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0521848784 - Racism, Misogyny, and the Othello Myth: Inter-racial Couples from Shakespeare to Spike Lee

Celia R. Daileader

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RACISM, MISOGYNY, AND THE *OTHELLO* MYTH

Through readings of texts spanning four centuries, and bridging the Atlantic – from genres as diverse as English Renaissance drama, abolitionist literature, Gothic horror, and contemporary romance – Daileader questions why Anglo-American culture’s most widely read and canonical narratives of inter-racial sex feature a black male and a white female and *not* a black female and a white male. This study considers the cultural obsession with stories patterned on Shakespeare’s *Othello* alongside the more historically pertinent, if troubling, question of white male sexual predation upon black females. Daileader terms this phenomenon “Othellophilia” – the fixation on Shakespeare’s tragedy of inter-racial marriage to the exclusion of other definitions and more optimistic visions of inter-racial eroticism. This original book argues that masculinist-racist hegemony used myths about black male sexual rapacity and the danger of racial “pollution” in order to police white female sexuality and exorcise collective guilt over the sexual slavery of women of color.

CELIA R. DAILEADER is Associate Professor of English at Florida State University. She is the author of *Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage: Transcendence, Desire, and the Limits of the Visible* (Cambridge, 1998), and has published numerous articles on feminist theory and criticism, critical race studies, and Renaissance literature. She is co-editor with Gary Taylor of John Fletcher’s *The Tamer Tamed*, and co-editor with Rhoda Johnson and Amilcar Shabazz of *Women and Others: Re-thinking Gender, Race, and Empire*.

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*To Gary Taylor
for taking me there*

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