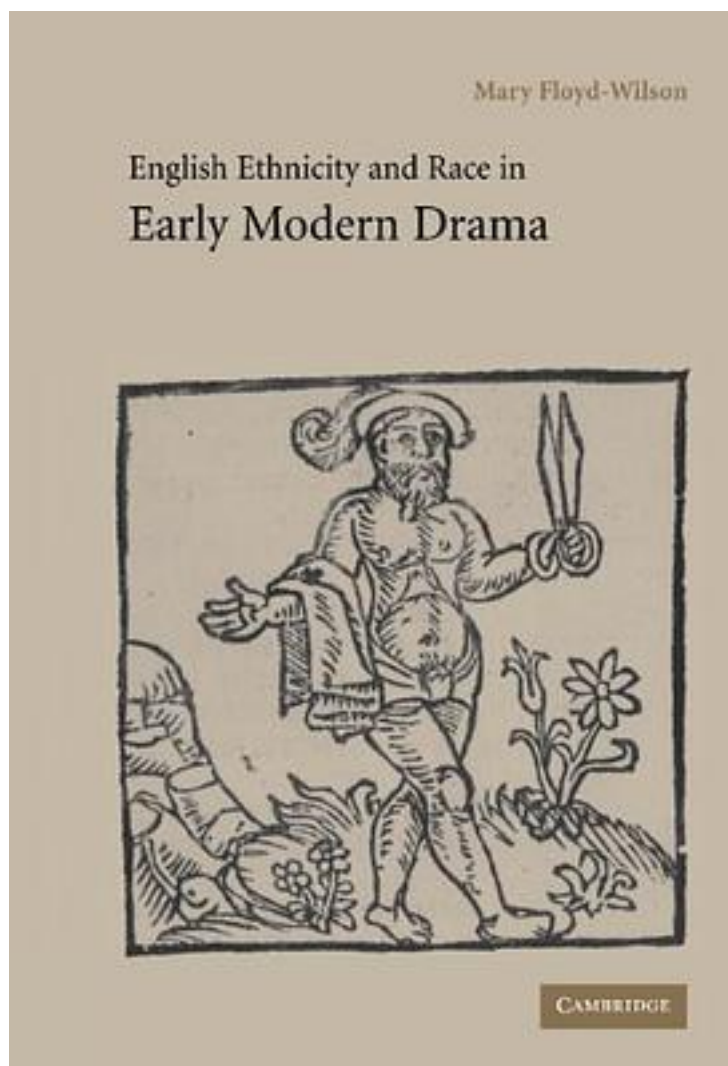


English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama



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出版者:

出版时间:2006-6

装帧:

isbn:9780521027311

In *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*, first published in 2003, Mary Floyd-Wilson outlines what we might call 'scientific' conceptions of racial and ethnic differences in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English writing. Drawing on classical and contemporary medical texts, histories and cosmographies, Floyd-Wilson demonstrates that Renaissance understandings of racial and ethnic identities contradicted many modern stereotypes concerning difference. Southerners, Africans, in particular, were identified as dispassionate, cool-tempered and wise, whereas the more northern English were understood to be unruly, impressionable and slow-witted. Concerned with the unflattering and constraining implications of this classically derived knowledge, English writers laboured to reinvent ethnology to their own advantage - a labour that paved the way for the invention of more familiar racial ideas. Floyd-Wilson highlights these English revisionary efforts in her surprising and transformational readings of the period's drama, including Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* and Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Cymbeline*.

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