is "not hye" meaning he is not as tall as an aristocrat should be since "he was made like a Turk". Moreover, the reference to the leg and thigh also might be referring to the horsemanship of the Turk as Turkish riders use their legs and thighs to hold onto

[2] The romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight will be abbreviated as SGGK.*

their horses while shooting arrows or jareeds. Concerning this Karasulas states that *"[w]hen shooting from horseback, both hands are used in firing, leaving control of the horse to leg pressure alone"* (49). Turkish mounted archers were masters of bow and arrow while riding and the use of their "thick leg and thigh" was one of the main reasons of this mastery. In addition to this, by creating a visual image, the romance materializes the image of the Turke, which adds credibility to the characterization. With the physical description of the Turke, the concept of the other becomes corporeal, leading to the internalization of the differences that the Turke presents.

Furthermore, to present the characteristics of a nation which go hand in hand with the physical description, Bisaha states that Turks were *"a fierce and determined people whose advance represents a grave threat to Europe"* (56). In parallel with this statement, it is viable to refer to the scene in the romance where the Turke is the challenging figure who boldly comes into the court of Arthur and demands an exchange of blows which is an expression of his courage and power. To iterate the warmonger figure that is associated with the Turke, it should be stated that Thomas Asbridge, while talking about the Turks in general to introduce the opposition for the crusaders emphasises that the Turks are "warlike characters" coming from the "steppes of Central Asia" (21).

Although religious issues have not been raised in the romance, the conflict between Christianity and Islam has been central to the literary and intellectual world of Europe. The clash during the Crusades and in Al-Andalusia certainly enriched the European imagination concerning Islam. The Western chroniclers and illustrators were trying to create a clear distinction between the European self and the Eastern "other" particularly with their descriptions of the Muslims during the First Crusade. Concerning this distinction Luchitskaya states that

> […] the image of the Other is rather the image of the Self, the medieval miniaturists represented rather their own picture of the world and their mentality. They transfer their Christian ideas to the world of the alien culture. All the visual signs of Otherness – colour, size and proportion, gestures and dress are extremely symbolic and conventional. The manner of the expression of emotions (including negative emotions towards the enemy) is on the whole conventional. (59).

The conventionality of the representation can be transposed to the representation of the Turk In *The Turke and Sir Gawain*. The physical description based on the bodily attributes, as explained above, is also the continuation of a convention. The emphasis on the physical difference demonstrates the otherness of "the Turke". As the main point of this article suggests, the Turke is an outsider and an alien just like the Green Knight himself. However, the religious dispute in the existing lines of the romance does not go beyond the stigmatizing "heathen". Still, it should be noted that during the Middle Ages *"[…] in Europe the word 'Turk' had a primarily religious connotation"* (Lewis 11). This connotation has its sources essentially in the rising power of the Ottoman Empire during the period. Nevertheless, the religious and political dispute over identities can be claimed to be nullified by the stereotypification of the Turke. The Turke in the romance becomes a supernatural entity, which is to transform at the end of the romance into a Christian knight.

"The Turke" performs as the other, like the otherworldly figures or supernatural elements in romances. This othering shows parallelisms with the othering concept that Gayatri Spivak presents in postcolonial studies. In her ground-breaking article "Can the Subaltern Speak" Spivak states that *"in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken obliterate the textual ingredients with such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary – not only by ideological and scientific production, but also by the institution of law"* (280). By not being given the chance to speak for itself, "other" just becomes a definition, limited by the definer, in this case, the European Culture. Postcolonial approach, which was heavily influenced by the poststructuralist thinking, tries to show that the other is not always already present, but it is rather created and altered by the Eurocentric thinking. Ashcroft, et al. points out the fact that othering is *"a process by which the empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes and marginalizes"* (158). To think in medieval terms, othering becomes employing the Turke figure in a romance to create a definitive line between both cultures. However, in this article the main aim is to reflect on the idea of the Turke as an alien figure, not as the definitive other on which the European, in this case English, culture can establish its own cultural identity.

In the part where the Turke leads Sir Gawain to the castle of the "heathen soldan" on the Isle of Man, there are supernatural references, such as giants and showings of superhuman strength, which are repeated motifs in English romances. Giants of the Soldan, who are "strong and stout," and "to uglie to look upon" (*The Turke,* l. 132) pose threat in this section of the adventure to both Gawain and the

Turke, but the Turke ensures Sir Gawain saying that *"I shall helpe you in time of need"* (*The Turke,* l. 147). Although he is the one who challenged Gawain and did not receive the blow but used this to lure Gawain into the adventure, the Turke claims that he would help in Gawain's time of need. This shift in the character of the Turke, who becomes a helper, also presents another parallelism with the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as Sir Bertilak, the human form of the Green Knight, helps Gawain in a dire situation when Gawain was helpless and forlorn (*SGGK*, ll. 810-925).

In Gawain and the Turke's struggle against the heathen Soldan, who is an interesting figure as he is the king of the Isle of Man but who is referred to with an eastern title "soldan," the Turke and Gawain are to overcome various tests of strength and dexterity. These tests include a game of tennis and a throwing game in which contestants throw huge fireplaces, in order to reach their goal, which was to kill the Soldan, Sir Gawain and his Turkish companion should overcome their rivalry and work together. The game of tennis is not an ordinary match though. It is supposed to be played with a huge brass tennis ball. Their opponent, the giants aim to bash the head of Gawain:

> There were seventeen giants bold of blood,
> And all thought Gawaine but litle good.
> When they thought with him to play.
> All the giants thoughten then
> To have strucke out Sir Gawaines braine.
> Help him God that best may!
> The ball of brasse was made for the giants hand;
> There was noe man in all England
> Were able to carry it … (*The Turke,* ll. 181-189).

The giants who think poorly about Gawain aimed the brass ball to Gawain's head with the intention to smash his brains. The hyperbolic representation with the overemphasis of the impossibility of Gawain's mission adds tension and suspense to his story. Nevertheless, Sir Gawain was drawn in to this adventure by the Turke and again, he managed to overcome this supernatural test with the help of the Turke (the details are unfortunately burnt with the MS), Gawain proves his strength and survives. The Soldan, surprised by the prowess of the Turk, comments on his strength as follows: *"The King sayd, 'Bray away this axeltree,/ For such a boy I never see./ Yett he shal be assayed better ere he goe'"* (*The Turke,* ll. 192-194). Commending the strength of the Turke the Soldan also prepares for another test for him. However, the important point here is that the Soldan is just as shocked as

Gawain with the battle prowess of the Turke, as someone who is carrying the title of the Soldan, which is an Eastern naming for a monarch, he presumably is expected to know better about the qualifications of the Turke. Yet, this may also suggest that the Turke depicted in the romance, although represented with negative stereotypical expressions, is not an ordinary character, which also can be interpreted as a foreshadowing for the drastic transformation at the end of the romance.

The next test that Gawain has to endure before finishing his quest is a kind of a weightlifting contest. Before this event, the Turke reveals his aim by saying *that "I told you, soe mote I the -(may I prosper)/ With the three adventure, and then no more/ Befor me at this tide"* (*The Turke,* ll. 195-198). This foreshadowing reveals the end of the romance in which the Turke turns into Sir Gromer. As the line "may I prosper" suggests, the Turke is awaiting a certain action to happen before the end of the romance. For this instance, the weightlifting contest becomes the testing ground for the Turke. This particular action presents the Turke as a superhumanly strong character who takes a giant "fireplace" without any difficulty or suffering from the fire:

> And gatt itt by the bowles great,
> And about his head he it flang.
> Thris about his head he it swang
> That the coals and the red brands. (*The Turke,* ll. 220-223).

Saving the frightened Gawain, the Turke becomes a true helper; in fact, he is referred to as, "Gawain's boy," as if he was a page or an errand boy for Gawain. Reducing the Turke to the status of "Gawain's boy," it implies the inferiority of the character despite his physical prowess. Although Charbonneau and Cromwell suggest that "[t]he unfamiliar and outside threats force those within the dominant culture to re-examine their values and behaviours and question beliefs that had been unconsciously accepted," the Turke figure is just internalized and neutralized when he is described as "Gawain's boy" (*The Turke,* l. 98).

The last adventure scene is a fight between a giant and Gawain, who defeats it with the help of the invisible Turke:

> The Turke was clad invissible gay:
> No man cold see him withouten nay,
> He was cladd in such a weede.
> He heard their talking lesse and more:

And yet he thought they shold find him there
When they shold do that deed. (*The Turke,* ll. 232-237).

Accompanying Gawain into the fray, with an invisibility cloak, the Turke destroys the enemies of Gawain by showing superhuman strength. This emphasis on the strength of the Turke both shows the image of the Turks in the eyes of the English and its condition as a replacement for a supernatural figure in the romance. Furthermore, using a magic object like a cloak of invisibility and achieving a supernatural physical state of invisibility show that the Turke figure has magical capabilities, which emphasises the extraordinary aspects of the character. This kind of alien representation brings the Turke closer to the Green Knight in the sense of supernaturality.

The last scene of the romance shows the rebirth of the Turke as a Christian knight, Sir Gromer. Finally reaching the end of their quest, the Turke requests to be beheaded, thus he may break the spell on him and is reborn as a Christian knight:

He tooke a sword of mettle free,
Saies "If ever I did any thing for thee,

Doe for me in this stead:
Take here this sword of steele
That in battell will bite weele,
Therwith strike of my head." (*The Turke,* ll. 271-276).

Gawain unwillingly complies with the Turke's wishes, saying: *"'That I forefend!' / 'For I wold not have thee slaine / For all the gold soe red'"* (*The Turke,* ll. 277-279).

The Turke, knowing the outcome of the requested action, presents a last act of supernaturality:

"Have done, Sir Gawaine! I have no dread.
But in this bason let me bleed,

That standeth here in this steed,
And thou shalt see a new play,
With helpe of Mary that mild mayd
That saved us from all dread."

He drew forth the brand of steele
That in battell bite wold weele,
And there stroke of his head. (*The Turke,* ll. 283-288).

This scene promptly creates a reproduction of the beheading scene in the opening part of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, but this time a miraculous transformation occurs instead of a grotesque scene in which the Green Knight is beheaded by Sir Gawain with a single axe blow. Yet, the Green Knight grabs his own head and reminds Sir Gawain of the promise of the return blow (*SGGK*, ll. 300-490). Still, the transformation is as supernatural as the Green Knight's reaction to his beheading since the Green Knight took his fallen head with its headless body and reminded the word Gawain gave to receive the blow (*SGGK*, ll. 431-464).

The terms, such as "Gawain's boy," "the heathen Soldan," or as the title suggests, "the Turke;" present the mindset of the composer of the poem; the replacement of the Green Knight with the Turke is just representational. Hahn, in his introduction to the poem states that, *"[t]hroughout the romance, the categorical term 'Turk' operates as an indeterminate Orientalist stereotype of difference and exoticism; like 'Saracen,' 'Turk' defines otherness through geography, politics, religion and class"* (337-338). They just represent another stereotypical adversary in the context of the East. It is both interesting and remarkable to use this farfetched identity in the romance as adversary. This statement leads to the concept of the alienation of the East and the Turks. Seeing that the Green Knight is an otherworldly figure, the replacement of him with the concept of the Turk is quite significant in this aspect. This is being equal to a supernatural force, as Ashton suggests: *"Arthur's often youthful court is challenged in the midst of a festival or an occasion like a royal hunt. The interloper is a familiar medieval 'other': a giant and/or a green man, a freakish woman or hag, a Turk"* (28).

IV. Conclusion

The Turke and Sir Gawain does not simply offer a figure of "other". The complexity of the relationship between the Turks and the Europeans as mentioned in the first part of this article, goes against the black and white worldview. The character of "the Turke," appearing as a challenger and then guiding Sir Gawain while keeping him alive also represents this complexity. The Turks dazzled the Europeans with their empire and *"[t]he majesty of the Sublime Porte made a lasting impression on the Europeans; the force of its presence overpowered them"* (Rodinson 37). The overpowering force of the Ottomans was both admired and feared. As a result, the Turks became the desirable and the detestable at the same time. *The Turke and Sir Gawain* displays this admiration and contempt concurrently.

Lastly, as Şahiner states *"[i]t is not easy to imagine whether the Turks were aware that they would be changing the future of the world when they conquered Constantinople in 1453. We do know, however, that this event and its aftermath had such an impact on the European concept of the Turk that consequently the word "Turk" came to cover Islam"* (137). Their role as the leader of the Islamic community in the East and an advanced empire which is threatening to go deeper into Europe created an image of an alien and alienated figure such as the Green Knight himself. This research aimed to reflect how the Green Knight figure became a pattern of alienation and how the misunderstanding or deliberately misinterpreting the characteristics of the most dominant enemy of the Christianity in the medieval era (that is the Turks) to reflect its enmity and produce an identity for the fear that the Europeans feel. The idiosyncrasy of the Turke, which is peculiar for the English audience, is reduced to a spell cast on a Christian knight, and it is just further alienated for the English to understand clearly. Thus, the name and concept of the Turke became a disdained idea, an identity comparable to an otherworldly being.

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Summary

The Western perception of the Turks in the late medieval age was quite complicated if nothing else. This was the result of various encounters during the Crusades, trading, and later with the Ottoman Empire that was progressively making its way into the heart of Europe and thus providing a fiercer but clearer image. Although the Turks have been included in the term "Saracen," which was used mainly by the West to refer to the entire Muslim world quite often, they managed to distinguish themselves with their prowess in battle which is also reflected within the romance *The Turke and Sir Gawain* (c. 1500). The image of the Turks in the eyes of the English poses an interesting dilemma in the late medieval period. The limited information on the subject led to an understanding which defined the Turks as "most rude and barbarous, and their beginning most base, vile, and ignominious" (Fletcher n. pag.). Taking this perspective into consideration, the approach to the "alien" Turkish figure would be quite sceptic as they were aware of the existence and military strength of the Turks. Still, Turkish people were not well known for the time being and they were victims of overgeneralisation. Grouped under the name Saracens, the Turks' martial prowess and military power have not spared them the discrimination they faced, they have always been "the other," the outsider in many terms alongside with religion. Their role as the leader of the Islamic community in the East and an advanced empire which is threatening to go deeper into Europe created an image of an alien and alienated figure such as the Green Knight himself. This study aims to reflect the image of the Turk in the romance *The Turke and Sir Gawain* while drawing parallelism with the Green Knight figure which can be found as adversary to Sir Gawain in other Arthurian Romances, such as *The Grene Knight* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* In the romance, "the Turke" guides Sir Gawain through several "tests" such as playing tennis with a huge brass ball or throwing massive fireplaces while there is still fire in them. The guidance that the Turke provides is an interesting one as he is the one who caused all the trouble to begin with. Still, he offers to be a helpful hand during

the tests. This shift in the character of the Turke, who becomes a helper, also presents another parallelism with the *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as Sir Bertilak, the human form of the Green Knight, helps Gawain in a dire situation when Gawain was helpless and forlorn (*SGGK*, ll. 810-925). The Turke shows extreme martial prowess and cunning, and always guide Gawain into victory and keeps his promise to be Gawain's guide. This emphasis on the strength of the Turke both shows the image of the Turks in the eyes of the English and its condition as a replacement for a supernatural figure in the romance. Furthermore, this kind of alien representation brings the Turke closer to the Green Knight in the sense of supernaturality. In parallel with this, the Turke is even called "Gawain's boy" as if he had been in his service. They just represent another stereotypical adversary in the context of the East. It is both interesting and remarkable to use this farfetched identity in the romance as adversary. This statement leads to the concept of the alienation of the East and the Turks. Seeing that the Green Knight is an otherworldly figure, the replacement of him with the concept of the Turk is quite significant in this aspect. This research aimed to reflect how the Green Knight figure became a pattern of alienation and how the misunderstanding or deliberately misinterpreting the characteristics of the most dominant enemy of the Christianity in the medieval era (that is the Turks) to reflect its enmity and produce an identity for the fear that the Europeans feel. The idiosyncrasy of the Turke, which is peculiar for the English audience, is reduced to a spell cast on a Christian knight, and it is just further alienated for the English to understand clearly. Thus, the name and concept of the Turke became a disdained idea, an identity comparable to an otherworldly being.