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## Introduction

There were Africans present in Tudor England and this book examines their status and origins. These Africans were present in cities such as London, Plymouth and Bristol, but also towns and villages such as Blean in Kent, Hatherleigh in Devon, Holt in Worcestershire and Salisbury in Wiltshire. This population included men, women and children, such as Catalina de Cardones an Iberian Moor part of Katherine of Aragon's entourage, and John Blanke the 'black trumpeter' who was living in London in 1507. There was 'Christopher Cappervert a blackmoore,' who was buried in St Botolph without Aldgate, London on 22 October 1586; and there are the baptismal records of 'Mary Fillis, a black more, being about xx years old and dwelling with Millicent Porter, a seamester,' on 3 June 1597. We know that Symon Valencia 'a Blackamoore' lived in St Botolph without Aldgate, London at the same time; and 'Fortunatus [was] a blackmoor seruant to Sr Robert Cicill,' who was buried on 21 January 1602 in Westminster. In Plymouth, records exist for 'Bastien, a Blackmoore of Mr Willm Hawkins,' buried on 10 December 1583, and 'Anthony, John, a Neyger' on 18 March 1587; whilst in the same parish there are baptism records for 'Helene, daughter of Cristian the negro svant to Richard Sheere, the supposed father bing Cuthbert Holman, illeg.,' dated 2 May 1593.<sup>1</sup>

In this book I argue that some of these Africans brought skills with them to Tudor England from where they came from, and that these skills meant they did not automatically have the status of slaves. Instead, most Africans in Tudor England seem to have occupied positions ranging from household servants to visiting dignitaries.

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<sup>1</sup> The references for the records that contain these Africans are to be found throughout this book and in the Bibliography.

However, not all of the Africans mentioned above or others discussed in this book were immigrants or temporary visitors. Some Africans were born here, whilst others were domiciled, although the status of native and foreign-born Africans appears to have been dependent on the personal relationships they developed in Tudor society and not the colour of their skin. Furthermore, some of these Africans appear to have been considered as liege subjects and loyal members of their English parishes. I argue this despite the existence of two Letters written in 1596, and a Proclamation drafted in 1601, which talk about Africans in Tudor England being foreign and strangers and which attempted to classify or treat groups of ‘those kindes of people’ as slaves. As I discuss in the next chapter these documents failed and this reveals much about the status of Africans in England at this time.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the Africans who were present in Tudor England were born in Africa and others were of Black African descent. I use the word African to describe both sets of people, but I acknowledge that in Tudor records these people are described by terms such as ‘Blackamoore,’ ‘Moor’ and ‘Negar.’<sup>3</sup> Some of these terms originate from the way Ancient Greek and Roman writers referred to Africans; and the meaning of words such as Moor may also have been influenced by the way that Africans were described in continental Europe and parts of West Africa. In some cases this shows

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<sup>2</sup> Author unknown, Letter to Lord Mayors, signed by Queen Elizabeth, National Archives, Kew, London, PC 2/21, p. 304, 11 July 1596; Author unknown, Letter signed by Queen Elizabeth, National Archives, Kew, London, PC 2/21, f. 306, 18 July 1596; and Author unknown, Proclamation ca January 1601, National Archives, Kew, London, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 1601/ 804.5-805. The phrase ‘those kindes of people’ originates from this Proclamation and the second Letter where it is used to describe Africans present in Tudor England.

<sup>3</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edition 2003), p. 28; Including those records in Guildhall Library, London (and thereafter referred to as G. L.), GL Ms 28867, GL Ms 9243–9245, GL Ms 4310, GL Ms 9222 and Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth, St Andrews/MF1–4.

that some of the Africans present in Tudor England came from those places.<sup>4</sup> This was confirmed through my research in Tudor parish records and other documents. And in a number of cases, this evidence has enabled me to locate and map the place in Africa or elsewhere that an African present in Tudor England came from. But I acknowledge that this may not prove in all cases that because an African came from a place that they originate from there.

This issue illustrates the difficulty of researching in this area, and may explain why there have only been a few modern historians who have examined this subject. It also explains why as a researcher I was forced to rely on primary evidence, often with very little additional information from elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> I acknowledge that my approach in interpreting this evidence may pose problems for some modern readers who are unfamiliar with Black British history or Black history in general.<sup>6</sup> Especially, as a general knowledge of the Tudor period, may not provide a reader with the skills to fully understand what is contained in this book. As most researchers of the Tudor period are within an academic culture which states or implies Africans were not present. Evidence which proves this presence, whether it originates from primary

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<sup>4</sup> The meaning and origins of these words is discussed in Richard Percyvall, *A Dictionarie in Spanish and English, First Published by R Percivale Now Enlarged by J Minsheu. Hereunto is Annexed in Ample English Dictionarie with the Spanish Words Adjoined* (London: E Bollifaunt, 1599), p. 172; and revealed in John Pory, (translator (tr.)), Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa, Written in Arabicke and Italian ... by Iohn Leo a More ...* (London: John Pory, 1600), pp. 6, 42.

<sup>5</sup> The idea of what is a primary source is open to some interpretation, a workable definition used in this book is material created at or close to the Tudor period. In analysing what is primary and what is not I have found the work of E. Sreedharan useful in, *A Textbook of Historiography, 500 B.C. to A.D. 2000*, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003), pp. 79–89, 301–303; Martha C. Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 21–22; and Jennifer Bowers and Peggy Keeran, *Literary Research and the British Renaissance and Early Modern Period: Strategies and Sources* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010), pp. introduction.

<sup>6</sup> The term ‘Black’ used here includes the study of African, Asian and other minority-ethnic people see David Dabydeen and James Gilmore (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. introduction; and Josna Pankhania, *Liberating the National History Curriculum* (London: Falmer Press, 1994), pp. 1–7. On Black studies in general see, Molefi Asante and Ama Mazama (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Black Studies* (2004, new edition, London: SAGE publications, 2005), passim.

sources or not, is often reinterpreted as merely being about blackness as an abstract metaphor; or the evidence of Africans in parish records disappears into a discussion about Tudor writing styles, or some other subject that a modern historian may feel more confident discussing.<sup>7</sup> This means that those historians trained only with traditional research methods will tend to be more limited and restricted in what they are willing to claim about Africans in Tudor England; whereas those with a wider knowledge of African history will tend to be more interpretive and ‘innovative.’<sup>8</sup>

This tension exists and to some extent is inevitable until Black history and in particular the study of Africans in the Diaspora is taken more seriously.<sup>9</sup> That is why in this book I have tended to include a range of different sources to support my arguments and where appropriate other historians’ counter arguments. But I suggest that to really understand the history of Africans in Tudor England it would be useful to get an understanding not only of this period but also of African history as a field of study. These themes and ideas I return to throughout this book.

Some of these issues help to explain why I started my research not with books about Tudor England written by modern historians, but by finding Africans in parish records. My research initially focused on cities and towns such as London, Plymouth, Bristol and Barnstable (the reason why I started with these places is explained later).

This process took three years, and then I spent a further two months in Spain

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<sup>7</sup> These views are shared by many others including Pankhania, *Liberating the National History Curriculum*, passim; and Marika Sherwood, in ‘In this curriculum, I don’t exist,’ The Institute of Historical Research, University of London School of Advanced Study <http://www.history.ac.uk/resources/history-in-british-education/first-conference/sherwood-paper>, accessed 27/ 7/11.

<sup>8</sup> A similar ‘tension’ exists when writing about women, in Susan Broomhall and Stephanie Tarbin (eds.), *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 7 (definition of ‘innovative’ interpretations).

<sup>9</sup> Onyeka, ‘The Missing Tudors, Black People in Sixteenth-Century England,’ *BBC History Magazine*, 13, no. 7, July 2012, pp. 32–33.

exploring the connection between Africans there and those here. However in 2008, Imtiaz Habib's *Black Lives in the English Archives* was published. Habib provides evidence much of it in the form of chronological lists, with information arranged by date, which reveals the presence of hundreds of Africans in towns, cities and villages throughout Tudor England.<sup>10</sup> Habib's book means that I no longer have to prove that Africans were present in England because his work does this. I was thus able to make a shift in the emphasis and direction of my research, and focus on the status and origins of Africans in Tudor England which are subjects that I had always found more interesting and important.

Habib's book was not the only important text about Africans in Tudor England which was published in 2008. Another was Gustav Ungerer's *The Mediterranean Apprenticeship of British Slavery*. In this book and other work by the same author, he talks about the presence and status of Africans in Tudor society. Ungerer claims that this presence was entirely the result of slavery conducted by English pirates and other Europeans who stole Africans from West Africa and brought them to Tudor England. He suggests that these West Africans were regarded as naked-pagan savages who were slaves in English society, and that these two factors eventually led to the systematic enslavement of African people during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Americas and the Caribbean. Habib also suggests something similar, and these are the kinds of views that I will be challenging.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500–1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (London: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1–18, 274–334.

<sup>11</sup> Gustav Ungerer, *The Mediterranean Apprenticeship of British Slavery* (Madrid: Verbum Editorial, 2008), p. 76; Gustav Ungerer, 'Recovering a black African's voice in an English Lawsuit,' *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), pp. 255–271; and Gustav Ungerer, 'The Presence of Africans in Elizabethan England and the performance of *Titus Andronicus*, at Burley-on-the-Hill, 1595–96,' *Medieval Renaissance Drama in England Annual*, Volume 21, 2008, pp. 19–56.

Habib and Ungerer are not the first historians, however, to suggest that all or most of the Africans present in Tudor England were slaves. Other historians whose focus is on Africans in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries also do this. This includes: Faiza Ghazala, Folarin Shyllon, Paul Edwards, James Walvin, Madge Dresser and David Dabydeen.<sup>12</sup> But I will show that because these historians focus on issues which relate to a later African presence some of their theories are doubtful. This applies not only to what they say about the status and origins of Africans in Tudor England, but also to the numbers of Africans who they claim were present in that society. For example in *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, Dabydeen claims that in ‘1601, in London alone the Black [African] population of England was 15,000–20,000.’<sup>13</sup> If *The Oxford Companion*’s figures are accurate, when compared with a total English population of 3–4 million, it would mean that Africans in 1601 represented a similar proportion of that population as they do now.<sup>14</sup> In other words, Africans would be a visible and substantial presence in late Tudor England. However, the figure of ‘15–20,000’ is likely to be a misquotation. Dabydeen confirmed in an email to me that these figures were obtained from the historian

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<sup>12</sup> Faiza Ghazala, Greater London Council Ethnic Minorities Unit, *A History of the Black Presence in London* (London: Greater London Council, 1986), pp. 7–8; Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. preface, 1–10; Paul Edwards, James Walvin, ‘Africans in Britain, 1500–1800,’ in *The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 173–204; James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro in English Society, 1555–1945*, pp. 1–31; *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery* (1992, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Harper Collins, 2001), preface; and Madge Dresser, *Slavery Obscured: The Social History of the Slave Trade in an English Provincial Port* (2001, new edition, Bristol: Redcliff Press, 2007), p. 11. Other books expressing similar views by James Walvin, Madge Dresser, Peter Fleming and others are included in the Bibliography.

<sup>13</sup> Dabydeen and Gilmore (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, p. 146; Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain Since 1504* (1984, reprint, London: Pluto Press, 1989), pp. 33–66, 67–89; Charles Malcolm Macinnes, *England and Slavery* (London: Arrowsmith, 1934), pp. 107–139; and Nigel File, Chris Power, *Black Settlers in Britain 1555–1958* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1981), pp. 1–32.

<sup>14</sup> Office for National Statistics, *Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales 2011*, [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_290558.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_290558.pdf) accessed 02/03/13 and Office for National Statistics, Population estimates for the UK, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?ID=6>, accessed 02/03/13.



Miranda Kaufmann.<sup>15</sup> However, Kaufmann states the figures are from *Daily Life in Eighteenth-Century England* by Kirstin Olsen, where they refer to the African population in England in the late eighteenth century. So the figure of 20,000 is generally regarded as a ‘reasonable estimate’ for the African population in Georgian not Tudor England.<sup>16</sup>

Dabydeen’s misquotation probably occurs because of a lack of research on the African presence in Tudor England. To avoid that problem I have sought to concentrate on finding evidence from the Tudor period. I have been aided in this process by the work of a few historians such as Marika Sherwood and Mike Sampson. Since 2000, these historians have been collecting evidence on an African presence in Tudor England. Sherwood published an important article that lists the names, baptisms and burials of Africans present in England in the sixteenth century,<sup>17</sup> whilst Sampson has been doing this same sort of evidence gathering in conjunction with a group of historians called the Friends of Devon Archives. Other researchers who have also looked at this area include those at the Guildhall of London who have compiled evidence of an African presence in England from 1485 until the early-twentieth

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<sup>15</sup> Dabydeen and Gilmore (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, p. 146; David Dabydeen, personal email sent 11/11/08, accessed 11/11/08; and Miranda Kaufmann, personal email sent 11/11/08, accessed 11/11/08.

<sup>16</sup> Kirstin Olsen, *Daily Life in 18th-Century England* (Oxford: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), pp. 29, 310. These books and articles quote similar figures for the numbers of Africans in eighteenth-century England: Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, *Black London: Life Before Emancipation* (New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1997), p. 5; Kathy (Kathleen) Chater, *Untold Histories: Black People in England and Wales During the Period of the British Slave Trade, c. 1660–1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), pp. 23–30; and Joel Augustus Rogers, *Nature Knows no Colour Line* (St Petersburg: Helga Rogers, 1952), p. 156 quotes, ‘Anglicanus,’ *Gentleman’s Magazine* XXXIV, October, 1764, pp. 493, 495.

<sup>17</sup> Mike Sampson, ‘Black burials and deaths 16<sup>th</sup> century’ (Email), from Devon Record Office, Devon, 16 April 2006; Mike Sampson, ‘Friends of Devon Archives, the Black connection,’ *Friends of Devon Newsletter*, Issue 25, May 2000, pp. 12–15 quoted in Lucy MacKeith, *Local Black History: A Beginning in Devon* (London: Archives and Museum of Black Heritage, 2003), p. 35; and Marika Sherwood, ‘Blacks in Elizabethan England,’ *History Today*, 53: 10, 2003, pp. 40–42.

century. Their evidence has been a useful tool which I use to cross-reference with information that I have already found on this subject.<sup>18</sup>

Another two historians who have examined the presence and status of Africans in Tudor England include Peter Fraser and Miranda Kaufmann. Fraser in his article ‘Slaves or Free People,’ suggests that Africans were not automatically slaves in Tudor England – whilst Kaufmann, who completed her doctorate at Oxford University in 2012, wrote her thesis on ‘Africans in Britain 1485–1640.’ She published an important article suggesting that the Letters of 1596, and the Proclamation of 1601, were not effective because they were not supported by public officials with the power to implement them. She has also done field research discovering 350 Africans in early modern records.<sup>19</sup>

It is only recently, however, that Habib, Ungerer and Sampson have produced enough evidence which demonstrates that Africans were present in Tudor England. But I suggest that most historians’ reticence or indifference about an African presence in Tudor England remains; moreover, this kind of thinking still influences the work of those who do write about ‘those kinds of people.’ This may explain why most historians before Sampson and Sherwood were tentative in their claims about the presence of Africans in Tudor England, but still offer in some cases misleading statements about their status and origins. One of these historians is Peter Fryer in *Staying Power*, who in a similar way to Habib and Ungerer claims that Africans were

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<sup>18</sup> Sherwood, ‘Blacks in Elizabethan England,’ pp. 40–42; and G. L. ‘Black and Asian people discovered in records held by the Manuscripts Section,’ *Manuscripts Section*, Aldermanbury, London.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Fraser in Randolph Vigne and Charles Littleton (eds.), ‘Slaves or Free people, the status of Africans in England 1550–1750,’ *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant Communities in Britain, Ireland, and Colonial America, 1550–1750* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2001), pp. 254–261; and Miranda Kaufmann, ‘Caspar Van Senden, Sir Thomas Sherley and the ‘Blackamoor’ project,’ *Historical Research*, 81: 212, May 2008, pp. 366–371.

either slaves or a few ‘strolling players,’ isolated, strange and transient.<sup>20</sup> But, as I shall reveal Fryer’s ideas about Africans in Tudor England are not supported by the evidence I have found, although other information in his book about Africans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is detailed and comprehensive. This latter evidence has enabled me to compare the status of Africans in Georgian and Victorian Britain with that of ‘those kindes of people’ in Tudor England.<sup>21</sup>

Other earlier historians who have also postulated about an African presence in Tudor England include Kenneth Little in *Negroes in Britain* written in 1947. But in a similar way to Fryer, Little says he doubts ‘if the Blackman whether of African or East Indian origin was a familiar figure [in England] until well on in the [sixteenth] century, except as a chance visitor or when imported from Portuguese and colonial territories [in Africa and the Caribbean].’ The word ‘imported’ in Little’s quote suggests that he thinks the few Africans present in Tudor society were slaves, who had arrived in England as the property of their owners. More recently, some historians such as Kim Hall seem to repeat similar ideas in their work. For example Hall suggests that Africans in Tudor England were very few in numbers, and that they were ‘too

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<sup>20</sup> Fryer, *Staying Power*, pp. 1–14, 113–133, 146, 191–236; The quotation is from Samuel Parsons Scott, *History of the Moorish Empire in Europe* (New York: Lippincott, 1904), p. 355.

<sup>21</sup> On the importance of Fryer’s work see the following: James Walvin in Peter Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 2; Marika Sherwood, ‘Britain, Slavery and the Trade in Enslaved Africans,’ *History in Focus*, Issue 12, <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Slavery/articles/sherwood.html> posted spring 2007, accessed 03/12/08; Gemma Romain, *Black British History*, Birkbeck University, Faculty of Continuing Education, London, England, 2007–2008 [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ce/history/documents/FFHI232UACB\\_003.pdf](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/ce/history/documents/FFHI232UACB_003.pdf) 05/11/08; and suggested by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) Website, ‘Innovating with History,’ [http://www.qca.org.uk/history/innovating/history\\_matters/worked\\_for\\_me/ks3/cameo9.htm](http://www.qca.org.uk/history/innovating/history_matters/worked_for_me/ks3/cameo9.htm), accessed 18/07/08.

accidental and solitary to be given a historical statistic,' implying that their presence was not significant enough to warrant any serious academic analysis.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout this book I will be challenging these sorts of views on the presence, status and origins of Africans in Tudor England. I also examine important legal issues such as whether it was legal to enslave Africans in Tudor England simply because of the colour of their skin, or ethnic origins, as it was later to be in Britain's colonies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the latter, Africans were treated as property and systematically stigmatised, so that ideas about their inherent inferiority became commonplace. These ideas were developed into a coherent system supported by science and religion which classified Africans as slaves at birth and attempted to ensure they would remain so perpetually. This system was not only morally justified but was also maintained on the basis of economic necessity.<sup>23</sup> In this book I will show that this does not appear to be what happened in Tudor England.

There are a few other historians who share the views I have just outlined. But their research is about the status and origins of Africans in sixteenth-century continental Europe. These historians who are African-American and African-Caribbean often have their research ignored by the English historians who I have mentioned earlier.

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<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain* (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1947), pp. 6, 166 (quotation), 187–216; Habib, *Black Lives*, p. 1, quotes Kim Hall in *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (1995, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 13; Fryer, *Staying Power*, pp. 4, 5, 8. Other historians with similar views include: Walvin, *Black and White*, pp. 1–16, 16–31; Shyllon, *Black People in Britain 1553–1833*, pp. 1–10; and Edwards and Walvin, 'Africans in Britain, 1500–1800,' pp. 173–204.

<sup>23</sup> Fraser in Vigne and Littleton (eds.), 'Slaves or Free people,' pp. 254–261; Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species ...* (London: T. Beckett, 1787), p. 142; Chancellor Williams, *The Destruction of Black Civilisation: Great Issues of a Race from 4500 BC to 2000 AD* (Chicago: Third World Press, 3rd edition 1987), pp. 176–195, 243–272 (how slavery was enforced and maintained); Naim Akbar, *Chains and Images of Psychological Slavery* (Jersey City: New Mind Productions, 1984), pp. 1–8; and Naim Akbar, *Breaking the Chains of Psychological Slavery* (Jersey City: Mind Productions and Associates, 1996), pp. 1–8, 27.

This may be because these historians from the African Diaspora are perceived as lacking evidence for their theories, or they are accused of falsifying history. However, I find many of these historians' conclusions are supported by evidence, and I suggest that sometimes their work is being treated with indifference for other reasons. These reasons may be based on non-academic issues such as the writers' ethnicity or that their work is produced by small-independent publishing companies.

I therefore include the work of African-American writers such as Edward Scobie, Joel Augustus Rogers and the African-Guyanese historian Ivan Van Sertima.<sup>24</sup> These historians have written about an African presence in sixteenth-century Europe and this work helped me understand more about Africans in Tudor England. Their work also shows that Africans in Europe were not all slaves and that 'those kindes of people' occupied various positions in sixteenth-century European society. Scobie has written five articles for the *Journal of African Civilisation* and three of his articles in particular are of note: 'The Black in Western Europe,' 'African Women in Early Europe' and 'The Moors and Portugal's Global Expansion.'<sup>25</sup> He also wrote *Black Britannia: A History of Blacks in Britain*, and his further work in *The African Presence in Early Europe* incorporates his previous articles on the subject with some new references and footnotes.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen Howe is one of those writers who claims most of the African-American and Caribbean historians noted below are polemic fantasists in *Afrocentrism: Mythical Past and Imagined Homes* (1998, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Verso, 1999), pp. 1–16, 215–229. These historians include: Edward Scobie, *Black Britannia: A History of Blacks in Britain* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 190–203; Joel Augustus Rogers, *World's Great Men of Colour*, Volume I and II (1931, new edition, New York: Touchstone Books, 1995), pp. 1–7; *Sex and Race*, Volumes I–IV (Petersburg: Helga Rogers, 1941/2), Volume I, pp. 151–160, 196–220; and Sertima, 'The African Presence in Early Europe,' pp. 190–223.

<sup>25</sup> Scobie in, Ivan Van Sertima (ed.), *Journal of African Civilizations*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University, 1985, Issue 3, n. p. These are edited and included in *African Presence in Early Europe*, pp. 190–223.

<sup>26</sup> Scobie, *Black Britannia*, pp. 190–203; Sertima (ed.), *African Presence in Early Europe*, pp. 190–203, 203–223; Edward Scobie, 'The Moors and Portugal's Global Expansion,' *Department of Black*

It is not just African-American historians who write on the African Diaspora who have their work ignored. The English historian Basil Davidson, and the African British author Robin Walker in *When We Ruled*, provide more evidence about Africans having power and influence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and their work is treated with indifference, probably because it offers this positive perspective.<sup>27</sup>

My research also refers to evidence from writers such as Nabil Matar and Daniel Vitkus that focuses on the presence of Muslims in Tudor and Stuart England. The evidence they reveal is important because it shows there were African Muslims in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that some came from the Ottoman Empire and North-African kingdoms such as Morocco. Readers wishing to understand more about this particular African presence may examine their research.<sup>28</sup> However, the evidence in this book suggests that not all Africans in Tudor England were Muslims and this therefore is the limitation of their research, since the comments that they make about non-Muslims do not seem to be supported by evidence. For example, Matar states that ‘the likelihood [in Tudor or Stuart Britain] of an Englishman or Scotsman meeting a Muslim [were] higher than that of meeting ... a

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*Studies Pamphlet* (New York: City College, City University of New York, 1996), p. 37. Also quoted by Wayne Chandler, in Sertima (ed.), *African Presence in Early Europe*, pp. 144–176.

<sup>27</sup> Basil Davidson, *African Civilization Revisited: From Antiquity to Modern Times* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1991), passim; Basil Davidson, *Black Mother: A Study of the Precolonial Connection Between Africa and Europe* (London: Longman, 1970), passim; and Robin Walker, *When We Ruled* (London: Every Generation Media, 2005), passim.

<sup>28</sup> Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558–1685* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and *Turks Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), passim; Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570–1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 21–50; Imtiaz Habib, *Shakespeare and Race: Postcolonial Praxis in the Early Modern Period* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999), pp. 157–205; and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 57–60.

Sub-Saharan African.<sup>29</sup> In this book I suggest that this matter is more complex than Matar's statement implies.

Interestingly, a group of much earlier historians attempted to address some of these issues and this includes the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century historians David MacRitchie and Gerald Massey. Their work contains a considerable amount of information<sup>30</sup> some of which has been useful in my research, for example, by examining MacRitchie's books it helped me find information on African performers in sixteenth-century Scotland and how similar performers were present in Tudor England.<sup>31</sup> But despite this, historians such as Stephen Howe have dismissed the work of MacRitchie and others such as Godfrey Higgins as being merely a regurgitation of myths and legends – when in fact they are attempting to find the facts behind those mythical stories.<sup>32</sup> More recently, a few historians such as Ahmed Ali and Ibrahim Ali have confirmed in their books that some of the kinds of ideas that MacRitchie writes about can be supported by evidence, and they support his claim that there was an African presence in England long before the Tudor period.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> David MacRitchie, *Ancient and Modern Britons: A Retrospect*, 2 Volumes (1884, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1985, reprint, Los Angeles: Preston, 1986), Volume I, p. 67, Volume II, pp. 125, 186; Gerald Massey, *Ancient Egypt the Light of the World, Containing an Attempt to Recover and Reconstitute the Lost Origines of the Myths and Mysteries ... with Egypt for the Mouthpiece and Africa as the Birthplace*. Volume I, *Egyptian Origines in the British Isles* (1881, republished, London: Secaucus University Books, 1974); Godfrey Higgins, *Anacalypsis, An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis: or, an Inquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations, and Religions* (1883, 1878, new edition, London: TGS Publishing, 1927); Albert Churchward, *The Signs and Symbols of Primordial Man ... The Evolution of Religious Doctrines from the Eschatology of the Ancient Egyptians ...* (London: EP Dutton and Co, 1910), n. p. passim; and Edward Williams Byron Nicholson, *Keltic Researches: Studies in the History and Distribution of the Ancient Goidelic Language and Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1904), pp. 1–8.

<sup>31</sup> MacRitchie, *Ancient and Modern Britons*, Volume I, pp. 212–213, 253, 347.

<sup>32</sup> Howe, *Afrocentrism: Mythical Pasts and Imagined Homes*, pp. 66–70 claims that MacRitchie et. al. are romantic fantasists.

<sup>33</sup> Ahmed Ali, Ibrahim Ali, *The Black Celts: An Ancient African Civilisation in Ireland and Britain* (Cardiff: Punite Publications, 1992), pp. 14–47; Paul Dunbavin, *Picts and Ancient Britons: An Exploration of Pictish Origines* (London: Third Millennium Publishing, 1998), pp. preface, 1–8.

Nevertheless, writers such as MacRitchie do not appear to have found the evidence that I draw upon in this book. But this also applies to recent historians as well. In addition, even those historians such as Habib and Ungerer who have found some of the evidence I have, often seem to come to starkly different conclusions. This means that their arguments often provide contrary views to those offered here – but their ideas are included nevertheless as they may enable the reader to gain a greater understanding of the issues in this book.

Some of the differences between what Habib and Ungerer propose, and what I claim are because we draw different conclusions from the same evidence. These differences occur as the historians Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall suggest because of our ‘innovative’ interpretations of the evidence. This method of examining records should be seen as a way of interpretation, rather than speculation, and is a tool writers about women in Tudor England have been using for decades.<sup>34</sup> For Tarbin and Broomhall these methods of interpretation are necessary, as they uncover evidence of women in Tudor documents much of which has been neglected, lost or concealed. For similar reasons I adopt an analogous approach with evidence about the presence, status and origins of Africans in Tudor England.<sup>35</sup>

### **Parish records and the subsidy rolls**

My investigations have led me to evidence contained in Tudor parish records. These documents include parish registers, some of which are written on single sheets of paper, others are bound together as books. The latter also include memorandum

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<sup>34</sup> Susan Broomhall and Stephanie Tarbin (eds.), *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> For a longer discussion on this see, Onyeka, ‘The Missing Tudors,’ pp. 32–33.



daybooks an important source of information which often contain notes written by a parish priest or clerk about the people who they baptised, married or buried.

However, these parish documents can be very difficult to understand as the information in them is sometimes indecipherable through age, or the way they are written. Moreover, even after finding a reference to an African in one parish register, it may have taken me another year before I found something else to corroborate this person's existence or status. In some cases this meant revisiting evidence which I had earlier disregarded. Notwithstanding these difficulties, I have found descriptions of Africans in Tudor parish records, and details about their baptisms, marriages and burials. These records also occasionally provide indications about an African's status and origins. The reasons why some parish records provide this information are linked to these documents' historical development. Up to the Dissolution of the monasteries 1538–1541, monks had been the principal record keepers. But because of a feeling that they were the 'harbingers' of 'popery' and 'idolatry,' this responsibility was passed to the parish priests and clerks.<sup>36</sup> On 29 September 1538, Thomas Cromwell issued the following order: 'a priest, parson or vicar ... [should] kepe one boke or reistre wherin ye shall write the day and yere of every weddyng christenyng and buryeng made wtin yor pish.' In other words, that there should be one authentic

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<sup>36</sup> The quotations are from Thomas Cromwell, 'Order for keeping parish registers,' on 29 September 1538, 'Parish Records: 1538, 1563 and 1598,' National Archives, *Parish Records* <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/familyhistory/guide/people/parish.htm>, accessed 12/08/08; <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~framland/acts/pre1812.htm>, accessed 25/12/06; and Thomas Cromwell, 'Supplication against the Ordinaries,' a petition passed by the House of Commons in 1532 in Geoffrey Rudolph Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government: Papers and Reviews* (1973, new edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 63–68. On how records were collected see Raphael Holinshed, *The Late Volume of Chronicles England, Scotland and Ireland with their Descriptions* (London: J. Harrison, 1587), p. 1524; David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 118–142; and John Vivian Kitto, 'St Martins in the fields the accounts of the church wardens, 1525–1603,' *British History Online*, 1901, pp. 457–475, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=81909> accessed 25/10/08 (on the role of priests and parish clerks).

record for everyone in the parish. This is important because if this order was followed we would find all the Africans in Tudor England who were baptised, married or buried by the Church simply by examining these records. The order goes on to say that each and ‘every time’ there is a ‘weddyng, christenyng and buryeng’ the person should be recorded and this should be done in front of ‘said wardens.’ According to the order the priest has no discretion as to whether to record – it must be done. The order then says the parish records are to be locked up for ‘sauff keeping,’ with rather elaborate means for the retention of keys and punishments for failure to comply.<sup>37</sup>

In 1563 and 1598 two further orders were made, the first stating that a copy of the parish records had to be sent to a Bishop. The second in 1598, reiterating this and stating all records from ‘the beginning of her Majesty’s [Elizabeth I’s] reign ... are to be added.’<sup>38</sup> This is important because most of the parish records that are available are from these second set of records. But the problem with them is that they may not be as comprehensive as those made under the first order in 1538.<sup>39</sup> Many priests and clerks started their records from 1558 and failed to copy those falling outside of Elizabeth I’s reign. So with the exception of those parish records from Perlethorpe and Carburton in Nottinghamshire, we have few records for the first fifty years of the Tudor period.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Cromwell, ‘Order for keeping parish registers,’ on 29 September, 1538, National Archives, *Parish Records*, ‘And for the sauff keping of the same boke the pische shalbe boude [bound] to puidre [provide] of there comen charges one sure coffer with twoo lockes and keys wherof the one to remain wt [with] you ...’

<sup>38</sup> Author unknown, ‘Order of 1563,’ National Archives, *Parish Records*; Author unknown, ‘A provincial constitution of Canterbury,’ 25 October 1597 but approved in 1598, National Archives, *Parish Records*.

<sup>39</sup> Anton Gill, Nick Barratt, *Who Do You Think You Are?: Trace Your Family History Back to the Tudors* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), n. p. introduction; Including those in London: GL Ms 28867, GL Ms 9243–9245, GL Ms 4310, GL Ms 9222 and Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth, St Andrews/MF1–4.

<sup>40</sup> William Brewer Stephens, *Sources for English Local History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 56; and Guy Etchells, ‘Timeline of events concerning the keeping of records pre 1812,’ *Genealogy RootsWeb*, ‘The records of Perlethorpe and Carburton include about forty registers and they

It is not known if these earlier parish records contain information about an African presence, but it does mean that the evidence in this book is weighted towards the end of the sixteenth century, suggesting there were more Africans present in England at the end of that century than at the beginning.<sup>41</sup>

In this book I use 232 entries from parish records that describe Africans using terms such as ‘Moor,’ ‘Blackamoore’ and ‘Negar.’ A further 73 entries contain these same terms, but it is not clear whether they describe Africans. A selection from both types of records are discussed in this book and included in the bibliography. Of the 232 entries, they were found throughout Tudor England in areas such as Hatherleigh, Northampton, Preston, Lancaster and Salisbury. However, I concentrated on forty-two parishes from four major cities and towns: London, Plymouth, Bristol and Barnstable. I was able to identify these areas because of information in contemporary records such as letters and books, which showed that Africans were living in those places. My research revealed that London has the largest number of parish records referring to Africans: 77 entries and this appears to reflect that there were more Africans living there than in other cities. It may also show that Africans were drawn to this city because it was a port and a centre for commerce and trade.<sup>42</sup> The same is also true for Plymouth which was the place with the second largest number of entries. Interestingly, the evidence suggests that Africans were living in the centre of these

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begin in 1528, containing one or two entries per year up to 1538’  
<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~framland/acts/pre1812.htm>, accessed 12/12/05.

<sup>41</sup> Evidence on this latter point can be seen in Habib, *Black Lives*, pp. 274–334.

<sup>42</sup> Evidence and clues came from Holinshed, *The Chronicles* (1587), p. 1524; John Stow, *A Summary of the Chronicles of England, Abridged and Continued unto 1598 ...* (1565, new edition, London: R. Bardocke, 1598), pp. 768–769; John Stow, Edmund Howes, *The Annales, or Generall Chronicle of England ...* (London: Thomas Dawson for Thomas Adams, 1615), p. 790; George Best, *A True Discourse ...* (London: H Bynyman, 1578), pp. 28–32; Sherwood, ‘Blacks in Elizabethan England,’ pp. 40–42; Sampson, ‘Black burials and deaths 16<sup>th</sup> century;’ and Rory Lalwan (ed.), *Sources for Black and Asian History at the City of Westminster Archives ...* (London: Westminster City Archives, 2005), pp. 9, 10.

two cities and this may show that ‘those kinds of people’ were part of the cultural heart of those places. For example the parishes with the most number of entries referring to Africans are St Botolph without Aldgate, where Africans appear at a ratio of 1:15, and St Olave Hart Street in London, with the St Andrew’s ward in Plymouth being the third largest. In the St Olave and St Andrew’s parishes, Africans appear at a ratio of 1:20. This creates the possibility that Africans constituted 6%, 5% and 5% respectively of the populations of these areas between the years of 1538 (when records began) and 1603.<sup>43</sup>

I am not in a position, however, to state how many Africans were living in Tudor England. This is because despite the clear words in the various orders, there does not appear to have been an effective administrative infrastructure capable of recording all the Africans present. Africans may be hidden or missing in some Tudor records as ‘parish clerks [and priests] were careful to conceal’ the existence of ‘controversies.’<sup>44</sup> In other words, recording a person with an epithet or moniker which describes their ethnicity may have been considered a ‘controversy’ or more likely, unnecessary, because as I shall show Tudor writers did not see race as we do now. What this means is that some parishes appear to have more evidence of an African presence than others: for example, St Olave Hart Street has more records where ‘those kinds of people’ are described than Whitechapel in London. This may mean that there were more Africans living in Hart Street in Tudor times than Whitechapel,<sup>45</sup> and/or, it

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<sup>43</sup> London: GL Ms 28867, GL Ms 9243–9245, GL Ms 4310, GL Ms 9222; and Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth, St Andrews/MF1–4.

<sup>44</sup> The quotations are in Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives*, pp. 7, 19–63, 96, 119; and Paul Griffiths, ‘Secrecy and Authority in sixteenth and seventeenth century London,’ *Historical Journal*, 40–4, 1997, pp. 925–51. A similar view on how parish clerks wrote their records is expressed by Stephens, *Sources for English Local History*, pp. 52–56.

<sup>45</sup> GL Ms 28867, GL Ms 9243–9245; and Habib, *Black Lives*, pp. 274–334.

might suggest that the parish priest or clerk in Hart Street was more comfortable at using terms that we now know refers to Africans than his counterpart.

Therefore there are likely to be Africans who are living in Tudor England who are not revealed by the records. This idea is supported by the notion that some documents which describe Africans may have been lost, especially if they were contained in non-conformist churches where this information was never collated, or perhaps was destroyed during the Reformation.<sup>46</sup> But whilst there is insufficient evidence to say conclusively how many Africans were present in Tudor England, there is sufficient information to claim that the numbers of African men, women and children were not negligible as Fryer claims. And there is enough evidence to raise issues, propose theories and explanations for these people's demographic presence.

Some of these demographic issues relate to the disproportionate recording in Tudor parish records of African women compared to men: 55 to 141. This is explained by the historians Hall and Benjamin Braude who claim that African women are obscured in Tudor records because they were hidden inside English households. Lowe takes this point further and infers that Tudor writers either did not know how, or were afraid to record African women.<sup>47</sup> Jose Piedra suggests something similar. However, Hall, Braude, Lowe and Piedra seem to base their conclusions on the fact that in some early

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<sup>46</sup> Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 3–17; and Geoffrey Rudolph Elton, *The Reformation 1520–1559* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 262–288.

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Braude, 'Collective Degradation: Slavery and the Construction of Race, Ham and Noah: Sexuality, Servitudinism, and Ethnicity:' from proceedings of the *Fifth Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference* (New Haven Connecticut: Yale University, November 8, 2003), n. p. passim; Hall, *Things of Darkness*, pp. 13, 211; Thomas Earle and Kate Lowe (eds.), *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 102–103. Similar views are expressed by Margo Hendricks, 'Surveying race in Shakespeare,' *Shakespeare and Race* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1–23; and George Kirkpatrick Hunter, 'Othello and Colour Prejudice,' *Proceedings of the British Academy* 53, 1967, p. 153.

modern plays such as *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus* African men are present and African women are either absent, or only referred to in a sub-plot.<sup>48</sup> Some of the issues that are raised by these facts are discussed throughout this book, others that relate more to the development of early modern literature are not. However the important point that I shall return to later is that Tudor parish records do suggest there were fewer African women living in Tudor England.

Parish records list the baptisms, marriages and burials of African men, women and children, but they do not record births.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, sometimes in the record for the baptism of an African child there is a comment about them being illegitimate. For example, there is a record of a baptism on 23 June 1603 at St Andrew's Plymouth, for 'Richard, son of Marye a Neger, base, ye reputed father Rog Hoggett.'<sup>50</sup> Records such as these indicate information not only about the status of the mother and child but also highlight another issue. This is that there are only a few references to 'Blackamoore children' and even fewer to Africans marrying other Africans. Amongst the records discovered so far, the most common types of sexual relationships are those unions between white men and African women. Of the thirty-two mixed-parentage children only twelve of them appear to be the product of a relationship between an African father and a white mother. Marriages where both parties are African do not appear frequently in Tudor parish records. This may be because African men and women in Tudor society were having non-Christian marriages. But we have little evidence to support this. So with the information I have discovered so far, it is more likely that the

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<sup>48</sup> Jose Piedra, 'In search of the Black stud,' in Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (eds.), *Premodern Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 22–44; and Braude, 'Collective Degradation,' n. p. passim.

<sup>49</sup> National Archives, *Parish Records*.

<sup>50</sup> Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, St Andrews/ June 23/1603 MF 1–4, 'Register of St Andrews,' p. 110; and Habib, *Black Lives*, p. 333.

evidence does accurately show there were only a small number of Africans marrying other Africans in Tudor England.<sup>51</sup>

So some parish records contain information about the relationships Africans had or their status and origins. It is possible as the historian Andrew Spicer suggests that if some Africans were thought of as Aliens then priests or clerks would record information about their ethnicity in case they were foreign spies or agents. War may have increased this fear, as England had internal civil and religious struggles or conflicts with France and Spain.<sup>52</sup> Certain parish records may then have become an additional record of Aliens that could be used in similar ways to the subsidy rolls.<sup>53</sup> This may be one reason which explains a record such as ‘Katherin the negar,’ who was buried on 24 August in 1594 at St Stephen Coleman Street, London and who is noted as ‘dwelling with the prince of Portingal.’<sup>54</sup> Katherin may have been described in this way because she was ‘dwelling’ with a high profile Portuguese dignitary. It may also imply that she too has foreign origins. However, most parish records contain few statements or comments on the origins of the Africans being baptised, or buried, in order for us to determine whether they were newly arrived immigrants, or domiciled. Of course, it is possible that some of these people may be English-born as in the example of ‘Iferdynando,’ who was buried on 19 January 1597 at Dartford,

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<sup>51</sup> Evidence in London: GL Ms 28867, GL Ms 9243–9245, GL Ms 4310, GL Ms 9222; Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth, St Andrews/MF1–4; and Habib, *Black Lives*, pp. 115, 116, 136.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Spicer, in Nigel Goose and Lieun Luu (eds.), *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), p. 94; John Knox Laughton, *State Papers Relating to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada, Anno 1588* (Aldershot: Publications of the Navy Records Society, 1987), n. p. preface, introduction; and Holinshed, *The Chronicles* (1587), pp. 1427–1567, ‘Cornish Rebellion 1497,’ ‘The Spanish Armadas 1588, 1596, 1597’ and ‘The Anglo Spanish War 1585–1604,’ etc.

<sup>53</sup> Roger Schofield, *Taxation Under the Early Tudors 1485–1547* (London: Blackwell, 2004), 73–74, 81, 94, 101, 104, 108, 115, 124.

<sup>54</sup> GL Ms 4448.

Kent and is simply described as ‘a blackamore svannte [servant] to Alexander Neuby.’<sup>55</sup>

If Africans living in Tudor England, however, were Aliens or immigrants then they may have appeared on another set of records known as the alien, lay or local registers: referred to here as the subsidy rolls. The subsidy rolls required every adult over sixteen who was not born in England but was ‘under the King’s Obeisance’ to be registered.<sup>56</sup> If the Alien’s income fell below a tax threshold (that was one established as a minimum for ‘native-born’) then they had to be taxed at a standard rate ‘that is 8d.’ The assessors or clerks were asked to list the name, nationality and status if known of the Alien. These rolls had existed since medieval times, but in 1523 Henry VIII attempted to standardise how they ran – now ‘every person’ had to pay a charge but Aliens paid more, usually double the rate. Aliens were identified on these records because they had to pay extra, but the rates were not standardised, nor was the extra they had to pay.<sup>57</sup> During Henry VIII’s war with France, the subsidy rolls were used as a way of making money to pay for this conflict. He did this by taxing immigrants such as Italians, Normans, Dutch and Flemish Huguenots, many thousands of whom had settled in London and on the south-coast of England in towns such as

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<sup>55</sup> Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Rochester, Kent, 19/January/1596/7/Dartford/MF1/P110.

<sup>56</sup> William George Hoskins, *Local History in England* (1959, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Harlow: Longman, 1984), pp. 140–2; and Richard Kirk and Ernest Kirk (eds.), *Returns of Aliens Dwelling in the City and Suburbs of London from the Reign of Henry VIII. To that of James I.* Volume IV, Quarto Series 10 (London: Huguenot Society of London, 1900–8), pp. 241, 248.

<sup>57</sup> Quotations from Cyril Coffin, ‘Aliens in Dorset 1525,’ *the Dorset page*, <http://www.thedorsetpage.com/history/Aliens/Aliens.htm> posted 2000, accessed 02/01/07. On how the rolls worked see, Author Unknown, *Lay Subsidy Records, Returns for the City of London in 1292–1392* ... National Archives, Kew, London, PRO E179/144/2 and E179/144/3; Hoskins, *Local History in England*, pp. 140–2; and Lara Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us: Policies, Perceptions, and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (1996, new edition, London: Routledge, 2003), p. 55.



Southampton, Poole and Bournemouth, or Norwich in Norfolk.<sup>58</sup> But the rolls were not created to specifically identify the race of the people who they taxed but to show if they were foreign or not. In other words, they are likely to have missed a number of Africans present in Tudor England because they were domiciled or had the status of being liege.<sup>59</sup>

This may explain why the subsidy rolls contain only fifteen entries that have a clear reference to an African person. For example in the Langborne ward of London in 1582, there is a record for ‘the house of John Baptista Sambitores: [where] Fardinando a blackamore [lives].’ But other records in the subsidy rolls contain words that require investigation to find out if terms such as ‘Blackamoore’ and ‘Moor’ are merely the names of people described in those records, or whether they are describing their ethnicity. For example as with ‘Fraunces Negro’ who was living in the Aldersgate ward of London in 1583, and was paid ‘for fee and wages x li...xxxs’ and ‘Dyego Negro servaunt’ who in 1541 lived at St Mary’s Woolnoth, London and was assessed at ‘4d.’<sup>60</sup> In this way these records resemble some parish records that raise similar issues such as that of ‘Philip Blackamore,’ who was christened on 18 January 1599 in Cardington, Bedfordshire.<sup>61</sup> In some cases I suggest that these types of records do describe African people, but in most situations I endeavour to find other evidence before claiming this.

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<sup>58</sup> Cyril Coffin, ‘Aliens in Dorset 1525;’ Goose and Luu (eds.), *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England*, pp. 41–57; and Sally Mckee (ed.), *Crossing Boundaries: Issues of Cultural and Individual Identity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Turnout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 268–272.

<sup>59</sup> Suggested by David Cressy, *Society and Culture in Early Modern England* (London: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 40, 107; and Sherwood, ‘Blacks in Elizabethan England,’ pp. 40–42.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Lang (ed.), *Two Tudor Subsidy Assessment Rolls* (London: The London Record Society Publications, 1993), pp. 87–95, ‘1582 Langborne Ward;’ Sherwood, ‘Blacks in Elizabethan England,’ pp. 40–42; and Kirk and Kirk (eds.), *Returns of Aliens Dwelling in ... London*, Volume I, p. 46, Volume II (1902), p. 339, Volume IV (1908), pp. 241, 248.

<sup>61</sup> Jesus Christ Church of Latter day Saints, *International Genealogical Index*, G Batch N. P003891, File 0845460, Call number 6905932, <http://www.familysearch.org/eng/default.asp>, accessed 15/08/08.

Nevertheless, Tudor parish records seem to contain more evidence about Africans than the subsidy rolls. This may be because parish records are more comprehensive perhaps, because they had more effective punishments for failure to complete them. They therefore appear to have been checked more often and by more people than the subsidy rolls. The rolls on the other hand, seem to have relied on clerks or priests having a personal interest in keeping them up to date.<sup>62</sup> Because of this it has not been possible to track many Africans who appear on both records. Perhaps, this is because these records were not designed to be, nor are, complementary.<sup>63</sup> In other words there are Africans recorded as being foreign-born in parish records, but they are missing from the subsidy rolls.<sup>64</sup> This may be because another person paid for the African's tax burden and then expunged them from the rolls. It may also mean that in Tudor England only a small number of Africans were being officially recorded as having the status of Aliens or immigrants. Africans may also have been exempt from the subsidy rolls because these records did not apply to some people employed as servants or soldiers. For example, a foreign-born African called Diego Negro who was a friend of Francis Drake and lived in England for four years from 1573 is absent from the rolls.<sup>65</sup> Other Africans in Tudor England who were transitory or here for short-term visits also appear to be missing from the rolls and the parish records: this includes the Moroccan Ambassador and his entourage who visited Elizabeth I in 1600. This is despite him being painted in England and his entourage being referred to in a number of other English documents.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Stephens, *Sources for English Local History*, pp. 77–80; Coffin, 'Aliens in Dorset 1525.'

<sup>63</sup> Hoskins, *Local History in England*, pp. 140–2.

<sup>64</sup> Evidence in GL Ms 28867, GL Ms 9243–9245, GL Ms 4310, GL Ms 9222; Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth, St Andrews/MF1–4; But not in Kirk and Kirk (eds.), *Returns of Aliens Dwelling in the City and Suburbs of London*, Volume IV, pp. 241, 248.

<sup>65</sup> Kirk and Kirk (eds.), *Returns of Aliens*, Volume IV, pp. 241, 248. (As far as I can tell Diego Negro is no relation to Dyego Negro mentioned earlier.)

<sup>66</sup> Artist unknown, *Abd el-Ouahed Ben Messaoud Ben Mohammed Anoun, Moorish Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth I*, Oil on Oak Panel, 1145 x 790mm, about 1600, Tate Britain, London, from the

## Other primary evidence

The parish records and the subsidy rolls are not the only contemporary, official public documents that mention Africans. There is also a Letter written on 11 July, and a second on 18 July in 1596 that are both signed by Elizabeth I. In addition there is a Proclamation drafted in 1601 that purports to have been written in the hand of Elizabeth I but lacks her or any other signature on it. These documents are significant because they show that some officials in Tudor England recognised and were willing to publicly acknowledge an African presence. This is so despite Africans in Tudor England occupying positions predominately in the private sphere of that society.<sup>67</sup> In that private sphere some of these Africans may have been obscured or hidden. But these documents show that Africans were sufficiently visible and significantly numerous that they could be labelled as a social, political and economic problem in late Tudor society.<sup>68</sup>

However, most documents that talk about Africans in Tudor England are not legal ones. Africans are also only rarely mentioned in the work of official Tudor historians such as Raphael Holinshed, John Stow and William Harrison. The lives of most

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University of Birmingham, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, Ref: A0427; see figure 1; Matar, *Turks Moors and Englishmen*, p. 43; Stow, *The Chronicles* (1615), p. 790; and Thomas Purfoot, *The Historical Discourse of Muley Hamet's Refining the Three Kingdoms, of Moruecos Fes and Sus. The Religion and Policies of the More or Barbarian ...* (London: Clement Knight, 1609), pp. A3, B2, 5.

<sup>67</sup> The idea that societal life can be divided between private and public spheres is discussed widely by social historians and others. The private sphere is generally regarded as being unfettered by public policy see Jurgen Habermas and Martin Heidegger in Thomas Burger, Frederick Lawrence (eds. trs.) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), introduction. For a discussion on the private sphere in Tudor society see Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), passim; Conal Condren, 'Public, Private, and the Idea of the 'Public Sphere' in Early-Modern England,' *Intellectual History Review*, 19, 1, 2009, pp. 15–28; Paula Backscheider (ed.), *The Intersections of the Public and Private Spheres in Early Modern England* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), passim.

<sup>68</sup> Author unknown, Letter to Lord Mayors, signed 11 July 1596; Author unknown, Letter to the Lord Mayors, signed 18 July 1596; and Author unknown, Proclamation ca January 1601.

Africans in Tudor society appear to have been obscured or are part of the ‘missing pages of history.’ In this way the lives of Africans resemble that of the poor and women.<sup>69</sup> However, with Africans this reticence is more pronounced, there are no books written by Tudor writers which talk exclusively about Africans in England at that time. Holinshed, Stow and Harrison’s work concentrates on subjects such as constitutional reform, trade, religion and the succession to the throne of England as these were the subjects their patrons were no doubt interested in. These writers often seem to present English history so that it pleases those who sponsored their work.<sup>70</sup> They thus give prominence to groups ‘capable of concerted’ political action such as the King, Queen or aristocratic lords inside the royal court.<sup>71</sup> I have found no evidence of a resident African group that was powerful enough to commission or sponsor an alternative vision of Tudor England that consistently included them as fully-functioning agents. This means that some late Tudor or early Stuart historians saw their own history with a revisionist perspective, and it might mean that Africans were obscured or ignored, perhaps deliberately. However, this is not always the case and in one important example in Chapter 3 of this book, a historian writing at the beginning of the Stuart period uses primary records written during the Tudor era to edit an African in. This may suggest that noting the presence of some Africans may not have

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<sup>69</sup> Africans not in, Stephen Alford, ‘Politics and Political History in the Tudor Century,’ *Historical Journal* 42 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 535–548. The term ‘missing pages’ in relation to African history was coined by the African-American historian Arthur Schomburg in, Benjamin P. Bowser, Louis Kushnick, Paul Grant (eds.), *Against the Odds: Scholars who Challenged Racism in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), p. 9

<sup>70</sup> On writers pleasing their patrons see Cressy, *Society and Culture in Early Modern England*, p. 1; Francis Bacon, *The Two Bookes of Francis Bacon of the Proficience and Advancement of Learning, Divine Humane* (London: Henrie Tomes, 1605), p. 1; and Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 550–1307* (1970, new edition, London: Routledge, 1996), n. p. introduction.

<sup>71</sup> Similar views are expressed in Peter Holbrook, *Literature and Degree in Renaissance England: Nashe, Bourgeois Tragedy, Shakespeare* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), pp. 169–170; and Louise Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. introduction, 1–30.

been as problematic as first thought. Or that for this particular African his legacy was so significant that it was not socially acceptable to ignore him.

So, only occasionally do we find clear references to Africans living in Tudor England in contemporary books. More often evidence about these Africans comes from personal letters sent between individuals or other correspondence not written for publication. This includes a letter written in 1501, by the Tudor politician Thomas More to his friend John Holt and others by George Best that talk about Africans being present in Tudor England.<sup>72</sup> Other writers who also make such references as an aside or in a matter-of-fact way include Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas.<sup>73</sup> There are also other books by English travellers such as Andrew Boorde's *Introduction to the Book of Knowledge*, published in 1550 and the work of the sixteenth-century Moorish scholar Leo Africanus, translated by John Pory in 1600 that describe the customs and culture of Africans. The latter is important because it includes the views of Africans about other Africans.<sup>74</sup> Africans also appear in *A Notable Historie of the Saracens*, written by the sixteenth-century Italian writer Augustinus Curio and Edward Blount's

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<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth Francis Rogers (ed.), Thomas More, *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 4; and George Best, *A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discovery, for the Finding of a Passage to Cathya, by the Northwest, under the Conduct of Martin Frobisher ...* (London: H Bynman, 1578), pp. 28–32.

<sup>73</sup> Rayner Unwin, *The Defeat of John Hawkins* (London: Allen Unwin, 1961), p. 205; John Hawkins, *Letter to Queen Elizabeth*, 16 September 1567, National Archives, Kew, London, SP 12/44, f. 16 16/9/1567; Richard Hakluyt (ed.), *The Principal Navigations ... Volume VI* (London: Hakluyt's Collection, 1598), p. 137; Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimage; or Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in all Ages and Places Discovered from the Creation unto the Present ...* (London: William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, 1613), pp. 540–541; Thomas Wyndham, in John Hamilton Moore (ed.), *A New and Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels ... Including ... Voyages and Travels ... With the Relations of Maghellan, Drake, Candish, Anson, Dampier, and all the Circumnavigators, Including ... the ... Voyages and Discoveries ...* (London: John Hamilton, 1785), pp. 86–87; and Margo Hendricks, Patricia Parker, *Women, 'Race' and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 336 (has a different view).

<sup>74</sup> Andrew Boorde, *The First Booke of the Introduction of Knowledge. The Whych Doth Teach a Man to Speake and Parte of All Maner of Languages and to Know the Vsage and Fashion of all Maner of Countries ... with Woodcuts* [images] (London: William Copeland, 1550); and John Pory (tr.), Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa, Written in Arabicke and Italian ... by Iohn Leo a More ...* (London: John Pory, 1600).

translation in 1600 of *The Historie of the Uniting of Portugal*. In addition, *The Spanish Dictionary* of John Minsheu created in 1599 is significant as it provides important sixteenth-century definitions of words used to describe Africans.<sup>75</sup>

I also suggest that the work of writers such as Boorde, Best and Africanus may have been one of the factors that influenced Tudor playwrights such as Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe to include Africans and references to Africans in their plays<sup>76</sup> – although the presence of Africans in Tudor London, and the stories they brought with them may have been a more significant factor, especially since Blackamoors were living close to where Shakespeare and others were writing and performing their plays.<sup>77</sup> This offers the possibility that some of the words spoken by characters such as Othello and Aaron are the echo of the voices of an otherwise silent population. But I acknowledge the fact as Habib, Matar and many other historians suggest that these playwrights provide few, if any, direct references to a resident Tudor African population.<sup>78</sup> Despite this, I suggest that some of these plays can

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<sup>75</sup> Caelius Augustinus Curio, *A Notable History of the Saracens ...* (London: William How and Abraham Veale, 1575), pp. 25–26, 139; Edward Blount (tr.), Ieronimo Conestaggio, *The Historie of the Uniting of the Kingdom of Portugal to the Crowne of Castill ...* (London: A. Hatfield for E. Blount, 1600), n. p. passim; Minsheu, *A Dictionarie in Spanish and English*, pp. 172, 175.

<sup>76</sup> Habib, *Shakespeare and Race*, pp. 35, 49, 74; Christopher Marlowe, *The Famous Tragedy of the Jew of Malta ...* (London: Nicholas Vavasour, 1633), Act 2, no scene, n. p. ; *Tamburlaine the Great* (London: Marlowe, 1592), No Act, or Scene, pp. A3, D4, E4, F2, F3, F4, G1–2; and *The Tragedy of Dido Queen of Carthage* (London: Thomas Nash, 1594), n. p. passim; William Shakespeare, *Othello* in Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan (eds.), *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (Walton on Thames: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1998), pp. 939–978; *Titus Andronicus*, pp. 1123–1150; *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Scene V, Line 46, p. 1013, ‘As a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear;’ *The Merchant of Venice*, Act II, Scene I, Line 1–46, pp. 835–836, Act II, Scene VII, Line 1–79, p. 840; *Macbeth*, Act V, Scene III, Line 11–12, p. 794, ‘The devil damn thee black/ thou cream-faced loon.’

<sup>77</sup> Harry Lee Faggett, *Black and Other Minorities in Shakespeare’s England* (Prairie View: Prairie View Press, 1971), pp. 34, 35, 43, 46, 48; Including evidence in: GL Ms 28867, GL Ms 9243–9245, GL Ms 4310, GL Ms 9222, GL Ms 4515/1; and Lalwan (ed.), *Sources for Black and Asian History ... Westminster Archives*, pp. 9, 10.

<sup>78</sup> Habib, *Black Lives*, p. 7; Habib, *Shakespeare and Race*, pp. 35, 49, 74; Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp. 50–70; Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), pp. 139–199; Hall, *Things of Darkness*, p. 211; Hendricks, ‘Surveying race in Shakespeare,’ pp. 1–23; Hunter, ‘Othello and Colour Prejudice,’ p. 153; Jose Piedra, ‘In search of the Black stud,’ pp. 23–44; Braude, ‘Collective Degradation,’ passim; Joyce Green Macdonald, ‘Black Ram, White Ewe: Shakespeare, Race and women,’ *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2001), pp. 188–

indicate popular perceptions and ideas about Africans present in Tudor society. The historians Harry Lee Faggett and Sujata Iyengar come to similar conclusions.<sup>79</sup>

Apart from written documents such as books and plays there are also a few images and paintings that show Africans present in Tudor England. There is the painting of the Moroccan Ambassador (Fig. 1), and we have images of a John Blanke the ‘blacke trumpeter’ in 1511 on the *Westminster Tournament Roll* (Fig. 2).<sup>80</sup> In addition, there are a few other images of Africans in Thomas Earle and Kate Lowe’s *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* which include an African woman or man on the Hawkins’ family crest. However, it is significant that we have more images of Africans present in continental Europe than Tudor England and the reasons for this are numerous and daedalian.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, in the next chapter we shall see that though there is a dearth in contemporary visual images of Africans in Tudor England, their presence was recognised in some official public documents such as the Letters and the Proclamation. These documents are important because they raise issues that are pertinent to the status of Africans throughout the entire Tudor period, despite the fact that they were written at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries. And that is why I discuss them in Chapter 1.<sup>82</sup>

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207. Other authors including Jonathan Burton, Ania Loomba and Patricia Parker are listed in the Bibliography.

<sup>79</sup> Faggett, *Black and Other Minorities in Shakespeare’s England*, pp. 30, 37–39; Sujata Iyengar, *Shades of Difference: Mythologies of Skin Colour in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 92, 99; and suggested by Ungerer, ‘The Presence of Africans in Elizabethan England and the performance of *Titus Andronicus*,’ pp. 19–56; Benjamin Braude, ‘The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods,’ *William and Mary Quarterly LIV*, January 1997, pp. 103–142.

<sup>80</sup> Artist unknown, Author unknown, *Westminster Tournament Roll 1511*, The College of Arms, London, E 36/214 f.109, see figures 2, and 20.

<sup>81</sup> This issue is discussed, and some images of these Africans are present in Earle, Lowe (eds.), *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, pp. 17–26, 27, 28–42, 42–48, 70–94, 113–125. The references for more images of Africans from continental Europe are listed in the Bibliography.

<sup>82</sup> Author unknown, Letter to Lord Mayors, signed Queen Elizabeth, National Archives, Kew, London; Letter Author unknown, signed Queen Elizabeth, National Archives, Kew, London; and Author unknown, Proclamation ca January 1601, National Archives, Kew, London.

In the Letters and the Proclamation, Africans are described by a variety of names and terms. This raises a number of issues which are not addressed in Chapter 1 because they are convoluted. Nevertheless I feel that they cannot be ignored as they reflect on our understanding of the identity, ethnicity and therefore the origins of Africans present in Tudor England. That is why in Chapter 2 I analyse what these different terms mean, and that people in English society did not categorise Africans as some modern anthropologists do now. The way that Africans are described in Tudor parish records and letters suggests that ideas about their racial identity and perhaps status were based on shifting criteria, such as the personal views of the contemporary writer, or were reflective of how individual Africans saw themselves. This can be seen in records in Plymouth and London such as that for Domingo who was buried in the St Botolph area of London in 1586, and was described as a ‘negar,’ ‘Ginnye,’ and ‘a black’ in various parish records.<sup>83</sup>

In addition, I propose that some of the terms used to describe Africans which are discussed in Chapter 2 of this book, had their origins or were influenced by words that may have come from the Iberian Peninsula or from classical writings. I also suggest in Chapter 4 that some of the terms used to define Africans in Tudor England may have had their source in the stories that Africans told about themselves. Some of these stories are fantastic and give a negative and/or prurient image of the African. In Chapters 2 and 4, I consider whether these stories led to ‘those kindes of people’ being seen as ‘less than,’ or as examples of ‘otherness’ in Tudor England. The term otherness in this book refers to ‘difference,’ ‘distinctness’ or ‘strangeness.’ It also

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<sup>83</sup> Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth, original records on microfiche, St Andrews/MF1–4; Author unknown, *St Botolph without Aldgate Memorandum Daybook*, Volume I (London: Parish of St Botolph without Aldgate, 1586–1588), p. 127; G. L. Ref P69/BOT2/ A/ 01/MS 9234/1; GL Ms 9234; and Hendricks, ‘Surveying race in Shakespeare,’ p. 15 (has a similar view).



relates to whether the ‘blackness’ associated with Africans made them outsiders in Tudor society.<sup>84</sup> I suggest in Chapter 2 that Africans were not considered as strange as other peoples such as Native-Americans, and that this may have been because ‘those kindes of people’ had been present in England since medieval times, and Englishmen had ideas about them from the stories that were told.

In Chapters 3 and 4 some of these Africans’ lives are traced from their time here, all the way back to the country or countries they came from. I believe this helps us see not only their origins more clearly but also their status as well. As a result, I intend to show particular Africans in Tudor England as real people, not just as a statistic or an anomaly. In the next chapter this is revealed as I discuss the status of Africans in Tudor England.

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<sup>84</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of English*, p. 1247 (quotations on otherness). On strangeness and otherness see Ania Loomba, Jonathan Burton, *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), n. p. preface, introduction; and Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, Meaghan Morris (ed.), *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 249–250.