

Othello (1604) revisited: Shakespeare's characters and Elizabethan Foreign Policy

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Abstract: This article attempts to historicize Shakespeare's characterization in one of the most staged plays in the world, viz., Othello, The Moor of Venice (1603) The analysis is conducted along the lines of Nabil Matar's study of the role of Barbary in the making of Early Modern Britain in his Britain and Barbary (2006). Matar's argument is brought to bear on Shakespeare's characters by showing that Shakespeare's shaping of the two characters, Othello and Iago, is informed by the foreign policy of Elizabeth I at the time of the writing of the play. Our contention is that Othello, the protagonist, and Iago, the antagonist, capture and represent Britain's attitude towards two rival powers in the Mediterranean, namely the Kingdoms of Morocco and Spain. If we have every right to see Othello, as Matar suggests, as a distant kin of al-Mansur, King of Morocco, Iago can, therefore, only be seen as a distant relative of King Philip II of Spain.

Keywords: OTHELLO, IAGO, MATAR, BARBARY, BRITAIN, MOOR,

المُلخَص: يحاول هذا المقال تأصيل توصيف شكسبير في واحدة من أكثر مسرحياته عرضاً في العالم ، أي ، عطيل بربري البندقية. يُجرى التحليل في ظلّ دراسة نبيل مطر عن دور بلاد المغرب في نشأة بريطانيا ما قبل الحديثة في كتابه بريطانيا و بلاد المغرب بين 1589 و 1689 (2006). تمّ في هذا المقال تطبيق حجة مطر على شخصيات شكسبير من خلال إظهار أن تأليف و تطور الشخصيتان الرئيسيتان عطيل و ياغو قد تأثرت بالسياسة الخارجية التي كانت تقودها إليزابيث الأولى في الفترة التي أنجزت فيها المسرحية

حُجَّتنا هو أن عطيل ، البطل ، و ياغو ، الخصم ، صورتان ممثلتان للقوتين المتنافستين في البحر الأبيض المتوسط و المنافستين لإنجلترا في مطلع القرن السابع عشر ، وهما مملكتنا المغرب وإسبانيا.

إذا كان لنا كل الحق في رؤية عطيل، البطل، كقريب بعيد للمنصور، ملك المغرب آنذاك، فلا يمكننا إعتبار ياغو، الخصم، إلا قريبا بعيدا لملك إسبانيا، فيليب الثاني.

الكلمات المفتاح: عطيل، ياغو، شكسبير، مطر، بريطانيا ما قبل الحديثة، بلاد المغرب

Introduction

Writing today about Shakespeare is not an easy matter. What can be said indeed about him that had not been said before and what can be written about him that had not been already written, one may ask. Yet, because literature is first and foremost a question of interpretation, and in spite of the thousands of volumes and articles that have been filled and produced about his life and his works, there are still grey spots that need to be explored.

This article is a re-reading of one of the most staged of his plays, viz., Othello, the Moor of Venice, in the light of the new perspective opened up by the Palestinian-born scholar Nabil Matar on the study of the geography, politics, and culture of the early modern period. Matar's work (Britain and

Barbary, Islam in Britain 1558-1682, Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery) has simply reshaped the way the West looks at its history and corrected the wrongs done to North Africa in particular and to the Orient in general by casting light on the role they played in the making of early modern Britain.

Indeed, Matar departs from both Western historiography that sees in the rise of modern Britain the effect of the sole Protestantism and colonialism, dismissing other influences, and from Said's argument linking Orientalism and colonialism. He shows that, contrarily to the commonly held view, English encounters and contacts with Moors and Turks were frequent and lasting during the early modern period, and that the presence of the latter in the literature of the period did not simply spring from the literary imagination of English dramatists and poets. He, in the same time, goes beyond Said's analysis of oriental otherness by showing that Orientalism as a discourse preceded colonialism: "Britons categorized the Muslims as barbaric even though they, the Britons, had not dominated them, perhaps even because of it: Muslims were doomed to alterity whether they were conquered (as the American Indians had been) or not" (Matar, 1999:15). This discourse about the Oriental Other (Ottomans and the inhabitants of Barbary States), was generated, according to him, "by superimposing the discourse about the conquest of America on Islam" (Matar, 1999:17).

The thesis developed in this article is that Shakespeare's plays, although meant primarily for entertainment, are informed by the political agenda of the Tudors and the Stuarts. In the case of Othello, making of Othello, the Moor, a tragic hero and of Iago, the European, a villain, is to be read in the light of the friendly and warm diplomatic relations Elizabeth I was developing with Ahmad Abu al-Abbas al-Mansur (1578-1603), the

Moroccan monarch on the one hand, and the conflict opposing her to Philip II of Spain, on the other.

Review of the literature

Othello has been popular with acting companies, audiences and critics alike, and this popularity does not seem to fade more than four centuries after its first performance. In terms of criticism, some of the most heated debates about the play have been the race and social status of Othello, its title character, though the play has also been discussed from feminist, psychoanalytic, formalist, and new historicist perspectives (Slights, n.d)

Othello is not an isolated case in English Renaissance Drama, not even in Shakespeare's works. Oriental plays were more of a literary tradition than an exception. Most of the main Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster, Ford, Dekker, Marston, and Greene, adhered to this tradition. It is estimated that about 50 plays with oriental themes or plots were produced from the 1580s up to 1648, date of the closing of the theatres during the interregnum (Bayouli, 2008:110).

Yet, Othello stands apart in terms of the amount of criticism it received and of the debates it aroused. Vitkus (1997) sees the play as an example of what he calls 'Drama of conversion', in particular the conversion to other faiths. He roots the play in the context of post-reformation England where fears were great to see the majesty's subjects convert to Catholicism or to Islam, reminding us of the threats the Devil, Catholics and Ottomans were representing for Protestantism in its early days. He dismisses all the historicist readings of Shakespeare's plays by Stephen Greenblatt and his followers as "products of a strictly proto-imperialist culture that looked across the Atlantic towards its American colonies". For him, new historicists have used the Western imperialist discourse of the later centuries to read Renaissance texts, forgetting that while European colonial powers of the time

were racing for the exploration and colonization of the New World, the Ottomans were conquering European territories (Vitkus, 1997: 146).

Unlike Vitkus however, many critics agree to see in Othello a character that stands apart from other Moorish characters in Renaissance Oriental plays including Shakespeare's. Elaskary (2008), for example, after a survey of different Moorish characters in a number of Elizabethan plays has concluded that "Othello stands as the most important, vivid, and human Moor that Elizabethan, and to a great extent English, drama has ever seen." For him, contrarily to other Elizabethan playwrights who portrayed their 'Moors' in the darkest possible way, Shakespeare created the most sympathetic Moorish tragic hero in the history of English drama. He follows in this Alan Bloom who asserted that Shakespeare ran counter to the prevailing pattern of thought in choosing a Moor as his tragic hero, and Stanley Wells who hailed the boldness and originality of Shakespeare in doing so (Elaskary, 2008:165).

Dutta (2013), in an article titled "Representation of Race in Four Shakespearean Plays: Titus Andronicus, Othello, Antony and Cleopatra, The Merchant of Venice" ascribes this rather positive image of the Moor in Othello in comparison to Titus Andronicus to the development in Shakespeare's consciousness of race as he came of age. Shakespeare's idea of race, according to him developed from a prejudiced image of the Moor, as the portrayal of Aaron in Titus Andronicus shows, to a more sympathetic image of the racial 'other', as the more positive portrayal of the figures of Othello, Cleopatra and Shylock in the later plays shows. (Dutta, 2013: 922)

Issue and Working Hypothesis

As this brief review shows, there is wide agreement on the uniqueness of Othello as a Moorish character compared to his counterparts in other Elizabethan and Jacobean plays. In our view, the explanation is to be

found in the respective identities of the two main characters, Othello and Iago, which have been constructed in a way to make them fit the political agenda of the English Crown when the play was composed. The play is to be read therefore as reflecting the specific historical context of the end of the sixteenth century, characterized by the war with catholic Spain and the warm diplomatic relations with the King of Morocco.

Such reading had been hindered, in our opinion, because most critics, regardless of the approach they adopted, focused on the protagonist Othello and relegated Iago to the status of a mere antagonist. Many critics, however, have, in the recent years, turned their attention to the identity of Iago. Blank (2006), for example, in her discussion of race in Othello, has considered the Spanish identity of Iago. For her, in assigning his character the name of Iago, a Spanish rather than an Italian name, Shakespeare may have been thinking of Santiago (the Spanish form of Saint James) the Patron saint of Spain, whom the Spanish associate with the Reconquista (Blank, 2006: 100). Put in the context of the general English resentment against the Spanish towards the end of the Sixteenth century, the positive portrayal of Othello, the Moorish 'Other', makes a better sense if the antagonist is himself an 'Other', albeit internal, as the Spanish were then viewed. Very few instances of Moorish characters with a positive image can be encountered indeed in Western writings of the period, and when this happens, it is only to highlight the villainy of an internal 'Other' or 'enemy'.

On the historical context of the play

Othello, The Moor of Venice is mentioned for the first time in a record dated 1604, showing that the King's Players were paid for acting a play called The Moor of Venice. However, scholars agree that the play was written sometime between 1601 and 1603(Shakespeare, [1604]2001:15). By that time, Elizabethan England had been openly at war with Spain for almost

two decades (Anglo-Spanish War 1585-1604) and in a latent conflict from the very beginning of the reign of Elizabeth. Philip II of Spain, indeed, has never made secret his claim to the English throne, considering himself the natural heir to his deceased wife, 'bloody' Mary Stuart. The war in reality only amplified the already existing and ever-increasing anti-Spanish sentiment, what later scholars called the 'Black Legend'.

For, although Protestant England had increased its wealth and power under Elizabeth, it was living under the permanent threat of a foreign invasion by its powerful catholic neighbors. Spain in particular, the then most powerful catholic nation, ruled by a monarch who had pretension to the throne of England, constituted a constant danger. Philip II did not constitute a danger because of the sheer military power of Spain, but also because of the religious sanction of his action by Pope Pius V who declared Elizabeth I a heretic, and therefore a usurper (Hadfield, 2004:2). According to Hadfield, fear of Catholic Spain dominated the last years of the reign of Elizabeth I "[d]espite the undoubted triumph of the defeat of the Armada in 1588, achieved just before Shakespeare began his career as a professional writer" (Hadfield, 2004:2)

To face the Spanish threat, Elizabeth undertook to establish new diplomatic relations and alliances to break its isolation and to oppose the hegemony of Catholics. South of the Mediterranean, another monarch, the king of Morocco, from where Othello possibly originates, was looking forward to new alliances to fight his next-door enemy and, why not, reconquer Al Andalus. Matar (2006) lengthily documents the epistolary exchanges between the two monarchs and the exchange of ambassadors. In 1600, Ahmad Al Mansur sent an ambassador, Wahid bin Massoud bin Muhammad Al-Annuri at the head of a delegation of 14 Moroccans to expose to the Queen, by word of mouth, Al Mansur's scheme to defeat Spain,

reconquer Al Andalus and seize its territories in the New World (Matar, 2006:24 and infra)

On the identity of Othello:

Although Othello is explicitly identified as a Moor, his race or ethnic origin has been subject to many interpretations. Critics have most of the time interpreted literally the textual references to Othello's blackness in the play, and stuck to this indication, appealing to black or black-faced actors when staging it, as different performances through time indicate. In several passages indeed, Othello is given epithets referring to blackness. He is called a 'black ram', 'black Othello' by Iago, and a 'blacker devil' by Emilia: "O! the more angel she, / And you the blacker devil." More recent criticism, originating from the Arab world, has stressed Othello's Arab identity, confusing Moor and Arab: "No work of Shakespeare touches chords of Arab sensibility and identity so much as the tragedy of Othello. For one thing, the hero is a Moor and therefore an "Arab." (Ghazoul, 1998:1)

Many textual and contextual elements, however, show that Othello originates from North Africa, and precisely, from Morocco. First, the blackness referred to in the text should not be viewed as referring necessarily to skin color. Blackness is more often associated with evil than with skin color. George Peele in *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588/89), a dramatization of the actual battle of the three kings or 'Wadi Al Makhazin', a war of succession to the throne of Morocco in which the King of Portugal and Turks were involved, portrays Abdelmelec, drawn on Al Mansur, as a noble Moor while his nephew Muly Hamet, is described as "The Negro [emphasis mine] Muly Hamet that withholds/the kingdom from his uncle" (Peele, 1594: I). It is virtue that makes someone fair, and it is evil that makes him black as supported by the Duke of Venice in his address to Brabantio: "And, noble

signior, / If virtue no delighted beauty lack,/Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.” (Shakespeare, 1604: I.3)

Calling Othello a Moor therefore does not make of him a Black African since as Kim Hall has shown in *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (1995), “to the Elizabethan audience, “Moor” could mean Muslim, Native American, Indian, white North African or Jew” (Hall, 1995, cited in Matar, 2006: 28). In an endnote (13) to the first volume of Leo Africanus' *The History and Description of Africa And of the Notable Things Therein Contained*, issued by the Hakluyt Society in 1896, the editor, Robert Brown explains that what Pory translates as "tawnie Moores", and Florianus " Subfusi", is, "in the original, "Affricani bianchi" (white Africans) and "I Bianchi dell' Affrica" (the whites of Africa), that is, the Berbers, to distinguish them from the Negroes." He adds that the word " Moor", as used by Pory and by all the writers of his time, and, indeed, subsequently, in a very loose way, is almost equivalent to Mohammedan. (Africanus, [1896] 2010, p.205)

Second, the text of the play explicitly situates Othello's origin in Barbary. Iago in the first scene of the play calls Othello a 'Barbary horse' (I.i) a metaphor that evokes both animality (horse) and origin (Barbary) from where originates this North African horse breed, also known as Barb or Berber horse. For Matar, Othello has very likely been drawn after Al Annuri, the ambassador Al Mansur sent to Elizabeth I. Answering the question of whether Elizabeth's collusion with the Morisco ambassador influenced the making of Othello the Moor" he writes: "the proposition the queen made to the Moriscos coincided with Shakespeare's reading of Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* and his subsequent composition of *Othello*"(Matar, 2006:28). For him, by showing Othello's eagerness to wage a war against the 'Ottomites' in the play, Shakespeare "represented the Moorish willingness

to fight for Christians against Ottomans—which is what Al Annuri was invited to do" (Matar, 2006:29)

Other critics asserted that Othello was modeled after Leo Africanus (Hassan Al Wazzan), another Moroccan of Morisco origin, author of *The History and Description of Africa*, which remained, for centuries, the reference work on the geography of the interior of Africa. Elaskary cites a number of critics sharing this view:

In the same vein, critics found striking similarities between Leo Africanus and Othello. Both Leo and Othello were Moors who were taken captive by Europeans, both converted to Christianity and seemed to have liked to settle in Europe and both were very influential figures who liked to work with fellow Europeans in the war against the Ottoman terror. Louis Whitney detected some other parallel lines between Leo and Othello, i.e., both were Moors who escaped many hazardous dangers in the desert and mountains of Africa and both were “noble” Moors. Similarly, Emily Bartels has found salient, mainly biographical, crossing points between Leo and Othello (Elaskary, 2008: 145)

What reinforces this idea is the plausible fact that Shakespeare read Pory’s translation of Leo’s *History and Description of Africa* published in 1600, a view shared by many critics such as Whiney who suggests that Shakespeare knew of Pory’s translation through Hakluyt with whom he was close, and Bollough for whom Shakespeare “almost certainly consulted Pory’s translation of Leo’s account on Africa” (Elaskary, 2008: 145) .

Actually, both interpretations stand. Shakespeare could have modeled Othello on Al-Annuri as well as on Leo Africanus, or even on both as suggested by Honigmann for whom both Leo’s *Description of Africa* and Al-Annuri’s ambassadorial visit to England in 1600 inspired Shakespeare to write Othello (Elaskary, 2008: 145). That Shakespeare modeled his character

on Al-Annuri, Leo Africanus, or both is not however the point in our argument. Both Leo and Al-Annuri were moriscos, or more precisely, "Muslim subjects forcibly converted to Christianity" as Fuchs (2009) defines them, originating from Granada, who have found refuge in the Kingdom of Morocco, and entered in the service of the king. Another characteristic shared by the two figures is that both have lived in Christendom and were ready to serve it in its war against the Ottomans: Leo Africanus offered his precious knowledge of the interior of Africa through his Description of Africa and Al-Annuri received a proposition by Elizabeth to join her and to become part of her fighting force.

The Moroccan origin of Othello is furthermore reinforced by the existence of a predecessor in Shakespeare's drama. A few years earlier, Elizabethan audiences discovered the 'Prince of Morocco' as one of the suitors of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596). However, whether modeled on al-Annuri or Hassan al-Wazzan (Leo Africanus) or both, what is to be retained is the overall positive portrayal of Othello throughout the play, although the vices usually associated with his race such as jealousy and lust are shown to be atavistic in him. Othello, the Moor, is not only granted the status of the hero in the plot, but raised to the dimension of a tragic hero as defined by Aristotle.

Furthermore, for an Othello originating from Morocco, fighting the Turks is not a corruption of historical events made by the author to adapt it to his plot. Morocco was indeed the only Barbary state that had at no moment fallen under Ottoman vassalage. The conflict opposing the Kingdom of Morocco to the Turks is as constant as the one opposing it to the Spaniards. According to Matar, in the scheme he suggested to Elizabeth, the king of Morocco, Al Mansur, offered not only an alliance against Spain, but also a secret attack on the regency of Algiers to dislodge the Turks. This

explains why among the four Moorish characters created by Shakespeare, the only ones bearing a positive image are the two related to Morocco: "Of the four Moors Shakespeare introduced in his career, two are devilish, Aaron and Caliban, and two are noble, Othello and Prince of Morocco." (Elaskary, 2008:145)

Of the identity of Iago

As stated earlier in this paper, critics have been more fascinated by Othello than by Iago, who is often regarded as a mere antagonist, although in the recent years, critics have started to discuss the identity of Iago and its role in constructing the plot of the play. Iago is portrayed as a loathsome villain and if a character in the play deserves the epithet of a 'black devil', he is certainly the one. What is unusual, however, about the play for a reader having in mind the usual dichotomy Self/Other in Elizabethan drama is the reversal of roles between the European and the Oriental/Muslim Other. Othello the Moor, the North African, is given the role of the hero while Iago, the European, inherits the role of the villain. This discrepancy, in our view, does only make sense if this European character is himself an 'Other'. This was precisely the case with the Spanish who were viewed by the English and many other Western Europeans as an internal 'Other' in the early modern period. Indeed, "Spain itself, though the westernmost part of Europe, is orientalized by its European rivals in a deliberate attempt to undermine its triumphant self-construction as a Catholic nation from 1492 on." (Fuchs, 2009: p.3).

The idea that Shakespeare was thinking to a Spanish character in his portrayal of Iago is by no means new. Blank (2006), for example, discussing race in Othello, in her Shakespeare and the Mismeasure of Renaissance Man, has considered, following other scholars (Hadfield: 1998, Griffin: 1998, Moore: 1996, Rea: 1986), the Spanish identity of Iago. She however suggests

the same origin for Othello, highlighting his identity as a Morisco (Blank, 99-100). What reinforces this view of the Spanish origin of Iago is the way Shakespeare remodeled Cinthio's "Un Capitano Moro" (Cinthio, 1565[2018]) . He makes of an unnamed character, known only by his function as the 'Ensign' a character that everything tends to identify as a Spaniard, beginning with his name.

In Giraldi Cinthio's *Gli Hecatommithi* (1566), Decade 3, Story 7 "Un Capitano Moro", which scholars generally accept as the main source from which Shakespeare drew his plot, with probably some psychological analysis from Geoffrey Fenton's tale of an "Albanoyse Captain" in *Certain Tragicall Discourses* (1567) (Vaughan, 1996: 2-3), the Ensign remains unnamed even though, we are made to know that he is not a native of Venice, since at the end of the story, "the Ensign returned to his own country" (Blank, 2006:100). That country could be either Spain or Sicily that was then ruled by Spain. A scenario that is very plausible, since Venice used to hire foreign soldiers to protect its flourishing commerce in the Mediterranean. It is Shakespeare who named the character Iago, a name that is not Italian, as one would have expected, but Spanish, and evocative of Santiago (Saint James) the patron saint of Spain whose protection was invoked by the Christian armies during the Reconquista, a role that earned him the name of Santiago Matamoros (the Moor slayer). Blank suggests that Iago's Spanish nature is evidence of Shakespeare's subscription to Renaissance English anti-Spanish sentiment or the Black Legend, and to the propaganda directed against the Inquisition (Blank, 2006: 100)

For Sixteenth Century England, indeed, Spain was not that exotic country about which one heard only through travelers' tales. Earlier in the century, Henry VIII had married Catherine of Aragon, and his daughter, Queen Mary Tudor married a few years later, Phillip II of Spain, which

marriage he used as an argument to reclaim the throne of England after her death and the crowning of Elizabeth I (Richmond, 2002: 432)

Like his contemporaries then, Shakespeare, had every reason to hate the Spanish and to misrepresent them. Spain as the most powerful nation of the time and as the declared protector of the Catholic Church was a double threat for England. The threat materialized in 1588, when King Philip II of Spain undertook the conquest of England with the blessing of Pope Sixtus V, hoping this would bring Britain back into the Catholic Church. The result was the defeat of the 'Great Armada' and the emergence of Britain as a new world power. This attack however reinforced the anti-Spanish sentiment present in England, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany from the early days of Reformation. When reports of the persecution of Protestants in Spain began to circulate in England, the hostility towards the Pope extended to include the King of Spain. These reports, used by Protestants as propaganda, circulated in such books as the Book of Martyrs (1563 for the English edition) by John Foxe (1516–1587) in which an entire chapter “The execrable Inquisition of Spayne” was dedicated to the Spanish Inquisition. For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, then, the Spanish were as threatening as the Turks. As Vitkus puts it:

The collective anxiety about religious conversion felt in post-Reformation England focused primarily on Roman Catholic enemies who threatened to convert Protestant England by the sword, but the English also had reason to feel trepidation about the imperial power of the Ottoman Turks, who were conquering and colonizing Christian territories in Europe and the Mediterranean. English Protestant texts, both popular and learned, conflated the political/external and the demonic/internal enemies, associating both the Pope and the Ottoman sultan with Satan or the Antichrist. (Vitkus, 1997:145)

Identifying Iago as Spanish, in addition to surfing on this collective anxiety to titillate his audience, keeps Shakespeare's work in line with the crown's foreign policy of the time, specifically towards Morocco and Spain.

Shakespeare is known, indeed, notwithstanding the liberties he did not hesitate to take, for his proximity with the royal court both under Elizabeth I whom he loved (Hadfield: 2004) and under James I who became the patron of his acting company that was renamed the King's Men. He was continually adapting his work to the political agenda of the moment as is the case with his earlier historical plays, King John, and Richard II. Writing on the theme of usurpation in King John, John Sibly asks: "Why ... did a Tudor playwright in 1595 go to such lengths to emphasise this usurpation in a play notoriously written to rally the country behind Elizabeth against a threat backed by Papal authority?" (Sibly, 1966: 415, cited in Maley, 2010: 51)² only to "conclude that Shakespeare deliberately presented John as a usurper in order to undermine the papal claim and the nature of his submission to Rome"(Maley, 2010: 51)

Conclusion

As shown along this paper, reading Othello, the Moor of Venice (1603) in the light of Elizabethan England's foreign policy during the period in which it was composed, characterized by the Anglo-Spanish war on the one hand, and by the projected alliance between England and Morocco, on the other, offers a plausible explanation of the reversal of roles between 'Self' and 'Other'. This explains the reason why, departing from the usual dichotomy between European/Christian 'Self' and Muslim/Moorish/Turkish 'Other' in Elizabethan Moorish plays, including his own, Shakespeare reversed the roles between Othello the Moor, the North African, and Iago the European, making of the first a tragic hero and of the latter a villain. This reversal of roles finds its full meaning when we see

in Othello a distant kin of Al-Mansur, King of Morocco and prospective ally of England, and in Iago a distant alter ego of Philip II of Spain, the national enemy.

Ultimately, making of Othello, the Moor, a tragic hero, does not mean the whitening of the Moor. Shakespeare seems to tell the audience that neither the Spanish Iago nor the Moor Othello are to be trusted. Iago is perfidy personified. His wickedness resurfaces and his true nature is eventually revealed. Othello, though an objective ally, can at any moment revert to his primary nature characterized by cruelty and barbarity. In this play, Shakespeare does not only succeed to reflect the prevailing English attitude towards two powers and two 'Others' of the time but also to foster and reinforce it.

Notes

1 The phrase “The Black Legend” was coined in 1912 by a Spanish journalist in protest of the characterization of Spain by other Europeans as a backward country defined by ignorance, superstition, and religious fanaticism, whose history could never recover from the black mark of its violent conquest of the Americas. See Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, Maureen Quilligan, eds., *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*, the University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London: 2007. For a detailed survey of the development of the Anti-Spanish sentiment in England, see William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558-1660*. Durham (NC) Duke University Press

2 John Sibly, ‘The Anomalous Case of King John’ , *English Literary History*, 33/4 (1966):415 , cited in Willy Maley, “‘And bloody England into England gone’: Empire, Monarchy, and Nation in King John” in Willy Maley and Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, eds., *This England, That Shakespeare:*

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