

“Against their forren foe that commes from farre”: Shakespeare and Orientalized Persia

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Abstract

The history of Western creation of stereotypes of Persia and the Persians goes back to Aeschylus' *The Persians* where he described Persia (and metonymically the Orient) as a zone of terror and irrationality, of excess and the demonic; these stereotypical images were later intensified in the works of such major Renaissance figures as Ludovico Ariosto, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, John Milton, etc. The present paper examines textual representations of Persia and the Persian in the works of the Bard in order to explore the underlying proto-orientalist style of thought, which has not been uncommon in those times. The textual representation of the Orient in general and Persia in particular is mostly imaginary, driven by fantasy and desire.

Keywords: Orientalism, Shakespeare, Persia, Ottoman, Stereotype.