

REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIMS IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S OTHELLO

Homam Altabaa,¹ Maryam Shofia Mohamad Nasir²

ABSTRACT

Muslims in Western writings are usually attributed distorted images and negative characteristics by the writers. It has become a great concern that the misrepresentation of Muslims in Western writings influences the readers' perception of Islam and Muslims, thus contributing to Islamophobia that is still prevalent in the present world. The history of misrepresentation of Muslims in Western literary writings dates back to centuries ago seeing how canonical writers like Thomas Dekker and Christopher Marlowe perpetuated the negative representations of Muslims characters in their works. This study attempts to shed light on the images and portrayals of Muslims in *Othello* (1603-1604), a play written by William Shakespeare during the early Elizabethan period. In order to conduct an in-depth analysis of this topic, this study employs the theory of postcolonialism, particularly adopting one of its prominent concepts, Orientalism as the main theoretical framework. The results of the analysis suggest that Shakespeare uses the Orientalist stereotypes of Muslims in the construction of the Moor and the Turks in the play. This study contributes to the future discussion of the Anglo-Islamic relations and the representation of Muslims in Elizabethan plays.

Keywords: Islam and Muslims; Western writings; Shakespeare; Elizabethan period; Othello; and Orientalism.

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature (DELL), AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHASKIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia.

² Researcher, Department of English Language and Literature (DELL), AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHASKIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia.