

**The Muslim Moors in John Dryden's  
plays: *The Conquest of Granada*  
(1672) and *Don Sebastian* (1689)**

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**Abstract**

The works of Peele, Kyd, Marlowe, Goffe and others exhibit the growing fascination with Muslim Oriental subjects. Many of such plays are loaded with conventional notions and Crusading themes about Islam and the East. In the Restoration, however, English interest in the Muslim culture shifted such generally conventional representation to encounters of love-and-honor. While the Renaissance is marked with hostility and cultural tensions between East and West, the Restoration is a time, when such hostilities between the Muslim and the Christian worlds have been much diminished. Historically, the Ottoman decline called into question the common literary view that devised the myth of the Turkish peril. Late seventeenth-century drama renewed a special interest in Oriental matters. This paper throws light on two of the later historical plays of John Dryden, *the Conquest of Granada* (1672) and *Don Sebastian* (1689). Dryden's representation of the Moors stand in sharp contrast to the dominant Restoration heroic genre. Explore Dryden's ideological theory in regard to cultural representation, these two historical performances are quite revealing. Dryden's stereotypical portrait of the Moorish culture and religion is seen in the dark image of the Islamic world he depicts. His stereotypical representation of the Oriental 'Other' also envisages the opposition between two different cultures and ways of life: one Christian and the Other Muslim.

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## The Muslim Moors in John Dryden's plays: *The Conquest of Granada* (1672) and *Don Sebastian* (1689)

### Introduction:

During the English Renaissance, there was a great interest in the world of Islam reflected in a good deal of Oriental dramatic works, mostly based on Ottoman history. The works of Peele, Kyd, Marlowe, Greville, Heywood, Goffe and others exhibit the growing fascination with Muslim Oriental subjects. Many of such plays are loaded with conventional notions and Crusading themes about Islam and the East. In the Restoration, however, the interest in the Islamic life and culture shifted this generally conventional representation to encounters of love and honor. The rise of the heroic genre in Restoration drama is closely associated with Oriental plots and subjects. The former dramatic age is of course one of hostility and cultural tensions between East and West. Conversely, the Restoration is a time when cultural and religious hostilities between the Muslim and the Christian worlds have been much diminished. Susan Wiseman believes that the shattering defeat of the Ottoman fleet by the Venetians in 1656, partly accounts for the "dual" representation of the Muslim Turk, simultaneously as Other and similar.<sup>(1)</sup> The Turkish defeat certainly called into question the common literary view that devised the myth of the Turkish peril. Moreover, the decay of the Ottoman Turks after the second siege of Vienna in 1683, which ended in a shattering defeat for the Turks, actually decreased tensions in Oriental representations. Late seventeenth-century drama renewed a special interest in Oriental matters and Islamic subjects which were drawn from history. This drama successfully reflected an ongoing process of East-West political and cultural

(1) Susan Wiseman, "History Digested": Opera and Colonialism in the 1650's." In *Literature and the English Civil War*. Ed. Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), p. 199.

confrontation, in which Muslim Turks and Moors posed a threat to Europe. Instead of bridging the gaps between the two cultures, the West had always struggled to take the lead in such confrontation. For some critics, the Western attempt to shape and influence the Islamic 'Other' took the form of domination. For example, in his classic work, Edward Said refers to this process in his definition of "Orientalism" as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in the Western experience,"<sup>(1)</sup> suggesting that Orientalism is "a Western style of dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient."<sup>(2)</sup> In his study, Anwar Abdel-Malek indicated that in Western traditional and colonial Orientalist writings, the Muslim Orient is treated as "an 'object' of study, stamped with otherness-as all that is different, whether it be 'subject' or 'object'- but of a constitutive otherness, of an essentialist character."<sup>(3)</sup> John Dryden's last plays about the Muslim Moors largely delineate the conventional notion of cultural difference as well as religious otherness. I would like to throw some light on two of the later historical plays of Dryden, dealing with the Muslim East. The first is *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), his most popular heroic play, and the second is *Don Sebastian* (1689), a seemingly heroic play, only in theme but not in structure. Dryden's representation of the Muslim Moors in the two plays stand in sharp contrast to the dominant mood of the dramatic heroic genre of the age. In fact, writers of the heroic play of the Restoration have adopted more tolerant attitudes towards the 'Other' and shaped the Muslim East in a mould of similitude. Heroic, 'love-and-honor,' dramatizations of the Muslims almost negate cultural difference between East and West.<sup>(4)</sup> For exploring Dryden's ideological theory in regard to cultural representation of Muslim Moors, these

(1) Edward Said, *Orientalism*. Reprinted with a new afterward. (New York, and London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 1.

(2) Said, p. 3.

(3) Anwar Abdel-Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis," p. 107, *Diogenes*. 44 (Winter 1963): 103-40.

(4) see, for example, Roger Boyle's *The Tragedy of Mustapha* (1668), and Elkanah Settle's *Ibrahim the Illustrious Bassa* (1676).

two historical performances in Dryden's dramatic cannon are quite revealing. Dryden's bias against the Moorish religion, i.e., Islam, can be seen in the picture of the Islamic world he depicts. In J. Svilip's discussion of Restoration Orientalism, Dryden's Muslim Orient, symbolizing the Hobesian notion of the "lawless pursuit of power," is represented in a striking dichotomy. On the one hand, "this Orient has a legitimate structure of authority and 'natural' human relations like those in England," and on the other, "it has a pre-social order supported by an illegitimate religion, a state of nature where the Hobbesian will arrogates power and preys upon relatives in 'unnatural' relations of dominance."<sup>(1)</sup> Svilip's description shows that Dryden, in his two plays, envisages the obvious opposition between two cultures and ways of life: one Christian and the other Muslim.

### 1. Moorish degeneration in *The Conquest of Granada, Part I and II*

Dryden's *The Conquest* is a play in two parts which is often cited as the archetype of the rhyming heroic play of the Restoration. Besides establishing the heroic genre, the play is distinguished for its memorable historical setting of Granada. The play focuses on Moorish degeneration through its conventionally antagonistic representation of Muslim Moors. The playwright offers unambiguous models of Moorish cruelty and barbarism so as to stand in sharp contrast with Christian nobility and grandeur. Historically, Granada had been in Moorish hands for more than seven hundred years, and the united Christian forces succeeded in recapturing it in 1492. Derek Hughes accurately describes the disorderly Islamic "civilization of Granada," which gives way to the Christian civilization in Dryden's play:

The pagan civilization of Granada is itself founded upon falsehood, embodying no principles of coherence and enshrining no truths that will lead its citizens from their diverse and incommunicable illusions to a communal enlightenment. Only

(1) "Orientalism, Kinship, and Will in Restoration Drama," pp.437-8, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*. 303 (1992): 435-9.

when Christianity supplants the false and ephemeral order are regeneration and unity possible.<sup>(1)</sup>

Although the play is deeply grounded in history, Dryden shows no interest in historical facts at all. He is more concerned with the representation of the Orient within an established ideology, one that is essentially dogmatic. The aim is to commemorate the Spanish, Christian triumph over Moorish Islam. In his play, however, Moorish degeneration and corruption, rather than Christian military superiority, account for the fall of Granada. Dryden presents a dark, Pagan Moorish world, whose most prominent disease is faction. Surely not quite unconsciously, he portrays a Moorish world that embodies treachery and factionalism. On the one hand, Moors are mainly divided into two rival groups, the Abencerrages and the Zegrys. On the other, we have a collection of savage Moorish characters: Boabdalin, an opportunist king; Abdalla, his rebellious brother; Lyndaraxa, the shrewd and ambitious lady. Two Moorish villains, Hamet and Zulema, add to the group of evil figures. Conversely, the unappealing picture of the Moors is not improved by the fact that all are ultimately conquered by virtuous Christians.

Dryden employs his own version of the historical Moorish degeneration to offer an analysis of the nature of political faction. While the beginning of the play shows Moorish Granada besieged by Christians, a messenger arrives to report that "the two fierce factions are again in arms:/ And, changing into blood the days delight/ the Zegrys with th' Abencerrages fight."<sup>(2)</sup> Another fight soon breaks out between two men of the same Moorish faction, but Almanzor, an exceedingly courageous character with a Moorish identity, resolves the dispute at once. Moorish weakness is enhanced by further treachery when Prince Abdalla is stirred towards rebellion against the King by the devilish Moorish lady,

(1) Dryden's Heroic plays. (London: the Macmillan Press Ltd, 1981), p. 91

(2) The Conquest of Granada. (Part I. 1.1.102-104). The works of John Dryden. V.

11 Ed. John Loftis and David Stuart Rodes. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be cited in the text.

Lyndaraxa, whose ambition has no limits. To become a queen is her life's dream, for she manipulates the infatuated Abdalla to "set the crown upon my Brow" (I- 2.1.162). Similarly, Abdelmelech, chief of the Abencerrages, falls in love with false Lyndaraxa and becomes her slave. In his tragic weakness, this Moorish man of state is also made to weep for her sake (Part I- 4.2). Thus, it is important to note that Dryden emphasizes the sensual motive behind Moorish faction and revolt.

In his analysis of Moorish faction, Dryden develops his own vision of what an evil, opportunist Moorish woman would look like. The character of Dryden's Moorish lady, Lyndaraxa, calls for extensive critical attention. While Jack M. Armistead focuses on Lyndaraxa's magical discourse to gain power over Moorish men<sup>(1)</sup>, I pay more attention to Dryden's use of this Moorish woman to portray Moorish cruelty, as well as moral and religious degeneration. The author utilizes every aspect of his fictitious Oriental female character, particularly her feminine powers, to serve his purposes effectively in the play. Dryden's Lyndaraxa manages to seduce both Moorish prominent men, Abdalla and Abdelmelech, who have become slaves to her deceiving love and subject to her cunning manipulation. Shrewd Lyndaraxa, "faithless as the wind," (II- 2.1.110) according to a Moor, thus, gains political power and has Moorish men of state under her control. She becomes the engine of revolt and the aid to faction. Her distinguished character makes Arthur Kirsche regard her as "the most interesting female villain in Dryden."<sup>(2)</sup> Kirsche's study of Lyndaraxa's remarkable ambition for the 'Crown' also suggests that she is "motivated by a private libertine creed unrestrained by public responsibility and by a lust for public power untouched by private magnanimity."<sup>(3)</sup> She is neither restrained by social restrictions nor satisfied with the Divine law;

(1) See "The Higher Magic in Dryden's Conquest of Granada" Papers on Language and Literature. Fall (1990): 26:4, 478-488.

(2) Dryden's Heroic Drama, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1965), p. 111.

(3) Dryden's Heroic Drama, p. 111.

“yet dull Religion,” she claims “teaches us content.”<sup>(1)</sup> For Lydaraxa’s sake, Abdalla joins the vengeful Zegrys to overthrow his brother and soon becomes king, but his victory is only short-lived. When Abdalla seeks safety along the walls of Albayzin palace in Granada, Lyndaraxa would not let him inside. Lyndaraxa’s incredible faithlessness incites Abdalla to insult her, ironically charging her of spiritual hollowness: “there is more faith in Christian dogs than thee” (I- 5.1.71). One can hardly miss the religious implication of the superiority of the Christian doctrine, suggested in Abdalla’s statement. Because of Lyndaraxa’s treachery, the rebellious prince loses to his brother and ultimately flees to the Christian camp. Lyndaraxa’s lustful desires, then, lead her to seek the love of the play’s heroic character, Almanzor, who immediately rejects her advances. In short, unrestrained lust, remarkable ambition and cruelty are all embodied in this Moorish lady.

It is also through Lyndaraxa that Dryden scorns the Moorish religion, i.e., Islam, and Moorish judicial system. Lyndaraxa orchestrates a conspiracy, slandering the reputation of the virtuous Christian Queen, Almahide, who is falsely accused of adultery with Abdelmelech. The Moorish court lacks the essential element of its judicial system, which is the interpreter of the Islamic law. There is neither anybody to defend the Queen, nor to take the role of “Mufti” (weighing evidence and judging in light of the Islamic law) in the play. Dryden, however, aims at emphasizing the lack of justice in Moorish Granada and, consequently, at illustrating Oriental despotism. Two Moorish villains, Hamit and Zulema, are brought as false witnesses, using “Alcoran” and “the Prophet” as means to achieve their evil purposes. The worst form of Moorish degeneration is suggested by Dryden when witnesses are asked repeatedly to “swear on the Alcoran your cause is right;/ and Mahomet so prosper you in fight” (II- 5.2.47-8). Dryden implies that the Moorish religion justifies injustice and oppression. The conventional image of mocking “Alcoran” and the “Prophet” is reinforced by having the

(1) Dryden, *The Conquest* Part II, (3.2.32).



witnesses kiss the Holy Book in a dumb show while they offer their false allegations. The innocence of Almahide, however, is discovered only through the confession of the dying Zulema, who is killed by Christian Almanzor. Lyndaraxa causes further disruption in the Moorish court by provoking her two Moorish rival lovers to fight for her sake. A groundless brawl is aroused for a shameless cause, while Granada is falling to the enemy. The King's brother, Abdalla, is subsequently killed. The inhumanity of this shrewd Moorish lady, Lyndaraxa, is demonstrated in her final treachery, as Granada is besieged by the Christians. Lyndaraxa collaborates with the treacherous Zegrys to submit the Moorish stronghold to Christians, and Granada ultimately falls through Moorish agency rather than Christian valor. In this Moorish world, moral degeneration and political chaos provoke acts of blasphemy. Before stabbing Lyndaraxa, Abdulmelech, rather traumatized, utters the words of a disbeliever: "what an angry God, to exercise his spight" (II-5.3.102). In depicting Lyndaraxa's death, Dryden shows knowledge of English Oriental representations and gives prominence to Oriental legends concerning Muslims. Insulting Abdelmelech, she interestingly alludes to the famous cage legend of Bajazet, the Ottoman Sultan: "I'll cage thee, thou shalt be my Bajazet./ I on no pavement but on thee will tread" (II- 5.3.241-2).<sup>(1)</sup> The allusion to the cage legend enforces Lydaraxa's enacting of Oriental "feminine" cruelty, clearly seen in her final humiliation of the poor Abdelmeleck. Her life, however, ends before she is able to fulfill the legend. Thus, false Lyndaraxa, having Granada "betrayed," dies, even unprotected by her conquering Christian allies.

Another form of degeneration in Dryden's Moorish world is suggested in the idea of kingship. The whole idea of kingship in the play is put into question when the role of the Moorish King of Granada, Boabdelin, becomes of staggering tyranny. Completely losing his royal dignity, he acts only like a figurehead

(1) Dryden is evidently acquainted with the famous legend which is first used in Marlowe's, *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590), in which Bajazet is greatly humiliated by the tyrant military ruler, Tamberlaine.

with no real power to exercise. In the beginning of the play, the King is depicted as the helpless ruler who is unable to control Moorish factions and treachery without the help of the brave Christian Almanzor, the play's ultimate hero. The King, in fact, seems to have handed in both power and authority to Almanzor at an early stage of the plot. By the end of the first part, Boabelin ironically celebrates a victory which is not only temporary, but also not attributed to him. This does not stop Dryden from exploring, at times, stereotypical portraits of Oriental tyranny. He, however, attempts to add the heroic flavor to his Moorish tyrant, making Boabelin bewail his loss of Almahide's love, which she has already granted to Almanzor: "false Women to new joys, unseen can move:/ there are no prints left in the paths of Love" (II-3.1.39-40). The unreasonable jealousy of the King and the "scarfe" motif (II-3.1) are all meant to echo Shakespeare's Moor, Othello. Boabdelin, the pathetic Moorish King, is overpowered by Christian Almanzor, in both domains of love and war. Defying the ambivalent authority of Boabdelin, Almanzor asserts his role in Granada:

If thou pretendst to be a Prince like me,  
Blame not an Act which should thy Pattern be.  
I saw th'opprest, and thought it did belong  
To a King's office to redress the wrong:  
I brought that Succour which thou ought'st to bring,  
And so, in Nature, am thy Subjects King. (I- 1.1.216-21)

The Moorish King of Granada, yet, desperately endeavors to preserve power: "The succor which thou bring'st me makes thee bold:/ But know, without thy ayd, my Crown I'le hold" (II-3.1.106-7). Alan S. Fisher maintains that Boabelin's confusion between his conception of his role as an absolute Oriental tyrant and his concern over his safety makes the idea of kingship seem foolish. Fisher provides what he considers to be the play's paradox. He agrees that the figurehead ruler is not the true King; for him, the simple truth is that Almanzor is actually the King of

Granada.<sup>(1)</sup> We find, therefore, that Dryden's representation of such a powerless Moorish King is in line with his general portrayal of Moorish degeneration. Boabdelin's actions can be seen as hypocritical because he promotes violence when it suits his needs as king, but punishes it when it weakens his power. His despotism can also be seen in his conspiracy to kill Almanzor, to prevent his love affair with Almahide. The Moorish King, like all his countrymen in the play, symbolizes Oriental treachery, rebellion, tyranny and even decay. Dryden ultimately suggests that all these unpleasant qualities blend to represent Islamic Moorish character.

In contrast to this dark, degenerate world of the Moors, stands the bright Christian world, praised for its exemplary virtue, nobility and valor. This world is championed by Almanzor, the play's hero, often quoted by critics as the model of the heroic character. His miraculous role and incredible actions have been much criticized by commentators, making this play notorious for being fairly bombastic and unrealistic.<sup>(2)</sup> H. Grant Sampson, however, notes that much of the action of the play is not essentially related to the heroic Almanzor. Because his character has been used mainly to develop the political thread, his role is connected only with the dramatic structure of this heroic play, so as to be part of the author's design.<sup>(3)</sup> For our purposes, we have to remember that Almanzor is a Moor, as the play starts, but is later found to be a devout Christian by both birth and faith. Excessive courage, nobility and virtue are all signs of his Christianity, from the beginning of the play. As a Moorish agent, Almanzor's love and friendship with the supposedly Christian enemies are evident in his words to the Duke of Arcos, as he negotiates peace with him. Almanzor openly shows his feelings when he declares to Arcos that "I love you more then you do me," (II- 3.3.30) and that

(1) Alan S. Fisher. "Paradoxes of the Conquest of Granada." *Studies in Philology*. 73 (1976): 414-439.

(2) For the treatment of the heroic play and the heroic character, see John Wilson, A Preface to Restoration Drama. Cambridge (Mass): Harvard UP, 1968.

(3) H. Grant Sampson. "The Hero and the Structural Design of the Conquest of Granada." *Wascana Review*, 69-79.

“I’m sad to death, that I must be your foe” (II- 3.3.56). The brotherhood and unconvincing conciliation between Almanzor, as a Moorish agent, and Arcos are unnatural and are perhaps part of Dryden’s Christian propaganda. We are not certain whether we are dealing with a fierce military struggle between enemies or with a rehearsal of a diplomatic or courteous conduct between intimate friends. This act of conciliation, however, blurs the nature of the Crescent-Cross military struggle and also largely questions Almanzor’s loyalty to the Moors. To our surprise, at the end of the play, Almanzor discovers that he has been friends with his real father, and that “the Bracelets and the cross, his mother ty’d about his wrist” (II- 5.3.222-3). This coincidence is not only melodramatic but is also quite funny. In his Christian propaganda, Dryden mocks God’s Providence. “Do we believe that Almanzor’s Moslem captors would not strip him of a ruby cross when little?,” asks Fisher, asserting that it is ridiculously paradoxical to depict Almanzor as both, saved by God’s Providence and as unaware of his true religion.<sup>(1)</sup> There is no doubt that at the end of the play, all of Almanzor’s military gains and marvelous bravery are attributed his Christianity rather than to his Moorish upbringing.

The play’s Christian world is so much infused with goodness and nobility that everyone turns to it in search for mercy and virtue. In this noble Christian world that Dryden draws, we also have the play’s symbol of Christian virtue, the Moorish Queen Almahide, who has readily accepted “the new faith.” Her virtue is well juxtaposed with the vices of other Moors, particularly Lyndaraxa’s. Soon after she is slandered by Moorish conspirators, Almahide seeks refuge in the Christian “Deity.” She echoes Prince Abdalla, who finds Christian pity with Ferdinand and Isabella, and so his conversion to Christianity, before his death, is not quite implausible. The Moorish Queen has always been detached from the dark, degenerate world of the Moors. She invokes “the Saints above,” (II- 3.1.178) and is instructed by her maid, Esperanza, to put her trust in “the Christian Deity” (II-

(1)Fisher, “Paradoxes of the Conquest of Granada,” p. 436.

5.2.10). Almahide turns Christian even before her innocence is declared, which makes her conversion rather abrupt. In fact, the author does not seem to prepare his audience for her acceptance of Christianity. In this heroic play, Dryden, however, is much concerned with celebrating Christian values, perhaps as much as commemorating a historical Christian victory. Dryden's Christian propaganda in *the Conquest of Granada* is typical of all of Restoration heroic plays about Muslims, in which Oriental characters almost lose their religious identity.<sup>(1)</sup> In his study of the religious significance of heroic plays, J. Canfield describes the delineation of the code of faith, in which everyone has absolute "Trust" in the "Christian God." Canfield refers to Dryden's underscoring of "Providential retribution": the fatal end variously given to scores of Moorish characters.<sup>(2)</sup> "Rescu'd from these Misbelievers hands" (II-1.1.24), Granada cherishes the defeat of the Moors, which is caused mainly by Lyndaraxa and other agents of Moorish treachery and corruption. The play indeed reasserts the return of Granada to its "old religion" or, as Dryden puts it through Isabel, its "true faith" (II-1.1.26,28-9). According to Jack Armistead, Dryden's dramatization of the fall of Granada and the emergence of the Spanish empire is presented "as leading to a more satisfactory order by reinstating Christianity in Europe and exporting it to the New World."<sup>(3)</sup> Granada's immoral Moors are not fit to be civilized citizens in the emerging Christian Empire and, therefore, have to be transformed.

Dryden dramatizes this Christian triumph by portraying a mass conversion to Christianity of purely Moorish characters and others, ambivalently, with a Moorish identity (namely Almanzor and Almahide). Thus, quite interestingly, Dryden reverses a

(1) Although Restoration heroic plays about Islam have only few anti-Islamic references and scenes, their writers maintain the Christian propaganda while their Muslim characters are made to act like Christians. For example, Solyman and Mustaph in Roger Boyle's *Mustaph* (1668).

(2) See J. Douglas Canfield, "The Significance of the Restoration Rhymed Heroic Play," 56-7, *Eighteenth Century Studies*. 13 (1979): 49-62.

(3) Jack Armistead, "the Higher Magic in the Conquest", p. 987.

general motif in Renaissance discourse of Islam by making his characters “turn Christian” rather than “turn Turk,” or become Muslim.<sup>(1)</sup> Believing himself to be a Moor, Almanzor has absurdly been unaware of his baptism, the discovery of which he welcomes wholeheartedly. By the same token, Almahide follows “the Christian God” because, in her religious bewilderment and through her “infancy” teachings, she has taken the wrong faith, i.e., Islam. She prays to her “unknown” god in the following manner:

Thou Pow’r unknown, if I have err’d forgive:  
My infancy was taught what I believe.  
But if thy Christians truly worship thee,  
Let me thy godhead in thy succour see (II- 5.2.15-18)

Nevertheless, Almanzor and Almahide are not the only Moorish converts. In fact, the first Moors to “turn Christian,” albeit implicitly, are the lovers, Ozmyn and Benzayda. The two seemingly Moorish lovers show exceptional nobility. They are well chosen by Dryden to represent Christian rather than Moorish grandeur of character, so much that they clearly belong to the Christian world of Spain, and ultimately “turn Christian.” The lovers resort to Queen Isabel, seeking her protection, whereas they cannot find safety and happiness in the corrupted Moorish world. Queen Isabel nobly displays compassion with the runaway lovers: My Sentence is, they shall together live.  
The court of Kings,  
To all Distressed shou’d Sanctuaries be:  
But most, to Lovers in Adversity (II- 1.1.128-31).

The pun suggested by “Sanctuaries” adds a metaphorical dimension to the lovers’ conversion. The Spanish Queen also demonstrates another act of nobility. She rewards Almahide for

(1) For the use of this expression by English dramatists, see Haitham Saab, Restoration Orientalism: the Representation of the Turk in Serious Drama, Ch.1 , “The Renaissance representation of the Turk.” Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. (1999). University of Wales, Swansea.

renouncing her religion and becoming “a Misbeliever” (II- 5.3.298) by conferring a Christian title upon her, “Isabella of Granada” (II- 5.3.301). Dryden’s Christian propaganda is completed with Almanzor’s unmistakable Christian enthusiasm, as he, too, celebrates the fall of Granada to “our Conqu’ring Crosses” (II-5.3.346). The end of the play suggests that Dryden does not terribly depart from history when he slightly alludes to the famous Spanish Inquisition against the Muslim Moors following the fall of Granada. As in history, all the living Moors are to be followed in accordance with Ferdinand’s commands that “the Moors in woods and mountains are to subdue” (II- 5.3.342). The play, hence, closes with absolute Christian triumph, which carries the weight of Dryden’s dogmatic representation.

In his depiction of Moorish degeneration, cruelty and treachery, Dryden distorts the Moorish religious and cultural color through the use of conventional notions and stereotypes. The Muslim Moors, including King Boabdalin and Almanzor, invoke "our holy Prophet" (I-1.1.175) and swear by the wrong name "holy Alha" (I-1.1.142), instead of "Allah." In his heroic magnificence, Almanzor pompously defies "Mahomet himself" (I-3.1.8) and shows further disrespect towards Islam and the Prophet by giving himself divine attributes. Conversely, the play loses some of its Oriental taste when the King's celebration of Almahide is marked by a love song, which has classical allusions, followed by what is called, the Zambra dance (I-3.1). Added to that are the heroic exchanges expressing exaggerated emotions and sentiments that the King, Almanzor and the Moorish lovers demonstrate, which greatly blur the play's Oriental cultural color. The suicide motif, alien to Islamic culture, also figures in the play in the death of Abdelmelech, who stabs himself after killing false Lyndaraxa. On the other hand, Lyndaraxa's use of the famous cage legend is Dryden's way of signifying Oriental despotism and cruelty. One can safely say that the historical fall of Granada symbolizes the moral fall of the Moors. All such images enhance the general atmosphere, in which the degeneration of the Muslim Moorish world is effectively portrayed.

## 2. The notion of a "false religion" in *Don Sebastian, King of Portugal*

In his later Oriental play, *Don Sebastian*, Dryden portrays his most relentless, conventional anti-Islamic rhetoric. He emphasizes the old medieval belief which views Islam as a false religion, relying on his play's general description of the degeneration and illegitimacy of the Moorish religion. The play is historically based on the 1578 Portuguese-Moorish war, and the plot deals with the aftermath of the historical battle of Alcazar, which ended in a shattering defeat for the Christian Portuguese and the mysterious disappearance of their King, Don Sebastian.<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) The events are dramatized in George Peele's play, *the Battle of Alcazar* (1594).



*Don Sebastian* is quite similar to *the Conquest* in terms of setting, characterization, themes and representation of Muslim Moors. Dryden's anti-Islamic discourse, however, is far more noticeable in *Don Sebastian* than in the earlier play. Once again, "the cruel despot," "the treacherous counselor" and "the uncontrolled rebellion" are all Dryden's stereotypes of Moorish degeneration. In the play, *Don Sebastian*, among other Christians, is the captive of the victorious tyrant, the Emperor of Barbary, Muley Moluch. Portugal replaces Spain as setting. Yet, in terms of characterization, we also have a wicked prince, the Emperor's brother Muley Zeydan, and a virtuous Moorish Queen, Almeysa. Another element in the plot which is common to both plays, is Moorish faction, which is Dryden's favorite Oriental theme in his literary representation of the Moors. Faction is represented here in the role of the "Rabble," led by Mustapha, who is merely "a poor rascally Musulman."<sup>(1)</sup> In Dryden's disparaging representation of the Moors, the play also enacts the struggle between the moral, civilized Christian and the amoral Muslim, supposedly pagan. Naji Oueijan notes that "in the play the Moors are portrayed as cruel to Christians, lustful in their desires, and indifferent to their religion."<sup>(2)</sup> However, in its attack of Islam, the Quran and the Prophet, this play is perhaps the most explicitly dogmatic among the Oriental plays of the Restoration. The reader is shocked to find Dryden's play replete with medieval misconceptions and stereotypes, insults and even obscene intimations about the Muslim Prophet and his religion. As we will see, it seems from Dryden's relentless, dogmatic attack on the Moorish religion that he aims to promote a hostile attitude towards Islam as the "false religion."

Unlike the beginning of *the Conquest of Granada*, which has a somewhat internal struggle among Muslim Moors, this play begins with the historical, conventional Muslim-Christian conflict.

(1)The Works of John Dryden, *Don Sebastian* (1.1.213). Ed. Earl Miner. Berkeley, Los Angles and London: U. of California P, 1976. All subsequent references will be made to this edition and will be included in the body of the text.

(2)The Progress of an Image: the East in English Literature. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1996), p. 26.

The conflict is easily identified as one between Crescent and Cross: between a tyrant Moorish Emperor, caused by the author to appear “so shining in brutality”<sup>(1)</sup> and a “pious” (1.1.103) Christian captive, “towering in Divinity” (1.1.102). Declaring the end of war, the tyrant Moorish Emperor begins his exploitation of religion with an attempt to reconcile Divine Law with human appetite. He commands his self-seeking Mufti that “fasting shall be abolish’d” (1.1.170) to celebrate the victory over Christians. The Mufti is then ready to offer his reinterpretation of Islam, of course in line with the Emperor’s desires, which is not without humorous implications:

Fasting is but the Letter of the Law  
 Yet it shows well to Preach it to the Vulgar  
 Wine is against our Law, that’s literal too,  
 But not deny’d to Kings and to their Guides,  
 Wine is a Holy Liquor, for the Great (1.1.179-183).

Dryden continues to put in the mouths of his characters further insults to the Prophet and to Islam. Persistent in his blasphemy, the irreligious Emperor despises the “dead Prophet,” (I-1.1.239) and the “dry Notions of our Alcoran” (I.1.1.267). In an attempt to save the life of the beautiful captive, Almeyda, the Mufti reproduces the famous medieval falsehood that women have no souls in Islam. What follows is a distortion of the Muslim character and religion through a typical scene of the Oriental heroic drama: the lustful Muslim Emperor is infatuated with his beautiful Christian captive. As always, in the play the emperor is struck suddenly by love and is instantly subdued by his courageous captive, Almeyda, who identifies herself as a noble Moorish lady. In Rose A. Zimbaro’s words, this “conventional heroic note” with the tyrant overwhelmed unjustifiably by Almeyda’s courage and beauty, demonstrates Dryden’s use of comic effect in *Don Sebastian*. Such scenes incite an immediate response from an audience, accustomed to conventions of heroic

(1) See the Works of John Dryden, *Don Sebastian*, (Preface), p. 70. Subsequent references will be cited in the text.

drama.<sup>(1)</sup> The Moorish ruler in this play is actually much more terrible than that of *the Conquest* and is obviously indifferent to religion. Dryden focuses on his “brutality” as a Muslim Emperor serving an illegitimate religion.

In Dryden’s own way, he also underscores Christian virtue. In his Christian propaganda, virtuous Christian characters rehearse heroic, noble rhetoric. While the play strives to shape the Moors in a blasphemy mold, it represents good Christians who demonstrate admirable zeal in their faith. The pious Don Sebastian persuades Almeyda to accept Christianity through “a Captive Priest” (2.2.624), who makes “those Misbelievers Man and Wife” (3.1.41). The faith of the noble Christian lovers is put to the test when the tyrant rages against the “blessed” marriage. Reiterating his usual blasphemy, the Emperor commands his Mufti to “Expound thy Mahomet; make him speak my sense,/ Or he’s no Prophet here, and thou no Mufti” (3.1.65-6). To prevent the tyrant’s unlawful marriage proposal to Almeyda, the Mufti, once again, alludes to an anti-Islamic misconception that “Alcoran” forbids Muslim men from marrying Christian women. When threatened by the tyrant, however, the Mufti is immediately ready to offer his re-interpretation of the Islamic law, to fit the tyrant’s desires:

‘Tis true, our Law forbids to wed a Christian;  
but it forbids you not to ravish her.  
You have a Conqueror’s right upon your Slave:  
And then, the more despight you do a Christian,  
You serve the Prophet more who loaths that Sect (3.1.94-8).

Presenting his heavily biased view of Islam, Dryden relies on his knowledge of all stereotypes and misconceptions. In his version of Islam as a hostile religion, he makes his Mufti suggest that the dreadful crime of rape is pleasing to both God and the Prophet.

(1) Rose A. Zimbaro, “The Late Seventeenth-Century Dilemma in Discourse: Dryden’s Don Sebastian and Behn’s Oroonko,” p. 59 in *Rhetorics of Order/ Ordering Rhetorics in English Neoclassical Literature*. Ed. J. Douglas Canfield and J. Paul Hunter. Newark: U. of Delaware Press, 1989.

The helpless, virtuous Christians, Sebastian and Almeyda, are understandably terrified by such institutionalized violence. The Emperor is instructed to poison Sebastian through his favorite minister, Bend, to force the unwilling Almeyda to marry the tyrant. In his discussion of the religious fall of the despotic Moorish Emperor, Derek Hughes perceives in his actions the "ready acceptance of damnation" and the absolute devotion to "carnal" desires. According to Hughes, his final blasphemous speech about the Prophet's invention of Paradise due to "corporal reality of earthly copulation" reflects such attitude.<sup>(1)</sup> In fact, the Emperor is severely punished in the play, for he is beheaded in a mutiny carried out by the Moorish "Rabble."

In such a chaotic world, the Christians stand out as heroically noble and virtuous. Dryden depicts the happy reunion of the Christian lovers, Sebastian and Almeyda, as the result of Divine Providence. Even Dorax, the noble Portuguese identified as a "Renegade," retains his Christian wisdom, as he offers his views of the Moorish religion. Implying the stereotypical barbarity and intolerance of Islam, he asserts that "I left my foolish Faith/ because it wou'd oblige me to forgiveness" (2.1.337-8). He also reminds the Emperor of the lechery of his Moors, and perhaps of the tyrant himself, because they desire "Religion sweeten'd to the sense;/ A good, luxurious, palatable faith" (3.1.411-2). For Dryden's audience, such commentary about Islam is quite revealing, given that it is produced by a "Renegade" whose allegiance to Christianity and reconciliation with Christians are manifest. Geoffrey Marshall refers to the general assumption of writers, like Dryden, representing racial Others, that Christianity is always noble and triumphant. Marshall's description of the Christian-Islamic struggle depicted in Dryden's plays is quite enlightening:

The Christian figure is at a disadvantage when dealing with pagans for the reason that he is constrained by values and moral obligations not operative for the enemy. Yet the Christian can

(1) Derek Hughes, "Dryden's Don Sebastian and the Literature of Heroism," Year's book of English Studies (YES). 1982: 12, 72-90.

sometimes overcome an enemy by the force of his example, and nothing prevents him from attempting to persuade or convert the enemy.<sup>(1)</sup>

I believe that Marshall's argument can be best encapsulated by the conversion of Muslim Moors into Christianity in the play.

Dryden loses no opportunity to capitalize on false representations of Moorish women in his plays when he employs the conversion motif. He has shown interest in Lyndaraxa's immoral ambition and cruelty in *the Conquest*. However, here, Moorish women are products of lechery who do "turn Christian" only to fulfill their physical desires. Dryden deliberately chooses his Moorish female characters to mock what is called Islamic clergy. He particularly mocks the leading and most eminent figure in the Islamic institution, i.e., the Mufti. Morayma, the "Virgin" daughter of the Mufti and her step mother (the wife of the Mufti) Johayma, both undergo religious conversion. In fact, the worst element in the play's attack on Islam is in the comic episode involving the domestic life of the Mufti. Dryden in his preface justifies his use of this comic episode, claiming to provide his audience a comic relief. Disregard for religion is not surprising in such play, where religion becomes a source of comedy for the author. Dryden makes both the silly daughter of the Mufti and her stepmother, fall insanelly in love with a Christian slave, Antonio. Dryden can do no better, reproducing stereotypes and conventional notions about the Moorish religion in this comic scene. Johayma, carried away by her passion for Antonio, explains her motives for offering love to the Christian slave and betraying her polygamous husband, "since he's old, and has three wives and six Concubines besides me!" (3.2.19-20). Her conversion to Christianity is quite implicit. On the other hand, Morayma, competing with Johayma, one of the wives of the Mufti, is ridiculously made Christian by Antonio who calls her, "thou pretty damn'd Infidel" (3.2.268-9). In her frivolous

(1) Geoffrey Marshall. Restoration Serious Drama. (Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1975), p. 63.

infatuation, she elopes with Antonio, stealing away all her father's wealth and leaving to him "his Alcoran" (3.2.298). Further amusement is aroused, as we see the voluptuous Moorish woman, Johayma, expressing gross Oriental, sexual license. Morayma informs her Christian lover that Johayma "has made my pious Father a three-pil'd Cuckold to my knowledge" (3.2.256-7). The impact of the allusion to cuckoldry is twofold, for Dryden. First, the common, medieval "cuckold" notion is not to be tolerated in a Moorish setting. Second, when it figures in the Mufti's household, the "Cuckold motif" indeed occurs in utterly ironic contradiction with such solemn status of Mufti. In brief, Dryden has managed to utilize such ancient notions to enhance his disdainful treatment of the Moorish religion. He effectively offers a great deal of comedy, while distorting the image of Islam through undermining such eminent Islamic institutions.

The whole Mufti episode presents Dryden with ample opportunity to use all available anti-Islamic discourses, animal imagery and sexual intimations for his purposes. They are all reproduced to underscore the "false religion" notion by focusing on the bestiality of the Mufti's world. This, in turn, would yield tremendous comic effect. For example, as Antonio cuckolds the Mufti, he scorns the "holy" man "for being the head of a false religion" (3.2.290). This looks like Dryden's moral punishment to the self-seeking Mufti for serving a doctrine which is, in line with the medieval notion, illegitimate. The Mufti is perhaps punished for his corrupted behavior in the play, i.e. his frequent reinterpretation of the Divine Law to fit his purposes. Further disparaging remarks about the figure of the "cuckold" Mufti are suggested in Johayma's encounter with Antonio. Their conversation contains the jest of Dryden's anti-Islamic rhetoric by using comic, gross sexual intimations at the expense of the Islamic institution of "Muftiship." The lewd comments, rather the innuendo of expressions such as, "serve," and "flesh and blood" are repeatedly used to refer to Johayma's lechery and faithlessness. For Dryden's audience, it would be extremely entertaining to view such an unusual scene, the Christian slave in the Mufti's house,

“serving” his female family members. Caught by the Mufti afterwards, Antonio expresses his willingness to “serve you” (3.2.144), an expression understood by Johayma to be Antonio’s offer of love. The comic encounter of Johayma and Antonio also reiterates cultural and religious differences between Christians and “Africans.” When Johayma describes Christians as cowardly “peeking sinners” (3.2.104), Antonio responds by regarding the Moorish lady as one of “such Termagants” (3.2.106). Ironically, the Christian slave instructs the lady, whom he mistakes for Morayma, to repent and go back to her husband because, he tells her, “you are married, and to a Holy man, the Head of your Religion” (3.2.107-8). Accidental mistakes and confusion produce much comedy in this scene. We end up with a distorted image of the eminent Mufti, who is greatly undermined by Dryden’s mocking of his religion, position, and way of life in this comic episode.

The character of the Mufti may serve for Dryden another important function, which is yet not quite explicit. Under the name of “Religion” and “our holy Mahomet” the Mufti leads a group of self-interested rabble in a rebellion against the tyrant Emperor. Examining *Don Sebastian* as emblematic of the 1688-English revolution, Steven Zwicker comments on Dryden’s political message implied in his representation of the Mufti:

...he derides the clergy and the Muft, who are seen alike as bent on profit and self-promotion, who willfully incite riot and tumult, who play on the greed of the multitude and the chimera of consensual politics to ride the crest of revolution to new heights of property and power.<sup>(1)</sup>

Other critics, such as David Bywaters, have also emphasized the political implications of rebellion in the play. As in *the Conquest of Granada*, religion also becomes a motive to rebellion. Bywaters goes further to suggest contemporary parallels in the

(1) “Representing the Revolution: Don Sebastian and Williamite Panegyric,” 193, in *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649-1689*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1993.

play. The most obvious one is between Christians and Catholics, on the one hand, and between Moors and Protestants, on the other. This would immediately allude to the striking contrast between the loyalty of Christians and the disloyalty of the Moors.<sup>(1)</sup> Dryden's Catholic propaganda against the Muslim Moors is manifest in this play. However, any political reading of the implications of rebellion in the play does not diminish the author's systematic anti-Islamic rhetoric.

For Dryden, the theme of rebellion, once again, offers fertile ground for his ideological message. There is still more room in *Don Sebastian* for other extremely aggressive, anti-Islamic misconceptions and unjustified insults to Islam and the Prophet. In one of the most shocking examples of anti-Islamic rhetoric, Mustapha, captain of the rioting "Rabble," unequivocally calls the Prophet offensive names. Deceived by Antonio into believing that Almeyda addresses him to save her from the rabble, Mustapha also alludes to a common medieval misconception about the Prophet's marriage: "Our Prophet was but just such another Scoundrell as I am, till he rais'd himself to power, and consequently to Holyness, by marrying his masters Widow" (4.3.279-81). One can rightly wonder why such a Moorish minor character, or Dryden's "poor rascally musulman" (1.1.213) is made to compare himself with the Prophet and consequently insult him! There is absolutely no justification for this reference. Putting such abuses in the mouth of Mustapha, may only serve as to enable the author to create more comedy by elaborating on deeper aspects of the blasphemous degeneration of his Moorish characters. Dryden makes Mustapha, yet once more, compare himself to the Prophet in another comic allusion. He sarcastically refers to the infamous, medieval pigeon-legend or, dove-legend, in which the Prophet is portrayed as receiving Divine revelation through a pigeon of "Mahomet's own breed" (4.3.164).

It is not quite implausible that Dryden had full accessibility to information on Oriental life, culture and religion from available

(1) "Dryden and the Revolution of 1688, Political Parallel in *Don Sebastian*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*. 85:3 (July, 1986): 346-56.



history books, travel accounts, foreign translations and French romances. The pigeon legend, a favorite Christian aspersion at the time, and a stereotypical account on the Prophet's marriage, both mentioned above, are derived from Alexander Ross's essay: "Life and Death of Mahomet" in his English translation of the Quran. This first (extremely biased) English translation of the Quran has much influenced Dryden's attitude towards Islam and the Moors. Dryden's disagreeable representation of the Moorish culture and religion is heavily shaped by such an infamous work.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, in *Don Sebastian*, Dryden perhaps is not being selective, regarding the Oriental material he employs. Copying conventional notions, stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam and the East from such unsympathetic works as Ross's *Alcoran*, demonstrates nothing but the author's inaccuracy and carelessness in his depiction of the Moors.

Dryden admits his complete adaptation of the "whole story" from another source, "according to the practice of almost all the Ancients."<sup>(2)</sup> He explicitly acknowledges that his major source for the play is the anonymous French romance bearing the same title, from which he also derived the name of Almeyda. In addition to the French romance and Ross's work, Dryden has probably capitalized on another important source. Because the eminent European travelers of the Restoration were all Frenchmen, Dryden had to resort to another French source. The contemporary, popular French travel account, *the Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant* (1686), offers plenty of information on the Orient with fascinating observations and remarks about Oriental life and customs. One aspect of the play's distorted Orientalism that Dryden has possibly derived from Thevenot is in his treatment of Muslim women, particularly his allusion to the often-quoted medieval notion that, according to the Mufti, "our Law says plainly Women have no souls" (1.1.262).

(1)The title of the original French work that Ross translated into English, which works as a formal source for Dryden, reads: the Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated out of the Arabique into French by the Sieur Du Ryer. See the Works of John Dryden, *Don Sebastian*, notes (pp. 389, 451).

(2)The Works, *Don Sebastian* (the Preface), p.69

The distorted notion is reiterated later in Morayma's declaration of her renouncing Islam and turning Christian: "I have heard of Christendom, is that we women are allow'd the priviledge of having Souls" (5.1.108-9). Dryden's interest in cultural local color, the most popular aspect in travel accounts, is not quite perceptible in the play. He shows slight interest, however, in costumes of Moorish men and women, like his references to Almeyda's veil of "Barnus" (1.1) and to the Mufti's "Green coat" (4.3). Dryden may also have seen hints about the absolute power of the corrupted Mufti in the English translation of Francois Pidou de Olon's *The Present State of the Empire of Morocco*.<sup>(1)</sup> Olon's *The Present State* must have been of great use to Dryden, as he dramatizes the sexual interest of Muslim Moorish women in "uncircumcised" men. Johayma and Morayma, for example, are indeed infatuated with the Christian slave Antonio, and such themes are popular in Western travel accounts of the Orient.

The author's constant undermining of Moorish culture and religion makes it obvious that he has ignored all positive qualities about Oriental life that his sources possibly address. In fact, the accounts of French travelers have shown occasional objective treatment of the Orient, as they emphasize the brighter side of Oriental life. Their narratives also embodied attractive and commendatory remarks about the manners of Muslim peoples. It is ironic that even contemporary critics, like Byron Smith, thought that Thevenot, one of Dryden's important sources, actually "goes to rather ridiculous lengths in his praise of their (i.e. Turks or Muslims) good qualities."<sup>(2)</sup> The following unprejudiced opinion of Thevenot emphasizes its author's objectivity about the good nature of Turks (Turk and Muslim were synonymous at the time) implying the inaccuracy of the common Western conception of Muslims:

In Christendom many think that the Turks are Devils, Barbarians, and men of no Faith and Honesty, but such as know them, and

(1)The Works, notes (pp. 447-8).

(2)Byron Porter Smith, *Islam in English Literature*. Beirut: the American Press, (1939), p. 22.

have conversed with them, have a far different opinion; for it is certain, the Turks are good people, and observe very well that command of Nature; not to do to others, but what we would have others to do to us.<sup>(1)</sup>

What we find in Dryden, however, is that he completely disregards all pleasant representations of Muslims in his sources, such as honesty, religious devotion and tolerance. He rather focuses on conventional notions about the Moors' cruelty, lechery and degeneration. All admirable qualities are, of course, to be attributed to Christian characters, making Dryden's Christian propaganda paradoxically most effective.

As we should expect in Dryden's Oriental drama, there are absolutely no virtuous or noble Muslims. Who among the audience would pity false Lyndaraxa or be moved by the fate of the tyrant Emperor, Muly Moluch, in *Don Sebastian*? Although Dryden is unique, among playwrights of Oriental drama, in his extensive portrayal of the Mufti's character, his exploration of this intriguing Muslim figure is only limited to the comic and ridiculous. Dryden does not even do justice to his Mufti, as he fails to prepare his audience for any sympathetic feelings towards him. In fact, writers of heroic Oriental drama of the Restoration have much more tolerant attitudes towards Muslim characters. Although such characters lose much of their Oriental Muslim identity, they are made to behave so nobly that they are ultimately subsumed in the Christian world. However, Dryden decides to take a different stand altogether. Dryden would rather go back in time when he decides to return to the Middle ages, permitting his audience to cherish medieval anti-Islamic tropes. His representation of the degeneration of the Moorish world in *the Conquest* and his fierce attack on Islam in *Don Sebastian* reflect a biased attitude towards the Muslim "Other."

(1)The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant in Three Parts. Ch. XLIV "A Summary of the Humour of the Turks." Newly done out of French (by A. Lovell). (London, 1686), p.58.

Dryden's Oriental plays do not conform to orthodox opinion about Islam in England or even in Europe during the Restoration, as displayed in the work of Thevenot. Rather than building his representation on solid knowledge, or experience of Oriental life, people and culture, Dryden only relies on unsympathetic reports and accounts. In his interesting work, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen of the Age of Discovery*, Nabil Matar contends that playwrights of Oriental drama tend to ignore a very important factor in their treatment of Muslim subjects. Dramatists do not consider the actual, constant interaction between Britons and Muslims. Matar tells us that:

To numerous Britons, the Turks and Moors were men and women they had known, not in fantasy and fiction, but with whom they had worked and lived, sometimes hating them yet sometimes accepting or admiring them.<sup>(1)</sup>

In his faithfulness to his sources, Dryden is perhaps not concerned with actual interactions between East and West. For instance, his emphasis is more on the legendary Crescent-Cross conflict (especially in *Don Sebastian*) than on human relations between his Moorish and Christian characters. Thus, Dryden's works cannot be counted as authentic sources of Oriental life and culture, nor do they present instructive social issues and aspects. His Muslim Moors are rather reduced to merely stereotypical, literary representations, or to imaginary constructs. They only serve his main aim of celebrating Christian values, while ignoring historical accuracy. This, of course, is partly accomplished through the constant undermining of the image of Muslim Moors. Dryden's literary representations of Muslim Moors do not only manifest Europe's essential theological and ethnic prejudice, but also show that the author maintains ethnocentric attitudes towards the Orient. His negative treatment of the Moors demonstrate his failure to emulate the Western sympathetic accounts of his time. Therefore,

(1)Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen at the Age of Discovery*. (Columbia UP, 1999), Introduction, p.6.

in that aspect, Dryden's plays about Muslims prove to belong to the Renaissance rather than the Restoration. It should also be noted that Dryden's Oriental drama was immensely popular and its negative influence on the audience must have been enormous in contributing to cultural prejudice. When Dryden decides to depart from the tolerant mode that characterizes the heroic representation of Muslims in his age, he also departs from serious scholarship that should color the discipline of Oriental studies. Dryden's Muslim characters are depicted in a way very similar to that of the medieval age, purely in ethnic and hostile terms. Instead of viewing them as the carriers of distinctive religion and civilization, Dryden uses his Muslim Moors to create comic effect, and the Mufti episode in *Don Sebastian* is one unmistakable example.

Western historical records of the events in Dryden's plays are indeed loaded with hostilities between the Moorish and Christian cultures. Yet, one wonders whether this fact justifies Dryden's zealous reproduction of anti-Islamic allusions and Crusading tropes. These notions and misconceptions, not to mention Dryden's own fictional additions, have been revived, despite the fact that his English audience may not have hoped to bring them back to memory. From another perspective, Dryden's Oriental plays indeed do not explore or negotiate profound cultural and religious differences. With their celebration of such differences, instead, his plays do not attempt to bridge the ideological and cultural gaps between Islamic and Christian cultures. They, rather, articulate hostile modes of representation, as if anticipating what some Western commentators call "the clash of civilizations." These plays undoubtedly have been instrumental, not only in reviving absurdly negative responses in English audiences of the time, but also in promoting antagonistic feelings and Crusading attitudes that have almost been healed by the end of the seventeenth century.

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