SHAKESPEARE AND RACE

This volume draws together thirteen important essays on the concept of race in Shakespeare’s drama. The authors, who themselves reflect racial and geographical diversity, explore issues of ethnography, politics, religion, identity, nationalism and the distribution of power in Shakespeare’s plays.

The authors write from a variety of perspectives, drawing on Elizabethan and Jacobean historical studies and recent criticism and theory. They pay attention to performances of the plays in different ages and places, as well as to the text, and they consider the distinction between authorial intent and subsequent appropriation.

An introductory essay describes the Elizabethan understanding of race and sets the context for the ensuing chapters, which reflect shifts in scholarship over the last forty years. Most are reprinted from volumes of *Shakespeare Survey*; others have been specially commissioned. They tackle the ethnic implications of Shakespearian drama in South Africa, the Caribbean, Germany and the Arab world as well as England. A broad range of plays and poems is included, while particular essays focus on *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest*.

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Editorial note

In exploring Shakespeare and Race the essays in this volume consider a range of plays and are written from a variety of perspectives by authors who themselves represent racial and geographical diversity. The chapters by Margo Hendricks and Celia R. Daileader have been specially commissioned: the remainder are reprinted from volumes of *Shakespeare Survey*. All reflect changing perceptions of the understanding and interpretation of ‘race’, revealing, through their difference of style and approach, some of the complexity and breadth of the subject.

These essays draw on history, criticism, theory, reception and performance, to explore ethnography, politics, religion, the creation of identity, nationalism and the distribution of power, and to grapple with the distinction between authorial intent and subsequent appropriation. We believe that they provide an informative and sometimes provocative collection which will enhance the study and understanding of Shakespeare’s text.

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