Mary Floyd-Wilson. *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. xii, 256.

In *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*, Mary Floyd-Wilson emphasizes the historical significance of geohumoralism, a concept denoting the theory of humors as understood through regional terms. In such a way she grounds in local terms the humoralist work of such scholars as Gail Paster and Michael Schoenfeldt. Wilson thus characterizes the reformation of geohumoral knowledge in early modern England as an attempt to disassociate the British from the southern peoples of Africa and, in turn, from their own barbaric history.

To debunk previously established racialist notions, Wilson introduces her argument with an episode from *Othello*. When Emilia questions Desdemona about the jealous nature of Othello, Desdemona asserts, "I think the sun where he was born / Drew all such humours from him" (3.4.28-9). Wilson criticizes the modern reader's anachronistic tendency to believe that he or she knows better than Desdemona the disposition of her lover's temperament, for, to the early modern mind, Desdemona's claim would have been accurate; that is, because Othello was a Moor, he was believed not to be subject to jealousy. And so, Wilson argues, "*English Ethnicity* aims to recover Desdemona's knowledge, but more than that, this book seeks to understand how and why Desdemona came to be proven wrong" (p. 19). Hence, by beginning her work with a reevaluation of early modern conceptions of race, Wilson prepares her readers for a close study of the history of classical geohumoralism that will reveal the deep-rootedness of the English attempt at compensating for their self-perceived marginalization.

Part I of Wilson's text, entitled "Climatic Culture: The Transmissions of Ethnographic Knowledge," aims to reeducate readers on the significance of the geohumoral tradition in the early modern mind. Chapter 1, "The Ghost of Hippocrates: Geohumoral History," discredits Hippocrates' incomplete text, *Airs, Waters, Places*, as an influential scientific work during this era, while stressing the authority of the opposing humoralist theories of Aristotle, Jean Bodin, and Albertus Magnus, among others. Whereas Hippocrates maintains that the "relationship between the atmosphere and a person's humors is analogous. . . . Other classical writers will consistently argue for a counteractive relationship between internal and external temperatures, that is, cold air makes for hot blood" (p. 25). Consequently, unlike the moderate temperaments of those living in the Mediterranean, people living in the other two regions of the tripartite world were seen as endowed with opposing humors that were barbaric in nature because of the climatic extremities of their habitats: "those in the north are white, ignorant, dull-witted, brave and physically strong; southerners are black, learned, wise, cowardly, and physically weak" (p. 31). In accordance with geohumoral theory, Africans and northern Europeans were similarly regarded as barbarians primarily because of the adverse effect of the environment on their humors. As Wilson will show more clearly in Chapter 2, humoralism and ethnology are inseparable concepts in early modern England.

“British Ethnology” highlights the anxieties that arose as a result of geohumoralism, and the ensuing desire of the English to redefine their identity as northerners. The courtesy books, educational handbooks, and dietary guides that began to inundate Elizabethan England demonstrate the need to eradicate all adverse qualities traditionally associated with the British: “For the northerner, and the English in particular, to fashion oneself as a civilized, temperate gentleman meant countering or refining one’s innate disposition and inclination” (p. 60). Consequently, this self-fashioning process required a substantial amount of self-forgetting as well (*ibid.*).

In attempting to elevate their culture, the English were compelled to denigrate others, namely their “barbaric” counterparts, the Africans. In Chapter 3, “An Inside Story of Race: Melancholy and Ethnology,” Wilson discusses the fact that, according to classical geohumoral conventions, Africans were considered not only witty but melancholic by nature because of the hot climates of their habitations. The dominance of this desirable humor was due to the sun’s ability to draw out all other humors. Consequently, the blackness of their skin attested to the abundance of black bile, representative of melancholy, and “As a result, southerners have been inclined to ‘seek the highest learning and secrets of nature’” (p. 69). Because the northern regions lack that dry heat, the northerner’s judgment was considered clouded by an excess of humors, and thus bestial by nature.

Seventeenth-century scholars “reinvented blackness” and the definition of the melancholic humor, not only to disassociate black skin from melancholy, but also to suggest that blackness itself was an aberration of nature (p. 78). Not only was melancholy understood as an internal state of being, rather than a physical phenomenon, but it was also hypothesized that the dark complexion of Africans was not a result of the climate. Their blackness became an inexplicable anomaly, “and whiteness emerges as unrelated to any specific disposition or body type representative, instead, of ‘humanity’” (p. 79). The English also permit blackness to bear the brunt of the negative connotations associated with their own northern humors, thus allowing their former traits to serve as a “natural justification of the inferiority and immutable biological otherness of blackness” (p. 86). And so, in their reinvention of blackness, the English were able, not only to strip Africans of their connection with melancholy, but also to place them outside the realm of nature. In light of Wilson’s assertions, readers might usefully rethink the implications of Hamlet’s melancholy, especially considering that he lives in a more northern region than England and would thus be even less likely than Englishmen to be affected by black bile.

After Wilson establishes the significance of geohumoralism in relation to Renaissance thought, she moves onto the second section of her book, “The English Ethnographic Theatre,” in order to allow readers to see her theories at play. In the remaining chapters of the book, Wilson discusses at length the British eradication of Aristotelian geohumoralism as demonstrated in Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*, Jonson’s *Masque of Blackness*, and Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *Cymbeline*. While each of these chapters provides insightful observations on early modern drama, for the

purposes of this review, I will focus primarily on Wilson's discussion of the most widely read of these plays, *Othello*.

"Othello's Jealousy" points out how, in their elevation of the northern cultures, the English found it necessary to denigrate not only southern blackness but also Mediterranean temperance, in an attempt to discredit Rome's central position in Europe. Wilson proposes that the defamation of the Italian nature suggests in particular that "Iago's strangely detached jealousy would have been more familiar to an English audience than Othello's violent metamorphosis" (p. 133). Whereas the Italians were credited by classical geohumoralists with the most temperate nature, the English twist this positive trait into a marker of an inward pathology, namely jealousy (*ibid.*). Accordingly, Iago comes to represent the characteristics that began to be associated with Italians, including dishonesty, deceptiveness, and the tendency to mask one's deepest emotions. As Wilson duly notes, such negativity in turn imbues the northern peoples with a sense of inherent worth that they previously lacked.

Wilson's claim that, to the early modern mind, jealousy was a trait possessed primarily by Italians raises questions about the origin of this very trait in the Moor. Because *Othello* was written during a transitional period in regard to the rewriting of English history and geohumoralism, the two opposing views can be seen at play within this drama. Hence, Othello is at first characterized as the composed Moor, while Iago is portrayed negatively. Wilson argues that the transformation in Othello's character is a result of the fact that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was widely believed that "one person could infect another with an utterly foreign passion — an emotion completely antithetical to the victim's own natural disposition or inclinations" (p. 152). Because blackness was not completely associated with the heated passions just yet, the Jacobean audience would conclude that Othello was poisoned by his proximity to Iago. This conclusion inverts the common racist notion of blacks as infecting whites by sharing facilities, living quarters, and other spaces.

Wilson concludes this chapter with *Othello's* final thematic elevation of English culture and consequent denigration of the still widely acknowledged southern humors. Because the southerners were often credited with constancy and stability of mind, Othello's temperament is cast in a negative light: once he has assimilated Iago's jealousy as his own, he cannot easily throw it off. Opposing this humor was the traditionally negative association of the English with fickleness, which Shakespeare treats in relatively positive terms: "Shakespeare's dissection of medial and southern temperaments suggests that English 'intemperance' and its signifier, 'whiteness,' have their own essential worth . . ." (p. 159). Consequently, Othello helps to infuse northern humors with a positive value that was formerly associated with his own southern disposition.

Read through the lens of *English Ethnicity*, Shakespeare's *Othello* may have provoked a very different response from its Jacobean audiences than was originally concluded by many early modern scholars. Shakespeare's focus on characterization denotes the significance of character traits in dramas such as *Othello*,

and the effect of those portrayals on the audience. In reasserting the often disregarded importance of geohumoralism in the early modern era, Wilson is able to bring her readers closer to the mindset of a typical Renaissance audience. On the other hand, since Wilson never clearly defines the early modern audience in terms of social factors such as class, readers may ask to what degree geohumoral theories were known by common playgoers. Were members of the lower orders even able to access the works of Aristotle, Jean Bodin, and Albertus Magnus? And, finally, were they aware of the efforts of their contemporaries systematically to compensate for the northern peoples' classical marginalization? The likelihood that such knowledge was restricted to the highly educated may undermine somewhat the persuasiveness of Wilson's assertions.

Despite the under-emphasis on class-related matters, Wilson's research is quite convincing in its acknowledgment of a theory often discounted as an "erroneous explanation of blackness" (p. 5). Although her reading of the historical development of racist theory may be overly linear in its organization, readers for years to come will benefit from the provocative and important ideas charted in that history. In this book, Wilson reveals not only the anxieties that plagued the early modern mind in regard to geohumoralist theories but also the influence of those trepidations, which have been passed down for centuries under the guise of racialism. Indeed, in attempting to compensate for their marginalization by discrediting climate theory, northern Europeans established the foundation for what would eventually become widely held beliefs regarding race and ethnicity in the modern world.

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Alan Shepard. *Marlowe's Soldiers: Rhetorics of Masculinity in the Age of the Armada*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. Pp. viii, 248.

Alan Shepard addresses an important topic in this book, the relation between early modern masculinity and the military profession. It will therefore be of interest not only to Marlowe scholars but to anyone engaged in exploring the construction of masculinity and gender in the Renaissance; it makes a further contribution to a specific area of investigation recently treated by Nick de Somogyi in *Shakespeare's Theatre of War* (1998). That said, I must also admit that I often find myself in disagreement with Shepard's arguments, due to a profound ideological difference, which I will address directly in order not to mislead readers whose position may well be closer to Shepard's than to mine.

Debora Shuger has interestingly claimed that in "northern Europe during the sixteenth century, Erasmian humanism and Protestantism conjointly discredited the two principal medieval types of Christian manhood: the monk and the knight"—that is, the two "idealized social roles based on the renunciation or mystification of violence" (*The Renaissance Bible* [Berkeley: University of Cali-