

Orientalizing Famagusta on the English Stage, 1573-1628

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George Gascoigne's 'Device of a Masque' was published only two years after the fall of Famagusta, and it precedes the next English dramatic representation of the city in Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* by sixteen years. In this paper, I will examine Gascoigne's masque in relationship to the subsequent Famagusta plays, *Fortunatus*, William Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603) and John Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628), all of which are set in Famagusta. Additionally, I will include John Mason's *The Turk* (1610), which is not set in Cyprus but features Eunuchus, a Greek Cypriot victim of Ottoman aggression. I will focus on the somewhat counterintuitive nature of English Famagusta dramatic narratives. One would think that over time the plays would reveal a greater knowledge of Ottomans and European-Ottoman history, especially as the publication record reflects a host of sources in English offering firsthand accounts of the Eastern Mediterranean; instead, only Gascoigne pays close attention to historiography. As such it appears that Famagusta increasingly becomes a literary palimpsest of commonplaces about ancient myth and legend. This very fiction of Famagusta makes it interesting as the city becomes a multivalent reference to love via Aphrodite/Venus; to wealth, through the city's Crusader past (celebrated by Geoffrey Chaucer and Dekker), and part of a larger construct representing looming anxieties about otherness, empire, and ownership.