

Notes

- 1 Augustine Curio, *A Notable Historie of the Saracens*, trans. Thomas Newton (London, 1575), sigs C3v-C4r.
- 2 Public Record Office, London. State Papers 12/275/94.
- 3 See the examples in Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
- 4 Robert Wilson, *A right excellent and famous Comedy called the three Ladies of London ...* (London, 1584), sig. F1v.

Celia R. Daileader. *Racism, Misogyny, and the Othello Myth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp x, 256.

Celia R. Daileader's lively and provocative discussion of *Othello* and inter-racial sexuality begins with her concept of 'Othellophilia': 'the critical and cultural fixation in Shakespeare's tragedy of inter-racial marriage to the exclusion of broader definitions, and more positive visions, of inter-racial eroticism' (6). Why, she wonders, did the pattern of a sexual relationship between a black man and a white woman (as opposed to a black woman and a white man) come to be such a prevalent literary trope? *Antony and Cleopatra* is also a great Shakespearean tragedy featuring inter-racial sexuality—assuming one believes that the dramatist's Cleopatra was meant to be black—but it has never achieved the universal appeal of *Othello*.

Daileader finds the answer in the imbrication of racism with misogyny. Mutually reinforcing constructs, racism and misogyny work hand in hand to demonize not just black sexuality but female sexuality as well. Ever since the early modern period, which begins Daileader's survey, the culture of white patriarchy, frightened of female sexual autonomy, has elided that fear with a horror of miscegenation. Thus, 'any woman who wants, even subconsciously, to be sexual with a black man (or a gypsy), must want to demean herself ... [and] by definition she deserves to be punished' (162).

Daileader's first chapter, which will be of most interest to readers of *Early Theatre*, briefly surveys early modern plays featuring inter-racial couples. In Shakespeare's earliest tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, we see the sexual union of

Aaron, the black Moor, with Tamora, white Queen of the Goths. Complicit in the rape of Lavinia, they form a kind of monstrous union. Eleazar's union with Eugenia, Queen of Spain, in *Lust's Dominion* reprises the interconnections between rapacious female sexuality and black violence. Yet two other plays in Daileader's discussion, John Webster's *The White Devil* and John Fletcher's *The Knight of Malta*, reverse the pattern, uniting a black serving woman with a noble white man. She rightly notes that the black servants establish the 'fairness' of their white mistresses, but is this really Othellophilia?

Daileader also provides an unusual and troubled reading of Desdemona. Underneath her analysis lies the question many of us ask but few can answer: 'Why does Desdemona have to die?' Even if she had been guilty of infidelity, why must she be killed? For many twenty-first century readers, Shakespeare's powerful tragedy is not so much the story of a noble Moorish general deceived by his Ensign as a validation of honor killing. Brabantio assumes that his unsullied daughter's elopement with a black Moor can only be a result of her corruption by witchcraft. To Daileader, Brabantio's claim is a foregone conclusion: 'the marriage—even in her husband's eyes—defines her as a whore, ... [and serves as] a precondition and guarantee of eventual whoredom' (25). Recognizing that this reading is 'self-consciously eccentric', Daileader posits that 'If Desdemona is taken as sympathetic, or as sexually innocent, she must be acknowledged as one of a kind, *vis-à-vis* other lovers of black men in early modern drama' (26).

Still, on stage Desdemona's innocence is an essential ingredient in the final scene's pathos. As we know from Henry Jackson's account of a performance at Oxford in 1610, the knowledge of Desdemona's innocence combined with the sight of her slain body 'entreated the pity of the spectators by her very countenance'.¹ That Desdemona is different from Tamora and the Queen of Spain is the source of her dramatic power, yet the dynamics of performance, so crucial to *Othello's* reception since the Restoration, are not Daileader's concern.

From the drama of early modern England, Daileader moves to the Restoration with Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, which she quickly elides into Thomas Southerne's dramatic adaptation. The Othellophilia pattern will only fit if the heroine is white, making Southerne's version more apropos than Behn's original. More surprising is Othellophilia applied to Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, not so much in the narrative itself but in Equiano's efforts to 'de-eroticize his persona' (62) and describe his relationships with white

women as strictly platonic. Thanks to an exercise in romantic self-fashioning, Equiano becomes a sentimental hero.

The remainder of Daileader's intriguing survey of the black male/white female binary cuts a broad swath through traditional British and American literary canons. Her third chapter turns to Gothic novels, applying the Othello myth to Edgar Allen Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Daileader notes that in both narratives a white woman is not simply the monster's victim; by loving him, she becomes a monster too. Her death is always sacrificial, ensuring the safety of the social order. From Gothic horror, Daileader turns to the nineteenth-century American canon. She finds the Othellophilia pattern in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and sees it subverted in the less canonical Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok: A Tale of Early Times*. There, the white heroine's relationship with a racial Other, the Indian Hobomok, is overtly sexual, yet when it ends she refuses to commit suicide. For Daileader, the fact that Child's work is so little known, especially in contrast to Stowe's widespread fame, is a direct result of *Hobomok's* unconventional ending.

The Othellophilia topos seems even more stretched in Chapter Six, where Daileader makes a case for Heathcliff's blackness in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. She counts the number of times he is described as 'black' and notes racial inflections in the 'rhetoric of savagery' used to describe him. Similarly, Margaret Mitchell's Rhett Butler, the dashing hero of *Gone With the Wind*, is, Daileader opines, really black; indeed, Mitchell describes his appearance as black no fewer than 45 times. The resulting discussion of Brontë and Mitchell is certainly intriguing, but applying the Othello myth to any dark-complexioned hero robs it of specificity.

Daileader's final chapter examines twentieth-century American novelists William Faulkner, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison. The application of Othellophilia to their texts works beautifully. Daileader shows how all three writers 'valorize black manhood at the expense of women, and above all women of color' (172). Her conclusion then turns to contemporary film with Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever* and Tim Blake Nelson's *O*; both conflate white female sexuality with a demonized black masculinity.

Throughout her wide-ranging study, Daileader offers candid observations from her own life experience and interactions with undergraduate students. Her style is refreshingly direct and honest, if sometimes overly clever. In probing the conflation of racism and misogyny in canonical works of British and American literature, she forces her reader to rethink old assumptions. Even

where she seems glib or her argument tendentious, Daileader's analysis provokes questions worth pondering.

VIRGINIA MASON VAUGHAN

Notes

- 1 Michael Neill, ed., *Othello* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9.

Julie Hankey (ed). *Othello*. Shakespeare in Production. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp 328.

Julie Hankey's edition of *Othello* updates her previous 1987 text (Bristol Classical Press) with new considerations of both current critical approaches to, and productions of, the play. The rationale for the series is to shift the critical focus from page to performance, and in this edition the diverse permutations of the play's theatrical history are highlighted in the textual commentaries. The edition is not, perhaps, directed at first-time readers of the play, as the detailed notes do not gloss the content of the speeches. The annotations focus on details from promptbook marginalia, eyewitness accounts, and reviews of the play's various incarnations. Hankey usefully provides a list of productions since 1603, including recent film adaptations and looser revisions of the text (which she refers to as 'anarchic experiments'), such as the rock musical *Catch My Soul* (1970).

Anecdotes and gossip from behind the scenes are related with considerable wit and humour. For example, Hankey recounts the story that Olivier's acceptance of the part of Othello in 1964 was strictly conditional on his being paired with 'not a witty Machiavellian Iago, [but] ... a solid honest to God NCO' (79). The anecdote also illustrates the significant point that each age produces its own Iago as it does its own Othello; sometimes the results for Iago are more engaging. Hankey charts the nuances in the changing embodiments of Iago from comic character, to stock villain, to demi-devil and back again, highlighting the point that *Othello* is not always about Othello; and