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**Title**

***William Shakespeare's Representation of Empire:  
Revision of some Classic Postcolonial Theories.***

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## ABSTRACT

This research seeks to explore William Shakespeare's representation of the so-called British Empire and its relations with the other European powers and the World of Islam, with a special emphasis on the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Morocco. Five of Shakespeare's Mediterranean plays are used for illustration, most notably *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) and *The Tempest* (1611). Taking its theoretical bearings from the new historicist and postcolonial approaches developed by literary scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt and Edward Said, the research argued that the issues of imperial relationships in Shakespeare are not solely centred on the transatlantic colony of Virginia, but also extended to the Mediterranean basin wherein Britain had much more trade and diplomatic activity, during Shakespeare's time. This activity also created a cosmopolitan zone of contact, wherein people of the orient elbowed people from the West, which inevitably gave rise to a pre-modern form of orientalism reflected in Shakespeare's Mediterranean plays.

Postcolonial reactions and responses to the colonial advocates promoted the idea of dominance and subordination of the post-colonial world and put the latter at the mercy of the colonial power. Hence, Orientalist or Postcolonial theories are discarded rather than appealed to in this study. The reason is that my research reversed these traditional beliefs as well as the roles of both the West and the East by questioning the Western supremacy mainly the English by focusing on the fact that it was the East, not the West, that had the power in both the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries when it comes to the political and military matters. Here, I am fully aware that the main players on the political and military scene at that time were the Ottomans, the French, the Portuguese and the Spaniards. I am also conscious about how the West used to think, and still does, of the Orient as the inferior "Other".

In this research, I have argued that at a time when the English were not well known enough to the Turks and the Arabs, the former had to identify themselves as French instead. According to some historical records, I can say that it is less logical to speak of the English as a colonizing imperial as the other Western European powers like the Spaniards, the Portuguese and the French who dominated trans-Atlantic trade and the New World riches as the Bard of Avon implied it in his plays. Therefore, I can confirm that in my research, I tried to give evidence that Shakespeare is no longer an advertiser of the colonial enterprise (spirit of the empire) but he is one of its victims.

**Keywords:** British Empire, the World of Islam, New historicism, Postcolonial theory, the ethnic Other, Representation, historical climate, Mediterranean basin. Shakespeare's plays.

## RESUME

L'objectif de cette recherche est d'explorer la représentation du soi-disant Empire britannique en relation avec les autres puissances européennes et le monde de l'islam, notamment l'empire ottoman et le royaume du Maroc, par le dramaturge Anglais William Shakespeare. Pour cet effet, cinq de ses pièces de théâtre méditerranéennes particulièrement *Le Marchand de Venise* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antoine et Cléopâtre* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) et *La tempête* (1611) sont utilisées pour illustration. En optant pour les nouvelles approches historicistes et postcoloniales développées respectivement par des spécialistes de la littérature tels que Stephen Greenblatt et Edward Said, les recherches montrent que les problèmes des relations impériales entre les différentes puissances antagonistes, pour Shakespeare, ne se sont pas uniquement focalisés sur la colonie transatlantique de Virginie, mais également sur le bassin méditerranéen. Ce dernier était un endroit stratégique de beaucoup d'activités commerciales et diplomatiques pour la Grande-Bretagne à l'époque de Shakespeare. Ces activités ont également créé une zone de contact cosmopolite entre l'orient et l'occident, ce qui a inévitablement donné lieu à une forme d'orientalisme prémoderne reflétée dans les pièces méditerranéennes de William Shakespeare.

Les réactions et réponses postcoloniales aux partisans coloniaux ont promu l'idée de domination et de subordination du monde postcolonial. Ils ont aussi mis ce dernier à la merci de la puissance coloniale. Par conséquent, dans cette étude, les théories orientalistes ou postcoloniales sont rejetées plutôt que sollicitées. Autrement dit, en remettant en question la suprématie occidentale et plus précisément la suprématie Anglaise, ma recherche a renversé ces croyances traditionnelles. Alors, en réalité c'était l'Orient qui avait le pouvoir au XVIe et au début du XVIIe siècle en ce qui concerne les questions politiques et militaires par rapport à l'Occident. En outre, je sais parfaitement que les principaux acteurs de la scène politique et militaire à cette époque étaient les Ottomans, les Français, les Portugais ainsi que les Espagnols. Je suis également consciente de la façon dont l'Occident considérait, et pense toujours, l'Orient comme l'«Autre» inférieur. Dans cette recherche, je me suis focalisée sur l'idée qu'à l'époque où les Anglais n'étaient pas assez connus pour les Turcs et les Arabes, les premiers devaient plutôt s'identifier comme étant français. Selon certains documents historiques et les pièces de Shakespeare, je peux dire qu'il est moins logique de parler des Anglais comme impériaux colonisateurs par rapport aux autres puissances d'Europe occidentale comme les Espagnols, les Portugais et les Français qui dominaient le commerce transatlantique et les richesses du Nouveau Monde comme le barde d'Avon l'avait rapporté dans ses pièces. Par conséquent, je peux confirmer que dans cette recherche, j'ai essayé de prouver que Shakespeare n'est plus un annonceur de l'entreprise coloniale (esprit de l'empire) mais qu'il est l'une de ses victimes.

**Mots clés :** Empire britannique, Le monde islamique, Nouvel historicisme, Théorie postcoloniale, Autre ethnique, Représentation, Climat historique, le bassin Méditerranéen, les pièces de Shakespeare.

## المخلص

يسعى هذا البحث إلى دراسة تمثيل وليام شكسبير لما يسمى بالإمبراطورية البريطانية وعلاقتها مع القوى الأوروبية الأخرى والشرق أو العالم الإسلامي، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على الإمبراطورية العثمانية والمملكة المغربية. للتوضيح، تم اختيار خمس من مسرحيات شكسبير المتوسطة أبرزها تاجر البندقية (1596)، عطيل (1603)، أنتوني و كليوباترا (1607)، سيمبلين (1609-1610) والعاصفة (1611). بالاعتماد على نظرية المقاربات التاريخية الجديدة ونظرية ما بعد الاستعمار التي طورها علماء أدبيون مثل ستيفن غرينبلات وإدوارد سعيد، برهن البحث بأن قضايا العلاقات الإمبراطورية في مسرحيات شكسبير التي تم اختيارها لا تتمركز فقط على مستعمرة فرجينيا الأطلسية ولكن أيضاً على حوض البحر الأبيض المتوسط حيث كان لبريطانيا نشاط تجاري ودبلوماسي أكبر خلال فترة شكسبير. خلق هذا النشاط أيضاً همزة وصل بين أهل الشرق والغرب، مما أدى حتماً إلى ظهور شكل من أشكال الاستشراق الذي يدعى بما قبل الحداثة والذي انعكس في مسرحيات شكسبير التي جرت معظم أحداثها في البحر الأبيض المتوسط. أدت ردود فعل المناهضين للاستعمار إلى تشجيع فكرة الهيمنة وخضوع عالم ما بعد الاستعمار للقوى المستعمرة، وهذا ما جعلنا نتجاهل في هذا البحث النظريات الإستشراقية أو بالأحرى نظريات ما بعد الاستعمار؛ لكونها تضع الشرق تحت رحمة الغرب.

ترمي هذه الدراسة إلى تبيان عكس ذلك وقلب المعتقدات التقليدية حول قضية هيمنة الغرب وبالأخص الانجليز على الشرق؛ لأنه في القرنين السادس عشر وأوائل القرن السابع عشر -عندما يتعلق الأمر بالشؤون السياسية والعسكرية- لعب الشرق دوراً هاماً مقارنة بالغرب. هنا ندرك تماماً أن في تلك الحقبة كان كل من العثمانيين والفرنسيين والبرتغاليين والإسبان في الريادة ولكن لسوء الحظ، اعتبر الشرق ولا يزال يعتبر "الأخر"/المتدني.

في هذا البحث، بيننا أنه في الوقت الذي لم يكن فيه الإنجليز معروفين بما يكفي للأتراك والعرب، كانوا يعرفون أنفسهم كفرنسيين بدلاً من كونهم انجليز. وفقاً لبعض السجلات التاريخية، يمكننا القول أنه من غير المنطقي التحدث عن إنجلترا كإمبراطورية مستعمرة مثل القوى الأوروبية الغربية الأخرى كالإسبان والبرتغاليين والفرنسيين الذين سيطروا على التجارة العالمية وثروات العالم الجديد كما أشار إليها شكسبير في مسرحياته. لذلك، يمكننا أن نؤكد أنه في بحثنا هذا، حاولنا تقديم دليل على أن شكسبير لم يعد معلناً عن المشروع الاستعماري الإنجليزي (روح الإمبراطورية) ولكنه أحد ضحاياه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإمبراطورية البريطانية، عالم الإسلام، التاريخية الجديدة، نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار، العرق الإثني، التمثيل، المناخ التاريخي، مسرحيات شكسبير، حوض البحر الأبيض المتوسط.

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**To my dear parents, my husband,  
CHAFA and my son, GAYA.**

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## General Introduction:

The following research aims to examine William Shakespeare's representation of the empire in some of his Mediterranean plays, most notably *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) as well as *The Tempest* (1611). More specifically, it seeks to look at imperial relationships in the Mediterranean plays from a perspective other than the postcolonial theories. Empires belong to the past, but their historical legacies are still engraved and this still with us in various artifacts that were produced when those empires were at their zenith or struggling to emerge as was the case of Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain. Historically speaking, Empire refers to the different strong powers that emerged and flourished in different domains whether military, political, architectural and even artistic. Among the Empires that changed the history of humanity, it is worth mentioning the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Germanic Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and the emerging European empires especially the Spanish, the French as well as the British colonial empires. Therefore, when all is said and written, one can affirm that people have always lived in imperial times, hence the notion of Empire is handling Shakespeare's drama.

The idea of empire has come into fashion of late, a huge number of books, articles, pamphlets, working papers and conferences have in one way or another been denoted to understand imperial relationships in the pre-modern times. However, these studies are mostly produced from a classic postcolonial perspective making a little case of the reality of power relationships in the pre-modern times.

The origin of the word empire is "*imperium*". It was used in historical documents following the rise of the Roman power in the Mediterranean region. Different conventional phrases were associated to it like "*imperium orbis terrae*" (empire of the world), "*imperium populi Romani*" (the empire of the Roman people), "*nostrum imperium*" (our empire), "*vestrum imperium*" (your empire) and "*hoc imperium*" (this empire). (Richard Koebner cited in Hart. Jonathan, 2003:04). So the

meaning of empire is still subject to considerable debate among historians. Yet, with the idea of Roman Empire in mind, *Empire* is generally defined as “the supreme authority of a large and powerful nation over considerable territory beyond its immediate borders” (Reynolds. G. Clark, 1976: 04). As this research will argue this consensual definition of “Empire” cannot be strictly applied for understanding Shakespeare’s deployment of the concept in his Mediterranean and other plays. Hence, when Stephen Howe writes “an empire is a large, composite, multi-ethnic or multinational political unit, usually created by conquest, and divided between a dominant centre and subordinate, sometimes far distant, peripheries” (Howe. S, 2002: 30), he falls in the postcolonial pitfall of centre-periphery dichotomy that cannot really help to capture the whole spectrum of meaning of empire with which Shakespeare works in his plays to express the major political issues, both domestic and foreign, of both Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

The same can be said of J. Motyl Alexander’s definition of empire as “ a hierarchically organized political system with a hub-like structure—a rimless wheel—within which a core elite and state dominate peripheral elites and societies by serving as intermediaries for their significant interactions and by channelling resource flows from the periphery to the core and back to the periphery” ( 2001: 94).

This definition of empire and that of Howe above show to what extent imperial studies are marked by the classic theories of postcolonialism of the kind developed by Bill Ashcroft et al in their book *The Empire Writes Back* (2002).

The whole irony in this case is that Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain were not full-fledged Empires but also in certain aspects postcolonial. In his book, *Comparing Empires: European Colonialism from Portuguese Expansion to the Spanish-American War*, Jonathan Hart, used the term “empire” to refer to those western European nations that began in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with Portugal to expand offshore and later overseas (2003:02). Those imperial powers are those great nations in history that have based their national political and economic

policies and strategies chiefly on maritime activities: commercial trade, overseas possessions or dependencies, and naval forces. This idea of sea empires is to the point, yet it makes a small case of the idea of empire as sovereignty.

Before speaking of empire as territorial expansion overseas, one has to speak of domestic sovereignty. And in this case, empire refers to power relationships between nations but also the power of the sovereign ruler over his subjects. These power relationships in Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain are not so indent as classic postcolonial theories would like us believe. That might be true when one involves Britain's relationship with other nation in the nineteenth century, but to do this with Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain is to ignore the real place that Britain occupied among the pre-modern sea empires such as Spain and landmass empires like the Ottoman Empire.

As a cultural icon, Shakespeare does not overlook the reality of imperial relationship because as this research will show, his plays, most particularly set in the Mediterranean such as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline*, speak about empire not only from a position of strength but also from the position of weakness. It is the vacillation of positionality of Shakespeare as a colonial dramatist and postcolonial playwright writing back of "empire" whether that Empire is Spain or the Ottoman Empire that, which makes him in the words of Jan Knott "our contemporary".

The majority of the Shakespeare's plays, including the plays that we have selected for our research, *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) as well as *The Tempest* (1611), develop the ambivalent theme of empire. The importance of this eminently political category can be accounted for not only in terms of the reality of political relationship but also in terms of the prestige of the term itself that Shakespeare named his theatre as "The Globe" shows the extent to which he was influenced by the discourse of the time which made the category of Empire occupy the highest position in the linguistic hierarchy. Referring to countries in other terms than that of Empire is reducing their position among the nations of the Globe. "The order of Things" of which Foucault in his book of the same title is as much valid in the

social world as in political theory. To ignore this hierarchy implied by the political discourse in the pre-modern Elizabethan and Jacobean Britain is to mislead the reader in the understanding of the large spectrum of the meaning of Empire that Shakespeare deploys in his plays.

A huge number of book-length studies and journal articles have also been written about empire in Shakespeare's plays. As a cultural icon, Shakespeare is inevitably referred to in every criticism. So with the advent of postcolonial theory starting with Octave Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban: Psychology of Colonization* (1950), Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), and up to Edward Said's *Orientalism* and even after, Shakespeare is selected as the one author to whom "The Empire writes back". The words are Bill Ashcroft's. This claim is also valid for fiction authors such as Aimé Césaire with his explicitly titled drama "Une tempête", George Lamming with his *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) and *Water with Berries* (1971), Roberto Fernandez Retamar's *Caliban* (1971), *A Grain of Wheat* of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and so on and so forth. It has to be observed that these political fiction and drama were written either from the African or American perspectives displaying in the process the place or space in which Shakespeare's plays are mostly set, the Mediterranean.

Accordingly, the objective of those above texts is mainly to question the embedded traditional stereotypes that Shakespeare's plays advertised and even fostered. In other words, those alternative texts tried at all costs to cast off the colonial myth and the western colonial stereotypes that made from the East the subordinate of the West.

In this research, we would argue that Shakespeare was not interested solely in transatlantic activity of the emerging British Empire during the Elizabethan and Jacobean reigns, as some post-colonial critics are prone to claim (Barker & Hulme, 1985; Brown, 1985; Greenblatt (1988); Willis, 1989; Skura, 1989; Knapp, 1992; Gillies, 1994, etc.). This transatlantic-centered reading of Shakespeare has overlooked the much more important Mediterranean dimension of Shakespeare's drama. This interest in the Mediterranean cultural area cannot be totally justified on the grounds that if Shakespeare set some of his plays in that area, it was not in order to escape censorship when

dealing with controversial issues or handing advice to the powers that be, though, we have to add that there is some truth in such readings. Nor was the interest of Shakespeare in the Mediterranean basin due totally to the supposed mythical origins of the Britons, origins traced to the Roman Empire through the mythical founder Brutus. Finally, we would argue that if Shakespeare's attention was drawn by the Mediterranean, it was not just an issue of the travel of Renaissance ideas marked by a rebirth of interest in classical Greek and Roman writings such as those of Plato, Virgil, Plautus, Cicero, Seneca, and so on and so forth. These authors certainly provided Shakespeare with food for thought about virtue, the right governance, love, gender relationships and other issues pertaining to his age, but their influence cannot be held as a final answer to his setting of his plays in the Mediterranean. we would argue that whilst the above reading perspectives offer insights into Shakespeare's Mediterranean plays, they need to be completed by a reading centred on imperial relationship in the Mediterranean Sea as a site of contest among sea empires in the pre-modern period. Admittedly, the case can be made for the universality of Shakespeare's drama, which has made some critics affirm the playwright's status as "our contemporary." However, we would contend that if Shakespeare had received the attention of the public during his time, it is primarily because he dealt with the main issues of his time, and that among these issues, the encounter with the imperial Other in the Mediterranean basin holds a prominent place in his drama. To make it more explicit, in producing his plays and one reads them historically, one cannot fail to realize that Shakespeare does not look west but also looks east to the Mediterranean to develop his idea of empire. In re-centring Shakespeare, this research is concerned mostly with Shakespeare's response to the involvement of the emerging British Empire in the Mediterranean basin wherein it mythically locates its origins and writes the first pages of its history. The approach that logically imposes itself on our attention is the historicist pre-modern approach of the kind developed by Stephen Greenblatt. Moreover, since focus is placed on the encounter with the Mediterranean Other, this historicist approach is given a postcolonial turn in a revised form. This historicist-postcolonial approach is brought to bear on five plays by Shakespeare, most notably, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*,

*Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*. This corpus includes a tragedy, two comedies, a tragi-comedy and a roman play. Its choice is not fortuitous since it is meant to show how Shakespeare's concern with the British Empire of trade and the Mediterranean 'Other' traverses nearly all his drama. If the comedies outnumber the other types of drama, it is paradoxically in this type of play that Shakespeare shows the most his imperial strain. Comedy is said to reflect the drive for a desired society by overwhelming the humours that stand against it. This desired society, as the name of his theatre "The Globe", is global, that is to say imperial, in its reach.

So this research completes a process of re-centring the historical reading of Shakespeare that started with imperial studies like Tristan Marshall's *Theatre and Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages Under James VI and I* (2000), Paul A. Olson's *Beyond a Common Joy: An Introduction to Shakespearean Comedy* (2008), Heather James' *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (2006), Gerald Maclean's *Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire before 1880*, and Lisa Jardin and Jerry Brotton's *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (2000).

To make it more precise, this research uses postcolonial theory not in blind way and not in its classic form, but historically by looking at the historical reality of imperial relations in the pre-modern times. Reading empire in Shakespeare historically requires the shifting of position as regards military and cultural power relationships among the empires in Shakespeare's times. These power relationships were not the same as those that prevailed in Victorian Britain and that have slanted classic postcolonial theories so far. Before coming back to the point, brief explanations of the historicist and postcolonial theories are in order.

In this part, we should introduce some useful information concerning the theory that we think fits our theme and helps us to reach our objective in this present research.

Drawing on the historical and political atmosphere of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this study aims to re-read the plays discussed here in the light of the historical/political moment in which they were written and performed. This study principally departs away from the traditional

literary studies in that it does not focus only on the text but also examines the outside factors (biographical, cultural, historical, political etc.) that may contribute to the making of a literary text.

The term 'New historicism' was coined by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt whose book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (1980) is usually regarded as its starting point. It is Cultural Poetics that is usually referred to the New Historicism in the United States of America and the Cultural Materialism in the Great Britain. It is a critical movement whose emphasis is put on the importance of the historical context and the immediate circumstances for the interpretation of different literary texts of different kinds and genres. Its basic target is the exploration of the extent to which any historical enterprise reflects the interests and bias of the period in which it was written. In other words, it puts considerable emphasis on the socio-historical conditions that shape the thoughts and assumptions of any author's dramatic and artistic productions. Hence, the new historicists, according to M. Keith Booker, consider that "it makes no sense to separate literary texts from the social contexts around them because such texts are the product of complex social "exchanges" or "negotiations" (1996: 138). Moreover, M. H. Abrams affirms that "in place of dealing with a text in isolation from its historical context, new historicists attend primarily to the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations." (1999:182).

The concepts, themes, and procedures of new historicist criticism took shape in the late 1970s and early 1980s, most prominently in writings by scholars of the English Renaissance. They directed their attention to literary forms mainly the pastoral, the masque, and above all drama. They emphasized the role of social and economic conditions in shaping a text such as literary patronage, censorship, and the control of access to printing. The new historicist scholars analysed texts as discursive "sites" which enacted and reproduced the interests and power of the Tudor monarchy; how such texts echoed the voices of the oppressed, the marginalized, and the dispossessed (Abrams. M. H, 1999: 186)

In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), Stephen Greenblatt argues that the interpretation or the understanding of literature is “a part of the system of signs that constitute a given culture” (1980:4). Louis Montrose asserts that the focus of new historicism is an attempt to refigure “the socio-cultural field within which canonical Renaissance literary and dramatic works were originally produced” (1989: 17). Moreover, in the field of new historicism, “a literary text cannot be considered apart from the society that produced it: a literary text is another form of social significance which is produced by the society” (ibid: 24). Louis Montrose also described the new historicism as “a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history” (ibid). In another expression, history is conceived not to be a set of fixed, objective facts, but, it is like the literature with which it interacts, a text which itself needs to be interpreted. This text is also conceived as a discourse which, although it may seem to reflect an external reality, consists of what are so-called representations that is, verbal formations which are the "ideological products" or "cultural constructs" of the historical conditions specific to a specific era (Abrams. M.H, 1999:183-4). In other words, new historicists often claim also that these cultural and ideological representations in texts serve mainly to reproduce, confirm, and propagate the power-structures of domination and subordination which characterize a given society.

In the same context, M. H. Abrams explains that in place of dealing with a text in isolation from its historical context, new historicists rely primarily on the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also of its later received critical interpretations and evaluations. This is not simply a return to earlier literary studies and criticism because the views and practices of the new historicists are different from those of former scholars who had adverted to social and intellectual history as a "background" against which to set a work of literature as an independent entity. They had viewed literature as a "reflection" of the worldview characteristic of a period. Instead, new historicists conceive of a literary text as "situated" within the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute the overall culture of a particular time and place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes



(Abrams. M.H, 1999: 182-3). Therefore, a literary production should be examined in relation to the culture that produced it i.e. by considering its cultural, social, historical, and political contexts.

For New Historicism, the literary text and the historical situation from which it emerged are equally important because text (the literary work) and context (the historical conditions that new historical and cultural criticism produced it) are mutually constitutive: they create each other. Like the dynamic interaction between individual identity and society, literary texts shape and are shaped by their historical contexts (Lois. T, 2006: 291-2). Hence fore, this relation between literary texts and the world (context) has been a central problem in criticism and theory “the text–world dichotomy is like a vampire that will not lie down” (Andrew. B and Nicholas. R, 2004: 27).

All historical analysis is unavoidably subjective. Historians must disclose the ways in which they know they have been positioned, by their own cultural experience, to interpret history (Lois. T, 2006: 290). “Literature could never be interpreted to mean anything that history didn’t authorize it to mean” (Ibid: 291).

For new historical literary critics, in addition to its representation of human experience at a given time and place, the literary text is an interpretation of history too since it maps the discourses circulating at the time it was written and it itself represents one of those discourses. That is, the literary text shaped and was shaped by the discourses circulating in the culture in which it was produced (Lois. T, 2006: 295).

As for the term post-colonial in postcolonial theory, it poses a problem. It is generally read as the period coming “after colonialism”. In other words, this era marks the end of European dominating powers over the other nations. Therefore, the term post-colonial makes from the issue of colonialism a matter of the past whereas postcolonial (not hyphenated) concerns a collection of theoretical and critical strategies used to examine the culture (literature, politics, history) of the former colonies of European dominating powers. According to Bill Ashcroft et al in *The Empire Writes Back*, the term post-colonial stands for “all the culture affected by the imperial process from

the moment of colonization to the present day” (2002:02). Bill Ashcroft seeks for reasons why postcolonial literary theory emerged, and he finds that “the idea of post-colonial literary theory emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of postcolonial writing- European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of the universal (2002:11). Hence, there is a necessity behind the emergence of postcolonial theory. The latter will be able to deal with all what is related to the newly independent nations.

The post-colonial era is characterized by a circulating discourse called the postcolonial discourse or a postcolonial theory. This theory is led by many postcolonial theorists like Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi. K. Bhabha and others like the psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. In fact, *Black Skin, White Masks* made Fanon a contributor to the postcolonial studies. It is in this book that Fanon developed his analyses of the psychological and sociological consequences of colonization.

As a response to the Europeans and the westerners in general, Frantz Fanon denounces the European prejudices about the Negroes who are considered as savages, brutes, illiterate genital and sexually obsessed especially when he declares: “in my case I knew that these statements were false. There was a myth of a Negro that had to be destroyed by at all costs” (Quoted in Ashcroft, 2002: 117). He adds in this context, “the white man was wrong, I was not a primitive, not even a half-man, I belonged to a race that had already been working in gold and silver two thousand years ago” (Ashcroft, 2002:130). Thus, All Fanon’s efforts affirm that his ultimate goal is to help the black to lift the colonial burden and to free himself from many complexes which are constructed and consolidated because of the colonial enterprise and the imperial environment.

Accordingly, Postcolonialism is a complex phenomenon which originated from the history of imperialism. The latter “imperialism” is derived from the Latin *imperium*, which conveys various meanings including power, authority, command, dominion, realm, and empire. Even though imperialism is usually understood as a strategy in which a state aims to extend its control forcibly

beyond its own borders over other states and peoples, this control does not concern only military but also economic and cultural control. In the process of colonization, the colonizing state imposes not only its own terms of trade, but also its own political ideals, its own cultural values, and its own language upon a subject state or the colonized state (Habib. M. A. R., 2005:737).

The 1950s was the heyday of the publication of seminal texts of post-colonialism. Among these very influential texts that shook the colonial enterprise and corrected the distorted image of the colonized are: Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950), and Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Edward Said's landmark work *Orientalism* (1978), *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin and Gayatri Spivak's *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), as well as Homi Bhabha and other postcolonial writers. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, as an example, use the term postcolonial in a comprehensive sense, "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2002:02).

Postcolonial criticism involved a number of aims especially dealing with the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized. It reveals the economic, political, as well as the cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonized peoples and the colonizing powers. It analyses also the process of decolonization. In other words, it participates in the goals of political liberation, which offers equal access to material resources, the denunciation of all forms of domination, and the assertion of political and cultural identities (Young, 2001:11). While early voices of anti-imperialism stressed the need to return to indigenous literary traditions or simply to the sources to cleanse their cultural heritage of the remnants of imperial domination, other voices advocated an adaptation of Western ideals as a means to serve their own political and cultural ends.

The fundamental agenda of postcolonial thought has been inspired and nourished by the Marxist criticism of colonialism and imperialism. Later, it has been adapted and promoted by many thinkers from Frantz Fanon to Gayatri Spivak (Habib M. A. R., 2005:738-9). Hence, postcolonial

discourse potentially is intimately linked, with an abroad range of dialogues, to the colonizing powers. All of these discourses have challenged the main streams of Western philosophy, culture, literature, ideology and their so-called civilization.

Consequently, Postcolonial Studies make their appearance to refer to “The critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers. These studies have focused especially on the Third World countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean islands, and South America” (Habib M. A. R., 2005:236). Thanks to the postcolonial movement that the status of English, as an epitome of the colonizing powers, has also been changing, as indigenous literatures, from Australia, Africa and North America have emerged to assume equal standing with or to displace entirely the English colonial tradition. Those changes are bound up with the end of official empire and the transfer of political, economic power, to formerly colonized peoples in the late half of the twentieth century. These historical developments provoked great changes in literature and in the discussion and teaching of literature. Entire bodies of writing emerged out of the imperial domination in order to portray the contact and relation between the colonizer and the colonized. This contact is characterized by reciprocal envy and admiration as by reciprocal fear and resentment.

The field of postcolonial studies is rapidly growing to tackle several essential and recurrent issues such as the rejection of the master-narrative of Western imperialism, which is replaced by a challenging counter-narrative, in which the colonial Other is not only subordinated, alienated and marginalized but, in reality, deleted and totally ignored as a cultural agency. The influential collection of essays, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (2002) written by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffins, puts emphasis on the notion of “hybridization”. This hybridization concerns a process in which “colonial languages and cultures, in which imperialist importations are superimposed on indigenous traditions; it also includes a number of postcolonial counter-texts to the *hegemonic* texts that present a Eurocentric version of colonial history (Abrams, 1999:236-7). In other words, Postcolonial studies have shown that both the

'metropolis' and the 'colony' were deeply altered by the colonial process and both of them are restructured by decolonization.

The Western discursive practices show the angle from which the postcolonial "subject" conceives himself and perceives the world around within which he lives and acts. The *subaltern* becomes a standard term used to refer to the colonial subject that has been constructed by European discourse and internalized by colonialists who employed this discourse. The *subaltern* "is a British word for someone of inferior rank, and combines the Latin terms for "under" (*sub*) and "other" (*alter*)" (Abrams, 1999:237). What is confusing is that how, and to what extent, a subaltern subject, who employs a European language, a colonial legacy, is considered as an agent of resistance against the discourse that has distorted his image and created his subordinate identity (Abrams, 1999:237).

To sum up, the main concern of the postcolonial studies and discourse is to shake the Eurocentric standards of literary and artistic values, and to create a kind of literature that deals with the postcolonial issues. Indeed, Postcolonial literatures have emerged to assume equal standing with or to displace entirely the imperial tradition. Additionally, we cannot mention the postcolonial theory without referring to the Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said's landmark *Orientalism* (1978). Hence, Orientalism, according to him, is "the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice" (1991: 72). In other words, the Orient represented a very important subject of discussion and investigation for the Orientalists who aim to demonstrate the differences between the West and the East. The Orientalists tried to draw a line of demarcation between the two opposing worlds (Occident and the Orient) by asserting the inferiority of the 'Others', the Orientals. To reach their end, they used "a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the occident" (ibid: 2). In fact, 'the Orient', as it is understood by the Western world, is a mere Western invention that for decades cared to preserve both their exotic sense of mystery and inferiority. These preconceived ideas, through the course of history, are transformed into "a created

body of theory and practice”, a “continued investment”, as Said declares, that “made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient” (1991: 06).

In the same vein, Orientalism presents a field of inquiry, an ‘unclosed space’, and a stage on which the whole East is narrowed ‘Orientalized’. This Oriental stage, in fact, demonstrates a cultural repertoire that represents a rich world “half-imagined, half-known” (ibid: 63). From this repertoire, the European imagination is nourished. Starting from the medieval time to the eighteenth century, such authors as Milton, Marlowe, Cervantes and Shakespeare drew on the Orient’s riches and mysteries for their literary productions (ibid). Therefore, they refashioned the image of the Orient and adopted it as to fit their objectives vis-à-vis their culture. In other words, they made the Orient seem as they want it to be, weak, less capable and as needing western paternalist assistance, ugly, uncivilized and inferior just to glorify and praise their culture as superior in contrast to that of the ‘Others’ (Julie. R & Michael. R, 2004:1072).

As claimed above, this research is a postcolonial and historical reading of Shakespeare’s deployment of empire and other related issues such as the Other in his drama. However, it displaces the historical and postcolonial perspectives from which Shakespeare has been read by taking into account the reality of political cultural power among the empires in the pre-modern period. So ironically, what postcolonial theories have said about empire mutatis mutandis to Shakespeare as a postcolonial dramatist writing not only from the position of power but from the position of the colonized. It is this dual perspective that is missing most in historical and postcolonial reading of Shakespeare. This perspective is also dual because the emphasis is placed not solely on pre-modern history but also on the importance of both the transatlantic and the Mediterranean geography in reading Shakespeare’s idea of Empire. Unless this dual geographic and historical perspective is taken into account, we shall continue to read Shakespeare as a Victorian would do hence deforming our perception of Empire in the pre-modern times.

Accordingly, this research will be divided into three parts. The first part *Historical Background and Literature Review of Shakespeare’s Imperial Studies* will be subdivided into three chapters. The

first part will deal with *Shakespeare and his Postcolonial Critics* in the first chapter, *Shakespeare: His Life and Times* in the second, and the *Theoretical Framework of Shakespeare's Plays* in the third chapter.

As for the second part entitled *Shakespeare and the Western Empires*, it focalizes on the contact between Britain and the other Western strong powers in the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries as they are portrayed in Shakespeare's Plays: *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) and *The Tempest* (1611). The fourth chapter will tackle Shakespeare and the Spanish imperial confrontations while the fifth one will associate Shakespeare with the Italy (the Roman Empire and the Republic of Venice). The sixth chapter will deal with England and the French Empire as well as their encounter in Scotland and Ireland. The third and the last part of our research bears the subheading of *Shakespeare and the Eastern Empires*. In the seventh chapter, the stress is placed on Shakespeare's representation of the British Empire and Britons by opposition with the Ottoman Empire. The eight and last chapter will be devoted to imperial relations with reference to the Moor.

Hopefully, this research as it is laid out above will shed light on the double geographical and historical perspectives that inform Shakespeare vision of empire and the Other in his plays. In order to better illustrate our argument as to the need of a dual perspective for understanding Shakespeare's construction of empire and the Other, the literature review of the previous imperial studies on Shakespeare is provided in the chapter that follows the introduction.

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## **Part One:**

### **Historical Background and Literature Review of Shakespeare's Imperial Studies**

This part of our research will explore Shakespeare's plays most notably *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) as well as *The Tempest* (1611). It is divided into three chapters.

The first chapter will deal with Shakespeare and his critics. Even though Shakespeare's plays in general and those chosen to be under study in this research in particular have stimulated a great wave of criticism from different perspectives and standpoints: the feminist, the colonial, the postcolonial, the psychoanalytical, the cultural and so forth, a special emphasis will be put on the postcolonial critiques. What is striking is that Shakespeare's plays did not only receive criticism, but there are many literary works that are written whether for the sake of imitating his drama or to collide with what it stands for.

The aim of the second chapter is to shed light on the historical background of Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain. It will disclose the kind of relationships that England had with the other European strong powers mainly Spain and France and the non-European ones like the Ottomans, the Barbary Coast states and the Kingdom of Morocco. Generally, these relationships and alliances transgressed the religious and ethnic barriers to serve political and economic mutual interests. The latter fostered different confrontations between the strong powers. Therefore, the tense atmosphere that prevailed in Europe and the Mediterranean at that time will be well demonstrated in Shakespeare's drama.

The third chapter of this part will put Shakespeare's plays under scrutiny. It will provide relevant details about the plays under study. It will also provide their sources as well as their settings i.e. imperial geographies, which we consider very useful in this research.

## **Chapter One: Shakespeare and his Postcolonial Critics**

In one of his books, Ralph Ellison writes that “the best way to criticize a novel is to write another novel”. This statement about dialogism is to the point not as regards novels but also other genres such as poetry and drama. It is best illustrated in African and Caribbean literature in its relation to works of Shakespeare. One of the first dramatists to make this type of criticism of Shakespeare is the Martinican dramatist, poet and essayist Aimé Césaire in *Une tempête*.

What is remarkable about Shakespearean imperial studies is that it is not critics who first responded to his works but artists such as Aimé Césaire. The latter, in a drama that he explicitly entitled *Une tempête*, developed an overt polemic with the Shakespeare of *The Tempest*. Aimé Césaire, as a post-colonial critic, well-known for his commitment to the struggle against colonialism cast the blame on Shakespeare as an advocate of imperialism.

In addition to Césaire, Virahsawmy, a Mauritian playwright, in *Toufann* adapted a significant writing genre, drama, like Shakespeare's, to circulate their ideas and explain their purposes vi-a-vis the British Bard and the Western past predominant discourse. This adaptation of Shakespeare's text is employed as a technique that gives the two postcolonial playwrights, Césaire and Virahsawmy, access to express their disapproval about Shakespeare's ideology and the manner in which things are arranged in *The Tempest*. What attracted the attention of many postcolonial writers and playwrights to whom Césaire and Virahsawmy belong is how the Western Europeans had come to the non-European territories to take them as their property, and how they subjugated the native aborigines against their will and made of them decadent and faithful slaves. The Europeans, or the so-called civilized men, did not stop here but they went further to consider the natives as uncivilized, primitive and even cursed by providence. Therefore, the Europeans, under the umbrella of the *civilising*

mission, afford themselves a responsibility to bring those uncivilized people to the light of civilization and deliver them from their nasty and cruel savage practices. If we associate this to *The Tempest*, Prospero represents the European who deprives Caliban from his island that belongs to him before Prospero's arrival. Hence, Prospero's act corresponds to the imperial project that Elizabethan England and James' Britain started to adopt to enlarge its territories overseas as the other European powers like Spain, Portugal and France. So, in both *Une Tempête*, a French word for "A Tempest" and *Toufann*, Hindi and Urdu for "tempest", Césaire and Virahsawmy dialogize Shakespeare's view about the non-white (non-Europeans). Moreover, through valorising the character of Caliban, they try to break and dismantle the Western ideology, myth and mainly their imperial motives that are vehicled in *The Tempest* as a Western propaganda. Caliban in *Une Tempête* appeals to physical and verbal violence to show to what extent he wishes to reach his freedom and Other's recognition. Therefore, Césaire's purpose in making Caliban a revolutionary hero is to show to the world at large that the black man is a dignified conscious human being who has his own culture, his own language and his own destiny which are different from that of the white man. Similar to Césaire, Virahsawmy's Kalibann is portrayed as a genius intellectual on whom Prospero depends. Thus, Kalibann is not an ignorant as Shakespeare's Caliban. By demonstrating their points of view about Caliban and the oppressed Other in general, Césaire and Virahsawmy collide with Shakespeare and all forms of oppression and exploitation that *The Tempest* endorses. According to what is previously mentioned, we can state that the relationship between Shakespeare's discourse and the two postcolonial playwrights' discourse is based on clashes and antagonist confrontations what Michael Bakhtin called hidden polemics.

*Une Tempête* is used by Césaire as a medium of protest against Shakespeare's text mainly against the negative portrayal of Caliban in *The Tempest*

to describe him. Fanon, as a postcolonial critic, goes with Césaire in the same direction especially when it comes to the negative portrayal of the colonized as the case of Caliban. Hence, he affirms, “in my case I knew that these statements were false. There was a myth of a Negro that had to be destroyed at all costs” (Fanon, 1967:117). In other words, Fanon appeals to the destruction of the western corrupted image of the Other. In a nutshell, we can state that The two alternative readings -*Une Tempête* and *Toufann*- of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* move towards a reversal of its imperial motives.

Even though the mere objective of both *Une Tempête* and *Toufann* is to question the ideology that Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* advertises, Césaire’s and Virahsawmy’s plays share many similarities with Shakespeare’s play. Among these similarities, it is evident to mention the western writing genre, together with the characters who are the same as Shakespeare’s characters in *The Tempest*. What is notable in the three plays is that they begin with the same scene. Hence, even the setting, characterization and the themes discussed both in *Une Tempête* and *Toufann* are nearly the same as those of *The Tempest*. Moreover, both Aimé Césaire and Dev Virahsawmy, the two examples of postcolonial writers and playwrights, respectively come from Martinique and Mauritius, have found from the adaptation and the appropriation of the Western literary tradition a best model to follow in their pursuit of cultural and historical recognition. This time, the two aforementioned postcolonial playwrights, through *Une Tempête* and *Toufann*, do not collide with the western Bard in his play *The Tempest*, however; they stylize him or simply they go with him in the same direction.

Generally, Postcolonial intellectuals and artists’ answer to Shakespeare is not univocal. Sometimes they react to stylization and imitation and at other times to hidden and overt polemics. This dialogue results in a double picture of Shakespeare as advocate of colonialism and its opponent. Such ambivalent relationship makes us talk about not one

Shakespeare but multiple Shakespeares each with a peculiar face. As Denis Kennedy expressed it, “almost from the start of his importance as the idealized English dramatist there have been other Shakespeares, Shakespeares are not dependent upon English and often at odds with it” (Kennedy 1993:2 Quoted in Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, 1998:07-08).

Shakespearean scholars and critics who are engaged in postcolonial studies have started to scrutinize the ways in which the colonial and racial discourses of early modern England might have fashioned Shakespeare’s work to become later on a colonial battlefield (Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, 1998:07-08). In other words, postcolonial critics consider that what happened in England and Europe in the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth in general has shaped Shakespeare’s views and his artistic horizon they are reflected in his drama.

Apart from the previous considerations of Shakespeare and his literary achievements, in the late 1990s, approaching Shakespeare became an exciting and an interesting field of inquiry to which feminism has contributed. However, performing, teaching, studying Shakespeare and plays cannot be done without considering and acknowledging gender issues. Therefore, these new approaches have marked a turning point in the history of Shakespeare’s criticism as far as feminist achievements are concerned. Feminist criticism continues to be one of the most dynamic, fruitful, productive and influential of the current approaches to Shakespeare. Sue Parrish has been asked a question by Marianne Ackerman, a founder director of the Women’s Playhouse Trust, whether Shakespeare is a sexist or not. The answers she gave (short and long answers) confirm strongly that Shakespeare is in fact sexist. To sustain this idea, Sue Parrish declares, “the short answer is ‘Yes’ and the longer answer is ‘Yes’ (1989:66). Since she has evaluated Shakespeare from a sexist and female perspective and ends with the conclusion that his female characters are disempowered incapable to change

the course and the outcome of events; and since they are *powerless*, they are portrayed more as *types* than round characters (1989:66).

She justified her stance by providing some reasons when saying that the majority of theatre directors are male who are trained from childhood to fit the theatrical exigencies while women are put in the margin or at the disadvantage. She states also that Shakespeare evoked the background of the Christian tradition as it told in The Bible and the roles that women performed in this story (Ibid).

In Marilyn French's *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*, she explains deeply the inequality and the difference of Shakespeare treatment of both his male and female characters. This inequality affects both women in the audiences and the actresses who play his women as well (Ibid).

Contrary to Sue Parrish, Caroline Alexander denied the fact that Shakespeare is a sexist. She has not even asked that kind of question since she has never viewed Shakespeare in this way and from this angle as the other female critics who approached Shakespeare. She collided with Sue Parrish's view when she said that women are portrayed, in Shakespeare, just as *types* and not considered as characters. In this context, she affirms:

I've been a critic for twenty years and I've never asked myself the question as to whether Shakespeare is sexist—and I'm a woman! The fact that I haven't thought about it is in itself revealing, because if he had been a terrible male chauvinist, I would have asked this question and probably rebelled against Shakespeare because of it. On the contrary, for many years, I have always envied Shakespeare's female repertory. He is the only classic author whose plays show such an immense variety of roles for women, and here I disagree with Sue Parrish. They are characters, not types. I have always envied their importance in the action and the fact that they are leading personalities, often providing the keys to the plots. 67 In Shakespeare, women belong to the upper classes, to the lower classes, to nobility, to history, to legends and fairy stories. They often share power, including political power, with men. (1989: 68).

Marianne Ackerman, another female critic, investigated the subject by asking Jan Kott a question concerning what he thought about the subject discussed. He replied in a brief and

logical way by saying, “For 450 years, we talked about Shakespeare being sexy and now, for the last fifteen, he’s sexist!” (Ibid: 65).

Marianne Ackerman’s preoccupations differ from that of the previous feminist critics. In other words, Marianne Ackerman is not interested in the fact of whether Shakespeare was a *sexy* or a sexist writer and how a woman is portrayed throughout or how she perceives herself as a woman in Shakespeare’s plays. For her, the problem does not lie in the interpretation or the understanding of the text, but how that text can be associated with the life and the world outside the theatre.

She develops more the idea whether Shakespeare can be considered our contemporary or not. At last, she found that this depends on how women today locate themselves in Shakespeare’s plays i.e. if the circumstances that Shakespeare’s plays provide enable women of today to see their own places in the modern contemporary society, in this case, Shakespeare is with no doubt our contemporary (1989:66).

This above point of view meets with the challenging view of John Drakakis who, in his introduction to *Alternative Shakespeares* (2002), assumed that if we consider history and its circumstances as far as Shakespeare’s plays are concerned have nothing to do with the modern time and its immediate issues, how Shakespeare can be our contemporary? Simply, Shakespeare in this case is far from being our contemporary. To sustain this stance, John Drakakis affirms; “in concrete historical terms Shakespeare can never be ‘our contemporary’ except by the strategy of appropriation” (2002:25). Therefore, or by appropriation, Shakespeare can be our contemporary.

In fact, since Shakespeare’s works are flexible and even Shakespeare in person is considered “as an elastic writer who can be stretched in many directions before he snaps” (Elsom. J, 1989:04), he can be our contemporary.

Accordingly, since we have tackled previously how Shakespeare is viewed from different angles and how his works in general are taken under a scrutiny by critics and scholars, it is time to analyze with care the plays that we have selected to our present research. However, like all works of literature, it is undeniable to say that Shakespeare's works or artistic achievements in general and his plays in particular have been the object of intense studies carried out from different perspectives and standpoints: the feminist, the modernist, the colonial, the postcolonial, the psychoanalytical, the philosophical, the cultural...etc. But, in this present research, we will focalize on some of his plays that we think relevant to our subject matter as *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) as well as *The Tempest* (1611).

Studies through time showed various reinterpretations of Shakespeare's writings and thoughts, and afforded a great importance to new recent issues over the traditional studies as A.C Bradley's analysis of characters. In other words, the main concern of the contemporary re-readings of Shakespeare's literary productions opened up a wide vision and gave birth to new issues and raised many questions as that of colonialism and race that are associated with Shakespeare's literary productions (Loomba Ania & Martin Orkin, 1998:03).

Shakespeare's play carries the idea of colonialism and the colonizer's civilizing mission. This point of view is sustained by Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin's assertion that "The meanings of Shakespeare's plays were both derived from and used to establish colonial authority" (1998: 01).

A. C Bradley, in *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth* (1904), has scrutinized Othello's character by describing him as being a 'noble barbarian' and 'simple' character. In the play, as Bradley affirms, Othello refers to himself as "one not easily jealous but being wrought, perplexed in the extreme" (Bradley, 1991: 176). He goes further to say that Shakespeare refers to Othello as a Blackman who is looked at as a



foreigner and alien. In addition, Bradley insists that Desdemona is innocent, saint, and loyal while Othello is described as a 'lascivious', 'lustful' and an 'old black ram' (Ibid:189). This fact portrays how the Elizabethans conceived the image of the Moor as anti-thesis of the Elizabethan identity.

Alternative criticism flourished with its multiplicity, flexibility of readings and interpretations. In her work *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (1987), Ania Loomba makes a deep analysis of the discourses of Renaissance literary productions. She extends the discussions of gender and politics to include race. For her, the play of *Othello* is simply about a complex relationship between a black man, a white woman, and the state of Venice.

According to the analysis of the discourse of race that she studies, she refers to Othello as racially different in the country in which he lives. This racial difference fosters the idea of "otherness" of Othello in the Venetian community or what Ania Loomba calls "the African in Europe" (Loomba Ania & Martin Orkin, 1998: 148). In the same vein, Habib Imtiaz has also referred to Othello's identity as an alien in the Venetian/ Jacobean Britain. He maintains that the Elizabethan world view about the black 'Other' is diffused through the character of Iago who is the 'archetypal' native member of the Venetian/ Elizabethan society. Habib Imtiaz argues that "Iago is not just the generalized vehicle of the irrationality of racism, but also the particular metaphor of Elizabethan colonial discourse's clueless writing out of its black other" (2000: 138). He adds that "Iago functions like the Tudor historical editors whose histories are built on exclusion" (ibid).

In "Othello's Racial Identity", Philip Batchelor considers the feature (trait) of blackness as crucial for the interpretation of the play. He explains that Shakespeare's description of Othello as black cannot be accepted without examination, since blackness is sometimes embedded in Elizabethan drama to refer to characters who are villainous. Though the playwright used just some passages in the play to refer to Othello's complexion, yet they are

enough to distinguish him from other characters. This colour distinction, Batcher maintains, makes of Othello someone who belongs to another nationality with a distinguished racial identity (1952: 244-6). As Shakespeare's protagonist, Othello is not only very complicated but an individualized and alienated subject from Venetian society in almost every respect such as in his blackness, his past, his bearing, and especially his strange language, with its unusual rhythms, grandeur, and exoticism (Bloom, Harold, 2010: 44). Hence, Othello is the victim of his origins.

Othello's alienation, then, is fundamental to the play. It is not important because Shakespeare portrays him as a Moor or a stranger or because racial tension and anxiety were pervasive in the atmosphere of Venetian society that shape Othello's relationship with every character; it is important because Othello himself, in his aspirations towards assimilation and anxieties about his blackness, internalizes a false dichotomy that can only dehumanize him. A rootless wanderer, Othello defines himself in Venetian terms, as an exotic European or a brutal savage. The most disastrous consequence of racial alienation for Othello is not the hostility or estrangement of the Venetians but his own acceptance of the framework within which they define him. Therefore, he endorses the Venetian stereotypes that they have on him and affirms his incapacity to break the yokes of this mental construct, to affirm his own identity. Thus, Othello falls in a trap that made from him a double victim of the early colonial imagination, an alien to others and even to himself (Bloom, Harold, 2010: 57).

No matter what critics say about Othello as an alien character, his presence in Venice/Britain speaks about the presence of Moors and Turks there. This presence is without doubt caused by imperial struggles in the Mediterranean that resulted in the exile and expulsion of Moors from Spain to Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain. The trouble that Othello faces in Venice/Britain can be accounted for by the visibility of these Moors in Britain in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The nobility claimed by Othello also points us into another

direction, to Moorish captains like Alwazan whose writings seem to have inspired Shakespeare's play. All in all, the presence of Othello in Venice/Britain became vraisemblable only if we place in the context in the emergence and consolidation of Empires in the Mediterranean in the late 1500s and early 1600s. The emergence of these Empires put on the road by waves thousands and thousands of Moriscos and Jews, come of whom landed in Elizabethan England and some others on the Barbary Coast and Venice. So Othello and Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* were these victims of imperial confrontations in the Mediterranean basin.

*The Merchant of Venice* is one of Shakespeare's most tightly structured comedies. The same procedure, as *Othello*, is used by recent critics to study *The Merchant of Venice*. In his attempt to study the play, Jay. L. Halio affirms that Shakespeare evoked many issues in *The Merchant of Venice*, most notably those that are related to the problems of anti-Semitism and racial prejudice. Jay. L. Halio tries to give evidence in the play by showing Portia's comments about her suitors particularly her remarks about the Prince of Morocco. This justifies and supports her feelings of superiority over them (2000: 142-5).

In "Shakespeare's Comedies: from Roman Farce to Romantic Mystery" (1986), Ornstein Robert explained how E.E. Stoll refuted the fact that in *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare portrayed Shylock, the Jew, as a buffoon and comic villain. Historically, Jews were condemned and marginalized by church doctrine, and accused of inhuman crimes, depicted as bloodthirsty in legends and folktales, and despised throughout the Christian society. Hence, the desolate history of Jew-hatred equated Shylock with conventional stereotypes of Jewish villainy as the villainous Jews that can be found in novellas like *Il Pecorone*. This Jew-portrayal is not compatible with Stoll's claim by saying that this prejudice is remarkably absent from the great literature of the Renaissance, and more specifically from the great literature of Renaissance England. Nonetheless Shakespeare made an exception

since, to some critics, *The Merchant of Venice* is a memento that Shakespeare was necessarily a man of his age who admitted and accepted its fundamental biases because it would never have occurred to him to question them (1986:91)

In fact, *The Merchant of Venice* or what Harold Bloom called “the Jew’s play” portrays the Jew, Shylock, a comic villain, since Shakespeare obviously admitted the anti-Semitic ideas of his time. However, Antonio, the true Christian is confirmed by spitting and cursing at Shylock. He conditioned the Jew’s survival to his conversion to Christianity, a forced conversion to which Shylock consents (Bloom. Harold, 2010: 48). In his article “Ideology and Class Conduct in *The Merchant of Venice*” (1979), Frank Whigham views *The Merchant of Venice* as an arena where different social classes and discourses come into contact and conflict in which each class tries to assert itself over the other. In this context, he affirms:

One of the significant issues in *The Merchant of Venice* is the rhetorical assertion of social status. Shakespeare locates this activity in a context of social mobility and class conflict, where language and other modes of self-projection serve as both enabling and repressive forces. In so far as the play presents an examination of political or class interaction” (1979:108).

Aside from class conflict and social prejudices, *The Merchant of Venice* is positioned within a contemporary debate about the move from agricultural economy to global market economy governed by empire building. This debate attempts to justify England’s entrance into imperial ventures by attributing a heroic dimension to the colonial expansion, a chivalric discourse that appeals to England’s gentry, with the interests of commerce and capital. (1979:166).

As claimed above, *The Merchant of Venice* through the inclusion of Shylock as a puritan type similar to Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* speaks for the dispersion of the ethnic groups from Spain as it waged its wars against the empires for the political domination of the Mediterranean globe and the global market economy. we fully subscribe to the parallel that

some critics have established Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* and Iago in *Othello*, Iago is another Jew thrown on the road of exile and jealousy pained to be sidestepped by another alien Othello in the preferment he gives to Cassio. Othello is described by some critics a “Spanish Tragedy”, because of the prevalence of exiles from Spain, then we can the same about *The Merchant of Venice* by looking at it as a “Spanish Comedy”.

It is slightly plausible that *Antony and Cleopatra* is a historical play since Shakespeare was much interested and preoccupied with historical stories and was greatly influenced by Renaissance issues and Roman matters. It is also a love story, and a tragedy which involves many interacting themes. From these themes derive many sub-themes such as how power is gained, and lost, and the effects of both such gain and loss on the psychology of the character. Shakespeare is not solely interested in the imperial strife that characterized his period, but also in the Roman Empire as a model of Empire building and domestic and foreign relations between the home country and other empires.

*Antony and Cleopatra* is centrally concerned with power, no less a question than the control of the whole of the known world” (Bloom. Harold, 2010: 101). In the sense, the play is filled with political intrigues, power struggles, war between empires and its consequences, and the plight of two desperately impassioned lovers. Cleopatra, the female protagonist, throughout the play, is portrayed as the source and the object of a hyperbolic imagination (Ibid: 111). The grandeur of Antony and Cleopatra, as characters, is central to the play’s concern with miscegenation of the Britons with the Other/Oriental. The protagonists are not only monarchs, imperial rulers; in their own imagination and that of those around them, they are elevated to the dimensions of gods or demigods. In other words, in the play, the exceptionally high number of legendary and mythological allusions has often been noted by critics. Hence, Cleopatra is associated with the goddesses Isis and Venus, Antony with Hercules and Mars, while the two of them as lovers are analogues of Dido and Aeneas

(Bloom. Harold, 2010:114), imperial characters in Virgil's Aeneas which celebrates the emergence of the Roman Empire. Antony and Cleopatra is a good case.

Cleopatra attracted the attention of many critics who attempted to shed light on the archetypal nature of its characterization in its evocation of the tragic fate of her counterpart in Virgil's Aeneas. The English critic, Arthur Symonds provides a perfect example of those critics who made Cleopatra one of the most important Shakespearian women. In this context, he writes: "*Antony and Cleopatra* is the most wonderful, we think, of all Shakespeare's plays, and it is so mainly because the figure of Cleopatra is the most wonderful of Shakespeare's women. And not of Shakespeare's women only, but perhaps the most wonderful of women" (Quoted in Harold Bloom, 2010:80). Indeed, the figure of Cleopatra, on the one hand, is associated with flattering words. She is referred to as "great Egypt," "dearest queen," a "rare Egyptian," a "triumphant lady," "Thetis," "this great fairy," "day of the world," "nightingale," "eastern star," a "most sovereign creature," a "lass unparallel'd". However, on the other hand, she is also described as a "foul Egyptian," the "false soul of Egypt," a "witch," a "gipsy," a "strumpet," a "whore," a "trull," "salt Cleopatra," a "boggler," a "morsel cold upon dead Caesar's trencher," Antony's "Egyptian dish," the "ribaudred nag of Egypt," and "a cow in June" (Ibid: 199). Hence, Cleopatra, as a Shakespearian character, is portrayed by critics in a contradictory way. This contradiction reflects the fears and cultural anxiety brought about by the English/ British participation in the trade exchange in the Mediterranean basin. So Cleopatra is just an oriental commodity among the other commodities that Shakespeare offered for consumption. She at once attracts the audience by its oriental mystery and repulses by her ethnic otherness.

Anna Murphy Brownell Jameson, in her book entitled *Characteristics of Women: Moral, Poetical and Historical*, confirms and admits the idea that Shakespeare in his play *Antony and Cleopatra* depicted faithfully Cleopatra:

I have not the slightest doubt that Shakespeare's Cleopatra is the real historical Cleopatra—the “rare Egyptian”—individualized and placed before us. Her mental accomplishments, her unequalled grace, her woman's wit and woman's wiles, her irresistible allurements, her starts of irregular grandeur, her bursts of ungovernable temper, her vivacity of imagination, her petulant caprice, her fickleness and her falsehood, her tenderness and her truth, her childish susceptibility to flattery, her magnificent spirit, her royal pride, the gorgeous eastern coloring of the character— all these contradictory elements has Shakespeare seized, mingled them in their extremes and fused them into one brilliant impersonation of classical elegance, Oriental voluptuousness and gipsy sorcery (2010:123-4)

Brownell is to the point in her description of Shakespeare's Cleopatra but in her reference to the historicity of the character, she has failed to point out the cultural and social anxiety that Cleopatra as an archetypal oriental figure par excellence raised as a result of the emergence of the British/English empire of trade in the Mediterranean. As a zone of contact, the Mediterranean Sea brought the British into an inevitable encounter with the Oriental in Egypt, which was at the time of Shakespeare under Ottoman domination.

The argument above is in line with the argument developed by Kyung-Won Lee in his essay “Shakespeare's England, Shakespeare's Rome: National Anxiety and Imperial Nostalgia” (2007), Kyung-Won Lee situates the Shakespearian plays in the historical circumstances of Shakespeare's England. Moreover, he goes further to assume that the Roman plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, which are said to be the most political of Shakespeare's works, were a response to the political and ideological climate of his age i.e. the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. By invoking imperial Rome, Shakespeare, in his Roman plays, wants to compare England to Rome in terms of greatness and reputation as a strong empire considering the latter as a model that England should follow in their process of empire-building (expansionism). As he puts in this following quotation:

For Shakespeare's Englishmen, in brief, Rome was at once an Other and a displaced self, at once a temporally remote world and a *model* for England's self-representation. Shakespeare's Roman plays exemplified the displaced projection of Englishness, namely, of what the England ought to be. If Shakespeare's English history plays were committed to nationalist propaganda to display the passing of the nation from the turbulent darkness of the Wars of the Roses into the promising light under the Tudor reign, his Roman plays were responses to the proliferation of nationalist and imperial sentiments arising after the defeat of the Armada (Lee Kyung-Won, 2007:407).

While we agree with Lee's argument about Rome as a model for empire building, we have to add that in trying to build on that model the aspiration of England for empire is described by Shakespeare as fraught with the same dangers that faced Imperial Rome. Antony is Hercules Britain brought down by an oriental Dido. Unlike Aeneas, he did not succeed to avoid the trap of the consumption of Oriental commodities and bewitching values attached to them.

The parallel between Imperial Rome and Britain appears again in *Cymbeline*. However, in the latter play, Shakespeare puts stress not on cultural anxiety brought about by the encounter of the Britons with the Oriental Other and his/her commodities, an encounter that threatened their imperial construction of their identity but with the historical confrontation between the Britons and the Imperial Rome of Octavius Caesar, what has to be noted very briefly here before developing the point further in the chapter devoted to *Cymbeline*, is that the emphasis is placed on reconciliation between Imperial Rome and Britain rather on the conflict.

Just as in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare refers to Imperial Rome and its attempt to conquer ancient Britain with a wince to the internal state of contemporary Britain. As Tristan Marshall writes so well,

The struggle in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is specifically between the *external* conquering empire of Rome and the *internal* imperium Britain (...) Shakespeare reflects on the Jacobean perception of Empire here in *both* senses (...) the coming to terms with the two empire states in a show of British national pride, and how the play closes with the return to friendship of the two rulers (2000:67).

The insight of Marshall into how Shakespeare manipulates British history to transform defeat to victory and invent a myth of reconciliation between imperial Rome and Britain throws light into the legitimate aspiration of Britain to the succession to the Roman Empire. What Marshall and other critics have often overlooked in their analysis of the play is that the legacy of Imperial Rome in Shakespeare time was sought by all the Mediterranean empires, including the Ottoman Empire. As the story of *Cymbeline* unfolds, we note the transformation



or metamorphosis of Britain from the status of Roman colony that it used to be into an empire in its right as legitimate successor to Imperial Rome.

So far in this critical review of the literature, emphasis is put on how Shakespeare in *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Cymbeline* looks east to the Mediterranean to invoke the major cultural, political and socio-economic issues that confronted Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain in their attempt to break the yoke of the Mediterranean imperial powers and fulfill their legitimate aspiration to an empire of their own. However, with *The Tempest* this postcolonial perspective of an Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain looking for ways to carve a niche among the empires of the time becomes Janus-faced in that it looks both East and West to Ireland and the transatlantic.

*The Tempest*, the one play by Shakespeare to be imperial, is interpreted in relation to its historical context. In other words, *The Tempest* is studied from a historicist standpoint emphasizing the idea of empire building in the transatlantic. According to Jerry Brotton's readings, *The Tempest* makes the reader and the critics go back to history and delve deeply into the development of early seventeenth century politics of empire building, with its issues and specificities (1998: 25). For Brotton, Shakespeare's play develops the idea of colonialism and the colonizer's civilizing mission. This point of view is sustained by Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin's assertion that "The meanings of Shakespeare's plays were both derived from and used to establish colonial authority" (1998: 01).

Similarly, Paul Brown claims that *The Tempest* bears colonialist ideas i.e. colonial discourse in the sense that it does not only reveal colonial prejudices, it even fosters and preaches colonialism. In the same vein John Drakakis writes what follows:

We have tried to show, within the limits of a brief textual analysis, how an approach via a theory of discourse can recognize *The Tempest* as, in a significant sense, a play imbricated within the discourse of colonialism; and can, at the same time, offer an explanation of features of the play either ignored or occluded by critical practices that have often been explicit, whether consciously or not, with a colonialist ideology (2002: 208).

In fact, literary critics endeavored to study *The Tempest* from a historicist standpoint and tried to put it in relation to its historical context. According to Jerry Breton's readings, *The Tempest* makes the reader and the critics go back to history and delve deeply into the political development of early seventeenth century, with its issues and specificities, when England/Britain affirmed itself to be a great colonial power (1998: 25).

Accordingly, Martin Stephen and Philip Franks agreed with the above that *The Tempest* vehicles the idea of colonialism through Prospero, the white colonizer, and Caliban, the colonized subject, the relationship which binds the two is that of the colonizer (imperialist) and the native of the land (the colonized) (Stephen. M & Philip. F, 1996: 117).

In her book *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past*, Hopkins claims that "The textual body of Shakespeare's plays has been a prevalent and enduring component of Western colonial practice...no western text has played a more visible role in the representation and reconstruction of the colonial body than Shakespeare's *The Tempest*" (2008:06). She adds; "*The Tempest*...cries out to be read in the context of the growing push towards mapping and exploiting the New World" (ibid). David Pinnington develops further this theme of colonialism which is present in *The Tempest* to show and explain the master-slave relationship that links Prospero, the epitome of civilization and order with Caliban, the primitive who embodies all the savage features and uncivilized behavior (2001: 51).

In his article entitled "The Tunis, Sir, Carthage, Contesting Colonialism in *The Tempest*" (1998), Jerry Brotton, the Research Fellow in the University of Leeds. UK, affirms that the story of *The Tempest* addresses the encounter of the English man with the *Other*. The play turns around the encounter of the white man "Prospero" with the aboriginal native "Caliban". Each of these figures belongs to a distinct world, the old world and the new world

respectively. Brotton affirms in this concern: “I would argue that the play is precisely situated at the geographical bifurcation between the old world and the new” (1998:37).

Many critics view *The Tempest* as Shakespeare’s study of the colonist’s adventures in the New World. Shakespeare’s monster is related to the native peoples who had been colonized by Europeans and were throwing off their foreign governors and asserting independence. “Like Caliban, most colonized peoples are disinherited, subjugated, and exploited. Like him, they learned a conqueror’s language and values. Like him, they endured enslavement and contempt by European usurpers. Eventually, like Caliban, they rebelled” (Vaughan. Virginia M, 1985:402).

In his article “Caliban’s Indian: The Americanization of Caliban” Alden T. Vaughan proposes that “Caliban must symbolize the Indians who lost their land and often their liberty to European intruders” while “Prospero’s dispossession of Caliban is a prototype of England’s dispossession of American aborigines (1988:139). That is to say, *The Tempest* turns around the struggle between the aboriginal and the oppressive/ aggressive civilization.

In the same context, Leslie Fiedler in his book *The Stranger in Shakespeare* focuses his interest on the figure of the *Stranger* who does not concern only the “savage man of Ind” but also the woman, the Jew, and the witch are included. Fiedler associated the play of *The Tempest* with the myth of America and the Indian. The latter is considered as the last *Stranger* in Shakespeare as Fiedler states: “The last stranger, in fact, whom this globe can know, until we meet on his own territories, or in ours, the first extraterrestrial, whom until now we have only fantasized and dreamed” (1972: 208). He goes on to add that: “no respectable production of the play these days can afford to ignore the sense in which it is a parable of transatlantic imperialism, the colonization of the West” (ibid).

In contrast with the two previous interpretations of *The Tempest*, in general, and Caliban in particular, in her article “Creature Caliban” (2000), Julia Lupton interprets the character of Caliban in relation to the geographical world into which he belongs. She says that Caliban is not a New World figure but he belongs to the Old World. She writes in this context: “All the geographical indicators of *The Tempest* mark Caliban as an Old World figure, born from an Algerian mother and an unnamed father on an unnamed island between Tunis and Naples” (2000:06). Moreover, Julia Lupton’s interpretation of Caliban does not stop here but she goes further to make an association between *The Tempest* and *Othello* by considering Caliban as “a sorry cousin of Othello” (ibid).

In view of the large volumes of the postcolonial readings of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, we can only agree with Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin’s affirmation that there is not only one post-colonial Shakespeare but many post-colonial Shakespeares. What these postcolonial readings of Shakespeare have overlooked is the geographically dual or double-fold perspective from which Shakespeare looks at Empire. If empire travels West, many postcolonial critics of *The Tempest* suggest, it is because when Shakespeare looks East to the Mediterranean as the imperial vision is blurred for the simple reasons that the map of empires were already drawn by the Spaniards and the Ottomans. It is the Janus postcolonial perspective that will be adopted in this research wherein the Moor and the Turk in Indian disguise receive the full attention that it fully deserves.

The critical review of postcolonial literature on Shakespeare’s *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* shows that creative authors such as Aimé Césaire and Dev Virahsawmy were the ones who have started to look at Shakespeare as a colonialist and postcolonial dramatist. Critics followed the lead to these authors, most particularly after the emergence and consolidation of postcolonial theories such as those of Fanon, Said, and Ashcroft. Whether fiction or criticism, the huge numbers of

postcolonial readings of Shakespeare, calls for further refinement and revision in the light of the complexity of the idea of Empire and Otherness in Shakespeare's plays. The next chapter is one step in this investigation of Empire and the Other.

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## **Chapter Two: Shakespeare: His Life and Times**

The aim of this chapter is to shed light at the historical background of Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain. More particularly, it seeks also to reveal the nature of the relationship that England had with the other European strong powers mainly Spain and France and the non-European ones like the Ottomans, the Barbary Coast states and the Kingdom of Morocco. The emphasis on the relationships and alliances, often shifting across religious lines is in order simply because they deeply marked Shakespeare's drama which was in tune with the major issues brought out by the confrontation among the empires in the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic.

### **England and the Continental Powers**

The end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries has been a period of transition from the medieval agricultural economy to a market-oriented economy. This Shakespearean Age as Trevelyan calls it also witnessed a religious reformation which deeply impacted the organization of the government and the social order. No less important is the flowering of the arts and most particularly drama propelled by the propagation of Renaissance ideas developed by humanist scholars such as Erasmus. The social stability during the Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain provided a fertile and congenial ground for the emergence of what historian named the Golden Age of the Arts in Britain.

### **Shakespeare and the Renaissance Romance**

Shakespeare can be rightly called a Renaissance Representative dramatist in regard to the interest he developed in the new genre of Renaissance romance which grew out of the

medieval romance. This generic transformation of romance came as a result of the cultural, political and social changes in Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain. Before developing further this point, a few words about Romance as it is currently defined are in order.

In her book which is entitled *Romance* (2004), Barbara Fuchs explains everything related to romance as a literary genre including definitions, its principle as well as its origins and development from the classical period of the Greeks and the Romans with reference to medieval romance till the post-Renaissance era.

Literally speaking, *romance* is the name given to a particular literary *genre*. It concerns the popular narrative poems that made its appearance in twelfth-century France and then reached Europe. These poems were considered as romances because they were composed in the vernacular languages. The latter were known as *romance* languages since they sprang from Latin.

The original sources for this literary genre are Greek and Roman legends (the story of Thebes, the Trojan War) and classical texts (Virgil, Statius, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Apollonius), medieval historiography, Celtic legends, and the *chansons de geste*. The characters of romance are generally court's members: kings and queens, knights and ladies while the court is the central setting. As a political environment, the court was also a place where individuals from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds met" (Gaunt quoted in Barbara Fuchs, 2004: 40).

The genre of medieval romance is traditionally identified as a literary genre that referred to a group of narratives in the vernacular that emerged around 1150 in the court of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine in England. Romance comes from the Old French expression "mettre en romanz". After being an elite court genre, translating its texts originally written in Latin into the vernacular, or romance, languages helped this genre reach a much wider common audience (Fuchs. Barbara, 2004:38-39).



Many kinds of those narratives in the vernacular were called romances, but also “estoires” (stories/histories) or “contes” (tales). These narratives tell stories of love and adventure that are generally situated in a distant classical past. (Ibid: 39). However, Romances written in English, originated from the French or Anglo-Norman background became popular from the fourteenth century and flourished over the next three hundred years (Cooper. Helen, 2004: 29-30).

After providing a historical development of romance, it is convenient to give it a general definition. In his definition, William Congreve, in *Incognita* (1691) revealed the main features of this literary genre as the following:

Romances are generally composed of the Constant Loves and invincible Courages of Hero's, Heroins, Kings and Queens, Mortals of the first Rank, and so forth; where lofty Language, miraculous Contingencies and impossible Performances, elevate and surprise the Reader into a giddy Delight which leaves him flat upon the Ground whenever he gives of, and vexes him to think how he has suffer'd himself to be pleased and transported, concern'd and afflicted at the several Passages which he has Read, viz. these Knights Success to their Damosels Misfortunes, and such like, when he is forced to be very well convinced that 'tis all a lye. (Quoted in Barbara Fuchs, 2004: 01).

Additionally, Romances are “full of the sea, of sea ventures and voyages, of losses and wrecks at sea, of travellers and movement (Rowse. A.L. 1988:2265). Since those romances emerged as a dominating fashion in the first decade of the seventeenth century and these plays are associated with all what is related to sea adventurers and their hardships at seas; therefore, they can be referred to the founding of Virginia, and the British colonial engagement in the different parts of the globe (Rowse. A.L. 1988:1565). Rowse. A.L. explains more the features of the romances which are “full of findings as well as losses, lost children and wives found again, reconciliation and forgiveness” (1988:1565).

In fact, when Shakespeare wrote the romances, he was at the end of his career as a playwright and theatregoer. He produced *Cymbeline*, *Pericles* and *The Tempest* which are full of adventures, losses and perils that are followed at the end by the reconciliation and the

celebration of marriage. Shakespeare's decision to write romances was even taken under scrutiny by literary critics and scholars. They explained this fact in relation to Shakespeare's retirement and his return to family life at Stratford. Hence, the romances are may be seen as Shakespeare's farewell to his art and his artistic career. In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye shares the same view with Aristotle who assumed that fiction may be determined "by the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same" (1957: 33). In fact, Romance is one of the genres that necessitates a superior hero. In this context, Frye asserts:

If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of romance, whose actions are marvelous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established (Frye 1957: 33).

Northrop Frye is to the point when he categorizes genres according to the power of the hero because this shows to what extent romance is not the puerile genre some critics would call it. As Frye names it in another book of his, Romance is indeed "a scripture with due regard the important thematic load with which it carries". If Frye is to the point to qualify romance in its way in our contemporary period, but it is truer for Shakespeare's contemporary Frye and Fuchs have neglected to deal with the major feature of romance during its emergence in Shakespeare's lifetime. In other words, they have overlooked the imperial or colonial dimension of Romance, its links to domesticity as well as the generic transformation that the genre witnessed in its passage from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The generic shift from courtly romance to the colonial or imperial romance, as suggested above, can be accounted for the plasticity or malleability of the genre to accommodate the political, economic, social and cultural changes in the Renaissance period. Shakespeare's *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest* and all of

Shakespeare's tales are all marked by the romance genre. Whether these romances end tragically or comically, they all play in the final analysis a variation on the genre of Romance. And the plays selected for this research are concerned with colonial desire where romance as love story fails when it concerns *Othello* and succeeds when it deals with the encounter with the Self. The dominant feature of all, however, is domestication and marriage.

To say that Shakespeare, like his contemporaries like Philip Sidney, used romance as an expression of colonial/imperial desire and the cultural anxieties that is embedded in that desire is not to deny that he inherited the genre of romance. His imperial expansion of the genre could not have happened if Italian Renaissance authors such as Boccaccio and Syntio had not existed. Nor could have Shakespeare produced such plays as *The Tempest* if he had not read Virgil's *The Aeneid*. The claim could be extended to the Renaissance if we take into account the influence that Virgil's *Metamorphosis* and the latter's works in the art of love. Italian Renaissance writers revived the antique Roman writings which found their way into other European countries where they were translated into the vernacular languages. Among these Roman writers who are translated into English was Virgil who offered the best translation of Empire from Troy to the Imperial Rome. Heather James (2007) has fully analysed the way Shakespeare deployed this *Translatio Imperii* in his various plays, comedies and tragedies.

In his essay on Renaissance Italy, Jacob Burckhardt has gone into the social economic and political upheavals that shaped the birthplace of the Renaissance. What is important to observe here is that nearly similar conditions prevailed in Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain that led to similar flourishing of the arts. When Renaissance ideas such as love, individualism and erotic life in general best captured in Boccaccio's *Decameron* travelled to England, they found a congenial ground in Shakespeare's genius. What Burckhardt says about

What looked like the Bohemian life of Italy in the Renaissance is strangely similar of what Peter Ackroyd says of Shakespeare's life as a Renaissance man and dramatist in his work *Shakespeare: The Biography* (2005).

The major difference as far as romantic life of Italy and England in the Renaissance is concerned is that romance in Renaissance England was deeply shaped by imperial ambitions, which led into the encounter with the Other shook the stability of the English self and identity.

In her *Romance of the New World*, Joan Pong Linton investigated the imperial appropriation of the genre of Romance; showing how Romance accommodated colonial desire by interweaving issues of gender and colonialism. Linton is very often to the point in underlying the intersection or interconnection of gender and the issue of the Other, both of which sustained with demonstration.

For Joan, the emergent ideology of the bourgeois household or domesticity seeks to control and order the supposedly erratic erotic life of women and imperial natives imposing the mastery of the white bourgeois male. This point will be developed later in this research. However, at this stage, it is worth pointing that as far as Shakespeare's plays are concerned, the rewriting or misleading of romance with its emphasis on domesticity was made possible not solely by the status social, political and economic changes that happened in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods, but it is the translation of Aristotle's *Politics* into English. It is this Aristotelian model of the household where wife and slave are the chattel of the male master that served as an unrulier ideological prop for, in colonial romance, the domestication of women at home and the Other who was encountered abroad.

Burckhardt in his *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* also underlines an artistic feature of Renaissance life what largely explains Shakespeare's penchant for the genre comedy. Burckhardt argues that the genre that predominated the arts in Renaissance Italy is the comic genre. The Italians revived the interest of Roman comic authors such as Petronius

and Plautes. The only invention that the Italian Renaissance authors made and excelled in is Comedia Del Arte. Burckhardt seems to regret that Renaissance playwrights did not accord to the genre of tragedy as much interest as the genre of comedy, and as the research will show in the hands of Shakespeare, comedy is elevated to a genre of the same footing as tragedy as far as seriousness is concerned.

Shakespeare is a multivalent dramatist in the sense that his genius welcomed not only tragedy and the epic genres of the Renaissance but also what in the history of the genres is called The New Comedy. His reading of Aristotle's *Poetics* and its negative appraisal of comedy as a lowly genre did not dissuade him to use and transform it into a respectable genre, thus breaking the generic hierarchy then establishes what is remarkable is that Shakespearean comedy finds its way in his famous tragedies such as *Hamlet*. Though it was inspired by Roman New comedy, this Shakespearean comedy is elevated to a grand from its treatment of issues of the highest importance, issues such as empire and the birth of the capitalist system, the social mobility, leadership and ruler-ship, and so on and so forth. It is in comedy that the issues of domesticity and male empire women and colonialism. Hence, in talking about imperial Romance, the reader is mistaken in his research, no difference is made between Shakespearean tragedy and comedy as genres. It has to be noted that Shakespeare's comedies often take us to the fringes of Empire such as Habsburg Empire in *Measure for Measure*, Venice in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, Milan and Naples as the unnamed island in *The Tempest*. In all these comedies, the theme of domesticity and the empire holds the upper hand.

### **Shakespeare and the Literature of Travel**

So far, the emphasis is placed on artistic background that shaped Shakespeare deployment of romance in his comedies and tragedies. However, imperial Romance was enabled not solely by the revival of the arts in the Renaissance but also by the travel literature.

It is in travel reports such as Sir John Mandeville's *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, Leo Africanus' *Geographical Historie of Africa*, Abraham Hartwell's *A Report of the Kingdome of Congo*, and Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* that Shakespeare must have found and the source of inspiration for imperial or colonial Romance.

## **Elizabethan England at Loggerheads with the Spanish and the French Empires**

In the political sphere, a stronger and absolute royal government had been established by the King Edward IV. The latter enacted and exercised freely what he called the "dispensing power". This act stipulated that the power could suspend the law in certain cases. Hence, by doing so, the King fortified the royal prerogatives that no previous king had exercised for two hundred years. Nonetheless, the true founder of the almost absolute monarchy of this period was Henry VII, who reigned from 1485 to 1509. He was not the nearest heir to the throne of England, but acted as the representative of the Lancastrian line, and by his marriage with the Lady Elizabeth who represented the claim of the York family joined the two contending factions. He was the first king of the Tudor line; his successors were his son, Henry VIII, and his three royal offspring, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth. Henry VII's immediate successors and their government followed the same policy as their grandfather. In fact, the Reformation that took place during the reign of Henry VIII, besides the new internal and foreign difficulties that characterized mostly the reign of Elizabeth I, made the royal power the supreme one and promoted it a higher and more independent position. The independence from Catholic Rome was described at the time in terms of imperium or domestic empire.

In the early years of the sixteenth century, however, several conditions joined to provoke a most striking movement in the history of Britain. This was known as the English Reformation. The main cause of the Reformation in England came as the result of a dispute between King Henry VIII and the Pope. At the beginning, several laws were passed by the Parliament. Furthermore, in the year of 1529, a number of petty evils and abusive practices in the church courts were abolished. This means that the Pope's income from England was then cut off, and his jurisdiction and all his other forms of authority in England brought to an end. Finally, the supremacy of the king over the Church of England and clergy and over all ecclesiastical affairs was declared and reinforced by the Act of Supremacy in 1534. Consequently, by the year of 1535, the ancient connection between the Church in England and the Pope in Rome was detached. Thus, in England, as in many continental countries, at about the same time, a national church arose independent of Rome. The emergence of such proto-nationalist rulers largely explains the predominance of the theme of relationship in Shakespearean comedies and tragedies.

Henry VIII's six marriages yielded him only one son, the sickly Edward VI (1547-1553) who carried the Reformation much further. An English Prayer-Book was issued which was to be used in all religious worships. The churches' services made more simple and restricted, and the introduced doctrines assimilated and reformed the Church of England to the contemporary, Protestant and Anglican Church. Contrary to Edward VI, the eldest daughter of Henry VIII, Queen Mary, had been brought up in the Roman faith environment. This motivated her to make England a Roman Catholic country again. In the later years of her reign, she encouraged severe persecutions, causing many to be burnt because of heresy. For this reason, Mary Tudor was named also Bloody Mary. we could say that with the bloody Mary England became once again a virtually Spanish colony, part of imperial Spain because of the latter's to Philip of Spain.

Mary's death in 1558 opened widely the doors to her half-sister Queen Elizabeth who felt the necessity to adopt a more moderate position. The Church of England was established by law as it was during the reign of Henry VIII. However, in the meantime, there had been growing up a far more spontaneous religious movement than the official Reformation. Thousands of persons had become deeply interested in religion and fervent in their faith. They had hold different views on church government, doctrines, and practices. They were known as puritans. Nevertheless, officially, they were not recognized. Especially during the reign of Elizabeth, they made active though unsuccessful efforts to introduce changes in the established Church of England and purify it but all their efforts evaporated and faded away.

In fact, at her accession in 1558, Elizabeth inherited a nation deeply divided by religious conflicts since she restored the moderate Anglicanism of her father and her half-brother. Although Elizabeth cut the ties with Rome, her tolerance and her ability to compromise won her the loyalty of both Catholic and Puritans. Elizabeth's reign was marked not only by the continuance of royal despotism and by brilliant literary production, but also by the struggle of the established Church against the dissident as well as Puritans, and mainly by the difficult and threatening foreign relations. On the whole, we can say that with Elizabeth I, England was caught in the process of decolonization from the Empire of Spain and that of France. It is from this postcolonial perspective that Shakespeare wrote both to Empire in plays such as *The Tempest*.

During the decade before Elizabeth's accession, England had twice been in serious danger of losing the empire as sovereignty over the country was, in the sixteenth century, in a world dominated by two strong powers, Spain and France. The King of Spain at this time ruled also over the Netherlands, Franche-Comté, much of Italy, and the Spanish settlements in the Americas (Wernham. R. B, 1980:24).



Between 1500 and 1580, the Spanish and the Portuguese built and developed two sorts of empires. The Spanish took hold of two existing pre-Colombian empires, the Aztec in Mexico and the Inca in Peru. These two empires had been taken as bases for their further expansion.

They profited from mainly their natural resources. These extracted quantities of gold and silver from mines in their new territories seemed to promise unlimited prosperity for the rulers of Spain. Like the Spaniards, the Portuguese were also at the peak of their maritime power. Their empire was centred in the Indian Ocean and Africa. They built up a string of bases in Brazil, in Angola and Mozambique for the long voyage from Lisbon to the Spice Islands (nowadays Indonesia) and Macao. The monopoly that these Iberian empires exercised over trade from Spain and Portugal to the Americas and from the Americas to the Philippines practically smothered the English commerce.

In 1580, Philip II of Spain succeeded to the crown of Portugal and united the lands inside and outside Europe (Spanish and Portuguese colonies) that had been divided between the two countries. Even though, he had too many troubles elsewhere, he paid much attention to his Portuguese lands (Lloyd. T, 2001:02-03). By establishing such large empire overseas, Spain was considered as the great rival as well as obstacle to the England's efforts and tendency to build its own empire. That is why we can say that Elizabethan England waged a war-like trade against what looked like economic sanctions by officially recognizing the economic order imposed by Spain even as Queen Elizabeth I officially waged her merchant adventurers to carve a place in the triangular trade. This economic struggle between empires is reflected in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

The origins and growth of the first quarrels between Elizabethan England and Spain developed during the 1560s and early 1570s. These quarrels were driven by the motives of the both sovereign states. In other words, these quarrels were the outcomes of Elizabeth's efforts

and tendency to reassert England's independence from the other foreign interventions on the one hand, on the other hand, Philip II of Spain determined to reassert his authority against the opposition, and eventual rebellion, in his Netherlands provinces (Wernham R. B, 1980: 24).

In addition to this, Mary's reign drove England back to the Middle Ages. First, she put herself and her kingdom under the tutelage and protection of Spain by marrying Philip II. Then with the latter's assistance, she restored the papal jurisdiction, this led England surrendered its national independence. In addition to this, England was plunged into war with France in order to help Philip, and lost Calais for its pains (Pollard. A. F, 1990:41).

Elizabeth was a sovereign more purely British in blood than any other sovereign since the Norman Conquest; and to her appropriately fell the task and the responsibility of completing her country's national independence. Therefore, Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy and Edward VI's Act of Uniformity were restored with some modifications in spite of the opposition of the Catholic bishops who contended that the crown had no right to deal independently with ecclesiastical matters. Those bishops suffered deprivation and imprisonment rather than recognize a schismatic national church.

Elizabeth rejected Philip's offers of marriage and paid no heed to his counsels of state. She scandalized Catholic Europe by assisting the revolted Scots to expel the French from North Britain; and revenged the contempt, in which England had been held in Mary's reign, by supporting with impunity the Dutch against Philip II and the Huguenots against the king of France. She concealed her aggressions with diplomatic artifice and caution; but at heart, she was with her people, who lost no opportunity, in their new-found confidence, of plundering and insulting the Catholic powers in their way (Ibid: 41-2).

Consequently, all these factors gathered to raise the Queen's obsession and irrational fears; the fear of rebellions, the fear of France, her stance towards Philip II (of Spain), and her

strong desire to recover Calais since at her succession found the King of France "bestriding the realm, having one foot in Calais and the other in Scotland" (Wernham. R. B, 1980:03-4).

Apart from the economic and military threat of Spain to England, France's threat, which was a greater and nearer danger than that of Spain for its claims over Calais and Scotland. France possessed the entire southern, windward shore of the Channel. Moreover, France, through its fast-growing domination over its old ally Scotland, had access through England's "postern gate" across England's only land frontier. This was particularly dangerous when Elizabeth came to the English throne, because Scotland's young queen, Mary Stuart, married to the French king's son and heir. She was, indeed, in many Roman Catholic eyes, the rightful and legitimate present Queen of England instead of the heretic Elizabeth whose father's and mother's marriage had been pronounced unlawful by the Pope (Pollard. A. F, 1990: 25).

England really remained enmeshed in a disastrous war with France since, on the one hand, the Queen Mary had lost England's remaining colony, Calais, and on the other hand, the *Dauphin* François, the legitimate heir to the French throne, married Mary Stuart. These two factors placed England under the threat of French invasion from England's northern border. In addition to this, the economy ruined because of the costs of the war and left the crown with heavy debts, while the populace both exhausted and traumatized by the violent outcomes of the religious reformation since Henry VIII separated from Rome (Herman P. C, 2011:117).

During the decade before Elizabeth's accession, besides the navy everything had been allowed to run upside down, England's weakness and disunity had made it seem, in Paget's phrase, "a bone between two dogs" (Quoted in Wernham. R. B, 1980:26). Determination to end this situation, to reassert England's independence, was the main driving-force behind the policies of Elizabeth and her ministers. This was, hence, not only in their foreign policy, but also in every aspect of affairs (Wernham. R. B, 1980:27). In this respect, Peter Herman, in his

book, *A Short History of Early Modern England: British Literature in Context* (2011) states; “When Elizabeth Tudor became queen of England in 1558, she inherited a depressed, dispirited nation” (2011:115). In a document entitled “The Distresses of the Commonwealth,” a clerk was describing England’s troubles to the Privy Council as follows:

The Queen poor. The realm exhausted. The nobility poor and decayed. Want of good captains and soldiers. The people out of order. Justice not executed. All things dear. Excess in meat, drink, and apparel. Division among ourselves. Wars with France and Scotland. The French King bestriding the realm, having one foot in Calais and the other in Scotland. Steadfast enmity but no steadfast friendship abroad (Quoted in Herman. P.C, 2011:115).

Elizabeth and her government faced two major challenges at the outset of her reign: the issue of religion and the Queen’s marriage. These issues had an echo in both the domestic and the foreign spheres (Ibid: 118) and are reflected in Shakespeare’s plays in characters like the Puritan Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*.

England saw from the marriage of Elizabeth an issue of emergency when they urged her to take it seriously. Indeed, marriage for Elizabeth was a highly sensitive issue, but in the hands of the Queen, it became a card for political negotiations. She pitted the French Empire and the Spanish Empire against each other by promising marriage to their respective rulers, promises that she had never taken seriously. Hence, she belied John Knox Cohen in his “First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women” (1558), he said it loud and clear that:

To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion or empire above any realm, nation or city is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to his received will and approved ordinance, and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice (Cited by Morris T.A, 2003: 323).

As a response to those commentators, Elizabeth I, in her famous speech at Tilbury on August 9, 1588, declared: “I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of a king of England too” (Cited by Herman. P. C, 2011: 137).

During the first half of the 1560s, this same determination to reassert England's independence found expression in hostility to the nearest enemy, France, rather than to Spain. Even as she used the marriage card to put Imperial France and Imperial Spain at loggerheads, Queen Elizabeth I tried to put an end to French domination in Scotland by supporting secretly and openly the Protestant and nationalist revolt there in 1559–1560. With this assistance, the Scots succeeded in expelling completely the French forces from the Scottish territories. This lessening of French hostility and winning of Scottish amity and confidence were fundamental achievements since England needs now no longer to fear a Franco-Scottish menace through the "postern gate," and no longer would confront the probability of a war on two fronts if relations with France again deteriorated. By recovering Calais, England became an island. Invasion now could only be by sea (Wernham. R. B, 1980:27-8).

As it was mentioned before, England was the target of many invaders mainly from the continental powers especially during the reign of the Queen Elizabeth. Moreover, the English adherents of Mary, Queen of Scots, supported by France and Spain, also threatened it even at home with deposition. The English government pursued a policy of interference in the internal conflicts of other countries that brought it frequently to the verge of war with their governments and sometimes beyond. Hostility bordering on open warfare was, therefore, the most frequent condition of English foreign relations especially her relations with Spain. The most serious contest with that country was the war that culminated in the battle of the Armada in 1588.

The threat of invasion remained a reality even after the defeat of the Armada, but it was less acute than it had been at the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign. England became a type of post-colony, but it was not yet completely secure. The hostility between the Empire of Spain and England from open war into a piracy and Corsair activity on the seas and assassination plots at home.

## **Queen Elizabeth I: The Pirate Queen**

Elizabeth tried another strategy to weaken the Spaniards when she secretly supported piracy against Spanish shipping and raids on the treasure fleets that left South America twice a year (Herman. P. C, 2011:128). In other words, under Elizabeth, England followed a highly aggressive para-naval policy towards Spain. Thus, the period of 1570s and 1580s, piracy became England's strategic response to Spain's imperial expansion. Long before the direct confrontation between the Spanish and the English in 1588, the Queen was granting her royal approval and support to privateering expeditions that ostensibly sought new channels for English trade but in reality consisted mainly of attacks on Spanish colonial bases in the Americas (New World).

Additionally, the pressure of international rivalries and conflicts, organized privateering and piracy in North West European waters, during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, severely disrupted trade and shipping, inflicting widespread disorder and causing damage to maritime regions, stretching from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. The politics of piracy and plunder represented a significant redistribution of wealth both between and within the economies of England, the Low Countries, Spain, Portugal and France. As the case of England, states with limited financial resources and military power exploited private enterprises at sea for both trading and military purposes, particularly in the form of privateering, under which legally commissioned private vessels were authorized to attack enemy shipping under the pretext of legitimate motives. Hence, during the long Anglo-Spanish conflict from 1585 to 1604, privateering, as a technique of warfare, grew into a widespread business (Appleby. J. C, 2007: 41).

Even though Philip was really conscious that conquering England was an illusion, he did not lose faith to conquer it and enlarge the scope of Catholicism. Nevertheless, in the end,

the Spanish Monarch was disillusioned by English Catholic exiles that spread the news that the majority of the English people only waited a signal to rise against their Queen. When this delusion was exploded and the naval incompetence of Spain exposed, his dreams of conquest vanished (Ibid: 47). Spain had organized an immense fleet which was intended to go to the Netherlands and convoy an army to be taken thence for the invasion of England. While passing through the English Channel, a storm broke upon them, they were attacked and harried by the English and later by the Dutch, at last Philip was provoked into a naval war for which the English were and he was not prepared, and the whole fleet (Spanish Armada) was eventually scattered and destroyed. Then by clinging to Mediterranean and medieval traditions, Spain had failed to realize the conditions of sea power and the naval tactics. Yet, England, on the other hand, had, largely under the inspiration of Henry VIII, adapted its navy to oceanic purposes and Island defence. Hence, the danger of invasion was greatly reduced after this time and until the end of Elizabeth's reign in 1603. The defeat of the Armada in 1588 marked the high point of her reign and Sir Francis Drake (1540-1596), a national hero, was one of the commanders of the English fleet. England had not only triumphed over its greatest enemy, but it confirmed its sense of divine mission, and Elizabeth ruled over the chosen nation as the Virgin Queen (Herman. P.C, 2011: 139). Therefore, this victory was a great triumph for Elizabeth and her nation. England's traditional enemy, Spain, was defeated, and this gave English the monopoly to control the seas of the world, exploring and bringing valuable goods from the New World.

Even though Elizabeth was popular, her defeat of the Armada showed not just a national success but strengthened England's sense that God was on their side and that England was indeed God's chosen nation. To commemorate this striking victory, Elizabeth's government issued a commemorative medal with the inscription "*Afflavit Deus et dissipati sunt*" (God blew, and they were sunk). In addition, Elizabeth composed a hymn that was

performed for her just after the Armada's defeat in providential terms: "This Josephs Lord and Israel's God, / The fiery Pillar and day's Cloud, / That saved his saints from wicked men / And drenched the honor of the proud" (Herman. P.C, 2011:137).

What is worth observing at this point is that Queen Elizabeth as an officious supporter of piracy and Corsair activity was more interested in the state of her coffers than in the planting of colonies overseas. This is at least what we can deduce from the emphasis on economy in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Her merchant adventurers presented by Bassanio in the same play refer to the huge number of adventurers including Drake to whom Queen Elizabeth bestowed the prestigious title of Knight. So, if one has to speak about Empire during Queen Elizabeth I, one should nuance it by referring to it as an aspiration for an empire of trade. Even this qualification of a postcolonial Empire of trade is a misnomer because the embargo that Imperial Spain imposed on the British cloth industry. However, as has already been said in this chapter, the aspiration of empire building was kept alive by imperial romances mostly written supposed by author travellers and adventurers in quest of social advancement through colonial wealth. The trading of imperial romance by Shakespeare made him fall in the category of authors/nearly established courtiers such as Philip Sidney.

## **James VI and the Building of the British Empire**

It is until Elizabeth's death in 1603 that England lost its status as a "colony" and "post-colony" to embark with James VI on the plantation of the first colony in Virginia. He decided that the two countries (England and Scotland) should keep their distinct governments and legal systems, the new crowned king James sought for a peaceful foreign policy especially with Spain. Consequently, in 1604, the Treaty of London brought the war with Spain to an end. As a first step to fulfil the British project of empire building, James I gave the Virginia



Company a royal charter to establish a colony in the New World, and in 1607, it set one up on Chesapeake Bay at Jamestown in present-day Virginia (Lloyd. T, 2001: 07).

England's spirit of adventure led to the establishment of foundations overseas in order to enlarge the horizon of the British Empire. Though, religion at first motivated some of those who moved from England to the New World searching religious freedom as the case of the Puritans who opposed the teachings of the Anglican Church, the economic expansion and the necessity of finding new markets and gathering wealth were the primary driving impetus of the majority. Since merchants interested in the stream of goods and profits coming from Asia, Africa, and the New World, to seize these opportunities, the crown started granting charters to find new markets overseas.

Henry VII's great-grandson, James VI, the King of Scotland; was enthroned as James I of the second realm "England". He was eagerly welcomed by his English subjects whose esteem of him increased after the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Under the leadership of Guy Fawkes, a band of Catholic conspirators failed to blow up the houses of Parliament while the king was present. This incident fostered Catholic hatred and contributed to a growing anti-Catholic spirit in English culture (Forgeng. J, 2007:03).

The accession of King James Stuart (1566–1625) seemed to come as a great relief for the English. A popular "description" of James's home begins by confessing that the country "is too good for them that possess it and too bad for others to be at charge to conquer it" (Quoted in Herman. P.C, 2011:151).

James firmly believed in absolute monarchy. For him, the monarch is above the common law, for he saw himself as representative of God on earth. James' belief in the Divine Right of kings culminated in a series of serious confrontations with Parliament especially with the House of Commons.

The new crowned king saw himself as a “rex pacificus,” a peaceful king. In his first speech to Parliament just after his succession, in 1604, he declared what follows:

outward peace ... is no small blessing to a Christian commonwealth, for by peace abroad with their neighbours the towns flourish, the merchants become rich, the trade doth increase, and the people of all sorts of the land enjoy free liberty to exercise themselves in their several vocations without peril or disturbance (Quoted in Herman. P.C, 2011:153).

Indeed, James I insisted on establishing and keeping peace and amity with his foreign neighbours and he acted as both moderator and chief negotiator in the continent. He even attracted the attention of the Spanish ambassador, Count Gondomar, Diego Sarmiento de Acuña (1567–1626) who affirmed in 1618, “The vanity of the present King of England is so great that he will always think it of great importance that peace should be made by his means, so that his authority will be increased” (Ibid: 167).

Unfortunately, because of the costs of the war between England and Spain, both countries had been nearly bankrupted, especially in the part of the Spanish suite-à their failure in their intervention in Ireland in 1601. As a result, the Spanish rulers lost their will to carry on their unending war. Despite the virulent hatred of Catholicism on the part of the English and the equally virulent desire to restore the “old religion” on the part of Spain, both sides were willing to strike a deal. On his part, James showed his good faith by almost immediately upon his accession issuing a “Proclamation to Repress All Piracies and Depredations upon the Seas” (1603), and the two countries signed the Treaty of London in August 1604, ending hostilities until 1625 (Herman. P.C, 2011:153-4).

On the domestic front, when he succeeded to the throne of England, James I of England and the VI of Scotland was frustrated by the idea of the union of England and Scotland into one nation that he saw advantageous for both nations. The House of Commons as the representative of the people refused this project and the king’s proposals under the pretext that if the nation’s name “England” becomes “Great Britain”, many changes should be brought and many laws would be erased. This event, of course, had created a conflict between

the King and the Parliament mainly the House of Commons. James surprised the commoners by telling them that he would resolve the dispute on his own, without their participation and consent. Indeed, Commons responded directly with a document called *The Form of Apology and Satisfaction*, in which they told the foreign King James that he lacked knowledge of the English laws and their prerogatives, and that “our privileges and liberties are our right and due inheritance, no less than our very lands and goods” (Quoted in Herman. P.C, 2011:160). Edward Coke intervened and told James (according to his report) that “no man shall be put to answer without presentment before the justices, matter of record, or by due process ..., according to the ancient law of the land,” and what is more important was that, “his Majesty was not learned in the laws of his realm of England” (Ibid). The King, Coke continued, “was greatly offended, and said, that then he should be under the law, which was treason to affirm”. However, to Coke, “Bracton saith”, that “the king ought not be under any man, but under God and the law” (Ibid). This conflict culminated in the dissolution of the parliaments many times; in 1604, 1610, 1614 and because of James I’s denial of the parliament, the latter became known as “the Addled Parliament” (Herman. P.C, 2011:160). All these conflicts between the Stuart King and Parliament resulted from James’ confused belief that kings were ordained by the grace of God and that the privileges of Parliament were ultimately ordained by the grace of the King (Forgeng. J, 2007:04).

In brief, the crucial moment of transition from Tudor to Stuart Dynasty was marked by a shift geopolitical strategy dictated for several reasons by a supposedly peaceful king interested more in the restoration of the mythical *Britannie* than in imperial geographical expansion abroad. The exceptional case of the imperial conquest of Ireland can be accounted for by the domestic policy of a king who sought to make it a meeting ground for the reconciliation of feuding Scots and English who shared the imperial project. However, already underlined above, the close at home imperial project fostered by James I foundered on

the bedrock of huge differences the Scottish and English legal systems. As one of the King's Men, Shakespeare did not remain distant from the King's concerns over to successfully manage his Patron's imperial project. We can see his involvement in *King Lear* and the theatre issue of a portioned empire, in *Macbeth* in its dealing with the disturbance of legitimate rule by regicide, in *Hamlet* in handling the problem of regicide and revenge, and in *Measure for Measure* in raising the issue of leadership incited by withdrawal. Shakespeare is interested not only in domestic and imperial rule but also in the King's re-centring of foreign policy to the advantage of Spain over the Turks and Moors. This shift in alliance from the Tudor to the Stuart periods is discussed in the section that follows.

## **England and the Eastern Powers**

Queen Elizabeth I could right be said to be the initiator of diplomatic and commercial relations with the Islamic world (Ottoman and Moroccan Empires), from Morocco to Persia to India. It was under her rule that many trading companies that received her royal charter and introduced the Britons to Islamic regions as the example of Turkey Company, 1581 renamed Levant Company in 1592; Barbary Company, 1585; East India Company, 1600 (Gerald. M & Nabil. M, 2011:02).

The origins of English diplomatic contacts with the Islamic world began with the correspondence that Queen Elizabeth (1558–1603) conducted with Muslim leaders. Her letters exchanges with the Sa'adian sherif of Marrakesh, Mulay Ahmad al-Mansur (1578-1603), shows how, in al-Mansur's eyes, England's virgin Queen was hardly imperial. In England, Elizabeth constructed an image of her own international worth and good reputation that poets, painters, and theatre-goers showed in their literary productions. This became later a mythology that persisted even after her death, raising her to "semi-divine heights of Marian veneration and imminent imperial power" (Gerald. M & Nabil. M, 2011: 42).

Elizabeth's diplomatic alliances with the great Islamic nations were mainly established for commercial and strategic ends. The Ottoman regencies of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and the Kingdom of Morocco is a strategic region that was a commercial transit; however, many English trading ships sailed to the Levant to avoid waters dominated by unfriendly Catholic powers to the north. During Elizabeth's reign, this zone attracted great commercial and political attention. The English went to the Mediterranean mainly to trade and even to plunder. This region was nevertheless gave a corrupted image of Muslims, because it was there that large numbers of Britons were taken captive by 'Barbary pirates'. The captured or the captives, of course, endured harsh and brutal conditions in the hands of their North African captors. In their coming back home, they denounced Muslims and Islam (Gerald. M & Nabil. M, 2011:07). To secure direct trade routes with the eastern ports of the Mediterranean since they were taken under the Ottoman control, Elizabeth I thought that it was for her nation's benefits to seek strong ties with the Ottomans and their North African regencies. The alliances between the Ottomans and England were not only made for commercial motives, but for political ones as well. Elizabeth's intention in this regard was to guarantee the Ottoman's support against her rivals mainly Spain and France. Although trading contacts between the English and Muslim peoples can be traced back to earlier periods, it was during Elizabeth's reign, encouraged by crown policy and an aggressive community of entrepreneurial merchants, that English relations with Muslim states put religion aside and flourished in unprecedented ways. Religious difference between England and Muslims was less important than political, ideological, and military cooperation (Gerald. M & Nabil. M, 2011:52).

Elizabethan England entered in the arena of international affairs in the sense that she tried to maintain a good relation with kings of Morocco, such as al-Mansur and his predecessor, 'Abd al-Malik (1576–78), as well as with the Ottoman sultans such as Mehmed

III (1595–1603). In addition to the Ottomans, Elizabeth also had direct trading connections with the duke of Muscovy known as Ivan the ‘terrible’ (Fenoyl. R. de, 1980: 288). The relation of the Ottomans with Elizabeth was that of shared interests, the Queen’s both England and the Ottoman Empire were at war with Western Catholic Spain who sought to dominate the whole geographical area that the Pope donated to her. Elizabeth was really conscious that she was in need of extra-European support whether for diplomatic, political reasons or commercial agreements with the Ottomans to ensure her strategic interests in the western Mediterranean and Atlantic. Hence, in July 1585, she granted the right for establishing the Barbary Company to regulate trade with the states of the North African coast. England, indeed, had succeeded in defeating the Spanish Armada and its victory in the summer of 1588. The defeat of the Spanish Armada strengthened the relations between England and the Islamic World. For example, al-Mansur, the king of Morocco, was so impressed by the victory that he decided for the first time to consider Elizabeth as a real military and diplomatic ally. The Moroccan King recognized the role she could play in his plans for the re-conquest of Spain and in Euro-Moroccan cooperation (Gerald. M & Nabil. M, 2011:52). This rapprochement between Morocco and Elizabethan England went so far that the latter, according to Matar, proposed to the Queen the imperial conquest of the New World, their domination by Spain.

Elizabeth’s death brought a sea-change in diplomatic and commercial relations between England completely changed geographical alliances and domestic policy.

When James I was crowned as the King of both England and Scotland, he tried to change both the domestic as well as the foreign policies of his predecessor. At home, he attempted to impose some absolute laws for he believed in the Divine Right of Kings. This created tensions between the Monarch and Parliament, which marked his whole reign. The system of law according to which the restored empire of Britain remained a bone of

contention between the English constitutionalists and the absolute monarch. Another division occurred in James' Court between die-hard imperialists who militated for militarily supposed enterprise abroad for the carving of an imperial piece in the New World and the Mediterranean and the doves contented with a peaceful participation in global trade be it under the supervision of Imperial Spain. The first camp was best represented by James I's elder son Henry and the latter by the excessively prudent and peacefully minded King and his Partisans. Therefore, overall, we can say that Stuart Britain was a house divided as regards both over the ideal way of managing the restored empire at home as well as over the issue of participating in empire building in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic. These divisions largely accounts for Shakespeare's reluctance to celebrate extraterritorial imperial expansion in the same manner as Edmund Spenser in his *The Fairy Queen*, for example, do we surprise Shakespeare indicting James I for his lukewarm support of imperial ambitions abroad.

To sum up this historical and literary background, we can say that Shakespeare is one of the best representative man of letters of his time. His drama is deeply shaped by the ideas of the Renaissance and the age of geographical discoveries. This influence is shown clearly in his adaptation of the genre of romance and travel literature, which he shot with the imperial desire for control of the Other, notably women and the Other abroad (the Spaniards, the Turks and the Moors). It is argued that Shakespeare's domestic model was largely inspired by Aristotle's *Politics*, which looked at the wife and servants (domestic and colonial) as chattel under the supervision of a male master who is the husband. This image of Shakespeare as a representative cultural figure applies to him regardless of whether his plays were performed during the Elizabethan period or that of her successor James I. The political, social, economic and cultural tensions that characterized the Elizabethan and even Jacobean period find echo in his plays. Shakespeare's performance of the identity of Britons amid all these tensions is particularly marked by the issues of empire of males over females in the domestic sphere of

the aristocracy and gentry over the emergent bourgeois of the low classes by both, and the colonials over the colonized. Before expanding further on the complexity of empire and the Other in Shakespeare's plays, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*, a surface reading of the sources of his inspiration and the mapping of imperial geographies of his plays are needed. Chapter three is focussed on these goals.

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## **Chapter Three:**

### **A Theoretical Framework of Shakespeare's Plays**

In his book *Captured by Texts*, Gary L Ebersole argues that “the meaning of the narrative (Mary Rowlandson’s *Captivity Narrative*) to its original readers was not found below the surface of the text, but largely in the readily recognizable and stylized rhetorical patterns employed in telling the tale” (1995:22). This statement applies perfectly to meaning making in Shakespeare’s plays for the original audience. Indeed, no archeological digging or extraction of the sort practised by postcolonial critics inspired by Foucauldian post-structuralism is needed to unlock some of the surface meanings of empire in Shakespeare’s plays, for their easy observable rhetorical patterns provide the key. It is once the first key is used that we can proceed to delve into the deeper layers of meaning. So part of the goal of this chapter will consist in what a surface reading of the plays under study. Summarizing and focusing on the narrative of empire, whether historically or geographically situated, as one of the intertexts that constitutes the dialogic milieu in which they were produced, performed and consumed. The other part of the goal will consist in identifying some of the texts that obviously inspired his plays and that his original audience brought to bear in his plays.

### **Shakespeare’s plays: Synopses, the Sources and the Imperial Geographies**

#### **The synopses of Shakespeare’s plays**

The events of *The Merchant of Venice* take place in the fourteenth century Venice, Italy and Belmont, situated at the periphery of its trade empire. The main agents of the events are Antonio, a Christian merchant and fair money-lender, currently goes bankrupt. Bassiano, Antonio’s friend, is in debt to Shylock who is a Jewish money-lender. Therefore, all of these characters are troubled by money. Bassiano’s critical financial situation is due to the fact that he has been unwise with money throughout his life. Therefore, he is in need of \$3,000 gold

coins to win Portia's love and affection as he confesses to Antonio. The latter wants really to help his close friend, but his money is invested in three trading ships that are still out at sea. Hence, he decides to borrow money from a man he despises named Shylock. Shylock is a Jewish money-lender, and he is greatly detested by the Christians because he charges high interest rates on his loans. In fact, Shylock lends Antonio \$3,000 gold coins for three months with           guarantee           of           one           pound           of           flesh. In Belmont, Portia received suitors at her residence with a test designed by her father prior at his death. The test is a choice of one of three boxes: gold, silver, or lead. Each box contains a short poem and an explanation of one's choice. All suitors have failed, and they have not been regarded as being suitable husbands by Portia as well. Marriage assumes the form of imperial exchange

Back in Venice, Shylock goes to dinner at Antonio's house. He warns his daughter to not go to the Christian masquerade and to keep the house locked. Bassiano makes plans to go to Belmont to court Portia with his companion Gratiano. Gratiano, Salerio, Lorenzo, Bassiano and Antonio's friends went to Shylock's house wearing masks. In the meantime, Jessica elopes with her Christian lover, Lorenzo. She has disguised herself as a boy, and she has stolen money and jewels from Shylock. Shylock returns home and when he sees what happened he goes mad. However, in Venice, bad news is circulating about one of Antonio's ships being wrecked. He forgets about his daughter's departure when he learns that Antonio's imperial venture is lost.

In Belmont, Bassiano succeeds in his contest for Portia's heart by choosing the correct box, the lead one with the picture of Portia. They are set to get married. When Bassiano receives bad news from Venice about Antonio imprisoned for not paying his debt on time to Shylock. The latter is determined to take one pound of flesh from Antonio, and it is clear that he wants to get revenge on the defaulting Antonio. The case is brought to court with the Duke

of Venice as main judge. The latter is under pressure to uphold the laws of Venice to keep foreign trade honest within Italy. Bassiano enters and offers Shylock twice the amount of the debt due, and it is refused. Then the case gets so complicated and intricate that the Duke compelled to seek help from a Doctor of Law named Bellario. Nerissa enters, disguised as a man, and she produces a letter from Bellario. Economic law turns into debate about the function of usury in the emergent capitalist system based on investment in imperial trade.

Bellario has fallen ill, so he has sent Balthasar, a younger Doctor of Law, in his place. Portia enters, disguised as the man Balthasar, and she states that the contract has been reviewed. Shylock shall have his one pound of flesh. The contract, however, does not permit Shylock to take blood from Antonio. Portia also finds that Shylock is guilty of conspiring to kill Antonio, and that he is required to give half of his wealth to Antonio and the other half to the Duke. Antonio gives Shylock's property back to him in condition to bequeath it to Lorenzo and Jessica at his death and to convert to Christianity. Hence, a new economic law is established with the appropriation of Shylock's wealth. Comedy as one of scholar rightly claims, is fundamentally concerned with conversion. In this comedy that is centered, on at least three romances, the case is not different because the is summoned by imperial capitalist system to convert his wealth into Christian Capital.

*Othello* is another play partly set in and partly at the periphery of its empire. The city of Venice, a City-state which was famous for its military strength, and of its being a center of trade. Roderigo, a Venetian gentleman who has tried to gain the affection of Desdemona, the Senator Brabantio's lovely daughter, has just learned from Iago that she has secretly married Othello. The latter is a heroic Moorish general in service to the Venetian state and army. Iago, driven by his hatred to Othello of his preference of Cassio to lieutenant over him, he urges Roderigo to inform Brabantio of his daughter's elopement with the Moor.

Cassio, Othello's lieutenant, arrives with an urgent message from the Duke who needed Othello's assistance to prevent a Turkish invasion of the Venetian-controlled isle of Cyprus. Othello's arrival is anxiously awaited in Cyprus, following reports of a violent sea storm. When his war-ship anchors, he reports that the Turkish fleet has been destroyed.

This part of the narrative shows clearly that *Othello* is a kind of mercenary at the pay of Venice in its confrontation with the Ottoman Empire over the island, Cyprus. The reference to Cyprus Wars of the second half of the fifteenth century could not be missed by his audience, particularly the court audience. The presence of the Moor Othello in Venice is no less justified on the grounds of the dispersal of the Jews and the Moors following the completion of the Spanish Reconquista in 1492. To speak of Moors, much more importantly, the way that Othello has won the admiration of Desdemona, that is the deployment of travel/romance narrative by a Muslim convert convert has certainly a familiar ring to it, particularly for those of Shakespeare's contemporaries who had read Al Hassan Ibn Mohammed Al Wazzan Al-Gharnati, now known as Johannes Leo Africanus. Leo Africanus, as the story goes, was a traveler, scholar, diplomat captured by pirates who delivered to Vatican. Struck by his learning, the Pope converted him, became his godfather, and later waged him to write the stories of his travels. The publication of John Pory's translation of Leo's work *A Geographical History of Africa* in 1600 was a sensational event that captured the attention of the English readers. It is this text that constitutes the textile or handkerchief that will turn what is initially a comic romance into a tragic romance. Like his contemporaries, Shakespeare provides a gloss for Leo Africanus' text by focusing on the danger inherent to empire building as regards their fascination with the Other.

This fascination with the Moor is regarded by the father Brabantio as a witchcraft, a black magic that seduces Desdemona as a representative of Shakespeare's audience. The Venetian Senate for reason of State dismissed the father's complaint allowing the plot to

move to Cyprus, which is an imperial outpost of the Republic of Venice, provides an ideal setting for completion of the marital romance, which was then regarded as a perilous venture, particularly when it involves the encounter of the Self with the Other. In Cyprus just as in Venice before, Iago still harbours a grudge which he seeks to satisfy first by putting an end to Othello's and Cassio's friendship.

In honour of his marriage and the defeat of the Turks, Othello allows his troops to celebrate. During the festivities, Iago gets Cassio drunk. Roderigo, under Iago's influence, begins a quarrel with the drunken lieutenant that culminates in Cassio stabbing Montano, an important Cypriot. Enraged by the unrest that ensues, Othello immediately dismisses Cassio from his office as lieutenant and things go as Iago has outlined. What made things worse is that Iago carries on his plan to advise Cassio to ask Desdemona to plead her husband to look back to his decision.

In a private meeting arranged by Iago, Desdemona promises Cassio that she will intervene on his behalf with her husband. As Othello returns with Iago, Cassio quickly takes his leave. Iago comments on Cassio's hasty departure, stating that Cassio seems to be attempting to avoid Othello. Desdemona pleads enthusiastically for Cassio, and vows to never cease until her husband pardons his friend. Othello's is sympathetic to her petition but Iago plants the seeds of doubt in Othello that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair. To achieve his end, the machiavellic Iago forced Emilia to pick up the handkerchief that Othello gave Desdemona as a token of his love and gives it to Iago. In addition to this, he tells Othello that he has seen Cassio with Desdemona's cherished handkerchief.

Invaded by uncertainty, anxiety and jealousy, Othello demands some proof that Desdemona is unfaithful and asks her for the handkerchief, but Desdemona changes the subject and again pleads for Othello to reconcile with Cassio. Othello's doubts become reality especially when he listened to Iago and Cassio talk about a woman (Bianca) assuming that they are discussing

Desdemona. He immediately vows to kill Desdemona and Iago vows to kill Cassio. Othello comes to Desdemona in their bed-chamber, determined to kill her. He accuses her of having committed adultery with Cassio and, although Desdemona pleads her innocence, he suffocates her. Emilia at the same time brings news of the street fight and the subsequent death of Roderigo. When she sees the murdered Desdemona and hears Othello's accusation of infidelity, she discovers the ruse and her husband's role in it. Therefore, as she denounces Iago, the latter stabs her and escapes. When he is brought back, the full truth is revealed. Othello, realizing his guilt, stabs himself, falls on the bed beside his wife, and dies.

What finally gives the drama a tragic turn is Iago's misappropriation of *Othello's*/Leo Africanus text/textile left to him by his mother. The text of Shakespeare's drama is in this manner transformed into a "fair text", the words are Kim. F. Hall (1996). The rhetorical pattern of Shakespeare's plays assume for contemporary audience the pattern of Petrarchan sonnet wherein the dark lady and her text are turned into "fair text". It is in this obsession and anxiety over the Other contamination of whiteness or fairness that we see the consequences of imperial expansion. In the final analysis, the conversion of Othello/ Leo Africanus remains Shakespeare's and his contemporaries' suspicions.

In *Othello*, Shakespeare chooses the remote geography of Venice and its imperial periphery. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, he travels back into Egyptian and Roman antiquity with an inversion of the imperial romance, focusing instead of a Moor-white woman relationship on an Oriental and white Roman.

*Antony and Cleopatra* tells the story of a romance between two powerful lovers: Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt, and Mark Antony, who rules the Roman Empire with Octavius Caesar and Lepidus. Mark Antony, here in this romance the one to be, bewitched by the beautiful Queen Cleopatra in Egypt. Pressed by the realities of Roman life by political intrigue and the death of his wife Fulvia, Antony cynically secures a pact with Octavius by

marrying his sister Octavia. Soon afterwards, the charm of Cleopatra and their luxurious life in Egypt draws him back although he is needed in Rome. He finally decides to return to Rome when Pompey, another military leader, tries to gain control over the empire.

After the defeat of Pompey, Octavius Caesar imprisons Lepidus and turns to Mark Antony. Even though Octavia attempts to reconcile them, she fails. Therefore, Antony comes back to Cleopatra again and finds refuge in Egypt. The conflict between the two Triumvirs, Antony and Octavius Caesar culminated in a sea battle in Actium. Antony's army joined by Cleopatra's ships challenges Caesar's powerful army. Unfortunately, Cleopatra ordered her navy to flee in mid-battle abandoning Antony, and causing his failure in a second battle at sea. Hence, Antony's lack of judgment and Cleopatra's panic offer the victory to Octavius. Antony reacted severely to the situation and he even blames Cleopatra for their failure and plans to kill her. However, Cleopatra, to lessen Antony's anger, succeeded in tricking him when she made him believe that she is dead. Antony gets fatally wounded when he falls on his sword just after receiving the news about Cleopatra's death. Moreover, when he is dying, he discovers that Cleopatra is still alive. Therefore, he ordered his servants to carry him to his beloved Cleopatra and dies in her arms. With Antony's death, and fearing to be part of a humiliating parade of captives in Rome, Cleopatra dresses herself in her royal finery and presses a poisonous asp to her bared breast then died.

As already pointed out, there is a strong parallel between *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra* as both deal with imperial romance at the outpost of empire, that of Venice in the former and that of Egypt in the latter. A postcolonial perspective, were tempted to use Fanon's description, we are tempted to use Fanon's description of the motivation that drives a black man to look for a white woman and a black woman to search for marital and amorous relationship with the white man. As Fanon puts it. So well, in his analysis of the Black Man and white woman relationship, the problem of the Black man is that instead of looking for an

encounter with a person of the opposite sex as in normal relationship is primarily striving for a symbol of civilization that the white woman embodies and that he thinks that he has won from other white gallants. The Black woman in her quest for the white man seeks white washing, the skin color that elevates her socially and prevents her progeny to fall back to blackness.

Admittedly, such postcolonial reading of *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra* has pertinence for readers of our time. However, if we put back all this into the postcolonial context when Britain still struggling to carve a place amid the Other empires, this is not totally the concern that seems to motive Shakespeare to stage mixed encounters. If we look at the recurrence of the rhetorical patterns, we can see that Shakespeare and his audience are haunted by is the concern of miscegenation, and the threat to the continuity of the bloodline. After all what is tragic in *Othello* is not the suicide of its such central character and his female partner (Desdemona) but the extinction of Brabantio's blood line. In the end, it is fine that the romance does not take a comic line, for in that case a mixed "monstrous" progeny would have born and threatened the racial purity of the burgeoning nation. A social body infected by the Other is a body doomed to disintegration. The case is the same with the imperial romance of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The Oriental woman, Desdemona, is compared in the play to Dido. It is with this comparison that we see how far Antony lacks the determination of his mythical ancestral Aeneas in his resolution to create and consolidate the empire. The empire, through Antony's alliance with an oriental woman endangers permanence. "Let Rome melt in the Tiber", Antony exclaims when he is recalled to his imperial duties. The rhetorical pattern is thus activated by Shakespeare in his staging of the ritual of expulsion where both lovers are expelled into legend and an impossible love story. In this regard, we can invoke Mary Douglas and her dialectic analysis of purity, danger, pollution and taboo. What is remarkable in *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra* is their relationship with the imperial Other is



polluting. The racial or ethnic Other is taboo to the white man, particularly in a nation that aspires to build an empire. Empire building is therefore very a problematic issue for it brings not only but a sexual intercourse that threatens the purity of the empire, at the moment, that it seeks to affirm its nationhood or nationalism. It is a dimension of national identity in the process of formation at the moment that Britain was engaged in empire building that is ignored by classic postcolonial critics. England and Britain in the Elizabethan and Early Jacobean periods was not the full-fledged imperial Britain that it became in the Victorian period. So, naturally, Shakespeare like his contemporaries was haunted by doubt about what would become of white/fair England if free reign was given to miscegenation, particularly when that Other is powerful, just as the case of Othello and Cleopatra.

Just as with *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare in *Cymbeline* makes us travel to ancient Britain in its resistance and negotiations with the Rome of Octavius Caesar and the Britain of Cymbeline. The echoes to the debate of Empire and its divergent perception by the Britons constitute the central issue and impresses further the rhetorical pattern already identified, and which is sustained by the threat of woman to the emergence of a new Jacobean empire against the residual empire belonging to the Elizabethan period. First what does the narrative of empire tell us in *Cymbeline*.

The story of *Cymbeline* turns around the British king Cymbeline and his complicated family life. He lost control of his only daughter who decides to marry the gentleman, Posthumus, instead of Cloten, the son of his new Queen. The latter is a wicked woman who exercises a great authority on the king.

Cymbeline finds himself obliged to send Posthumus Leonatus, the orphan he raised, into exile in Italy (Rome). In Rome, he meets an Italian villain called Iachimo who tries to influence him and push him to be suspicious vis-à-vis his wife Imogen. He promises Posthumus that he will succeed to seduce his wife since for him all women are unchaste. In

fact, Iachimo travels to Britain to meet Imogen and test her fidelity. Unfortunately, he fails to ensnare/ convince her to have an affair with him. Nevertheless, since there is a will there is a way, Iachimo infiltrates to Imogen's room, when she is sleeping, and takes from her arm a bracelet that Posthumus Leonatus once gave her as a token of his love and fidelity to her.

Iachimo returns to Italy to meet Posthumus. The latter is deceived when Iachimo convinces him that his wife is unfaithful to him. Posthumus, when Iachmo describes Imogen's bedroom and displays Posthumus the bracelet, believes him and admits easily the idea of his wife's infidelity. Immediately, Posthumus writes to his servant in the court, Pisanio, and commands him to kill Imogen. He sends also a letter to Imogen to meet her in Wales and she insists on joining him there. Pisanio does not obey the orders of his superior and wants to save Imogen from a certain death since he knows that Imogen's unfaithfulness is just Posthumus' invention. For this reason, he decides to save her by advising her to disguise as a boy and go with Caius Lucius for a service. Pisanio lets Imogen in Wales with a potion the Queen gave her in case of illness and he returns to Britain while Cloten searches for her and decides to follow her to Wales. His intention is to rape her and kill Posthumus to take revenge.

In Wales, when Imogen is wandering and searching for food in the Welsh mountains, she gets lost. She finds refuge in a cave where her two brothers Guiderius and Arviragus, the sons of Cymbeline who are kidnapped by a lord for his unjust banishment from the court, dwell. The three men welcome her kindly and even save her from Cloten who followed her by beheading him. However, after her awakening from a deep sleep caused by a potion given to her by the queen when her brothers left the cave, she finds the Cloten's body wearing Posthumus' garments without a head near her. Imogen thinks directly to Posthumus and she loses conscience. Fortunately, Lucius finds and takes her with him giving her the name "Fidele".

When the news of the death of Imogen reaches Posthumus, he marches to Britain with the Roman army. His motives are different since he decides to fight for the British against Rome. In the battle, Posthumus defeats Iachimo, and then fights with Belarius, Guiderius and Arviragus to deliver Cymbeline from capture and lead the Romans suffer a heavy defeat. Unfortunately, Posthumus, in his Roman clothes, is taken prisoner by the British, but, at last, he is pardoned and saved by Cymbeline.

Additionally, News comes from Doctor Cornelius that the Queen died after revealing her evil plots against Cymbeline and Imogen. Iachimo in his turn confesses his villainous crime against both Posthumus and his wife Imogen. Hence, a series of confessions followed, the masks are fallen and the play ends in reconciliation. Finally, Cymbeline shows his will to make peace with Rome.

What does this above surface narrative suggest to us as regards the issue of empire is that the first thing that we can observe is that the protagonists in Cymbeline's court are divided over the issue of succession. Cymbeline and supporters stand on one side and those who support the Queen and her son Clotus on the other. Both sides have addressed Lucius who has come to reclaim a long delayed tribute to Rome she has the following words which echo the failure of the Spanish Armada and the exacerbated Nationalism of Henry V at the battle of Agincourt.

Remember, Sir, my liege,  
The Kings your ancestors, together with the natural  
bravery of your isle, which stands as  
Neptune's park, ribbed and paled with  
Rocks unscalable and roaring waters, with  
sands that will not bear your enemies'  
boats bur suck them up to th'topmast. A kind of conquest  
Caesar made here; but made not here his brag  
Of 'cam' and 'saw' and 'overcame': with shame  
That first that ever touched him – he was carried  
From off our coast, twice beaten; and his shipping  
Poor ignorant baubles—upon our terrible seas ( III.i:23).

What one can observe in such rhetorics is a superseded form of English nationalism that celebrates the insularity of the fortified Island against external intruders. This national imperium of the English that spurns the Britons involvement with Europe stands as an obstacle to the emergence of the new nationalism defended by the official partisans of the British Empire so much desired by James I. Significantly, the old Anglo-centered empire is associated with the Queen who seems to have descended from the bad witches of the fairy tales where the idea of the Jacobean type of empire union of the kingdoms of Scotland and England and Ireland are fleshed in Cymbeline and his retrieved sons at the end of the play. It is this gendered divisions about the empire that constitutes the rhetorical pattern of the play. The romance of Imogen (the mythical sister of Brutus and the latter in his turn is the mythical founder of Ancient Britain). Posthumus Leonatus, or another counterpart to James I bodes well for the future of the restored Britain. With Lucius, the mythical founder of Christianity in antique Britain blesses not only the union of two heroes, it is all their happy incidents that Shakespeare's evidence meant within the framework of the empire debate in the Jacobean period. This double conception of empire at war against equally doubled form of nationalism makes difficult not to think about revising the postcolonial theories defended for example by Bill Ashcroft et al. In the case of *Cymbeline*, we have one form of domestic imperial vision born out of the English colonial confrontation with the external and internal enemy "writing back" (Ashcroft1. B et al, 1989) to the emergent form of the Euro-centered Empire of peace defended by James I.

The same rhetorical pattern can be observed at the surface level as regards the debate of Empire and how it should relate to domestic/ national empire and the external empires surrounding it. William Shakespeare's last play *The Tempest* opens with a storm, which strikes a ship carrying Alonso, Ferdinand, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, Stephano, and Trinculo, who are on their way to Italy after coming back from the wedding of Alonso's

daughter, Claribel, to the prince of Tunis in Africa. Miranda and Prospero stand on the shore of their island, looking at the spectacle of a shipwreck caused by Ariel at the behest of Prospero. Miranda asks her father to do anything he can to help the poor souls in the ship. Prospero assures her that everything will be all right. He thinks that time has come for Miranda to learn more about herself by telling the lengthy story of their past; a story he has often started to tell before but never finished. In this confession, little mention is made to the mother, Prospero becomes a sort of surrogate mother.

This story turns around Prospero, the Duke of Milan, who has devoted his time to learning in his library, leaving the government in the hands of his trusted brother, Antonio. However, the latter conspired with Alonso, the King of Naples, and ultimately usurped Prospero's position. Then, they set Prospero and his baby daughter, Miranda, adrift in a boat, and they eventually found themselves marooned on a strange island. Thanks to the old Gonzalo and God's providence, the two survived. On the island, Prospero is served by Ariel and Caliban. Ariel is a spirit that he has magically freed from a tree to which he is wedged by the witch Sycorax, while the native slave "Caliban" is the son of the witch Sycorax who was banished from Argiers, because of her evil practices. The mother is once again excluded to leave the way to the rule of the fathers as the husbands of the whole island. This falls in line with colonial plantation and husbands.

Prospero and his daughter arrived on the island where they lived for twelve years. Prospero's good fortune sends his enemies his way, and then he has raised the tempest in order to make things right with them. Therefore, he reveals to his daughter that he, himself, orchestrated the shipwreck. The passengers of the shipwrecked ship fortunately survived. Ferdinand, the son of Alonso, is among the survivors who are brought to Prospero by the magical singing of Ariel. Prospero ultimately confronts his brother and Alonso, and he reveals his identity as the rightful Duke of Milan. He even comforts Alonso, that Ferdinand is alive

and well. At the end, Prospero decides to abandon his magic and releases Ariel and white keeping Caliban as “this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine”, pardons his enemies. Like all romances of Shakespeare that end happily, a marriage takes place in the island as a performance of reconciliation among all the characters. What can be observed from the surface of this romance is the writing back of empire of Spain, criticizing its model as a cargo-cult. It is also in this play that indetermination of the setting for the future of empire looks both to the East and the West. The very character Trinculo evokes Dido and Aeneas, Mediterranean archetypes while speaking of Indians. This dualism will be developed later in this research.

## **The sources of Shakespeare’s plays**

In this part, we try to put Shakespeare’s plays within the context of the European Renaissance, more precisely, within the context of the cultural and literary traditions of the Italian Renaissance by considering the influence of the classical culture on Shakespeare. Since pre-modern English dramatists had adapted both classical and modern Italian materials to suit their dramatic purposes and Shakespeare as an exception. Therefore, his comedies, romances and tragedies were constructed on the basis of different sources and different origins especially from Italianate plays and novellas.

Like other Shakespeare’s plays, *The Merchant of Venice* is inspired by some texts and works prior to it. For example, it found one source of its inspiration in Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*. The following passages from the inspiring text and the inspired text can be considered as the evidence of influence. They describe one whole scene in *The Merchant of Venice* that is taken directly from Marlowe’s “The moon sleeps with Endymion every day,” becomes Portia’s “Peace ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion.” (Bloom, 2010:10).

Another source for *The Merchant of Venice* is considered to be a sixteenth-century Italian novel, *Pecorone (The Dunces)* by Ser Giovanni Fiorentino. In addition to these, Shakespeare's borrowing extends to another source, another Italian novel Masuccio's fifteenth-century *Novellino*.

The main narrative source for *Othello* was the seventh novella in the third decade of Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*. This collection of tales, first published in Venice in 1566, represented a raw material that a number of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists were appealed to in their literary productions. Norman Sanders affirms that Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* may suggest that Shakespeare was fascinated by it and that is why the latter provided the source for Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, performed at court at the end of 1604. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine whether Shakespeare used the Italian original or the French translation of Gabriel Chappuys, published in his *Premier Volume des Cents Excellentes Nouvelles* (1584) (Sanders. N, 2003:03). Indeed, the influence of Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* on Shakespeare's *Othello* is inescapable, the principal characters in Cinthio's story only Desdemona is named; Othello is called simply 'Capitano Moro' or 'Moro', Cassio is nominated as a 'Capo di Squadra' (Captain or low-ranking officer), and Iago is an 'Alfiero' (Ensign or standard-bearer). The Moor is an eminent soldier highly appreciated and respected in Venice for his fine qualities what made Desdemona falls in love with him regardless his looks. Despite her family's refusal of their union, she weds the Moor and they live happily in Venice for some time (Sanders. N, 2003:04).

The plot of the events and the setting of both Cinthio's novella and Shakespeare's *Othello* are quite alike. In both plays, Venice, provided the social and military context in which the characters originate. Besides, the garrisoned island of Cyprus, where the principals are isolated and the personal tragedy develops, are two geographical locations where the events took place in both works (Ibid: 08). In addition, Evil, ruse, cunning, doubt and jealousy

are the dominating vices that did not only reign in the two works, yet they even determined the succession of their events. To build his play, Shakespeare recalled other aspects from his readings. In fact, some remarkable affinities can be noticed especially in the character of Othello, his military and personal life with Plutarch's *Life of Cato Utican*. In the story of Procris and Cephalus in George Pettie's *A Petite Palace of Pettie his Pleasure* (1576) (Sanders. N, 2003:09). In addition to Plutarch' work, there are some significant resemblances between Othello's adventures and the portrayal of John Leo's career given by John Prory in the preface to his translation of Leo's *The History and Description of Africa* (1600). Shakespeare also noticeably used Philemon Holland's translation of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (1601) to inject a dose of some exotic allusions to Othello's speeches: the cannibals, anthropophagi, hollow caves, mines of sulphur, gum-dropping Arabian trees, chrysolite, mandragora, colloquintida; the movement of the Pontic and the Propontic and the Hellespont waters; witchcraft. Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and Apuleius's *Golden Ass*. (Sanders. N, 2003:10). What can we say about this variety of sources that inspired at varying degrees the production of performance of *Othello, The Moor of Venice*? The first thing is that Shakespeare's contemporary audience was certainly well-versed and well-read in these sources that travelled from the confines of the cultural empire of Venice and Italian regions among other goods of consumption. What the same audience must have expected is the type of variation Shakespeare would play on them to render the major issues of that critical moment of transition from the Tudor to the Stuart Dynasty. The diverse sources that we have identified clearly shows that Othello was performed in an intertextual milieu whose consideration needs to be taken into account to get across to its meaning making for the Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences.

In his seminal book, Said writes that this intertextuality of texts belonging to the imperial tradition develop a type of "radical realism", that makes a short shift of the outside



reference. In the case of Shakespeare producing and performing plays at the moment that the empire is still in the budding stage, this claim is too much to fit in to the period of Victorian Empire when Western authors wrote from a position of power. The case is different with Shakespeare, though the signs of the penetration and infiltration of “western culture” by imperial prejudice already making their encroachment by inflecting the conventional aesthetics of black and white, Petrarchism, romance, comedy into a racial direction. This is at least what Shakespeare did to Cinthio by building imperial polarities between the Self and the Other that were initially those in Cinthio’s work of the impurity of the other woman.

*Antony and Cleopatra* is not spared from this process of appropriation for imperial use and abuse. It portrays romanticize historical events, the reason why Shakespeare appealed to existing sources in order to depict these events in his play. He mainly used Sir Thomas North’s (1579) translation of *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans and Life of Marcus Antonius and the Comparison of Demetrius with Antonius* by the Greek biographer Plutarch (Harold Bloom and Neil Heims, 2008: 47-48). Sara Munson Deats insisted on this fact by affirming that “Plutarch remains, at least, a source and, at most, an influence by negation. For, he gives support to Shakespeare’s decision to move in a different direction” (2005:161). Harold Bloom and Neil go further to affirm that Plutarch was not the only source of Shakespeare’s play. Hence, Shakespeare gives evidences of being influenced by Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Legend of Good Women* (1380), where the author gave a portrait of Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen, who sacrificed herself for love. In addition to *The Tragedie of Antonie*, translated in 1590 by Mary Herbert and Robert Garnier’s *Marc Antoine*, while Samuel Daniel’s *The Tragedie of Cleopatra*, that was published in 1593 and revised in 1607 proves signs of having been influenced by Shakespeare’s play (Ibid: 49). In addition to all these sources, it is undeniable to affirm that “Marlowe’s *Dido Queene of Carthage* . . . offered the most likely example for the Shakespearian blend in *Antony and Cleopatra* of the Virgilian

heroic and the Ovidian erotic” (Reuben Brower cited in Sara M.D, 2005:165). The dialogic relation that obtains between *Antony and Cleopatra* and its huge number of intertexts both by male and female authors and that constitute the intertextual milieu in which it is performed and consumed is of the order of hidden polemics and dialogue. As presumably indicated with regards to *Othello*, at work in Shakespeare’s romance is a ritual of expulsion and the affirmation of the purity. The affirmation of the purity whether in the times of Elizabeth nationalism ( Elizabeth did not hesitate to order Moors out of the Kingdom) or that of the Jacobean British nationalism was both out of the anxiety that the periphery of the empire exerted on insular Elizabethan and the cosmopolite Britain of James I. In any cases, Antony is the one emperor that England and Britain should shun because of his preference of the “fair Octavia” for the alien Cleopatra, whose future progeny can bring pollution to the real bloodline. Once again, Shakespeare is not that confident propagandist for empire. At best, he is a reluctant imperialist afraid of the impurity of the other woman.

Shakespeare was perceived by historians and his contemporaries as a borrower *par excellence*. His works, including his plays, are inspired by ideas, thoughts as well as by the works of his contemporaries and even by the Greek and the Roman antiquity. Since our focus will be put on one of his late plays *Cymbeline*, it is convenient to refer to many affinities, whether at the level of the plot or the setting and even the characters. Hence, the works that attracted the imagination of Shakespeare and motivated his inspiration are various, but some of these works represented the raw material on which his artistic works are built. If we consider the setting of the play and the main characters’ names, we find that Shakespeare used the *revised* version of Holinshed’s *Chronicles* that were published in 1587. In Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, the King of Britain Cymbeline sounds positively with *Kymbeline*, or *Cimbeline the sonne of Theomantius*, a historical figure who was the ruler of Britain 33B.C to 2 A.D. (Maxwell. J C, 2009: XV). In addition to

Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, many elements in Blenerhasset's "Complaint of Guidericus" in the second part of the *Mirroure for Magistrates* (1578), as well as in Higgins's *Mirroure for Magistrates* (1587) are echoed in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

Since Shakespeare in many of his plays appealed to Italy, the story of *Cymbeline* includes also some Italianate element especially in the wager scene when Posthumus sent Iachmo from Italy to Britain to test Imogen's faithfulness. Hence in this case, scholars judged that Shakespeare borrowed from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (Ibid:XVI). It was written in 1353 but its English translation was not published until 1603.

It is also said that the anonymous English play *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* that was performed in court in 1582 and printed in 1589 is another source of inspiration for Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. Hence, it exercised a strong influence on it that can be shown mainly at the beginning of the play. *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* starts with the gods Venus (love) and Fortuna (fortune) discussing over which one has more power over the other. Jupiter intervenes to set their debate by offering a solution, which is to test their power according to a situation of their couples of lovers. This scene is reflected in Iachimo who has done his best to seduce Imogen as a test of her fidelity to Posthumus.

The previous parallels between *The Rare Triumphs* and *Cymbeline* do not satisfy Shakespeare's appetite of borrowing. Therefore, in the two plays, we can draw other more affinities mainly in the scene when Posthumus is decided to be banished suite à his marriage to Imogen, the King's daughter, against the will of the King Cymbeline. In *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, Posthumus stands for Hermione, a young man who falls in love with Fedelia, the daughter of Duke Phizanties. The latter does not consider him as a rightful husband to his daughter Fedelia. This ultimately caused his banishment (Maxwell. J C, 2009: XXIV).

The influence of *The Triumphs of Love and Fortune* does not stop in those above-mentioned scenes. In fact, in the scene of the cave, Imogen disguises and dressed as a man and gives herself another name Fidele. The latter is inspired from Fedelia, another character in *The Triumphs of Love and Fortune*. Moreover, what is striking is that both Hermione and Posthumus were orphans who were raised by their future fathers in law (Ibid:XXVI)

Shakespeare, in *Cymbeline*, does not only borrow the plot and the names of the major characters, he goes also to pick up some expressions from *The Triumphs of Love and Fortune* and utilise them in his play. Indeed, in the former play, Hermione is referred to as “the jewel of some price” by Fedelia, his lover while Imogen qualifies Posthumus as being the “jewel in the world”. To cut it short, we may say that Shakespeare used *The Triumph of Love and Fortune* as an important source for his play *Cymbeline*.

In his article “The Narrative Sources of *The Tempest*”, J. M. Nosworthy comments on *The Tempest* by saying that it is an amalgam of three narrative sources combined by Shakespeare in a very artistic way. These sources are Virgil’s *Aeneids*, William Thomas’s *Historie of Italie* and Christopher Marlowe’s *Dida, The Queen of Carthage* (1948:282-3). New historicists said that Virgil is the source of Shakespeare’s inspiration in *The Tempest* since the events and the actions of Virgil’s play are similar to that of Shakespeare’s play. Moreover, both the plays took place between Tunis (Barbary) and Naples (Italy) i.e. in the Mediterranean region (Wilson. R, 1997:333).

Shakespeare’s work is derived from other different sources rather than the ones aforementioned. *The Tempest* embodies a number of elements, which existed a long time before Shakespeare was born like fairy tales, myths and folk tales. The play shares a number of features even with Dante Alighieri’s *Commedia dell’Arte* (1472) or *Divine Comedy*.

David Pinnington affirms, in his critical essay on *The Tempest*, that two contemporary pieces of writing which Shakespeare would have known are analogous to the subject matter of *The Tempest*. These are Montaigne's essay *Of Cannibals* (1580); the relevant source/literary influence on Shakespeare's play which was translated into English by John Forio in 1603, and the pamphlet published in 1610, *A Discovery of the Bermudas* otherwise called "the Ile of Devils" (2001:08).

At last, we may say that Shakespeare did not only borrow most of his plays from the foreign sources, he even set them in the foreign geographies and settings. In other words, the variety of sources that enlarged Shakespeare's horizon to write his plays has also contributed in setting them in diverse and distant locations.

## **Shakespeare's Imperial Geographies**

Both *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* are set in Renaissance Venice, the Italian multicultural and cosmopolitan *city-state*. The setting is of a paramount importance in our analysis since the latter is concerned with the study of history. It portrays the environment that shapes and determines mostly the characters and their relationships as well as their actions. 'Venice', the strategic place where Shakespeare sets his plays, is the state known throughout Europe as the *Serinissemia*. For Shakespearean England, it represented a place of paradox where two opposed realities coexist in the sense that it was comparatively more developed, but in its core, it is spoiled and corrupted. Venice stands, at the same time, for the 'idealized myth' and the exaggerated 'dark' reality (Nostbakken. Faith, 2000: 32-34). Nevertheless, Venice is, by considering its history, one of the cradles of the Renaissance. It was the state that rooted deeply in the traditional life of its citizens. However, it was also considered as the place that planted and nurtured the new challenging ideals that questioned the traditional paradigms and welcomed the new ones.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, we notice that both characters and actions shift from the central city of Venice to the remote space of Belmont i.e. from the center to the periphery. Venice is portrayed in the play as a center of dynamic trade, commercial and monetary exchanges and established public justice contrasting to Belmont, which is a calm private place where everything takes time to move. In this context, Sigurd Burckhardt depicts the two sites Venice and Belmont, respectively, as “the realm of law and the realm of love, the public sphere and the private sphere” (Qtd in Richard Horwich, 1977: 191). The interests of the two differ significantly. Venice’s focus is to settle order and to maintain justice, while Belmont’s preoccupation is to afford a secure and romantic environment for the lovers (ibid).

The same setting repeats itself in *Othello*. However, the events of the play shift from the centre ‘Venice’ to the peripheral remote island of Cyprus. The latter, according to Alvin Kernan, is what may be called a ‘liminal space’, a space ‘inbetween’, or the threshold (Quoted in Platt Peter. G, 2001: 138). The two places, Cyprus and Venice, reveal two distinct worlds. Kernan explains that “Out at the far edge are the Turks, barbarism, disorder, and amoral distractive powers; closer and more familiar is Venice, *the City*, order, law and reason” (Ibid). Just as in *The Merchant of Venice*, the movement is an outward movement to Venice. That is to say, reaction is displaced from Venice to a place far removed from the center. The movement of *Othello* is from Venice to Cyprus, “from collective life to the life of the solitary individual” (Quoted in Platt Peter. G, 2001: 138). More importantly, what Shakespeare reveals in his plays about Venice is a site of ideological conflicts. These conflicts are set in Venice, but they are displaced to other spaces far better for their development or resolution. One might ask whether Shakespeare is not purposefully letting out the secret of his plots. Through his wink to his audience, one can guess that for Shakespeare, Venice stands for England or Britain. If he resorts to allegory, it is because these two plays deal with sensitive issues.

In fact, Venice was in a perpetual state of alteration that, according to Contarini's account, "every day altering and changing according to the tides of the sea" (Quoted in Platt, 2001: 131). This is true on a literal level, for the Venetian state that was undergoing a gradual change in the way of life that came as a result of the Renaissance. Therefore, Shakespeare's account of Venice in the two plays is but a displaced picture about the Imperial Britain. Shakespeare's Venice is set at the threshold, a liminal place. Just as England and Britain, it is on the point of shifting from a traditional economic and socio-political system to a pre-modern system. The displacement in setting can be regarded as an imperial projection reflecting both domestic and foreign issues.

The little Republic of Venice hosted different peoples coming from different parts of the world, especially the Moors comparing to other European cities. Venice was an open, democratic, equivalent to the pre-modern England and Britain. The presence of aliens and foreigners in this disguised imperial England/Britain was a result of its encounter with the Other.

It offered the "perfect setting for the action for Shylock and Othello because it was the place where the various sorts of men could freely mingle, and it was known to the world over as the most tolerant city of its time" (Bloom, A, & Jaffa, H, 1981: 14). Judging by the sixteenth and seventeenth century standards, any other European city cannot match Venice when it came to tolerating the 'other'. While England, France, and Spain chased, or at least marginalized, Jewish, black and Muslim populations from their lands, Venice tolerated them all and opened its doors wide for the Other .

Othello, a Moorish fighter, and Shylock, a Jewish merchant, are perfect example aliens who live, work, prosper; and even marry in Venice. The latter was known as a democratic, and open, Republic that afforded "foreigners" and "strangers" freedom to work, trade, or join its army. Though a Moor, and that is to say a foreigner, Othello rises to the status of General

of the Venetian army that was destined to fight the Turks. The same is true about Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. As a Jew, he is portrayed as influential in the trading affairs especially in money-lending business. As Felix Gilbert writes, Venice was a place where everyone could freely live according to his or her own convictions and religious beliefs in which peace was their only pursuit and considered to be their “highest goal” (1987: 37). However, Shakespeare shows the other or seamy side of the picture by undermined the racial and anti-Semitic prejudices of Venice and its heterotopia, imperial Britain.

From a historicist perspective, Shakespeare’s double-sided picture of Venice speaks for contradiction in imperial England or Britain. In history books, pre-modern Venice is often blamed for playing off political rivals in order to gain a place among the empires of the time. The same holds true for England and Britain. For example, Venice sided with other European states constituting the Holy League in its war against the Turks in the 1560s, but as soon as the war was over, it renewed its economic and political contacts with the Ottomans. Imperial Business was for Venice of a paramount importance. It demanded a pragmatic approach in order to thrive. Tudor England and Jacobean Britain practised the same pragmatic approach in its empire building since a small case was made of morality and ethnics. Under the rule of Queen Elizabeth I, Tudor England put aside as under the carpet the question of religion by making contacts with both the Turks and the Moors, but as soon as the Spanish threat was over, the English/British and the Moor/Turk relations cooled. When James I enthroned in 1603, he dramatically changed Britain’s imperial alliances in favor of Spain.

Shakespeare’s *Anthony and Cleopatra* is set between two different worlds, “polar oppositions”, as Lyam Ortmeier claims that in this play “Shakespeare confronts his readers and audiences with two radically, categorically opposed worlds” (2007:10). The events of the play shift from Egypt to Rome then from Rome to Egypt and back to the same place. “Egypt is associated with the Nile [...] visualized as the source both of fruitfulness and of carrion-



eating insects, harvest and deadly serpents”, writes John Wilders (Quoted in Ortmeier Lyam, 2007:10). Here, life in Egypt is described in an ambivalent paradoxical way where excess is considered to be the rule; excess and exoticism are marked traits of Egypt. Hence, this makes from it exotic. In this context Lyam Ortmeier states, “on the North African coast of the Mediterranean, everything “o’erflows the measure” (2007:10). Excess is the rule and remains far from marking a modest exception, as Enobarbus and Maecenas’s dialogue below shows that this excess is viewed as monstrosity by contrast to normality represented by imperial Rome.

**Enobarbus**

we did sleep the day out of countenance  
And made the night light with drinking.

**Maecenas**

Eight wild boars roasted whole at a breakfast,  
and but twelve persons there. Is this true?

**Enobarbus**

This was as but as a fly by an eagle. We had  
Much more monstrous matter of feast, which worthily  
Deserved noting (II.i.51).

Harold Bloom and Neil Heims (2008) show that Egypt is portrayed to be the antithesis of Imperial Rome. The former stands for all what is sensual, irrational (life of pleasure), lustful and tempting, while the latter conveys all what is virtuous, rational, vigorous life. In the play, Antony, the Roman triumvir, is caught in the trap of the seducing Queen of Egypt who places him between two distinct opposite worlds without belonging to any. As Bloom and Heims put it:

Rome or Egypt, virtue or vice, the active life or the life of pleasure, the Antony of the past or the sybarite of the present: these are the great antinomies between which his will has vacillated and swung and the movement has been, to a large extent, the movement of the play (2008:194).

Nicole Williams, in her article “Who is't can read a woman?” (1998), affirms that one of the *Cymbeline*’s most challenging and problematic features is its setting. Many critics have addressed the issue of temporal and spatial settings. In other words, why Shakespeare has decided to set his play in the reign of Cymbeline and the beginning of Imperial Rome.

Nicole Williams refers to the critic Robin Moffet who, in “*Cymbeline* and the Nativity” (1962), makes an association between Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. For Williams, the choice of setting is motivated by the fact that the source of its inspiration, i.e. Holinshed's book shows the correspondence between the birth of Cymbeline and that of Jesus Christ.

Historians were not sure of *Cymbeline*'s date of performance. However, the commonly accepted dates for Shakespeare's romances are the dates given by Sir Edmund Kerchever Chambers (1866-1954). We learn that, *The Winter's Tale* was performed in 1610-11, and *The Tempest* in 1611, while *Cymbeline* was performed in 1609-10. If *Cymbeline*'s performance was a public one, it would have been published before December 1609 when the theatres reopened their doors, after they have been closed since August 1608 because of The Bubonic Plague that struck London.

In his book entitled *The Annotated Shakespeare Three Volumes in one: The Comedies, The Histories, Sonnets and Other Poems, The Tragedies and Romances*, Rowse. A. L (1988) considers that *Cymbeline* takes place in a “remote fairy-tale world” and the story itself “is put into the framework of a conflict between Rome and ancient Britain, over the payment of tribute” (1988: 2264). However, she does not go into the implication of setting the play at the beginning of the Imperial Rome, that is at the time of the rise of the first Roman Emperor, Augustus. It is the association of Cymbeline's reign with Augustus' rise as Roman Emperor. Thus, we can see the parallel between Imperial Rome and Imperial Britain.

The events' shift from Britain to Rome is evoked in the story. This can be seen via Posthumus who has been banished by the King Cymbeline from Britain to Rome (Italy) because of his marriage with his only daughter without his consent.

The setting of *Cymbeline* is very significant since it puts Britain and Roman Empire at the same level even though the Roman Empire was the most powerful empire, i.e. Jacobean Britain is even seen as the successor to Rome at the end of the play.

Shakespeare uses the name “Britain” instead of England to point to the imperial ambition of Britain at the time of James I. The imperial project that James I nourished and that Shakespeare projects in the plays is seen as a restoration of the mythical inland-based empire of “Britannia”.

In *Cymbeline*, Rome and England are portrayed as political rivals. Conflict characterizes their relationship until the final scene when the two strong powers come to an agreement. This agreement spares Britain from paying tribute to Imperial Rome. This twisting turn in the drama looks like a recognition by Imperial Rome of the right of contemporary Britain and ancient Britain not only as an equal empire but also as a legitimate successor of Rome.

Shakespeare regards Rome or the Roman Empire as a model of empire for Shakespeare's Jacobean Britain that was emerging as an absolute kingdom. This kingdom, for centuries, tried harder to protect its national borders from any foreign invasions as well as to enlarge its territories beyond its borders as the important strategy to satisfy its imperial aspirations and cope with the socio-political atmosphere of Europe at that time.

In British mythology, particularly in the time of Shakespeare, Rome was perceived as the birthplace of Brutus, the founder of Britain is the grandson of Aeneas, founder of Rome. This historical evidence fortified Britain's mythical relation with Rome. The kinship connection between one of the strongest empire in the world before its collapse and the new emerging power, Britain, is described in *Chronicle History of England* that Richard Grafton wrote around 1569 where he affirms: “When Brute...first entred this Island and named it Briteyne:

there beginneth mine History of this Realme” (1569:31). For the English, by being represented in terms of its past kinship ties with Britain, Rome served as a model for England’s present and future (Kahn. C, 2002: 4). Hence, we can state that *Cymbeline* represents this kind of relation between Rome and England and the British aspiration to figure in the imperial map of Shakespeare’s time.

The play shows the tension between the empire of Rome and the would-be empire of Britain. While the former starts to degenerate, the latter begins to flourish. In this case, Shakespeare wants to associate the old classical world and its legacy with the emerging new Britain. In other words, Britain emerged from the ashes of the Roman Empire. In projecting the real image of Britain, Shakespeare shows up as a King’s Man. That is to say, as an advocate of James I’s ambition to restore a lost land-based empire comprising England, Scotland, Wales and to some extent Ireland. Just as Rome rose from the ashes of Troy, Britain as having its origins in Rome through its mythical founder Brutus. It is in the sense that Shakespeare follows up Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

*The Tempest* follows the same imperial Virgilian pattern of travelling from the East to the West. The play was written about (1611-1612), first published in the first folio 1923. It was performed in November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1611 at the Whitehall.

Even though, we cannot draw an exact context in which *The Tempest* was written, we can argue that it is the by-product of its immediate circumstances. John Bender puts it in “The Day of *The Tempest*” that Shakespeare’s last play’s performance in November the 1<sup>st</sup> represents the Hallowmas or All Saints’ Day”. This date marks the beginning of winter, which was always associated with festivities and celebrations. John Bender adds also that the performance of *The Tempest* corresponds to James’ first return to his residence in the Whitehall from the sports of the Summer Royal Progress and the autumn hunts. This return was always celebrated by a play (Bender. J. B, 1980:237-8).

In “Voyage to Tunis”, Wilson Richard relates *The Tempest* to the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Catherine, daughter of Grand Duke Ferdinand of Tuscany. The latter wanted Milan to regain its independence from the uprising of Duke Philip II of Spain. In 1611, the prince returned to Tuscany for a bride and a week later *The Tempest* was performed (Richard. Wilson, 1997:339-40). The second performance of *The Tempest* in Shakespeare’s life time was done before King James I at Whitehall in 1613 in celebration of the marriage of the king’s daughter, princess Elizabeth, to Frederick Elector Palatine, a protestant prince (John.G. Demaray quoted in Lisa Hopkins, 2008:03). Lisa Hopkins (2008) argues that the immediate circumstance that pushed Shakespeare to write his play was not the marriage of the princess. Moreover, it is inspired by the shipwreck and the experience of the English sea adventurers, Sir George Somers, Sir Thomas Gates, William Strockey, Sylvester Jurdon and Richard Rich off the Coast of Bermudas (Bermoothes) on their voyage to establish Jamestown colony in Virginia on July 25<sup>th</sup> , 1609 (2008:34).

Many events took place before and after the performance of *The Tempest*. These events can be cited as the following: the English invasion of Ireland, then the Americas and the establishment of the colonies and plantations there. Thus, the broader context of the play coincided with the spirit of building a great empire that was growing in Britain. In other words, the context of *The Tempest* is a strictly a colonial context. John Dakakis sustains the following:

The timing of that first performance of *The Tempest* was crucial: It came after the English invasion of Ireland but before the colonization of New World, after Smith’s arrival in Virginia but before the beginning of the tobacco economy, and after the first contacts with Indians but before full-scale warfare against them. In this historical moment, the English were encountering “other” peoples and delineating the boundary between civilization and savagery. The social constructions of both those terms were dynamically developing in three sites-Ireland, Virginia, and New England (1992: 893).

This imperial background against which *The Tempest* was performed did not prevent Shakespeare from referring to Algiers, Tunis, Naples and Milan. Indeed, these geographical

places can add to the play much importance. The idea that is expressed does not solely look to the westward to the emerging colonies but also westward to the Mediterranean, as the birthplace of Empire. This double or triple perspective on empire building in *The Tempest* is summarized by Jerry Brotton as follows:

The presence of a more definable Mediterranean geography which runs throughout the play, and which emanates outward from disputation over contemporary Tunis and classical Carthage, suggests that *The Tempest* is much more of a politically and geographically bifurcated play in the negotiation between its Mediterranean and Atlantic contexts than critics have recently been prepared to concede (1998:24).

It is often claimed that Shakespeare removes his settings to distant places in order to escape censorship. Admittedly, this claim has some truth. However, we would like to add that this shifting of geographies either eastward or westward expresses the reality of political ambition to empire building an ambition carried both by the Queen Elizabeth I and more precisely by her successor James I. This ambition has given birth to what Nabil Matar calls the first Triangular Trade, a Triangular Trade preceding the Atlantic Triangular Trade based on slave-trading. So, if the space in *The Tempest* moves from Milan and Naples to Algiers, and Tunis before moving again from Tunis to Milan and Naples through Algiers with the concomitant projection to the New World and Colonial Ireland, it is because this poetics is determined by both a socio-economic and politic reality of an emergent empire.

No matter the motivation that pushed Shakespeare to produce *The Tempest*, it remains closely concerned with the issue of Empire building both in the Mediterranean basin, in the New World as well as in Ireland. The imperial geographies shift according to the information with which the reader approaches the play.

To conclude, since Shakespeare is called the spirit of his age, in the following chapters, we will try to confirm that through his plays, he may faithfully portray the late Elizabethan and the early Jacobean periods. This cannot be achieved without making

reference to two theories that we have chosen which are the Postcolonial and the New Historicist theories.

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## **PART TWO**

### **Shakespeare and the Western Empires**

It was quite apparent that by the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century the Spanish, English and French as well as the Dutch and the Portuguese, created a war atmosphere over trade and the possessions in the New World.

(Hart. Jonathan, 2003: 89).

We are fascinated by the socio-political context, and our very premise depends upon the connection between it and literary productions. Since our crucial concern is William Shakespeare's dramatic works like *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) as well as *The Tempest* (1611); thus, we will consider these works in accordance with the very historical circumstances of Europe at that time. In other words, we will associate the aforementioned plays with the period when they have been written both to satisfy the entertaining thirst of the Renaissance English audience as well as to shed light on what the English were experiencing at that precise moment of history.

As the starting quotation indicates, the period that we seek to put under scrutiny was so complex since it was a period of metamorphosis in England and in the majority of the European powers. Many events had shaped this era beginning from the end of the Middle Ages that opened the wide doors for new revolutionary flourishing ideals of the Renaissance to the discovery of The New World.

Europe was the cradle in which new secular thinking grew up and developed since the wave of the Renaissance coming from Italy reached the shores of the other European regions. The intense travel for the sake of learning and discovery had provoked competitions and rivalries between the strong European powers like Spain, Portugal, England, France, Netherlands, and Italy. This scenery was copied directly in the works of Art at that time. Since Shakespeare can be taken as a testimony since he witnessed this period, we will try to testify how he

(Shakespeare) tried, by his inked-feather and a bunch of actors, and succeeded in drawing a European colourful picture of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

## **Chapter Four: Shakespeare and Italy**

In *Piers Penniless* (1592), Thomas Nashe described Italy in very dramatic expressions: ‘O Italy, the academy of manslaughter, the sporting place of murder, and the apothecary–shop of poison for all nations (Nashe. Thomas, 1985: 83). While in *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), he portrays it as a land that infects a traveler by exposing him to different vices as “the art of atheism, the art of epicurizing, the art of whoring, the art of poisoning, and art of sodomitry” (Nashe. Thomas, 1985:345). Therefore, in the present chapter, we will try to discover how Shakespeare portrayed Italy in mainly his Italianate plays. In trying to do so, it is important to focus on the Roman Empire and Venice as the modern Italian City-State.

### **Shakespeare and the Roman Empire**

In the second century of the Christian Æra, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valor. The gentle but powerful influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with decent reverence: the Roman senate appeared to possess the sovereign authority, and devolved on the emperors all the executive powers of government. During a happy period of more than fourscore years, the public administration was conducted by the virtue and abilities of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines. (Gibbon. Edward, 2001: 29).

In the above quotation, Edward Gibbon tried to give a good image of the civilized Roman Empire and its grandeur. Unfortunately, for many reasons, this strong Empire weakened and disintegrated, giving the chance to another era, which was the Middle Ages, to dominate Europe for centuries. However, people, tired of religious supremacy, started to question this era and became nostalgic to revive the classical World of Greece and Rome. Hence, in fact, the wind of change had blown and the ideals of the Renaissance landed on mostly all the European nations.

The Renaissance was considered as an age of departure from the Dark Middle Ages to a modern European civilization. Its striking ideals sought to liberate humanity from the yokes

of the dominant conformist Christian monotheism by going to the past to revive the secular world of the Greco-Roman antiquity.

For the Renaissance thinkers, the waves of the Renaissance ideals paved the way for Europe to witness and live an episode of a golden age. In *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), Jacob Burckhardt has described the Renaissance to be "the discovery of the world and of man" (1951:104) or simply "the revival of antiquity" (1951:171). In addition, the age of the Renaissance and the age of 'discovery', 'rebirth' and 'revival' were used interchangeably.

Europe's tendency and efforts to venture and discover the Other World were undertaken. In other words, the European hegemony intensified just after the decline of the legendary Roman Empire. The Renaissance, then, changed the course of the history of Europe. It did not concern only rebirth in aesthetics, politics, architecture and so forth but it sowed the seeds of European colonial expansionism and hegemony mainly on the detriment of the non-European.

This Age meant a lot for Europe and for the world as well; it set up the basis of the world system. Immanuel Wallerstein's investigation in *The Modern World System Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (1974) explains how the modern world that is divided into two entities, the *metropole* and the *periphery* functions. In other expression, the *metropole*, which is the centre, incorporated and exploited the *periphery* by retaining unequal exchanges as well as by imposing a particular pattern of specialization. This metropole- periphery relation justify the underdevelopment and dependency of the periphery (1974: 297).

Accordingly, as European nations; Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and England owed a reconnaissance to the Renaissance since the latter had changed their destiny especially in terms of its overseas expansion and its contribution in developing its colonial enterprise. Indeed, even though England, as the aforementioned European nations, experienced its overseas expansion thanks to the Renaissance stimuli, it is inconvenient to admit the fact that

during the Renaissance England pushed forward colonial enterprise on a large scale. However, if it is compared to the other European nations as Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands, England's colonial power was just germinating.

After nearly sixty-five years' conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, the first English attempt to establish a colonial settlement in Virginia culminated in failure. In this concern, Jeffrey Knapp explained the England's colonial belatedness especially when Columbus's first letter reporting his discoveries reached all the corners of the continent by 1494 but it had not found an echo from the part of the British and never found an English publisher. Therefore, Knapp explained that the first references to the New World printed in England occur not in economic, political, or even geographical tracts but in imaginative literature (1994:18-22).

When considering the trembling history of the English colonialism, Knapp is obviously right to admit that during the Renaissance, England was "an empire nowhere". According to him, the empire was fashioned only in the imaginary cartography of English literary writers like Thomas More, Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare. Hence, they portrayed history in a way to compensate these discrepancies in their writings.

Even though they were preceded by the Iberian countries (Spaniards and the Portuguese) and the Dutch in the colonization of the non-European lands, the English were motivated to make an empire of their own by a variety of cultural representations. Under the aegis of Tudor absolutism, English navigators, cartographers, chroniclers, poets, and dramatists were all involved in the construction of nationalist and imperialist discourses and propaganda. Such projects of empire-building were based on literary imagination, spiritualism, and advertising discourses rather than following the aforementioned greatest colonial powers on their footsteps.

Obviously, the British tendency to build an empire through literary representations was a proof that England failed to venture and establish earlier an empire overseas and to compete with the other continental empires and rivalries (Knapp, 1994:7).

Some historians claimed that the idea of establishing an empire was initiated from the Tudor era. In the sense that, just after the Act of Supremacy 1534, the parliamentary statute declared England to be an empire and Henry VIII as the supreme head of both the Anglican Church and the state. This implied the assertion of the English national sovereignty by excluding the papal intervention and influence in England. Unfortunately, Tudor England was just thought to be an empire only in name. In other words, the real form of English empire that stretched beyond European borders began to emerge and then take shape after the succession of the Stuarts to the throne of England.

Really, England was in a dilemma of in-betweenness. However, the rising desire to establish a strong empire from overseas expansion like that of the Spaniards and that of the other strong European nations collides with its potentials to do so. In Other words, the prevailing conditions and circumstances of the small isolated island at that time did not respond to these aspirations and expectations.

Jeffrey Knapp positioned England to be the antithesis of the Spaniards. In this context, he affirmed, "Spain, Empire, and gold on the one hand and England, island, and poetry on the other," (1994:7-9). This helped to make many of the English "more isolationist, more absorbed in their island as the trifling material index of England's spiritual power" (Ibid). Consequently, England's troubled colonialism only completed a larger picture of national isolation, where "the English could see their island as much excluding the world as being excluded by it" (1994:4).

Following in the footsteps of the other emerging powerful states in early modern Europe, Elizabethan England felt the urgency of fashioning a new national and cultural identity. Writing about England was the most "ideologically demanding project" that gained even the Queen's encouragement in the field of aesthetics and cultural representation.

In spite of the great ambition for identity-making, England began its national project with "a sense of barbarism, with the recognition of the self as the despised Other, and then

moved to repair that damaged self-image with the aid of forms taken from a past that was now understood as both different from the present and internally divided" (Knapp. J, 1994: 22-23). And this past for Richard Helgerson is set in either "Greco-Roman antiquity or the middle ages that provided the recognized models of civility and barbarity against which English writings were inevitably measured" (1992:23).

Peter Bondanella in *The Eternal City: Roman Images in the Modern World* affirms that the Roman history became a myth, a form of secular religion which has been linked to "the historical, philosophical, and human problems of change, process, growth, evolution, revolution, decline, decay, corruption, and death" (1987: 14). This myth of Rome is "not so much a relic to be venerated as it is a flexible and limitless source for self-expression, a common heritage which has met the needs of successive generations, influenced the styles of different periods, and inspired widely different forms of artistic expression" (Ibid). This mythical city of Rome was enormously praised and dignified to the extent its values, norms, and institutions became the models of Western civilization. In the same context, Paul Cantor, in his book *Shakespeare's Rome: Republic and Empire*, affirms that Rome provided a model for both "imperial ambitions and nascent republican sentiments" in England (1976:17).

Shakespeare's England, too, was not immune to the Roman myth-making. The English bard and his contemporary playwrights and theatergoers appropriated overtly and in different ways the Roman legacies since they were adopted as raw materials and a founding source for their plays. These appropriation and adaptation of the Roman prototype were not innocent, because the motive hidden behind, as Robert S. Miola asserts, aimed at "establishing instructive parallels between ancient history and contemporary politics". As a result, Miola affirms, "English classicism came to be a historical and eclectic in character, little concerned with understanding the past on its own terms" (2002: 8-10).

In the same vein, John Palmer, in *Political Characters of Shakespeare* (1945) states that in his Roman plays, Shakespeare appeals to "Roman history not as a source of scholarly footnotes to

English history, not as a quarry for decorative simile or parallel incident, but as a medium through which English history can be interpreted” (1945:102-3). To foster more this point of view, Coppelia Kahn's adds, "Englishness appears in Roman settings, and Romanness is Anglicized” (2002:04). Moreover, she adds that Rome was “a model for England's present and future” (Ibid).

This chapter on Shakespeare and Rome tends to put Rome (Italy) and England in the same position in order to situate the Shakespearian Roman plays which are said to be the most political of all his works in their historical contexts -Shakespeare's England-. They may be considered as responses to the political and ideological environment of his age.

Coppélia Kahn in *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, And Women* (2002) admits the fact that Rome is called “the Eternal City,” but she raises the issue about what did “Rome”- “the city, the republic, the empire, the culture, the history, the legend, and the Latin language that mediated them all- mean to Shakespeare?” (2002:02).

Evidently, Shakespeare’s plays’ meanings were borrowed from distinct sources whether written in Latin or in translations. Writings, paintings, engravings, even tapestries, and oral traditions enabled Shakespeare to gain insights to the Roman culture and history. Hence, Rome represented the model of civilization itself for the English (Miola. R. S, 2002: 05).

Consequently, the English acquainted with Rome since the latter was portrayed in relation to its past kinship with Britain. In other words, it represented an ancestral model for England’s destiny (Kahn. C, 2002:04).

Roman history was always associated with the Renaissance; however, “Roman history was a discourse that one could not afford to ignore ...one had to make use of it... The meaning of Roman history had to be articulated in and for the Renaissance present” (Burt 1991:112 quoted in Kahn. C, 2002: 03). Moreover, for the English Renaissance, “the Roman past was ...not simply *a* past but *the* past” (Ibid). Hence, it was legendarily linked to the



moment in which Britain itself emerged into history (Hunter 1977:95 Quoted in Kahn, 2002: 03). It is not an accident, then, that the myth of Roman-British connection, formulated in Arthurian medieval romance, it was also deliberately fostered and circulated by the Tudor monarchy, especially after Henry's accession to the throne. In the appropriation of Henry's British ancestry and of the belief that Britain had been founded by Brutus, the English came to define themselves as legitimate descendants of the Roman Empire (Kahn. C, 2002: 4). Moreover, Cantor asserts that Rome provided a model for both “imperial ambitions and nascent republican sentiments” in England (Cantor, 1976:17).

The English were acquainted with Rome since the latter was portrayed in relation to its past kinship with Britain. In other words, it represented an ancestral model for England's destiny (Kahn. C, 2002:04). Besides, in the court of the first Stuart king, James I, the Roman model served as a standard currency for honor and praise of the monarch as ‘*England's Caesar*’. Hence, the English were recreating ancient triumphant Rome in James's England. Therefore, Rome provided a model for the English (Chernaik. Warren, 2011: 04).

Among Elizabethans' traditions, writing and reading histories, mainly histories of Rome considered as a reliable source of ethical and political lessons (Kahn. C, 2002:08). In this stream, Coppelia Kahn states; “By comparing the sources on which Shakespeare drew for his English history plays with those he used for the Roman works, we can further appreciate the path he took in creating Rome for English audiences.” (Kahn. C, 2002:09).

Shakespeare took from Thomas North's English translations of Jacques Amyot's French translations of Plutarch's *Lives*, the major source for his Roman plays. The translators and the theatergoers of the sixteenth century adjusted and altered the Roman history as to fit the immediate circumstances of their own era. Therefore, Rome as a rising supreme power preoccupied with national and imperial motives was a model of empire for Shakespeare's England. If Shakespeare's Rome was a prototype of cultural and political greatness,

Shakespeare's England might have been a successor to that Roman greatness. "Roman history was a discourse that one could not afford to ignore...one had to make use of it" (Burt: 112).

This essay on Shakespeare's Rome and Romanness purports also to place "Rome and England in tandem," namely, to situate the plays in the historical circumstances of Shakespeare's England. Under the assumption that the Roman plays, which are said to be the most political of Shakespeare's works, were responses to the political and ideological climate of his age, This essay pays attention to the historicity of the ancient city and its social ethos within the context of Elizabethan and Jacobean contemporaneity. It means that the essay is not concerned with the historical accuracy of the Roman world constructed by a 'lowbrow' playwright who had little access to original Latin and Greek sources. Shakespeare's Rome is removed at least three times from the 'reality' that ancient Romans experienced in heterogeneous and remote circumstances.

Rome was a prototype of empire for Shakespeare's England that was an emerging absolute state preoccupied with national and imperial aspirations. If Shakespeare's Rome was a symbol of cultural and political greatness, Shakespeare's England might have been a would-be successor to that Roman greatness.

The aim of this part is not concerned with the historical accuracy of the Roman world constructed by an English playwright 'Shakespeare' who had little access to original Latin and Greek sources "*Small Latin and Less Greek*". Those Latin and Greek sources took an important place among Elizabethan playwrights and writers. Roman traditions, writing and reading histories, as Kahn Coppel affirms, are considered to be a reliable source of ethical and political lessons for the English. In this context she argues, "By comparing the sources on which Shakespeare drew for his English history plays with those he used for the Roman works, we can further appreciate the path he took in creating Rome for English audiences" (Kahn. C, 2002:09).

Accordingly, it is not an accident, then, that the myth of Roman-British connection, formulated in Arthurian medieval romance, was deliberately fostered and circulated by the Tudor monarchy, especially after Henry VII's accession to the throne. In the appropriation of Henry's British ancestry and of the belief that Britain had been founded by Brutus, the English came to define themselves as legitimate descendants of the Roman Empire. (Kahn. C, 2002:4). In the artistic field, "the public theatre, both as an art and as a social milieu, allowed Shakespeare wide latitude in refashioning Romanness" (Kahn. C, 2002:8-9).

According to Richard Helgerson, despite the great ambition for its identity-making, England began its national project against "a sense of barbarism". In other words, with the recognition of the *self* as the despised *other*, and then moved to repair that damaged self-image with the aid of forms taken from a past that was now understood as both different from the present and internally divided" (1992:22-23). And this past, for Helgerson, is set in either "Greco-Roman antiquity or the Middle Ages that provided the recognized models of civility and barbarity against which English writings were inevitably measured" (Ibid:23).

For the Elizabethans, the problem is not only that the Greek biographer relied heavily on the propagandistic devices of stereotyping and mythologizing, but also that Quite arguably, for "the Roman past was not simply a past but the past" (Hunter, 1977:95 in Kahn, 2002:03), legendarily linked to the moment in which Britain itself emerged into history.

Shakespeare's Rome is not an embodiment of the golden age Virgil eulogized for Augustan imperial propaganda; it is rather a "wilderness of tigers" interspersed with invasion, rebellion, famine, betrayal, and adultery, all dark realities inherent in the history of human civilization. (Kyung-Won Lee, 2007:410-411)

Paul Dean keenly observes that in his Roman plays, Shakespeare uses "Roman history not as a source of scholarly footnotes to English history, not as a quarry for decorative simile or parallel incident, but as a medium through which English history can be interpreted" (1988:102-3). In fact, our objective in this part of our research is the same as that of Paul

Dean. In other words, our aim is to show that Shakespeare made use of the Roman raw materials or the Roman model to communicate the English history.

Accordingly, after providing the most relevant details about the Roman history and how it is related to *Britannia*, it is worth focalizing on *Antony and Cleopatra*, one of Shakespeare's historical plays that we have chosen to be studied, which fits in fact our objective in this part. If we dive deeply into the analysis of the aforementioned play, we will try to reveal the truths hidden behind Shakespeare's revival of the antique Rome and the most prominent Roman leaders and their relation with the antique Egypt.

If we can put the play under scrutiny and analyze it historically, we can affirm that Shakespeare uses a skill of displacement, which was widely used by his contemporaries when he implicitly hints to England via Egypt. He tries to distance England by appealing to a foreign and exotic setting. It is allegorical since the English history lies behind Shakespeare's portrayal of the Roman history.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Octavius Caesar's dream in putting Egypt under his control can go hand in hand with James I, who stands for Caesar, and his unitary ambitions to put England and his realm Scotland under his sovereignty. Both, whether in fiction or in reality, succeeded in fulfilling their dreams of unification.

If we move to the female characters, Cleopatra, the last Egyptian Pharaoh, stands for Elizabeth I, the last Tudor Monarch. Therefore, their death gave the chance to Octavius Caesar when he succeeded in putting Egypt under his control, and James I who had been given England by heredity respectively. However, unlike Egypt, that was a great Eastern Empire that raised the jealousy of the Western leaders, the British Empire, at the time when *Antony and Cleopatra* was written, was just an illusion or a dream that was waiting to be fulfilled.

Shakespeare's reference to Egypt is not at random but to communicate ideas about what was taking place during his lifetime. Hence, as Egypt which was a great empire under

Cleopatra was targeted by Octavius Caesar, Elizabethan England, which was not known enough in the foreign lands as an empire, was one of the Spaniards' colonization project. Therefore, Shakespeare uses in the play *Egypt* to speak about Elizabethan England.

During the reign of the last Tudor Monarch, Elizabeth I, the term British Empire did not exist, maybe England started to gain some continental recognition after the destruction of the Spanish Gran Armada in 1588. However, the first seeds of the British Empire were sown when James I gave charters to some adventurers to found colonies in the New World. The latter which had been already dominated by the Spaniards, Portuguese, French and the Dutch.

If we associate this to the play as well as to the Roman history, Shakespeare referred to an important event that took place in the Roman history, which is the Battle of Actium, in 31 BC. In this battle, Octavius Caesar claims the Roman victory over Antony and Cleopatra then puts Egypt under his control then giving the chance to the Roman Empire to emerge. Hence, what represents the Battle of Actium to the Romans is the same as the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 to the British.

As the old empires like Rome collapsed, new empires emerged. Rome as the ancient coloniser of England, or *Britannia* in the remote time, is used by Shakespeare in order to show that England was always under the threat of the other empires whether in the European front or in the oriental one (the Ottomans Empire and the Kingdom of Morocco). Hence, Shakespeare wanted through his play to describe the atmosphere of England that was overwhelmed by fear, anxiety and restlessness under different foreign threats. The English subjects in fact can be put in the colonized's shoes. Even though they have never been under the foreign control, the fear of being colonized haunted their spirits and reflected via their aesthetics.

The ambitions of the first Stuart King were limitless. Just after his ascension to the English throne in 1604, James I of England wanted to identify himself with Augustus Caesar,

a historical figure and conqueror whose commitment was to unify various peoples under one strong monarchical authority (Kane. Christopher, 2016:8). James put himself in Augustus's skin to fulfil his dream of uniting his realms (England, Scotland and Ireland).

Warren Chernaik states, in this context, that “in the court of James I, the Roman analogy is standard currency for praise of the monarch as ‘*England's Caesar*’. In James's elaborately staged entrance into London in 1604, the streets were lined with arches and statues in ‘a triumph in the high Roman style’, recreating ancient Rome in the eyes of the beholders” (2011:04).

In fact, to Shakespeare and his contemporaries who depicted the circulating ideologies of their epoch, Rome could never be considered as the ‘Other’, but was seen as a mythical and historical parent or precursor. This can be seen via James I who adopted the Roman fashion and followed the example of Rome in every aspects of his reign. He was even referred to as a *new Augustus*. Even in coins and medals, the King is frequently represented in Roman dress, crowned with laurel. The king is represented as ‘a Roman emperor reincarnate’ (John Peacock quoted in Warren Chernaik, 2011:04).

James VI's of Scotland coronation as James I of England in 1603 was a remarkable event in the history of both James and his two kingdoms. In his announcement of October 1604, in which he declared himself to be the King of Great Britain, he insisted on “the blessed Union, or rather Reuniting of these two mightie, famous, and ancient Kingdomes of England and Scotland, under one Imperiall Crowne.” (James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes quoted in Patterson W. B, 1997:31).

If the Context is given a paramount importance in studying *Antony and Cleopatra*, many critics considered the latter to be a colonial play. Among those critics, Christopher Kane, in his article entitled “Shadows of Empire: the Displaced New World of *Antony and Cleopatra*”, says that James I's of England had colonial ambitions to expand across the Atlantic but in the

period that is parallel to the writing and performance of as of *Antony and Cleopatra*, unfortunately England proved its inadequacy to fulfil this kind of project. Warren Chernaik, as some of the playwrights and historians like Shakespeare, Livy and Plutarch affirmed that “The history of Rome (...) is a history of war and conquest” (Chernaik Warren, 2011:02). From this standpoint, Christopher Kane tries to associate England to Rome when he puts *Antony and Cleopatra* as a significant text that seeks to promote colonial consciousness on the part of the English that dates back to the sixteenth century. Shakespeare invokes the historical Rome and the unbeatable Romans. Shakespeare through characters and the setting tried to create a colonial atmosphere by putting the colonizing Rome and the colonized Egypt in a binary opposition. (2016:04).

It was said that Octavius did not gain the label of the emperor, and Rome was not an empire until four years after Actium, in 27 BC even though it was ambitious to do so (Kane. Christopher, 2016:9). It was the case of England whether under the reign of Elizabeth or James I. Hence, when the empires of the East (the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Morocco) and that of the West (the Spaniards, the Portuguese and the French) carried on their military achievements, England’s first trials to expand its powers abroad were unsuccessful. Shakespeare in his *Antony and Cleopatra* wanted England to follow in the footsteps of Rome to achieve its imperial project and to compete with both the Western and Eastern empires. To sustain this idea, Christopher Kane affirms: “for England, as for Rome, an imperial identity could be possible but only after successful colonization” (2016:9).

In the play, Antony received a bad news coming from Rome. A civil war started by young Pompey, who “is strong at sea” or “the absolute master of the sea”, who wanted to avenge his father by threatening the other two members of the triumvirate, “pillars of the world”, Caesar and Lepidus. To sustain this idea, it is worth referring to the following passage from the play:

**Antony:**

Hear me, queen:  
The strong necessity of time commands  
Our services awhile; but my full heart  
Remains in use with you. Our Italy  
Shines o'er with civil swords: Sextus Pompeius  
Makes his approaches to the port of Rome;  
Equality of two domestic powers  
Breed scrupulous faction: the hated, grown to strength,  
Are newly grown to love: the condemn'd Pompey,  
Rich in his father's honour, creeps apace  
Into the hearts of such as have not thriv'd  
Upon the present state, whose numbers threaten;  
And quietness, grown sick of rest, would purge  
By any desperate change. My more particular,  
And that which most with you should safe my going,  
Is Fulvia's death (I.ii.34).

If we try to associate it with the English history, we find that before and when *Antony and Cleopatra* was written, England was overshadowed by internal conflicts whether from political, social or religious fields. If we delve into the details, we find that the kingdom of England under the rule of Queen Elizabeth I, *a strong-willed sovereign, much heralded in her own time*, was an arena of serious problems. The continued Anglo-Spanish conflict had emptied the English treasury what led the government to fall deeply into debt and had created tensions within all positions of society. Religious tensions had got a lion share in those tensions. They had attained their heights in the 1570s and 1580s especially with the emergence of Puritanism and the threat of aggressive Catholics supported from abroad. Elizabeth's court had been the arena of intense personal rivalries then factional dispute resulting in an unsuccessful *coup d'etat* by the earl of Essex and his supporters.

Relations between the crown and the Parliament had begun to struggle over monopolies. In addition to all these conflicts, social problems included vagabondage and crime, aggravated by unemployment and prices' boom. Moreover, in the foreign sphere, England's engagement to stop the resistance in Ireland worsened England as well as Ireland, what gave the chance to the foreign powers to intervene in the conflict (Patterson W. B, 1997:32-33). Even though after the succession of James I to the throne of



England made an end to some continental conflicts, the conflicts between the crown and the parliament intensified and became even tense. Following on Octavius Caesar's footsteps when he claimed his sovereignty as Caesar; "He is a god /and knows What is most right: mine honour/ was not yielded, but conquer'd merely", as Cleopatra has stated, James I also claimed his sovereignty over the British people and parliament. In this context, James I, the English Caesar, claimed the following:

The people owed their lawful and Christian king such obedience "as to Gods Lieutenant in earth, obeying his commands in all thing, except directly against God, as the commands of Gods Minister, acknowledging him a Iudge set by God ouer them, hauing power to iudge them, but to be iudged onely by God, whom to onely hee must give count of his iudgement." (James I quoted in W. B Patterson, 1997:22).

The above passage explains to what extent James VI/I believed in the Divine Right of King. In his book *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), he explained how the King should govern and behave vis-à-vis his subjects.

To study the Roman Empire in relation to England/ Britain, *Antony and Cleopatra* is not the only Shakespearian play that tackles the Roman world. *Cymbeline* (1609-1610) is another play in which the playwright appeals to Rome and more than that, he even set its events between Rome and Britain. In fact, the events' shift from Britain to Rome is evoked in the story. This can be seen via Posthumus who has been banished by the King Cymbeline from Britain to Rome (Italy) because of his secret marriage with his only daughter without his consent.

The setting of *Cymbeline* is so significant because it puts Britain and Rome at the same level even though the Roman Empire was older compared to Britain and the most powerful empire in Europe when it was at the zenith of its power. Unfortunately, England was far from reaching this level of power and greatness.

"Britannia", Britain is a modern version, is a name given by the Romans to England (British Isles). Julius Caesar's British enterprise tried twice to take control of Britain. The latter represented for the Romans, a mystery, "a remote land", and "almost a fabled island

across the ‘Ocean’, a fearsome sea to Romans as yet unaccustomed to the tidal conditions outside the Mediterranean”. In addition, “Britain was beyond the known world” (Salway. P, 2015:34).

Even though Britain was widely known as the world of the unknown, Caesar did not hesitate to put Britain on the Roman map to satisfy his military ambitions as well as to demystify this tempting place. Hence, his ambition led him to launch his two expeditions to Britain in 55 and 54 BC. Unfortunately, they culminated in failure. Indeed, Caesar’s defeat in his two campaigns did not impede the Romans’ ambitious efforts to conquer Britain. However, in AD 43, the Roman forces sailed to occupy Britain in AD 47.

These historical events found even in literary sources that, before the Conquest in AD 43, the island (Britain) stood for the end of the world. For the poet Virgil, Britain is the almost incredibly distant land ‘a whole world away’ (Salway. P, 2015:34). Hence, we understand from these historical records that Britain was a Roman colony or province.

Shakespeare as a Renaissance writer, poet and playwright went back to the Roman classical world to set his play *Cymbeline* in. This world refers to the antiquity .i.e. the pre-Christian era. Thus, the playwright of Avon, in *Cymbeline*, describes on purpose the period of history before the fall of the Roman Empire. He may be want to show the English ambitious efforts to build an empire like that of the Romans. Besides, the use of the name “Britain” instead of England is a message from Shakespeare revealing the circulating discourse about England’s spreading its power beyond its borders. Hence, England wanted to follow the example of the legendary Rome to affirm its presence on the European scene.

In *Cymbeline*, Rome and England are far away from being friends. However, conflicts characterised their relationship until the final scene when the two strong powers come to an agreement. This agreement sets England free from paying tribute to Rome. This means that England is no longer in need of the Roman Empire to stand on its feet. In other words,

Shakespeare, via his play, ended all kind of England's dependence on Rome, but instead the former emerged from the latter that it became its successor. Therefore, we can understand from this, that Shakespeare demystified one of the oldest stronger empires to advertise the emerging new ones as the British Empire.

Accordingly, the Roman Empire was a model of empire for Shakespeare's England that was an emerging absolute Kingdom. This Kingdom, for centuries, tried harder to protect its national borders from any foreign invasions on the one hand, while on the other, it sought to enlarge its territories beyond its borders as an important strategy to satisfy its imperial aspirations and cope with the socio-political atmosphere of Europe at that period of history.

To thicken more the ties between Rome and Britain, in the English chronicle histories, it was proved that Brutus, the founder of Britain is the grandson of Aeneas, founder of Rome. This strengthened the Britain's association with Rome.

Britain and Rome's historical relatedness as two realms was reported in chronicle history of England that Richard Grafton wrote around 1569 where he declared: "When Brute...first entred this Island and named it Briteyne: there beginneth mine History of this Realme" (1569:31). Therefore, because of being familiarized with the English by being represented in terms of its past kinship with Britain, Rome served as a model for England's present and future (Kahn. C, 2002: 4).

Briefly, we may say that Shakespeare employs the word Britain instead of England because in *Cymbeline* the idea of Empire is predominant. Besides, the play shows the tension between the empire of Rome and the would-be Empire of Britain. While the former starts to degenerate, the latter begins to flourish. In this case, Shakespeare wants to associate the old classical world and its legacy with the emerging new Britain. In other words, Britain emerged from the ashes of the Roman Empire. However, what is striking is the fact that Shakespeare in his play puts Rome, which is the ruler of Britain, in the equal position with its province. Hence, Shakespeare wanted to put England as strong as Rome. By doing so, the English

highlighted the spiritual greatness of their small island to disguise its material littleness. So, the result was the stimulation of a strong desire for imperial ascendancy.

Shakespeare did not only make a parallel between Rome and the land of Britons, he made the latter more victorious than the former. In the play, he shows this idea, through the words of the Queen:

That opportunity  
Which then they had to take from 's, to resume  
We have again. Remember, sir, my liege,  
The kings your ancestors, together with  
The natural bravery of your isle, which stands  
As Neptune's park, ribbed and paled in  
With rocks unscalable and roaring waters,  
With sands that will not bear your enemies' boats,  
But suck them up to the topmast. A kind of conquest  
Caesar made here; but made not here his brag  
Of 'Came' and 'saw' and 'overcame: ' with shame—  
That first that ever touch'd him—he was carried  
From off our coast, twice beaten; and his shipping—  
Poor ignorant baubles!— Upon our terrible seas,  
Like egg-shells moved upon their surges, crack'd  
As easily 'gainst our rocks: for joy whereof  
The famed Cassibelan, who was once at point—  
O giglot fortune!—To master Caesar's sword,  
Made Lud's town with rejoicing fires bright  
And Britons strut with courage (III.i 2290-1).

In the same context, Cloten's challenging words reduce from Caesar's reputation and honour.

So he affirms in the following passage:

Come, there's no more tribute to be paid: our  
kingdom is stronger than it was at that time; and,  
as I said, there is no more such Caesars: other of  
them may have crook'd noses, but to owe such  
straight arms, none.  
We have yet many among us can gripe as hard  
as Cassibelan: I do not say I am one; but I have a hand.  
Why tribute? Why should we pay tribute? If Caesar can  
hide the sun from us with a blanket, or put the moon  
in his pocket, we will pay him tribute for light; else, sir,  
no more tribute, pray you now (III.i.2291).

*Cymbeline* (1609-10) is a Shakespearian play that was performed during the early Jacobean period i.e. during the reign of the first Stuart King James who referred to himself as the King of Great Britain since England and his Scottish realm were unified for the first time

under his reign. James VI/I of Scotland and England respectively tried to play the role of the unifier who kept the title of the King James VI of Scotland and King James I of England but he preferred to be named as King of Great Britain.

James' project when he unified the two realms was to establish peace and promote harmony among his English subjects and the Scottish people. However, because of his being extremely ambitious, James was named as “the wisest fool in Christendom”.

In addition of naming himself a *philosopher-King* and the New *Solomon*, James wanted to be identified as one of the mightiest Roman emperors, Augustus. Moreover, James followed the Roman model of *Pax Romana* to establish his peace-project in *Pax Britannica*. Shakespeare who witnessed this era did not hesitate to report these truths via his drama. In *Cymbeline*, which we can consider as a Roman play, Shakespeare chose Rome and Britain to be the setting of the play's events. His choice of the setting was not done at random, the Bard of Avon wanted to communicate the circulating ideologies of his era to the wide public. Therefore; Shakespeare's play shows to what extent the first Stuart Monarch wanted to follow the Roman imperial model for Britain to become an empire like that of the Romans. This parallelism can be shown in *Cymbeline*'s acceptance to pay tribute to Caesar even though they won the battle against them. It is evident that thanks to the Roman Empire, that served as a model, the British Empire was built. To foster this idea, *Cymbeline* states that “although the victor, we submit to Caesar,/ And to the Roman empire; promising/To pay our wonted tribute” (V.v.2331). From this, we can deduce that *Cymbeline*, as the ruler of Britain, can be an example of the ‘client kings’ who are friendly local rulers who endorsed the Roman control without any need of a direct military occupation. In addition, the Britons were paying heavy customs dues to Rome, since for the Romans taxation without occupation was more profitable (Salway. P, 2015:38).

The concept of the ideal Roman government, which should be based on a powerful and charismatic ruler, was even adopted by James I. To become one of these powerful, charismatic and even absolute rulers, James I believed strongly in the Divine Right of Kings, in which the King is considered as a representative of God on earth. This absolutism can be shown in his works; *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598) and the *Basilikon Doron* (1599).

In a nutshell, we can say that Shakespeare was influenced by the classical world of the Romans and the Roman Empire in general. This is shown in his works mainly his Roman plays as *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Cymbeline*. In this part, we tried to show in which ways the Roman Empire inspired the British Empire and paved the way to its emergence as one of the powerful empires in Christendom mainly after fulfilling its overseas expansionist project that reached the Americas.

James I was one of the British Monarch who adopted the Roman model of the empire to build his own, the British Empire. He even followed the Roman model of *Pax Romana* to reach his goal of *Pax Britannica* when he aspired to establish peace with his neighbouring powers after several centuries of unending wars.

Indeed, since we said previously that Shakespeare was the spirit of his age who witnessed the late Elizabethan and the early Jacobean eras, we can affirm that his Roman plays communicate history. In addition, the British-Roman association told the story of how the English Monarchs, who incarnated the mythical Brutus, followed the Roman example in their imperial project in order to build a strong empire.

## Shakespeare and the City of Venice

“The story of Shakespeare and Italy, centering on the international city-state of Venice, is inexhaustible” (Tosi. Laura & Bassi. Shaul, 2011: Xviii).

We can have access to the past (history) only through our own interpretations, and if these interpretations change, the past will change with it as well. We feel the need to read and consider Shakespeare’s plays not only by means of acts of historical imagination, as documents of their time, but also by the application of a new historicist perspective that considers a text as a product of its own time.

This research’s objective is to put early modern English drama within the context of the European Renaissance and, more exclusively, within the context of Italian cultural, dramatic, and literary traditions. In other words, in this part, we will make reference to how the classical cultures are evoked and referred to in the contemporary literature. To make it clear, this research aims at revealing to what extent the early modern Italian novellas, drama, discourses and even history, worked as the raw material that helped Shakespeare to construct his drama, mainly the comedies, romances, and other Italianate plays.

It has been extensively written that the Venice of the Renaissance was a political myth. It was described as the ideal republic characterized by the perfect government, economy, and social organization.

Graham Holderness argues that “there is not one myth of Venice, but multiple myths”, such as “Venice the Chaste, the Seductive, the Powerful, the Fragile, the Pure, the Imperfect, the Beautiful, the Evanescent, the Decadent” (2010:8). These reputations whether they “were implicit or explicit in early modern literature” they “appear in dramatic and poetic forms in Shakespeare’s Venetian plays” (Ibid).

In the first chapter of his book *Shakespeare and Venice* (2010), Holderness, in “Renaissance Venice”, made reference to many historical records and texts about Venice such as William

Thomas's *The History of Italy* (1549); Francesco Sansovino's *Venetia città nobilissima* (1583); and Gasparo Contarini's *Commonwealth and Government of Venice* which was translated by Lewes Lewkenor in 1599.

Venice is one of the most reminiscent and important scenes in Western historical documents and literary texts. Moreover, it is even evoked in many of Shakespeare's art mainly drama.

Shakespeare's association with Venice provoked a number of publications and even intrigued many writers and publishers to raise different questions. If we take the example of Graham Holderness, he precludes his book with asking some fundamental questions: "What did Shakespeare know of Venice? What did Venice mean to Shakespeare? "How exactly did Venice find its way into Shakespeare?", and "What were the sources of knowledge and influencers of opinion that mediated the dramatization of Venice in English culture?" (2010:03).

Venice is situated at the crossroad between the western and the eastern cultures, i.e. it was a place where the western Empires (the world of Shakespeare) met with the eastern empires mainly the Ottoman "the aliens". In this context, Graham Holderness claims,

Venice was a border town, on the very edge of Western Christian civilization, increasingly encircled in Shakespeare's time by the expanding Ottoman Empire. It stood as the very perfection of Western civilization; yet it lay very close to the perilous borderline between that civilization and its many alien 'others... It was in the heart of the Mediterranean, the centre of a great European trading and Commercial network. It was a flagship of Western Christian civilization" (2010:33).

In the same vein Manfred Pfister added: "From the beginning, Venice has appeared to the foreign traveler as liminal to Italy, as the place where Italy and with it Europe intermingled with its Oriental and African Other" (Quoted in Holderness, 2010:34).

Geographically speaking, Venice was positioned 'at the margins of Christendom (Vaughan M. V, 1994: 27). For Manfred Pfister, Venice is "an inner-European orient" that



was considered by the European travellers as an oriental city rather than a European one (quoted in Holderness. G, 2010:34). In addition, Marcel Proust refers to it as “a site of orientalist fantasy displaced from the orient back into Italy” (1986: 283). All these writings and descriptions of Venice are proofs that this mythical city was of extreme importance. This city left a very good impression on even the Italian traveller Marco Polo who described it to the Kublai Khan as:

‘Sire, now I have told you about all the cities I know’.

‘There is still one of which you never speak’.

Marco Polo bowed his head.

‘Venice’, the Khan said.

Marco smiled. ‘What else do you believe I have been talking to you about? ...

Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice’ (Quoted in Holderness Graham, 2010:12-13).

Graham Holderness portrayed Venice as a reservoir of mythologies, a city of fantasy and imagination which is not, admittedly, produced by Venetian themselves but rather, created and imagined, then as now, by foreigners, visitors, strangers (2011: 10).

D. S. Chambers and Deborah Howard respectively in *The Imperial Age of Venice 1380-1580* and *The Architectural History of Venice* explained that the original “myth of Venice” was the claim that Venice was the true successor to the ancient Roman Republic (Michelson. Paul E, 2006:03).

Even George Gordon Lord Byron in his poem “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” referred to Venice as the myth, Venice the fertile reservoir of mythologies (1970: 227).

In "When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography," the Historian James Grubb writes;

The prevailing vision of Venice has been remarkably consistent and persuasive and has been transmitted substantially unaltered in guidebooks and histories since its full articulation in the sixteenth century: a city founded in liberty and never thereafter subjected to foreign domination; a maritime, commercial economy; a unified and civic-minded patriciate guardian of the common good; a society intensely pious yet ecclesiastically independent; a loyal and contented populace; a constitution constraining disruptive forces in a thousand-year harmony and constancy of purpose; a republic of wisdom and benevolence, provider of fair justice and a high degree of toleration (1986:43-44).

Historical geographer Dennis Cosgrove, in “The Myth and the Stones of Venice: An Historical Geography of a Symbolic Landscape,” summarizes his idea about Venice in the following quote:

By the late 16th century, the central node of Venice expressed a complex symbolic structure, understandable in terms of the humanist ideas shared by the Venetian patriciate and in terms of the Venetian myth. San Marco was a concrete representation of the perfection of Venetian institutions. The Doge's Palace...represented monarchy...The two wings of the Procuratie...defined the boundaries of the 'place of eloquence, of Minerva': the Piazza San Marco. Her republican freedom was celebrated in the daily discourse of Venetian citizens. It opened towards the sacred legitimation of Venice, the Basilica San Marco. Opposite the Doge's Palace stood the Marcian Library, the seat of Humanist wisdom....” (Cosgrove. Dennis, 1982: 145).

As we have mentioned it previously, the political myth of Venice portrayed it as an ideal republic, a perfection of governance, economy and social organization. M.M. Mahood affirms that Venice was “a legend for independence, wealth, art and political stability, her respect for law, and her toleration of foreigners” (2003:13). Holderness added that the city’s republican constitution afforded a model of popular government that reverberated the magnitude and the greatness of Roman democracy. Because of its being open, economically flourished, tolerant, politically and religiously independent, Venice expanded from the city-state expansion into empire (Holderness Graham, 2010:06).

All these helped Venice to gain “the reputation of a remarkably open and multicultural society, which treated all its citizens as equal before the law, irrespective of race, colour or creed. Within this ideal community both rulers and ruled, natives and strangers, participated in the fabulous wealth and enviable liberty of ‘a polity in which all particulars were harmonized and whose stability was consequently immortal” (Pocock. J.G.A, 1975:102). Therefore, Pocock deems That Venice is a ‘vision’ a ‘myth’, rather than a reality (Holderness Graham, 2010:07). To make it short, Holderness states that Venice is the place where myth and reality meet and merge, and this is the site of Shakespeare’s poetic Venice (2010:09).

This virtual Venice of text and image has mainly been the by-product of centuries. This virtual image was not given to Venice by Venetians themselves, but by visitors, tourists,

foreigners, 'strangers'. Therefore, Venice is 'not really ever written from the inside, but variously appropriated from without' (Tanner. Tony, 1992: 17).

"A Western city saturated with the East; a city of land and stone everywhere penetrated by water; a city of great piety and ruthless mercantilism; a city where enlightenment and licentiousness, reason and desire, indeed art and nature flow and flower together - Venice is indeed 'the surpassing-all-other embodiment of that "absolute ambiguity" which is radiant life containing certain death' (Schopenhauer in Tanner. Tony, 1992: 368).

Marco Polo's view about Venice is not different from many other writers who have depicted Venice as a place where incredible contrasts and oppositions meet. "Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else" (Quoted in Holderness Graham, 2010:12-13).

In the same vein, in *Myth of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (2001), Rosand David said that Venice is portrayed by travellers, dramatists, historians and audiences in ambivalent terms: as the virgin-city whose myth of inviolability co-exists with its international reputation for licentiousness, in the best interest of economy and trade (Quoted in Tosi. Laura & Bassi. Shaul, 2011: 31).

Venice was very notorious, both in Europe and beyond, from early times as a great commercial city-state and empire as well as a shelter of diverse ethnic groups. In addition to that, Venice represented an ideal context in which to situate dramatic stories about merchants and usurers, about the perils and pitfalls of the law, about love and adultery, poetry and passion, marriage and masks (Holderness, 2010: 31).

Venice, 'a city of strangers', provided absolutely the right setting in which to set stories about aliens and foreigners whose race, religion, ethnicity, colour, are different from white Christian Venetians. Compared to any other European city, Venice provided a model of a multi-cultural rather than a mono-cultural society, one in which aliens such as Jews and

Muslim Turks were accorded a proper place, partially segregated but protected by the law. In this context, Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini affirmed; “In Venice, then, Jews could worship at their own synagogues, Muslims could pray to Allah, without fear of inquisition or persecution” (Quoted in Holderness Graham, 2010: 31-32).

Virginia Mason Vaughan puts it, as culturally ‘at the center of civilization’ (1994:27), while religiously, Coryate puts it as “the Jerusalem of Christendom” (Ibid: 33). However, Venice is simply ‘the eye of Italy’ for Francesco Sansovino (1561).

In Italy, Venice was the best state since it was reckoned with its stability, liberty, the opportunity to own wealth even for strangers and above all Venice has an active political system that pushes its citizens to be active agents in public affairs. (Deidda et al quoted in Hadfield. Andrew, 2011:70). Therefore, for its liberty and its reputation for embracing strangers and accepting the consequent diversity of population, Venice was known as a safe haven for those who search for security and safety.

Venice can be also described as an important destination for those who seek adventure rather than a destination to those who search for settlement. In this concern, Georg Simmel affirmed that Venice is “never a home”, but “an adventure for our souls” (Quoted in Hadfield. Andrew, 2011: 126).

In his poem "*On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic*" (1802, 1807), Wordsworth describes Venice as follows:

Once did hold the gorgeous east in fee;  
And was the safeguard of the west: the worth  
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,  
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.<sup>16</sup>  
She wa a maiden City, bright and free;  
No guile seduced, no force could violate;  
And, when she took unto herself a Mate,  
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.  
And what if she had seen those glories fade,  
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;  
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid  
When her long life hath reached its final day;  
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade  
Of that which once was great, is passed away (Quoted in Quiller-C. A, 1912:599).

For many people, Venice opened its gates and welcomed the foreigners who wanted to venture, trade and settlement. It was an example of a more open, liberal, even modern society. It is a land where many values as tolerance, mutual respect for cultural differences, peace and security reigned. Hence, the Venetians, unlike the other European cities, condemned atrocities of anti-Semitic persecution, the traditional hatred and enmity between Christianity and Islam. To make it clear, Jean Bodin asserts that “other cities and districts are threatened by civil wars or fear of tyrants or harsh exactions of taxes or the most annoying inquiries into one’s activities, this seemed to me nearly the only city that offers immunity and freedom from all these kinds of servitude” (1975:03).

Many writers and historians associated the city of Venice, since it hosted waves of people coming from different places and cultures, with its political liberty, freedom of thought and trade, and its universal hospitality. Among those historians, it is worth mentioning Fynes Moryson who affirms:

... this most noble City, as well for the situation, freeing them from enemies, and for the freedom which the Citizens and very strangers have, to enjoy their goods, and dispose of them, and for manifold other causes, is worthily called in Latine Venetia, as it were Venetiam, that is, come againe (1617: 82).

After reviewing the image of Venice as it was described by many historians and poets, it is worth associating it with Shakespeare’s drama in general and with *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* in particular. The latter are the only plays in which Shakespeare employed the city of Venice to be a setting of some of their actions. Shakespeare chose Venice in order to evoke England. As many critics have argued, “Is it because Shakespeare’s Venice is a thinly disguised cover for Shakespeare’s England, and the preoccupations of both plays are in fact matters of local and domestic concern dressed in exotic costume?” (Holderness, 2010:3-4). In fact, we can affirm that most of all Shakespeare’s plays are set in foreign settings except *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which is set in his own contemporary England and *Cymbeline* in pre-Christian Britannia. In this case, Shakespeare preferred employing *displacement* of time

and/or place since he did not dare to reflect overtly on his immediate world, but only via mediation of temporal or geographical difference (Holderness, 2010:02). Shakespeare used Venice to reflect England, since the latter is a cosmopolitan city where different social groups can be mingled and merged like the blacks, the Moors, the Turks as well as the Jews.

The question that should be raised here is that how did Shakespeare know about Venice since he did not travel to it? Nevertheless, we think that it is needless for Shakespeare to travel to Venice since he succeeded in compiling his background from travelers, books and histories they brought home with them; and the Italian community in London, though small, it included people he was likely to meet (Holderness, 2010:03).

Many scholars have talked about the possibility of Shakespeare's visit to Italy during the *lost years* of his mysterious biography, i.e. between 1585 and 1592. Others believe that he fled the Plague in London and the prohibition of dramatic performances at Court. Shakespeare, thus, seized the opportunity to go and visit Italy and discover the beauties of the country that had traditionally fascinated/enchanted and attracted men and women across Europe. However, those scholars reached a consensus that the English Bard never set foot in Italy.

Shakespeare used the city of Venice to gain insight on what was happening in England at the time when his two plays *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* were written and performed. Since Venice was well known for people of Europe or outside, Shakespeare put England in its place in order to make Venice raise again in England after its collapse. Hence Shakespeare wanted England to become a Venice's successor. Moreover, since England was influenced, as the other European States, by the waves of the Italian Renaissance, Shakespeare wanted to make Venice reshaped and reincarnated in it.

Virtually, all of Shakespeare's plays, except only one of them which is set in his own contemporary England, are set in the foreign settings. Hence, Shakespeare employs this

technique of *displacement* of time and/or place since “Shakespeare was virtually incapable of reflecting on his own immediate world except via the mediation of temporal or geographical difference” (Holderness, 2010:02).

Considering Venice as a multicultural city where the strangers can dwell and practice trade and worship their religions freely, England also, especially during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, according to historical records, many Black Moors were living in England without mentioning the Jews who were expelled from England in 1290 for economical, ecclesiastical, and political motives. Later, even the Black Moors became later subjects to deportation.

As for the Venetian author Gasparo Contarini (1599) who described Venice as the city that was a *coincidentia oppositorum*, Shakespeare’s Venice of his plays that reflects England is portrayed as a place of ambiguity and contradictions.

If we take the example of Othello as a stranger in *Othello*, we notice that the Venetians saw him in a contradictory way. On the one hand, they expressed a sentiment of fascination, while on the other hand, they expressed towards him a feeling of hatred since they considered him as the ‘Other’, ‘Black’, ‘Turbaned Turk’.

These contradictions within Shakespeare’s Venice as they are portrayed in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* are shown in the characters’ state of mind especially the rich merchants who are melancholic and enable to enjoy themselves like Antony and the Jew Shylock. This passage from the plays is a testimony:

**Antonio:** In sooth I know not why I am so sad.  
It wearies me, you say it wearies you;  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff ’tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn;  
And such a want-wit sadness of me  
That I have much ado to know myself. (I.i. 23).

In addition to what is mentioned above, Fathers like Shylock and Brabantio are not given the chance to enjoy their rebellious girls Jessica and Desdemona respectively. Their dreams turn to nightmares when they discovered that their daughters eloped with their socially unacceptable partners (the Christian Lorenzo and the Black Moor Othello). Shylock, in the play, affirms that “there is some ill a-brewing towards my rest, for I did dream of money-bags tonight” (II.v.49); and Brabantio in his turn declares;

Strike on the tinder, ho!  
Give me a taper; call up all my people.  
This accident is not unlike my dream;  
Belief of it oppresses me already.  
Light, I say, light! (I.i.8).

In fact, the characters of the two plays are profoundly disturbed and their psychic life is a proof that all is going wrong in Venice. Indeed, since Venice stands for Elizabethan and early Jacobean England, Shakespeare used it in order to depict the restless and disturbed temperament of the English as a result of many domestic as well as foreign issues.

When it comes to the domestic issues, England of the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries suffered from the presence of foreigners mainly Black Moors. Hence, Elizabeth I, for instance, took some measures to get them banned from her realm even though England had the reputation of being tolerant to the foreigners and a cosmopolitan city like Venice. To show Elizabeth’s position towards the foreigners, here is the letter sent by the Queen herself to the Lord Mayor of London,

An open le[t]tre to the L[ord] Maiour of London and thralermen his brethren, And to all other Maiours, Sheryfes, &c. Her Ma[jes]tie understanding that there are there are of late divers Blackmoores brought into this Realme, of which kinde of people there are allready here to manie, consideringe howe God hath blessed this land w[i]th great increase of people of our owne Nation as anie Countrie in the world, wherof manie for want of Service and meanes to sett them on worck fall to Idlenesse and to great extremitie; Her Ma[jesty]’s pleasure therefore ys, that those kinde of people should be sent for the of the lande. And for that purpose there ys direction given to this bearer Edwarde Banes to take of those Blackmoores wee Req[ui]re you to be aydinge & Assysting unto him as he shall have occacion, and therefore not to faile. (Dasent. Roche. J, 1902:16-7).



In 1601, she complained again about the great numbers of *Negars* and Blackamoors who are crept into this realm. They had given a distorted and defamed image as infidels, having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel; therefore, she ordered and authorized their deportation. (Quoted in Eldred D. Jones, 1971:20). According to Matar in *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (1999), during the Elizabethan and Jacobean Ages the English had plentiful opportunities to meet and trade with the Turks and Moors who visited in great numbers the ports of England and Wales.

As they are portrayed by Shakespeare in his two Venetian-set plays, to the Elizabethans, the Black Moors are villainous, monstrous, lascivious and treacherous characters as the case of Othello in *Othello* and the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice*. What is weird especially in *Othello* is that Shakespeare makes from the Black Moor a protagonist who is endowed with exceptional qualities.

Even though Othello has got a high status in the Venetian society especially his being a respected, noble and powerful soldier, in reality, he is not fully accepted as a Venetian citizen. His physical appearance and exotic culture draw a line of demarcation between him and the other members of Venetian society in the play. Othello gained respect as a successful general who fought both in the Venetian army and that of Cyprus on the one hand, the Venetians saw in him a social inferior and coloured alien who belongs to a different and an inferior race on the other.

In *Othello*, racial clichés are aroused especially in the union of Othello and Desdemona that is opposed by Desdemona's father and even by some Venetians as Iago. The latter used black, exotic, animal and bestial terms to refer to Othello as "an old black ram", "Barbary horse".

We mentioned previously that Othello's marriage with Desdemona corresponds to the unacceptable economic and military union between Queen Elizabeth I and the Infidels (the

Turks and the Kingdom of Morocco). Hence, the character of the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice* and Othello in *Othello* who are described in the plays as gallant military leaders and adventurous can stand for both the Ottoman Sultan Murad III and the Moroccan Sultan Muley Ahmed Al-Mansur. In fact, historically speaking, Both the Islamic Sultans answered Elizabeth's call to gather their efforts in order to weaken the Spaniards and make an end to their continuing threats.

Accordingly, Shakespeare uses Venice to reveal the hidden truths about England, that was not yet an empire like the other European empires. The English society and politics of his time were over-shadowed by threats, anxieties and fear of the 'Other'. The latter concerns the Spaniards and the French in the continental Europe or the Turks and the Moors in the East. Those powers were known as gunpowder empires held power and dominated the international scene. In the same context, Laura Tosi. & Shaul Bassi affirm, "Venice is constructed as a puzzle of utopian and dystopian qualities that gives a hint of what England might become and the way in which it could deal or was already dealing with internal and external conflicts" (2011: 10).

For Elizabethans, to be black, as Othello and the Prince of Morocco, is always being considered as evil, ugly, 'lascivious', untrustworthy, primitive and associated with the devil. This image of course contradicts with the white who is fair, beautiful, intelligent, civilized and pure as the case of Desdemona and Portia.

Othello, the Moor of Venice, is aware of the binary opposition between him and the fair Desdemona. Thus, he confirmed this opposition through his expression, directly after being informed about Desdemona's unfaithfulness, that "Her name, that was as fresh As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black As mine own face" (III, iii.67). Hence, we understand from this that while the white colour stands for all what is good and virtuous, the black colour

signifies all what is evil and vicious. To foster this idea, Emilia said to the dying Desdemona, “O, the more angel she, and you the blacker devil”. (V.ii.111).

In *The Merchant of Venice*, the Prince of Morocco is seen in the same way as Othello. In the Casket scene, when he introduces himself to Portia as her suitor, he asks her to deny his black skin since he is aware of the colour bias. In this context he states:

Mislike me not for my complexion,  
The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,  
To whom I am a neighbour and near bred (II.i.38-39).

Unfortunately, the Prince of Morocco could not change Portia’s fixed stereotypes about the Black Moors as the other Venetians who stand for the Elizabethans and the early Jacobeans. However, this idea can be sustained by Portia’s following passage from *The Merchant of Venice*:

If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart as I can  
bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach.  
If he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil,  
I had rather he should shrive me than wive me (I.ii.32).

To conclude, this chapter of the thesis discussed Italy (the Roman Empire and the City of Venice) and what it represents in the plays of Shakespeare that we have taken under study to Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras. Our analysis of the plays revealed that the Roman Empire served as a model that England should follow in order to build an empire as that of the Romans. In both *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*, we found that the Roman Empire and the British would-be Empire are historically related. For this reason, the English Monarchs were fascinated by the Roman greatness. The Stuart King James VI/I wanted to be named as New Augustus Caesar, the Roman Emperor because his achievement in uniting two realms was his first phase to build an empire as that of the Romans. In addition to Shakespeare’s reference, in his plays, to Rome and the Roman Empire, Venice as a city-state is used as a setting to some of his plays mainly *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*. We can affirm that

Shakespeare's use of Venice is allegorical. This city is employed as a medium through which England's anxieties and fear are exposed and shown in a hidden way. Therefore, while the postcolonial theories focalize on describing the 'Other' who stands for the Black Moors, the Muslims, the Turks and the Arabs in a very negative qualifiers, the reality reflects the opposite. In other words, it is the English realm and its people who suffered from the presence of those strangers who represented a real danger for the English identity, economy and politics. Therefore, at last, we can say in the words of Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi, Venice to which Shakespeare appealed to is a 'city *par excellence*' (2011: 3) that reflects Shakespeare's England and its immediate issues.

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## **Chapter Five: Shakespeare and the Spanish Empire**

“The proud severity of the Spaniard is hated throughout the world” (Thomas. Brady. A. 1991: 11).

Spain had always been England’s political, military, religious enemy and rival since the beginning of the sixteenth century especially after the Protestant Reformation that drew an inaccessible line of demarcation between the two realms. Even though England was taken under the Spanish control for five-year reign of the Queen Mary Tudor when harmony reigned, Francis Drake’s successful and intimidating piracy plagued the Spanish sea-power and this led at last to the defeat of the historical great Spanish Armada in 1588. This important event encouraged and paved the way for England to expand its territories overseas especially to compete with the Spaniards and the other European powers in the New World.

Just a century earlier, the Spanish encouraged and financed Christopher Columbus’s landfall in the New World with the help of the papacy who continued to legitimize his explorations. This, of course, strengthened the *Iberian* (Spain and Portugal) colonization and fuelled their greed to build empires overseas.

The ancient Greeks called Spain *Iberia*, and they regarded that land as the extreme western end of their Mediterranean-based ecumen (Truxillo. Charles A, 2001: 11). Spain’s Mediterranean shores made from it a part of the world of Greece, Carthage, Rome, and North Africa. However, later, when the context changed especially when the Gunpowder Empires (A.D. 1453-1840) emerged, Spain's geographical affiliation changed towards the Atlantic. This Spanish orientation of course was due to its new role in the Indies and its being the defender of the Catholic faith against the Protestant England, rebellious Holland, to the Castilians, and perfidious France (Vives in Truxillo. Charles A, 2001: 11).

Spain came into sight as a strong imperial power in Latin Christendom during the reign of the Catholic Kings (1474-1516), Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile. The historical union of these crowns fused together the *Iberian* peninsula's largest kingdoms, including Aragon's overseas territories like the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

Castile, compared to Aragon, was the greater in terms of territories and population. Even, the kings of Castile were more absolute than those of Aragon. The Catholic Kings' (a title ancient in Spain since Visigothic times) dream was the unification of Hispania by a dynastic union with Portugal. Yet, Portugal and Spain as colonial powers were rivals in terms of expansion while their relation became even more complicated at the end of the sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventeenth century (Hart. Jonathan, 2003:17). However, if we can consider history, in 1128, the county of Portugal declared its independence from Leon and Castile. Pope Alexander III called the Portuguese leader, Afonso Henriques (1128-1185), the king of Portugal in 1179. In 1249, the Portuguese succeeded in expelling the Moors and have a unified national territory. Yet, in 1383, when King Ferdinand, the last of the Afonsina dynasty, died, John I of Castile attempted to take Portugal, unfortunately for the Castile, John, prince of Aviz, was victorious in resisting the Castilian assault. This victory did not last for a long time since the Aviz dynasty was thrown into chaos on August 1578 when King Sebastian died in battle at Alcazarquivir in North Africa when he planned to invade Morocco. Just after the Sebastian's uncle death, Cardinal Henry, in 1580, the Philippine dynasty reigned: Philip II of Spain was Philip I of Portugal until 1640 (J. D. Y Peel, trans by Appleby Holt quoted in Hart. Jonathan, 2003: 18).

Indeed, in 1580, Philip II (1556-1598) of Spain's dream came real and his goal was finally achieved when he annexed Portugal. The union with Portugal was not permanent, lasting only sixty years (1580-1640) since the cost of defending Portugal's overseas possessions

in Africa, Brazil, and Asia from Castile's Protestant enemies was beyond the Catholic Monarchy's means. The Portuguese looked for the first opportunity to secede, which came in 1640 after the revolt of the Catalans. Those were the terrible years of crisis for Castile (Elliot quoted in Charles. Truxillo. A, 2001: 37).

As regard to the overseas explorations and territories, for the Iberian powers, the sea was closed and the world was effectively divided between them (Hart. Jonathan, 2003: 54). Spain envied the other European nations except Portugal to settle in the New World; though, it could not stop the French, the English, the Dutch and the others from pursuing their economic interests and founding colonies there. Therefore, Spain claimed to be the greatest power both in Europe and the New World in the sixteenth century. Hence, this position made from Spain a vulnerable prey for piracy and conflict over trade (Ibid: 80).

## **The Origins of the Anglo-Spanish Conflict**

Paul Kennedy explained that the dynamic expansion of late medieval Europe continued into the modern era because “the manifold rivalries of the European states, already acute, were spilling over into transoceanic spheres” (Quoted in Thomas. Brady. A. et al, 1991, 199: 121).

Accordingly, the conflict between England and Spain goes back to 1531 when King Henry VIII declared himself the head of both the Church and the state of England under The Act of Supremacy in 1534 and created an Anglican Protestant Church independent from the Roman Catholic one. The second King in the Tudor line Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church in order to divorce Catherine of Aragon, the Spanish Queen.

After the death of Henry, his daughter with Catherine of Aragon became the Queen of England since her father's unique heir died at an early age. The newly crowned Queen Mary married King Phillip II of Spain in order to restore Catholicism again in England. This did not



last longer since she died five years later. She was succeeded by her half-sister Elizabeth I. She always tried to maintain good relations with Spain, but, unfortunately, John Hawkins and Francis Drake's piracy ravaged the Spanish ships between 1577 and 1580 what helped the rise of English nationalism but hindered the establishment of peace between these two European powers. In other words, the Anglo-Spanish relations declined after the succession of Elizabeth I to the throne of England.

Spain became very powerful especially after the annexation of Portugal in 1580 and this had reinforced the Spanish naval power (Iberian power). At the same time, England became more interested in developing its maritime enterprise what created conflict of interests between the two strong empires.

The reigns of the Spanish Catholic Kings and the Holy Emperor Charles V coincide with the Age of Discovery, Exploration, and Conquest. This period pioneered by Cristopher Columbus who discovered the New World, and ended with the abdication of Charles V. From 1492 until 1519, the Spaniards based their interests on the main Caribbean islands-Hispaniola, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Besides, they explored the mainland coasts of Venezuela, Central America, and Florida. (Truxillo. Charles. A, 2001: 65).

The Protestant Reformation was the emperor's most serious problem. As a Catholic Monarch, Charles V could not tolerate heresy whatever the reason, even though, he showed his agreement with the Protestants that the Church needed to be reformed. Furthermore, Protestantism questioned the very foundations of the imperial ideal of "one faith, one emperor, one sword". As a result, the new challenging circumstances that infiltrated in the body of Christendom provoked Charles's frustration and rushed his decision to abdicate in 1555 (Brandi quoted in Charles Truxillo. A, 2001: 41).

Charles V divided his kingdom when he decided to give up his reign. He gave the imperial title and the ancestral lands of Austria to his brother, Ferdinand I (1556-64). While to his son, Philip, the Emperor bestowed his most powerful and richest realms as Spain, the Netherlands, and Italy. Philip II's Catholic Monarchy was the most widespread empire in the world and Europe when considering the Spanish territories in the New World and Portugal's possessions in 1580. Considering himself as the defender of the Catholic faith, Philip II of Spain led a campaign of the Catholic Counter-Reformation by funding war against the True Faith's enemies at home and abroad. Therefore, the palace-monastery of the Escorial became a commending court of Crusade and *Reconquista* (Kamen in Charles Truxillo. A, 2001: 42).

During Philip's reign (1556-1598), his pursuit of establishing a Catholic Universal State was fueled by overseas' treasures of Mexico's and Peru's mines that filled Castile's coffers. Indeed, Castile's traditional economy reached its zenith and prosperity, and the kingdom's population boomed and attained nearly eight million. Fleets of over three hundred warships were maintained in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and costly land forces, numbering nearly two hundred thousand men made the burden of the empire so weighty. Philip went to impose burdensome taxes on his Castilian subjects what pushed Philip's glorious empire go bankrupt (Truxillo. Charles A, 2001: 42).

When European sea-adventurers diverted their interests from the East to the south-east coast of North America, it was the Spanish who were the pioneers who marked their existence in the region with the Portuguese. Their presence in the New Discovered World drew other European powers like England to challenge the Spain's claims there and even to compete with it in Europe.

England's jealousy followed a strategy of imitating and at the same time contesting the Spanish strong imperial power when encouraging the attacks of the Spanish ships and its

possessions in the New World. However, the first English attack on St Augustine weakened the colony and even the Spanish power in the North American Coast (Grady. P, 2010: 11).

In the first decade of the seventeenth century, England continually began to challenge Spain's possessions in the region. The Spanish in St Augustine, a Spanish colony established in Florida in 1565 to protect their colonies in the Caribbean and South America from any possible European rivals, reported the English endeavors at Roanoke in the 1580s and the 1607 for the establishment of the colony at Jamestown.

The English presence in the areas near to St Augustine and the possibility of the English clash with the Spanish interests there kept the Spanish officials in Florida vigilant. But, the founding of Charleston in 1670 by the English showed to what extent Spanish authority in the region marked its end giving the floor to growing seventeenth century English and French influences.

The first English initiatives to establish colonies in the New World have been undertaken by Richard Grenville who sailed to the Americas and found the first English colony Roanoke that previously belonged to the Spanish. This provoked a reaction from the Spanish front what pushed Philip to seize all the English ships in Iberian ports (Ibid). The English protested this act of injustice by encouraging Francis Drake to attack the Spanish port of Vigo, Santiago in the Cape Verde islands, and Santo Domingo in Hispaniola on the Queen's orders (Quinn in Paul Grady, 2010: 14).

The first direct confrontation between the two nations in the region, when the rivalry between Elizabeth I of England and Philip II of Spain was at its height, took place in Florida in 1586. After the settlement of La Florida in 1565 by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, the Spanish planned to put St Augustine as a small military outpost on the northeast coast of the Florida peninsula whose capitol was Santa Elena. St Augustine was not only subject to the English threat, but

also to a group of French Huguenots who set a small colony called Fort Caroline along the south-eastern coast of North America in 1564 (Grady. P, 2010: 14: 12).

Between 1593 and 1595, Spain was obliged to quieten the Irish rebellions, his Catholic allies turned to Philip for support. In the meantime, Drake continued his raids in the Indies but this time were unfruitful since the Spanish were well-prepared and warned. In 1596, Drake died at sea and in the same year, Spain captured Calais through the Channel, Essex attacked and pillaged Cadiz. The English tried to find another alternative to threaten the Spanish; hence, in 1596 and 1597, the English navy left England to support the rebellious Irish but it was driven back by the storms.

After providing a brief history of the Anglo-Spanish encounter in both the Old and the New Worlds, it is convenient to know how this encounter is represented and portrayed in Shakespeare's plays under study as *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-1610) as well as *The Tempest* (1611). This can be achieved only if we make use of the theory that we have opted for which is Stephen Greenblatt's New historicism that views a literary text as the product of the immediate circumstances of the period in which it is written.

In this part of discussion, we will put some of Shakespeare's Mediterranean plays, previously referred to, under scrutiny to prove that they were not just destined for entertaining the English audience, but also to perform history. To succeed in doing so, let us start with *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-1598). At the first glance and as the title indicates, the event of the play took place in the City-State of Venice .i.e. in the Mediterranean basin while its concern is commerce and trade. Yet, when we open the play to try to understand more, we find that it is typically a play through which we can imagine and why not witness what was the atmosphere of trade at the time of Shakespeare.

If we go back to history, we can affirm that the first English seed to build an empire was trade rather than fame and glory. James VII firmly believed that war and glory were bad for business, and that business was good for the state. He, therefore, avoided quarrels either with Scotland in the north, or Spain and France in the south. Moreover, only a year after his victory at Bosworth in 1485, Henry VII made an important trade agreement with many of the other countries, which allowed English trade to grow again after it had been damaged by the Wars of the Roses. Elizabeth I, in fact, adopted the strategy to gather wealth to the nation after being exhausted from the foreign Spanish control during the reign of her half-sister Mary Tudor. She started her plan by chartering different companies to regulate trade with many foreign powers and empires. These latter are, the Turkey Company (1581) renamed Levant Company in 1592, the Barbary Company (1585) and the East India Company (1600).

If we start discussing the play, *The Merchant of Venice* opens with the scene of Antonio's, one of the famous merchants in Venice, incomprehensible worries and agonies when he declares in his dialogue with his friend Salarino:

**Antonio:** In sooth I know not why I am so sad.  
It wearies me, you say it wearies you;  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn.  
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,  
That I have much ado to know myself.  
**Salarino:** Your mind is tossing on the ocean,  
There where your argosies with portly sail  
Like signors and rich burghers on the flood,  
Or as it were the pageants of the sea,  
Do overpeer the petty traffickers  
That curtesy to them, do them reverence,  
As they fly by them with their woven wings (I.i.23).

As a proof that a play is about trade activities and money, Antonio is upset because of his trade ships that he is afraid to lose. On top of that, Bassanio, his best friend, asked him for money

since he could not venture without the help of Antonio with the other rich suitors in the contest to win his true love Portia, a rich heiress from Belmont.

**Bassanio:** In Belmont is a lady richly left;  
And she is fair, and fairer than that word,  
Of wondrous virtues. Sometimes from her eyes  
I did receive fair speechless messages.  
Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued  
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia;  
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,  
For the four winds blow in from every coast  
Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks  
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,  
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strond,  
And many Jasons come in quest of her.  
O my Antonio, had I but the means  
To hold a rival place with one of them,  
I have a mind presages me such thrift  
That I should questionless be fortunate! (I.ii: 29).

Indeed, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare made use of many words that have a direct link with trade like; commodity, money, fortune, gold, silver, lead, estate, merchandise, venture, traffic. These words were recurrently used in England at that time. Money for Bassanio is the most important pre-requisite to gain Portia's acceptance; therefore, Bassanio's love to Portia is not enough, so by his high estate, he can win the fair rich Lady of Belmont.

A wealthy heir from Belmont, Portia's fortune, beauty and her intelligence magnetized many suitors from different corners of the world to ask her hand. However, she wanted to fulfill her father's will that is marrying the suitor who chooses the right casket from the three.

Portia played a very important role in the play since she is the one who orients the course of its events and she even influences the other characters. She is not used in the play haphazardly, but Shakespeare wanted her to represent Queen Elizabeth who held a great place in her kingdom.

Portia's marriage scene reflects Elizabeth and her government's impasse. They faced two major challenges at the very outset of her reign, which are the issue of religion and the Queen's marriage. These issues, we may say, have been echoed in *The Merchant of Venice*.

According to historical facts, England saw from the marriage of Elizabeth an urgent issue; therefore, they urged her to choose a husband. Nevertheless, this affair was really complicated. Elizabeth I encountered a real dilemma. On the one hand, if she chooses to marry one of her subjects who is of a lower position to her; hence, this does not suit her as a Queen. In this context, she answers Nerissa's question:

**Nerissa:** What say you then to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

**Portia:** You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor penny-worth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, but alas who can converse with a dumb show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere. (I.ii.31).

On the other hand, if she marries to a foreigner, then, this means to make England at the mercy of a foreign control. What made things worse for her was the bad experience of Mary I and Philip II of Spain's marriage that confirmed the danger of marrying a foreign prince and putting England between the hands of the "stranger". This event is referred to in *The Merchant of Venice* when *Servingman* said to *Portia*: *The four strangers seek for you, madam, to take their leave* (I.ii.32, italics mine).

**Portia:** If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions; I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree - such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband. O me, the word 'choose'! I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike, so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none? (I.ii.29)

**Nerissa:** Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men at their death have good inspirations. Therefore the lottery that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will no doubt never be chosen by any rightly but one who you shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come? Portia I pray thee over-name them, and as thou namest them I will describe them - and according to my description, level at my affection. (I.ii.29-30).

At the end, in order to protect her realm and preserve her chastity, Elizabeth chose to marry to her Kingdom and here is the Elizabeth's declaration:

But now that the publick Care of governing the Kingdom is laid upon me, to draw upon me also the Cares of Marriage may seem a point of inconsiderate Folly. Yea, to satisfie you, I have already joyned my self in Marriage to an Husband, namely, the Kingdom of England. And behold (said she, which I marvell ye have forgotten) the Pledge of this my Wedlock and Marriage with my Kingdom. (And therewith she drew the Ring from her Finger and shewed it, wherewith at her Coronation she had in a set form of words solemnly given herself in Marriage to her Kingdom (Camden .W quoted in Doran.S, 2003: 1-2).

The above declaration is even echoed in *The Merchant of Venice* through dialogue between Portia and Nerissa, her Gentlewoman:

**Nerissa:** You need not fear, Lady, the having any of these lords. They have acquainted me with their determinations, which is indeed to return to their home, and to trouble you with no more suit unless you may be won by some other sort than your father's imposition, depending on the caskets.

**Portia:** If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable, for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence; and I pray God grant them a fair departure (I.ii.31-32).

In the plays, Portia's foreign suitors as the Duke of Venice, Bassanio, a Venecian scholar and soldier, the Prince of Morocco or simply Morocco, and the Prince of Aragon (Spain) refer to Elizabeth I's suitors after her becoming a Queen of England.

In this chapter, our emphasis is put on Spain and its relation with the English in Shakespeare's plays. Therefore, we are trying to study deeply the Spanish suitor, the representative of Spain and the King Philip II, Prince of Aragon, and his relation with Portia, the spokesperson of Elizabeth I, the Queen of England.

Boutheldja Riche explained that when *The Merchant of Venice* was written in the 1590s, for the English, the Spaniards were not much different from the Moors (Morocco) since Spaniards at the time were referred to as "White Moriscoes" in English anti-Spanish propaganda. The Spanish association with the Moors was due to the long presence of Moors in Spain and because of that, the Spanish were considered as a corrupt hybrid race (2012:5).



Prince of Arragon is an 'arrogant' Spanish nobleman who also attempts to win Portia's hand by picking a casket. The Prince of Arragon has arrived to Belmont to test his fortune in choosing the right casket. He chooses unwisely and picks the silver casket, which gives him a message calling him an idiot rather than offering him Portia's hand.

If we take into account some historical data, the Prince of Arragon, stands for Philip II of Spain or the Spaniards; a strong western empire, who pursues Portia's/ Queen Elizabeth I's hand. This marriage proposal had an objective behind, which is to annex Britain, as an emerging empire, to its Catholic League.

Portia, like the Queen Elizabeth, is haunted by the fear of the foreign attacks from different fronts, especially from Spain that is why Shakespeare describes her as anxious before and during the scene of the caskets.

Spain was much more powerful than England. Hence, Elizabeth's fear of Spanish threat was growing and it would be of great importance to keep it on its own side. Philip II of Spain was capable to do the worse, mainly to leverage his huge wealth into supporting a Catholic rebellion in England that would replace Elizabeth with a catholic monarch, Mary, Queen of Scots.

Philip II of Spain wanted strongly England to be his own through a continuum asking of Elizabeth for marriage. Unfortunately, she rejected his offers of marriage each time (Pollard. A. F, 1990:41). Hence, Shakespeare succeeded in *The Merchant of Venice* in mirroring the Elizabeth's categorical refusal of Philip when she, through Portia, expressed her disgust of Philip recidivistic offers. In other expression, Portia gave her suitors a condition before they choose the caskets. Thus, suitors have the right to not to choose at all, or if they fail when they choose, they should be obliged to leave immediately.

**Portia:** You must take your chance,  
And either not attempt to choose at all  
Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong,  
Never to speak to lady afterward  
In way of marriage: therefore be advised (II.i.40).

Behold, there stand the caskets, noble Prince.  
If you choose that wherein I am contained,  
Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemnized;  
But if you fail, without more speech, my lord,  
You must be gone from hence immediately (II.ii.58).

Prince of Arragon addressed Portia in a very courteous manner in the hope of making her accept him. If we can make use of historical events, Philip II of Spain tried to convince Queen Elizabeth to be with him in the same front (Catholic Universal State) and to make the same mistake that her half-sister Mary I made when she married to him and put England under his control.

Once he is in front the caskets, the Prince of Arragon directly rejects the lead casket, as it does not deserve to venture one's fortune. He also rejects the gold casket because gold is the more appreciated of all metals that all men may opt for, "what many men desire". In addition, if he does so, this may put him at the same level with "the barbarous multitudes". However, his choice falls on the silver casket that bears the inscription, "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves". Arragon's arrogance, exaggerated self-esteem and self-confidence lead him to believe that he is the only one who deserves the heiress of Belmont 'Portia', but when he opens the silver casket, he finds within "the portrait of a blinking idiot", a picture of a fool's head. Suddenly, the Spanish prince's dream of Portia became a nightmare. This led him to change his tone and protest,

**Arragon:** What's here? The portrait of a blinking idiot  
Presenting me a schedule! I will read it.  
How much unlike art thou to Portia!  
How much unlike my hopes and my deservings!  
Who chooseth me shall have as much as he deserves.  
Did I deserve no more than a fool's head?  
Is that my prize? Are my deserts no better? (II.ii.59).

What is here?  
The fire seven times tried this;  
Seven times tried that judgment is  
That did never choose amiss.  
Some there be that shadows kiss;  
Such have but a shadow's bliss.  
There be fools alive iwis,

Silvered o'er, and so was this.  
Take what wife you will to bed,  
I will ever be your head.  
So be gone; you are sped.  
Still more fool I shall appear  
By the time I linger here.  
With one fool's head I came to woo,  
But I go away with two.  
Sweet, adieu. I'll keep my oath,  
Patiently to bear my wroth. (II.ii.60).

If we try to associate history to literature or more precisely Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*, the marriage scene when the prince of Arragon has tried his luck, he did not choose the silver casket randomly. Hence, Shakespeare wanted to show the significance of silver to the Spaniards.

Historical archives stipulate that the foundation of the expansionism of Philip II's reign was its flourishing Spanish-Atlantic economy that was fueled by the riches of the New World mainly silver. The latter, coming from the Americas, filled the Spanish coffers and empowered the Spanish dominance and reputation as a strong empire dominating many overseas dominions. In this concern, J. H. Elliott states:

America and of a Castile which itself received regular injections of silver from the silver-mines of the New World. During the last decade of the sixteenth century American silver was still reaching Spain in very large quantities, and the port of Seville had an undeniable air of prosperity; but the comforting appearances masked the beginning of a radical change in the structure of the entire Spanish-Atlantic system (2002:193).

Accordingly, during Philip's reign (1556-1598), his pursuit of establishing a Catholic Universal State was fueled by overseas' treasures of Mexico's and Peru's mines that filled Castile's coffers. (Garay 1944 in Truxillo. Charles A, 2001: 42).

In fact, Castile's traditional economy reached its zenith and prosperity, and the kingdom's population boomed and attained nearly eight million. Fleets of over three hundred warships were maintained in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and costly land forces, numbering nearly two hundred thousand men made the burden of the empire so weighty. Philip went to

impose burdensome taxes on his Castilian subjects what pushed Philip's glorious empire go bankrupt (Truxillo. Charles A, 2001: 42).

When European sea-adventurers diverted their interests from the East to the southeast coast of North America, it was the Spanish who were the pioneers who marked their existence in the region with the Portuguese. Their presence in the New Discovered World drew other European powers like England to challenge the Spain's claims there and even to compete with it in Europe.

Indeed, the policy of plunder started first with Francis Drake who made his fame as a famous English privateer that ravaged the Spanish colonies throughout the Caribbean during the 1570s and 1580s. As early as 1572, Drake succeeded to sack the Spanish port of Nombre de Dios on the Atlantic coast of what is known today Panama. A year later, the governor of the town, Pedro de Ortega Valencia, reacted and wrote of the threat of English activity along the coast stimulating uprisings against the Spanish, asserting that the entire coast was "beset by such bold English corsairs, little afraid of any offense that can be done them from here" (Quinn quoted in Grady. P, 2010: 13) Spanish officials looked at English threats with increasing fury, but the situation kept Philip from taking overt action (Ibid).

Philip's silence helped the English ships to become more hostile. Francis Drake plundered also Nombre de Dios by leading an expedition in 1578 to go around the globe. During the voyage, Drake and his fleet rounded the tip of South America, sailed up the Pacific coast of South and North America where they conquered Valparaiso, attacked Spanish shipping, and the Indies (Grady. P, 2010: 12).

The Spanish complained to Elizabeth for what was happening in the Americas because of Drake's activities and assaults on the Spanish ships and possessions. They reacted to the

English attacks by interfering in Ireland and the Spanish support of the Catholics in England against her, Elizabeth's rule.

The Spanish complaints to Elizabeth did not stop the English attacks on the Spanish ships and overseas' claims. On the contrary, by the 1580s, Elizabeth started to encourage aggressively the assaults of the source of much of Spain's wealth. The Queen of England knighted Sir Francis Drake to lead a voyage around the world. Drake's fleet of twenty-five ships sailed in late 1585 as a response to Philip's embargo of English shipping and set course for the West Indies. For the rest of 1585, and through the first half of 1586, Drake attacked a series of Spanish cities. In 1585, his fleet sacked Vigo in Spain and sailed to the Cape Verde Islands and took the city of São Tiago. Directly to the Caribbean, Drake attacked and sacked Santo Domingo and Cartagena (Parke in, Grady. P, 2010: 14). After taking Cartagena, Drake surprised many by turning north, towards La Florida, and struck St Augustine.

These raids contributed to the building of the English Empire. This was apparent in the words of Quinn and Ryan in their book *England's Sea Empire* when they affirmed:

Strong young English seaborne empire was given birth to thanks to men who had participated in the promotion of the drive for transoceanic trade and plunder; afloat its conduct was largely in the hands of men whose maritime experience had been accumulated in the same movement (Quoted in Thomas. Brady. A. et al, 1991: 69).

In addition to the political and economic reasons behind the Anglo-Spanish disturbed relations, the execution of Mary, Catholic Queen of Scots in 1587, raised the anger of Pope Sixtus V who proclaimed a Catholic crusade for the invasion of England, and Philip wanted to play the role of an avenger of martyred Mary's death. Meanwhile, in the other side of the world, Drake followed his series of raids. He plundered the Caribbean and Cadiz and even he damaged twenty four Spanish ships.

England's jealousy followed a strategy of imitating and at the same time contesting the Spanish strong power when encouraging the attacks of the Spanish ships and its possessions in the New World. Therefore, the first English attack on St Augustine weakened the colony and even the Spanish power in the North American Coast (Grady. P, 2010: 11).

William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* was written between 1594 and 1598, but 1596 seems to be the most conceivable date of composition. In September 1598, Francis Meres published his *Palladis Tamia*, in which he referred to Shakespeare especially *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare mentions a ship called the St. Andrew, a real Spanish ship captured in the attack of Essex on Cadiz in 1596. This ship's seize reflects the Elizabethan strategy to weaken the Spanish economy and sea power. Therefore, following the chronological order of events, it is evident that the play was written around 1596/7 (Dobson. M & Wells. S, 2001:288). This can be seen through Salerio's words when he says,

**Salarino:** My wind cooling my broth  
Would blow me to an ague when I thought  
What harm a wind too great might do at sea.  
I should not see the sandy hourglass run  
But I should think of shallows and of flats,  
And see my wealthy *Andrew* docked in sand,  
Vailing her high top lower than her ribs  
To kiss her burial (I.i.23, italics mine).

Unlike Desdemona who fell under Othello's spells, Portia is portrayed as a strong, clever, and pragmatic woman who resisted her different suitors who tried their best to seduce and impress her especially the prince of Morocco who spoke about his heroic adventures and romances in the casket's scene.

In line with Bouteldja Riche's historical significance of Shakespeare's play *Othello*, in his article "William Shakespeare's Cross-Generic Representation of Empires: A Reconsideration of Some Classic Postcolonial Readings of his Drama" who succeeded in considering some historical facts in relation to aforementioned play, we shall not deny the relation between the

Elizabeth and the Ottoman Empire. Regardless of the disparity between the Christians and the Muslims, Queen Elizabeth became the first English monarch who saw from the Muslim Turks, under the reign of Sultan Murad III, an interesting ally. Elizabeth by soliciting the Turks for help adopted the strategy of the enemy's enemy is a friend. Elizabeth was fully aware of the struggle between Spain and the Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean region, which ended just after the battle of Lepanto in 1571. Even though the victory was for the Christians (Spaniards), the Ottomans rapidly reconstructed their fleet and the conflict intensified by capturing Tunis in 1574 since the port city of Tunis was strategic to the Spaniards to reach the eastern Mediterranean.

These historical events did not skip Shakespeare's mind and imagination what pushed him to portray them, in an artistic and genuine way, when writing his *Othello*. In Venice/Elizabethan England, where the first events took place in the play, the Council, the Duke of Venice and his senators, receive the news that the Turkish fleet which stands for the Spanish Armada is in its direction to Rhodes, but at first, they believe it just as "a false gaze" (I.iii.14). Another messenger delivers another message from the Signior Montano, governor of Cyprus, that his island is surely the target of the Turkish armada. This idea can be sustained by evidence from *Othello* which is the following:

**Sailor** ... What ho! What ho! What ho!

Officer: A messenger from the galleys.

**Duke:** Now, what's the business?

**Sailor:** The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes;

So was I bid report here to the state

By Signior Angelo.

**Duke:** How say you by this change?

I Senator: This cannot be,

By no assay of reason. 'Tis a pageant

To keep us in false gaze. When we consider

The importancy of Cyprus to the Turk,

We must not think the Turk is so unskilful

To leave that latest which concerns him first,

Neglecting an attempt of ease and gain

To wake and wage a danger profitless.

**Duke:** Nay, in all confidence he's not for Rhodes.

**Messenger:** The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,

Steering with due course toward the isle of Rhodes (I.iii.14).

**I Senator:** Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance  
Their purposes toward Cyprus. Signior Montano,  
Your trusty and most valiant servitor,  
With his free duty recommends you thus,  
And prays you to believe him.  
**Duke:** 'Tis certain then for Cyprus (I.iii.15).

The council in Venice answered immediately Signior Montano's call for help. That night, the Duke agreed upon sending Othello to Cyprus, "Valiant Othello we must straight employ you/ Against the general enemy Ottoman" (I.iii.15), accompanied by Desdemona, Brabantio's daughter as Othello requested;

So please your grace, my ancient:  
A man he is of honesty and trust.  
To his conveyance I assign my wife,  
With what else needful your good grace shall think  
To be sent after me.  
**Duke:** Let it be so (I.iii.23).

The Elizabeth's military alliance with Sultan Murad III can reflect Desdemona's matrimonial union with Othello, the "turned Turk" of Venice. The defeat of the "Turkish" fleet on its way to Cyprus, a Venetian colony, reflects the destruction of the Spanish Armada by a violent storm on its way to England (English Channel) in 1588 as it is shown in the following dialogue between Montano and Gentleman:

**Montano:** Methinks the wind does speak aloud at land,  
A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements.  
If it hath ruffianed so upon the sea,  
What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,  
Can hold the mortise? What shall we hear of this?

**Gentleman:** A segregation of the Turkish fleet:  
For do but stand upon the banning shore,  
The chidden billow seems to pelt the clouds;  
The wind-shaked surge, with high and monstrous mane,  
Seems to cast water on the burning Bear  
And quench the guards of th'ever-fixèd Pole.  
I never did like molestation view  
On the enchafèd flood.

**Montano** If that the Turkish fleet  
Be not ensheltered and embayed, they are *drowned*:  
It is impossible they bear it out.

**Gentleman** News, lads! Our wars are done:  
*The desperate tempest hath so banged the Turks*



That their designment halts. A noble ship of Venice  
Hath seen a grievous wrack and sufferance  
On most part of their fleet (II.i.27).

**Montano:** I am glad on't; 'tis a worthy governor.

**Gentleman:** But this same Cassio, though he speak of comfort  
Touching *the Turkish loss*, yet he looks sadly  
And prays the Moor be safe; for they were parted  
With foul and *violent tempest* (II.i.28, italics mine).

Bouteldja Riche appeals to the English translation of Ariosto's romance (1591) to refer to the English history, especially to Queen Elizabeth who is omnipresent in the English history as Bradamante in Ariosto's romance as a warrior Queen who devoted her life to serving her people and saving her realm from her rival enemies. Riche affirms that "Shakespeare's use of Ariosto's romance and wit as intertext in *Othello* is obvious" (2012.9). He gives even evidences from the play especially the through the used labels that refer Desdemona like "my fair warrior", "the captain's captain." She can also be referred to the fairy queen or why not the Queen of "fairness and wit" (II.i.31).

Shakespeare's use of the villain and dishonest character Iago (Yago) is a threat to the stability of the play and to Othello's union with Desdemona, and of Venice that stands for Elizabethan England. Iago tried and succeeded in provoking Othello's jealousy to kill his beloved wife and disturb the order and peace of the City of Venice. If we try to make a reference to Elizabethan reign, we can believe that the ones who sow the seeds of danger among the Elizabethan subjects at that time were the catholic plotters who tried to empoison the public opinion about the Queen Elizabeth and corrupt her image as the illegitimate Queen who usurped the English throne. They wanted to satiate their thirst of seeing her murdered and replaced by the catholic princess Mary of Scots who was supported by Phillip of Spain's Catholic League.

Another interpretation, which we think possible, is that Iago 'viper', 'villain', 'demi-devil' as a malicious character in *Othello* can rhyme with Rodrigo López, "a Portuguese former

physician in chief to Elizabeth I. He was accused of plotting with Spanish emissaries to poison the Queen” (Dobson. M & Wells. S, 2001:288). Hence, to sustain this stance, it is convenient to appeal to some historical records to speculate about Portugal’s association with Spain. The latter’s attempt to annex Portugal was fruitful; however, Philip II of Spain (the Philippine dynasty) was Philip I of Portugal who reigned just after the Sebastian’s uncle death, Cardinal Henry, in 1580.

Before going to analyze another play of Shakespeare, it is worth saying that it was believed that *Othello* was the first play to be performed on the English stage after the succession of James I to the throne of England. we think that Shakespeare, in writing this play, wanted James I of England and the VI of Scotland (the foreign king) to be acquainted with some deep and meticulous details about the English history. Since James I, the Stuart king, is a man of books, so this may serve him as a potential predisposition to understand the hidden side of Elizabethan England. Therefore, Shakespeare gave him an overview about the events that happened in England before his coronation as a king of England.

Shakespeare, in *Othello*, made use of many Spanish words such as ‘Holla’, ‘Diablo’ and even mentioned the Spanish sword, “It was a sword of Spain, the ice brook’s temper (V.ii.116) that means a sword of a very best quality.

In 1598 Philip II died, leaving his world monarchy to a weak son, Philip III (1598-1621). Worse was yet to come as defeat followed defeat (Truxillo. Charles A, 2001: 44). In fact, even though the Spanish sea power was weakened by a series of losses, they were still powerful since they took hold of the France’s channel ports and Lisbon in addition to its overseas possessions. In other words, a period of decline followed the Spaniards’ victory in the European mainland did not reduce their prestige and place in the Americas (Hart. Jonathan, 2003:106). In fact, Spanish power had been declining from the defeat of the armada to 1621, but it was still a strong power. From 1621 to 1640, Spain began to disintegrate when France and England’s efforts to established permanent colonies in North America were undertaken.

This helped France and England to become competitors in North America, and this is just one aspect of that rivalry (Ibid: 87).

Spain and England's quarrel came to its term after the death of Elizabeth I in 1603 and the ascension of James I to the throne. Hence, the war that was raised between Philip and Elizabeth was over.

Even though the relations between the two countries overshadowed by conflicts over the Americas since the English were searching to establish permanent colonies there, James directly after his succession initiated to improve relations with Spain especially with Philip III, who succeeded his father to the throne of Spain in 1598 (Grady. P, 2010: 16).

The new crowned King of England wanted at first to establish peace by signing a peace treaty between the two strong powers in 1604. However, four years later, after the Act of Succession 1604 of the King James I of England and the VI of Scotland to the throne of England, the Spanish army was chased from the Irish soil and forced to surrender to the English at Kinsala.

When Spanish power started to decline, the English New World emerged and mirrored in the English literature. English writers tried to portray the colonists' journeys with the Native inhabitants of the Americas. The English writers such as Shakespeare, Fletcher, Bacon and Godwin portrayed in an accurate image the conflicting concerns of the government and church, the rising of Protestant power, political intrigues as well as the English relations to catholic Christendom especially the Catholic Spain.

The Spaniard and Native encounter in the New World and the rivalries grown between it and its European neighbours made the situation complicated for the Spaniards. Spanish power became an inescapable subject in the New World French, English and the other rivals' texts. It was

considered as the model that stimulated envy and emulation at the same time. Nevertheless, their representation in the European manuscripts was contradictory; however, on the one hand, Spaniards were represented as heroic, while on the other, they were portrayed as cruel. Therefore, Ambivalence and contradiction complicated the English and French texts that represented Spain which was “an example to follow and avoid” (Hart. Jonathan, 2003: 89).

Indeed, Shakespeare in his drama employed some characters who are directly taken from the Imperial Spain. Gonzalo, Sebastian, Ferdinand, Antonio, Alonso.

J.H. Elliott ‘s book entitled *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (2002) studied deeply the history of Spain in which he supplied us with the names of the Spanish historical figures who shaped the history of Europe in general and Spain in particular. Since history finds its way through literature, we can state that Shakespeare delved into some historical facts to make them alive, vivid again and immortal through his drama.

If we provide the example of *The Tempest*, we notice that most of the characters’ names, employed by Shakespeare are named after some political influential figures who contributed in the fashioning of the Spanish empire.

Gonzalo, an honest old counsellor in *The Tempest* stands for Gonzalo Pérez, a trained, skilled and experienced secretarial official who was known as an excellent Latinist and a highly intellectual man appointed as secretary to Prince Philip in 1543. From this time onwards “he was in Philip's constant service, minting his correspondence and deciphering his confidential dispatches” (Elliott.H.J, 2002:173). As the only skillful secretary of State, Pérez became very influential to the extent that even Antonio Pérez, his illegitimate son, was appointed to be the secretary of *Italia*, the southern department just after his father’s death while *Norte*, the northern department, went to a Basque, Gabriel de Zayas.

In fact Gonzalo, in both *The Tempest* and reality is portrayed as honest. This can be shown through Prospero’s words;

By Providence divine.

Some food we had and some fresh water that  
A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,  
Out of his charity,--who being then appointed  
Master of this design,--did give us, with  
Rich garments, linens, stuffs, and necessities,  
Which since have steaded much: so, of his gentleness,  
Knowing I lov'd my books, he furnish'd me,  
From mine own library with volumes that  
I prize above my dukedom (I.i.32)

The commander in the Granada campaign, the Great Captain Gonzalo de Córdoba led an expedition to Sicily and took Calabria in 1495. During his Italian campaigns of 1495-1497 and 1501-1504 realized great achievements what led Elliott to describe him as, “Gonzalo was to show himself a commander of genius, quick to learn the lessons taught him by the enemy, and to apply them to his own troops. As a result, just as these years saw the creation of a professional diplomatic service that would serve Spain well for many years to come, so also they saw the creation of a professional army, whose skill and esprit de corps were to win Spain its great victories of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (Elliott, 2002:92).

Another character, Alonso who played the role of King of Naples refers to Alonso de Valdés; the Spanish Emperor's secretary. He can also stand for Alfonso, difference in ‘f’ of Portugal who was a widower and Isabella’s suitor. Alfonso is described by Elliott as “the Magnanimous, master of the Mediterranean,” (2002:21). Alfonso, the king of Naples descended from a junior branch of the house of Aragon. He entered Naples in 1443. The claiming of Naples was seen by Ferdinand a triumph for the ‘Aragonese’s foreign policy, but unfortunately in 1495, Naples had fallen to the French King Charles VIII (Ibid:30).

Shakespeare’s Sebastian, Alonso’s brother, stands for the King of Portugal, Don Sebastian of Portugal who had been killed in the battle of Alcazar (Alcazarquivir) in Wadi al-Makhazin (Kingdom of Morocco) in 1578. While Antonio, in the play, refers to Gonzalo's illegitimate son, Antonio Pérez.

Ferdinand, the son to the King of Naples, stands for Ferdinand, King of Sicily and heir to the throne of Aragon. Ferdinand is a son and heir of John II of Aragon who got married with

Isabella (heiress of Castile) in January 1469 and unified the two royal houses (Aragon and Castile). They formalized a Castilian-Aragonese alliance and realizing what John II had been vigorously dreamt of. King Ferdinand was famous for his achievements to the extent that Machiavelli spoke about him when he stated, “We have in our days, Ferdinand, King of Aragon, the present King of Spain, who may, not improperly, be called a new prince, since he has been transformed from a small and weak king into the greatest monarch in Christendom” (Quoted in Elliott. J.H, 2002:15).

If Ferdinand in *The Tempest* refers to King Ferdinand of Spain, so Miranda stands for Isabella of Castile and their arranged royal marriage in the play that united the kingdom of Naples and the Duchy of Milan. Therefore, Ferdinand and Miranda’s union symbolizes the Castilian-Aragonese alliance.

Besides, Francisco de los Cobos, A lord in the play, the highly influential Imperial secretary of Charles V and the trainer of Gonzalo Perez.

Bouteldja Riche’s analysis of *The Tempest* puts Prospero in the shoes of Philip II. The latter was granted by his father Charles V the Duchy of Milan in 1540 after the death of Sforza in 1535. Riche made a clear association between Philip II and Prospero on the basis of what the two have in common (2012:13). As Prospero, in Shakespeare’s fictional play, *The Tempest*, who forgot about what was going on in his Dukedom by throwing himself on his books, “Me, poor man--my library /Was dukedom large enough” ( I.ii.29) and letting his Dukedom to his ‘false brother’ with ‘Awak'd an evil nature’ Antonio. The latter wronged him by usurping his Dukedom (Don Juan/Gohn of Austria, King Phillip’s half-brother) since for the latter, Prospero is not able to manage his Dukedom as Prospero asserts:

He thinks me now incapable; confederates,--  
So dry he was for sway,--wi' th' King of Naples  
To give him annual tribute, do him homage;  
Subject his coronet to his crown, and bend  
The dukedom, yet unbow'd--alas, poor Milan!--  
To most ignoble stooping (I.ii.29)

Suddenly he found himself in a desert island with his daughter. This can be illustrated as the following;

My brother and thy uncle, call'd Antonio—  
I pray thee, mark me,--that a brother should  
Be so perfidious!--he, whom next thyself,  
Of all the world I lov'd, and to him put  
The manage of my state; as at that time  
Through all the signories it was the first,  
And Prospero the prime duke, being so reputed  
In dignity, and for the liberal arts,  
Without a parallel: those being all my study,  
The government I cast upon my brother,  
And to my state grew stranger, being transported  
And rapt in secret studies. Thy false uncle—  
Dost thou attend me? ( I.ii.28)

Philip II in reality met the same destiny. As a real Duke of Milan and at the same time the King of Spain, Philip II was fond of his books and state's papers. Elliott, in *Imperial Spain* (2002), portrayed his best moment by stating that the King Philip II is “safe only among his state papers, which he would tirelessly read, mark, annotate, and emend, as if hoping to find in them the perfect solution to an amenable conundrum – a solution which would somehow dispense him from the agonizing duty of making up his mind” (2002:250).

Prospero can also stand for the Stuart King James I. The former, who is known for his pursuit of knowledge, is an intellectual, a man whose interest on books made him lose his Dukedom. James I was an educated King who studied Greek, French and Latin and he even gained access to classical and religious writings which awakened his literary ambitions. He is the author of *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies* (1598) and *Basilikon Doron* (1599). In addition to these, James notoriously issued a new authorized English translation of the Bible that was published in 1611 and became known as the King James Version. James I believed greatly in the divine right of kings, hence he ruled England with absolute power as Prospero ruled his island and the other characters on that island.

James I lived the same fears and disillusionment as Prospero who was betrayed by his brother Antonio, but succeeded to bring down the three plotters plan against his sovereignty; Caliban and the two drunken butlers Stephano and Trinculo.

The three plotters intended to murder Prospero, the king of the island when he is asleep. Their intention is to recover the island from its tyrant and to put Stephano its king by getting married to Prospero's daughter 'fair Miranda'. Fortunately, the plan has been revealed by Ariel and Prospero's life is spared;

**Stephano:**

Monster, I will kill this man; his daughter and I will be king and queen,--save our graces!--and Trinculo and thyself shall be viceroys. Dost thou like the plot, Trinculo?

**Trinculo:**

Excellent. (II.i.140)

This will prove a brave kingdom to me (II.i.142).

If we draw a parallel line between the story in *The Tempest* and the real life of the seventeenth century England, James I was warmly welcomed in his second realm "England" in 1604 by his English subjects, but suddenly things have been changed when he was put as the target of conspiracy and deadly plan that he miraculously escaped. This plan is named the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, in which a band of Catholic conspirators, under the leadership of Guy Fawkes, failed to blow up the houses of Parliament while the King was present. This incident amplified people's esteem of the newly enthroned King and succeeded in growing of anti-Catholic spirit in English society, culture and even literature. This event also increased the first Stuart King's fear and panic and made him lose trust and confidence henceforth.

Considering this plot as being done by pious Catholics, it is not surprising to say that the latter were, in one way or in another, sided and encouraged by the Holy League of Spain and other European Catholic Empires. When Shakespeare via Ariel referred to Silver in "Silver! There it goes, Silver! (IV.i.106), he hinted to the event of the Gunpowder Plot that was supposed to be sided and waged by Spain 'silver' as we have referred to it in the previous play *The Merchant of Venice*, engraved in the English historical golden book.



If we try to delve to the deepest detail in the history of England and its relation with Spain, it is very convenient to study this important event. After the succession of the new King to the throne of England, the Catholics expected that James I would give them a voice and consider them as a religious entity in the country since his mother Mary Stuart was a pious catholic. Hence, the Catholics of England dreamed that James I would be a tolerant King vis-à-vis their beliefs, even though he was educated as a protestant since he was raised away from his mother.

Just after James's coronation in 1603, the English Catholics' dreams became daylight nightmares. The former adopted harsher measures to deal with their preoccupations. Hence, the latter sought for help from England's continental Catholic traditional foe and rival Spain.

Another time, their hopes met with a brick wall mainly after the signing of The Treaty of London 'the Somerset house conference'; a peace treaty that marked the end of many years of Anglo-Spanish conflicts.

Consequently, Thomas Wintour and his brother Robert tried to get help from Spain at all cost even when it comes to invade Britain and restore Catholicism, but the Spanish at that time could not venture. Because of the problems, they had both in the domestic and the foreign scales, Philip III thought that the open war with England would be more risky. Even though, the offer represented a ripe opportunity to Philip III to realize his father's dream which was invading England and annexing it to his Catholic League thus promoting a European religious conformity, he was afraid of fighting a losing battle.

The Spanish indifference towards the offer of the Catholics pushed the latter to design some individuals, who were determined to conspire against the King and to plot for his assassination on the fifth of November, 1605. Those individuals who were involved in this murderous plan are; Robert and Thomas Wintour, Thomas Percy, Christopher and John Wright,

Francis Tresham, Everard Digby, Ambrose Rookwood, Thomas Bates, Robert Keyes, Hugh Owen and John Grant. The Wintour brothers Robert Catesby (Fraser. A, 1996).

Their plan was set in the two houses of the Parliament. Therefore, on October 26, Monteagle received an anonymous letter warning him about the consequence of attending the parliament on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The original transcript of the letter is the following:

My lord, out of the love I bear to some of your friends, I have a care of your preservation, therefore I would advise you as you tender your life to devise some excuse to shift your attendance at this parliament, for God and man have concurred to punish the wickedness of this time, and think not slightly of this advertisement, but retire yourself into your country, where you may expect the event in safety, for though there be no appearance of any stir, yet I say they shall receive a terrible blow this parliament and yet they shall not see who hurts them, this counsel is not to be condemned because it may do you good and can do you no harm, for the danger is past as soon as you have burnt the letter and I hope God will give you the grace to make good use of it, to whose holy protection I commend you (Fraser. A, 1996:215).

Unfortunately for the plotters who were discovered and hanged after a harsh torture and fortunately for James I who was saved with his kingdom.

In the 17th century, just after the failure of Guy's plot and the capture of the enemies of the King and the state, a celebration followed. This celebration is known as Guy Fawkes' night or simply bonfire night that is still celebrated. This festivity has known some changes throughout history, it kept the same song and the same rhyme.

Remember, remember, the 5th of November  
The Gunpowder Treason and plot;  
I know of no reason why Gunpowder Treason  
Should ever be forgot.  
Guy Fawkes, Guy Fawkes,  
'Twas his intent.  
To blow up the King and the Parliament.  
Three score barrels of powder below.  
Poor old England to overthrow.  
But, by God's providence, him they catch,  
With a dark lantern, lighting a match!  
A stick and a stake!  
If you won't give me one,  
I'll take two,  
The better for me,  
And the worse for you.  
A rope, a rope, to hang the Pope,  
A penn'orth of cheese to choke him,

A pint of beer to wash it down,  
And a jolly good fire to burn him.  
Holloa, boys! holloa, boys! make the bells ring!  
Holloa, boys! holloa boys! God save the King!  
Hip, hip, hooor-r-r-ray.

Shakespeare tried to reflect this incident in *The Tempest*, more precisely in the scene when Prospero, by the help of his airy spirit 'Ariel' discovered the plan of Caliban with the two Stephano, a drunken Butler and Trinculo, a Jester. Afterwards, Prospero expressed directly his anger in a form of a song that can stand for what the English people sang just after revealing the Gunpowder plan. To shed light on this resemblance, it is worth quoting what Prospero says:

Fury, Fury! There, Tyrant, there! hark, hark!  
[Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo are driven out.]  
Go, charge my goblins that they grind their joints  
With dry convulsions, shorten up their sinews  
With aged cramps, and more pinch-spotted make them  
Than pard, or cat o' mountain (IV.i.84).

Since *The Tempest* is a comedy, so Prospero behaved sympathetic with his enemies by the end of the play. This aspect of the comedy goes hand in hand with James's reconciliation with Spain and the tempest that Prospero raised with the help of Ariel, an airy spirit, symbolizes the wave of change in the relations between the Protestant England and the Catholic Spain that shifted from struggle to reconciliation. Therefore, in this case, Shakespeare used a comedy as a genre to show to his readers the complexities of the English history in relation to that of Spain. Moreover, James's, the "rex pacificus," or a peaceful king, first speech to parliament in 1604 was about the establishment of peace between England and its neighbours mainly the Spaniards. Hence, James I's optimistic attitudes towards Spain and the European powers can be shown in the following passage, which he declared; "outward peace ... is no small blessing to a Christian commonwealth, for by peace abroad with their neighbours the towns flourish, the merchants become rich, the trade doth increase, and the people of all sorts of the land enjoy free liberty to exercise themselves in their several vocations without peril or disturbance" (Herman. P.C, 2011:153). This positive attitudes towards promoting peace and

good relations between the two empires culminated in the signing of the Treaty of London in August 1604, ending all the forms of hostilities including the practice of piracy at sea (Ibid:153-4). This idea can be illustrated in *The Tempest* when Prospero promised his former enemies of a free sail home;

**Prospero:**

In this last tempest. I perceive, these lords  
At this encounter do so much admire  
That they devour their reason, and scarce think  
Their eyes do offices of truth, their words  
Are natural breath; but, howsoe'er you have  
Been justled from your senses, know for certain  
That I am Prospero, and that very duke  
Which was thrust forth of Milan; who most strangely  
Upon this shore, where you were wrack'd, was landed  
To be the lord on't. No more yet of this;  
For 'tis a chronicle of day by day,  
Not a relation for a breakfast nor  
Befitting this first meeting. Welcome, sir:  
This cell's my court: here have I few attendants  
And subjects none abroad: pray you, look in.  
My dukedom since you have given me again,  
I will requite you with as good a thing;  
At least bring forth a wonder, to content ye  
As much as me my dukedom (V.i.90)

He adds:

I'll deliver all;  
And promise you calm seas, auspicious gales,  
And sail so expeditious that shall catch  
Your royal fleet far off  
Be free, and fare thou well (V.i.96).

Additionally, James I project to establish peace with British European neighbours can also be echoed in another Shakespeare's play *Cymbeline*. If we consider the Spanish Monarch Philip III, as a representative of the Roman Caesar, and Cymbeline, as James VI/I's spokesman, it is possible to affirm that the peace that Cymbeline wanted to promote between Britain and Rome reflects the same policy that James VI/I wanted to follow to establish peace between his realm and the Spaniards. Therefore, James I tried his best to promote peace between the two realms after being threatened by the Queen Elizabeth I who corresponds to the character of the Queen in *Cymbeline*. To sustain this idea, in the following excerpt, Cymbeline asserts:

Well  
 My peace we will begin. And, Caius Lucius,  
 Although the victor, we submit to Caesar,  
 And to the Roman empire; promising  
 To pay our wonted tribute, from the which  
 We were dissuaded by our wicked queen;  
 Whom heavens, in justice, both on her and hers,  
 Have laid most heavy hand.  
 Laud we the gods;  
 And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils  
 From our blest altars. Publish we this peace  
 To all our subjects. Set we forward: let  
 A Roman and a British ensign wave  
 Friendly together: so through Lud's-town march:  
 And in the temple of great Jupiter  
 Our peace we'll ratify; seal it with feasts.  
 Set on there! Never was a war did cease,  
 Ere bloody hands were wash'd, with such a peace (V.v.2331).

Furthermore, as a part of James' peace project, he tried to arrange a royal matrimonial union between his son, Charles, the Duke of York, and the Spanish Infanta, Maria Anna of Spain, the daughter of Philip III. This marriage negotiation or the Spanish Match, alas, culminated in failure. Therefore, we can affirm that James' will to promote peace in Europe is,

still a dream, or else such stuff as madmen  
 Tongue and brain not; either both or nothing;  
 Or senseless speaking or a speaking such  
 As sense cannot untie. Be what it is,  
 The action of my life is like it, which  
 I'll keep, if but for sympathy (V.iv.2321).

Even though it is not really easy to draw a precise context to *The Tempest*, we can deduce that it is a product of its immediate circumstances. John Bender says in his article, "The Day of *The Tempest*", that Shakespeare's last play's performance, on November the 1<sup>st</sup>, represents the Hallowmas or *All Saints' Day*". This date marks the beginning of the winter season that was generally associated with festivities and celebrations. In addition, John Bender mentions another occasion and reason behind the performance of *The Tempest* to James' first return to his residence in the Whitehall from the sports of the Summer Royal Progress and the autumn hunts. This return was always celebrated by a play, and on November 1<sup>st</sup> that play was

Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In the same occasion, the Stuart king went to establish Winter Court at Whitehall (Bender. J. B,1980:237-8).

In his article "Voyage to Tunis", Richard Wilson associated *The Tempest* to the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Catherine, daughter of Grand Duke Ferdinand of Tuscany. The latter wanted Milan to regain its independence from the uprising Duke Philip II of Spain. In 1611, the prince returned to Tuscany for a bride and a week later *The Tempest* was performed (Wilson. R, 1997:339-40).

*The Tempest* sounded always with ceremonies and celebrations. Its second performance in Shakespeare's lifetime took place before King James I at Whitehall in 1613 when celebrating the marriage of the king's daughter, princess Elizabeth, to the German Frederick V, the Elector Palatine, a protestant prince.

After dealing with the previous Shakespearian plays, the time of *Antony and Cleopatra* has come. In this part, we will try to scrutinize the aforementioned play in relation to the English with the Catholic Spain.

According to our theory's, New Historicism, reading of the play, we found that some of its characters can be associated with some figures that shaped the history of Europe. If we try to read closely the play in relation to the Anglo-Spanish relation, we find that Cleopatra as an Egyptian Queen can stand for Elizabeth the Queen of England. The former's bitter enemy is Octavius Caesar while Elizabeth's continental enemy is Philip II of Spain. If we try to make a link between fictional characters and the real historical figures, we can even assert that Octavius Caesar refers to Philip II of Spain.

Accordingly, to study Antony and Cleopatra in relation to English/ Spanish relations, it is convenient to refer to the history of the Low Countries that were, at that time, under the command of the Spaniards.

After a profound study, we can affirm that William of Orange, the Dutch commander who led the rebels in the Netherlands against the Spaniards can stand for Pompey, a powerful leader who made Rome and its leaders restless. While Sextus Pompeius, a son of Pompey the Great, who gathered a strong army to seize Rome from the rule of the triumvirs, William of Orange's only objective is to gather Dutch troops to sack the Spanish presence in the Low Countries.

Since our concern is history and how it is reflected in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, it is evident to shed light on some historical facts in order to understand more what was taking place in Spain, in Spanish Netherlands and England as well.

The rivalry between the Spaniards (Hapsburgs) and France gave some relief and protection to England, but later on things were getting worse between England and Spain especially when Charles V relinquished in October 1555, and split up the Hapsburg possessions to his sons. Charles gave the control of both Netherlands and Spain to his son Philip II, while his brother, Ferdinand, took hold of the German and Austrian lands, and he has chosen Ferdinand's son (Maximilian) to succeed him as Holy Roman Emperor.

Unfortunately, things were going wrong with Philip II/ Octavius Caesar who met with a rebellious Netherlands. He was obliged to send in 1567 a huge force of Italian and Spanish soldiers under the command of the Duke of Alba to the Netherlands to squash the rebellion. In fact, the Duke of Alba succeeded in suppressing the opposition in addition to imposing taxes on the people to pay his soldiers. These harsh measures undertaken by the Spaniards stimulated the fury of both Catholics and Protestants. This common destiny sowed their spirit of unity.

England under Elizabeth I's command tried to wage the conflict between the rebels and the Spanish inquisition; however, in 1570, Elizabeth I/ Cleopatra gave some sums of money to

help the rebels and she even permitted some English volunteers to go to the Netherlands for help.

Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt, in *Antony and Cleopatra* was reluctant in her intervention in the war that Antony should fight against Caesar. Antony by responding to Caesar's provocation, he accepted to fight him at sea since he counted on Cleopatra's ships to come and assist him against Caesar. Unfortunately, Cleopatra's ships made a U-turn followed by Antony who left back his own troops and giving Octavius a major victory. Hence, in this context Antony blames Cleopatra's/ Elizabeth's position and betrayal as in the following:

Antony states;

All is lost;  
This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me:  
My fleet hath yielded to the foe; and yonder  
They cast their caps up, and carouse together  
Like friends long lost.--Triple-turn'd whore! 'tis thou  
Hast sold me to this novice; and my heart  
Makes only wars on thee.--Bid them all fly;  
For when I am reveng'd upon my charm,  
I have done all.--Bid them all fly; begone.  
O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more:  
Fortune and Antony part here; even here  
Do we shake hands.--All come to this!--The hearts  
That spaniel'd me at heels, to whom I gave  
Their wishes, do discandy, melt their sweets  
On blossoming Caesar; and this pine is bark'd  
That overtopp'd them all. Betray'd I am:  
O this false soul of Egypt! this grave charm,  
Whose eye beck'd forth my wars and call'd them home;  
Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end,--  
Like a right gypsy, hath, at fast and loose,  
Beguil'd me to the very heart of loss. (I.x.114).

As Cleopatra who preferred to keep herself and her nation away from Caesar's threat, Elizabeth also was hesitant to venture and send her army to fight in the Low Countries because it was too risky for her to declare an open war with the powerful Spain. Paul Hammer, in this context, asserts; "England was critically weak in the 1560s and early 1570s, both economically and militarily, while Philip II of Spain possessed the most effective army in Western Europe



and could call upon the resources of an empire which spanned Spain, Italy, Flanders and the New World (2003:122). For this reason, Paul Hammer characterizes Elizabeth's responses to the crises in the Low Countries as a "zigzag of different (and even contradictory) policies which some-times bewildered her councilors" (2003:111).

To portray all these events through his drama, Shakespeare used Cleopatra, as a great eastern leader who was haunted by fear of Caesar's eminent invasion, to mirror Queen Elizabeth's fear and anxieties that England would be the target of its rivals especially the Spaniards.

Despite all these fears, Elizabeth I did not digest the idea that Spain would took the Netherlands under its control; hence, she and her government tried their best to prevent it. As Paul Hammer adds:

For her part, Elizabeth saw the war as an unpleasant necessity – and one from which she hoped to extricate herself as quickly as possible. Her strategy was that the arrival of English troops in the Low Countries would prevent the Dutch from being defeated and demonstrate her determination to prevent a successful Reconquista (Hammer. Paul E. J, 2003:122).

The unity of the Netherlands was just a myth that soon became a bitter reality. However, after some misunderstanding between different religious fronts, the Netherlands was divided into two; in 1579, the southern provinces formed the Union of Arras, and established peace with Spain. The northern provinces, led by William of Orange formed the Union of Utrecht, and rejected Philip's rule (1581).

One pamphleteer described Prince William of Orange as a Dutch Brutus, who challenged one of the most powerful leader Caesar's (King Philip's) right to reign. However, his efforts were not fruitful when he failed to achieve a consensus among those Catholics, Calvinists, Gelderlandes, Ghentois. Therefore, without the alliance, they would represent an easy prey for the Spanish Reconquista (Pieter Geurts in Kaufman. Peter Iver, 2013:07).

Indeed, Spain, under the command of Alexander Farnese, tried another time to re-conquer the other part of the Netherlands. This Spanish attempt to invade, another time, the Netherlands incited Elizabeth of England to send in, 1584, 7,000 men under the leadership of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester to the Netherlands, but the English contribution was not satisfactory.

As Antony was a victim of betrayal of Cleopatra, Prince William lost faith in trusting Elizabeth's endeavors to side with the Netherlands (Low Countries). As a result, his commitment to the project of unification pushed him to ask for French assistance. He appealed to François Hercule d' Valois, duke of Anjou, King Henry III's younger brother. In 1575, news reached Spain that Anjou was ready to lead an army of French Calvinists into the Netherlands to fight for the Dutch rebels against the Spanish conquest (Edmond Pouillet and Charles Piot cited in Kaufman. Peter Iver, 2013:8).

Elizabeth did not welcome the States-General appointing of the Duke of Anjou (French Huguenot), the brother of Henri III of France, to be the 'Defender of Belgic liberty' in August 1578. Anjou's interference in the Dutch affairs was soon diverted to his private intervention in the English affairs what will be discussed further in the following chapter.

As a conclusion, we can say that England was the target of many invaders mainly from the continental powers especially during the reign of the Queen Elizabeth. However, it was also threatened even at home with deposition by the English adherents of Mary Queen of Scots who was supported by both France and Spain. Besides, the Catholic activists, the inner foes, also waited an opportunity to overthrow Elizabeth I and later James VI/ I. What made things worse for England was that the English government pursued a policy of interference in the internal conflicts of other countries like France and the Netherlands. This brought it frequently to the verge of war with their governments and sometimes beyond. Hostility bordering on open warfare was, therefore, the most frequent condition of English foreign relations especially her

relations with Spain. The most serious contest with that country was the war that culminated in the battle of the Gran Armada in 1588 that resulted, by the help of the winds of God, in the Spanish heavy defeat. Hence, Shakespeare who lived and witnessed the restless world in which England was put under domestic and foreign threats, and through his drama, he reflected his fears and mainly that of the Elizabethans.

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## **Chapter Six: Shakespeare and the French Empire**

“For most of the late medieval and early Tudor period, English foreign policy rested upon twin pillars: hostility towards the kings of France and friendship with the rulers of Burgundy” (Doran. Susan, 2001:01).

Ambivalence and contradiction complicated the English and the French texts that represented Spain. Spain was an example to follow and avoid (Hart. Jonathan, 2003: 89). The Spanish power had been declining from the defeat of the armada to 1621, but it was still a strong power. From 1621 to 1640, Spain began to disintegrate when France and England’s efforts to established permanent colonies in North America were undertaken. This helped France and England to become competitors in North America, and this is just one aspect of that rivalry (Hart. Jonathan, 2003: 87).

The first contact between England and France can be traced back to the Norman Conquest that took place just after the Battle of Hasting in 1066. The conquest was led by a French-speaking descendent of a Viking leader William, duke of Normandy. After succeeding to invade England, he became William I or William the Conqueror. The latter, to foster his rule and dominance in the neighbouring land, brought with him nobles, churchmen and a legal, dominant and prevailing system in Normandy, Feudalism (Jeffery. S, 2003:1). However, later on, the relationship between England and France became tense. This led, of course, to a series of wars that lasted one hundred years.

The Hundred Years’ War (1337-1453) as a term was coined in the mid-19th century. It refers to the late medieval series of conflicts between the two neighbouring kingdoms, England and France that lasted more than a century. The end of the Hundred Years’ War in 1453 marked the beginning of the New Monarchy in France under the reign of the Valois Dynasty who

claimed the throne since 1328. Even though the English had been chased from France except for the Channel port of Calais, the costs of the long-lasting war were so heavy for the French kingdom that was socially, politically and economically ruined.

England had direct relations with France; however, even though the kings of England were not sovereign in France, they were considered to be Dukes of Aquitaine, an important area of south-west France. Nevertheless, later, those English Sovereigns wanted to claim the crown of France, the matter that rendered the situation even more complicated between the two crowns.

Edward III was the first who initiated this claim when he declared himself King of France at Ghent in 1340 and made the conflict more intense with France. His successors, Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V also got involved in this conflict when they also named themselves Kings of France.

The death of Henry V gave the chance to his nine-month-old son, Henry VI, to inherit the two realms. He was crowned as king of England at Westminster Abbey in November 1429, and as king of France at Notre Dame in Paris in December 1431. Therefore, this achievement in the foreign land is their justification of their victory in the Hundred Years' War. Unfortunately, their victory did not last for long, because the French could not digest/ accept to be ruled by a King of their bitterest enemies.

In 1429, the intervention of Joan of Arc and her striking victories changed the course and the destiny of the Hundred Years' War. By 1450, the English had been chased from their last remaining stronghold in Normandy, followed by Gascony in 1453 while Calais that was taken by Edward III in 1347 was still an English territory. These English losses put the title 'king of France' at peril (Curry. A, 2005:2).

Because of its complexity and the time it took, the Hundred Years War engaged not only the English and the French crown, but it was extended to the other parts of Europe mainly Scotland, the Low Countries and Spain that, in their turn, took part in the conflicts. Hence, Anne Curry claimed in this context; “it is fair to see the Hundred Years’ War as the first pan-European war” (2005:32).

In the end, we can say that the outcomes of the Hundred Years War on both England and France were disastrous. Both suffered civil war. In England, the Wars of the Roses between the House of York and that of Lancaster weakened the monarch. In France a series of reforms, mainly military, were adopted by both Charles VII with his son Louis XI, strengthened the royal authority and raised a large army.

Consequently, the French emerged stronger from the war and the English weaker. (Ibid: 108). However, when Edward III claimed the French throne in 1337, he tried to recover the lost ancestral lands of Normandy, Anjou, Poitou and Gascony.

In fact, Edward III achieved victories at Crécy (1346) and Poitiers (1356). Besides, he even obliged the French King to recognize his title to the duchy of Aquitaine. After Edward’s death, Henry V succeeded him in 1413 and continued to win a series of battles like the famous battle of Agincourt in 1415 in which he conquered much of Normandy, and was recognised as the heir of the French dauphin.

Unfortunately, after the death of Henry V, things turned upside down. His son Henry VI started to lose gradually what his predecessors had claimed on the French soil. England lost nearly all its French strongholds as Normandy in 1450 and Gascony in 1453 except Calais (Doran. S, 2001: 1-2).

Being inspired by heroic tales of chivalry, Henry VIII's plan was to recover the lands lost in France in the previous years. He wanted to compete with Henry V and claiming the French crown. Therefore, Henry VIII invaded France in 1544. Although, Henry's ambitions faced by a lack of financial resources in the early 1520s, his army succeeded in capturing some towns in Picardy near Calais followed by the capture of Boulogne and in 1544 (Doran. S, 2001: 2).

In fact, it seemed that the war between England and France was unavoidable. This let Edward VI, son of Henry VIII, and his privy council to sign a peace-treaty with Henry II of France in 1550, which surrendered Boulogne earlier than expected.

After Edward VI's death, his half-sister, Mary I Tudor (1553–58) expressed her will to establish peace with France. However, her marriage to Charles V's son, Philip II of Spain, implicated her and her realm in an open war with the Franks, which led to England's humiliating defeat. Consequently, England lost its last outpost, Calais, in France in January 1558 (Doran 1999 cited in Doran. S, 2001: 02).

Suzan Doran in her book, *Elizabeth and the Foreign Policy* (2001), claimed that when "Elizabeth I came to power just when the military, political and religious maps of Europe were beginning to change" (2001:6). Indeed, in Europe especially during the first half of the sixteenth century, France and the Spanish Habsburg Empire represented the two dominant military powers, what is not the case of England, that accepted her status as a *second-runner* par excellence. However, France, under the reign of Francis I and Henry II of France, could never challenge the power of Charles V, the Holy Emperor. Phillip II's naval power was at its zenith of strength especially after the Spanish striking victory at the head of the Holy League against the Turks at Lepanto (1571). In addition, a series of civil wars, which ran from 1563 to 1598 enfeebled militarily and financially the French monarchs.



Therefore, France failed to face Spain and its growing power, and maintaining the power-balance in Europe (Doran. S, 2001:6).

The immediate circumstances in Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century did not help the English to play any role in the European continental scene. Elizabeth could not even take a risk to compete with neither the French kings nor Philip II of Spain. Nevertheless, the course of events in Europe took another dimension especially after Charles V abdication followed by the dismantling of Spanish immense Empire in 1555 after his failure to preserve the unity of Christendom. Charles V divided his territories between his sons.

Spanish territories in Italy, the Americas, the Netherlands, Franche-Comté and Spain were transferred to his son Philip, and bestowed his Austrian lands and imperial title to his brother Ferdinand. The Netherlands changed the status from the centre of Charles V's *monarchia*, to just a part of the Spanish empire (Ibid: 7). In addition to Charles V's abdication, the emergence of Calvinism led to many social and political disorders in France and the Netherlands, a situation that worsened Elizabeth's relations with both Philip II and the kings of France.

As far as France is concerned, during the period from 1562 until 1598, France witnessed nearly eight civil wars. The latter came as the price of religious and power conflicts between different sects and parts.

To put an end to these conflicts especially religious conflicts, Philip II of Spain, the arch-enemy of heresy" and Henry II of France decided to sign a joint commitment to eradicate Protestantism as part of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559). What made a situation more complex was Philip II's marriage to Henry II's daughter. Hence, these political, religious and matrimonial relations between Phillip II of Spain and the French Monarch were considered as a real threat to the Protestants in general and Elizabethan England in particular (Doran,2001: 13).

Fortunately, the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis made an end to England's war against France, However, Elizabethan court was afraid that Henry II would interfere in England's affairs by opposing Elizabeth's right to the English throne and replace her with his new daughter-in-law, Mary Queen of Scots.

Henry II died in July 1559, but the French threat to Elizabeth did not die with him. His successor Francis II, Mary's new husband and her advisers were her uncles, Francis Duke of Guise and his brother Charles Cardinal of Lorraine. Thus, Elizabethan England was under the threat of invasion from the French front from Scotland.

In this present chapter, we will focalize on the relationship between the English Empire and its neighbouring Empire of the French. Since our concern is to make use of history and the ideologies that were circulating mainly during the reign of Elizabeth and the beginning of James I's reign, it is worth speculating the genre of relations between the "Soeurs Ennemies".

As we mentioned previously, France suffered from a series of civil wars for political and mainly religious reasons. All started after the death of the King Francis II in 1560. Catherine de Medici found herself playing the role of her husband the King despite the fact that the newly crowned King of France was Charles IX, her ten-year-old son. Catherine de Medici could not succeed in securing domestic stability and peace in France since she was faced with the Guises and the princes of Condé and Navarre, leaders of the Huguenots. In addition to this, the Queen mother could not settle the religious conflicts between the Catholic majority and the Calvinist minority. Therefore, In March 1562, the Duke of Guise was involved in the massacre of a Calvinist congregation at Vassy. This event provoked many Huguenots who retaliated against this act of barbarism.

In April, the Huguenots sought support from England but Elizabeth I did not want to interfere militarily but she preferred to reconcile the two sides to re-establish peace between ‘these extremities’ (Doran. S, 1996: 99).

In July 1562 Louis I de Bourbon Prince de Condé, the Huguenot leader, asked another time Queen Elizabeth for help. This time the Queen was afraid of the Catholic League, which consisted of French Catholics and the Spaniards. This pushed her to accept the offer and sign the Treaty of Hampton Court, also known as a Treaty of Richmond, in September 1562 in which she guaranteed to send money and soldiers to France. (Doran. S, 2003: 21)

Indeed, Elizabeth kept her word and sent 3,000 soldiers to help Condé and another 3,000 to Le Havre (Newhaven) and Dieppe. These towns, for Elizabeth, would be exchanged with Calais at the end of the war if the Huguenots had won the War of Religion. Unfortunately, the events took another dimension since in October 1562, English troops succeeded in capturing Le Havre but Rouen and Dieppe were taken under the control of Guise’s army. Besides, in December 1562, Condé was beaten and seized (Doran. S, 2003:2). Consequently, we can affirm that Elizabeth’s strategy resulted in fiasco and her dream to reclaim Calais became a nightmare.

Elizabeth had many reasons behind her support of the Huguenots in France; therefore, she played all her cards to achieve her goal. This time, she even wanted to make a marriage affair with Francis (François) Duke of Anjou, the brother of the King of France and the leader of the Huguenots. In fact, the Duke of Anjou, later, asked Elizabeth’s hand in marriage. This Anglo-French marriage affair culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Blois, “a mutual defence pact against Spain signed by England and France in April 1572” (Bell. I, 2010:148). Therefore under the umbrella of the Protestant League, Marriage negotiations were taking place.

In spite of devoting her entire life for her realm. i.e. married to her kingdom, in 1563, Elizabeth's reaction, in discussion with the Scottish envoy, to Mary Stuart's claim to the throne of England demonstrated her possibility of marriage and having an heir. In this context, she stated: 'As for the title of my crown, for my time I think she will not attain it, nor make impediment to my issue if any shall come of my body' (M. Levine quoted in Doran. S, 2003:2). To sustain more this idea, in 1564, she wrote to the Duke of Württemberg saying that:

Although shee never yet was wearie of her maiden and single life, yet in regarde shee was the laste issue her father left, and only of her house, the care of her kingdome, and love of posteritie did ever counsell her to alter this course of life (John Somers quoted in Doran.S, 2003:2).

The Duke of Anjou was Elizabeth's last serious suitor, François de Valois, Duke of Alençon, who became the Duke of Anjou, known as Monsieur Frère du Roi after his brother was crowned Henry III, King of France, in 1574. Sir Thomas Smith, Elizabeth's special envoy to France described The Duke of Anjou as follows:

D'Alanson is as riche in lands and moveables as D'Angiou, th'other is th'elder and higher, this is the more moderate, more flexible and the better fellow.... Yndede D'Alanson is no so tall and so fayer as his brother but that is fantasied. Then he is not so obstinate and froward, so papisticall and (if I may say so) so foolish and restyve like a mule as his brother is (Strype, Smith quoted in Doran, S, 2003:131)

Anjou's marriage offer to Elizabeth was considered as Elizabeth's last chance to marry and give an heir to the English throne as well as making an end to Mary Queen of Scots' threat. Her Marriage with Anjou would also be used as a means for Elizabeth to get involved with Anjou in the Low Countries and form a new alliance with France against Spain (Hammer. Paul E. J, 2003:105).

Elizabeth I's state-adviser, Walsingham, saw also that Elizabeth needed this matrimonial alliance to protect her realm from the Catholic Spain. This can be shown through his following comment:

The negotiacion of Monsieur here taketh greater foote then was at the first lookid for and receaveth no smaule furtheraunce upper [*sic*] occasion of the decayed state of things in the Low Countryes, for that Her Majesty, foreseeing that yf the King of Spayne come once to have his will there he will prove no very good neytbour to her, thincketh this [the Anjou match] the best meane to provide for her safety that can be offerid, in which respect yt is to be thought she will in th'end consent to the matche, though otherwyes not greatlie to her liking (Kervyn de Lettenhove quoted in Doran. S, 2003:155).

Ilona Bell shares the same idea with Paul Hammer, in her book, *Elizabeth: The Voice of the Monarch* (2010), she affirms that the Queen of England's target in marrying to the Duke of Anjou was to unite their forces to attack their Catholic enemy, Spain. In this concern, she asserts:

Elizabeth came closer to marrying Monsieur than she did to any of her previous suitors, except perhaps Robert Dudley. The courtship began as an opportunity for England to forge an alliance with France and to check the threat of Spanish attacks on the Netherlands, Portugal, Ireland, Scotland, and England itself. (2010:146-7).

After providing some historical events in the history of the greatest empires in Europe in relation to England, we are going to echo them in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Since we have studied some of the characters in the play as Cleopatra; Octavius Caesar, Pompeius in the previous chapter; the time of Antony has come.

Indeed, after putting the play under scrutiny, we noticed that Antony as a character suits the historical figure of the Duke of Anjou especially when it comes to their love relationship and marriage negotiations that diverted him from some his country's political concerns especially from the Netherlands.

As we mentioned before, the Duke of Anjou is French and our aim in this part is to focalize on the Franco-English relations. We have made use of Monsieur

Frère du Roi, because we found that he reshaped Elizabeth's relations with Spain. Hence, the alliance between Elizabeth and Anjou to fight Philip II of Spain corresponds to that alliance that was established between Antony and Cleopatra to fight their common enemy Octavius Caesar, the Roman Emperor.

What attracted our attention are the letters that are full and "heavy with the language of love" (Bell. I, 2010:151) that circulated between Anjou and Elizabeth. In addition, the Duke of Anjou visited many times England. This is reflected through Antony and Cleopatra's strong love and military affair what drove Antony to visit each time Egypt to be with Cleopatra.

In England, the Spanish ambassador Mendosa reported that Elizabeth fell under the spells of Alençon's (the Duke of Anjou's) *sophisticated French manners*, flattery and *amorous attentions* (Bell. Ilona, 2010:150, emphasis mine). In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Antony is Anjou's equivalent especially when it comes to his use of eloquent, affectionate and flattering language like "dearest queen", "most sweet queen", "my precious queen", "my warrior" and so forth. Moreover, As William Camden states in this concern, he, the Duke of Anjou, was "a choice Courtier, a man thoroughly versed in Love fancies, pleasant Conceits and Court-dalliance, and Elizabeth was soon won over by his charm". (Quoted in Doran, 2003:154).

If we consider other Shakespearian plays that we have chosen to be under study, we will find that the character of Othello in *Othello, the Moor of Venice* uses the same strategy to seduce or to make the fair Desdemona fell in his trap. In fact, when he talked about his achievements and brave deeds, he succeeded in winning Desdemona's heart and forget about his being a Turk, Moor, stranger as well as black. In the play, this idea finds its way through the following except:

**Othello:** Her father loved me, oft invited me,  
Still questioned me the story of my life  
From year to year - the battles, sieges, fortunes  
That I have passed.  
I ran it through, even from my boyish days

To the very moment that he bade me tell it;  
 Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,  
 Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
 Of hair-breadth scapes i'th'imminent deadly breach,  
 Of being taken by the insolent foe  
 And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence,  
 And with it all my travels' history:  
 Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,  
 Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads  
 touch heaven,  
 It was my hint to speak - such was the process:  
 And of the cannibals that each other eat,  
 The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
 Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear  
 Would Desdemona seriously incline. (I.ii.18-19).

In addition to *Othello*, *The Moor of Venice*, in *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare employed the equivalent of the previous scene. The prince of Morocco, in the casket scene before opting for any choice, he tries to justify to Portia his black colour by citing his heroic deeds and accomplishments to influence Portia and win her heart. Unlike Desdemona who was docile and naïve when he made her choice to marry a foreigner, Portia, who refers to Queen Elizabeth I and her decision vis-à-vis the Anjou marriage, was strong enough to bring down this marriage. Portia is aware of the fact that this match would be a calamity to her state as Elizabeth was conscious about the harm that it could bring to the throne of England. Hence, she, especially, avoided reviving the bad experience of Mary Tudor who put England under the foreign dominance and its bad repercussions in the domestic as well as in the foreign scales.

**Morocco:** Mislike me not for my complexion,  
 The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,  
 To whom I am a neighbor and near bred.  
 Bring me the fairest creature northward born,  
 Where Phoebus' fire scarce thaws the icicles,  
 And let us make incision for your love  
 To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.  
 I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine  
 Hath feared the valiant. By my love I swear  
 The best-regarded virgins of our clime  
 Have loved it too. I would not change this hue,  
 Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen (I.ii.38-9).

This relation of love and affection is also manifested in another Shakespeare's play that is *Cymbeline*. In fact, like Posthumus Leonatus, the Duke of Anjou and Antony in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, employs the language of love and flattery to describe his wife 'Imogen' like 'my queen', 'My mistress', 'my lady' (I.i.2269).

Elizabeth, in fact, according to historians, was so interested in her affair with Anjou. This can be seen in some of her poems especially the one dedicated to him "On Monsieur's Departure," which "is intensely personal, surprisingly erotic, and deeply rooted in the messy contingencies of an unusually distressing personal and historical crisis" (Bell. I, 2010:145). The poem is the following:

On Monsieur's Departure  
I grieve and dare not show my discontent;  
I love, and yet am forced to seem to hate;  
I do, yet dare not say I ever meant;  
I seem stark mute, but inwardly do prate.  
I am, and not; I freeze and yet am burned,  
Since from myself another self I turned.  
My care is like my shadow in the sun—  
Follows me flying, flies when I pursue it,  
Stands, and lies by me, doth what I have done;  
His too familiar care doth make me rue it.  
No means I find to rid him from my breast,  
Till by the end of things it be suppressed.  
Some gentler passion slide into my mind,  
For I am soft, and made of melting snow;  
Or be more cruel, Love, and so be kind.  
Let me or float or sink, be high or low;  
Or let me live with some more sweet content,  
Or die, and so forget what love e'er meant.  
Elizabeth a Regina. (Leah. S et al quoted in Bell Ilona, 2010: 144).

To confirm the idea of the scholars that the above poem was written for Anjou, it is worth noting that Monsieur visited England twice, the first time during the last two weeks of August 1579, and his second visit after two years, on October 31, 1581. Then he left England in February 1582. Hence, the poem was attributed to both of Alençon's departures.



Elizabeth's poem "On Monsieur's Departure," finds its echo in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

In the sense that, Cleopatra's reaction on Antony's departure is similar to Elizabeth's reaction on Monsieur's departure. To make it more visible, Cleopatra asserts:

Nay, pray you, seek no colour for your going,  
But bid farewell, and go: when you su'd staying,  
Then was the time for words: no going then;  
Eternity was in our lips and eyes,  
Bliss in our brows' bent; none our parts so poor  
But was a race of heaven: they are so still,  
Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,  
Courteous lord, one word.  
Sir, you and I must part,--but that's not it;  
Sir, you and I have lov'd,--but there's not it;  
That you know well: something it is I would,--  
O, my oblivion is a very Antony,  
And I am all forgotten.  
'Tis sweating labour  
To bear such idleness so near the heart  
As Cleopatra this. But, sir, forgive me;  
Since my becoming kill me, when they do not  
Eye well to you: your honour calls you hence;  
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,  
And all the gods go with you! upon your sword  
Sit laurel victory! and smooth success  
Be strew'd before your feet! (I. iii. 35-36).

In addition to this, our close reading of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* reveals that in the play Shakespeare portrays the same situation. In other words, Posthumous Leonatus' banishment "departure" to Rome is received with grief and sorrow by Imogen who begged him to stay. The following dialogue between Posthumous Leonatus and Imogen illustrates the idea:

**Posthumous Leonatus.**  
Should we be taking leave  
As long a term as yet we have to live,  
The loathness to depart would grow. Adieu!  
**Imogen.** Nay, stay a little:  
Were you but riding forth to air yourself,  
Such parting were too petty. Look here, love. (I.i. 2269).

Elizabeth's marriage to Anjou was *politically* impossible (Doran. S, 2010:39) since Not all her councillors welcomed this idea. For instance Sir Thomas Smith, Elizabeth's special envoy to France, welcomed the Alençon's proposal enthusiastically and he shared the same

opinion with Catherine de Medici that “it was true, the knot of blood and marriage was a stronger seal than that which was printed in wax and lasted longer, if God gave good success” (Doran S,2003: 3). Hence, Elizabeth left without any choice. Because Henry III of France insisted on the fact that the Anglo-French military alliance would come after the consummation of marriage between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou. He thought that by doing so, the Queen would be obliged to assist her husband in the Netherlands against the Spaniards. However, Elizabeth was conscious of that and she forgot the idea of Marriage by orienting her attention to Spanish threat especially after its conquest of Portugal in 1580 and possessing a strong Armada ready to invade England at any time (Doran. S, 2010:39). Hence, officially, in her speech delivered to the House of Commons on February the 10<sup>th</sup>, 1559, Elizabeth openly revealed her last decision concerning her marriage when she stated:

And albeit it might please almighty God to continue me still in this mind to live out of the state of marriage, yet it is not to be feared but He will so work in my heart and in your wisdoms as good provision by His help may be made in convenient time, whereby the realm shall not remain destitute of an heir that may be a fit governor, and peradventure more beneficial to the realm than such offspring as may come of me ... And in the end this shall be for me sufficient: that a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin (Ronald. S, 2012:42).

According to many historians, like Anjou who was a maverick who would always go his own way and work only in his own interest (Holt 1986 quoted in Susan Doran, 2010: 39), Elizabeth I was very pragmatic in her decisions and political policies because her objective when she sided the Huguenots was not really for the Protestant cause. She rather wanted to secure her national borders from the foreign invaders mainly the Spaniards. Her strategy was not motivated by religious concerns since she was totally indifferent when it comes to religion (Read 1925, 1955, 1960). In this context, Read asserts: ‘The one thing that mattered to her was the peace and security of England, and she was far from identifying those objectives with the Protestant cause’ (Read 1960: 309). To sustain more this idea, Dr Kouri asserts; “national

interests rather than religion dominated her dealings with foreign powers” (Kouri 1987: 426 cited in Susan Doran, 2003: 63 64). To sustain more the idea, Susan Doran attests,

During the first decade Elizabeth’s reign the main obstacles in the way of an Anglo-French matrimonial alliance had nothing to do with religion....On practical grounds, too, it was difficult to arrange a suitable royal marriage in France because of the disparity in age between Elizabeth and the three unmarried sons of Henry II and Catherine de Medici. Even later on, in 1565 when Charles IX was of marriageable age, the French king seemed far too young to marry Elizabeth, who commented that she would look like a mother leading her child to the altar (2003:99).

The English position vis-à-vis Elizabeth’s marriage affair with the French young Kings (the three sons Catherine de Medici) was far away from being optimistic. This is due to many reasons mainly Anjou’s age, he was eighteen years younger than the Queen, and his religious orientation since Anjou was a Catholic and a member of the Catholic League. In other words, he was the bitter enemy of the Protestants, i.e. the English. No doubt that “hee shalbee comonly misliked of the nation of England” (Doran. S, 2003: 101). The dangerous matter was his being the heir to the French throne. Hence, Elizabeth and her advisers were afraid of repeating the mistake of Mary Tudor when she wed Philip II of Spain and united both the English and the Spanish crown. Consequently, Mary entered into continental wars that resulted in the loss of England’s last hold in France, Calais. This idea can be fostered by Lord Keeper Bacon who affirmed that the alliance via marriage with France, would “ensewe coldnes of amytie with Spayne and Burgondye’, and might draw England into a foreign war ‘as Q.Marye was with Kinge Phillipp againste Fraunce, wheareby Callys was loste”. (Quoted in Susan Doran, 2003:102). To cut it short, it is worth referring to the words stated by the Duke of Parma, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1580, who made a parallel between Queen Elizabeth’s marital decision and Penelope’s weaving,

The marriage of Queen Elizabeth seems to me like the weaving of Penelope, undoing every night what was done the day before and then reweaving it anew the next, advancing in these negotiations neither more nor less than has been done and undone countless times without reaching a conclusion one way or the other (Quoted in Charles Wilson, 1970:75).

Even though Elizabeth directly after her succession swore an oath of following a life of virginity, she, under the pressure of her councilors and parliament to marry and give an heir to the English throne, reviewed her decision of marriage. She even tried with many suitors mainly the last one, the Duke of Anjou. However, by the end, she succeeded in maintaining her first decision which was to marry to her kingdom and the following passage guarantees her claim:

But now that the publick Care of governing the Kingdom is laid upon me, to draw upon me also the Cares of Marriage may seem a point of inconsiderate Folly. Yea, to satisfie you, I have already joyned myself in Marriage to an Husband, namely, the Kingdom of England. And behold (said she, which I marvell ye have forgotten) the Pledge of this my Wedlock and Marriage with my Kingdom. (And therewith she drew the Ring from her Finger and shewed it, wherewith at her Coronation she had in a set form of words solemnly given her self in Marriage to her Kingdom (Camden .W quoted in Susan Doran, 2003: 1-2).

If we try to make an association between these important historical events and Shakespeare's drama, we find that history is echoed in mainly one of the Shakespearian plays, *Antony and Cleopatra*. In other expression, in the play, when Antony asked Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt, to assist him in the battle against Caesar, she advised Antony to attack the Romans by sea. This war strategy as it is proposed by Cleopatra culminated in failure. This can be demonstrated through the following passage:

**Antony.**

A good rebuke,  
Which might have well becom'd the best of men  
To taunt at slackness.--Canidius, we  
Will fight with him by sea.

**Cleopatra**

By sea! what else?

**Canidius**

Why will my lord do so?

**Enobarbus**

Your ships are not well mann'd:  
Your mariners are muleteers, reapers, people  
Ingross'd by **swift** impress; in Caesar's fleet  
Are those that often have 'gainst Pompey fought:  
Their ships are yare; yours heavy: no disgrace  
Shall fall you for refusing him at sea,  
Being prepar'd for land.

**Antony.**

By sea, by sea.

**Enobarbus.**

Most worthy sir, you therein throw away  
The absolute soldiership you have by land;  
Distract your army, which doth most consist  
Of war-mark'd footmen; leave unexecuted  
Your own renowned knowledge; quite forgo  
The way which promises assurance; and  
Give up yourself merely to chance and hazard  
From firm security.

**Antony.**

I'll fight at sea.

**Cleopatra.**

I have sixty sails, Caesar none better.

**Antony.**

Our overplus of shipping will we burn;  
And, with the rest full-mann'd, from the head of Actium  
Beat the approaching Caesar. But if we fail,  
We then can do't at land (III.iii.84-85).

The problem did not lie in that, Cleopatra promised Antony to help him in the Battle of Actium but she ordered her army to withdraw from it leaving Antony alone. Therefore, as Cleopatra, Elizabeth behaved in the same way when she left Anjou without support as well as Condé (the Huguenot leader). This made of her an untrustworthy Queen who seeks only her interest and when it comes to others, she is indifferent. Besides, the Queen of England took some actions that did not bring any benefits neither for the English throne nor for her allies, on the contrary, they nearly all led to failure and losses. If we take the example of her support of the Huguenots, because of a bad strategy, England lost many of its men. However, she succeeded in seducing the Duke of Anjou to ask her hand for marriage and to seek also support from the French against the Spaniards. In other words, she used matrimony as a diplomatic tool to reach her hidden objective. Henry III knew Elizabeth's motives that is why he did not accept to support her until she got married with Francis the Duke of Anjou. Hence, Elizabeth, according to MacCaffrey "formulated her policies in response to particular crises, and tended to be reactive rather than pro-active in decision making, 'improvising as the situation demanded' (MacCaffrey, 1981: 193). This is resonated in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* through the character of Cleopatra and her decision to commit suicide. It is not because of her

lover's death or loss in the Battle of Actium, rather she is afraid of Caesar whose plan is to invade Egypt and make of her a slave. This can be shown in the following excerpt,

**Cleopatra.**

Why is my lord enrag'd against his love?

**Antony.**

Vanish, or I shall give thee thy deserving,  
And blemish Caesar's triumph. Let him take thee  
And hoist thee up to the shouting plebeians:  
Follow his chariot, like the greatest spot  
Of all thy **sex**; most monster-like, be shown  
For poor'st diminutives, for doits; and let  
Patient Octavia plough thy visage up  
With her prepared nails (VI.xii:68).

Indeed, Christopher Haigh, when he said, about Elizabeth I, that; 'A woman could brow beat politicians and seduce courtiers, but she could not command soldiers' (1988:142) was right.

As we have mentioned earlier, Henry III, the French King, was not interested in signing any military alliance with Elizabeth. She was very hesitant in her decision to finance the French assault in the Netherlands because she did not want to engage England to dangerous war against Spain. This reluctance from her part pushed Henry III to think of her as untrustworthy.

In fact, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra is seen as untrustworthy as Elizabeth I. To make it clear, Cleopatra acted indifferently when she ordered her army to withdraw from the Battle of Actium what led to Antony's disastrous loss. Antony blamed her for this loss in the following verses,

**Antony**

All is lost;  
This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me:  
My fleet hath yielded to the foe; and yonder  
They cast their caps up, and carouse together  
Like friends long lost.--Triple-turn'd whore! 'tis thou  
Hast sold me to this novice; and my heart  
Makes only wars on thee.--Bid them all fly;  
For when I am reveng'd upon my charm,  
I have done all.--Bid them all fly; begone (IV.x:114).

At last, both Elizabeth's government and its French counterpart agreed to establish peace as it was stipulated in the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis of April 1559. In addition to this, France promised to return Calais to England in eight years. The English treasury should pay 500,000 crowns. This treaty did not only concern the English and the French but it even ended the war between Philip II and Henri III.

*Antony and Cleopatra* is not the only play in which Shakespeare refers to the French Empire, *Cymbeline* can also bear some theatrical events and actors' performance that afford the literary critic as well as the reader some historical facts that shaped the ideology of the late sixteenth and the wake of the seventeenth centuries.

Our analysis should focus on the characters/ actors of the play that we consider the vehicles of the themes and the events. In doing so, we try to show how each fictional character in the play, *Cymbeline*, corresponds to a specific historical figure in the English history and mainly when it comes to its relation with the French Empire.

Even though the setting and the story of *Cymbeline* do not give any hints to Britain's relation with the French except the unnamed character who bears the qualifier "the Frenchman", the play can also be explained via the association between Britain and France. In fact, Elsom. J who said that Shakespeare is "an elastic writer who can be stretched in many directions before he snaps" (1989:4) was right. His works bear more than one meaning and compatible to all the interpretations. So, if we delve deeply into the play's core, it becomes possible that Imogen as an important character of the play can refer to Queen Elizabeth I when regarding her personality as well as her personal features. Elizabeth I, as the Queen of England, was a centre of interest since she had a good reputation all over Europe. Her honour and virtue were heard about even in the east. This made her the Queen who attracted suitors from different kingdoms. As we have illustrated previously, Elizabeth I's famous suitor emerged from the French aristocracy.

The Duke of Anjou or *le frère du Roi* who, we judge, fits the personality of Cloten while his mother, the Queen, correspond to Catherine de Medici ( a widow Queen) who wanted by hook or by crook that the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth I and the Duke of Anjou would obtain a fruitful result.

Indeed, both the Duke of Anjou/ Cloten and Catherine de Medici/ Cymbeline's Queen see Elizabeth I/ Imogen (High status in the society) as the solution to some of their problems especially suite à civil wars about religion in France.

In the play, the Queen who has exercised great influence on Cymbeline, her husband, reflects the widowed authoritative Catherine de Medici who took control of her sons just after the death of her husband, the King of France. As the Queen in the play who pushes the King to force her daughter to choose Cloten as a husband even though they are not from the same social status, Catherine de Medici did her best to arrange a royal marriage between one of her sons to Elizabeth I of England.

Accordingly, In *Cymbeline*, the Wicked Queen is portrayed as an ambitious woman who wanted to control the King and used him to secure the crown for her son Cloten. Her strategies in attaining her objective are not based on the use of direct force, but mostly by political malign tactics.

Cloten's strong will to marry the King's daughter is not driven by a strong love to the Princess but rather he wanted her riches and her social status as the future heir of the British throne since her brothers have been lost or died. This idea can be sustained by Cloten when he affirms; "Winning will put any man into courage. If I could get this foolish Imogen, I should have gold enough" (I.iii.2283). This can fit also the match between Elizabeth I of England and Monsieur le frère du Roi of France who wanted her to support him in the Netherlands as well as to take control of the English throne. Consequently, Cloten is encouraged by the Queen, his



mother, who is portrayed as a mechiavilic figure, as Catherine de Medici, whose interest and that of her son dominated over all. Unfortunately, like the Duke of Anjou who died prematurely, Cloten, in the play, is killed by one of Imogen's brothers.

If we try to read the play by keeping always strong ties with history, we can affirm that Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* can also be associated to the reign of James VI/I of Scotland and England respectively by putting emphasis on his family life by revealing the secrets hidden behind the walls of the Stuart court.

James VI of Scotland who was crowned as James I of England succeeded in the unification of the English, Scottish as well as Irish crowns for the first time in the English history after the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. For this reason, the Stuart King James was labelled the King of three Kingdoms. In fact, James' unification project changed the destiny of England and its name that shifted from England to Great Britain or *Britannia* as the Romans called the British Isles after their invading expedition.

In the play, *Cymbeline*, as a character, is portrayed as the King of Britain not England. Shakespeare has employed the word on purpose since he was a King's Man, his acquaintance with the life in the court of James I made him aware of all what was taking place there on the one hand, on the other hand, this may refer to James I's motives to build an empire as that of the other European Empires. Those European Empires' achievements/greatness were brought through geographical discoveries and overseas possessions what motivated James in his unification of the English, the Scottish as well as the Irish realms.

If we try to bring Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* under a spotlight, we can see how the play speaks history. Actually, the characters are utilized by Shakespeare to portray the historical truth in an implicit way to and to narrate the British history.

In order to do so, facts and fiction should be intertwined to reveal what was taking place at that time. Hence, in *Cymbeline*, we may say that James VI/I of Scotland and England respectively is a father of three; Henry of York, Princess Elizabeth and the Prince Charles. These can be parallel to Cymbeline's three children, "O, what, am I a Mother to the birth of three?" (V.v.2329), Imogen, Guiderius and Arviragos.

Unfortunately, James I supposed heir to his throne, Henry of York, died at the age of eighteen leaving his sister Princess Elizabeth and the sickly Charles, Duke of York. Therefore, Princess Elizabeth who was named in honour of the Virgin Queen of England, Elizabeth, Princess Elizabeth's godmother; was said to be the heir of the Scottish throne.

Similar to James I only daughter Princess Elizabeth who embraced Queen Elizabeth position as heir to the throne, Imogen is the only daughter of the King Cymbeline who is supposed to be the heir of her father's throne (the throne of Britain).

If we take the character of Imogen under scrutiny, we find that her personality and behaviour resemble to that of the Princess Elizabeth, therefore, Queen Elizabeth I. This point of view is claimed and sustained by many writers and literary critics. Graham Parry was the first to discuss the comparison of Elizabeth Stuart to her godmother, Queen Elizabeth I., in "The Golden Age Restored: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603 –1642". He describes the Princess' Elizabeth marriage celebrations, mainly how the young Elizabeth was continually compared to her godmother, Elizabeth I of England. Graham Parry has stated that, the young princess was "by virtue of her name [...] often considered to be the inheritor of the old Queen's spirit; indeed, it was a commonplace of courtly compliment to stress their successive identity." (Quoted in Semper Eadem, 2013: 149).

William Leigh, an English clergyman and royal tutor to James I's son Prince Henry, in December 1612, wrote a series of three sermons in the honour of Princess Elizabeth entitled

“Queene Elizabeth, Paraleld in Her Princely Vertues” (1612). He had preached the sermons in the last years of Queen Elizabeth I’s reign. As praising sermons to Princess Elizabeth, William Leigh put the legacy of the Virgin Queen under her protection. In doing so, he tried to persuade the sixteen-year-old Princess that she was the right person to be associated directly to her godmother. As he writes:

Shee a Kings daughter, so are you: shee a maiden Queene, you a Virgin Prince: her name is yours, her blood is yours, her cariage is yours, her countenance yours, like pietie towards God [...] the difference stands in this; that the faire flower of her youth is fallen; yours flourisheth like a Rose of Saram, and a Lilly of the Valley. Her dayes are determined on earth, and begun in heauen; yours are a doing on earth: and blessed be the current till they bee ended: euer may your happinesse growe together, and make you blessed with that immortall crowne, that withereth not. (Quoted in Semper Eadem, 2013: 150-1).

In addition to Graham Parry and William Leigh, Thomas Coryate (1577–1617) in *Coryat’s Crudities* (1776) also wrote about the Princess Elizabeth and the Queen Elizabeth. He went further when he compared the Virgin Queen’s resurrection in the Princess Elizabeth’s name, sex, and even heroic personality” to a Christ-like resurrection.

Since for the moment every character corresponds to a historical figure that marked the British history, we can say that the unnamed Queen, Cymbeline’s wife, may refer to James’ wife, Anna of Denmark. The latter was the King of Denmark’s daughter. Hence, she was issued from the royal family – high-born. For this reason, as some historians claimed, she participated in Britain’s decision-making. She was a courageous, pragmatic and daring Queen and mother who showed a strong will to take care of her children. In addition to this, she was a woman of Art and the example of a Renaissance woman as she is described by Baldassare Castiglione in his work *The Book of the Courtier* (1528).

In the book, the character of Giuliano Medici praises the virtues of women, stating that throughout history, women have successfully waged wars and ruled kingdoms. Giuliano goes on to praise women as being of powerful mind than men as well as virtuous:

In case you wil then consider the auntient Histories (albeit men at all times have bine verie sparing in writinge the prayses of women) and them of latter dayes, ye shall finde that continually vertue hath raigned aswell emong women as men: and that suche there have bine also that have made warr and obtained glorious victories, governed realmes with greate wisdom and justice, and done what ever men have done. (1900:224-5)

These Queen's features are fostered by Anastasia Christine Baker who, in her article "Anna of Denmark: Expressions of Autonomy and Agency as a Royal Wife and Mother" (2012), states; "Anna of Denmark ...was....a bright and engaging young woman and queen consort who was often involved in politics, took an active interest in the care and upbringing of her children, was an ardent patron of the arts at court, and was a keen judge of character...after all," she was "a highly pragmatic and practical woman" (2012: 95-96). Moreover, she was not only the queen consort of the King, but also the daughter, sister, and mother of kings.

Queen is the only name given to the king's wife/ Anna of Denmark. She has not been attributed any name whether in the play or in history. Shakespeare's use of the name Queen in a generic sense is done on purpose. It can be a technic used to show that the Queen plays a minor or an unnecessary role in Cymbeline's/ James I's court since Shakespeare wrote this play for King James I, King's man, he wanted to limit the Queen's influential role by ignoring it to satisfy both his King and the public. In addition, the unknown Danish Catholic Queen compared to the British people is considered as a foreigner and people are generally afraid of foreigners; therefore, the only way to introduce her on the stage to the public is by ignoring her.

Elizabeth I wanted to assert herself as a figure of masculine authority in the body of a woman. In doing so, she faced a constant internal and external conflict over how to play the role of a king while still maintaining the qualities of a virtuous Queen. This has directly a relation to the Shakespearian play *Cymbeline*, since Princess Elizabeth has been associated with Elizabeth I of England. The following excerpt from the play illustrates it:

**Pisanio.** Well, then, here's the point:  
You must forget to be a woman; change

Command into obedience: fear and niceness  
The handmaids of all women, or, more truly,  
Woman it pretty self-into a waggish courage:  
Ready in gibes, quick-answer'd, saucy and  
As quarrelous as the weasel; nay, you must  
Forget that rarest treasure of your cheek,  
Exposing it-but, O, the harder heart!  
Alack, no remedy !-to the greedy touch  
Of common-kissing Titan, and forget  
Your laboursome and dainty trims, wherein  
You made great Juno angry.

**Imogen**

Nay, be brief:  
I see into thy end, and am almost  
A man already (III.iv.2298).

Imogen who seems to live in a Renaissance society, in the play she is portrayed as a typically Renaissance woman. In other words, we can say that she is the product of her environment. Hence, Shakespeare, through Imogen, gives us the real image of women and their ideals in the Renaissance-Britain.

In fact, Imogen has all the requirements of being a Renaissance woman. Posthumous Leonatus claims that Imogen surpasses all the women in her beauty and virtue and that she embodies all the qualities of a true Lady. She is "fair, virtuous, wise, chaste, queen, constant, qualified, and [not] attemptable to men's seduction". Imogen, who conserves her fidelity to her husband attests that she was "the truest princess/ That ever swore her faith," as Iachimo asserts at the end of the play (V.v.2330).

In his book *Anne of Denmark* (1970), Ethel Carleton Williams has noticed that Anna was less attached to her daughter, Princess Elizabeth compared to her son Henry, Prince of Wales. This has no relation with Anna's lack of love towards her daughter or because the latter was a less politically valuable female child, but rather because Anna recognized in her daughter many of her own character traits: a lively and happy nature, stubbornness, and courage in times of trouble. Anna's position vis-à-vis the Princess Elizabeth was justified by the fact that the

former, Anna of Denmark, simply thought that Elizabeth needed her less than either Henry, who would be the successor of his father the King one day, or the sickly Charles who suffered physical problems.

The only affair of Elizabeth's life in which the Danish Queen interfered was the finding of a husband. Her strong interest in the marriage negotiation process shows that a fortunate match will be of great deal not only for her daughter but also for England as well as her own interests. (Williams. E. C, 1970:153).

Anna so vehemently opposed the marriage between her daughter and the Elector Palatine, Count Frederick V. The reason of Anna's opposition to this marriage has a relation with Frederick's relatively low status in comparison to Anna or Elizabeth. Besides, a union with one of the Germanic States was really risky. Indeed the region was characterized by political instability; therefore, Anna, who knows about the English court politics, realized that accepting her daughter marriage to Frederick would put England surely at risk of being involved in future Germanic wars (Baker. A. Christine, 2012: 62-63).

These ideas can be echoed in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* especially when it comes to the position of the Queen when Imogen who married to the prince to a gentleman of lower position compared to her as the heiress of the British crown. The Queen's motives are to secure the throne for her son Cloten like Anna of Denmark who supported her son Henry, the Prince of Wales, to be the successor of his father. This is the reason why the Queen opposed this marriage. In other expression, the latter does not think about Princess Elizabeth's interest but her interest and that of her son.

In *Cymbeline*, we notice that the two sons of the King were kidnapped and raised by one of his banished lords Belarius and disguised under the name of Morgan. This may reflect the reality of James I/VI of England and Scotland. He was the King who was haunted by fear and

lack of trust. Moreover, whether in the play or in reality, we notice a clash of public personalities between James and Anna. In other words, James did not really establish a good relation with his subjects .i.e., he did not feel comfortable when facing them. This may be explained by his excessive fear of assassination. This fear was a result of his childhood experiences. In fact, at the early age, James had witnessed several murders and deaths that had badly shaken him. Even after his mother's abdication, he had been subject to several plots and conspiracies. On 4 September 1571, when James was just five years old, the Earl of Huntley and the Hamiltons (a Catholic faction) attempted to take control of the parliament and kidnap the boy king. Though the attempt failed, James watched his grandfather, the Earl of Lennox, die because of the attack.

All the hardships that the King James went through are reflected in the literary productions of his reign mainly in the stage performances. Shakespeare, in *Cymbeline*, wants to give some hints in order to vehicle the realities of his era. For instance, the play is full of intrigues, deceptions, kidnapping, deceit, deaths and so on and so forth. These made it even complicated to be classified whether, a comedy, tragedy or a tragi-comedy.

## **England and France in Scotland**

How happy oughtest thou to esteem thyself, O kingdom of Scotland, to be favored, fed and maintained like an infant on the breast of the most Magnanimous king of France ... for without him thou would'st have been laid in ashes, thy country wasted and ruined by the English, utterly accursed by God? (Estienne Perlin quoted in Frazer. A, 1969: 79).

In this part of our research, we will try to make an association between history and literature since the two are intertwined. History can only be understood and recorded via its works of Art. Hence, our objective here is to shed light on the historical events of England during the late Elizabethan era and the early Jacobean by putting emphasis on some of Shakespearian plays. However, before going so far, it is crucial to provide some historical

events that shaped Europe's map and changed the destiny of England and its northern neighbouring realms by considering other European Empires as the case of Spain and France.

The conflicts between the French and the English monarchs extended from the competition over the titles and lands to the direct interference in Scotland. Historically speaking, the English monarchs, from the reign of Edward I, established strong ties of lordship with the Scottish nobles to whom they owed allegiance (Doran. S, 1999: 02).

The Scots saw from Edward I's relation to Scotland as a real threat to their realm. This pushed them to seek support from the French. Moreover, they went further to establish an alliance, Auld Alliance, with Philip IV. This Alliance was appealed to whenever the Scots feel threatened by the English. In fact, the Auld Alliance played an important role in worsening the relations between England and Scotland. However, in 1513, James IV of Scotland assaulted the northern part of England as a proof of the Scottish assistance to his ally Louis XII of France. Unfortunately, for James IV who, in the end, lost the battle of Flodden that ended momentarily the Scottish threat (1513). In this battle, James IV lost his life then succeeded by his son James V who, in his turn, wanted to re-established his ties with France. This intensified the war between Henry and his Scottish counterpart. Therefore, in 1542, Henry's army surprised the Scots and led them to a strong defeat at Solway Moss. James V died three weeks later, and Henry VIII tried to take hold of Scotland at all costs in order to spread the Protestant Reformation in Scotland. Besides, he wanted to unite England with Scotland by arranging a dynastic marriage between his son Prince Edward VI and James V's daughter Mary Queen of Scots. This marriage arrangement received resentment from the Scots and led to six years' war between the two realms (1544-1550). (Doran, 1999:3).

Even after the death of Henry VIII, the project of controlling Scotland was maintained. However, this time, Henry II of France interfered to assist militarily the Scottish against their



enemy, England. The French, ultimately, succeeded in pushing the English out of Scotland. Edward VI died and Mary married to the Dauphin, the heir of French throne. Scotland was ruled by the French-born Mary of Guise with the French assistants. (Ibid)

In May 1559, Scottish Protestants rebelled against Mary of Guise, Mary Queen of Scots' mother, who controlled Scotland since her daughter married to the French prince Francis II and stayed in France. However, things have been changed to the young Queen of Scots who became the Queen of France with her husband's succession to the French crown after the death of his father Henri II. This event gave the opportunity for the duke of Guise and his brother, the cardinal of Lorraine to interfere directly in the French affairs. Guise was known for his Catholic extremism what motivated him to support Mary Queen of Scots' claim to the English throne as a legitimate Queen of England and Ireland instead of Elizabeth, the bastard.

The Scottish, who rebelled in 1559 against Mary of Guise and the French presence on their lands, called themselves "Lords of the Congregation". Because of the aids coming from France to side with Mary of Guise, the Scottish Lords suffered a series of defeats. Scottish Lords were left no choice except to apply for Elizabeth's assistance in order to defeat this common enemy. Elizabeth was reluctant to take any decision since she wanted to avoid at all prices the direct war with France.

Guise's stance and position made things worse for Elizabeth who felt a real threat coming from both France and Scotland. Therefore, she should act immediately to respond to the threat that can come across the borders (Doran. S, 1999: 50).

In fact, as a first step to do so, she replied hesitantly to the appeals for help of the Scottish protestants by sending them money and arms. In spite of doing so, Elizabeth did not want an open war with France as well as with Scotland since Mary of Guise sent a letter to Elizabeth to prevent her from yielding any aids to the rebellious Scottish subjects as if she knew that

Elizabeth waged the rebellion. However, when things went wrong in Scotland, Elizabeth opted for another solution, which is to delay action and search for a diplomatic way out.

Elizabeth I was warned by Mary of Guise of interfering in the internal matters to help a band of rebels who revolted against their sovereign. For this reason, Elizabeth another time did not want to take the risk of assisting the Scottish Lords of Congregation, but the events took another direction when they persuaded Elizabeth about how Mary Queen of Scots surrendered her realm in favour of the Dauphin, her French husband. Therefore, the Lords of Congregation saw themselves as patriots who tried to fight for *the defence and weill* of Scotland, rather than as zealots taking up arms against their ruler on behalf of religion” (Doran.S, 1999:50).

Since the Guise family waited for an opportunity to attack England from the northern borders, Elizabeth felt a danger of invasion from the Scottish borders by thirty-five thousand French troops. For this reason, she took the initiative to write to Mary of Guise by telling her that “respecting the conservation of amity between the two realms ... she thinks ... her doings shall be always constant and agreeable ... For her mind to peace, she affirms that she is as well inclined to keep it as she ever was, and will be most sorry to see any occasion given her by the Dowager to the contrary” (Ronald. S, 2012:56-57).

Elizabeth was so pragmatic when she changed her mind and decided to help the Protestant Lords. She felt that if they would defeat the rebels and took control of Scotland, the French could find their way and attack England from the Scottish borders since Scotland represented a postern gate for an invasion of England. In this concern, Elizabeth informed her ambassador in France by telling him: “we find no small danger ensuing to our realm if the realm of Scotland should be conquered, as appeareth is meant by the men of war now in Scotland” (Anne Cameron quoted in Doran. S, 2003: 50).

According to the historical events cited above, we can refer directly to two Shakespearian plays as the example of *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. In *Othello*, we may say that Scotland corresponds to Cyprus which is the target of both the Venetians and the Turks. If Venice is England, the Turks can stand for the Catholic French.

Fortunately for both the Scottish/ Cyprus and the English/ Venice, the French/ Turks diverted their attention from Scotland to solve their problems at home especially after the outbreak of the civil wars of religion. Hence, Elizabeth and the Lords of Congregation agreed upon protecting one another against the common enemy France. The Scottish Lords mainly the Earl of Argyll promised to support Elizabeth plantations of Ireland against the Catholic rebels as the case of Shane O'Neill in Ulster. At the same time, The Scottish Protestants Lords saw also from Elizabeth, their protector. This relation made some of the Lords think about the dynastic union with England and one of its advocates was John Knox (Doran. S, 2003: 50-1).

Additionally, the death of Mary of Guise on 11 June changed the course of the events. However, after a series of negotiations of many fronts, the Treaty of Edinburgh was signed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July and replaced the “Auld Alliance”. The treaty stipulated that all French and English troops should leave the Scottish soil. In addition to this, the French fortifications at Leith, Dunbar and Eyemouth should be destroyed and a council of twelve (12) Scottish noblemen took control of Scotland. At the end, the French lost completely the control of Scotland (Doran. S, 2003:61).

Even though the French were chased completely from Scotland, Elizabeth of England kept a favourable relationship with the King of Scotland, her cousin. That is why in 1586, they became allies after signing a treaty of Berwick. James I of England was named James VI of Scotland through hereditary law. His mother was Queen of Scots who was forced to abdicate to be replaced by her son James VI.

James was King of Scotland until 1603, when Elizabeth I died, he succeeded her and became the first Stuart king of England. By being so, he united the two realms under one sovereignty and forming the kingdom of Great Britain.

James VI/I's succession to the throne of England was an important event in the history of England and Scotland as well. The event, which marked a turning point of the history of both realms that were taken under the same Monarch, became the important subject of the English writers, poets and playwrights. Shakespeare was among those who reported the event through his dramatic works that were generally performed at the court of the newly enthroned Stuart King.

All these events did not escape Shakespeare's mind and Art. Hence, we can regard his works in general and his plays in particular as merely historical since they faithfully reported the English history.

In a nutshell, after putting the plays of Shakespeare under scrutiny in relation to the New Historicist theory, we have noticed that they in fact expose history. They may be considered as a mirror that reflects the English/ British history and its exigencies. When studying the plays, we tried to show history with its complexity. We have also noticed that the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras that have been idealized by many pamphleteers and propagandists were just periods of the history of the so-called Empire that were overshadowed by internal conflicts and external threats. Even though during the reign of James I Britain tried to sow its first seeds of the Empire, it could not be compared to the other European overseas Empires that had already dominated the seas and oceans' trade. Thus, instead of venturing and encouraging the project of the empire-building, England/Britain, mainly during the Elizabethan era, tried instead to secure her realm's borders from eminent attacks coming from its neighbouring enemies as well as from its internal foes. Therefore, all these historical hidden details about the English history

are unveiled through Shakespeare's staged plays that showed the reality of Britain/England that pretended superiority over the *Other*, mainly the Scottish and the Irish, instead of being itself the *Other*.

## **English, French and Spanish Struggle over Ireland**

Ireland, another England's neighbours after Scotland, became an arena of conflict and rivalry between the European strong powers -England, Spain and France- mainly in the second half of the sixteenth century. Conflict over religion, the Catholics and the Protestants, was the predominant issue in Ireland. Both Spain and the Pope wanted to draw Ireland to the Catholic League in spite of the Protestant English presence in Ireland. Historically speaking, the English were not welcomed on the Irish soil. This was justified by a series of rebellions mainly from the Gaelic lords. To get rid of the English, the Spaniards tried to support those lords who challenged and threatened England's control in the territory mainly after Elizabeth's support the rebels against Philip II rule in the Netherlands (Doran. S, 1999: 57). In fact, Philip II waged the Irish lords' rebellion providing them money and armaments, and he even ordered two armadas which sailed to Ireland in 1596 and 1597. Unfortunately, both fleets were destroyed and did not reach the right destination because some of the ships were wrecked and others were scattered by the winds of God (tempests) on their way to the Irish shores. Later, the Spaniards, Philip III, sought to negotiate with the English since they did not want to venture another Armada. In 1602, the Spanish threat in Ireland was officially over. (Doran. S, 1999:58). The English crown took control of only a third of Ireland, including the Pale, which centered upon Dublin, however, England's dream was to control the whole island. Historically speaking, Henry VIII claimed himself to be 'king of Ireland' in 1541. The English attitudes towards Ireland encouraged the encounter between the Irish people and both the English settlers and soldiers.

In Shakespeare's drama that was used primarily for entertaining the court public, may also echo what was taking place on the European scene in general and the English/British one in particular. The playwright of Avon, as we think, tried to perform on the stage the immediate circumstances of both the late Elizabethan and the early Jacobean eras in an implicit manner. Therefore, if we consider one of his plays *The Tempest* (1611), we can attest that Prospero's island may reflect Ireland that the English monarch wanted from the early period to take control of. If Prospero represents James VI/I of England and Scotland respectively, Sycorax who is the old witch who is left by the pirate on the island, Argiers, can symbolize Elizabeth I of England. What is striking is that both Sycorax and Elizabeth I are old women; besides, they both had relations with pirates (the Turks). Elizabeth I encouraged the pirates who, were known as sea dogs or sea beggars, plagued mainly the Spanish ships that came from the New World uploaded with gold and the other exotic riches.

Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo reflect on the rebellious Irish people who challenged the presence of the English/British on the Island/Ireland. Even though Caliban is a coloured personage in the play, he can be an Irish because at that time, blacks, Moors, Turks and Muslims were put in the same class as the Irish people. Hence, Prospero's project to take full control of the island mirrors James VI/I's unionist project on uniting Ireland.

Since the English presence in Ireland provoked the anger of many Irish people, during Elizabeth's reign, Shane O'Neill/ Caliban, who requested title earl of Tyrone was denied by the English crown, challenged the authority of the crown and he went even further to threaten the English holds in Ireland, Ulster and Pale. Moreover, he appealed to the French assistance/ Stephano and Trinculo's plan to chase away the English/ Prospero from Ireland/ island as well as to defend Catholicism by offering the crown of Ireland to Charles IX of France (Hammer. Paul E. J., 2003: 75). The latter, because of the wars of religion, fell into a series of civil wars.

This goes hand in hand with Caliban and the two drunkards/the Irish' conspiracy plan to disposes Prospero from the land he conquered results in failure. Consequently, the Irish rebels/ Caliban, Stephanou and Trinculo fell in the hands of the English/Prospero and suffered a severe defeat.

Accordingly, after their defeat in the Nine Years' War, Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone and Rory O'Donnell, Earl of Tyrconnell were not only spared from execution by the victorious English government of Ireland, but they also kept their lands and titles. In 1605, things began to change under the law of the new lord deputy, Arthur Chichester who started to restrict their authority. The two Irish leaders were afraid of the worst and decided to flee to Europe with their families and followers. Their action, which was known as the 'Flight of the Earls', ended the power and the threat of Ireland's Gaelic nobility.

To ensure its power and domination in Ireland, the Jacobean England tried to protect mainly the plantation of Ulster as a part of settlement project in which Protestants from both England and Scotland were given lands confiscated from the Gaelic Catholic inhabitants. This project of settlement aimed to establish towns in Ulster as a part of the process of unifying England and Ireland just after the death of the Queen Elizabeth I and the succession of James I to the English throne. Similar to James I's claim of Ireland, Prospero in *The Tempest* confiscates Caliban's Island that he inherited from his mother Sycorax. Moreover, Caliban is denied his rights as the possessor of the island.

Since we previously mentioned that James I was crowned as the King of three realms, it is convenient to attest that he ascended to the thrown of England and Scotland by heredity while Ireland was inherited from the previous Tudor line. In other words, Henry VIII labelled himself King of Ireland and so did his offspring even though he was not very interested in the conquest of Ireland.

The majority of the Irish were Catholic so they welcomed James I since they thought that he would be tolerant with them than other protestant Kings. Unfortunately, James I was a protestant to the marrow. Like in *The Tempest*, Caliban, at the very beginning, welcomed Prospero on his island. However, later, he changed his mind by rejecting his teaching and proclaiming his island that Prospero has taken from him. In this context, an excerpt from *The Tempest* will be the evidence as follows;

**Caliban..**

This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first,  
Thou strok'st me and made much of me; wouldst give me  
Water with berries in't; and teach me how  
To name the bigger light, and how the less,  
That burn by day and night: and then I lov'd thee,  
And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle,  
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place, and fertile.  
Curs'd be I that did so! All the charms  
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!  
For I am all the subjects that you have,  
Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me  
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me  
The rest o' th' island. (I.ii.38).

To challenge the traditional foreign foe, Spain, Elizabeth I gave a permission to the Dutch Protestants, sea beggars or pirates to attack the Spanish ships. This sea war strategy was adopted by the Queen to weaken the Spanish economy as well as to establish a diplomatic relation with the Low Countries who rebelled against the Spanish domination.

At the beginning, The Low Countries established a strong alliance with the French Huguenots. This alliance frightened Elizabeth I. What made things worse for the English was the fact that William of Orange, the Dutch leader, together with Admiral Coligny and Charles IX made a plan for the invasion of the Low Countries to get rid of the Duke of Alba's Spanish bloody regime. Unfortunately, this plan alarmed Queen Elizabeth and made her even think of assisting the Duke of Alba against the French presence in the Low Countries. Fortunately, for



Elizabeth, St Bartholomew's Day (24 August 1572), in which many Huguenots were massacred in Paris and other cities, drawn the French from the Low Countries to deal with their domestic warfare (Doran. S, 1999:87-88) and they abandoned invasion campaigns in August 1572. The civil war (s) in France represented an opportunity for Elizabeth's government to take part in the conflicts by yielding aids and encouragements for the Huguenots.

In March 1603, Elizabeth I died without letting an heir to the English throne. For this reason, she was succeeded by her cousin, James VI of Scotland. The latter, hereafter, took the title of James I of England. James's accession to the English throne was fruitful since he helped the three separate kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland to unite for the first time under a single monarch. By his succession, James started another dynasty of the Stuarts and took other dimensions vis-à-vis the continental Europe as well as vis-à-vis the East mainly the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Morocco that we will discuss in the following part of the present thesis.

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## **PART THREE**

### **Shakespeare and the Eastern Empires**

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to...” (Conrad, 1994:10)

Robert Williams Jr. said that Western expansion and the consequent confrontations go back to the thirteenth century. i.e. to the time of Pope Innocent. The latter addressed letters to the Great Khan of the Mongols” in which he stated; “The ‘West’ has sought to impose its version of truth on non-Western peoples since the Middle Ages. In seeking the conquest of the earth, the Western colonizing nations of Europe and the derivative settler-colonized states produced by their colonial expansion have been sustained by a central idea: the West’s religion, civilization, and knowledge are superior to the religions, civilization, and knowledge of non-Western peoples. This superiority, in its turn, is the redemptive source of the West’s presumed mandate to impose its vision of truth on non-Western peoples” (Robert. A. Williams Jr, 1990:06). Williams went further to affirm that “that law, regarded by the West as its most respected and cherished instrument of civilization, was also the West’s most vital and effective instrument of empire during its genocidal conquest and colonization of the non-Western peoples of the New World” (Quoted in Muldoon. James, 1979:6).

The use of the terms ‘West’ or Europe is associated with the monopoly that the peoples of Europe have vis-à-vis the non-European. The Europeans adopted violence and exploitation on whom they labeled outsiders. However, historical records stipulated that that was not the case. Historically, many civilizations and great empires at different periods

found from Europe a perfect place to expand their dominions (Williams Robert A. Jr quoted in Bowden. Brett, 2009:106).

For James Muldoon, European expansion by powers started before the thirteenth century. He asserts that, it effectively began in “1095, the year in which Pope Urban II (1088–1099) declared the first crusade.” Muldoon admits that even during the medieval era, “religious motivation” was never been the “sole hallmark” of expansion and invasion. From the very “first [crusade], economic and social motives were inextricably associated in a religious culture.” Besides, Urban II was really conscious of “the profits to be made in winning land and treasure from the infidel” (Quoted in Bowden. Brett, 2009:107).

Pope Innocent IV had effectively accused the Saracens for their illegally seize and control of the Holy Land in an unjust war. Hence, in this case, the Pope had the whole right to allow an invasion to have it back to its rightful Christian inhabitants. As a justification, he persisted when he said “the Holy Land was rightfully Christian because Christ’s life and death there had consecrated the land. His followers, not those of Mohammed, should therefore dwell there.” (Muldoon. James, 1979:6).

The following is the letter that the Pope Innocent IV wanted to send to the Great Khan to introduce him to the mores and manners of Christian doctrine. He wrote:

He [Jesus] handed to him [St. Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven by which he and, through him, his successors, were to possess the power of opening and of closing the gate of that kingdom to all. Wherefore we, though unworthy, having become, by the Lord’s disposition, the successor of this vicar, do turn our attention, before all else incumbent on us in virtue of our office, to your salvation and that of other men, and on this matter especially do we fix our mind, sedulously keeping watch over it with diligent zeal and zealous diligence, so that we may be able, with the help of God’s grace, to lead those in error into the way of truth and gain all men for Him. The two letters are reproduced in “Two Bulls of Pope Innocent IV to the Emperor of the Tartars,” (Dawson quoted in Bowden. Brett, 2009:108).

Robert Ward explicitly states, “If we look to the *Mahometan* and *Turkish* nations . . . their ignorance and barbarity repels all examination, and if they have received any improvement since the days when they first set foot in Europe, it is probably from their connection with

people professing the very religion which they most hate and despise.” He adds that the “same inferiority in this sort of conduct, is to be found even among the Chinese, so famed for eminence in every other branch of knowledge, and in the science of morals itself. Their wars have always been carried on with *Eastern* barbarity, and their known laws against strangers would alone demonstrate the point” (Quoted in Bowden. Brett, 2009:121).

Additionally, in his speech to the British House of Commons on June 13, 1910, Arthur Balfour stated,

one may look through the whole history of the Orientals . . . and you never find traces of self-government. . . . Conqueror has succeeded conqueror; one domination has followed another; but never in all the revolutions of fate and fortune have you seen one of those nations of its own motion establish what we, from a Western point of view, call self-government. That is the fact” (Bowden. Brett, 2009: 148).

Historically speaking, religious and military conflicts between Christians and Muslims go back to the rise of Islam as a religious-social system in the early seventh century A.D. The Arabs were basically a pastoral, nomadic people when they received the teaching of the Arabian prophet, Muhammad (570-632). To make the voice of this new faith (Islam) heard from the different corners of the globe, the followers of the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca and Medina triumphed over Sassanian Iran, Byzantine Syria, Egypt, and North Africa and even in 711; the Muslim armed forces entered Spain. The conquest that lasted less than one century— between 632 and 711 A.D, showed to what extent the Arab Muslims were determined and with their military skill, they succeeded in changing the balance of power in the world. Therefore, from the fall of the Classical Empires in Eurasia, like Byzantium, until the European discovery of the New World (1492), the rise and expansion of Islam was the most significant event in world history.

## **Shakespeare’s England and the World of Islam**

“Perhaps the last place in the world where we should expect to find Mahommedanism is England, and yet it is a fact that this religion has been established in our land of late years, and, strange to say, by an Englishman.” (John J. Pool, 1892: 01).

From the Elizabethan period and throughout the seventeenth century, Britons, from England to Wales, and to a lesser extent Scotland and Ireland, were exposed to the civilization of Islam. This civilization was experienced by means of its literature, culture, and languages, chiefly Arabic, Moorish and Turkish. The story of Britain and the Islamic world that came to be written in the early modern era could not be qualified solely as a *love story*. But this story could neither be conceived as a story of remorseless hostility and unending conflict. As all stories dealing with human contact across religious, ethnic, linguistic, and national borders, its complexity emphatically gives the lie to those who would see Islamic countries and the West as locked into a history of inevitable conflicts (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2011, p. 42).

The disintegration of the world's most enduring empires, namely the Byzantine Empire, in May 1453 paved the way for a new confrontation between European Catholics and the Ottoman Turks. The confrontation came to a head with the expulsion of the Moors from Spain in the last decade of the fifteenth century. The crusading wars – the Christian-Muslim struggle – had taken a new shape in the modern era with its two champions, employing religion as pretext for warfare, but its chief interest was the domination of the world based on an economic system that some economists came to call the “economy of plunder.”

The conflict between the Spanish Empire and the Ottoman Empire took a much more complex turn with the religious split between Catholics and Protestants of all shades brought out by the Reformation in the early decades of the sixteenth century. The emergent ideology of nationalism had largely energized the Reformation that made religious affiliations less

important, and therefore much more difficult to mobilize than the concept of “nation” as the new religion in a divided Western Europe. In this age, conflict of interest did not give rise only to grand scale warfare but also to the propagation of piracy and corsair operations, especially in the wake of the battle of Lepanto in 1576.

Having inherited a financially ruined, socially divided and religiously fragmented realm, the last Tudor monarch Elizabeth I was the British monarch who sponsored piracy and corsair activity behind the scene not only in order to meet the financial needs of her kingdom, but also to counter the Spanish domination of the trade routes and its threat to the territorial sovereignty of Britain. In addition to her support to the corsairs or pirates, Elizabeth I played the card of matrimony to set her two menacing belligerents, France and Spain, at loggerheads, opening at the same time diplomatic relationships with the Ottomans in response to the threat of both. It was during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I that diplomatic and commercial relations with the Islamic world, from Morocco to the East (Persia and India) were set on the way with the creation of chartered companies. Among these, we can mention the Guinea Company (1588) which brought English traders in limited contact with Muslims; the Turkey Company (1581) renamed Levant Company (1592); the Barbary Company (1585); and the East India Company (1600), by far the most important of the companies that received the royal charter to trade with the oriental regions (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2011: 02).

From the Elizabethan period, Britons ventured into an extensive commercial, diplomatic, and social engagement with the Turks and Moors of the Muslim empires. No other non-Christian interacted more widely with Britons than the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the North African regencies of Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya, along with Morocco, which resisted the Ottoman domination.

These Muslims *were the chief Others in British Renaissance history* than the other non-Christian minorities like the Jews and the American Indians that were present on the English soil at that period of time (James Shapiro quoted in Matar, Nabil, 1999 : 03). The Islamic empires were striking since it is on their soils that a great number of a non-Muslim faith dwelled. The homogeneous mingling of Muslims, Christians, and Jews was a proof of tolerance of different faiths that in its turn helped the formation of harmonious multi-ethnic, multicultural communities that astonished and impressed many European visitors (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 06).

The next monarch to the English throne, James I, reversed the political rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire that Elizabeth I had started during her reign (1563-1603). This reversal finds one of its best expressions in the normalization of political relationships with Spain in the 1610s and James I's attempt to their consolidation through matrimonial alliance. During all his reign, James tried to marry his sons, Henry and later Charles after Henry's death, to the *Infanta* of Spain. James I's matrimonial policy was a half success. Whilst his daughter Elizabeth was indeed married to the German Palatinate Prince, he never succeeded in getting one of his sons into wedlock with the Spanish princess. However, this reversal in British policy was translated into attempts to contain the so-called piracy in the Mediterranean through patrols. Trade in the Mediterranean basin never halted, and we would argue that it even increased. Corsair activity brought prizes to the Mediterranean ports to be bought and sold, and hence paradoxically stimulating the very trade that piracy was supposed to hinder. It is true that corsairs or pirates were responsible for the traumatic experience of the enslaved crews and passengers on both the North and South sides of the Mediterranean, but it is also true to claim that they made possible close cross-cultural encounters. Moreover, this capture of human beings reduced into slavery



largely covered in reported captivity narratives and other literary figures that stimulated the interest of the people at home, most notably dramatists such as Shakespeare.

From the 1580s until the 1630s, there were dozens of plays about Turks and Moors. The representation of the Muslims in English Renaissance writings was undeniable and has been extensively examined in recent scholarship.

Accordingly, critics and historians who were curious to study Renaissance “Islam” have taken from works by playwrights such as Peele, Kyd, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Greville, Mason, Daborne, Heywood and Goffe, and by travelers such as Morrison, Sanderson, Sandys, Biddulph, Coryat, Blount, Lithgow, and others their reliable source.

In this part, we will focus on Shakespeare’s plays as *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) as well as *The Tempest* (1611) in relation with the Islamic World. Therefore, we will shed light on some important historical events that took place between the Empires of the East and the imperial Elizabethan England and Jacobean Britain and what kind of relation they had at that period of history.

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## **Chapter Seven: Shakespeare and the Kingdom of Morocco**

“To English theatre audiences, the figure of al-Mansur appeared as a formidable figure, commanding respect for his wealth, military strength, and political acumen” (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 61).

Our objective in this chapter is to give a voice to history through Shakespeare’s plays. What is skeptical is that each time we read Shakespeare, Morocco, as a term, whether it stands for a person (prince of Morocco), or a powerful kingdom, is widely used by the playwright. This overuse of the term, especially in *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* stimulated our curiosity to dive deeply into the ocean of Shakespeare’s literary library to find the reasons behind this matter considering the playwright’s intention as being far away from being haphazard and innocent. The Moor as we have referred to in this chapter is the original inhabitant of North Africa (Barbary States), Morocco and Mauretania. Moors are men of another religion “Islam”.

Othello, as a Moor or a foreigner and stranger, is portrayed as a protector of Venice from the foreigners like the Turks. He earned his reputation in Venice as the General in the Venetian Army thanks to his commitment to his state, self-confidence, dignity, achievements, strength and competence in leading the Venetian army and keeping Venice immune to foreign threats.

Let us go back to the history of Morocco and speculate Shakespeare’s interest in this part of the Muslim World.

The early modern Morocco was depicted by the well-known Orientalist Bernard Lewis in *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* as follows; ‘In the world of Islam, Morocco, in Arabic called al-Maghrib al-Aqsà, the Far West, was a remote and isolated outpost and a comparatively small and weak country.’ (1982:118).

Morocco's geographic setting between three great regions of contact and trade; between the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea and the Saharan desert, and its political location between the dominant powers of the sixteenth century – the Spanish Habsburgs and the Ottoman Turks – made it a strategic country of great importance. In addition, Morocco represented a border territory between the Christian and the Islamic Worlds. In the sense that, it was a host land that opened its doors wide to the peoples chased from the Iberian Peninsula, such as the Jews and Muslims of Granada. It was a country that was fascinated by the political powers like the Ottoman and the Spanish Empires – to follow their models (García-Arenal. M, 2009: 03).

Upon the coronation of Muley Ahmad al-Mansur to the Moroccan throne in August 1578, after a striking victory of the Moroccan army at the Battle of Wadi al-Makhazin (Alcazar), the new Sultan al-Mansur found himself in a difficult situation in which he felt the necessity to deal with two superpowers; the powerful Ottoman and Spanish empires. Both of those powerful Empires were in constant search for an opportunity to invade his kingdom (Morocco).

Morocco was distant from the main power centers of the Middle East; however, during the time of Sultan Muley Ahmad al-Mansur, Morocco's territory and power enlarged. This power attracted the attention of the Ottoman sultan Murat III, and the other European Monarchs as Queen Elizabeth I of England, Philip II of Spain and the Dutch *stadhouder*. Sultan Muley Ahmad al-Mansur ruled Morocco for almost a quarter of a century (1578-1603), and during his reign, he led Morocco to an age of modernization especially in the international political matters. Moreover, he brought his country up-to-date with Ottoman Turkey and with Europe as well. Morocco's commercial and economic success under al-Mansur did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries abroad. In this context, the Spanish Duke of Medinasidonia who was to lead the Armada against the English in 1588, a leading expert in

Moroccan affairs, wrote to Philip II in 1584 by telling him that “Barbary is no longer what it was, for in it are wealth and curiosity” (García. A. M, 2009:01).

The fact of being a member of the holiest of all lineages gave him the kind of charisma and religious authority that legitimized his possession of absolute political power whether at home or vis-à-vis foreigners. His power and supremacy were guaranteed after his victory over the army of King Don Sebastian of Portugal who was killed in the battle of Alcazar 1578, who led a military expedition to conquer Morocco – hence his title Al-Mansur, ‘The Victorious’ was associated to him (García. Arenal. M, 2009: 04-05).

Although Othello, the Moor of Venice is not descended from a decent royal family, as a character can be put in the shoes of Ahmed al-Mansur, the victorious, who gained a very prestigious reputation both at home and abroad. Shakespeare incarnated the personality of al-Mansur in Othello. However, Othello, as a Moor or a foreigner and stranger, is portrayed as a protector of Venice from the foreigners like the Turks. He earned his reputation in Venice as the General in the Venetian Army thanks to his commitment to his state, self-confidence, dignity, achievements, strength and competence in leading the Venetian army and keeping Venice immune to foreign threats.

In fact, historically speaking Morocco under the reign of al-Mansur was among the countries that performed a principal role in the international scene of the sixteenth century, arranging alliances with Christian nations or other Islamic powers when threats were coming whether at home or from outside (García. Arenal. M, 2009: 03).

Morocco took profit from the rivalry between the Turks and the Spaniards (his enemies) who struggled to take hold of the Mediterranean basin. Al-Mansur saw even the division between Catholic and Protestant Europe as opportunities. However, al-Mansur suffered from the Spanish and the Portuguese presence on the Moorish soil since they established colonies there in the late fifteenth century. At that time, Morocco was spotted in

Spain and Portugal's division program. In other words, it formed a part in the extension of the Iberian Peninsula's process of the so-called *Reconquista*. Therefore, Mediterranean ports, Morocco's eastern border, such as Melilla, Tlemcen and Oran were taken under the Spanish command (García. Arenal. M, 2009: 03- 04).

If we try to mingle history with fiction i.e. *Othello*, the Venetian Cyprus was the target of the Ottoman Turks. The latter are considered a source of threat to the Venetian presence in Cyprus. Hence, as al-Mansur had defended his Kingdom from the Spanish and Portuguese threat, Othello delivered Cyprus from the Turkish conquest.

Al-Mansur, as his predecessors, turned to countries such as France, Holland, and England that were all enemies of Spain for possible assistance and military support. England enthusiastically proved cooperative since the Queen Elizabeth feared of the Spanish threat especially after her excommunication in 1570. She was really in need of this alliance with Al-Mansur until the end of her reign against Philip II whose vast New World resources of gold and silver were matched by his hostility towards the Protestant heresy (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 50).

On 23 June 1580, the first contacts had been established officially between al-Mansur who sent Elizabeth a letter that opens with five lines of honorific flattering titles, praising her as the greatest among the followers of the 'religion of Christ'. Al-Mansur with eloquence and flattery, confessed his 'evident love'—*al-hubb al-sarih*—between him and the Queen Elizabeth 'sultana Isabel': she was 'the majesty in the lands of Christ, the sultana Isabel, may God grant her all good and continue her good health'.

This alliance of love and cooperation between Al-Mansur and Elizabeth I can be used as a confirmation to our intriguing doubts. It did not escape the English Bard's mind and works of fiction that bear truth about the courtly life of the Elizabethan England. Thus, our task here is trying to associate this love, military and economic affair to some of

Shakespeare's plays as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, especially in the casket scene, the prince of Morocco takes part. This scene is so significant because the Prince of Morocco is one of Portia's suitors. In fact, in his article, professor Riche (2012) is right when he associates this to Ahmed al-Mansur's amicable and if we dare say love relation with Queen Elizabeth I. Their pretended love relation is based on interest and profit, especially since they were both involved in the conflict with Spain.

The prince of Morocco or Moorish prince/ Al-Mansur is portrayed in the play as a great and Dark-skinned warrior dressed in white. What is bizarre is that, although he is completely conscious that the color of his skin may not please Portia, he is proud and aware of his value. He is an eloquent noble prince who addressed Portia/Elizabeth in a very refined verse when he narrated to her some of his achievements and glories but he asked her to ignore his dark complexion in the following:

**Morocco:** Mislike me not for my complexion,  
The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,  
To whom I am a neighbor and near bred.  
Bring me the fairest creature northward born,  
Where Phoebus' fire scarce thaws the icicles,  
And let us make incision for your love  
To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.  
I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine  
Hath feared the valiant. By my love I swear  
The best-regarded virgins of our clime  
Have loved it too. I would not change this hue,  
Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen (I.ii.38-9).  
Why that's the lady! All the world desires her;  
From the four corners of the earth they come  
To kiss this shrine, this mortal breathing saint.  
The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds  
Of wide Arabia are as through fares now  
For princes to come view fair Portia.  
The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head  
Spits in the face of heaven, is no bar  
To stop the foreign spirits, but they come  
As o'er a brook to see fair Portia. (II.vi. 54).

Riche Bouteldja tried also to associate each character in the play with his/ her empire that he/she represents. Portia is referred to Elizabethan England, Prince of Morocco stands for Ahmed Al-Mansur (Kingdom of Morocco) while the prince of Aragon is an epitome of Philip II of Spain (the Spanish Empire).

As we explained it before, Spain is associated with Silver since the Prince of Aragon has chosen the silver casket, Morocco as Bouteldja Riche assets is associated with gold. This can be seen through Morocco's choice of the golden casket. Hence, this kind of choice is so significant and not random since Morocco's gold rush attracted westerns interests. Ahmad Al-Mansur, is also labelled *al-dhahabi*, "the man of gold" (Riche, 2012). Morocco during his reign witnessed flourishing and development in different fields as the case of England under the reign of Elizabeth. Hence, Shakespeare made use of some fictional characters to mean and reflect Elizabeth's Machiavellic tendencies when she ventured to establish diplomatic, commercial and political ties with Al-Mansur, the Moroccan Sovereign.

The Moor as he is referred to in this part is the original inhabitant of North Africa (Barbary states), Morocco and Mauretania. The most known Moors in the drama of Shakespeare are Othello, the Moor of Venice and the Prince of Morocco. In the previous analysis of *The Merchant of Venice*, we can compare the Prince of Morocco, the black Moor, who is aware of his appearance and skin to "black Othello's colour that created also in the play a contrast between him and the Venetians. Even though the Prince of Morocco is given an image of a comic figure, he is another Moor who has the same traits as Othello, especially his physical strength and when he talked of his adventures and achievements to attract Portia's attention.

Generally speaking, the Moors of Barbary are a dark-skinned people when they are compared to Europeans, but they are not really black. However, in Shakespeare's time, the

term *Moor* was generally employed, to refer to any person with dark or black skin, including black Africans.

Shakespeare in the play tends to describe Othello as a black African. However, no matter what the exact colour of his skin, what is important is that Othello was an outsider in Venice, an exotic strange figure who in spite of being admired and praised for military strength and competence, he even developed in the Venetians a feeling hatred and fear.

If we try to read closely Shakespeare's play *Othello*, we can point to some instances that communicate some historical facts. In the second scene of the play, Brabantio received the news that his only daughter married secretly to the Moor. He went mad and furious. However, because of the imminent Turkish threat, Brabantio and his son in law Othello forget about their misunderstanding and conflict trying to find a solution to that immediate issue. Othello received the orders to go to Cyprus to protect it from the Turks. He welcomes the command with requesting Desdemona to leave with him for Cyprus.

As the Venetians felt the urgency for Black Moor's (Othello's) intervention in Cyprus against the Turks, English people also saw from the Kingdom of Morocco. i.e., Al-Mansur an important ally against the Spaniards.

Accordingly, by 1583, when advising Elizabeth about her political options with regard to Spain, Lord Burghley suggested that an alliance with Morocco could well 'serve your Majesty' (Hillgarth. J. N, 2000:366). Therefore, the English Monarch saw from the diplomatic relations with Morocco was advantageous. As a result, Elizabeth gave a charter to the Barbary Company to be established to regulate trade with the Barbary Coast. In this context Henri De Castries affirms,

While the formal diplomatic and trade contracts with the Ottomans were established since 1582, the English interests in the western Mediterranean and Atlantic necessitated strong agreements with Morocco. In July 1585, she granted the letters of establishing the Barbary Company to direct trade to the North African coast. (1935:455-7).



The mutual interest and the union between the Moorish Sovereign and the last Tudor Monarch Elizabeth I can be reflected in the play of *Othello* via Othello's marriage with the fair Desdemona. Really, we share with Allan Bloom the point of view that the marriage between Othello and Desdemona is not an easy union to analyse. She qualified it to be "a marriage between an old, black, foreign warrior and a young, beautiful, innocent Venetian noblewoman" (1960:132).

In the same vein, Allan D. Bloom, in her article "Cosmopolitan Man and the Political Community: An Interpretation of Othello", referred to the Earl of Shaftesbury's criticism of *Othello* by asserting that "the marriage of Othello and Desdemona is a mismatch, a monstrous union founded on the lying pretensions of a charlatan and the unhealthy imagination of a misguided young girl". Since *Othello* is a tragedy, for him this tragedy is not the result of Iago's villainy but it is due to the nature of the characters and their relationship (Ibid: 131).

Her devotion to serve her country and people pushed Elizabeth to search for *unholy* alliance with the non-Christians. Elizabeth, in fact, needed these ties with Morocco since the latter was rising as a desirable market for English cloth.

Elizabeth became eager to consolidate all her relation with Morocco not only trade especially after her army's failure to defeat the Duke of Palma in the Netherlands, what gave the chance to the Spanish army to threaten the English shores.

In February 1587, Elizabeth I ordered the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, thereby inviting revenge by Philip II, who was building a large Armada. Overwhelmed by dangers from all sides, Elizabeth turned to al-Mansur for help (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 51).

Elizabeth swallowed her pride and wrote requesting help to build a front against Spain, reminding him that she had sold him the tents and the heavy weapons for the invasion of the Sudan (Ibrahim Harakat in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 55). However, Al-Mansur refused,

temporizing even though in March 1588, he issued a royal decree protecting all English traders, travelers, and residents in his kingdom (De Castries in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 51-52).

Elizabeth's relationship with Al-Mansur was not welcomed at home and abroad. Because of being a Muslim, the Moorish King was considered as a real danger for the Christians and Christendom in general. Regardless of all these, Elizabeth ventured and established this alliance with Morocco since she wanted to protect her country and hit the Spaniards (the enemy of both Elizabeth and Al-Mansur) in their own beds.

This reality is reflected in *Othello*. The black Moor's marriage with Desdemona has been the most important subject of discussion in the City State of Venice. Brabantio, Desdemona's father, refused categorically this union of two opposite sides. He considered it a shameful act, an aberration to the law and ethics of Venice.

His reaction when he receives the news of his daughter's engagement with the Moor can be seen in the following passage from the play:

**Brabantio.** It is too true an evil. Gone she is,  
And what's to come of my despised time  
Is nought but bitterness. Now Roderigo,  
Where didst thou see her? O unhappy girl!  
With the Moor, say'st thou? Who would be a father?  
How didst thou know 'twas she? O she deceives me  
O heaven! How got she out? O treason of the blood!  
Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds  
By what you see them act. Is there not charms  
By which the property of youth and maidhood  
May be abused? Have you not read, Roderigo,  
Of some such thing? (I.i.8-9)

Brabantio did not only refuse this kind of much, however, he went further when he accused Othello for having bewitched his daughter Desdemona. Historically speaking, witchcraft was associated with the Orientals, Black Africans, and pagans. Since Othello's

origin is not decent, he is said to be a witch who bewitched his daughter to accept him regardless of his colour and frightening, horrifying posture.

**Brabantio:** My daughter! O, my daughter!  
She is abused, stolen from me, and corrupted  
By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;  
For nature so preposterously to err,  
Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense, (I.iii.15-16)

O thou foul thief! Where hast thou stowed my daughter?  
Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her,  
For I'll refer me to all things of sense,  
If she in chains of magic were not bound,  
Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,  
So opposite to marriage that she shunned  
The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,  
Would ever have, t'incur a general mock,  
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom  
Of such a thing as thou - to fear, not to delight.  
Judge me the world, if 'tis not gross in sense  
That thou hast practised on her with foul charms,  
Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals  
That weakens motion. I'll have't disputed on;  
'Tis probable and palpable to thinking.  
I therefore apprehend and do attach thee  
For an abuser of the world, a practiser  
Of arts inhibited and out of warrant.  
Lay hold upon him. If he do resist,  
Subdue him at his peril. (I.ii.12).

In reality, Othello denies Brabantio's accusations of witchcraft by trying to convince the Venetian Senator that his daughter is attracted by his achievements and heroic deeds then fell in love with him. This can be seen in the passage below.

**Othello:** Her father loved me, oft invited me,  
Still questioned me the story of my life  
From year to year - the battles, sieges, fortunes  
That I have passed.  
I ran it through, even from my boyish days  
To the very moment that he bade me tell it;  
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,  
Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
Of hair-breadth scapes i'th'imminent deadly breach,  
Of being taken by the insolent foe  
And sold to slavery; of my redemption thence,  
And with it all my travels' history:  
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,  
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads  
touch heaven,  
It was my hint to speak - such was the process:  
And of the cannibals that each other eat,

The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
 Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear  
 Would Desdemona seriously incline;  
 But still the house affairs would draw her thence,  
 Which ever as she could with haste dispatch  
 She'd come again, and with a greed year  
 Devour up my discourse; which I observing  
 Took once a pliant hour and found good means  
 To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart  
 That I would all my pilgrimage dilate  
 She loved me for the dangers  
 I had passed,  
 And I loved her that she did pity them.  
 This only is the witchcraft I have used. (I.ii.18-19).

England's triumph over the Spanish Armada in the summer of 1588 made from Elizabeth a viable military and diplomatic ally for al-Mansur. He saw from her now a means to an end: since she fought Spain to defend her island, she can also help him to liberate al-Andalus from Philip II or 'the tyrant of Castile' as he named him. Besides, al-Mansur encouraged the Andalusian exiles to attack Spanish-held Ceuta which they almost conquered. He also fortified his fleet, his 'ships of jihad' (marakib jihadiyya) for the 'invasion of the land of al-Andalus'. His preparation was to 'cross to al-Andalus by sea with the soldiers of God and Islam to re-establish Islam and to deliver it from the hands of unbelief' (Al-Fishtali in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 52). Therefore, for al-Mansur, Elizabeth had opened wide the gates to Europe and he was now ready to play his rightful role on the European stage.

Henceforth, Religious divergence with England was less important than political, ideological, and military cooperation. Indeed, such cooperation was authorized by God Himself for—having sided by Elizabeth's forces against Philip—for the benefit of Al-Mansur's Islamic cause and objectives (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 52-3).

Accordingly, Othello's contribution in the destruction of the Ottoman fleet when trying to invade Cyprus "Valiant Othello we must straight employ you Against the general enemy Ottoman" (II.i.36) is parallel to the destruction of the Spanish Armada in the Channel

on its way to invade Britain. Fiction merges with truth and find their ways through the inked feather of Shakespeare. As Othello helped Venice and spared her from a certain Turkish invasion, we think that the abortion of the Spanish attempt to invade England was due to the strength of the English navy, the stormy weather as well as the Moorish intervention since both Elizabeth and Al-Mansur expressed hatred vis-à-vis the Spaniards.

**Gentleman:** News, lads! Our wars are done:  
The desperate tempest hath so banged the Turks  
That their designment halts. A noble ship of Venice  
Hath seen a grievous wrack and sufferance  
On most part of their fleet (II.i.27).

“The firm-footed, of celestial light and knowledge, the great sultana al-asila, almathila, al-athila, al-khatira [true-blooded, exemplary, high-born, great], the famous, the possessor of England, sultana Isabel” are titles that al-Mansur used even to address himself and Elizabeth to Muslims, too. For him, the Christian Queen was as esteemed, admired and respected as a Muslim ruler, where similar titles are applied to the Sultan of Mecca (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 54). As Al-Mansur did with Elizabeth, Othello is used to address Desdemona in heroic terms “fair warrior”, “the gentle Desdemona”.

Like the casket scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, a marriage contest to gain Portia’s hand, in *Othello* Desdemona is targeted by many suitors like Iago, the villain, Cassio, the Florentine Captain, and Othello, the Moor.

Desdemona’s choice fell into Othello. Her choice is so noteworthy if we associate it to the history of England. Elizabeth did not feel safe at home or vis-à-vis the other European Empires; however, she preferred to establish political and economic alliances with the non-Europeans as the case of the Kingdom of Morocco.

We can say that England's diplomatic relations with the Barbary States (Morocco) contributed in shaping the British imperial ideology. Elizabeth I gave charters to British

merchants in order to found trading companies to regulate trade with different states as the case of the Barbary Company that is concerned with trade between Britain and the Barbary Coast. Unfortunately Elizabeth's death in 1603 and a civil war in Morocco changed the direction of the relation especially after the coronation of James I. Therefore, in writing *Othello*, Shakespeare wanted to show Elizabeth I's engagement in a subtle diplomatic relationship with Mulay al-Mansur, King of Morocco.

Another event that marked the Elizabethan era is that in early July 1596, the Elizabethan Navy attacked Cadiz, 'the heart of Spain', as it was labeled by the Venetian ambassador. Al-Mansur saw from the English attack another Christian way to his Muslim goal. He sent ships to take part in the attack and to help the English forces (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 56). Ahmad al-Mansur, was very much a ruler of his time, planned for a unified venture with the English Queen to attack and conquer the Spanish territories in America (García-Arenal. Mercedes, 2009:02). Hence, we can affirm that, it was al-Mansur who had worsened Elizabeth I's relations with Philip II of Spain. Besides, her attack against the Spaniards; the Moroccan Sultan took revenge through Elizabeth, since Philip had invaded Morocco by means of al-Nasir the year before (Richard L. Smith in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 56). Hence, Al-Mansur was now invading Iberia by means of Elizabeth.

Later that year, an anonymous memo addressed to Secretary of State, Sir Robert Cecil, expressed the hope that the 'King of Moroko' would send 'som of his Mores to burne and spoyle the Spaniards corne adjoining to their fortts and garisons in Barbarie' (De Castries, in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 57).

During the visit of the Moroccan ambassador to London in 1600- 1601, Al- Mansur in secret offered to Elizabeth a joint operation to seize the Spanish possessions in the Americas. However, Elizabeth seemed hesitant about building an extensive overseas empire, since she was in need of well-trained troops to help her against Spain. She desired to benefit from the

savoir-faire of the elite force of Morisco warriors by tempting them to come to England and serve on her fleet. Al-Mansur, however, wanted to expand his kingdom, and in a letter of the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1601, he stated that he would guarantee a joint military venture with her not just to fight against Spain but also to colonize the New World (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 58). To guarantee cooperation, Al-Mansur explained to Elizabeth that such a venture would be beneficial for the two realms' imperial venture:

And your high estate shall knowe that, in the inhabiting of those countries by us and yow, yow shall have a great benefite: first for that those countries of the East are adjoining to many Kinges Moores and infinite nations of our religion; and further, if your power and command shall be seene there with owre armie, all the Moores will joyne and confederate themselves—by the help of God—with us and yow (De Castries in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 58).

Elizabeth and al-Mansur were two of a kind as Matar has referred to in his book. Both experienced a highly intense religious context: Protestant Elizabeth feared Catholic King of Spain, Philip II, in the same way that Maliki Ahmad feared the Hanafi Ottoman Sultan, Murad III. Both were highly sovereign rulers, expecting obedience and flattery, but also relying on the advices of the Privy Council and *Majlis al-Shura*. Both were consolidating and defending their peoples' national identity in the face of foreign danger and threat. In addition, both sovereigns were driven by money and treasures. Elizabeth guaranteed her sea-dogs' pursuit of the gold of the Spanish galleys, while al-Mansur sent his Morisco army into the Western Sudan in quest of gold and occupation. Both feared the conspiracy of their relations who were supported by Spain: Elizabeth with Mary Tudor and al-Mansur with his nephew, who was defeated and killed in 1595. Both monarchs established contacts by exchanging letters of admiration and amity, envoys and ambassadors (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 60-1).

The western Mediterranean, especially the region of North Africa from where the Britons expelled and robbed of their riches and liberties, was considered to be the land of hostility where the hostile Moriscos lived (Maclean.G & Matar. N, 2001: 10).

Despite the dangerous fascination of Islam, Queen Elizabeth had taken the risk when cooperating commercially and diplomatically with both the Turks of the Ottoman Empire and the Moors of the Kingdom of Morocco. However, instead of demonstrating her power and superiority to the Moroccan ruler, Ahmad al-Mansur (1578–1603), Queen Elizabeth wanted military and diplomatic support from him (Yahya Dahiru in Matar. Nabil, 1999: 09).

In 1603, the last year of the two sovereigns' reigns and lives, al-Mansur offered to the Elizabeth that the Moroccan and the English troops could use the English ships together to assault the Spanish colonies in the West Indies. Hence, their goal, in doing so, was driving out the Spaniards, and then conquer their land and keep it “under our”, their, “dominion forever, and—by the help of God—to joyne it to our estate and yours.” The Sultan Muslim ruler added:

It shall be needfull for us to treat of the peopling thereof, whether it be your pleasure it shall be inhabited by our armie or yours, or whether we shall take it on our chardg to inhabite it with our armie without yours, in respect of the great heat of the clymat, where those of your countrie doe not fynde themselves fitt to endure the extremitie of heat there and of the cold of your partes, where our men endure it very well by reason that the heat hurtes them not (De Castries in Matar, Nabil, 1999 : 09).

The first Muslims who sailed to London as representatives of their monarchs were “two Moores, being noble men, whereof one was of the Kings blood,” who were brought by Thomas Wyndham in 1551 (Hakluyt quoted in Matar. Nabil, 1999: 33).

In January 1589 an ambassador from Morocco, Ahmed Belkassem, visited England with the English agent Henry Roberts, and was received by over forty members of the Barbary Company, “well mounted all on horsebacke,” and escorted into the city of London by torchlight (De Castries in Matar. Nabil, 1999: 33).

Even Caids, the leaders of the corsairs, who attacked the European shipping vessels in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, did not miss this kind of visits. Moreover, in 1595 another ambassador, al-Caid Ahmed ben Adel, visited England, accompanied by two other Caids and a retinue “of twentye five or thirtye persones” (Klarwil in Matar, Nabil, 1999: 33).



Not much information has survived about those visits of the ambassadors and Caid, unlike the visit in 1600 of the Moroccan ambassador, “Hamet Xarife,” as he was known in England, or ‘Abd al-Wahid bin Mas‘ood bin Mohammad ‘Annouri, as Mulay Ahmed listed his full name in the letter to Elizabeth on 15 June 1600. This ambassador arrived with two merchants, “A real hadgel Messy, and Alhadge Hamet Mimon,” along with thirteen others—all told, sixteen Muslims” (De Castries in Matar, Nabil, 1999: 33).

The death of Al-Mansur and Elizabeth can be reflected in *Othello* by the death of Othello and Desdemona. Therefore, Shakespeare may be portray the tragic end of the two characters in the play to the departure of the two well-known sovereigns in both Europe and the Barbary. Even though their match whether in the play or in reality is qualified to be a mismatch, their common interests and cooperation, we may say, succeeded in keeping the foreign invasions away from their two realms. Hence, we can affirm that the tragedy of *Othello* is one among other Shakespearean plays that mirrored history.

In his book, *England and the Barbary 1589-1689* more precisely in the first chapter entitled “The Moor on the Elizabethan Stage”, Nabil Matar investigates the reason behind the presence of the Moors in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (1596) and *Othello* (1604). However, Matar affirms that these Moors were not “just a product of literary invention, the European legacy of race discrimination, or biblical denunciations of the sons of Ham: they were a direct result of England's diplomatic initiative into Islamic affairs and of the negotiations and collusions that took place between Queen Elizabeth and Mulay Ahmad Al-Mansur” (2005:13).

In addition to the plays discussed above, *The Tempest* is generally considered as Shakespeare’s last play, first performed in 1611 in King James I’s court to celebrate the marriage of Elizabeth, the King’s daughter, to Frederick, the Elector Palatine.

Scholars attribute the immediate context of the play to the 1609's shipwreck of an English ship in Bermuda. Besides, news reached England about the adventurers' and the travellers' hardships, they faced during their journey to the island. This period coincides with the seventeenth century's overseas exploration. Nevertheless, our objective in analysing the play collides with what scholars have said about it. Hence, we will try to investigate deeply its context in relation to England's foreign relations, mainly with the Kingdom of Morocco.

As in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, Shakespeare, in *The Tempest*, did not neglect to employ another Moor or other moors like the King of Tunis and Caliban, the son of Sycorax a witch from Argiers or Algiers (North Africa).

Accordingly, both in *Othello* and *The Tempest*, Shakespeare united a Moor with a European woman. As the example of the Black Moor's marriage with Desdemona and The King of Tunis's (the African Moor) union with the Napolitan princess Claribel, the only daughter of Alonso, the King of Naples. This union between the two opposite sides provoked our curiosity to reveal the historical truth via Shakespeare's drama.

Through our reading of the play, we notice that in the Jacobean era, the English people did not really welcome and appreciate any tie with the Moors. The Elizabethan bad experience with the King of Morocco, Ahmed Al-Mansur, the one who fueled the conflicts between Elizabeth I and Philip II of Spain, was seen as a scandalous union between the two Monarchs. This pushed James I' England to adopt some measures vis-à-vis the Moors as to keep England away from any Muslim cooperation on the one hand, and to ameliorate England relations with Spain on the other.

James's position and policy towards the Moors is clearly shown **in *The Tempest* especially** when the King of Naples's fleet is shipwrecked on their way back to Naples. This incident is interpreted as a curse and God's punishment suite à the union of Naples with Tunis. Thus, we

understand from this that this kind of union, Anglo-Magharibi encounter, is not even blessed by God. This idea can be shown in the following quote from *The Tempest*.

**Sebastian:**

Sir, you may thank yourself for this great loss,  
That would not bless our Europe with your daughter,  
But rather lose her to an African;  
Where she, at least, is banish'd from your eye,  
Who hath cause to wet the grief on't (II.i.48).

Caliban is Prospero's dark, earthy slave, often referred to in the play as a monster. Caliban is the son of an African Algerian witch-hag and the only native of the island. Caliban is another Moor who made his appearance on the Jacobean stage. He, in his first speech, accuses Prospero of stealing the island from him since he is the rightful heir of the island.

**Prospero**

The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy  
Was grown into a hoop? Hast thou forgot her?

**Ariel**

No, sir.

**Prospero:**

Thou hast. Where was she born? Speak; tell me.

**Ariel:**

Sir, in Argier.

**Prospero:**

! was she so? I must  
Once in a month recount what thou hast been,  
Which thou forget'st. This damn'd witch Sycorax,  
For mischiefs manifold, and sorceries terrible  
To enter human hearing, from Argier,  
Thou know'st, was banish'd: for one thing she did  
They would not take her life. Is not this true?

**Ariel:**

Ay, sir.

**Prospero:**

This blue-ey'd hag was hither brought with child, (I.ii.35).

Caliban is described in the play as "the slave" who carries wood, makes fire, and serves Prospero and Miranda's needs. Prospero gave a very negative image of Caliban when he affirms:

Come, thou tortoise! When?  
Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself  
Upon thy wicked dam, come forth! (I.ii.37).

As Caliban's reaction to Prospero's ingratitude is to "violate the honour" of Miranda and people the island with calibans.

Oh ho! Oh ho! Would it had been done!  
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopl'd else  
This isle with Calibans. (I.ii.38).

Miranda is the only heir of Prospero's and the only woman in *The Tempest*. Like in *Othello*, Brabantio refuses the marriage of Desdemona with Othello, Prospero, in his turn, prevents Caliban from raping his Daughter Miranda.

Accordingly, if we appeal to some historical evidences, we can consider Miranda as Elizabeth I who was the target of different suitors. Miranda, in *The Tempest*, meets the same fate as Elizabeth since she was spotted by many suitors like Ferdinand, Stephano and even Caliban whose interests differ. However, at last, she opted for Ferdinand to be her husband.

Many events coincide with the writing and the performance of *The Tempest* like the English invasion of Ireland as well as the foundation of colonies and plantations in the New World (Americas). Hence, *The Tempest* tells the story of England when the latter sowed its first seeds to build an empire overseas by following the example of Spain or other Muslim empires like that of Morocco.

Consequently, we can say that Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is a play that embodies history in which the playwright tried his best to reflect the Jacobean England's image and its circulating discourse. It reflects also on mainly England's relations with the non-Christians (the Muslims of the Barbary States). In addition, if we consider the setting of the play, we find that it is really significant. Indeed, the play is set on the unknown island in the Mediterranean basin; besides, Shakespeare gave another hint when he mentioned Argiers. Therefore, the events of the play took place in the region of Algiers that is situated in North Africa, the lands where the Moors dwell.

Cleopatra is another Shakespearean character who exemplifies an important woman in history. She is endowed with political intelligence, gift for languages and an overwhelming ambition since she descended from her Royal Macedonian-Greek family. Because of her commitment to her country as a Queen of Egypt, Shakespeare made of her a machiavellic character who seeks her interests even through seducing western leaders.

*Antony and Cleopatra* is the second in a trilogy of Roman plays (the first was *Julius Caesar*; the third, *Coriolanus*). Shakespeare in his play evoked a classical era of the Roman Empire.

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is described as a political romance. This latter involves the two characters Antony and Cleopatra as lovers and political leaders. The play gives us an arena where two great distinct civilizations, Rome and Egypt are put into contact.

Open quarrel and internal conflict is the core of the play from its very opening till Antony and Cleopatra's disastrous defeat at Actium giving the chance to Caesar to invade Egypt. Cleopatra even with Antony's assistance did not feel secure. In the play, we notice that the Egyptian Queen is a "sovereign mistress of true melancholy" (IV.ix.112), restless and feared Octavius Caesar who is continuously threatening her.

Shakespeare wanted to show how Antony's submission to Cleopatra leads to his defeat. The latter is caused by their decision to fight Caesar at sea although their army is good on land. This very bad military strategy is adopted by Cleopatra who wanted, at the very beginning, to wage the war and help Antony. She then changed her mind, when she retreated her fleet leaving Antony what led to his defeat and death.

At the first glance that we make on the play, we can judge that the play has nothing to do with the English history. Nonetheless, if we analyse deeply these events, our view will be shifted towards affirming that the play is in fact a historical narrative. Considering the fact

that Shakespeare, as a Queen's Man then King's Man, was aware of all the details of the English court of his time, automatically, his works can be taken as a reflexion of the English history.

Shakespeare to distance himself and England, he adopted his own technique in refashioning and altering history in order to serve his dramatic purposes as well as to communicate the ideologies and the exigencies of his time in an implicit manner.

Many historians tend to say that *Antony and Cleopatra*, a Shakespearian play, is far from being a historical one; but we dare say the opposite. It is, in fact, a historical play since all the events happened in it and even its characters communicate historical truths. Thus, according to my interpretation of the play, Cleopatra as a historical figure and Queen of Egypt as well has simply used the Roman triumvir Mark Antony to save her kingdom from Octavius Caesar's invasion. Besides, her death as the last Queen of Egypt marked the end of the Pharaonic Dynasties.

If we try to relate the events of the play to the immediate context of late sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, it is evident to refer to Elizabeth I's reign (last Tudor Monarch) which was parallel to that of Cleopatra. As Cleopatra used her art of seduction to ensnare the Western leaders for the welfare of her state, Elizabeth I also tried her best whatever the means to reach her end which is to protect her Kingdom from foreign eminent invasions mainly from the Spanish front.

In fact, when Elizabeth I felt the necessity to draw even the non-Catholics, as the case of Morocco's King Al-Mansur, to her league, she, may be, adopted the same technique used by Cleopatra towards Antony to ensnare Al-Mansur. Indeed, Al-Mansur's letters to Elizabeth that bear a heavy love language make us think about the kind of relationship that both the two were involved in. In addition to this, both Monarchs have the same motives and they are both machiavellic in their decisions. Therefore, birds of one feather should flock together.

Really, the investigation of the characters in the play even though they are fictional entities pushed us to consider them as historical personages. Since *Antony and Cleopatra* is a tragedy of the two lovers and leaders, it is evident that Shakespeare wanted to refer to the death of both Elizabeth I and the death of Al-Mansur in 1603, which was received, in both England and Morocco, as a real tragedy. While Elizabeth I died without leaving a male heir created disorder in England about who would be the King after her, Al-Mansur's death entered Morocco in a civil war.

The events of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* turn around three major characters Antony, Cleopatra, and Caesar since they are the most significant in the play. However, Cleopatra was still the most targeted character in the play.

I can side Kalmey, Theodora A. Jankowski (1989) who explained the character of Cleopatra and her resemblance to Queen Elizabeth especially when both women used bodies for political purposes. Nevertheless, we do not really agree with her when she goes further to affirm that Cleopatra should not be taken as an allegorical representation of Elizabeth I. Instead, she argues that, in *Antony and Cleopatra* was written by the bard of Avon, a successful female sovereign in a patriarchal society is a myth rather than a reality. Hence, Shakespeare put Elizabeth in Cleopatra's shoes to demonstrate that the Queen of England, during her reign, encountered the same problems and hardships as Cleopatra when she ruled Egypt.

To conclude, this chapter revealed some historical truths about the relation that both Elizabeth and Al-Mansur had. This political, economic and military alliance, being based on mutual interests, was not welcomed whether at home or abroad since the Moorish King is a Muslim who represented a real danger for the Christians and Christendom in general. Unfortunately, things went upside down after the death of both Elizabeth I and the succession of James I to the throne of England. Therefore, our profound study of the five plays by

Shakespeare enabled us to unveil some historical truths about what was taking place at that period of the English/British history.

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## **Chapter Eight: Shakespeare and the Ottoman Empire**

“The terror of their name”, Turks, “does even now make the Kings and Princes of the West to tremble and quake through fear of their victorious forces.” (Fletcher. Giles, 1597:3).

According to the New Historicist approach that we have opted for in our research, literature is the by-product of history. Hence, to understand a specific historical detail, one should fetch deeply between the lines of the scripts that were written at that specific time and place to reveal their hidden truths.

Since our material concerns a bunch of plays selected carefully from Shakespeare’s literary archive, our target here is to explain in which ways the Turks (the Ottoman Empire) are appealed to in the plays. We will go even further to evoke their political, economic and, why not; their friendship relations with England in the late Sixteenth and the onset of the Seventeenth centuries. Therefore, historical records are required to make this kind of much.

The Ottoman sultan, Muhammed II (1450-1481), or Mehmet II was described as “the cruellest persecutor of Christ's church, the son of Satan, son of perdition and son of death, seeking like his father, the devil, to devour both bodies and souls. He has risen up like a rabid beast whose thirst is never satisfied by the shedding of Christian blood” (Baronius and O. Raynaldus in Frazee. A. Ch, 1983: 09). He captured Constantinople in 1453 and declared himself *Padishah Rumi*, emperor of the Romans. Following this striking historical event, Christian Europe became traumatized as the western Europeans had watched what they considered to be a *schismatic Greek empire* fell for the Turks.

From Constantinople, a base of a new Islamic empire, the Ottoman Turks managed to triumph over Greece, cradle of Western civilization, then the Balkans and Hungary. Armed with

gunpowder weapons, the Ottoman armies penetrated into central Europe, sweeping Vienna twice, in 1529 and 1683 (Truxillo. Charles. A, 2001: 25).

By the late fifteenth century, the Ottoman Turks took the monopoly by installing Islamic military power at sea and driving the Genoese and the Venetians gradually from their colonial outposts in the eastern Mediterranean. They took even Crimea, Chios, Rhodes, Athens, Cyprus, and Crete, the trading outposts from which the Italian republics were chased away. Therefore, it is worth noting that the region's trade was held in the Christian hands, while the Ottoman navy served mainly for military purposes. In parallel, Venice, as an important City-State where trade flourished, steadily lost its value in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries since the trade of spices as well as the oriental luxuries was reoriented to Atlantic ports (Braudel in Truxillo. Charles A, 2001: 56).

Historically, the Ottoman Turks were considered as the enemy of Christendom or the anti-Christ. This gave birth to an ending struggle between this strong oriental empire and the Spaniards who saw themselves as the defenders of the Roman Catholic Church. Ultimately, the Ottoman-Spanish conflicts in the Mediterranean ended after the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Even though the victory was for the Christians, the Ottomans rapidly reconstructed their fleet and the conflicts intensified by capturing Tunis in 1574, since the Port City of Tunis was a strategic post to the Spaniards to reach the eastern Mediterranean part. In 1580, the two great powers shifted their attentions to other preoccupations especially when they agreed to deal with other threatening adversaries. Therefore, Spain secured the defense of Italy, and the Ottoman Empire defended the possession of the Balkans. At the same time, the Turks dealt with the renewed threat of Safavid Iran under Shah Abbas (1587-1629). However, Philip II had to quieten the rebellion of the Netherlands, the English attacks on Spanish shipping, and the civil war in France (Alvarez in Truxillo. Charles A, 2001: 77-8).

If we relate the above to the English history, it is of a great importance to affirm that, according to Maclean and Matar, during the sixteenth century, the English played minor roles on the global scene, and little was known about them beyond their fortress (2001: 11).

Indeed, the sixteenth century was an era when Britons and Muslims first met and acquainted with each other's religion, customs, laws, and society and so forth. However, the British archipelago was never really been a subject of threat by the armies of the Ottomans. Elizabeth I was crowned the Queen of England while Sultan Süleyman 'the Magnificent' (1520–66) commanded the most formidable army on the European scene. Elizabeth, drawn by fear, was fully conscious of the value of being able to strengthen the British national unity by making reference to the Ottomans as a bitter enemy that can threaten England whenever the opportunity is present (Donald F. Lach, Asia in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 15).

Accordingly, these fears and anxieties that Elizabeth had vis-à-vis the Ottoman Turks are reflected in literature of that time especially in Shakespeare's plays under study, which are *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline* as well as *The Tempest*

Meanwhile, Muslim local officers, administrators, and rulers from Marrakesh to Libyan Tripoli, and from Izmir to Jerusalem and Agra, were also investigating about the Euro-Christians who sailed into their harbours or travelled to their cities, bringing with them commodities and stories about their lands, their monarchs, their cultures, and differences in their Protestant and Catholic versions of Christianity. However, trade and commerce were the main motives of Britons when they ventured to the Muslim territories, but not driven by curiosity to discover, or by their heroic spirit of 'adventure', as often thought and stated (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 15).

Trade between England and the Ottoman Levant began as early as 1511, according to Richard Hakluyt. Although, by the middle of the century, it started to decrease, in 1580, Sultan Murad III (1574–95) issued a formal trading license to the English nation as a whole in

order to re-establish their commercial as well as their political relations (T. S. Willan in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 17).

Because of the stories told about the moors and the “hostile Turks”, Londoners both feared and enjoyed the visits of these ‘Mahometans’ to England. However, when ‘Abd al-Wahid al-Annouri’ met Queen Elizabeth in 1600, the populace was so frightened at his impressive strength and his strange ‘Moorish’ religion. This pushed the captains to refuse to allow him and his followers of infidels on board their ships until the Queen in person intervened. (Norman Egbert McClure in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 20).

Converting Muslims was dominant in the English evangelical thought even though there were only a few Muslims from the Ottoman Empire converted to Christianity and took from England their new homeland. From 1500 to 1677, there are records indicating that fewer than 448 Black lived in the country; most, if not all, of them actually Muslim quitted Islam in favour of Protestant Christianity (Imtiaz Habib in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 20).

However, for Habib Imtiaz, the church records has carefully shown that many men and women as ‘Moors’, ‘Blackamoors’, and ‘Negros’, were baptized, married, or buried all around England, although the vast majority dwelled in London (Ibid).

Whenever such a conversion occurred, a sermon was delivered, and sometimes published, to explain from where the ‘Mahometan’ had come and why he had chosen to convert to Protestantism—not Catholicism—and become ‘English’. In addition, after the conversion, the converted Muslims adopted English names, English clothes, and took part in the English Church communion. For this reason, the Congregation marveled at the ‘Turk’ standing before them, un-turbanned and de-Islamicized (Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 21).

From the reign of Queen Elizabeth to that of Queen Anne, Islam and Muslims were portrayed as powerful and expansionist since the empire of the Ottomans, and the North African pirates and privateers threatened the British shores and its sea-navigations.

Consequently, Islam became a symbol of war and threat. Besides, it is for this reason that the Britons constructed an imaginary image that Muslims were a tribe of warring anti-Christians to establish “the universal monarchy of their long-dead leader known as ‘Mahomet’” (Aldershot in Maclean. G & Matar. N, 2001: 26).

The anti-Christian hostility and the danger that the Muslims represented was further inculcated in the minds and the hearts of the Anglican congregations. Therefore, in the conclusion to the section “Prayer against the Turks”, they made prayers against the Turks, which is the following:

O lord God of hosts, grant to thy church strength and victory against the malicious fury of these Turks, Saracens, Tartarians, against Gog and Magog, and all the malignant rabble of Antichrist, enemies to thy Son Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Prevent their devices, overthrow their power, and dissolve their kingdom (Townsend & Reed, 2009: 27).

As we have referred to in the previous chapter, Elizabeth tried to bridge a historical gap between the Christians and the Muslims when she sought political and economic alliance with the Muslim Empires as the case of the Turks. This can be seen when she allowed her subjects to trade and interact with them without being prosecuted for dealing with “infidels” (M. Epstein in Matar, Nabil, 1999: 19). From doing so, Elizabeth I had an objective behind especially to find new markets for her merchants and having by her side such a military support against the Spaniards (Matar, Nabil, 1999: 19). This pushed her in 1580s and 1590s to propose to the Turkish and the Moroccan rulers’ bilateral beneficial and practical agreements. In her correspondence with Sultan Murad (reg. 1574–1595), both approved to admit English and Turkish traders into each others’ kingdoms: the Sultan guaranteed her in a letter of 1579 that the English “may lawfully come to our imperiall Dominions, and freely returne home.” (Hakluyt in Matar, Nabil, 1999: 20). Elizabeth responded him in same manner: “we will graunt as equall and as free a libertie to the subjects of your highnesse with us for the use of

traffique, when they wil, and as often as they wil, to come, and go and from us and our kingdoms” (Hakluyt in Matar, Nabil, 1999: 20).

Accordingly, England opened its doors to the “Turks.” The Europeans feared that Elizabeth could offer to the Sultan “safe port in England, by means of which to set his foot also into the Western Empire” (Susan Skilliter in Matar, Nabil, 1999: 20).

In 1591, one “Hamet, a distressed Turk” asked Queen Elizabeth to authorize him to fight with her forces against the Spaniards. It was not really the first time that an alien was accepted to join and assist the English military action. From 1575 to 1588, immigrants were repeatedly made to join in national defense (Matthews in Matar, Nabil, 1999: 20).

In September 1579, a Turkish ambassador landed in England with a letter to Queen Elizabeth from the Sultan Murad III. In that letter, the Sultan offered “unrestricted commerce in his country to Englishmen”. This envoy is important in the history of the Anglo-Ottoman diplomatic relations because he was probably the first Turkish official to visit Elizabethan England to bring with him the first communication from Sultan Murad III to the Queen (Susan Skilliter in Matar, Nabil, 1999: 33). Three years later, another Turkish ambassador reached England, bringing presents that represented the wealth and exoticism of the Levant like lions, Turkish scimitars, horses, and unicorn horns (Harris in Matar, Nabil, 1999: 33).

During the sixteenth century, the Barbary Coast that is apparent in some of Shakespeare’s plays was being taken under the Turkish domination or the historical great empire known as the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Mediterranean regencies or provinces as the example of Algiers (1530), Tripoli, Tunis (1574) were known at that time as illegal markets, directed by the *Corso*, where European white slaves (Barbary hostages) were sold to slavery. This kind of human marketing based on capture and ransom. If we associate this directly with Shakespeare’s Mediterranean-set plays mainly in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra* as well as *The Tempest*, we can argue that they reflect the

Mediterranean historical sketch, the Euro-Turkish relations, and the ordeals that the European merchants had encountered in the Mediterranean basin.

Since Shakespeare is called the spirit of his age, we judge that his works portrayed faithfully the Elizabethan-Jacobean era in relation to the Muslim Empires mainly the Empire of the Turks.

In most of the aforementioned plays, Shakespeare gives many hints to the Turkish presence in Londoners' mind-set and imagination. However, many terms that stand for the Ottoman Empire are evoked in them as Tripoli, the Barbary, Carthage, turbaned Turk, Algiers, Tunis.

*Othello* was first performed by the King's Men at the court of King James I on November 1, 1604. The play was written during Shakespeare's great tragic period, which concerned also *Hamlet* (1600), *King Lear* (1604–5), *Macbeth* (1606), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606–7). *Othello* is a Mediterranean-set play that portrays the wars between Venice and the Turks (the Ottomans Empire) about Cyprus. The latter is a Mediterranean island and a Venetian outpost that was attacked by the Turks in 1570. Cyprus afforded an ideal setting for most of the events in the play.

If we go deeply in our analysis of the plays, it is evident to reveal what kind of relations that England and Constantinople were engaged in. *Othello*, *The Moor of Venice* is the only play in which Shakespeare exposes us to how the Turks were considered in the Elizabethan as well as the Jacobean eras.

As we have already stated in the previous chapter when we studied Elizabeth I's relation with the Moroccan King Al Mansur, we think that, according to some references in the play, *Othello* can also fit the personality of Murad III, the Ottoman Sultan or the Grand Segnior. Both Al Mansur of Morocco and Sultan Murad III of the Ottoman Turks showed great respect for Elizabeth.

Therefore, to make things more accurate, it is convenient to appeal to some historical facts to make our stand a valid one. As Elizabeth felt the urgency to make from the Moroccan Kingdom (the infidels) an important ally and later went afraid from Al Mansur reluctance to help her against their enemy Spain, she had also sought assistance from the Ottoman Empire for her benefits and that of the Ottomans.

When Elizabeth started to lose faith on Al Mansur, she used another strategy, which is threatening him by asking assistance from the Ottoman Sultan, the bitter enemy of Al Mansur. In this concern she stated, “If you would not grants us what we so reasonably ask from you, we will have to pay less attention to your friendship. We know for sure also that the Great Turk, who treats our subjects with great favour and humanity, will not appreciate your maltreatment of them in order to please the Spaniards” (Matar, 2011:152).

The Kingdom of England, long ruled by Queen Elizabeth I, a strong willed sovereign, and much heralded in her own time, was not void of serious problems. In other words, the prolonged Anglo-Spanish conflict had plunged the government deeply into debt and had produced a climate of war-weariness across all ranks of society. Religious tensions, which had reached their heights in the 1570s and 1580s with the growth of Puritanism and the threat of aggressive Catholic action supported from abroad (Patterson. W.B, 1997:32).

The Elizabethan initiative interested even the Turks. This led to the establishment of a diplomatic alliance between the two to serve their mutual interests. In fact, the Queen of England’s political strategy resulted in the foundation of the Levant Company on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 1581 that regulated trade with the Levant which contributed in filling the English coffers. The Anglo- Ottoman relationship was fostered especially when they sought to join their armies against the common enemy Spain. In this context Alfred C. Wood in *A History of the Levant Company* (1964) affirms, “the Sultan saw in Elizabeth a potential ally against



Spain, and said that he would never expel from his Porte the foes of his foes” ( Cal. S. P quoted in Wood, 1964:14).

So in *Othello*, all these events are mirrored. If we believe that Othello ‘turbaned Turks’ and “most worthy signor” refers to the Ottoman Sultan “Grand Signor” Murad III, automatically Desdemona refers to Elizabeth, while their unacceptable marriage of course symbolizes the alliance between the two.

Othello, as a character, can stand for Murad III. He is portrayed, on the one hand, as a noble figure, a man of great authority who gained respect and admiration of the Venetian authority and the other characters of the play as the example of The Duke who labelled him as “valiant Othello” (I.iii.49), and even one of the messengers addresses him as a “most worthy signor” (1.2.92). Besides, on top of that, he is the husband to the beautiful Venetian Lady Desdemona, the only daughter of the senator Brabantio. However, on the other hand, Othello is described as a stranger, “the thick lips” (I.i.66) and “the lascivious Moor” (I.i.126), foolish outsider, barbarous, “foul thief” (I.ii.62), a “Barbary horse” (I.i.110), an “abuser of the world” (I.i.78), “an old black ram” (I.i.87), “the lascivious Moor” and “malignant and turbaned Turk” (V.ii.351). This contradiction can be reflected even in Othello’ final speech;

Base Indian, threw a pearl away  
Richer than all his tribe; one of whose subdued eyes  
Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
Drops tears as fast as Arabian trees  
Their medicinable gum. Set you down this,  
And ay besides that in Aleppo once,  
Where a malignant and turbaned Turk  
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
I took by th’ throat the circumcised dog  
And smote him thus. (V.ii.119)

Daniel Vitkus explains how Othello, who was a converted General of the Venetian army, by murdering his wife, went back to his origins as a Turk. In other words, Vitkus believes that by murdering Desdemona, Othello “Turned Turk”. In this concern, he affirms:

A baptized Moor turned Turk, Othello is "doubly damned" for backsliding. Sent out to lead a crusade against Islamic imperialism, he "turns Turk" and becomes the enemy within. He has "traduced" the state of Venice and converted to the Black Muslim *Other*, the Europeans' phobic fantasy: Othello has become the ugly stereotype. His identity as "the noble Moor of Venice" dissolves as he reverts to the identity of the black devil and exhibits the worst features of the stereotypical "cruel Moor" or Turk-jealousy, violence, mercilessness, faithlessness, lawlessness, despair. Faced with this terrible identity (1997:176).

As an antithesis of Othello, in the play, the honest Desdemona is described as a brave and a committed lady who knows what she wants even when it comes to defying her father's will to not accept Othello as a husband. Moreover, she dared to convince her father in public that she is loyal to her lord Othello. In this context she affirms:

My noble father,  
I do perceive here a divided duty.  
To you I am bound for life and education.  
My life and education both do learn me  
How to respect you. You are the lord of my duty,  
I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband,  
And so much duty as my mother showed  
To you, preferring you before her father,  
So much I challenge that I may profess  
Due to the Moor my lord. (I.ii.20).

Even though at the beginning the marriage between the Turkish-born Venetian general Othello and the fair Venetian girl Desdemona was not accepted among the Venetian citizens, but thanks to his service in the Venetian army, he gained a very honourable place as a defender of Venice. This idea in fact echoes history because Elizabeth faced the same situation as Desdemona when she wanted to establish alliance with non-Christian states (the infidel Muslims). Elizabeth found that it is important to appeal for the Muslim states (Kingdom of Morocco and the Ottoman Empire) as they were at their zenith of power for military and economic reasons and mainly to protect her realm from Spanish invasion.

Othello-Desdemona's union that reflected the Anglo-Ottoman alliance had important outcomes to both the Turks and Elizabethan England. Furthermore, the victory of the Venetian army under the leadership of the Turkish General Othello and his wife Desdemona when helping Cyprus against the threatening Turks can be allegorical to the victory of

England with the Turkish assistance over the invading Spain. However, Jerry Brotton states how Sir Francis “Walsingham’s plan was ultimately successful. Ottoman fleet movements in the eastern Mediterranean fatally split Phillip II’s Armada,” (2004:1) which culminated in English victory over the Spaniards. Hence, we understand from this that the Turks played a tremendous role when helping Elizabeth I to defeat the historical Spanish Armada.

Othello is described at the beginning as a noble moor who is chosen by Shakespeare to be a tragic hero can reflect the Elizabethan portray of the non-Europeans i.e. the Muslims whether they are Moors or Turks. Unfortunately, things fall apart and Othello’s portrayal as the other Muslim characters shifted from admiration, respect and nobility to mistrust, hatred and ruthlessness. The reason behind this negative attitudes towards the Muslims i.e. *Islamophobia* can be fuelled by the fact that unlike Elizabeth I, James I turned to establish peace with Spain while the Anglo- Islamic relations collapsed and died out.

*The Tempest* is the other Shakespearian play in which he mentions two important Barbary States Algiers and Tunis. The latter were two North African regencies taken under the Ottoman control. Before the coming of the Turks, these two strategic states were targeted by both Spain and Portugal. For many centuries, Moslem Arabs took control of the Berber coasts of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

At last, the “Unofficial” Spanish and Portuguese expeditions under the command of Pedro Navarro succeeded, thanks to their sophisticated firearms, in capturing the Moslem pirate strongholds at Cazaza and Mers-el-Kebir in 1505 and Oran, Bougie, Algiers and Tripoli in 1509.

This Spanish-Portuguese threat of the Barbary States marked its end in 1510-11. The Greek Muslims leaders the brothers Barbarossa (“red beard”), Aruj and Khir Din, Tunisian pirates who had gathered a small fleet to attack the Iberian holds. Even though they failed to recapture Bougie in 1514 and 1515, they helped the Arabs in the Reconquista of Algiers in

1516. The Iberian's other expedition to recapture Algiers was destroyed by the storm that led to Muslim victory in 1519.

Like Algiers, the conquest of Elizabethan England was the most important Spanish Catholic project. The Spanish motives were to restore Catholicism and to get rid of Protestantism, and to draw England to join the Holy Catholic League. If we relate these historical data to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, we state that Prospero's island, which was the Algerian blue-eyed witch's island represents England. Therefore, in line with Riche Bouteldja, we can even say that Prospero's succession to Sycorax's island after Sycorax's death allegorizes the Stuart King James I's succession to the throne of England just after the death of Elizabeth I.

If we put the character of Sycorax, the "blue-eyed hag", who stands for Elizabeth I, from Algiers under scrutiny, we understand that she made a kind of alliance with the pirates mainly the Ottoman Turks who left her on the desolate island. All Europe of the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth centuries were aware of the notorious Barbary pirates. Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli and other Mediterranean regencies were the bases of Turkish pirates. Shakespeare at that time was aware of what was taking place in England's domestic and foreign affairs, for this he, with an inked feather, drew an image in *The Tempest* of Elizabethan and Jacobean courts in an artistic and literary way.

Sycorax's association with pirates reflects Queen Elizabeth I, the "confederate" of the Turks (Matar, 1999:20-33) as the Pope called her, who signed a treaty with the Ottomans in 1581. This treaty was received "with outrage and protest by European diplomats, who accused Elizabeth of selling out to the Turkish infidel" (Vitkus quoted in Waite. Gary K, 2013:1256). Moreover, the term 'Muslim' and the devil were used interchangeably by the Christians. In the 1566 celebration over the baptism of Prince James of Scotland in Stirling Castle was attacked by a group of highland men, Moors, and "devillis" (Goodare. J, Martin. L. Miller.J,

2008: 3-4). Scottish highlanders and Muslims were put in the same category and they were associated with the devil. Daniel J. Vitkus, in his article “Turning Turk in Othello: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor”, explains that according to English Protestantism, “the Flesh, the Church of Rome, and the Turk were all believed to be material means for the Devil to achieve his ends” (2012:145). They were the source of anxiety especially the Muslim Ottoman Turks’ pirate corsairs who plagued the Mediterranean basin and made it inaccessible to the European travellers and merchants.

This Christian negative view of the Ottomans, “‘new barbarians’”, is apparent mainly when Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1494–1566) who attacked Vienna in 1529 and led Charles V’s army to a humiliating defeat in 1541. This latter was said to be a “God’s apocalyptic scourge upon a sinful Christendom, the external enemies of Christ comparable to the internal foes, the Jews” (Waite. Gary K, 2013:1256).

Unlike Othello who is described from the beginning of the play as a noble, brave and honourable warrior, but as the events of the play progressed especially after murdering Desdemona, his image and status in the Venetian society have turned upside down to become lascivious, cursed and turbaned Turk. Caliban is described from the prologue to the epilogue of the play mainly by Prospero and Miranda, in negative qualifiers and stereotypes like “Thou most lying slave/ Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself/ Upon thy wicked dam/ thou tortoise!/ Tis a villain” (37-38). This is due to James’s position towards the Turks/ infidels and his endeavour to establish peace with Spain rather than signing treaties with the infidels as Elizabeth did.

Accordingly, Shakespeare’s representation of the Algerian Turkish Caliban in *The Tempest* reflects James I’s attitudes towards the infidels, the enemies of the Christ as the case of the Muslim Turks. Consequently, James’s *Islamphobia* can be justified by his writing of his poem *Lepanto* (1591) to glorify the Christian League victory over the Ottoman fleet in

1572. Hence, Shakespeare appealed to this important event in the history of Europe and Christendom when he included with success representatives of the Ottoman Turks and their European Christians counterpart.

In this part of the thesis, we worked to highlight the different societal and diplomatic positions and policies of the last Tudor Monarch Elizabeth and her Stuart successor James I vis-à-vis the Muslims of Morocco and the Ottoman Empire. In doing so, we tried to show how the Elizabethan and the Jacobean eras are reflected in the literature written during the two periods. Concisely, the aim of this part is to shed some light on the historical background of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and sketch out the relationship between England and the non-Europeans, especially the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Morocco, at that time. The purpose here is to provide the reader with some historical hints of what was actually taking place between these strong antagonistic powers. Thus, it might be simpler to associate between history and drama. In other words, to reveal how the political ambivalent ties between the world of Islam (the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Morocco) and England's distorting propaganda have conditioned the way the ethnic Other -non-European- especially the Moors from North Africa (Barbary) and the Turks were portrayed and looked at on the stage of both late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England. Hence, while the postcolonial theories focalized on the representation of the ethnic Other in the literature of the colonizers, our objective is to display England that lived in fear and anxiety of this Other. Hence, the English Bard wanted through his plays to reveal the true atmosphere of England under the Elizabethan and the Jacobean reigns in an artistic and implicit way.

## **Notes and References**

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## General Conclusion

Historians and literary critics, who were interested in studying the history of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods by relying on the postcolonial theory to reveal the pre-colonial period in the British history, were not aware of the fact that England at that time was not a colonial power. Besides, by injecting a dose of Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicist theory, we discovered that even though England had colonized Wales and Scotland and had waged a colonial war in Ireland, during Queen Elizabeth I's lifetime, England still did not possess a *single colonial inch in America*.

Our research focusses on revealing the hidden truths about the Elizabethan and the early Jacobean periods via some of Shakespeare's plays like *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) as well as *The Tempest* (1611) that we put under study in the present thesis. Shakespeare, as the spirit of his age who worked for the English court, tried to communicate in a hidden way the unrest atmosphere of fears and anxieties that the English Monarchs lived because of domestic religious conflicts and foreign threats of invasion coming from Europe and the east.

In fact, our analysis of the above-mentioned Shakespeare's plays showed that the chosen theories fit our topic. In other words, when we applied the theories on the plays, we discovered that they are loaded with realities and a lot of historical evidence about the transitional period between the Tudor Dynasty and the Stuarts.

In order to proceed in our research in a logical way, in the first part, we tried first to trace a frame in which we started to study Shakespeare's plays and the host of criticism that they received from different perspectives. In addition to this, we have also provided some relevant information about the plays chosen to be under scrutiny like the sources and the settings. Besides, we thought that it is of a paramount importance to include a chapter about historical



background in this part since our aim in this research is to shed light on the English/British history through Shakespeare's drama.

In the second part of this thesis, we have discovered that during the reign of the Queen Elizabeth I, England was the target of many invaders mainly the continental powers as Spain and France. Moreover, it was threatened even from within, with a constant threat of deposition, at home, by the adherents of Mary Queen of Scots, supported by France and Spain. The English government pursued a policy of interference in the internal conflicts of other countries as Scotland, Ireland and the Low Countries that brought it frequently to the verge of war with their governments and sometimes beyond these, as in the case of Elizabeth I's support for the rebels in the Low Countries, thus intensifying anti-English sentiment in Spain. . Hostility bordering on open warfare was the most frequent condition of English foreign relations especially with Spain. The most serious contest with that country was the war that culminated in the battle against the invasion by the Spanish Armada in 1588. Hence, Shakespeare lived in a restless world that was put under domestic and foreign threats, and through his drama, he reflected his fears and those of the Elizabethans.

Additionally, according to our theory, the New Historicist reading of *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Othello* (1603), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) as well as *The Tempest* (1611), we found that some of their characters can be associated with some figures that shaped the history of Europe. Moreover, their plots and themes portray directly the period when they were written and performed.

The Spaniards were not really the only British continental enemy, France also played an important role on the European scene.

The soeurs enemies' conflicts started, if we may say, from the Norman Conquest. The old rival monarchs extended their conflicts from the competition over the titles and lands to the direct interference in Scotland and Ireland as well as the Netherlands. These historical truths and

realities found their way through the works of Art of mainly the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean plays of Shakespeare.

After putting the plays of Shakespeare under scrutiny in relation to the New Historicist theory, we have noticed that they in fact mirror the English/ British history and its exigencies. When studying the plays, we tried to show history with its complexity. We have also noticed that the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras, although they have been idealized by many pamphleteers and propagandists, were just periods of the history of the so-called Empire that was overshadowed by internal conflicts and external threats.

Even though during the reign of James I Britain tried to sow its first seeds of the Empire, it could not be compared to the other European overseas Empires that had already dominated the seas and oceanic trade. Thus, instead of venturing and encouraging the project of the empire-building, England/Britain, mainly during the Elizabethan era, tried instead to secure the borders of her realm from eminent attacks coming from its neighbouring enemies, as well as from its internal foes. Therefore, all these historical hidden details about the English history are unveiled through Shakespeare's staged plays that showed the reality of Britain/England that pretended superiority over the *Other* mainly the Scottish and the Irish instead of being itself the *Other*.

This part of the thesis discussed also Italy (the Roman Empire and the City of Venice) and what it represents in the plays of Shakespeare to Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras. Our analysis of the plays revealed that the city-state of Venice, a cosmopolitan state, echoed England. Besides, the Roman Empire served as a model that England should follow in order to build an empire as that of the Romans especially in both *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Cymbeline*. Hence, our reading of the plays drew us to the idea that the Roman Empire and the British would-be Empire are historically related. In other words, Britain was founded by Brutus who is the grandson of Aeneas, founder of Rome. Hence, the English came to define themselves as

legitimate descendants of the Roman Empire. For this reason, the English Monarchs were fascinated by the Roman greatness.

The Stuart King James VI/I wanted to be named as New Augustus Caesar, the Roman Emperor, because his achievement in uniting two realms was his first phase to build an empire as the Roman one. He even followed the Roman model of *Pax Romana* in *Pax Britannia* as his first steps to establish peace with his enemies especially with the Catholic Spain.

In the third part of the present thesis, we tried to shed some light on the historical background of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and sketch out the relationship between England and the non-western, especially the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Morocco. Our purpose in this part was to provide the reader with some historical hints, and what was taking place during that period, between these strong powers. Thus, it might be simpler to associate between history and drama. In other words, how the political ties between the Ottoman Turks, Morocco and England conditioned the way the ‘other’ non-European especially the Moors from North Africa and the Ottoman Turks were portrayed on the London stage, in Elizabethan England, and the Jacobean Britain. However, literary scholars such as Nabil Matar affirmed that the Renaissance period changed the map of Europe and fostered, the encounter between the World of Islam and England. What made these relations special was that for the first time the Turks/ the Moors engaged in a friendly relation with Christendom regardless of centuries of crusading wars.

At a time when the English were not well known enough to the Turks and Arabs in Jerusalem, the former had to identify themselves as French instead. This gives us a hint to confirm that it is inconvenient to refer to the English tendency in colonizing the East. To sustain this stand, it may be important to quote the early seventeenth century English travelers like Henry Timebrlake, and some other English pilgrims who went to visit the Holy Land. He affirmed that he and his English fellows had to identify themselves as French since the Turks,

as Timberlake states, “know not what you meane by the word Englishman... that when any of my countremen vndertooke the like trauaile, at the Iates of Ieruslaem they should tearm themselues Frenchmen... because they are well knowne to the Turkes.” (Timberlake. H, 1603:02)

During the Renaissance period, the English began to discover the Orient, but not to the extent of taking hold of it, or maintaining power over it. The reason behind this is that from the reign of Queen Elizabeth I to that of Queen Anne, Islam and Muslims played a major role in the European scene. Moreover, the Empire of the Ottomans who encouraged the North African pirates and privateers rendered the passage of the European ships through the Mediterranean Sea almost impossible, and they even threatened the European trade-stability and navigation. Consequently, Islam became a symbol of war and threat, and Britons, as the other Europeans, constructed an imaginary negative image that Muslims were a tribe of warring anti-Christians.

The Muslim powers, referred to as ‘the infidels’, were not the only threat that Elizabeth I suffered from, during her lifetime as a Queen of England, especially because of her re-establishment of her father’s protestant religion. For this reason, her realm became the target of the other European powers like the Spaniards, supported by the Pope to restore Catholicism and drag England into the Catholic League. Therefore, Elizabeth I was left no choice only to seek to establish with the infidels a political and economic alliance, in order to secure England’s national borders from an eminent Spanish Reconquista.

Actually, both the Empire of the Turks and the Kingdom of Morocco had shown their positive answer to Elizabeth’s call of cooperation since the European powers represented a bitter enemy of the two parts.

Accordingly, through our research, we gave evidence from Shakespeare’s plays under study that all of what was taking place at that era was portrayed faithfully. So, we used the

drama of the Bard of Avon as our testimony, when we tried to report the British history of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean era in its accurate image.

In fact, our analysis of the plays puts the major characters under scrutiny in order to show to what extent the England of the Elizabethan and the Great Britain of the Jacobean were related to the Muslim powers politically and militarily. However, Queen Elizabeth I and King James VI/I of Scotland and England respectively saw differently the relationship between England and the Muslim world. However, while Queen Elizabeth was in closer alliance with the Moors and the Turks rather than the Spaniards and the French, King James, after being enthroned as the King of the English and the Scottish monarchies, preferred to befriend the Spaniards rather than the Moors, and the Turks. His interests, after establishing diplomatic relations and peace with Spain and the other continental powers, were oriented towards building the earliest colonial enterprises against the Barbary states. For this purpose, Henry Roberts, England's agent in Morocco, advised King James I to colonize Barbary for its wealth and to bring its infidels to Christianity.

These late sixteenth century, and early seventeenth century circulating ideologies are also portrayed in the afore-mentioned plays. Almost in all these plays, the figure of the 'other' - the Moorish, the Turk, the Algerian- is present. To be more precise, we have explained in our thesis how these figures are related to the other characters in the plays. In addition, we have also determined the roles that they performed and their historical significance.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and *The Tempest*, Shakespeare united a Moor with a European woman. As the example of the Black Moor's marriage with Desdemona and The King of Tunis's (the African Moor) union with the Neapolitan princess Claribel, the only daughter of Alonso, the King of Naples. This union between the two opposite sides provoked our curiosity to reveal the historical truth via Shakespeare's drama that Elizabeth I made a political as well as military alliance with the Moorish and the Turkish Kings. The black Moor

as Othello in *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Caliban in *The Tempest* correspond to Mulay Ahmed Al-Mansur or the Turkish Sultan Murad III's union with Queen Elizabeth I. This union, which was not welcomed whether at home or by the other European powers who felt the danger of Muslims' invasion of the land of Christendom, opposed also in Shakespeare's plays. This has been shown via Brabantio's opposition to the match between Desdemona and the General Othello, Portia's refusal of the Prince of Morocco's offer of marriage, while in *The Tempest*, Prospero has lost his wits when he discovered that Caliban, the savage tried to rape the delicate Miranda.

In addition to the analysis of the characters, our analysis of the setting of the plays revealed that England in the late sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century engaged herself to search for fresh territories mainly in the Americas to establish colonies as the first step to establish a strong sea Empire. However, England's efforts to build an empire started from its control of both Scotland and Ireland i.e. land empire.

In spite of the interests of England in colonizing heathen Barbary, Prospero's island of Argiers, they had nothing, or little, to do with the earlier stages of colonization in Africa compared to the Spaniards, the French, or the Portuguese. In other words, while the Spanish, the French and the Portuguese had held some power and influence in North Africa, the British did not mark its presence in the Muslim land throughout the Age of Discovery.

Instead of creating a military basis and expanding its power in founding colonies in the Americas as the other European powers did in the second half of the seventeenth century, England failed to expand power in the Mediterranean.

Accordingly, in the third part of this thesis, we have succeeded, through our deep analysis of the Shakespearian plays, in confirming our doubts as well as reconsidering some postcolonial beliefs that put the land of the Moors, the Turks as well as the Orientals under the English dominance. Hence, we have discarded the postcolonial theory that put those people at

the margin. On the contrary, it was not the Britons who colonized the Moors and built plantations in the moors' land, it was the Moorish and the Turkish peoples who were threatening to land in England. In other words, the Moorish pirates represented danger for the British home water. Even Sir Francis Bacon in 1617, in a meeting with merchants and sea captains [in 1617], argued that England could not face up to the Moorish, basically Algerian, pirates on its own so it needed help from other European sea powers, Spain, France or Holland, the English could not confront the Barbary corsairs. Hence, Britons never employed the term 'colonization' to describe their relations with the Muslims.

Consequently, the term colonial discourse did not exist in describing the relations between the Muslim world and England during the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods. Militarily and economically speaking, the Muslim world, the Ottoman Empire and the Barbary States, were incomparable to the Western world. Even though, later, when the Britons claimed their power and superiority in their encounter with the West Indies, their arrogance was lessened in their encounter with the Muslim world since the Englishmen did not possess the advanced armament as that of the Muslims. In addition, the latter were religiously and militarily more powerful, which put them in a position to manage their commercial and industrial exchange with the British. Hence, the triumph of the Englishmen in the West Indies turns into modesty in North Africa, the Levant and the Ottoman Empire. Thus, our point of view vis-à-vis Muslim-English encounter goes hand in hand with Nabil Matar's who declared that "conquerors in Virginia, they were slaves in Algiers." (Matar, 2000: 15-16).

Queen Elizabeth was aware of the advantage of her Kingdom and people to have friendly relations with the powerful Muslim world. The Turkish-Anglo-Moroccan alliance was that of mutual interest whether in time of peace or war. Queen Elizabeth did not hesitate to appeal to the help of the Ottoman Sultan, Murad, to stop the threat of a Spanish attack against England in the 1580s. The Turks, in their turn, had welcomed such an alliance since it serves

also their interests. However, what is astonishing is the idea that the England's amiable relations with the Turks and the Moors -the "Other"- did not change the way they were represented on the Elizabethan as well as on the Jacobean stage.

Amongst the few things that went upside down after the death of Queen Elizabeth, King James VI/I directly changed the foreign policies of England towards the Muslim world 'the infidels'. In 1604, he reviewed Britain's relations with its bitter enemy, Spain, in order to form a unity against the Turks and the Moors. In fact, after a long period of struggles and conflicts, with the Spaniards, a peace treaty was signed by the two sides.

Throughout our research, we came to the conclusion that in order to affirm their superiority and advertise their national and imperial image, the English writers turned to writing. The latter was as an alternative and a strategic weapon that helped them compensate their cultural, economic as well as military inadequacies compared to other European nations such as Spain and France.

Concisely, William Shakespeare is a vivid example of those writers who promoted the ideals of the British imagined Empire. However, when we tried to analyze some of his plays profoundly, we found that English/British Empire in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries was in its developmental phase compared to the other continental empires.

The motives of the Britons in keeping the Ottomans and the Barbary States by their side were numerous. Their attention was oriented directly towards establishing trade and military cooperation with those non-European powers. In this context, it is important to refer to Fisher who declared that these alliance presented " a marked contrast to our [English] experiences in Spain, where our [English] ships were liable to be relinquished or embargoed and our [English] merchants thrown into prison..."(Fisher,1957:64 )

Contrary to Spain, Elizabeth succeeded to negotiate with the Moors to secure the English ships free access to the ports of Barbary for shelter and refreshment. She preferred to



confederate with the Muslim world. Even though at that time the British Protestants saw both Catholics and Muslims as enemies, Elizabethans felt in security amongst the Moors than their fellow Christians.

In a nutshell, we can affirm that it exists a strong association between history and drama. However, revealing how the political ambivalent ties between England/ Britain and the ethnic 'Other', the non-European Moors and Turks, the Irish, the Indians, the Spaniards, and the Scottish, sounds complex. What made it more complex is England's distorting propaganda that have conditioned the way this ethnic 'Other' was portrayed and looked at on the stage of both late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England. Hence, while the postcolonial theories focalized on the representation of the ethnic "Other" in the literature of the colonizers, our objective through this research was to display England that lived in fear and anxiety of this 'Other'. Hence, the English Bard wanted through his plays to reveal the true atmosphere of England under the Elizabethan and the Jacobean reigns in an artistic way.

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