The Image of the Moslem in 18th Century English Drama: A

Critical Study of Three Plays

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Abstract

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This thesis studies the image of the Moslem in selected plays from the eighteenth-century English drama. The discussion of this topic will be limited to three plays: Nicolas Rowe's *Tamerlane* (1701); John Hughes's *The Siege of Damascus* (1720) and Richard Cumberland's *Alcanor* (1785). Reference is also made to previous literary works to illustrate the shift of attitude between the period under discussion and the past. The study contends that unlike Renaissance drama which presented Islam and Moslems as antithetical to Christianity, some of the plays of the eighteenth century presented Islam and Moslems in a relatively positive way. Moslems and Islam, in the plays under discussion, are presented, to a certain extent, without the preconceived stereotypical notion which is found in the drama of the Renaissance and Middle Ages. In these plays, some Moslem characters are associated with a number of positive traits
such as nobility, chivalry, honour, religious toleration and leniency.

Besides, the study discusses briefly the background which led to this shift of attitude among English playwrights.