

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

VIRGINIA MASON VAUGHAN

### Notes

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- 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

she provides a fascinating account of the oscillation between Iago and Othello as central figures in the various directorial treatments of the play. Presumably, Olivier was aware of the possibility of his character's being upstaged by a 'witty' Iago when he made his request.

In examining the performance history of *Othello*, Hankey explores how producer, audience and actor all contribute significantly to revisions of the text. Cuts—some of them drastic—were made in the play from the eighteenth century onwards, often in the name of decorum. The examination of the play's performance history thus provides a telling study of how the sensibilities of various eras dictated its contents. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century versions of the text attempted to omit references perceived as overtly sexual. Iago's lewd allusions to Othello 'making the beast with two backs,' and his imaginings of the wedding night were consequently cut from most nineteenth-century British revisions. In contrast, it seems that more recent re-interpretations were marked by a distinct *inability* to shock the audience. The decision to feature a naked Desdemona in the last act of a 1971 production was presumably made, opines Hankey, to provoke a reaction from the audience. She drolly remarks that 'it seemed reasonable enough that she [Desdemona] might try to win her lord again by going to bed without her nightie' (86). The scene, however, passed without outrage.

Critical approaches to the text have also shifted the focus of *Othello*. In feminist re-evaluations of the play, the roles of both Desdemona and Emilia have received a more comprehensive focus than in previous criticism. Hankey's detailing of the audience's responses to Emilia, played as a victim of domestic abuse in Trevor Nunn's *Othello* (1990), is especially engaging and noteworthy. One of the main criticisms of Hankey's previous edition was that it did not create a clear distinction between theatrical and filmic modes of presentation. In this edition, however, she does address these crucial differences with particular reference to films from Janet Suzman (1988) and Oliver Parker (1995). While she admits that she conflates Suzman's theatrical and videotaped treatments of *Othello* in her commentaries, she is also keen to point out how the recorded version, with its use of technical devices such as the close-up, highlights the moments of intense privacy between Desdemona and Othello in a way that the theatrical version could not do. In reference to Parker's film, she makes the important point that the director's decision to represent Othello's fantasies of Desdemona's adultery on screen is problematic. She agrees with feminist critiques of the film that this 'diminishes Desdemona', because the dichotomy between male delusion and female infidelity

becomes indistinct (107). What she terms 'that nineties tendency towards de-race-ing *Othello*' instead posits him as a victim of his own fantasies and downplays the issue of race as a factor in his breakdown (106).

It is precisely this 'de-race-ing' of *Othello* that Hankey sees as influencing modern castings of the play. Though there was an increasing preoccupation with race and skin colour in *Othello* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this was not reflected in Othello's costume. In fact, David Garrick's decision to don a turban for a Drury Lane production in 1745 provoked only an outburst of laughter from the audience. Nothing very exotic in terms of Othello's costume was attempted until the nineteenth century, when the representation of Othello as racial outsider began to receive more critical focus. Current critiques of the play from within a post-colonial framework are also concerned with modes of racialized representation, and Hankey provides a useful selection of these critiques in her bibliography. The use of blackface is viewed as unacceptable in modern productions (and as Hankey shows, it became the focus for ridicule and satire in some 1970s productions), but the choice to cast a black actor as Othello also has its attendant problems: as the actor Hugh Quarshie has argued, this can work to reinforce and legitimate racial stereotypes (Hankey 2–3). Hankey mentions Christopher Cannon's critique of a 1997 production where he says that to cast a black man as Othello is 'racially simple-minded' (102). Furthermore, he criticizes what he felt were the insistent fetishization of the black actor's body and the simplistic attempt by the director to provoke audience reaction simply by using a black actor: 'the production seems to think there is something scandalous about the decision simply to show black skin' (102). On the other hand, as Hankey notes, there are difficulties also inherent in attempts to subvert traditional casting choices. Jude Kelley's 'photo negative' re-working in 1997, where most of the roles—except that of Othello (played by Patrick Stewart)—were taken by black actors, was accompanied by no alteration in the dialogue to coincide with the casting decisions. Stewart, described by one reviewer as 'an actor whose mouth is like a slit in his face', is nevertheless denigrated by the term 'thick-lips' (109). This baffled some reviewers and audience members and incited derision from others. The impact of the experiment was thus uncertain. However, as Hankey astutely argues, the fact that audiences were questioning their presuppositions about skin colour was itself significant.

Current directors now face a new phase in *Othello* productions, one that Hankey sees as marked by a kind of post-racial impasse. Nonetheless, the political impetus of the text in terms of race and gender, as she shows in this

study, continues to challenge its performers, directors and audience. Hankey's suggestive and incisive analysis points to an intriguing future for *Othello* in performance.

LOUISE DENMEAD

Lucy Munro. *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp xiv, 267.

Lucy Munro's *Children of the Queen's Revels* is a splendid addition to the recent crop of studies of individual playing company repertoires. Many of the Queen's Revels plays — which include *Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Dutch Courtesan*, *Eastward Ho*, *Epicoene*, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and *The Malcontent* — have been studied in an author or genre-centred context. By looking at them as a repertory, Munro frequently succeeds in capturing what it meant for a theatergoer to regularly attend performances by a company that was 'ambitious and innovative, even avant-garde' (1) in their experimentation with generic form and in their risky forays into political satire.

Munro begins with a 'company biography' in which she describes the Queen's Revels' origins, its management, its move from the Blackfriars to the Whitefriars in 1609, the layout of its theatres and its personnel. She draws suggestive connections between its shareholders, dramatists, patrons and actors: for example, the plays that offended the King become more intriguing when one learns how many company patrons had 'an uneasy relationship with authority and the court of James I' or were connected with the 'Spenserian' group of oppositional poets (36). In the rest of the book, Munro studies the company's experimentations with genre, dividing them into comedies, tragicomedies and tragedies, and devoting special attention to their endings, which she considers to be 'generic stress-points' (60).

The chapter on comedy is the most problematic, not for its content, but for its relationship with the book's overall methodology. Munro begins by exploring the company's audience; she rejects the notion that it was an aristocratic male 'coterie', noting contemporary references to citizens in the indoor playhouses, as well as to women and possibly children (62-3). Considering