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Title of the abstract: *William Shakespeare and the Mediterranean Sea*

Body of the Abstract:

The literary discussion of Shakespeare's drama remains a controversial issue to postcolonial critics interested in Empire Studies. A huge number of these critics as the still prevalent postcolonial cross-Atlantic reading of *The Tempest* shows overlook the geographical bifurcation at the crux of the play where the Mediterranean basin is put at the periphery at a time when it was in fact the center of the world as a large number of historians such as Fernand Braudel have demonstrated. Not recognizing that Britain, particularly under the Stuart Dynasty started by James I in 1603, imperial ambition on the part of the British if there were any at the time consisted in looking for a way of forming a land empire in Britain itself. In this geographical inversion of the center-periphery, critics were arguably impacted by what in the 19th and 20th centuries came to be known as the British Empire. In this research, we suggest to put the record straight by correcting the skewed picture that classical postcolonial scholars have painted for us in their reading of those plays of Shakespeare set in the Mediterranean basin. Our assumption for making a case for an inverted postcolonial reading of Shakespeare the Mediterranean arises from our conviction that during Shakespeare's England or Britain, the British were looking East, from a periphery to the predominant empires in the Mediterranean not for conquest but mostly for trade. The making of English slaves in the Barbary Shores and the fiasco of the attempt to make Tangiers (Morocco) a permanent colony during Charles II's reign speak for the real power relations between the Mediterranean empires and Britain for a long time before it became the most empire of the seas in the nineteenth century. Taking our theoretical bearings from this inverted postcolonialism, we would argue that though Shakespeare's Theatre is called "the Globe," the part of the globe he is most interested in is the Mediterranean, as the setting of such plays as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* etc clearly shows. This focus of interest on the Mediterranean would be accounted for by the fact that the Mediterranean basin as a political, cultural, economic and religious contact zone that enables Shakespeare with the least political cost to make critical resistance to taboo issues at home and negotiate an imperial identity for the British with reference both to contemporary imperial subjects such as the Spaniards and the Ottomans, and to historically distant but mythical relatives or ancestors such as the Romans.

Short bios

Mohamed Gariti is an assistant professor (Maître de Conférences A) of British studies at the Department of English, University Mouloud Mammeri of Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria. He earned his PhD with the presentation of a doctorate thesis on Shakespeare available on the Website of the University of Tizi-Ouzou, UMMTO.dz. He is currently acting as chair of the Scientific Committee of the English Department and is full member of the faculty senate.