

complexio / complexion. Categorizing Individual Natures 1250-1600*

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(forthcoming in: *The Moral Authority of Nature*. Edited by Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal, Chicago University Press)

In an anecdote widely used and retold between the 13th and the 16th century, pupils of Hippocrates brought the portrait of their famous teacher to Physionomyas (or Philemon, in other accounts), the supposed founder of the discipline of physiognomy. Asked for his opinion about the man in the picture according from the outward signs of his appearance, Physionomyas/Philemon replies: "He is a wrangler, lecherous and rude." The young men angrily rebutt his claims and return to Hippocrates, who explains that the diagnosis was indeed very correct; but that (I quote here from an English version of 1528) *reason in me ouercometh and ruleth the vyces of my complexion*.¹ A German version of the tale published in 1536 nicely differentiates between *physionomey* (the portrait) and *physionomi* (the art of deciphering the signs of the body), the latter enabling Philemon to read, in Hippocrates' words, "the true tendencies of my nature" (die *neiglichkeit meiner natur*) in the first.²

Whatever our notions of the individual's triumphant or destructive abilities for transforming, self-fashioning and self-inventing, common language use neatly differentiates such metamorphoses from what is supposed to be a stable set of inherent, inborn qualities: a person's "nature". Whether opposed to other slightly intimidating abstract concepts such as "culture" (or "nurture") or highlighted alone as somebody's "true" nature as contrary to disguise, dissimulation or good manners, nature is generally understood as the fixed, unchangeable basis of a person's physical self, described as a set of aptitudes and inclinations determining his or her abilities. "Natural" categories are used in the politics of placing that form the basis for defining and enforcing the boundaries the contributions of this section deal with.

In the following, I want to explore the background and the uses of some Renaissance notions of the nature of individuals and the boundaries they were placed within, with particular attention to the frameworks of visualization that surrounded and shaped these notions. By what outward signs could the "nature" of an individual be recognized, and by what categories were these signs linked to a person's body and its physical qualities, embodied or incorporated in the literal sense? For this, I will focus on the notion Hippocrates uses in our anecdote and describe its journey from the medieval centers of

scholastic learning in Italy and Paris to the 16th-century printing presses north of the Alps. Derived from learned Renaissance discourse, it has, to our days, a certain prominence in administrative protocols of a person's outward appearance, a piece of history of science in the identity documents in our pockets and in the passports we need for crossing boundaries. What can 'complexion' mean?

Dropping the word into the AltaVista search engine is generously rewarded by 46,715 web pages. "A Beautiful Complexion with Advanced Skincare products", promises the first one, "Advanced Skincare with Oriental Blossom Cleanser and other Skin Care products that really care for your complexion." Whereas "Color of skin or dark complexion cannot alter nature's frame" states the second, set up by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, "skin may differ but ability dwells in black and white the same." Both modern notions highlighted here - race and cosmetics - point to an underlying principle of reading of human nature on the skin, on bodily surfaces. They point, secondly, to the protocols of physical appearances.³ It is in this framework – skin and signs, interaction with the body and classifications of (exotic) bodies – I will trace the changing meanings of the term complexion in the following. Boundaries come in here on several levels. According to what categories were boundaries drawn between invisible and visible qualities of and on human bodies? In what rhetorical contexts were contrasts between individual and collective visual markers defined and enforced? And how did the notion of complexion, originally designating in medieval texts the balanced proportion of Galenic humors, come to be used as a term for a person's bodily appearance and skin color, crucial for describing the differing bodily natures of inhabitants of Africa and the Americas from the second half of the 16th century onward?

1.

Cosmetics and race aside, individual nature in Renaissance discourse was usually and commonly defined as non-likeness. "Resemblance", Montaigne writes in his essay 'On Experience' in 1588, "does not make things so much alike as difference makes them unlike." For him, it is dissimilarity that forms the basic principle of creation: There are not even two eggs that were completely identical, he ponders, nor the carefully smoothed and whitened backs of cards used in games, let alone humans. "Nature", he adds in the 1592 version of the passage, "has committed herself to make nothing separate that was not different."⁴ This "ingenious mixture on the part of Nature" is what constitutes human existence. "If our faces were not similar, we could not distinguish man from beast: if they were not dissimilar, we could not distinguish man from man."⁵

When medieval and Renaissance treatises celebrated a personified (female) Nature for her abundant fertility and incredible diversity, they pointed to the fact that Nature showed infinite variations in the bodily appearance of mankind. Nature was of course capable of whimsically producing monozygote twins⁶ - perfect doubles, albeit only in very rare cases - and more generally physical likenesses of differing degrees between parents and children and among siblings. But however members of the same family or clan might resemble each other, they wore distinctive individual features characterizing them as unmistakably individual in physique, speech, habits. This individuality was described and registered in very different frameworks, theological, medical, legal ones. With what categories were persons described to be identified? How was a person's individual appearance described in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance precise to "distinguish man from man"?

Between the end of the 14th and the end of the 17th centuries, papers of identification in different forms and from different fields became compulsory all over Europe - as *passaporti* for soldiers on leave, as *billets de santé* or *bollete di sanità* for possibly plague-infected travellers, as "lettres de conduit" for merchants and diplomats.⁷ Identity documents, warrants of apprehension and similar official descriptions of a persons' individual appearance with their detailed and increasingly formalized accounts of clothes, scars, marks, skin colour, bodily signs formed nodal points in a network of disciplines in the period between the 14th and the 17th century. With the increasing influence of Roman law, legal procedures diminished the role of oath helpers (who attested to the credibility of the accused) and emphasized the importance of eyewitnesses, focussing on outward appearances and visual evidence. As criminal court procedures came to favor visibly verifiable facts, problems of identification played an increasingly prominent role in legal practice and juridical literature - Renaissance learned legal discourse is abundant with parallels to the cause celebre of Martin Guerre. The emerging role of forensic medicine shaped the position of legal and medical experts in the gaze of the law that could penetrate the layers of deception and dissimulation, thereby recognizing a person's "true nature". All these texts blended fragments of learned tradition with actual administrative information, as did the famous *relazioni* of Italian ambassadors that carefully combined physiognomic allusions to a person's "nature" with detailed descriptions of individual bodies and faces.⁸ Nature's moral authority could seamlessly merge into an administrative one.

But if the category Nature was (and is) a machine producing generalizations, it did (and does) so as a formula implying constraint. Every appeal to the authority of Nature was based on the idea of Nature as given, or, to put it differently, as a principle of restricted choice from the individual's side. Nature was always presented as something from which

neither the speaker nor the audience she or he addressed could distance themselves. At the same time, Nature was understood as an inherent quality that might be disguised, dissimulated, masked (all techniques of the surface, "cosmetical" ones, as it were) but could not, by definition, be altered in a profound and irreversible way. Is this what complexion stands for?

2.

The Galenic texts constituting the doxa of medical learning from the 13th century onwards taught that all living creatures were composed of hot, cold, wet and dry qualities. Galen's theoretical treatises - especially his *De complexionibus* and the *Tegni* - and their medieval commentators used the term *complexio* to describe different kinds of qualitative mixtures and the causes leading to changes of the balance between these qualities. They emphasized above all that the balanced *complexio* was a relative conception. Each creature had its proper mixture of primary qualities: The man, the dog, the lion, the bee were not of the same *complexio*, they stated, even if they were in perfect health, but each had the proper *complexio* suitable to its nature. Not the humors as such but their qualities (active or passive) and their combinations were the vital factors.⁹ Nature was both the nature of the individual and the nature of the species, and both had their own complexional range. As a person's behaviour, appearance, aptitude, and moral stature were perceived to be intricately connected to his or her physical, humoral, "natural" condition, the term *complexio* was thus employed for a relatively wide range of meanings. It could signify a combination of qualities (cold and dry; hot and moist; cold and moist etc.) as well a predominant humor (black bile, yellow bile, blood, or phlegm). It designated also an individual's permanent disposition or temperament determined by a governing humor (melancholic, sanguinic etc.) as well as sudden changes in skin color that reflected shifts in temperament - blushing being the classical example. *Complexio* was also held to be age- and sex-linked, men being warmer and drier than women, aged persons colder than adolescents.¹⁰ It involved physical characteristics like the temperature of certain organs or body parts and tactile qualities like the firmness or softness of flesh. Yet it applied as well to a patient's sexual activity and to his or her emotional states. All of these were of the physician's concern because they indicated "change in the *complexio* of the body", as a 14th-century Florentine practitioner put it.¹¹ An individual's bad complexion (*malicia complexionis*) could thus be targeted as the cause for his or her passions, excessive appetites etc. As any disease was understood as a disturbance to the body's *complexio*, and as any particular drug or medicine had its own *complexio* or combination of qualities, the cures prescribed aimed to restore the patient's individual *complexio* back to normal, brought about by another

shift in the balance of qualities.¹² Rather than having health or illness as qualities the patient's body was thus treated as literally 'being' or embodying health or illness as the material result of subtle interactions.

Scholastic medicine in the 13th and 14th centuries included complicated philosophical debates in Aristotelian and Averroist terms about perfection or imperfections of elements, of substance and form, about the persistence of elements and about mixtures as separate entities. The use of the term *complexio* in these writings, however, signified much more a type of analysis than sets of firmly defined hypotheses on causes and effects. Medical writers reminded their readers that the term should be used in practice only as a comparative, not as an absolute.¹³ But however elusive the practical applications of the all-embracing theory of *complexio* were, the term provided medieval learned medicine with flexible and satisfying general explanations of many kinds of physical, physiological and even psychological changes. It figured prominently in the flowering genre of medical "consilia" describing the individual constitution of the patient, usually opening with a detailed description of the patient's personal *complexio* as the basis for any successful diagnosis and treatment.¹⁴ Not only did each individual human being have his or her own *complexio innata*, the parts of the body themselves - brain, liver, heart and testicles being the most important - had each *complexiones* of their own that, crucial for any successful medical diagnosis, had to be determined by the doctor's touch and gaze. Jacopo da Forlì, teaching in Florence in the 1350ies and 1360ies, referred at length Galen's and Avicenna's opinions human hair being of a warm and humid *complexio*, the brain of a cold and wet one. But the hair cannot be treated as completely determined by the brain, Jacopo then objected. The women in Florence usually had fair hair, those of Padua were dark. Should one therefore state, he polemically asked, that their brains were of a different *complexio* as well? However venerable the teachings of the ancients are, he concluded, they have to be completed by more and more detailed descriptions of signs indicating individual complexions - bodily signs, of course.¹⁵

Catalogues of these signs were from the beginning an important part of the genre, not only in influential and widespread medical handbooks like Niccolò de Falcucci's 'Sermones medicinales' or Michele Savonarola's 'Practica maior', but also in more specialized treatises. A 13th-century 'Liber complexionum' from which numerous 14th- and early 15th-century copies are extant, set up long and detailed catalogues where to look for what. After dividing complexions into temperate and intemperate, the author went on to show how the complexion of the brain can be known by the size of the head, its shape, the hair, its actions, the superfluities expelled from it, its temperature and by signs in the eyes. He provided similar detailed catalogues for the liver, heart, lungs, at, at last, for

the body as a whole, whose complexion was to be found from touch – softness or firmness of the flesh – as well as from close scrutiny of the patient's skin, hair, figure and *actiones*.¹⁶

As Joan Cadden's article in this volume beautifully makes clear, no firm boundaries separated learned Latin scholastic discourse from courtly vernacular culture in the Middle Ages. Notions and materials from the one realm were transferred and introduced into the other and thereby changed headers, context and meaning. Learned as well as popular writings described from the 14th century onward a person's *complexio* not only as an theoretical abstract concept but, simultaneously, as a term designating the existing composition of actual substances, a mixture of existing, physically present liquids in the body. Astrology was an important and very present element in the medieval discourse about a person's individual constitution. Medical prognostications had to be integrated in a system of causal relationships between the upper and lower worlds, where the qualities of different planets – hot and dry Mars, cold and wet Venus – corresponded with the complexion of a patient's disease, body and body parts. A *complexio sanguinea* for example would therefore be dominated by blood and air, wet and hot elements that determined the bearer's physiological and psychological disposition, making him or her particularly sensitive to the influence of certain planets and stars.¹⁷ The use of these categories for describing personal qualities, affinities and effects was not limited to medical and astrological writings in the strict sense. *Of his complexion he was sanguyn*, Chaucer described 1386 one of the protagonists in his tales. To summarize Saturn's influence on those born under him, Gower's 'Confessio amantis' from 1393 called his complexion *colde*.¹⁸

However different in their interpretations, all these texts agreed that the exact description of a person's *complexio* and his or her body parts must form the basis of any statement of his or her qualities. Simultaneously, they referred to the infinite variety of possible complexions. The incipit of the 'Liber complexionum' read: "The variety of complexions follows the variety of its causes".¹⁹ Nature was thus defined as the generous fertile principle causing the variety and, simultaneously, as its result, a person's individual character, discernible through his or her appearance, features, signs. Being so strongly tied to Nature's variety, the term *complexio* signified paradoxically both an immutable and a mutable characteristic. On the one hand, it was considered as almost identical or identical with the essential determining and active quality that made each complexioned thing (species, compound, organ, or individual human being) what it was. On the other, the complexion of human beings was seen as highly mutable, changing with age, emotions, with the impact of disease and medication and even with changes of the weather. A young physician from Prato described in 1408 in a letter to a friend his

dilemma taking over a patient from a (famous) elder doctor who refused to give him informations about the case. "I did not know", he writes, "what remedies he prescribed or what the patient's condition was, or how his nature and accidents reacted to the treatment. For our nature can change not just over two months but in a day, as you see all the time."²⁰

Nature as infinite and ever-changing diversity was a problem to the physician as well as to the judge and the administrator whose authorities rested on their power and abilities to taxinomize. It is in this context Montaigne scoffs in his above quoted essay at the ever differing shapes and names of our illnesses given to them by medical experts. "They make a description of our diseases like that of a town crier proclaiming a lost horse or dog," he ponders. "Such-and-such a coat, such-a-such a height. But present it to him (the lost animal to the owner), and he does not know it for all that." This is not just irony. In the description of his own physical inclinations Montaigne stresses their variability. "The best of my own bodily complexions are that I am flexible and not stubborn", he writes two pages further down, "some of my inclinations are more proper, more common and more agreeable than others, but with very little effort I can turn away from them and adopt an opposite style."²¹ Given Nature's infinite variety, even the most intricate taxonomies must produce misrecognitions, Montaigne implies (himself being a student of jurisprudence and experienced administrator), and even more so when confronted with people's subjective patterns of perception. The general descriptions enforced by bodies of systematized knowledge and learning do not necessarily match the categories we use to describe our diseases, our animals and our neighbours, Montaigne argues - let alone ourselves.

3.

But how, then, could the outward features of a person be read, described and interpreted? Medieval treatises on complexions show numerous connections and references to physiognomic literature. A wide range of medical writers from Pietro d'Abano (in his *Compilatio physionomiae* from 1295) to Michele Savonarola (in his *Speculum physionomiae* from 1455/1460) had written on the subject.²² Together with other Arab sources like Rhazes' *Liber ad Almansorem*, the medieval learned tradition drew most notably to the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum Secretorum*, a Latin translation of the ninth-century *'Kitab Sirr al-asrar'*, originally of Syrian origin. The *'Sirr'* purports to be an epistle from Aristotle to Alexander about the arts of government and statecraft, dealing with the ruler's education, the care for his body, court rituals, and physiognomics. Translated in the 12th century into Latin and reworked into a dialogue

between the master philosopher and the king, it quickly became one of the most important political texts in the medieval West. Under the new title ‚Secretum‘ it became an influential source for the whole genre of medieval “Mirrors of princes” up to Erasmus’ ‚Institutio principis‘. It was translated into all major European vernaculars; more than 600 manuscripts survive today.²³

The anecdote on Hippocrates and Philemon I have started with figured prominently in the different versions of the ‚Secretum‘. It was usually accompanied by a reminder to the reader to bear in mind the power of human will over one’s inborn nature, recommending to read any outward signs as mere hints to a person’s “natural” (that is, hidden) dispositions and inclinations.²⁴ But in fact it served as a paradoxical affirmation of the extensive catalogues of alleged visual signals for lechery, sodomy or treason given on the pages following the story in the ‚Secretum Secretorum‘ or in the numerous treatises on physiognomy compiled on its basis.²⁵ A black mark on the left hand signified the traitor; other bodily features were no less revealing. *Whan the here of the hede is playne and softe, the man is curteys and jentill, and his brain is colde*, a 14th-century English versions of the “Secretum” states. *Bygge eyes betkeneth to be envyous / unshamefast / slowe and ivnobedyent. A brode nose in the myddes is a grete speker / and a lyer*. Red eyes indicate a manly, strong and bold person, a anonymous compendium on complexions printed in Augsburg 1514 states. Those who have eyes in the color of the sky are of wicked intentions, the above-quoted German compendium from 1536 adds; those whose foreheads show wrinkles and a furrow above the nose are simple-minded, haughty and have bad luck.²⁶

I am less interested here in the mutual borrowings between late medieval and Renaissance treatises on complexions, physiognomics and astrology than in the ways the dialectics of allegedly visualized “natural inclinations” were presented and used in different contexts. A 14th-century manuscript now in St. John’s College, Cambridge, engages in a long recapitulation of the marks of a body of hot and humid complexion. It describes the person in question as “having little fat, straight black hair, color between white and ruddy;” he is “faithful, has a round beard, fine black eyes, two large upper teeth, looks at the earth as he walks, talks lightly but is an habitual reader, of medium stature, large face, beautiful or trim eyebrows, fond of clothes, not telling anyone his plans, and not to be fooled.” To this extraordinary mix of physical features and attributed behaviour it is added: “Has a black spot on one of his teeth”. An early 15th-century manuscript in Bern delivers a very similarly structured catalogue: “So the choleric are generally wrathful, in mind unsettled, fickle, unstable, in body thin and lean, swarthy with dark curly hair, rough and hirsute, hot to the touch, with a strong rapid pulse. In substance their nature is delicate and subtle; in color fiery, glowing and clear.”²⁷

Both passages are constructed as ideal types of certain complexions not or only very rarely to be found in real life. In the last decades of the 15th and the first of the 16th century, a considerable number of older physiognomic texts – from the pseudo-Aristotelian ‚Physiognomonica‘ to the ‚Secretum‘ and the treatises of Rhazes, Michael Scotus and Pierre d’Ailly - had been published in print.²⁸ More popular and widespread were the editions of so-called ‚Physiognomiae et chiromantiae compendium‘ or ‚Complexionenbüchlin‘, based on the Secretum Secretorum and the writings of Michael Scotus, but usually (and falsely) ascribed to the Italian physician and astrologer Bartolomäus Cocles (+1504). Such compendia were again and again reprinted in Latin, German, English and Italian versions in the first half of the 16th century. They offered the reader clues to detect the secret features of their enemies with the help of physiognomy, “a striking natural art” to identify “reckless disgraceful people through their bodily signs”.²⁹

Part of the attraction of these texts for medieval readers seems to have been their careful use and display of fragments from learned authorities (there is clearly a pleasure in lists and references at play here) combined with a new emphasis on portraits, physiognomics and self-observation. Petrarch played a very similar game of literary quotations and allusions in his famous 1374 ‘Letter to posterity’, describing himself as “though not blessed with a physique of the first order, I enjoyed the advantages of youth, sparkling eyes, the skin colour between white and dark” (*inter candidum et subnigrum*)³⁰ No description of a face can do without models and the protocols that are coming along with them. The wording and vocabulary of the physiognomic literature reappeared in the popular descriptions of the face of Jesus as given in the alleged ‚Letter of Publius Lentulus‘, extremely popular in the late 15th and 16th century. Body and face of the Saviour, of course, showed no birthmarks or black spots; Christ was described as *makellos* or unblemished in the most literal sense. An Augsburg broadsheet published around 1512 combined a woodcut of the face of Christ by Hans Burgkmeier with the detailed physiognomic interpretation of Christ’s ideal *complexio*, his nose, eyes, eyebrows etc.³¹ The ideal face points to that of the beholder: For the popular Franciscan Strasburg preacher and ardent moral reformer Johann Geiler von Kaisersberg active in the last decades of the 15th century (+1511), acute and unrelenting self-observation became the key to perfection and salvation. “Only the one who scrutinizes himself to some degree and perceives his own body becomes aware how far he is from perfection” - an old topos from monastic spiritual literature. In the texts of Kaysersberg’s sermons posthumously published by Johannes Pauli in 1517, however, the author urges his audience and readers to concentrate these efforts “on your own complexion” (*auff die eygen*

complexion) – to take utmost care to decipher the signs of one's own nature on one's own body.³²

4.

At the turn of the 16th century the term complexion had detached from the framework of Galenic medicine and natural philosophy and moved into a broader sphere of the description of human bodies. Scholastic medicine had shaped *complexio* as a mode of establishing and interpreting complicated relations in a wide range of bodily phenomena including tactile qualities (the firmness or softness of flesh, for example), temperature and the effects of emotions, exercise or medication, used to describe both mutable and unchangeable characteristics. The notion of "well-tempered" blood evoked in the descriptions of 17th-century transfusion experiments in Londa Schiebinger's article in this section still derived its meaning from this classical set of categories. Yet the physiognomization and essentialization of the term in the vernacular literature and in the developing genre of treatises on signs narrowed its use to something more particular, determining, individually innate and visible – or at least traceable for the trained eye. Highlighting nature's diversity as well as nature's constraint, *complexio*, we may argue, shifted from the interior to the exterior with increasing prevalence to the skin, its colors and marks.

The use of such notions of diversity and constraint may remind us that the term "nature" itself always hovers ambiguously between the descriptive and the normative. Even on the descriptive level alone, there is an always present tension between the scholastic notion of the nature of the species which displays qualities inherent to the specific category, and the nature of the individual. In medieval and Renaissance texts, a number of qualities of certain groups were portrayed as problematic for the identification of the nature of their individual members. Medical theory conceptualized women's alleged abilities of disguise and dissimulation as a function of their "cold" and "wet" nature. In a very similar move, gypsies, with particular reference to their dark skin, curly hair and to, according to the authors, their Assyrian or Egyptian origins, were accused of treacherously changing their outward appearances as well as their names. Gypsies were the first group whose passports and safe conducts, by whomsoever they might be issued, were declared invalid by imperial legislation in the whole Holy Roman Empire in 1551 and again in the following decades. People of such a treacherous nature, it was implied, could only have forged identity papers.³³

How then did the meaning of somebody's complexio move from a balance of invisible interior liquids and their balance or combination to their exterior signs on skin and face? The ways skin colors were described between the 14th and the 16th century seem to have less to do with the actual degree of reflection of light on the skin than with a complex set of notions of colors and signs informed by the theories of physiognomy and complexion outlined above. Descriptions of slaves bought and sold in Florence between 1366 and 1397 in the city's 'Registro degli schiavi' (the overwhelming majority of them female, 329 out of a total 357), focus on their outward appearance in ways familiar to the readers of medical and physiognomic texts. They speak for example of an 18-year old woman sold in July 1366 as "above medium height, olive-colored skin (*ulivigna*), with a big nose and a black mole above the nose and two scars on her left hand", another of "quasi black skin, with some marks of the left side of her nose" or "of white skin, with pierced ears and a black mole on the left side of her forehead". Along with the detailed description of 'natural' signs goes the emphasis on marks figuratively written on the body. "With a great scar on her head by her left eyebrow, and a scar on her left cheek, by her nose"; a tattoo "like a cross, on the right finger", or "a great scar or brand, on the top of the right hand". Privately set-up notary records of sales and emancipations of such female slaves give similar descriptions of their appearances. They list their stature (small, rather small, medium, large), the shape of their faces (round, long, square), skin color (*flava* or yellow, *bruna*, *nigra*, *ulivigna*, *rossa*, or even *verdastrò*, greenish), and provide extensive descriptions of birthmarks on hands and faces, scars and tattoos.³⁴ Their categories of skin colors are somewhat puzzling for modern readers. As olives take very different colors in the stages of their ripening and treatment, from light brown to violet and pitch black, what could *ulivigna* - as opposed to, let's say, *bruna* - possibly stand for? In other texts, descriptions of color and origin of slaves are turned into explicit puns. Alessandra Strozzi advised in one of her letters her son Filippo in 1465 to look for a tatar slave (*qualche tartera di nazione*) to buy, because they could better stand hard labor, but she admitted that "the red ones - that is, the Russians" (*le rosse, cioè quelle di Rossia*) were more attractive and handsomer."³⁵

The meaning of *rossa* is (deliberately?) vague here. Does it really refer to skin pigmentation? References to birthmarks, moles and signs and to "red" or "black" as a person's characteristic color appear as well in a detailed 1464 description of the soldiers garrisoned in the Roman Castel S. Angelo. Practically all of the 62 soldiers, with the exception of a Jacobus Hungarus, an Iohannes Albanesi and an Antonius Sclavus, are of Spanish, Italian and German origin. Their descriptions are rather short, giving only name, age and two or three distinctive marks. A certain "Johannes Scemel", "gallicus", is described as red (*pinguis et rubeus*); another is simply presented as "Apricus Rubeus", without further specification if the indicated color referred to skin or hair. Yet the list

provides its reader with very detailed descriptions of the signs these men are wearing on their hands, faces and arms, of their scars, moles and birthmarks. "With a black sign of his right jaw"; "with a sign of his small finger of the right hand" – not only referring to traces of their violent profession but echoing the detailed lists of marks from the literature of complexion and physiognomy, "with a black mole on his left hand."³⁶ When the list presents the German Michael de Maguntia as a man of medium height with a scar on his forehead and having a black appearance or a black face (*facie nigra*), or a certain Thomas de Trever (from Trier) having a *facie nigra*, or an "Alfonsus de Salamanca" as *homo nigris colore*, what notions of blackness are employed here?

Such descriptions of Reds and Blacks guarding the papal fortress in the centre of medieval Christendom in the West cast an interesting light on Renaissance notions of skin colors and bodily appearance in general. Christopher Columbus' first account of the inhabitants of the island of Guahani from October 1492, describes them as "well formed, with handsome bodies and good faces. Their hair is coarse - almost like the tail of a horse - and short. (...) Some of them paint themselves with black, and they are the color of the Canarians, neither black nor white, and some of them with red, and some of them with whatever they find."³⁷ The "neither black or white"- formula is clearly not the actual description of somebody's appearance. If not simply a general figure of speech (Petrarch's *inter candidum et subnigrum*), it might well be derived from the description of the Canary islands translated by Boccaccio from Italian to Latin – the skin color of the inhabitants of the "Happy Islands" as a borrowing of a Petrarchian metaphor.³⁸ Later 16th-century chroniclers of the European expansion to the Americas, however, seem eager to present a rather different story. Bartolomé de las Casas describes the very same encounter on a Caribbean beach in October 1492 in his 'Historia de las Indias' thirty years later: "The Indians, who witnessed these actions in great numbers, were astonished when they saw the Christians, frightened by their beards, their whiteness, and their clothes; they went up to the bearded men, especially the Admiral since, by the eminence and authority of his person, and also because he was dressed in scarlet, they assumed him to be the leader, and ran their hands over the beards, marvelling at them, because they had none, and carefully inspecting the whiteness of the hands and faces."³⁹

Commenting on this passage, Peter Hulme has dryly noted that, after several weeks at sea, the Spanish and Italian sailors might not have differed much at all in color from the Amerindian natives.⁴⁰ Las Casas' whiteness is strangely located precisely at those parts of the Europeans' bodies surely most exposed to tropical sun. I want to leave aside, too, the importance of clothes and beards so prominent in Las Casas' account in contemporary European protocols of identification in the first half of the sixteenth century. Among other things, it was the right to wear a beard that distinguished

personally free male laborers from slaves in 16th and 17th century Italy and Spain; and physiognomic compendia had a lot to say about the importance of “a well kept beard with thick and strong hairs” as a sign of a person of reason and “of good nature”.⁴¹

Whereas blackness or a black appearance could be located on moles and bodily marks, very few of the inhabitants of Renaissance Europe seem to have considered themselves to be white in any form – let alone in the all too familiar meaning of the term as a category signifying a central dominant “non-race” position from which other people and peoples ‘differ’, analyzed in Londa Schiebinger’s work in this section. On the contrary, European theories of climate and complexion handed down from the classics reserved a number of rather unflattering terms for the fair-haired and fair-skinned residents of the North. Aristotle’s ‘Politics’ described them as “full of spirit” but lacking political organization, “incapable of ruling others... (they are) deficient in intelligence.”⁴² Widely read classical texts like Pliny’s ‘Natural History’, Vitruvius’ ‘Ten Books on Architecture’ and Flavius Vegetius’ ‘Military Institutions’ all agreed over the interactive relationship between the body’s constitution and its environment. As the sun in the southern regions caused the moisture to evaporate, northern climates prevented its ready evacuation. The cold northern climates therefore made their inhabitants to be courageous, but this excess moisture also produced “sluggish minds”. Albertus Magnus repeated in the 13th century that those who live in cold regions abounded in “blood and bodily spirit... their humour is thick and bodily spirit does not respond to the motion and receptivity of mental activity. Therefore, they are dull-witted and stupid.”⁴³

It has been repeatedly noted that in the making of the category “race” (in the sense of a group of persons or animals of common descent or origin and likeness, the term itself coined in the 16th century), early modern authors drew on material from both antique and medieval learned authorities to configure innate, permanent, “natural” categories suitable for the classification of humans.⁴⁴ Yet the texts they used did not only construct Africa and Asia as both monstrous and noble, but did the same for the barbarous northern regions of Europe. Medieval humoral discourse had a lot of negative things to say on the bodily consequences of northern climate. Cold external air clogged the body’s pores, drawing heat and moisture inward and producing a particular complexion – white. Drawing on an wide range of scholastic authorities, Jean Bodin in 1565 in his widely read ‘Method for the Easy Comprehension of History’ urged historians to consider the temperaments of various peoples in the world so that they may write histories “drawn from nature”. Southerners were cold, dry and melancholic, he stated; Northerners were hot, moist, and sanguine. In an attempt to reconcile ancient authorities with astrological and humoral models, Bodin suggested that cold, moist, phlegmatic peoples inhabited the extreme north, whereas, in general, shades of skin color varied with the latitude. “Under

the tropics people are unusually black; under the pole, for the opposite reason, they are tawny in color...down to the sixtieth parallel, they become ruddy; thence to the forty-fifth they are white...to the thirtieth they became yellow, and when the yellow bile is mingled with the black, they grow greenish, until they become swarthy and deeply black under the tropics" – a spectre of skin pigmentation allegedly due to nature that echoes the Italian categories we have already encountered. Such outward signs had their inward counterparts. The southerners "abound in black bile" and proved wise, weak, swarthy and small, Bodin argues. Conversely, the hearty, fair-skinned, white northerners had such an excess of "blood and humour" that their "mind was so weighed down (with moisture) that it hardly ever emerged."⁴⁵

The Frenchman Bodin was not the only Renaissance writer claiming the ideal, temperate middle position "favoured by Nature" for his own countrymen. Italian, German, Spanish, German and English authors did the same. Neither was this kind of argument reserved for Europe; 17th-century Chinese intellectuals and their 19th-century commentators established very similar rhetorical links between birthplace, skin colour and bodily features, as Fa-Ti Fan's contribution on Nature and national essence in this section reminds us.⁴⁶ Yet Bodin's spectrum of climate-induced skin colors went from white through yellow and green to black without inducing explicit moral statements. On the contrary, he concluded that certain natural modes of conduct were not altogether subject to human volition: the chastity of Northerners was not to be particularly admired because it was caused by the weakness of their sexual appetites. Nor was the licentiousness of the southerners to be blamed, he added, for it was especially the mark of their melancholic complexion. The apparent virtuousness of the Germans came, he wrote, from their lack of imagination; statesmen, his lesson went, must frame their policy in accordance to these laws of nature.⁴⁷

In this 16th-century polyphony of categories the term complexion could serve quite different functions, as we have seen. Physiognomical, astrological and medical treatises continued to use the term to highlight individual "natural" inclinations. The aforementioned 1536 physiognomic *Complexionenbüchlein* ascribed to Cocles devoted long chapters to the inhabitants of Africa and Asia - yet ignoring the newfound lands in the West. But apart from a short reference to the blackness of certain African tribes, its accounts of exotic India and Asia (providing, among other things, detailed descriptions of the soldiers of the legendary Christian Prester John in India wearing cross-shaped tattoos) do not mention skin pigmentation at all.

White as a color, however, appears only once in the *Complexionenbüchlein*. It is reserved for those conceived or born under the astrological sign of Andromeda. These

people, the anonymous author wrote, have a pretty face, are lucky and unchaste. They are usually not too interested in women but engage in sodomy; they are flatterers, servile, and "of white skin color" – and usually end their lives either bankrupt or burnt on the stake.⁴⁸ And it is only in the last chapter that the anonymous author introduces his readers to a particular people that, however, "lives under Nature's guidance only" (*nach der natur leitung*). These "Ichtiophagi Affrice" walked naked, knew of no personal property, had children, women and all things in common, would not differentiate between right and wrong and knew nothing of pleasure or mourning. Yet, the author adds, they lived happily and peacefully from fish and a kind of bread baked between hot stones, knowing of no scarcity or famine, eating together and merrily singing songs in dissonant melodies.⁴⁹ What immediately follows this picturesque exotic idyll is, as a conclusion of the whole compendium, an account of the barbaric origins and of the national character of the Germans, "so ingenuous in both good and bad things". Drawing on Tacitus' descriptions of their wildness and on the Germans' military prowess, the author praises their victories in innumerable battles against the infidels, their perseverance, reliability, and ambition. They supercede all other nations in artifice, mechanics and inventions, he closes, in printing, artillery and many other arts (*und vil ander künst*).⁵⁰ In contrast to the mild-mannered fish-eaters living under nature's guidance only to whom any history is refused, the Germans appear as self-educating noble savages and successful Taciteian ingeneers of their own ambition and historical progress – with no particular nature (nor skin-color, we might add) attached to them.

The 1536 *Physionomi* guides its reader from reading and deciphering the bodily signs of people's true nature to the wild nature of pittoresque savages living under nature's guidance only - and from them, bringing the message home, as it were, to their originally not less savage but ambitious, enterprising and cultured counterparts.⁵¹ The (German) reader is flatteringly invited to see his own achievements in overcoming nature highlighted by the sluggish innocence of the Ichtiophagi. The rhetorical scheme is identical to the one displayed in the aforementioned anecdote of Hippocrates and Physionomyas/Philemon with which the same book on *Physionomi* literally opens: A paradoxical lesson on both the deciphering and the transformation of the unchangeable innate of humans, or in Hippocrates' words, on "the true tendencies of my nature". In a kind of utopia of shifting gazes and switching definitions, both *Physionomyas*' and Hippocrates' position, both the strict normative and the flexible descriptive reading of Nature is offered to the reader. It could be argued that the combination of such ambiguous references on infallible "true signs" with well-placed hints on their uses for dissimulation organized most Renaissance writing on the practices of identification and classification, allowing for a particular plaisir du texte.

Yet the closing chapter of the 1536 *Physionomi* as a 16th-century heterology may also be read as an example of a specific literary technique of contrast to be found in most early modern accounts on complexion. Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation* includes George Best's often-quoted ponderings from 1587 of on the wonders of diversity and persistency: "I my selfe have seene an Ethiopian as blacke as cole brought unto England, who taking a faire English wife, begat a sonne in all respects as blacke as the father was (...); whereby it seemeth this blackness proceeded rather of some natural infection of that man, which was so strong, that neither the nature of the clime, neither the good complexion of the mother concurring, could any thing alter."⁵² In this passage, neither a woman's "good complexion" nor the blessings of English weather can make up the father's black "nature". Like medieval complexiones, early modern complexions as (facial) skin pigmentation are relational. They do not exist for themselves but come in packages of neatly preorganized juxtapositions, usually (but not exclusively) binary ones in which, as we have seen. The actual meanings of "white" and "black" (as well as of a couple of other colors) turn out to be much more flexible than their respective rhetorical function of establishing a system of presumably fixed co-ordinates.

I have outlined here some of the uses of the term complexion in its journey from medieval natural philosophy to colonial rhetoric and administration. Long before debates on human difference of polygenists versus monogenists (and their echoes in 20th-century paleontology, as Robert Proctor shows in his article in this book), long before the discussions of moral versus climatic causes of difference between humans, and long before the efforts of the 18th-century professor Blumenbach to detect blackness around the nipples and on the testicles of European underclass males as a sign of their closeness to "Ethiopians" decribed more fully by Londa Schiebinger in the following, medieval writers of the 13th and 14th century established *complexio* as a key term in the emerging new paradigm of isolating and reading signs (humoral, medical, astrological ones) in and on human bodies. In the framework of interpreting Nature as both diversity and constraint, *complexio* shifted from a abstract and highly complicated notion that included tactile qualities (firmness or softness of flesh) or differences in the temperatures of organs or limbs into a new realm of *evidentia* in the literal sense of the word. In the older reading of the term, nobody had the same complexion. When complexion stood for an invisible and internal disposition, you had to be a trained and experienced physician to describe and define it. In the worldly sphere of physiognomics and in the games of dissimulation, however, statements about a person's "true nature" had to be made at a glance. And even more so in a broader administrative context, when judging if a person's appearance fits his or her description in search warrants or identity documents.

Moreover, the interpretation of the signs of complexio/complexion evokes definitions of place as something constructed in relational coordinates. Where are you born? Under which constellation? In which climate? The politics of placing are a politics of creating an "us". Without such placing, no successful moral, aesthetic or administrative authority of nature can rhetorically unfold. We are back to the making of boundaries here. The changing use of complexio, no longer confined to the protocols of the individual but increasingly prominent in the description of classification marks of groups, illustrates the shift from an individual to an collective astrology to classify and explain other people's outward appearances. Complexio thus became complexion, signifying something that was purely visual, located on the outside, on the skin, on the skin of the face and its color. With nature's allegedly unchangeable signs becoming ever grosser, skin became the privileged screen on which somebody's "true" nature would be located. It is not by chance that the term complexion turns out to be closely linked to the descriptions of individuals in their identity documents and to the history of the passport. The efforts of placing individuals within the closed boundary of complexion may so be intrinsically (and paradoxically) linked to their movement, to their abilities of crossing boundaries in space.

* The following is part of a larger project on identity papers and the practices of identification in the Renaissance; research and writing of this chapter was supported by a grant of the ATHENA-program of the Swiss National Foundation.

¹ Here quoted in the version of Robert Copland, *The Secrete of Secretes of Arystotle* (1528), reprinted in M. A. Manzaloui, ed., *Secretum Secretorum. Nine English Versions*, Oxford: Early English Text Society Publications 276, 1977): 378-9. For a 14th-version in which the story serves as an introduction to the text, see ibd. p. 11.

² (Bartolomäus Cocles), *Physionomi vnd chiromanci. Eyn neues complexionbüchlein* (Strassburg: Cammerlander, 1536, reprint Hannover: Th. Schaefer, 1980), f. 2r.

³ On the longue durée of related metaphors see Jean Michel Massing, "From Greek proverb to soap advert: Washing the Ethiopian", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 58 (1995): 180-201.

⁴ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. Donald Frame (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 815.

⁵ Montaigne, *Essays* (note 4). p. 819.

⁶ Luigi Gedda, *Twins in History and Science*, trans. M. Milani-Comparetti (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1961); on the different uses of the notion of "nature's perfect doubles" see Hillel Schwartz, *Culture of the Copy* (New York: Zone Books 1996), p. 19-48. My Basle colleague Claudius Sieber is currently preparing a major study on the interpretations of twins in medieval legal theory and philosophy.

⁷ Daniel Nordman, "Sauf-conduits et passeports, en France, à la Renaissance", in *Voyager à la Renaissance*, Jean Ceard and Jean-Claude Margolin, eds. (Paris: Seuil, 1987): 145-158.

⁸ For a more detailed account of the project see my "Describing the Person, Reading the Signs in Medieval and Renaissance Europe. Identity Papers, Vested Figures, and the Limits of Identification 1400-1600", in: *Documenting Individual Identity*, Jane Caplan and John Torpey, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

⁹ R.J. Durling, ed., *Burgundio de Pisa's Translation of Galen's 'De complexionibus'* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1976), p. 30 f and 37 f. For the circulation of Galenic texts, their commentaries and their uses in university curricula of medicine from the late 13th century on, see Nancy Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti and his pupils* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 47, 66, 65, 99-

105 and 107, Katharine Park, *Doctors and Medicine in Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1895), p. 193, 198-220 and 245 f., and Per-Gunnar Ottosson, *Scholastic Medicine and Philosophy. A study of Commentaries on Galen's 'Tegni'* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1984), p. 132 ff.

¹⁰ Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages, Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), p. 170-174.

¹¹ Turisanus, Plusquam commentum in parvam Galeni artem Turisani Florentini... Venetiis, 1557, f. 12r, here quoted after Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti* (note 9), p. 227.

¹² Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti* (note 9), p. 130, 139, 204, 257-259.

¹³ Ottosson, *Scholastic Medicine* (note 9), p. 142 f.; 146; 153; Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti* (note 9), p. 76-77, 158-160; on definitions of complexio ibd. 257 f. and Luke Demaitre, "Scholasticism in Compendia of practical Medicine 1250-1450", *Manuscripta* 20 (1976): 81-95.

¹⁴ Chiara Crisciani, "L'individuale nella medicina tra Medioevo e Umanesimo: I 'Consilia'", in Roberto Cardini e Mariangela Regolosi, eds., *Umanesimo e Medicina: Il problema dell'individuale* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1996): 1-32; Karl Sudhoff, "Eine Diätregel für einen Bischof", *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin* 14 (1923), p. 184-186; Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti* (note 9), p. 277 f.

¹⁵ Ottosson, *Scholastic Medicine* (note 9), p. 214 f.

¹⁶ Niccòlo Falcucci, *Sermones medicinales* (Papiae 1481/1484); Michele Savonarola, *Practica Maior* (Venetiis 1559); Lynn Thorndike, "De complexionibus", *Isis* 49 (1958): 398-408, here p. 401.

¹⁷ Roger K. French, "Astrology in Medical Practice", in L. Garcia-Ballester et al., *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994): 60-87, esp. 54; Wolf-Dieter Müller-Jahnke, *Astrologisch-magische Theorie und Praxis in der Heilkunde der frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Sudhoffs Archiv, Supplement, 1985); Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti* (note 7), pp. 139-145, 173 f., 183; W. Seyffert, "Ein Komplexionentext einer Leipziger Inkunabel", *Archiv fuer Geschichte der Medizin* 20 (1928): 272-299, 372-389; Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, Fritz Saxl, *Saturn und Melancholie* (Frankfurt/Main: suhrkamp, 1990), p. 115-116. On the debates on astrology between the 13th and the end of the 15th century, see Laura Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars. The Christian Astrology of Pierre d'Ailly* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp.25-42.

¹⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), vol. 3, p. 613; Hans Kurath and Sherman Kuhn, eds., *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), vol. 2, p. 468 f.

¹⁹ I quote after Thorndike, "De complexionibus" (note 17), p. 141.

²⁰ Park, *Doctors* (note 9), p. 116.

²¹ Montaigne, *Essays* (note 4), p. 827 and p. 829. I am grateful to Stephen Greenblatt who drew my attention to this passage. I have slightly altered the wording: Cf. Montaigne, *Essays*, ed. Albert Thibaudet, Paris 1950, P. 1216: "La meilleure de mes complexions corporelles c'est d'estre flexible et peu opinastre."

²² Graziella Vescovini, "L'individuale nella medicina tra medioevo e umanesimo: La fisiognomia di Michele Savonarola", in: Cardini, *Umanesimo* (note 15), p. 63-87, and Jole Agrimi, "Fisiognomia e 'scolastica'", in Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, ed., *I discorsi del corpo* (Turnhout, Brepols (=Micrologus 1), 1993): 235-272.

²³ Michele Grignaschi, "La diffusion du Secretum Secretorum (Sirr-al-Asrâr) dans l'Europe occidentale", *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 48 (1981): 1-69, and Walter F. Ryan und Charles B. Schmitt, eds., *Pseudo-Aristotle, The Secret of Secrets: Sources and Influence* (London: Publications of the Warburg Institute, 1982).

²⁴ The famous condemnation of Averroist doctrines and a number of astrological precepts by Etienne Tempier, bishop of Paris, in 1277, left explicitly open room for astrological medicine – Smoller, *History* (note 18), p. 33.

²⁵ The same rhetorical trick to prove the reliability of one's own prognostics through negative analyses of one's "true" individual nature was repeatedly performed by Girolamo Cardano. Publishing his own horoscopes containing devastating statements about his character, he assured his readers that he had overcome these negative predispositions through self-discipline and will-power: an all-too-credible expert for

himself and others. Anthony Grafton, *Cardano's Cosmos. The Worlds and Works of an Renaissance Astrologer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

²⁶ Copland, *Secrete* (note 1), p. 378, 379, 381; *Phisionomi* (note 2), f. 4r, 5r.

²⁷ Thorndike, "De complexionibus" (note 17), p. 403 and 405.

²⁸ Ulrich Reisser, *Physiognomik und Ausdruckstheorie in der Renaissance* (München: Beiträge zur Kunstwissenschaft 69, 1997), p. 52 f.

²⁹ *In disem büchlin wirt erfunden von complexion der menschen* (Augsburg: Schönsperger, 1514), f. 4v; *Phisionomi* (note 2), f. 3r.

³⁰ Francesco Petrarca, *Posteritate / Lettere ai posteri*, trans. Gianni Villani (Roma: Salerno 1990), p. 35 f. *Forma non glorior excellent, sed que placere viriadibus annis posset. Cloro vivido inter candidum et subnigrum, vivacibus oculis...*

³¹ Philine Helas, "Il profilo di Christo – eine neuzeitliche Ikone", in: *Il volto di Cristo, Catalogo della mostra, Roma, Palazzo delle Esposizioni 2000-2001* (Milano: Electa 2000), p. xx-xx; Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), p. 116.

³² Johannes Pauli, ed., *Die Broesaemlin doct. Keiserspergs uffgelesen von Frater Johannes Paulin* (Strassburg: Johann Grueninger, 1517), f. 12v, 17v, 42r.

³³ Reimer Gronemeyer, *Zigeuner im Spiegel früher Chroniken und Abhandlungen. Quellen vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Giessen: Focus, 1987). For the Imperial legislation on gypsies see *Neue und vollständigere Sammlung der Reichs-Abschiede*, Johann Schmauss and Heinrich Senckenberg eds. (Frankfurt/Main, 1747), vol. 2, p. 609-632. On the gypsies' assumed Assyrian origin cf. Polydorus Vergilius, *Beginnings and Discoveries* (*De rerum inventoribus*, 1521), trans. and ed. Beno Weiss and Louis Pérez (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf 1997), p. 481. His account is not without tongue in cheek: Vergilius, a close friend and collaborator of Erasmus, uses his description of the treacherous tattooed gypsies for a polemic attack on mendicant orders and especially on the Antonines, who, he explains, are cheating and deceiting the faithful with begging and stealing, wearing on their chest the letter T.

³⁴ The "Registro degli schiavi" is edited in Ridolfo Livi, *La schiavitù domestica nei tempi di mezzo e nei moderni* (Padova: Milani 1928), pp. 141-217, here pp. 146 and 149 (1366). Livi's edition is used by Iris Origo, "The Domestic Enemy. The Eastern Slaves in Renaissance Tuscany in the 14th and 15th century", *Speculum* 30 (1955): 321-366, see esp. p. 337 and 333. Descriptions of runaway slaves, however, seem to concentrate less on scars and birthmarks but on the clothes the fugitives are wearing – ibd. p. 349.

³⁵ Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, *Lettere ai figliuoli*, ed. Angela Bianchini (Roma: Bulzoni, 1987), p. 247. The passage has a peculiar undertone: Is she teasing the son for his sexual appetites?

³⁶³⁶³⁶ Giuseppe Zippel, "Documenti per la storia del Castel Sant'Angelo IV: La guarnigione di Castel s. Angelo nel 1464", *Archivio dela Societa Roana di Storia Patria* 35 (1912): 196-200.

³⁷ *The Diario of Christopher Columbus' First Voyage to America*, Oliver Dunn and James Kelley, eds. (Norman, OK, 1989), p. 65, 67.

³⁸ Rinaldo Caddeo, ed., *Le Navigazioni Atlantiche di Alvise di Ca da Mosto, Antionetto Usodimare, e Niccoloso da Recco* (Milano, 1928); Giorgio Padoan, "Petrarcha, Boccaccio e la scoperta delle Canarie", in: *Italia Medioevale ed Umanistica* 7 (1964): 263-277.

³⁹ Bartolomé de las Casa, *Historia de las Indias*, ed. Agustin Millares Carlo, Mexico, D.F., 1965, I, 202. I quote here after Peter Hulme, "Tales of Distinction: European Ethnography and the Caribbean", p. 161, in: Stuart B. Schwartz, ed. *Implicit Understandings. Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and other people in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 157-197, here p. 161.

⁴⁰ Hulme, "Tales" (note 39), p. 162.

⁴¹ *Physionomi* (note 2), f. 8v. On the significance of beards for free laborours see Raffaella Sarti, "Viaggiatrice per forza. Schiave "turche" in Italia in età moderna", in Dinora Corsi, ed., *Altrove. Viaggi di donne dall'antichità al Novecento* (Roma: Viella, 1999): 241-296; p. 274; on their role in early modern racist discourse, Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's*

Body. Gender in the Making of Modern Science (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), pp. 120-125.

⁴² Mary Floyd-Wilson: *Clime, Complexion and Degree. Racism in Early Modern England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina PH.D., 1996), p. 31. Even less favorable is Hippocrates' account of the Scyths dwelling in Northern regions: See John Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, Harvard UP, 1981), p. 106 ff.

⁴³ Floyd-Wilson, *Clime* (note 42), p. 34; Clarence Glencken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore, Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the end of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 258 and 429-460.

⁴⁴ For a broader bibliographic survey, see Les Back and John Solomos, eds., *Theories of Race and Racism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), and Michael Banton, *Racial Theories*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). I have found Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness. Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995), Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren* (Hamburg: Junius, 1993) and Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods", *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997): 103-142, very useful.

⁴⁵ Jean Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History* (1566), trans. Beatrice Reynolds (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 111; Floyd-Wilson, *Clime* (note 42), p. 89. See also Marian Tooley, "Bodin and the Medieval Theory of Climate", in: *Speculum* 28 (1953): 64-83, and Schiebinger, *Nature's Body* (note 42), pp. 126-134 and 186 ff.

⁴⁶ Floyd-Wilson, *Clime* (note 42), p. 85, 171, 175; Fa-Ti Fan, "Nature and National Essence", p. xx-xx.

⁴⁷ Tooley, *Bodin*, (note 45), p. 78.

⁴⁸ *Phisionomi* (note 2), f. 25v.

⁴⁹ *Phisionomi* (note 2), f. 73r. The account seems to be based on the description of the Guinea coast by the Augsburg merchant Balthasar Springer 1505/1506. On its influence see Beate Borowka-Clausberg, *Balthasar Sprenger und der frühneuzeitliche Reisebericht* (München: Iudicium, 1999).

⁵⁰ *Phisionomi* (note 2), f. 74r and v.

⁵¹ To which the Frenchman Bodin in his "Method" thirty years later maliciously adds the "lack of imagination" as a natural category of 'Germanness', as we have seen.

⁵² Quoted after Hall, *Things* (note 43), p. 11.