

The Images of Hürrem Sultan the Beloved: From the 16th to the 21st Centuries

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Introduction

Using women's bodies as an image is sharply criticized by feminist theory, which argues that women's bodies are more than just an image for consumption society. The discourse of feminist theory has changed its direction beyond the body from equality to controlling the body and sex differences as well as identity construction. However, all those discourses revolved around the body in which an "ego/self" takes place. The body, in this sense, is an anchor of the "self" to survive. On the other hand, the image of the body grants power to the ones who consume the image. Any depiction of the body, either in a painting or in writing, has an influence over not only the imagination of the audience but also their lives. This transition of power from the body to image and image to body in visual and performance art is the main topic of this article. I will explore how the image of Hürrem Sultan (d. 1558), wife of Suleiman the Magnificent, sultan of the Ottoman Empire, survived from pre-modern times to the post-modern age and how a historical figure has become a historical object of the popular culture through the centuries. I will offer an overview of how the image of Hürrem Sultan spread over time and space and how one can understand the meaning of Hürrem's image in art, poetry, music, performance art, and popular culture over time.

When my colleague at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Professor Uli Schamiloglu, called me in February in 2014 and told me that he had seen Hürrem Sultan's portrait hanging in a museum in Sarasota, Florida, I had not been aware that the image of Hürrem had reached the other side of the ocean seventy-five years before a popular Turkish show about Suleiman the Magnificent, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, appeared on Turkish satellite channels in the USA. Students studying Turkish language, history, and culture at the UW-Madison showed great interest in the show along with the Turkish diaspora and Turkish-speaking former Ottoman subjects living in the USA when we viewed the serial during the summer language immersion program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2011. The more I traveled across continents, the more I realized that many people in Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Kazakhstan, and Russia enjoyed watching the show. I was struck when I saw Russian aerial ballet

performers presenting the *Love of Hürrem and Suleiman* to a packed audience at a luxurious restaurant and entertainment center in Moscow around midnight in 2016.

Naming Hürrem Sultan

Name changing is a significant stage in an individual's life since an individual is identified by one's name while society has a connection with it. The function of a name is to confirm the identity of persons whom they represent as identifiers. Emelheinz examines identity elasticity and narrative elasticity, both of which transform a person's life and social relations after the name change (Emelheinz 2012, 171). She also argues that changing name of a slave means reconfiguring a new identity and a new life. "Such a forceful renaming not only asserts the master's ownership to the wider world but also gives the slaves a new self-definition concerning their master" (Emelheinz 2012, 171). In this article, I will also discuss how changing Hürrem's name has affected different narratives.

Hürrem's original name remains a riddle since her given name is unknown (Peirce 2019, 4). The reason behind the name confusion is that she was a slave sold in the slave market in Istanbul. This slave girl became Sultan Suleiman's wife and one of the most influential women in Ottoman political and cultural life in the 16th century. She was born in Rohatyn in Ruthenia, in today's Ukraine. The daughter of a Ruthenian priest, she was captured during a Tatar incursion into Poland before being sold to the Ottoman Sultan's harem in Istanbul when she was around 14 years old. She was presented to the Sultan, who was twenty-six years old, when she was about seventeen years old (Peirce 2019, 6). She was given the name "Hürrem" or "Hürremşah" in the Palace (Baltacı 1998, 498).

Being renamed is not only about the "self" but also a matter of the "others" who live in the same society since names give a public status to the individual. While the latter accepts the transformation of a new identity, the former resists losing a member. They continue considering the individual who undergoes name change as their society's a priori member as if any change had not happened.¹ This drastic change also gives one an esteem and self-acceptance in the new society in which the individual now lives. Yet, the "self" somehow manages the transformation and adopts the new life after being accepted by the new society's members (Dion, 1983, 251). Thus, narrative elasticity expands from self-narration to public narration, which will be seen in scholar's articles, stories, and biographies of Hürrem.

1 A statue, "Roxolana is Coming Home" by Roman Romanovich was erected in her native town in 1999. The image reminds one the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor. The woman figure in the statue holds the same animal as in Titian's famous portrait. There are Tatar figures on the foundation. The statue is accompanied by birds resembling freedom and home coming. URL:<https://kavrakoglu.com/hurem-ingesi/>.

It is not possible to find a consensus on her name. “European observers and historians referred to her as ‘Roxolana,’ ‘Rosselane,’ ‘Roxa’ or ‘Rossa’ as she was believed to be of Russian descent” (Yermelenko 2005, 234). Galina Yermelenko states that her given name at birth was Anastasia Lisowska (Yermelenko 2005, 234). However, her name was mentioned as Alexandra Lisowska in the *Islam Encyclopedia* (Baltacı 1998, 498). Hürrem Sultan is also known as Haseki Sultan, who became a legal wife of the sultan later. As a concubine of the Sultan, she was able to become “Haseki,” which refers to the spouse of the Sultan, a prestigious title for concubines who gave birth to a sultan’s child in the harem.²

Hürrem was the mother of four children, including the next sultan of the Ottoman throne. Her name appeared in love letters she exchanged with the Sultan. Alongside the love relationship with the Sultan, she was also involved in intrigues against the grand viziers and high-level Ottoman officials to strengthen her children’s position in the reign. Later in her life, she dedicated herself to charity work and sought to be visible in spaces outside of the Palace, such as a complex which includes a madrasa, mosque, school, public soup-kitchen, and hospital. Moreover, after she passed away, Sultan Suleiman established a foundation, a mosque, and a caravanserai in honor of his deceased wife’s memory (Baltacı 1998, 499). The Haseki Education and Research hospital continues to function in Istanbul in her memory. Aside from her birth name, her given name according to Islamic law or *sharia*, the name she gained because of her high status, and the names the narrators used, she also has other names: the names given to images of her in portraits by famous painters.

The Image of Hürrem in Paintings: Florida

We do not know whether John Ringling, a businessman and art collector, knew who Hürrem Sultan was when he included a painting of Hürrem Sultan in his collection, located in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, which was earlier his home in Sarasota, Florida. John Ringling, the youngest of the Ringling Brothers, ran the biggest circus company, which led the entertainment sector in the 19th and early 20th centuries in the USA. They spent summers in Baraboo in Wisconsin while their wheel took them to Sarasota, the city which was the winter home for the Ringling Bros. Circus. The youngest brother John expanded their business from having a circus company to function in other sectors such as oil, railroads, and ranches. He and his wife moved to Florida after the great depression and invested in real estate developments, where John Ringling became one of the richest men in the USA and an art collector. His wife “spent many months in Europe, especially Italy, personally selecting and furnishings for Florida home. She brought many pieces from old Venetian palaces”. It was emphasized that she was an “art collector” spending a lot of

² A *haseki* is not a concubine who may be sent away from the palace any time but gives her blood to the lineage of the Ottoman dynasty.

time in Europe in her obituary in the *New York Times* (June 9, 1929). This short obituary might lead us to understand how Hürrem Sultan's image had arrived in Sarasota. The painting of Hürrem was cataloged by the museum in 1936.³ We do not know whether or not the couple aimed to include a valuable painting by the famous painter Titian rather than the image of an Ottoman queen.

The portrait, painted in 1550, is recorded under the name "La Sultana Rossa (Roxolana)" in the museum.⁴ A curly-haired blond woman in a green velvetish Ottoman woman's costume, holding a chained iguana in her hand, appears against a dark background in the painting. Boone argues that Vasari mentioned that Titian had painted Hürrem's image just as he painted many other influential elite figures of his time. He notes that since the painter had never been in Istanbul or met with Hürrem in his lifetime, "her face is imaginary" (Boone 2018, 97). Boone also argues that Titian might have sent the painting to the King of Spain with the name "Queen of Persia," although he did not explicitly declare the work as his own. Titian was not paid for this work by the King. For this reason, he wrote letters to the Spanish authorities asking for the payment late in his life (Boone, 2018, 97). However, we do not know how the painting ended up in Florence before it was sold to Mable Ringling.

I will make some assumptions to answer why Titian did not send the painting to the Ottoman Sultan's Palace but to King Philip of Spain. My first assumption is that it is because the woman in the picture was not Hürrem. Since the image of the same woman appeared in other paintings by Titian, it is claimed that the woman was a Lavinia in Turkish dress.⁵ Leslie Peirce argues that we do not know Hürrem's original appearance because all painters depicted an imagined Hürrem. She maintains that they did not paint her since, according to social norms, it was not appropriate to talk about the Sultan's wife or make her a public figure (Peirce 2019, 9). I argue that we do not have her original image depicted as painting since images of individuals were not allowed in the Muslim Ottoman Empire, although Sultans had their own portraits. Hürrem, a devout convert to Islam, possibly did not want to have a conflict with the Muslim ulema.

My second assumption is related to the marketing of the paintings. We knew that he had already sent some other paintings before to the Spanish king. My third assumption is related to hostility towards Muslims. Sending the image of the wife of the Muslim Ottoman Sultan to King Philip has symbolic meaning when the power of Muslims was declining in Iberia while that of the Spaniards was on the rise. The Ottoman Sultans had opened their land to Jews whom the Spaniards had persecuted. It might have been anticipated that sending a Muslim noblewoman's image to King Philip would have pleased him. Rather than using the strong term Islamophobia, I will use Said's concept of "orientalism".

3 <https://emuseum.ringling.org/emuseum/objects/24004/portrait-of-a-woman>.

4 <https://shakko.wordpress.com/2018/07/10/sources-about-la-sultana-rossa-by-titian/>.

5 <https://shakko.wordpress.com/2018/07/10/sources-about-la-sultana-rossa-by-titian/>.

Edward Said proposed in his theory “orientalism” that artists who had never been physically present in the Orient depicted it as an imaginary place through the stories which they heard. The Orient was a place which did not have any definition in Titian’s mind when he named the painting either “La Sultana Rossa” or “Queen of Persia” when he sent it to King Philip. It was therefore very surprising for me when I came across another portrait of Hürrem made by Titian, which was listed in an auction under the name of “The Property of a Gentleman”. The note next to the portrait says, “follower of Tiziano Vecellio, called Titian’s portrait of a woman, possibly Haseki Hürrem Sultan, called Roxelana (1506–1558) bust length, in Ottoman costume, with a jeweled headdress”. Her name was assumed to be Ruslana by the curator of the auction.⁶ The auction was closed for 55,250 GBP in 2012. The image in the portrait was depicted with a light complexion which is not identical to the other image. Her hair was covered by her conic headgear, which has a large item of jewelry symbolizing the Ottoman Sultan.

Mohja Kahf argues in her book *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman* that “on the level of popular culture, melody, song, and folk stories poured into Europe from and through the Islamic world, carried by pilgrims, minstrels, merchants, and others who ventured in-between” in the 12th century. Then, the West had saw the Orient as a relatively advanced place which they admired for its technology and science. She maintains that any imitation was valuable since the Orient was at a higher cultural level (Kahf 1999, 20). Kahf continues that the Islamic “hosts entered epic and romance, poetry and prose, aristocratic and popular literature; and the Muslim woman stepped into Western imagination in the 15th century before the Orient was not romanticized yet” (Kahf 1999, 21). Artists used especially interaction with wild animals and Muslims in their paintings to create a fantastical world in their works.

Kahf maintains that in medieval times, art was not in a position to “orientalize” “the Orient” to create a system of knowledge about it to delimit and differentiate it. Yet they tried to make it the “same” till the Renaissance. She acknowledges her reader that “(t)he influence of Islamic structures of thought, the experience of Islamic modes of reference, even of fabric, food, music, military technology, and aesthetic objects of Islamic production, permeate Italian consciousness in this era.” (Kahf 1999, 60). In order to prove her argument in her book, she reminds her reader that there were special ties between Turks and Italians in medieval times. Italians who had a strong association with Byzantines transferred it to Turks after capturing Constantinople and controlling trade between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Kahf argues that changes in the perception of Muslims as the “other” started with the Renaissance “when in prescriptive male views of women through the trends of secularization, Reformation, and new concepts of individualism and domesticity happened” (Kahf 1999, 54). I follow Kahf’s argument that this orientalist image of Hürrem in the 16th century serves the idea to create sameness between the Western and Oriental noblewomen. “This Italian intimacy with the Islamic Other — a traditional foe of

⁶ <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5586275>, Auction: LOTS 9, 109, 123, 155 & 174.

France, far-off enemy of England, overbearing nemesis of Christian Spain — lends a unique cosmopolitan feeling to Italian Renaissance explorations of identity” (Kahf 1999, 59).

Galina Yermolenko argues that Western literature, especially historians, described her as an ambitious evil woman seizing the throne for her children by intrigue in the Palace because of their biased patriarchal views. She argues that Hürrem lived with other grandiose women figures in Europe at the same period and deserves more respect that she found in Ukraine. She also claims that this negative image sticks to her because of biased fictional narratives in the works of authors, including historians (Yermelenko 2005, 233).

Florence

When secular ideas arrived in Europe, scholastic thought in the Islamic world became more rigid. Michel Sokolnicki argues that it was not surprising that “Sultana Ruthene and her daughter had their portraits carefully hidden” from believers since the painting of images was strictly forbidden in the Ottoman state. He wrote an article on two paintings of Hürrem, one of which was in the Uffizi Museum in Florence and the other in the Topkapı Museum in Istanbul (Sokolnicki 1959, 232). Those two images are sharply different from the image in the painting of Titian. He did not depict the whole face portrait but the left side of the face. The woman in the picture has a Turkish turban with pearls and braided hair hangs down both sides of her neck. Sokolnicki states both portraits have the same name, Roxolane. However, the one painted by Cristofano Altissimo, who had never been in Istanbul 1556, is registered under the name Roxelane or Roxolones in the Uffizi Museum in Florence. From many published and unpublished documents it emerges with certainty that “the painter went to Como in June 1552, made twenty-four portraits by May 1553, by July 7, 1554, another twenty-six, by September 20, another twelve, and by October 23, 1556, others twenty-five.”⁷ The painting may have been sent from that inventory of paintings.

Istanbul

Hürrem’s portrait in Topkapı Palace was painted in 1533/34 when Sultan Suleiman was in Szigetvár. She was depicted with black hair and a light complexion in the portrait. She has a gorgeous headgear ornamented with pearls and a large ruby on the top. She was wearing a blue robe and red costume as well as a big necklace going down to her abdomen. The necklace reminds us of Christian zealots’ necklaces since it has the shape of a cross with beads. Another image of Hürrem in Turkey is named “Rossa Solymanni Vxor” or just “Uxor”. She appears in a very modest red robe

7 [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cristofano-di-papi-dell-altissimo_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cristofano-di-papi-dell-altissimo_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

holding her robe with her left hand while holding a stick with the other hand. She wears white conic headgear with a large pearl hanging down her forehead and matching her earrings. This portrait belongs to the private collection of Jak Arram (Baltacı 1998, 499) or Amram (Peirce 2019, 5), which is claimed to have been painted by an unknown Venetian painter in either the 16th, 17th, or 18th century.

London

The image of Hürrem in the British Museum in London is a printed copy. She is plain wearing headgear with pearls in this portrait. It is recorded under the name of “La piu bella e piu favorita donna del gran Turcho dita la Rossa” in an oval with a decorated border with a lion mask and two women within a rectangular frame. It was painted in Venice in 1540-1550 by Matteo Pagani. The British Museum purchased the portrait from Alphonse Wyatt Thibaudeau in 1878.⁸

Self-image: Hürrem’s Voice in her Letters

Systematic education in language, religion, and customs turned slaves into loyal members of the Palace by erasing their memories (Peirce 2019, 16). Such a sharp break with Hürrem’s old identity in her teen years after becoming a slave in the Palace not only turned this new historical figure into a subject of identity change, it also affected her narrative, which can be seen in her love letters. First of all, she shows her sincere religiosity as a devout Muslim in her letters. Possibly, the Christian religious education she received from her father during her childhood helped her to transfer and transform her faith to Islam. Even though they are love letters full of longing for Sultan Suleiman, she includes that “She prays till the morning to reunify with the Sultan.” She also assures him that she supports his campaign against the Christian world: “You are in a campaign against the enemy on behalf of Allah” and “You will exalt the holy war, jihad.”

The second point in her letters is that she mentions that she has still been the Sultan’s slave. Because of her religious affiliation with Islam, we may assume that she uses the word “slave” as a metaphor of Sufi literature. However, her emphasis on being a slave shows us that she has double or triple identities in conflict deep down within her. The first is the child Hürrem or a Ukrainian Christian girl which was suppressed, the second is the slave girl who remained within her, and the third is Hürrem Sultan. Erikson argues that childhood and the society in which they live affect an individual’s entire life (Erikson 1963, 277).

Adolescents undergo four psychological stages of identity construction when they develop an ego identity before an identity crisis starts. During this identity crisis, the

⁸ https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1878-0713-4166.

identity formation processes the ego's ability. Namely, a "critical turning point in the life of an individual starts in which development can only move forward by taking a new direction" (Kroger 2003, 207–8). Individuals synthesize and integrate necessary earlier identifications from their childhood into a new form, uniquely. Eventually, the identity crisis is resolved later in their lives. Marcia argues that women tend to go through more commitments based on the expectations of society in order not to "pay the price in the lack of extensive social support" (Marcia 1980, 179). Even if it seems that Hürrem adopted a new identity, the letters which she wrote to Suleiman shows that she is still in the third stage in which she synthesizes and integrates earlier religious identifications into a new religious domain, the domain of Islam.

From the self-narration of Hürrem in her letters to Sultan Suleiman, I can say that she was in a social moratorium stage in her incompleting identity construction in post-adolescence years. Readers can see that she feels alone and wants Suleiman next to her at the Palace. Marica does not name this stage as a crisis but as "disequilibrating circumstances," which do not originate only from family circumstances, anything can cause it. It is the case that crises or disequilibrating circumstances can occur at any time in an individual's life and they do not have to happen only once. Under this circumstance, one takes a break from social life to find oneself, as stage which Erikson called the stage of social moratorium (Kroger 2003, 207). Hürrem does not socialize or trust others, relying only on Sultan Suleiman. She writes, "My Life, My Dear, My Sultan! May God let us meet again and look at your glowing face. I do not want to be separated again. I wish you to be happy in this and other worlds."⁹

Leslie Peirce assumes that Hürrem did not write the letters by herself, but that a secretary who knew the conventions of the language in high-status letters wrote them on her behalf with her agreement (Peirce 2019, 87). In my view, she was brought to Istanbul in 1517 when she was young enough to learn a language quickly. She received an education in the Palace with other concubines. When the earliest letter was written she was 23 years old. To function at a superior level in Turkish, ten years is enough time for a learner. I do not claim that she did not use the secretary to write or edit the letter, but I can say the voice in the letters is Hürrem's voice.

It can be seen in her letters to Sigismund II, the King of Poland, that she had a desire to connect with her past and her former society. She writes a letter to greet him after he gained the throne. I examined only two letters Hürrem sent to the King in which she stated that she started the conversation with him and was pleased to receive an answer. She reveals her Muslim identity in her letters to the King, too. Her signature always has the words "humble/poor" as she used in her letters sent to Suleiman. Her humble tone become more robust when she promises the King that she would support him if he were a subject discussed by the Sultan (Uçtum 1980, 712).

9 <http://www.haberself.com/h/3336>.

The Image of Hürrem in Poems

Crown princes of the Ottoman Empire acquired a solid education from their *Lalas*, including languages and literature. Sultan Suleiman was a poet under the pseudonym *Muhibbi* or 'Lover'. He used metaphors, language, and meter masterfully in his poems. He wrote both didactic and lyric poems, which are in *ghazal* form and full of metaphors. The image of Hürrem can be seen in his poetry. Muhibbi addresses the beloved one in one of his poems:

Even though my beloved oppresses me, it is a pleasure
Eventually, her being faithful to others is a pleasure

...

O! Even though Muhibbi gets the throne of the world
He is to be a beggar of the beloved, it is a pleasure

In another poem, he uses many affectionate terms such as "my spring", "my holy water", "my day", "my plants", "my sweet", "my pomegranate", "my citrus", "my candle in the darkness", "khan of my heart", "my Istanbul", "my Karaman", "my Byzantium", "my Baghdad", "my Horasan", "my curly hair", "my non-Muslim" (!). The repetition of similar words and names emphasizes his love. They develop a sense of rising tension and an effect in the reader, who becomes impatient to see a reunion. The opening lines of the poem:

My companion, my everything, my shiny moon
My friend, my women, my everything, the queen of the beauty, my Sultan

The Sultan praises her in the closing lines:

Since I am a storyteller at your door, I always praise you
My heart is full of sorrow, and my eye is full of the tear; I am Muhibbi and in
a happy mood

Sultan Suleiman states openly that he is in love with Hürrem. When he departs on a campaign, both miss each other's company, which can be seen in his poems and Hürrem's love letters. This image of lovebirds mesmerized the audience after the Turkish serial began to be aired on a Turkish television channel in 2011.

The Image of Hürrem in Performance Art: Plays

Abide Doğan analyzes two plays written based on the story of Hürrem in the 20th century. The first is the play “Helpless Princes or Hurrem Sultan,” was written by Yusuf Niyazi in 1909.¹⁰ Doğan summarizes the plot that Hürrem engineered a game against Prince Mustafa since she wanted her sons to be on the throne and secure her own status after the Sultan dies, since she is afraid to lose her status as well as her life (Doğan 1999, 60). Hürrem in the play was the one who was behind Prince Mustafa’s being killed by the Sultan. She convinced the Sultan that the prince was planning a rebellion against him. With the help of the vizier, Hürrem reaches her goal and Mustafa was poisoned. The playwright Yusuf Niyazi includes Sultan Suleiman’s fondness/love sickness for Hürrem. The play shows Hürrem as a loser who regrets what she has done at the final scene (Doğan 1999, 60).

The second play is entitled “Hurrem Sultan,” written by famous playwright Orhan Asena in 1959.¹¹ Doğan argues that Hürrem was depicted as a Sultan, mother as well as an ambitious and jealous person in the play (Doğan 1999, 61). The play was staged in the same year in the Grand Theatre in Ankara.

The opening words of the play spoken by Hürrem are “I am scared”. “I am the first lady, the chief Haseki of the Palace. I am scared”. She was scared of the people of the Ottoman Empire who have never accepted her and her children (Asena 1960, 11). The protagonist Hürrem is confident with her beauty but does not feel secure in the Palace. She says she is wild because she has always lived in a hostile environment. Despite the fact that Hürrem has always been accused as being a Machiavellian queen in the Ottoman Palace. The character, Suleiman, in the play confesses that he is a Machiavellian leader. “I am scared of peace. For this reason, I do not take a long break from war” (Asena 1960, 21). Hürrem plans to eliminate Suleiman’s son Mustafa with the help of her daughter and son-in-love. The fear she feels causes her to be a cruel person. She thinks that Mustafa is an innocent person, but he would kill all of them if she does not kill him first (Asena 1960, 26).

The plot is not a romance but a matter of being loyal to the Sultan. The character Suleiman does not have love sickness in the play but questions who Hürrem is after he orders his son Mustafa to be killed. “I have been sleeping with you for more than thirty years. Oh my God, I know you too little. Who are you? Whose child are you? Where are you from? Are you a friend or an enemy?” (Asena 1960, 70). The playwright highlights Hürrem as a mother “We mothers cannot live our own lives. We are no longer our own ‘self’ after giving birth for the first time” (Asena 1960, 83). Hurrem is a character who does everything to save her children, even committing the crime of having Prince Mustafa killed. Hürrem’s son Beyazıt became furious after he learning that Mustafa had been killed and he accuses his mother. Hürrem is presented in the play as a ruthless queen and mother at the same time.

¹⁰ Modern editions of Niyazi’s plays spell Hurrem without an umlaut.

¹¹ It was spelled as Hurrem without an umlaut.

Hürrem was accused of causing the Ottoman Empire's decline with her support for Mustafa's being killed and keeping the throne for her children. After ordering the execution of his own son, Sultan Suleiman feels a sharp remorse and isolates himself from everyone, including Hürrem, in the play. Hürrem feels lonely. The play's closing lines are "I am scared" by Hürrem and "Me, too" by the vizier (Asena 1960, 96).

Television Serial: Suleiman The Magnificent

The woman character Hürrem, tall, blue eyed, light complexioned, and red-haired, attracted the Sultan in the harem after she fainted during the Sultan's visit to the harem at the beginning of the serial in 2011. This humanized side of the Ottoman sultan and his love for a Christian slave girl who used a broken Turkish accent was enough to make the show one of the most popular shows.

The actress Meltem Uzerli is herself from Germany and had become an icon by the time she left the show. The jewelry and costumes she wore in the program also became very popular as the show became increasingly popular beyond Turkey's borders. More than 150 million persons have watched the show and loved this new image of Hürrem when it appeared on Netflix, reaching an even greater international audience (Peirce 2019, 29).

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan made a statement in 2012 criticizing the scenario which highlighted the human side of the Sultan spending time in the Palace with Hürrem. "We do not have such ancestors. We do not know that Suleiman. He spent thirty years on horseback. He did not have such a life in the show. You need to know and understand that I disapprove of the director and the TV station owner. We warned them but are waiting for the decision of the court." Unfortunately, heavy censorship came to bear upon the producers of the show after that statement.¹²

Ballet

The ballet "Hürrem Sultan", the first two act ballet in Turkish history, was composed by Nevit Kodallı and Oytun Turfanda in 1975 and staged in 1976. The choreography is based on the play written by Orhan Asena (Karaca 2008, 110). It became popular after 1998 and again in 2011 and was staged in Istanbul, İzmir, Mersin, and Samsun. The plot is a plain historical romance based on Hürrem's intrigues to get rid of Prince Mustafa to guarantee her son the throne. Hürrem is shown to an ambitious person who wrongly influences Sultan Suleiman and causes a tragedy in his life. After he ordered Prince Mustafa to be killed she dances for the Sultan. The choreographer highlights her hybrid identity by using both Slavic and Ottoman figures in her dance (Karaca 2008, 100–113).

¹² BBC Türkçe, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2012/11/121126_magnificent_century (27 Kasım 2012).

Music

The composer Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) composed Symphony #63 in 1781 after he was inspired by image of Hürrem Sultan (Ward 1994). The symphony entitled “La Roxelane” has four movements. Flutes and violins in the first movement create royal happiness with the help of cellos and oboes. Flutes give the music an “Oriental” sense. The second movement, “La Roxolana” or “La Roxelane Allegretto”, is led by a flute that continues a duet between violins. The symphony was given its name after a troupe visited Eszterháza Palace in Hungary where Haydn worked and lived. They performed the comedy “Les Trois Sultanes” by French playwright Charles-Simon Favart in 1777 in which Hürrem was a character (Ward 1994). The piece is mellow and relaxing, with a repeating melodic figure in each movement.

Opera

The image of Hürrem also inspired Denys Sichynsky’s opera “Roksoliana” in 1911, as well as Turkish composer Tevfik Akbaşı’s opera in the libretto of Işık Noyan.

Conclusion

This article focused on the image of Hürrem in various forms of art from the 16th century when she lived until today. Hürrem Sultan’s image in the paintings of famous Western painters is not her original image, but imagined images of an “Oriental” Queen. She was depicted as a Western woman in Ottoman costume. Paintings are in museums from North America to Europe and Turkey. This transborder image of Hürrem has her own voice in the letters which she wrote to her beloved husband and Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Suleiman, while he creates an image of a woman who deserved the most profound love in his poems. Hürrem’s image stayed alive in Europe and Turkey’s performing arts in the 20th and 21st centuries. Her image in the television serial “Suleiman the Magnificent” created an enormous community connected not only through the show, but also in the marketplace and popular culture, with consumers seeking imitations of Hürrem’s jewelry, clothing, and even hairstyle and color.

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