

In this study I examine attitudes towards the negro races of Africa which are manifested in the prose, poetry, and especially the drama of sixteenth and early seventeenth century England. The time frame which I employ begins with the reign of Elizabeth I in 1558 and ends at the death of James I in 1625, but I do not adhere rigidly to this span, as I have found it necessary and useful to refer to works earlier and later than those which fall within this period.

In the Introduction I outline the areas to be examined in the thesis. Chapter I deals generally with old and new ideas about the negro which are to be found in English travel accounts of the stated period, with some references to other European countries involved in expeditions for trade. In Chapters II and III I examine travel accounts of North, East and South Africa and of West Africa, respectively. Chapter IV provides a general introduction to the plays of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries which employ black-skinned characters and distinguishes any differences in treatment by individual writers. Chapter V is a study of Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, the earliest play to make extensive use of a negro character in the role of villain. In Chapter VI I examine five plays later than Titus Andronicus which employ black-skinned men or women in the villain's part, and are useful for comparison with the former, or are linked to it thematically. Chapter VII treats the question of blackness in Shakespeare's Othello and determines what

changes occur in dramatic treatment as a result of making the hero a negro. In the Conclusion to the thesis I state my findings.