

# Introduction

Explaining how it came to be, and why it was different from his would-be executioners', John Smith saved his own skin by talking about precisely that in late 1607. Captured by men belonging to the Powhatan confederacy, Smith, double-compass dial in hand, had revealed the 'roundnesse of the earth, and skies, the spheare of the Sunne, Moone, and Starres, . . . the greatnesse of the Land and Sea, the diversitie of Nations, varietie of complexions, and how we were to them *Antipodes*'.<sup>1</sup> So impressed with Smith's lesson and the gift of the compass was Pocahontas' uncle, Opechancanough, that he intervened, ostensibly allowing Smith his first escape from death at the hands of Virginia's Algonquins. Many episodes from Smith's autobiography need to be taken with generous pinches of salt. Nevertheless, Smith's command performance in an American woodland clearing, to say nothing for its printed rendition, encapsulates the purpose of this book: to trace how early modern English people gauged human variation, how they understood the causes of bodily diversity, and the consequences of drawing social distinctions based upon it.

Even before his Atlantic adventures, and time living in Shakespeare's London, Smith had interacted with an extraordinary array of peoples, often on foreign soils. To name just a few of those whom we will meet in the following pages, he was variously the honoured comrade-in-arms and a sometime captive enemy of the Dutch, Spanish, Bohemians, Moroccans, and Tartars. Notwithstanding this broad, direct familiarity with humanity's diversity, Smith's encounters, his perceptions of Old World strangers too, were very likely scripted in accordance with cultural co-ordinates learned as a teenager in the eastern Midlands of late Elizabethan England. His beginnings were quite humble. The eldest child of a Lincolnshire farmer who would bequeath him a very modest landholding, Smith had but the vestiges of a grammar school education. Yet this was ample when it came to explaining physical variation. For, in their own way, the fundamental concepts used to comprehend somatic difference were vividly simple, well and truly rooted in English popular culture by the seventeenth century.

1 J. Smith, *The generall historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (1624), p. 47.

For Smith, the crux of bodily diversity was complexions' variety, by which he meant something more than several shades of skin. Courtesy of classical authorities, indirectly Hippocrates yet quintessentially Galen, the human body's vitality and variation were commonly understood to stem from four elemental fluids or humours – blood (sanguine), phlegm, choler (yellow bile), and melancholy (black bile) – mixing together in different qualities and quantities. Widely held to be established at one's birth by celestial influences, which themselves differed according to time and place, this mixture explained morphology, and was known as one's temperament or complexion. Complexion then referred not merely to the body's exterior, the colour or condition of skin, but to a person's visceral constitution, from the inside all the way out to the hair on their head and to the tips of their toes. By extension, physiognomy – whether read in one's facial profile or overall demeanour – was part and parcel of native humoral balance too. Different people had different bodies sustained by different combinations, within which at least one of the humours was more prevalent than the others. It was this prevalence that explained a person's predisposition to being of a melancholic, choleric, phlegmatic, or sanguine frame of mind. Outward, skin-deep contrasts could therefore endorse profound, persistent differences in both body and behaviour.

For historians of European medicine and scholars of early modern English literature, the humoral paradigm has long been a preoccupation. Although it did not go uncontested, the paradigm largely defined medical practice during the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth.<sup>2</sup> With complexion a pivot for personhood, the humours were agonists for many poetic fictions, some of which remain canonical to this day.<sup>3</sup> More recently, there has been a surge of interest in embodiment among social and cultural historians.<sup>4</sup> That is, how did early modern people experience (or, sometimes, not experience) otherwise common bodily processes: from eating to walking, sleeping to dressing, falling ill to

2 The single best survey of the English situation remains A. Wear, *Knowledge and practice in English medicine, 1550–1680* (Cambridge, 2000). For the broader intellectual and European contexts, see N. G. Siraisi, *Medieval and early Renaissance medicine. An introduction to knowledge and practice* (Chicago, 1990) and M. Lindemann, *Medicine and society in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1999).

3 Signal works include G. K. Paster, *The body embarrassed. Drama and the disciplines of shame in early modern England* (Ithaca, 1993); M. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and selves in early modern England. Physiology and inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge, 1999); R. Wheeler, *The complexion of race. Categories of difference in eighteenth-century British culture* (Philadelphia, 2000); A. Loomba, *Shakespeare, race, and colonialism* (Oxford, 2002); M. Floyd-Wilson, *English ethnicity and race in early modern drama* (Cambridge, 2003); G. K. Paster, *Humoring the body. Emotions and the Shakespearean stage* (Chicago, 2004).

4 For early modern British historiography, the work of Roy Porter was and is exemplary. In addition to his many books, see 'History of the body reconsidered', in P. Burke, ed., *New perspectives in historical writing* (Philadelphia, 1992, second edition, 2001), pp. 233–60.

feeling happy, giving birth to growing old, having sex to dying? How did these experiences condition social relations and vice versa? What did people make of such experiences – how did prior, humoral understanding of their bodies condition their lived occurrence?<sup>5</sup>

The consequence of this dialectic between flesh and knowledge, ideas and bodies, was, as numerous historians have acknowledged, often pernicious. A patriarchal masculinity rested on the gendering of sex; the assumption that female bodies were not merely different from but manifestly subordinate to male.<sup>6</sup> The upper classes usually had better chances in life. If not always well nourished by our standards, they were often better fed by theirs. They had readier access to medical expertise, notwithstanding the fatal constraints on surgeons' skills, painful fallacies under which any physician laboured, or chronic illnesses that went with believing that the elite were naturally meant to live a certain way. Indeed, particular diets, certain diseases, and deeper understanding of the reasons for the same were all possible proofs of that very superiority. The physical toll of manual labour, combined with quite noxious elite prescriptions, meant that the bodies of ordinary folk were both denigrated and benighted.<sup>7</sup>

However, when it comes to habits of inscribing social inequality into the flesh, scholarship is rather more ambivalent on the score of race. Can

5 D. Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death: ritual, religion, and the life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997); A. Bryson, *From courtesy to civility. Changing codes of conduct in early modern England* (Oxford, 1998); A. R. Jones and P. Stallybrass, *Renaissance clothing and the materials of memory* (Cambridge, 2000); D. Kuchta, *The three-piece suit and modern masculinity. England, 1550–1850* (Berkeley, 2002); L. M. Becker, *Death and the early modern Englishwoman* (Aldershot, 2003); S. Vincent, *Dressing the elite. Clothes in early modern England* (London, 2003); M. E. Fissell, *Vernacular bodies. The politics of reproduction in early modern England* (Oxford, 2004); L. Cody, *Birthing the nation. Sex, science, and the conception of eighteenth-century Britons* (Oxford, 2005); J. Schmidt, *Melancholy and the care of the soul. Religion, moral philosophy and madness in early modern England* (Aldershot, 2007); J. Thirsk, *Food in early modern England. Phases, fads, fashions 1500–1760* (London, 2007); S. Toulalan, *Imagining sex. Pornography and bodies in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford, 2007); C. Muldrew, *Food, energy and the industrious revolution. Work and material culture in agrarian England, 1550–1780* (Cambridge, 2011); H. Newton, *The sick child in early modern England, 1580–1720* (Oxford, 2012).

6 See the ground-breaking but controversial work of T. Laqueur, *Making sex: body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), and compare H. King, *The one-sex body on trial: the classical and early modern evidence* (Farnham, 2013). More nuanced assessments of the early modern English situation include L. Gowing, *Common bodies. Women, touch and power in seventeenth-century England* (New Haven, 2003) and K. Harvey, *Reading sex in the eighteenth century. Bodies and gender in English erotic culture* (Cambridge, 2004).

7 Compare, for example, R. Porter and G. S. Rousseau, *Gout. The patrician malady* (New Haven, 1998); W. C. Carroll, *Fat king, lean beggar. Representations of poverty in the age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca, 1996).

we say that early moderns looked at bodies in racial ways and therefore behaved in discriminatory fashion? Even if there is broad agreement that race is a construct, and one intersecting with gender and sex, much of the doubt arises from rival definitions of race; competing standards for what counts as both racial perception and racist behaviour. When in time did we begin stooping to the low of such bodily prejudice? At what point were the physical characteristics subsequently considered the hallmarks of racism first registered?<sup>8</sup>

Race relies upon somatic variation. Variation is proverbially in the eye of the beholder, and we can be taught to see dissimilarities that to someone else are much less pronounced, even invisible. As a result, the bodily contrasts recognised, as well as their meaning, may shift over time. The enduring crux of race therefore becomes what we do with these perceived contrasts – we group people according to these divergences in the belief that they mark innate differences in the average physical ability, mental agility, and moral aptitude of one group as opposed to another. We then treat members of these groups differentially, such that power, be it economic, social, or cultural, is unequally distributed and the racially superior have both the means and the motive to perpetuate this same hierarchy. As the organisation of somatic diversity for political ends, race has multiple histories.

If race is the process of deliberately reading what is otherwise incidental or continuous bodily variation in a categorical manner, then historians have cautioned that it was only just starting to stir about the time of the Renaissance. We should certainly not be fooled by early references to ‘race’, since the terminology signified pedigree. That is, the affiliations of noble families, which transcended differences of geography or ethnicity and which, by definition, plebeian people across Europe wholly lacked. The emphasis was otherwise on how these bloodlines intersected (or ‘races’ intermarried) down the generations, rather than on their exclusivity at any point in

8 Scholarship on race as a cultural construction, and racisms as historical phenomena, is now voluminous. Work informing the present study includes I. Hannaford, *Race: the history of an idea in the West* (Washington, DC, 1996); T. W. Allen, *The invention of the white race* (London, 2 vols, 1994–97); A. F. Corcos, *The myth of human races* (East Lansing, 1997); *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54:1 (1997); M. Banton, *Racial theories* (Cambridge, 1987, second edition, 1998); B. Lang, ed., *Race and racism in theory and practice* (Oxford, 2000); *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31:1 (2001); P. Essed and D. T. Goldberg, eds, *Race critical theories. Text and context* (Oxford, 2002); B. Isaac, *The invention of racism in Classical antiquity* (Princeton, 2004); C. H. Nightingale, ‘Before race mattered: geographies of the color line in early colonial Madras and New York’, *American Historical Review*, 113:1 (2008), pp. 48–71 and *Segregation: a global history of divided cities* (Chicago, 2012); M. S. Hering Torres, M. E. Martinez and D. Nirenberg, eds, *Race and blood in the Iberian world* (Zürich, 2012); A. Smedley (with B. D. Smedley), *Race in North America. Origin and evolution of a worldview* (Boulder, 1993, fourth edition, 2012).

time or space. The study of heraldry, not of a science of biology, was what mattered.<sup>9</sup>

According to a widely accepted chronology, it was only during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that some English people first fabricated race in its now all too familiar form of a black/white dichotomy. Systematic bodily discrimination emerged in the context of an Atlantic colonialism and matured once more studied justifications for socio-political inequality, especially arising from property in bonded African labourers and the dispossession of native Americans of their lands, became necessary.<sup>10</sup> Having long attracted comment in their own right, the skin-tones of (non)-Europeans in the Caribbean and North America were only then also ‘thought to define ... aspects of character or personality [and ability]’.<sup>11</sup> By rethinking the significance of their somatic differences or similarities, and keying these to social and political liberties, settlers in several Anglo-American colonies addressed some troublesome anomalies. If forced resettlement and slavery had at first been rationalised as a means to Christian civility, non-Europeans could now neither acquire nor resume control over their own lives, and those of their progeny, upon conversion. *Prima facie*, their persons permanently disqualified them from full and equal membership in English communities. And vice versa: if so many Anglo-American migrants had indentured themselves on the often empty promise of class mobility, courtesy of their eventually obtaining a landed independence, they came to have an equal share in a new, racial privilege instead. Gradually made, this ostensibly novel correlation between people’s exteriors and their interiors constituted a ‘provincial ideology’ or a ‘creole idea’ which broke from prevailing, metropolitan notions of a common humanity.<sup>12</sup> If it does not assume that contrasting skin-tones are eternally obvious signifiers of difference, even revisionist work, implying that physical contrasts were a cause rather than the belated justification of chattel slavery and colonial subjugation, emphasises that the deliberate assignment of ‘outsider’ status to non-Europeans initially gave precedence to cultural distinctions rather than phenotypical markers which

9 C. de Miramon, ‘Noble dogs, noble blood: the invention of the concept of race in the late Middle Ages’, in M. Eliav-Feldon, B. Isaac, and J. Ziegler, eds, *The origins of racism in the West* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 200–16.

10 W. Jordan, *White over black. American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, 1968, second edition, 2012), pp. 44–98; E. S. Morgan, *American slavery, American freedom. The ordeal of colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975, second edition, 2003) pp. 316–37; T. W. Foote, *Black and white Manhattan. The history of racial formation in colonial New York City* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 91–158.

11 S. D. Amussen, *Caribbean exchanges. Slavery and the transformation of English society, 1640–1700* (Chapel Hill, 2007), pp. 21, 42.

12 A. S. Parent, *Foul means. The formation of a slave society in Virginia, 1660–1740* (Chapel Hill, 2003), p. 194; R. A. Goetz, *The baptism of early Virginia: how Christianity created race* (Baltimore, 2012), p. 110.

were distinctive and indelible.<sup>13</sup> So, a central issue remains how, and at what point, ethnocentric, cultural biases were overtaken by a decidedly racial prejudice centred on particular understandings of the human body.

Whether based on alleged contrasts in pigmentation or physique, historiography tends to assume there were two impediments delaying the widespread adoption of somatic typecasting. Smaller disagreements over the timing of its arrival therefore depend on when and why scholars reckon these barriers either fell or were hurdled. First, for all the attention it has received from scholars, the sort of corporeal (self)–examination encouraged by the humoral paradigm is very often considered to have had a Sisyphean character. The humours were mercurial substances, and the inheritance of somatic variation was a mystery. Vulnerable to shifting environmental influences *cum* geographic variables, temperaments were transient and physical contrasts short-lived.<sup>14</sup> Such mutability has been deemed inconsistent with the essentialism upon which racism would rely – the ideas that somatic differences are enduringly innate because they are inherited, and that outward contrasts, especially skin colours, must always be both signifier and signified.

Humoralism's demise therefore becomes a prerequisite for racism, with Mary Floyd-Wilson's particularly influential study boldly stating that the 'racial stereotypes [which] facilitated the Atlantic slave trade were incompatible with geohumoral tenets'.<sup>15</sup> Others aver that there was a fundamental incompatibility between these Old World tenets and New World experience too, yet emphasise how other dimensions of the latter precipitated race for those at the leading edge of Atlantic colonialism. Thus, these tenets were suddenly contradicted by the apparent uniformity of American physiques across latitudes or the now glaring lack of a global correspondence along any one geographic parallel. Therefore, geohumoralism, Gary Taylor concludes, 'disintegrated because it could not explain the global distribution of human colors—and hence could

- 13 D. Eltis, *The rise of African slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 57–84; J. C. Coombs, 'Beyond the "origins debate": rethinking the rise of Virginia slavery', in D. Bradburn and J. C. Coombs, eds, *Early modern Virginia: reconsidering the Old Dominion* (Charlottesville, 2011), pp. 239–78.
- 14 J. Ziegler, 'Physiognomy, science, and proto-racism, 1200–1500', in M. Eliav-Feldon, B. Isaac, and J. Ziegler, eds, *The origins of racism in the West* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 26, 181–99; J. Cañizares-Esguerra, 'Demons, stars, and the imagination: the early-modern body in the tropics', in *ibid.*, p. 320; A. Pagden, *The burdens of empire: 1539 to the present* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 101–2.
- 15 Floyd-Wilson, *English ethnicity*, p. 6, also pp. 10, 86, 142. It should be noted that Floyd-Wilson elsewhere seems to qualify this assessment. Later reference to 'classical' humoralism (pp. 47, 72, 158) implies that if the early modern English could reconsider what this paradigm meant for them, they might as easily do the same for non-English peoples whilst continuing to follow its fundamental logic.

not explain the causes of human difference'.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, while careful to avoid suggesting that it was the sole reason for the rise of a racial essentialism, Justin Smith has argued that Europeans who ventured into what were, for them, climatic extremes became all but paranoid about degeneration. Fearing supposedly profound, irresistible somatic change wrought by the different environment, migrants therefore started to think that, in fact, they shared home-grown bodily traits which endured, rather than believed these always contingent upon, and induced by, new climatic circumstances.<sup>17</sup> Evidently European bodies were made *tabulae rasae* at these aforementioned watersheds and intrinsic marks of distinction were impressed for the first time.

Second, and relatedly, scholarship has suggested that the traditional means to an often vicious discrimination – ethnocentrism – had, paradoxically, to make way for racism. According to this argument, religious affiliation circumscribed different groups and was the taproot of internecine hatred, but such lethal divisions could be healed in the name of a Christian universalism. Ordinarily, baptism salved souls and somatic contrasts were irrelevant, provided that unbelieving behaviours ceased. The insidious exception proving this rule is typically said to have involved Inquisitorial Spain's excoriation of Jewish and Muslim converts or, more remarkably, their Christian descendants who were assumed to carry the stigma of infidelity – a context in which the term 'race' itself assumed negative connotations.<sup>18</sup> By comparison, to the Protestant English outward appearance was critical but judged in terms of the relative refinement and conformity of one's clothes, conversation, and carriage. These were aspects of one's person which could be put off or taken on; were ultimately cultured rather than incarnate. Unless one was prepared to deny the very humanity of a population, which could by definition never be civilised, somatic difference was therefore largely meaningless.<sup>19</sup> Thus Karen Kupperman has suggested that

- 16 G. Taylor, *Buying whiteness. Race, culture, and identity from Columbus to hip hop* (New York, 2005), pp. 51–95 (quote from p. 82). Later, Taylor observes that early modern geohumoralism was like racism in its effects. Nevertheless, he joins other scholars in suggesting that geohumoralism deemed complexion 'a function of climate', and therefore the theory had to be 'cashiered' if global differences in skin colour were to be explained, pp. 271–6 (quote from p. 272).
- 17 J. E. H. Smith, *Nature, human nature, and human difference: race in early modern philosophy* (Princeton, 2015), pp. 26–30, 59.
- 18 G. M. Fredrickson, *Racism. A short history* (Princeton, 2002), pp. 15–48. So invidious were the implications of this genealogical stigmatising that some have suggested it constitutes racism *per se*, predating systematic discrimination by phenotype: F. Bethencourt, *Racisms. From the crusades to the twentieth century* (Princeton, 2013), pp. 1–10, 48–62, 137–80.
- 19 Most conspicuously, questions were raised about the existence of 'natural slaves', especially in the New World, for which see A. Pagden, *The fall of natural man. The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology* (Cambridge, 1982). For an iteration of the same debate closer to Stuart England's shores, see I. Campbell, *Renaissance humanism and ethnicity before race. The Irish and the English in the seventeenth century* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 53–74, 87–112.

the graphic and literary representation of Anglo-American encounters during the early Stuart era focused on bodily decoration and demeanours that could be assumed. Indian faces and physiques could be silently ‘Europeanized’ because any variation therein was considered ‘unimportant’; was an accident of environment rather than inborn.<sup>20</sup> This tendency persisted well into the next century, especially in popular culture. ‘Embodied in dress, manners, and language’, Roxann Wheeler observes, ‘conceptions of Christianity, civility, and rank were *more explicitly* important to Britons’ assessment of themselves and other people than physical attributes such as skin color, shape of the nose, or texture of the hair.’<sup>21</sup>

Pressure to adhere to particular beliefs and customs was certainly intense, and ethnic discrimination could prove deadly, but conformity to the supposedly superior culture, according to its central beliefs, should have been possible for *anybody*, however barbarous they might initially seem. As Joyce Chaplin appraises the situation during John Smith’s lifetime, ‘inherited resemblance’ was mostly thought ‘typical only of smaller populations’ – families, villages, provinces – but ‘not the larger national populations that would later be the units of racialist analysis. To a considerable extent, this was because theories of nature stressed an underlying universal human similarity: monogenetic creation and descent from the primordial parents.’<sup>22</sup> A concept which Colin Kidd has shown prevalent across the early modern Atlantic world, monogenesis was, he agrees, ‘inhibitory’ of racial difference. When it came to bodily discrimination, people therefore remained in a ‘benign state of denial’ until the later seventeenth century; until views of Adam were slowly (en)lightened.<sup>23</sup> That is, either Adam was imagined ‘white’, so that ‘Biblical monogenesis’ was no longer the ‘compassionate opposite of polygenesis’, or dethroned as humanity’s first and only progenitor (since Eve was made of his body).<sup>24</sup>

This study interrogates these twin suppositions. Rather than assume that one necessarily superseded the other, it traces the ways in which humoralism facilitated a racism of its own – a domestic discriminatory praxis that was itself

20 K. O. Kupperman, *Indians and English. Facing off in early America* (Ithaca, 2000), pp. 42–3.

21 Wheeler, *Complexion of race*, p. 7.

22 J. E. Chaplin, *Subject matter: technology, the body, and science on the Anglo-American frontier, 1500–1676* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 117–18.

23 C. Kidd, *The forging of races. Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic world, 1600–2000* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 26.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 26–30, thereafter esp. pp. 54–78; C. Malcolmson, *Studies of skin color in the early Royal Society: Boyle, Cavendish, Swift* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 65–112 (last quote from p. 112). A similar argument has recently been made for the wider Euro-Atlantic, J-P. Rubiés, ‘Were early modern Europeans racist?’, in A. Morris-Reich and D. Rupnow, eds, *Ideas of ‘race’ in the history of the humanities* (New York, 2017), pp. 33–87.

gradually adapted over a century and a half as the English engaged directly with and took the measure of diverse non-Anglophone peoples at home as well as abroad. For even if they were frequently diseased and skin discoloured, underlying humoral complexions were always considered somehow native and permanent. Explanations for the intergenerational transmission of variation were certainly contested and quite vague, favouring a ‘soft’ heredity – to borrow a term from the historiography of biological science. Yet this did not mean that no one believed some bodily contrasts durable or ever attempted to distinguish between particular groups on the basis of physical characteristics presumed shared across space and time. Moreover, bodily flux was considered both a normal and abnormal physical state.<sup>25</sup> To be healthy, an individual’s body had to keep producing the same relative quantities and qualities of humours to make the overall combination which had sustained their being from birth. Over- and under-production, as well as irregularity in their mixture or ‘concoction’, caused occlusion and corruption. This lack of homeostasis brought pain and illness if it was not counteracted. By the same logic, what was a healthy (or literally idiosyncratic) blend for one person could be morbid if it occurred in someone of a different native complexion. So it is rather misleading to write that early modern bodies were perceived to be in a ‘continual state of imbalance’.<sup>26</sup> Humoral equilibrium was relative rather than absolute, and a person’s complexion was typically either pathological or ontological.

While the ancient medical authorities might have conceived of a golden mean, a perfectly poised physiology to which anyone might aspire during their lifetime, we should bear in mind that these texts were subject to the same sort of revision as all pagan natural philosophy. Very few early moderns conceived of a bodily equilibrium in which the humours were either quantitatively or qualitatively equal to each other. Anyone’s complexion was prone to misalignment, yet survival meant perpetuating the specific humoral preponderance with which one had been born, not striving to achieve an absolute balance – as many, though thankfully not all, studies have taken for granted.<sup>27</sup>

25 What follows now finds support in the work of H. Newton, *Misery to mirth. Recovery from illness in early modern England* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 33–64.

26 For example, Chaplin, *Subject matter*, p. 120; Loomba, *Shakespeare, race, and colonialism*, p. 53.

27 Floyd-Wilson, *English ethnicity*, pp. 12–13; J. Feerick, *Strangers in blood. Relocating race in the Renaissance* (Toronto, 2010), pp. 113–36; M. A. Lund, *Melancholy, medicine and religion in early modern England: reading The anatomy of melancholy* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 98–9; M. A. Johnston, *Beard fetish in early modern England: sex, gender, and registers of value* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 25–9, 43; Z. M. Hutchins, *Inventing Eden: primitivism, millennialism, and the making of New England* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 9, 68–75; H. M. Kopelson, *Faithful bodies. Performing religion and race in the Puritan Atlantic* (New York, 2014), p. 111; E. Snook, ‘Beautiful hair, health, and privilege in early modern England’, *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 15:4 (2015), 36.

While we can most readily witness early modern people engaging with the humoral paradigm when they were ill, and in the context of therapeutic diagnostics, we should recognise that the opposite was equally common. Indeed, health's recovery relied upon a person already knowing how their complexion normally differed from another's. The paradigm underwrote particular assumptions, however fanciful, about well bodies as much as morbid. It is partly for this reason that the following pages refer sparingly to medical theory, instead focusing on how that theory shaped common knowledge and influenced social norms. Another is that this theory has already been nimbly dissected. Most often composed by and primarily intended for well-educated, socially superior men, medical treatises assumed a 'spectrum of difference' in which, Alexandra Shepard argues, 'bodily merit corresponded with social position'.<sup>28</sup> Social position was itself recursively reliant upon considerations of sex, age, lineage, and nationality.

A fundamental aim here is to show how widely shared such ideas were, and, as a consequence, how prevalent (or rare) was the discriminatory recognition of certain characteristics. In other words, rather than wait until their sickbeds or for an erudite physician, people – those below the gentry and the less than fully literate too – had ample opportunity to consider the causes and consequences of their varied complexions. People learned to interpret physical contrasts, in certain ways and to particular ends, when listening to sermons in church; reading astrological ephemera; watching stage-plays; talking in the street or visiting their neighbourhood coffee-house. The incentive for so doing was that the humoral paradigm allowed people to account for both their own and others' bodies, explaining why and how theirs was mundanely different from the next person's. Bodies were constantly and simultaneously evaluated in relation to intersecting vectors of discrimination. Complexions, both female and male, were judged righteous or sinful; innate or superficial; genteel or humble; healthy or diseased.

The first four chapters examine, in turn, the scribing of each of these binaries. Chapter 1 suggests that religious discourse formed the bedrock of popular beliefs regarding the origin and fundamental significance of human *cum* humoral variation. If the Fall explained somatic variety in the here and the now, then every corporeal contrast was a sign of sin; every body was always somehow

Compare, for instance, R. J. Tannenbaum, *The healer's calling. Women and medicine in early New England* (Ithaca, 2002), pp. 4–5; A. Shepard, *Meanings of manhood in early modern England* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 58–9; A. Gowland, *The worlds of Renaissance melancholy. Robert Burton in context* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 44–8; E. H. Shagan, *The rule of moderation: violence, religion, and the politics of restraint in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 15, 46, 52–3, 60; K. Evans, *Colonial virtue: the mobility of temperance in Renaissance England* (Toronto, 2012), p. 43.

28 Shepard, *Meanings of manhood*, pp. 47–69 (quotes from pp. 49, 68).

marred and imperfect. Nevertheless, some humoral complexions were thought better, more beautiful, than others. At least at their creation, Adam and Eve were widely believed to have been sanguinely tempered. So too had been God Incarnate – Jesus Christ. Given that bodily health was a cipher for spiritual well-being, those with fair, ruddy faces were often considered the truly faithful and, vice versa, properly moderate devotion could itself mollify complexions, even when people’s humoral balances were naturally, normally, other than fulsomely sanguine.

Predicated on a particular understanding of human life, people frequently resorted to astrology to comprehend their complexions. Indeed, clerics could be found encouraging this means to self-knowledge and some practised astral science themselves, at least until the later seventeenth century. The prevalence of astrological practice and its prominence in print culture are well known.<sup>29</sup> However, not so well appreciated are the underlying assumptions of this celestial scrutiny, and what it says about people’s conceptions of somatic difference. These conceptions, as Chapter 2 contends, assumed that different humoral balances, and their associated body types, were innate. Established from birth, complexions conditioned people’s lives, as well as those of their offspring. Furthermore, when the disposition of power remained largely hereditary, these long-lived notions even played a part in initiating an earthly revolution: the deposition of James Stuart in 1688.

That bodily contrasts were telling is not news to scholars of early modern drama. All the same, Chapter 3 offers a correction to the prevailing consensus regarding precisely how the Stuart theatre both appraised human difference and drew social distinctions thence. Drama taught audiences how to discriminate among themselves and why they were distinct from non-Anglophone peoples. Scholarship now acknowledges that this discrimination relied on several criteria. While skin colour, or physique in general, may have been increasingly important, religious confession, language or manners, nation, and class remained very significant. We will concentrate on the last factor, but must be careful not to import a modern social distinction into the seventeenth century. England’s social hierarchy turned on distinctions of birth, also known as ‘degree(s)’ or ‘quality’.<sup>30</sup> In spite (or often because) of socio-economic and

29 B. Capp, *Astrology and the popular press. English almanacs, 1500–1800* (London, 1979); L. Curth, *English almanacs, astrology and popular medicine, 1550–1700* (Manchester, 2007); L. Kassell, *Medicine and magic in Elizabethan London. Simon Forman: astrologer, alchemist, and physician* (Oxford, 2005) and ‘Casebooks in early modern England: medicine, astrology, and written records’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 88:4 (2014), 595–625.

30 M. S. Dawson, *Gentility and the comic theatre of late Stuart London* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 1–23. Work on Jacobethan drama acknowledging how ‘class’ was naturalised, and therefore entwined with ‘race’, includes P. Akhimie, *Shakespeare and the cultivation of difference: race and conduct in the early modern world* (New York, 2018), esp. pp. 23–8.

political change hinting at a reconfiguration according to wealth (or class), the elite persistently observed status inequality; emphasised a division between a well-born, genteel minority and a meanly born majority of plebeian heritage.<sup>31</sup> The theatre explained to people how this allegedly natural division was marked, or emblazoned, both on and in their bodies. This chapter presents an anatomy of that fiction. Previous studies have noted that distinctions of ‘rank’ or ‘status’ were particularly critical in the context of Anglo-Atlantic encounter, and some have stressed that these distinctions were believed innate.<sup>32</sup> Yet why early moderns thought such contrasts manifest, and how they recognised them, are matters not often addressed. In short, English men and women were much exercised in drawing distinctions because the humours were themselves socially valorised. Phlegm, cholera, and melancholy were all vital, but very rarely was any one of them exalted – considered the best to have dominating one’s native temperament, like the sanguine humour. This much is readily evident from the socially redolent metaphors describing a sanguineous state. According to one popular health guide, it was the ‘Ornament of the Body, the Pride of Humours, the paragon of Complexions, the Prince of all Temperatures’ which ‘herald[ed]’ a ‘vertuous mind’.<sup>33</sup>

Employing a database which indexes approximately 23,600 physical descriptions for wanted persons appearing in Anglophone newspaper advertisements over a century (1651–1750), Chapter 4 shows how distinctions on the basis of somatic variation were being drawn quite systematically by and among ordinary people, but the resulting patterns are unfamiliar. We can explain both their peculiarity and longevity once we understand that routine evaluation of people’s complexions so often depended, in the first instance, on assessing whether subjects were fit or frail. Such appraisal relied on a number of somatic signs, even as skin-tone was becoming the single most significant marker for establishing difference at a glance. While the ideal was to confirm a person’s intrinsic humoral type, diagnosis of diseased complexions was an equally important social imperative. Distempered skins were, in the moment, as meaningful as fair ones, and witnessing them had egregious consequences too.

Captain Smith’s account epitomises the tendency to participate in, and make sense of, foreign encounters using these domestic somatic norms. While morbidity might inhibit ontological evaluations, assessment of people’s native humoral types, we should remember that no disease, according to humoralism,

31 For what was a complex and changing ‘calculus of esteem’ among the majority, see A. Shepard, *Accounting for oneself: worth, status, and the social order in early modern England* (Oxford, 2015), esp. pp. 1–32.

32 For example, Amussen, *Caribbean exchanges*, pp. 48, 174; Kupperman, *Indians and English*, pp. 234–5.

33 T. Walkington, *The optick glasse of humors* (1607, fourth edition, 1663), pp. 111 and 155.

was entirely exopathic. Even the poison of bubonic plague, for example, struck down those whose humoral mixture was itself not at its equilibrium. And if one could not be sure about its immediate physical cause, illness was always a wage of sin. As people bore constant responsibility for their health for their souls' sakes, so those considered chronically ill-tempered, or degenerate from their innate humoral balance, could be treated prejudicially on account of how they looked. Such was the case for America's first peoples in the eyes of many English colonists. As Chapter 5 argues, English ethnicity was by no means disembodied, and neither was English assessment of alien societies and cultures.

To be sure, the established paradigm was taxed, and sometimes pulled in opposite directions. Nevertheless, Chapter 6 shows that rival claims about the nature of European, African, and Asian populations continued to share a basis in humoralism while not always agreeing over precisely how, and why, these other bodies were persistently different from, perhaps inferior to, English ones. Inasmuch as genteel, well-born individuals liked to think themselves superior in stature, with brighter eyes, fine manes of suitably dark hair, and fair skin, it was a self-fulfilling prophecy that elite English women and men were the most sanguine of their sanguine nation. Perhaps the gentry considered their extensive lineages to have witnessed a successive refinement of complexions; their current full- or blue-bloodedness was the result of a gradual diminishing of the cruder humours. English society had learned to perceive whiteness as a signifier of elite identity before it identified itself as universally white, a nation of 'whites'. Caution is required here. We should not infer that the gentry thought or called themselves white. Rather, they were inclined to consider themselves relatively *whiter* as part of a somatics of social superiority that included skin colour but was not always defined solely by it. As one marker of a well-born sanguinity, English observers were therefore primed to see elite non-Europeans too as somehow fairer skinned than those they ruled. A domestic somatics was transplanted abroad, but in some situations it was transformed. From the early seventeenth century, instances when the English discerned their own collective whiteness and viewed it positively were increasingly common. This dawning recognition eventually allowed even humbly born folk to discriminate affirmatively; in their own favour. While it might still be marked by a healthy modicum of red, particularly in the blushing face, fair skin came, over the next two to three generations, to stand for the sanguine temper of Christ's followers and a shared physical characteristic now had the potential to underwrite a new group identity which was not just national but, increasingly, international.

We have under-estimated the humoral paradigm's potential, or misapprehended what a great many early moderns did with it. People judged and were judged on sight by the ostensible balance, or complexion, of their humours. Bodies were made to vouch for distinctions in social status, physical *cum* moral fitness, religious affiliation, and national allegiance. At different rates in diverse

places these prejudices metastasised, and racism's canker, as we have since come to recognise it, can be glimpsed during the period of this study. Most conspicuously, Africans, Americans, and Europeans could be 'Blacks', 'Tawnies', and 'Whites'. A belief in past monogenesis did not necessarily inhibit such malignancy, since this tenet could itself always be complexioned *a priori*. Rather, racism's invasiveness depended on the degree to which people had a naturalistic conception of themselves and their world. It is for this reason that the aforementioned groups were not routinely known as 'races' before the second half of the eighteenth century, and their margins remained relatively unclear until examined in the light of new biological and human sciences. Yet, embodied prejudice still resulted in socio-economic, political, and cultural inequality for, and on the part of, English men and women during the Stuart and early Georgian eras. That prejudice was codified as 'racism' only between the First and Second World Wars, but few would deny that it has a much deeper history, one which this book tries to fathom.