

Difference and Disease

Before the nineteenth century, travellers who left Britain for the Americas, West Africa, India, and elsewhere encountered a medical conundrum: why did they fall ill when they arrived, and why – if they recovered – did they never become so ill again? The widely accepted answer was that the newcomers needed to become ‘seasoned to the climate’. Suman Seth explores forms of eighteenth-century medical knowledge, including conceptions of seasoning, showing how geographical location was essential to this knowledge and helped to define relationships between Britain and her far-flung colonies. In this period, debates raged between medical practitioners over whether diseases changed in different climes. Different diseases were deemed characteristic of different races and genders, and medical practitioners were thus deeply involved in contestations over race and the legitimacy of the abolitionist cause. In this innovative and engaging history, Seth offers dramatically new ways to understand the mutual shaping of medicine, race, and empire.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-41830-0 — Difference and Disease
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Frontmatter
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Difference and Disease

*Medicine, Race, and the Eighteenth-Century
British Empire*

Suman Seth

Cornell University, New York



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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108418300

DOI: 10.1017/9781108289726

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First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Seth, Suman, 1974– author.

Title: Difference and disease : medicine, race, and the eighteenth-century British empire / Suman Seth.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY:

Cambridge University Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018002424 | ISBN 9781108418300 (hardback)

Subjects: | MESH: Geography, Medical – history | Travel-Related Illness |

Climate | Colonialism – history | Racism – history | History, 18th Century |

West Indies | United Kingdom

Classification: LCC RA651 | NLM WZ 70 FA1 | DDC 614.4/2–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018002424>

ISBN 978-1-108-41830-0 Hardback

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“... bad intentions alone do not invalidate knowledge. For that to happen it takes bad epistemology ...”

Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other*

For Ashima

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Acknowledgements

I did not imagine, when I finished my first book, that I would write this one, which has required that I learn the histories of a new discipline, period, and place. Whatever insight I've managed has come through the support and guidance of many friends and colleagues. Robert Travers has taught me much about the eighteenth-century British Empire; Chris Hamlin was unstinting in his generosity in helping me come to some mastery of the history of eighteenth-century medicine, while Steve Stowe and John Waller introduced me to the historiography of medicine during a sabbatical year at Michigan State University; James Delbourgo offered critical and enormously helpful suggestions for ways to engage with social histories of slavery in the Atlantic World; and both Michael Gordin and Mary Fissell turned critical eyes to my introduction and helped make it both more precise and more reflective of the fields with which it engages. The Science and Technology Studies (STS) department at Cornell has provided a mostly supportive and congenial environment in which to teach and research. My colleagues – including Peter Dear, Steve Hilgartner, Ron Kline, Bruce Lewenstein, Mike Lynch, Trevor Pinch, Sara Pritchard, Jessica Ratcliff, Margaret Rossiter, Phoebe Sengers, Rebecca Slayton, and Malte Ziewitz – can be counted on to engage seriously and deeply. Special thanks to Rachel Prentice and to Ann Johnson, who I miss terribly. Much love to my broader Cornell and Ithaca family: Cynthia Brock, Shelley Feldman, Deb van Galder, Trina Garrison, Durba Ghosh, Sara Hatfield, Deirdre and George Hay, Geo Kloppel, Patricia Lia, Hope Mandeville, Vlad Micic, Lucinda Ramberg, Mark and Evan Stevens, Stacey Stone, and Marne, Larry, Maya, and Casey Honigbaum. Ray Craib and Jenny Mann remind me regularly of the kind of scholar and person I'd like to be. Holly Case, Nicole Giannella, Murad Idris, and Theresa Krüggeler left Ithaca a while ago, but they are – and always will be – family.

Various chapters of this book were presented at The Institute for Comparative Modernities and the STS Colloquium Series, Cornell University; the Vanderbilt History Seminar, Vanderbilt University; Universidad Autónoma de Yucatan; Louisiana State University; the Porter Fortune Symposium, University of Mississippi; Halle University; the Science, Technology, and Society Colloquium at the University of Michigan;

the University of California, Los Angeles; History of Science and Technology Colloquium, Johns Hopkins University; the History and Philosophy of Science Colloquium, University of Sydney; the Science and Society Speaker Series, Drexel University; the History Colloquium, Princeton University; the Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University; the University of Pennsylvania; and the Politics Department at the University of Virginia. A special thanks to those, like Suzanne Marchand and Nonny de La Peña, who opened their homes to me on my travels. Matt and Janelle Stanley were generous in every possible way. They are, both metaphorically and literally, the people I'd want in my corner in a fight. For invitations, questions, and comments, thanks to Sanjoy Bhattacharya, Richard Blackett, Tom Broman, Debbie Coen, Steffan Igor Ayora Diaz, Tony Grafton, Rana Hogarth, Sarah Igo, Myles Jackson, Bill Jordan, Stephen Kenny, Fabio Lanza, Theresa Leavitt, Natalie Melas, Lisa Messeri, Emmie Miller, Ole Molvig, Sarah Naramore, Deirdre Cooper Owens, Susan Scott Parrish, Kapil Raj, Ruth Rogaski, Richard Rottenburg, Simon Schaffer, Londa Schiebinger, Alistair Sponsel, Helen Tilley, Gabriela Vargas-Cetina, Keith Wailoo, Aaron Windel, and Anya Zilberstein. In terms of the final product, I could not have asked for a more professional, engaged, or fun editor than Lucy Rhymer. The team at Cambridge, including Daniel Brown, Sue Barnes, and Nicola Howcroft, were exceptional. Readers will join me in thanking Janelle Bourgeois for her work on the index.

New projects need the support of old friends. Laura Stark is the epitome of thoughtful, open, and engaged humanistic research and thinking. She is also dear to me beyond measure. Any day in which I see Heidi Voskuhl – H-Dog – is a great one. Mary Terrall, Helen Tilley, and Elaine and Norton Wise remain both mentors and role models. Angela Creager is, quite simply, the best. Seeing and learning from Warwick Anderson, Ofer Gal, Daniela Helbig, and Hans Pols continues to be one of my favourite things about returning to Sydney University. Thanks to Arlan and Carol Smith for many years of love and care. Sharrona Pearl's ideas about my arguments and writing have made this book immeasurably better, just as I am a better person for knowing her. I don't know how her unflinching generosity is possible. I would be lost without friends like Lisa Bailey, Scott Bruce, Johanna Crane, James Cunningham, Katy Hansen, Kevin Lambert, Anne Lester, Dan Magaziner, Valeri Kiesig, Erika Milam, Tania Munz, Anjali Singh, Richard Staley, and Chuck Wooldridge, who comfort the heart and inspire the mind. Patrick McCray is the God of Thunder.

Amber Lia-Kloppel has been tireless in helping me find images for my front cover. She has been equally tireless in making me feel joyful and cared for and grounded. I look forward to repaying favours and incurring new debts to her and Isabella in the years to come. My father has never once doubted in my success, even when my own confidence would break. My siblings, Sanjay and Vanita, are my best and quickest readers, to be counted on to tell me what

works and what is dull or unnecessary. Vastly more importantly, they – and Kelly, Raju and Nishad – are to be counted on for love and laughter, food and foolishness.

Mindy Smith has been my best friend and strongest support for the years this work has taken and for many more besides. She has been reader, sounding-board, advisor, and critic. Thanking her for her part in this project would do little justice to all the debts she's owed. Books are written while lives are forged and it's the lives that matter most. Together, we've raised a daughter who is the best thing I will ever produce. It's to our daughter – who has never known a time when I was not working on this project – that this book is dedicated.

