The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages[1]

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Abstract

'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages' – a two–part article – questions the widely held belief in canonical race theory that 'race' is a category without purchase before the modern era. Surveying a variety of cultural documents from the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries – chronicles, hagiography, literature, stories, sculpture, maps, canon law, statuary, illustrations, religious commentary, and architectural features – the study considers racial thinking, racial law, racial formation, and racialized behaviors and phenomena in medieval Europe before the emergence of a recognizable vocabulary of race. One focus is how a political hermeneutics of religion – so much in play again today – enabled the positing of fundamental human differences in biopolitical and culturalist ways to create strategic essentialisms demarcating human kinds and populations. Another focus is how race figures in the emergence of *homo europaeus* and the identity of Western Europe (beginning as Latin Christendom) in this time. Part I – 'Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages' – surveys the current state of race theory, and puts in conversation race studies and medieval studies, fields that exist on either side of a vast divide. Part II – 'Locations of Medieval Race' – identifies and analyzes specific concretions of medieval race, while continuing to develop the theoretical arguments of Part I.

> …the extent to which contemporary discourses, consciously or not, are affected by pre–modern paradigms is, at times, surprising.
>   Khaled Abou El Fadl, *And God Knows the Soldiers* (18)

In 1218, Jews in England were forced by law to wear badges on their chests, to set them apart from the rest of the English population. This is the earliest historical example of a country's execution of the medieval church's demand, in Canon 68 of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, that Jews and Muslims be set apart from Christians by a difference in dress. In 1222, 1253, and 1275, English rulings elaborated on this badge for the Jewish minority – who had to wear it (men and women at first, then children over the age of seven) – its size, color, and how it was to be displayed on the chest in an adequately prominent fashion. In 1290, after a century of laws that eroded the economic, religious, occupational, social, and personal status of English Jews, Jewish communities were finally driven out of England *en masse*, marking the first permanent expulsion in Europe.[2]

Periodic extermination of Jews was also a repeating phenomenon in medieval Europe. In the so-called Popular and First Crusades, Jewish communities were massacred in the Rhineland, in Mainz, Cologne, Speyer, Worms, Regensburg, and several other cities. The Second Crusade saw more Jew-killing and the so-called Shepherds' Crusade of 1320 witnessed the genocidal decimation of Jewish communities in France. In England, a trail of blood followed the coronation of the famed hero of the Third Crusade, Richard Lionheart, in 1189, when Jews were slaughtered at Westminster, London, Lynn, Norwich, Stamford, Bury St. Edmunds, and York, as English chronicles attest.[3]

Scientific, medical, and theological treatises also argued that the bodies of Jews differed in nature from the bodies of Western Europeans who were Christian: Jewish bodies gave off a special fetid stench (the infamous *foetor judaicus*), and Jewish men bled uncontrollably from their nether parts, either annually, during Passion week, or monthly, like menstruating women. Some authors held that Jewish bodies also came with horns and a tail, and popular belief circulated for centuries through the countries of Western Europe that Jews constitutionally needed to imbibe the blood of Christians, especially children, whom they periodically mutilated and tortured to death, especially little boys.[4]

Cultural practices across a range of registers also disclose historical thinking that pronounces decisively on the ethical, ontological, and moral value of black and white. The 13th century encyclopedia of Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, offers a theory of climate in which cold lands produce white folk, and hot lands produce black: white being, we are told, a visual marker of inner courage, while the men of Africa, possessing black faces, short bodies, and crisp hair are 'cowards of heart' and 'guileful'.[5]

A carved tympanum on the north portal of the west façade of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Rouen (c. 1260) depicts the malevolent executioner of the sainted John the Baptist as an African phenotype (Fig. 1), while an illustration in six scenes of Cantiga 186 of *Las Cantigas de Santa Maria*, commissioned by Alfonso X of Spain between 1252 and 1284, performs juridical vengeance on a black-faced Moor who is found in bed with his mistress; both are condemned to the flames, but the fair lady is miraculously saved by the Virgin Mary herself (Fig. 2). Black is damned, white is saved. Black, of course, is the color of devils and demons, a color that sometimes extends to bodies demonically possessed, as demonstrated by an illustration from a Canterbury psalter, c. 1200 (Fig. 3). In literature, black devilish Saracen enemies – sometimes of gigantic size – abound,

Fig. 1. African Executioner of John the Baptist. Cathedral of Notre Dame, Rouen: tympanum, north portal, west façade, c. 1260. Courtesy of the Menil Foundation, Houston, and Hickey and Robertson, Houston.
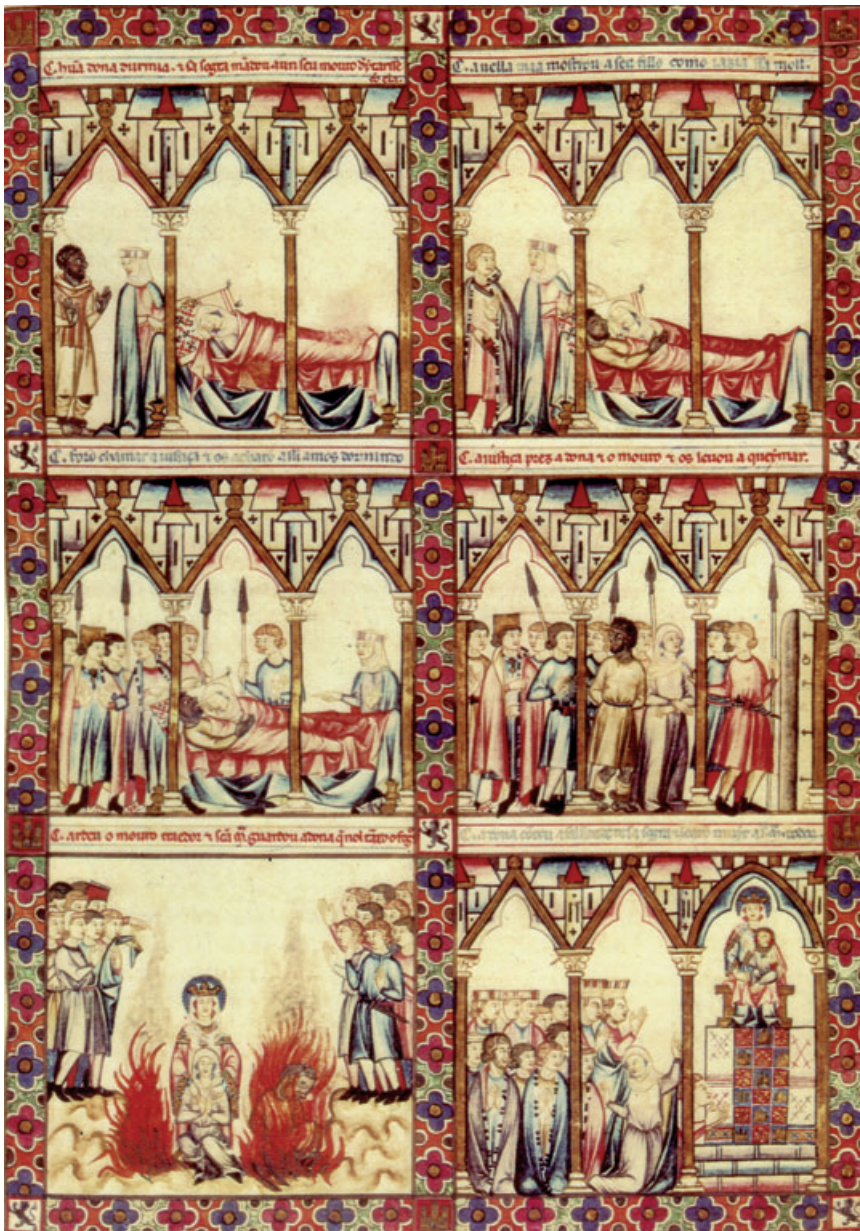
Fig. 2. Illustration of Cantiga 186, Las Cantigas de Santa Maria, commissioned by Alfonso X of Spain, second half of the 12th century. Escorial, Real Monasterio, Biblioteca. Courtesy of the Menil Foundation, Houston, and Hickey and Robertson, Houston.

especially in the *chanson de geste* and romance, genres that tap directly into the political imaginary, as some have argued.[6]

White is also the color of superior class and noble bloodlines. In the 14th century *Cursor Mundi*, when four Saracens who are 'blac and bla als led' ('black and blue–black as lead') meet King David and are given three rods blessed by Moses to kiss, they transform from black to white upon kissing the rods, thus taking on, we are told, the hue of those

Fig. 3. Healing of the Gadarene demoniacs. Psalter, fol. 3^v (detail). From Canterbury, about 1200. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

of noble blood: 'Als milk thair hide bicom sa quite/And o fre blode thai had the hew' ('Their skin became as white as milk/And they had the hue of noble blood' [Morris ll. 8072, 8120–1]). Elite human beings of the 14th century have a hue, and it is white. The few examples I cite here from medieval England, Germany, France, and Spain – examples from state and canon law, chronicles and historical documents, illuminations, encyclopedias, architecture, devotional texts, rumor and hearsay, and recreational literature – form only a miniscule cross-section of the cultural evidence across the countries of Western Europe.

Yet, in spite of all this – state experiments in tagging and herding people, and ruling on their bodies with the violence of law; exterminations of humans under repeating conditions, and disparagement of their bodies as repugnant, disabled, or monstrous; in spite of a system of knowledge and value that turns on a visual regime harvesting its truths from polarities of skin color, and moralizings on the superiority and inferiority of color and somatic difference – canonical race theory has found it difficult to see the European Middle Ages as the time of race, as racial time. Conditions such as these typically constitute race theory's standard identifiers of race and racism, so it's logical to ask: how is such obliviousness possible?

Canonical race theory understands 'racial formation' (Omi and Winant 55) to occur only in *modern* time. Racial formation has been twinned with conditions of labor and capital in modernity such as plantation slavery and the slave trade, the rise of capitalism or bourgeois hegemony, or modern political formations such as the state and its apparatuses (we think most recently of David Theo Goldberg's magisterial *The Racial State*), nations and nationalisms (Etienne Balibar's chapters in *Race, Nation, Class*), liberal politics (Uday Mehta), new discourses of class and social war (Foucault of the 1975–1976 Collège de France lectures), colonialism and imperialism (the work of many of us in

postcolonial studies), globalism, and transnational networks (Tom Holt on race in the global economy).[7]

In the descriptions of modernity as racial time, a privileged status has been accorded to the Enlightenment and its spawn of racial technologies describing body and nature through pseudoscientific discourses pivoting on biology as the ground of essence, reference, and definition.[8] So tenacious has been scientific racism's account of race, with its entrenchment of high modernist racism as the template of *all* racisms, that it is still routinely understood, in everyday life and much of scholarship, that *properly* racial logic and behavior *must* invoke biology and the body as their referent, even if the immediate recourse is, say, to theories of climatology or environment as the ground by which human difference is specified and evaluated.

In principle, race theory – whose brilliant practitioners are among the academy's most formative and influential thinkers – understands, of course, that race *has* no singular or stable referent: that *race is a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human differences, rather than a substantive content.* David Goldberg and Ann Stoler, two particularly incisive scholars of race, voice the common understanding of all when they affirm that 'the concept of race is an "empty vacuum"—an image both conveying [the] "chameleonic" quality [of race] and [its] ability to ingest other ways of distinguishing social categories' (Stoler, 'Racial Histories' 191).

In principle, then, race studies after the mid-20th century, and particularly in the last three and a half decades, encourage a view of race as a blank that is contingently filled under an infinitely flexible range of historical pressures and occasions. The motility of race, as Ann Stoler puts it, means that racial discourses are always both 'new and renewed' through historical time (we think of the Jewish badge in premodernity *and* modernity), always 'well-worn' *and* 'innovative' (such as the type and scale of 'final solutions' like expulsion and genocide), and 'draw on the past' as they 'harness themselves to new visions and projects'.[9]

The ability of racial logic to stalk and merge with other hierarchical systems – such as class, gender, or sexuality – also means that race can function as class (so that whiteness is the color of medieval nobility), as 'ethnicity' and religion (Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda, 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia), or as sexuality (seen in the suggestion raised at the height of AIDS hysteria in the 1980s that gay people should be rounded up, and cordoned off, in the style of Japanese American internment camps in World War II). Indeed, the 'transformational grammar' of race through time means that the current masks of race are now overwhelmingly cultural, as witnessed since September 11, 2001.[10] Definitions of race in practice today at airport security checkpoints, in the news media, and in public political discourse flaunt ethnoracial categories decided on the basis of religious identity ('Muslims' being grouped as a de facto race), national or geopolitical origin ('Middle Easterners'), or membership in a linguistic community (Arabic-speakers standing in for Arabs – Arabs themselves, in Census 2000, not having been imagined yet as a race).

But if our current moment of flexible definitions – a moment in which cultural race and racisms, and *religious* race, jostle alongside race-understood-as-somatic/biological-determinations – uncannily renews key medieval instrumentalizations in the ordering of human relations, race theory's examination of the past nonetheless stops at the door of modern time. A blind spot inhabits the otherwise extraordinary panorama of critical descriptions of race: a cognitive lag that makes theory unable to step back any further than the Renaissance, that makes it *natural* to consider the Middle Ages as somehow outside real time.

Like many a theoretical discourse, race theory is predicated on an unexamined narrative of temporality in the West: a *grand récit* that reifies modernity as *telos* and origin and

that, once installed, entrenches the delivery of a paradigmatic chronology of racial time through mechanisms of intellectual replication pervasive in the Western academy, and circulated globally. This global circulation project is not without its detractors, but the replication of its paradigmatic chronology is extraordinarily persistent, for reasons I outline below.

Part 1 of 'Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages' considers the premises undergirding race theory today, and the consequences of ignoring macrohistorical time; it briefly surveys responses by premodernists, and specifies key particularities of medieval race. Part 2 of 'Invention of Race' then offers three quick sketches that exemplify some locations of medieval race, and an outline of architectures that support the instantiation of race in the medieval period; it also considers how we might think of race in the Middle Ages without recourse to totalizing fictions, and how medieval instrumentalizations inhabit postmedieval eras.

Modernity as the Time of Race, an Old Story of Telos and Origin in Global Circulation

In the *grand récit* of Western temporality, modernity is positioned simultaneously as a spectacular conclusion and a beginning: a teleological culmination that emerges from the ooze of a murkily long chronology by means of a temporal rupture – a big bang, if we like – that issues in a new historical instant. The material reality and expressive vocabulary of rupture is vouched for by symbolic phenomena of a highly dramatic kind: a Scientific Revolution, discoveries of race, the formation of nations, etc, which signal the arrival of modern time. Medieval time, on the wrong side of rupture, is thus shunted aside as the detritus of a pre-Symbolic era falling outside the signifying systems issued by modernity, and reduced to the role of a historical trace undergirding the recitation of modernity's arrival.

Thus fictionalized as a politically unintelligible time, because it lacks the signifying apparatus expressive of, and witnessing, modernity, medieval time is then absolved of the errors and atrocities of the modern, while its own errors and atrocities are shunted aside as essentially non-significative, without *modern* meaning, because occurring outside the conditions structuring intelligible discourse on, and participation in, modernity and its cultures. The replication of this template of temporality – one of the most durably stable replications in the West – is the basis for the replication of race theory's exclusions.

For the West, modernity is an account of self-origin – how the West became the unique, vigorous, self-identical, and exceptional entity that it is, bearing a legacy – and burden – of superiority. Modernity is *arrival*: the Scientific Revolution, represented by a procession of founding fathers of conceptual and experimental science (Galileo, Descartes, Bacon, Locke, Newton) and the triumph of technology – the printing press ushering in mass culture, heavy artillery ushering in modern warfare.

Or arrival is attested by the Industrial Revolution, witnessing extraordinary per capita and total output economic growth of the Schumpeterian, over the Smithian, kind. Since origin is haunted in the post-Biblical West by the story of a fall from grace, modernity is also necessarily the time when new troubles arrive, the most enduring of which are race and racisms, colonization, and the rise of imperial powers. Regrettable as such phenomena are, their exclusive arrival in modern time (variously located) nonetheless sets off modern time as unique, special: confirming modernity as a time apart, newly minted, in human history.

The dominance of a linear model of temporality deeply invested in marking rupture and radical discontinuity thus eschews alternate views: a view of history, for instance, as

the field of dynamic oscillations between ruptures and re-inscriptions, or historical time as a matrix in which overlapping repetitions-with-change can occur, or an understanding that historical events may result from the action of multiple temporalities that are enfolded and co-extant within a particular historical moment. The dominant model of a simple, linear temporality has geospatial and macrohistorical consequences. Since the prime movers and markers of modernity are exclusively or overwhelmingly discovered in the West, the non-West has long been saddled with the tag of being *pre*modern: inserted within a developmental narrative whose trajectory positions the rest of the world as always catching up.

Some sociological historians and historians of science, working against the grain, have attempted to disrupt the narrative of scientific, economic, and demographic transformation separating modern from premodern time in the West, and the West from the rest.[11] Revisiting the old repertoire of claims, they have argued for the legitimacy of complex, non-linear temporalities: temporalities in which multiple modernities have recurred in different vectors of the world moving at different rates of speed within macrohistorical time. One position is articulated by Jack Goldstone's thick description of human history as punctuated by scientific and technological 'efflorescences' that, coupled with labor specialization and intensive market orientation, have driven *both* Schumpeterian *and* Smithian growth and change in various societies and various eras, thus muddying the monomythic simplicity of a radical break favoring the West in modernity's singular arrival.

Against the putative uniqueness of the Industrial Revolution, we have Robert Hartwell's data that the tonnage of coal burnt annually for iron production in 11th century northern China was already 'roughly equivalent to 70% of the total amount of coal annually used by all metal workers in Great Britain at the beginning of the eighteenth century' (122). Demographic patterns deemed characteristic of modernity have also appeared in premodernity. Goldstone observes that urban populations in 12th and 13th century Europe – a period of extraordinary growth – amounted to 10% of total population, a ratio not exceeded until the 19th century (347).

The work of Eric Jones and Robert Hartwell on the extensively developed water power, iron and steel industries, and shipping of Sung China; and that of Richard Britnell and Bruce Campbell, Joel Mokyr, D. S. L. Cardwell, Lynn White, and Goldstone himself on the economic and demographic growth, technology, urbanization, and commercialization of 12th and 13th century Europe (Goldstone 380–9) furnish material for counternarratives contesting the fiction of sudden, unique arrival, and the discourse of Western exceptionalism.[12] Some historians of science and sociology accordingly prefer to speak of scientific *revolutions* across time rather than *the* Scientific Revolution – a single, unique instance, in a single unique modernity (Hart, *Civilizations* ch. 2; 'Explanandum') – and of industrial *revolutions*, rather than *the* Industrial Revolution.

Even were we to ignore the demographic, economic, and scientific materialities painstakingly sketched by these historians, the representation of medieval time as wholly foreign to, and unmarked by, modernity intuitively runs counter to modes of understanding in contemporary theory undergirding the study of culture today. Studies of culture, literature, history, and art that have been open to late 20th-century and 21st-century developments in academic theory across the disciplines will not find unfamiliar the notion that the past is never completely past, but inhabits the present, and haunts modernity and contemporary time in ways that estrange our present from itself. Modernity and the present can thus be grasped as the habitat of multiple temporalities that braid together a complex and plural *now* that is internally self-divided, and contaminated by premodern

time. In public life, the evocation of Crusades and jihad by jihadi and Salafi ideologues and by the Western political right is one example of the past in the present, marking an internal cleavage in modern time through which premodern time speaks itself as an active presence.[13]

Dipesh Chakrabarty's meditation on how an earlier time re-inscribes itself in later periods (always with difference, never in exactly the same way), is useful here:

> humans from any other period…are always in some sense our contemporaries: that would have to be the condition under which we can even begin to treat them as intelligible to us…. the writing of medieval history for Europe depends on this assumed contemporaneity of the medieval [with our present], or…the non-contemporaneity of the present with itself. (109)

If we grant that the present can be non-identical to itself in this way, we should also grant the corollary: that *the past* can *also* be non-identical to itself, inhabited too by that which was out of its time – marked by modernities that estrange medieval time in ways that render medieval practices legible in modern terms.

If we allow our field of vision to hatch open these moments in premodernity that seem to signal the activity of varied modernities in deep time (Goldstone's 'efflorescences'), our expanded vision will likely yield windows on the past that allow for a reconfigured understanding of earlier time. Indeed, hatching open such moments in premodernity is what feminists and queer studies scholars have, in a sense, been doing for decades in staking out *their* European Middle Ages – identifying the instances in which a different consciousness and practice erupt and effloresce – even as their earliest archeologies suffered slings and arrows hurled in the name of anachronism and presentism. The 'contemporaneity of the medieval' with our time, and the non-identity of medieval time with itself, thus grants a pivot from which the re-cloning of old narratives can be resisted.

Nonetheless, at present the discussion of premodern race continues to be handicapped by the invocation of axioms that reproduce a familiar story where mature forms of race and racisms, arriving in modern political time, are heralded by a shadow-play of inauthentic rehearsals characterizing the pre-political, premodern past. For discussions of race, the terms and conditions set by this narrative of bifurcated polarities vested in modernity-as-origin has meant that the tenacity, duration, and malleability of race, racial practices, and racial institutions have failed to be adequately understood or recognized. With centuries elided, the long history of racing has been foreshortened, truncated to an abridged narrative.

But why would we want a long history of race? Like other theoretical-political endeavors that have addressed the past – feminism comes readily to mind as a predecessor moment, queer studies is another – the project of revising our understanding by inserting premodernity into conversations on race is closely dogged by accusations of presentism, anachronism, reification, and the like.[14] Why call something race, when many old terms – ethnocentrism, xenophobia, 'premodern discriminations', 'prejudice', 'chauvinism', even 'fear of otherness and difference' – have been used comfortably for so long to characterize the genocides, brutalizations, executions, and mass expulsions of the medieval period?

The short answer is that the use of the term 'race' continues to bear witness to important strategic, epistemological, and political commitments not adequately served by the invocation of categories of greater generality (such as 'otherness' or 'difference') or greater benignity in our understanding of human culture and society. *Not* to use the term race would be to sustain the reproduction of a certain kind of past, while keeping the door shut to tools, analyses, and resources that can name the past differently. Studies of 'otherness' and 'difference' in the Middle Ages – which are now increasingly frequent –

must then continue to dance around words they dare not use; concepts, tools, and resources that are closed off; and meanings that only exist as lacunae.

Or, to put it another way: the refusal of race de-stigmatizes the impacts and consequences of certain laws, acts, practices, and institutions in the medieval period, so that we cannot name them for what they are, nor can we bear adequate witness to the full meaning of the manifestations and phenomena they install. The unavailability of race thus often colludes in relegating such manifestations to an epiphenomenal status: enabling omissions that have, among other things, facilitated the entrenchment and reproduction of foundational historiography in the academy and beyond.

To cite one example: how often do standard ('mainstream') histories of England discuss as constitutive to the formation of English identity or to the nation of England the mass expulsion of Jews in 1290, the marking of the Jewish population with badges for three-quarters of a century, decimations of Jewish communities by mob violence, statutory laws ruling over where Jews were allowed to live, monitory apparatuses like the Jewish Exchequer and the network of registries created by England to track the behavior and lives of Jews, or popular lies and rumors like the cultural fiction of ritual murder, which facilitated the legal execution of Jews by the state? That the lives of English Jews were *constitutive*, not incidental, to the formation of England's history and collective identity – that the built landscape of England itself, with its cathedrals, abbeys, fortifications, homes, and cities, was dependent on English Jews – is not a story that is often heard in foundational historiography.[15] Scholars who are invested in the archeology of a past in which alternate voices, lives, and histories are heard, beyond those canonically established as central by foundationalist studies are thus not well served by evading the category of race and its trenchant vocabularies and tools of analysis.[16]

For theory, the study of racial emergence in the *longue durée* is also one means to understand if the configurations of power productive of race in modernity are, in fact, genuinely novel. Key propensities in history can be identified by examining premodernity: the modes of apparent necessity, configurations of power, and conditions of crisis that witness the harnessing of powerful dominant discourses – such as science *or* religion – to make fundamental distinctions among humans in processes to which we give the name of race.

For race theory, a reissuing of the medieval past in ways that admit the ongoing interplay of that past with the present can only recalibrate the urgencies of the present with greater precision. An important consideration in investigating the invention of race in medieval Europe (an invention that is always a reinvention) is also to grasp the ways in which *homo europaeus* – the European subject – emerges in part through racial grids produced from the 12th through 15th centuries, and the significance of that emergence for understanding the unstable entity we call 'the West' and its self-authorizing missions.

Against the Template: Historicizing Alternate Pasts, Rethinking Race in Deep Time

Scholars who have considered race in premodernity have by and large understood race as arguments over nature – how human groups are identified through biological or somatic features deemed to be their durable or intrinsic characteristics, features which are then selectively moralized and interpreted to extrapolate continuities between the bodies, behaviors, and mentalities of the collective members of the group thus identified. Premodernists subscribing to a view of race as contentions over nature have thus focused primary attention on *bodies* in examining the record of images, artifacts, and texts: investigating the meanings of skin color, phenotypes, blood purity and blood lines, genealogy, physiognomy, heritability, and the impact of environment (including, in the medieval

period, macrobian zones, astrology, and humoral theory) in shaping human bodies and human natures, with differential values being attached to groups thus differentially identified.

For antiquity, major studies by Frank Snowden, Benjamin Isaac, and David Goldenberg are among those that favor body-centered phenomena as indicators of race – and in particular, for Snowden and Goldenberg, blackness as a paramount marker of race.[17] Among medievalists, noted studies by Robert Bartlett, Peter Biller, Steven Epstein, David Nirenberg, and contributors to a 2001 issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* edited by Tom Hahn also suggest that medievalists too have understood race as a body-centered phenomenon: defined by skin color, physiognomy, blood, genealogy, inheritance, etc.[18]

Some premodernists have insisted that there must be prior linguistic evidence in European vocabularies of the word 'race' before racial phenomena and racializing practices can exist, advocating priority for whether medieval peoples *themselves* saw themselves as belonging to races and practicing racisms. Insistence of this kind may underpin classicist Denise Buell's scrupulous attentiveness to the meaning of the word *genos* in the early centuries of the Common Era when strategies of Christian universalism rhetorically posit Christians as a new people, a kind of race (*Why this New Race*, 'Early Christian Universalism').[19] As a reminder that a gap can exist between a practice and the linguistic utterance that names it, Steven Epstein's discovery of 'a way of thinking that closely resembled modern forms of racism, in a vocabulary suited to the times' (201) suggests that 'unfamiliar vocabularies and languages' (13) do not in themselves indicate the absence of a phenomenon.

A few premodernists, following examples in canonical race theory, have chosen to emphasize cultural and social determinants in racing – including a political hermeneutics of religion – while not eschewing overlapping multiple discourses in racial formation. Unlike many who stress nature-based determinants in racing, and race as body-centered phenomena, premodernists emphasizing socio-cultural determinants do not assume that race or racism requires human distinctions to be posited as permanent, stable, innate, fixed, or immutable.

Critical race theory itself, of course, has for decades attentively scrutinized culturalist forms of racing – in which culture functions, we might say, as a kind of superstructure that is relatively disarticulated from its base, nature. Ann Stoler's study of the colonial Dutch East Indies (1997) is a salient and oft-quoted example:

> Race could never be a matter of physiology alone. Cultural competency in Dutch customs, a sense of 'belonging' in a Dutch cultural milieu…disaffiliation with things Javanese…domestic arrangements, parenting styles, and moral environment…were crucial to defining…who was to be considered European. ('Racial Histories' 197)

With the appearance of studies like Gauri Viswanathan's influential *Outside the Fold*, which point suggestively to how racial and religious identities might form interlocking and mutually constitutive categories,[20] the examination of religion-based race has gained increased legitimacy among some premodernists (see, e.g., Buell, Heng, Lampert[-Weissig], Ziegler 198).

In the attempt to suggest how we might rethink the past, I should therefore begin with a modest, stripped-down working hypothesis: that 'race' is one of the primary names we have – a name we retain precisely for the strategic, epistemological, and political commitments it recognizes – attached to a repeating tendency, of the gravest import, to demarcate human beings through differences among humans that are selectively essentialized as absolute and fundamental, in order to distribute positions and powers differentially to human groups. Race-making thus operates as specific historical occasions in which strategic essentialisms are posited and assigned through a variety of practices and pressures, so

as to construct a hierarchy of peoples for differential treatment. My understanding, thus, is that *race is a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human differences, rather than a substantive content.*

Since the differences selected for essentialism will vary in the *longue durée* – perhaps battening on bodies, physiognomy, and somatic attributes in one location; perhaps on social practices, religion, and culture in another; and perhaps a multiplicity of interlocking discourses elsewhere – the second half of this two-part article ('Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages II: Locations of Medieval Race') begins by focusing on the evidence of historical consequences and impacts on populations and individuals in the encounters between communities.

In such encounters, it is important to note that religion – the paramount source of authority in the Middle Ages – can function both socioculturally *and* biopolitically: subjecting peoples of a detested faith, for instance, to a political hermeneutics of theology that can biologize, define, and essentialize an entire community as fundamentally, and absolutely different in an inter-knotted cluster of ways. Nature and the sociocultural are thus not bifurcated spheres in medieval race-formation: they often crisscross in the practices, institutions, fictions, and laws of a political – and a *bio*political – theology operationalized on the bodies and lives of individuals and groups.

Short Biography

Geraldine Heng's research focuses on literary, cultural, and social encounters between worlds, and webs of exchange and negotiation between communities and cultures, especially when transacted through issues of gender, race, sexuality, and religion. Her book, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (533 pp, Columbia, 2003, 2004), traces the genealogy of a literary genre – romance (the foremost narrative genre of Europe over 400 years), and the King Arthur legend – in response to the traumas of the crusades and crusading history in the Near East. *Empire* was a finalist for the MLA First Book award and was SCMLA Best Book in 2004. Heng is completing *Race and the Middle Ages* (commissioned by the Medieval Academy of America and Toronto Press, 2012), and has begun *Global England: A Literary Archeology of the Global Middle Ages*. Her articles on postcolonial Singapore and Southeast Asian feminisms have been translated and re-anthologized several times. She also founded and co-directs, with Susan Noakes, the Global Middle Ages Project (G-MAP), the Mappamundi digital initiatives, and the Scholarly Community for the Globalization of the Middle Ages (SCGMA). She conceptualized 'Clash of Religions?' a Theories and Methods cluster, for *PMLA* (March 2011), and is co-editing, with Lynn Ramey, a special issue on The Global Middle Ages for the Global Circulation Project of *Literature Compass*. The Perceval endowment at the University of Texas was created to honor her work; she has also been awarded six research fellowships at U.S. universities, including Stanford, Brown, Wisconsin, and the University of California. She holds a PhD in literature from Cornell and is currently engaged in projects to investigate the utility of high-performance computing and data-mining techniques for humanities scholarship. For more information, please see: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/english/faculty/heng> and <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/gma/portal/>

Notes

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[1] First written in 2005, this paper – now a two-part article for *Literature Compass* – has taken six years to see publication. In those six years, I delivered some 16 talks based on the paper's contents, in the form of invited lectures, keynotes, and conference presentations at various universities, to audiences comprising race theorists, medievalists, literary scholars, historians and art historians, social scientists, religious studies scholars, and cultural studies scholars. Because the article has taken so long to appear in print, some of its insights have appeared in other formats, as a result of engaged and engaging interactions with interlocutors, some of whose work has found voice earlier than this. In the course of those six years, I have been grateful to many, but in particular to: Leah Marcus, David Theo Goldberg, Donna Haraway, Ato Quayson, Margo Hendricks, Karen Bassi, Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Marc Schachter, Priscilla Wald, Cathy Davidson, Srinivas Aravamudan, Heather Love, Bob Stacey, David Nirenberg, Stephen Feinstein, Lawrence Wheeler, Rick Emmerson, David Staines, Mary-Jo Arn, Chris Baswell, Helen Solterer, Dan Donoghue, James Simpson, Dyan Elliott, Holly Tucker, Gabrielle Schwartz, Ana Paula Ferreira, Philomena Essed, Susan Noakes, Jonathan Boyarin, Lynn Enterline, Suvir Kaul, Joe Bristow, David Sorkin, Felicity Nussbaum, Kathy Lavezzo, Julie Couch, Judith Ferster, John Ganim, John Plummer, James Brundage, Jane Chance, Joe Campana, Kathy Biddick, Sylvia Tomasch, David Benson, Emily Steiner, Arun Saldanha, Bali Sahota, Terry Kelley, Barbara Fuchs, Lynn Ramey, Ania Loomba, Kathryn Lynch, and Elaine Treharne. To Regenia Gagnier, I owe profound thanks for her intellectual generosity and the appearance of these arguments in print.

[2] For the text of Canon 68, see Schroeder 584. For summaries of English rulings, see Roth (*History*) 95–6. On the badge in Europe, see Grayzel 68–9. The literature on medieval English Jews is vast. Adler, Richardson, Roth (*History*), and Mundill provide standard points of entry. England was the first to expel its Jewish population; in 1496, Portugal was the last (France expelled and readmitted Jews several times in the Middle Ages, and only permanently in 1394).

[3] For massacres in Germany, see Eidelberg. Chroniclers documenting Jewish slaughter at Richard I's coronation include Richard of Devizes 3–4; Roger of Howden 3:33–4, Roger of Wendover 1:176–7, and William of Newburgh 1:308–10, 564–71.

[4] Trachtenberg surveys several traditions, including Jewish possession of horns, a tail (44–52) and a goat's beard (46). Biller examines how a male menses or hemorrhoidal flow is established in 13th century University of Paris theological quodlibets ('Christian or "Scientific"?' and 'A "Scientific" View'); Ziegler (187) tracks the flux in texts of physiognomy; and see Marcus on the relationship of the 'bloody flux' to Passion Friday (250). Johnson offers the fullest account of how Christian political theology accrues in stages the fiction of the bloody flow. Biller ('Proto-racial Thought' 177) offers Caesarius of Heisterbach and Berthold of Regensburg ('*ein stinkender Jude*') on the smell of Jews, and Matthew Paris on the Jewish face ('*facies Judaica*'); see also Marcus on Caesarius' depiction of the 'evil odour' (255). For Jewish phenotypes and somatic features in medieval art, see Mellinkoff I: 127–9, and Strickland 95–155. Blood libels insist that Jews need Christian blood, especially for Passover rites, one reason for the ritual murder of Christian children (the flux efficiently overdetermines this: blood is also needed because Jewish men are supposed to congenitally bleed).

[5] See Seymour et al. 2:752–3, 763. Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* has a similar formulation (Babbington and Lumby 1:50–3; ethnographic polarities based on phenotype, biomarkers, and color are also posited by texts on physiognomy. Biller ('Proto-racial Thought in Medieval Science') surveys the more influential medieval encyclopedias and medical texts describing how color and biomarkers reveal the moral, psychological, and intellectual character of human groups.

[6] See Devisse 72–9, for conventions depicting the Baptist's executioner and Christ's torturers as black Africans. Figure 1 is from Devisse 74; Fig. 2 from 92; Fig. 3 from 71. Images from Devisse are reproduced by generous consent of the Menil Foundation, Houston/Hickey & Robertson, Houston. On romance, see, e.g., Heng, and Metlitzki, chapter 6. On *chansons de geste*, see, e.g., Daniel, and de Weever.

[7] My discussion of why race has been located exclusively in modernity merely points to a blind spot in academic culture. Needless to say, it does not detract from the value of, and my admiration for, the work of these and other authors on modern race. I also apologize for naming representative exemplars here: the scholarship on race is vast, and rather than devote this article to summarizing more than half a century's work in race theory and critical race studies, I offer exemplars whose studies include extensive bibliographies that can be consulted as starting points.

[8] Kwame Anthony Appiah's 1990 'Race', opposing *biology*, in high modernist racism, to *theology* in pre-racial premodernity, is still widely cited in (especially undergraduate) courses on race. A keynote by Balibar ('Election/Selection') for a 2003 UCHRI conference, 'tRaces: Race, Deconstruction, Critical Theory', shows how little has changed in race theory, despite deconstruction, when it maintains that 'the biological' is to racism what 'the theological' is to 'pre-Modern discriminations' – thus continuing race studies' habit of polar oppositions (Balibar, 'Election' 2).

[9] I owe the impetus for the following arguments on temporalities, premodernity, and modernity to Ann Stoler's marvelous reading of origins in her 'Racial Histories'. Quotations are from p. 191.

[10] Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire* 73; Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 'masks', 61ff.; see also Goldberg's important formulations on cultural race, 'ethnorace', and the 'ethnoracial' (70–8).

[11] For a trenchant critique of Western exceptionalism and grand narratives of scientific transformation, see Hart ('Explanandum', *Civilizations*, *Algebra*). See especially Biagioli, Terrall, Galison and Stump on the Scientific Revolution and Goldstone on the Industrial Revolution and multiple economic and demographic modernities. Also useful is the symposium on 'Eurocentrism, Sinocentrism and World History'. In the last three or four decades,

euromedievalists have also critiqued the modern/premodern divide, most recently under the rubric of 'periodization'. For an influential early example, see Jauss. Haskin's 1927 volume on the 'renaissance' of the 12th century may perhaps be seen as a precursor moment. Euromedievalist critiques have focused, among other investments, on literary history (Summit and Wallace), 'neo-medievalism' in political writing (Holsinger, Lampert[-Weissig]), stories of reading and queer relationalities (Dinshaw), epistemologies of feudalism and sovereignty (Davis), and the politics of knowledge- and disciplinary formations (Biddick, *Typological*).

[12] For other comparisons between 11th century Sung China and 18th century Europe, see Hartwell's 'Revolution' 155. Much scholarly work decentering the West has been inspired, of course, by Joseph Needham's magisterial studies on the history of science, and in particular Chinese science and technology. Rondo Cameron, Eric Jones, and Jan de Vries dismiss an Industrial Revolution in the West or qualitative distinctions between modern and premodern growth (Goldstone 327). For David Levine and Alexander Woodside (Goldstone 331), Michael Mann and Alan McFarlane (Goldstone 347), 'modern' growth began in the early or high Middle Ages. Janet Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony* also remains invaluable.

[13] I elaborate the politics of temporality more fully in 'Holy War Redux'.

[14] Medievalists, however, have long been interested in questions of race. Earlier scholarship conjured with 'the Celtic races', 'Germanic stock', 'Indo-Europeans', 'the Anglo-Saxon race', *inter alia*, as more than contingently heuristic categories, and discussed relationships between ethnicity, lineage, tribe, *natio*, *gens*, blood, linguistic affiliations, ties to territory, etc. For an example of more recent thinking on Anglo-Saxons, race, and ethnogenesis, see Harris. On 12th-century Anglo-Norman and Anglo-Saxon English as merging ethnoraces via the manipulation of Jews, see Cohen. Twenty-first century scholarship on medieval race has tended increasingly to focus on non-Christians or non-Europeans such as Muslims, on blackness and fantasmatic Africans in literature and art, Jews, and to a lesser extent, Mongols or − rarely − 'Gypsies'. I consider a selection of medievalist scholarship below, in Part II of this article, and in a monograph-in-process, Race and the Middle Ages, commissioned by the Medieval Academy of America. Studies of medieval 'otherness' and 'difference' are also on the rise, and may or may not invoke race/ethnicity in discussing 'internal foreigners' such as Hungarians (e.g., Hoffmann, Sager), 'the Celtic fringe' (e.g., Knight, Lilley, Lydon, Moll, Muldoon), or pre-conversion pagan eastern Europe or contestations in Spain (e.g., Hoffmann, Kagay, Mariscal, Nirenberg). Importantly, medievalists have shown that studying the Middle Ages reconfigures our understanding of key contemporary concepts such as gender, sexuality, national formations, and even literacy. Race should prove little exception.

[15] Foundational historiography's exclusions make Colin Richmond ask, 'Why does it have to be a history of the Jews in medieval Oxford which discusses the Jews of Oxford in the Middle Ages? They were not unimportant…quite the contrary—on any measure of "importance", whether social, economic, political, cultural, or intellectual, for two hundred years the Jewish community of Oxford was important' (214).

Richmond discusses the Oxford don H. E. Salter's *Medieval Oxford*, which 'ignored [the Jews]', the 'less than three pages' that mention Jews in Michael Prestwich's magisterial 567-page volume on Edward I, a volume that amply considers Edward's treatment of the Welsh and Scots, and James Holt's *Magna Carta*, which dismisses 'the anti-Jewish clauses 10 and 11 as "superficial" ' (222). Concluding that 'non-Jewish historians ignored the Jews' (214), Richmond wonders if medieval Jews upset the myth of an English England: 'The history of the Jews in England enables us to see that it is myth…Is this not why the Jewish history of England is not taught in schools—because it is a type of anti-history as perceived by those who finally determine national curricula?' (221).

Part 2 of 'Invention of Race' addresses how England's collective identity as a national body united across disparate peoples is accomplished through the emergence of a visible and undifferentiated Jewish minority into race. Kathy Lavezzo is currently undertaking a project documenting the debt of England's architecture to medieval English Jewry. English historiography, of course, is by no means unique: Menocal astutely remarks, e.g., of medieval Spain: '*Spaniard* is implicitly defined in racial and religious terms. The Cid is a Spaniard, but Ibn Hazm and Maimonides are not; they are an Arab and Jew respectively' (284 n. 17).

[16] In contrast to foundational historiography, there exists a large and growing body of scholarship on medieval English Jews that furnishes ample material for counter-narratives and alternative histories of England. Studies range from Anglo-Saxon England's conceptual understanding of Jews and Judaism before the 11th century post-Conquest arrival of Jews (e.g., Scheil) to careful analysis of records of taxation and tallages, registries of debt and financial transactions, trials and imprisonment records, civic and municipal documents, laws and statutes (e.g., Dobson [*York*], Hillaby, Lipman, Rokéah, Roth [*Oxford*], Stacey), the political implications of manuscript and codicological artifacts (Bale), and the economic and political bases of expulsion (e.g., Abrahams, Menache, Mundill), among many kinds of archival scrutiny. Literary interpretation of how Jews are portrayed in medieval English literature − an endeavor not irrelevant to historiography − is also a large, riveting, and expanding field, and can be bibliographically rendered by subject, genre, author, and *topoi*, though this is impossible to attempt in a short article.

[17] Snowden, for example, has argued at length that antiquity is a time 'before color prejudice'. The work of the few named here are examples of studies on antiquity that have appeared in recent years, and which with growing frequency conjure with categories of ethnicity and race. Also important is the work of Jonathan Hall (though his category of choice is 'ethnicity') and Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*, despite controversies of scholarship (see Lefkowitz and Rogers, and Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back*). The wonderful term 'deep time' is Dimock's (3).

[18] Bartlett (*Making of Europe* 197) puts it like this: 'while the language of race—*gens*, *natio*, ''blood'', ''stock'', etc—is *biological*, its medieval reality was almost entirely *cultural*'. Bartlett's subscription to the preeminence of biology in race matters wavers, however, when he grants that medieval practices which assume religious identity to be coterminous with ontological and essential nature can be considered racial (at least by other medievalists): 'Many scholars see in the later Middle Ages a tendency for racial discrimination to become sharper and racial boundaries to be more shrilly asserted. The hardening of anti-Jewish feeling between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries is recognized by all who work on the subject and they disagree only on their dating of the crucial change for the worse' (*Making of Europe* 236). Bartlett's more recent work places greater emphasis on blood and descent groups in establishing race in the Middle Ages: for instance, because 'environmental influence' is behind the thinking of Bartolomeus Anglicus and Albertus Magnus in their sorting of human kinds based on climatological determinism, Bartlett believes that their linking of skin color, physiognomy, and phenotype to interior dispositions of group character is not racial, but environmental ('Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity' 46–7). In his latest work, Bartlett eschews race altogether in favor of 'ethnicity' ('Illustrating Ethnicity in the Middle Ages').

Biller's studies, among the most impressive and arresting work on medieval race today, focus on the evidence of medieval scientific texts, and on intellectual discourses circulating in medieval universities, in entrenching and diffusing theories of race in the Middle Ages. Epstein, for whom 'race/color' is a compound term (9), focuses on the mixing of kinds in the eastern Mediterranean, concluding that 'back in the Middle Ages, color prejudice existed, at times even with few or no people of color to deprecate' (13). In fact, the 'literal valuing of people crossed beyond simple color symbolism or even prejudice into a way of thinking that closely resembled modern forms of racism, in a vocabulary suited to the times' (201).

Nirenberg's interests have shifted in recent years from blood, genealogical descent, and body-centered essential natures ('Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities', 'Conversion, Sex, and Segregation'), to a more agnostic stance on medieval race, whether named explicitly as race or not ('Was There Race Before Modernity?', 'Race and the Middle Ages'). Commenting that 'All racisms are attempts to ground discriminations, whether social, economic, or religious, in biology and reproduction. All claim a congruence of ''cultural'' categories with ''natural'' ones' ('Was There Race Before Modernity?' 235, 'Race and the Middle Ages' 74), he also adds, 'I am not making…claim[s] that race did exist in the Middle Ages, or that medieval people were racist. Such statements would be reductive and misleading, obscuring more than they reveal' ('Race and the Middle Ages' 74); 'Nor do I aspire to anything so provincial as a proof that late medieval discriminations were racial' ('Was There Race Before Modernity?' 239). Nirenberg's ambivalence (he also simultaneously inveighs against modernists who claim that race and racism are exclusively modern phenomena) may owe something to his conviction that 'any history of race will be at best provocative and limited; at worst a reproduction of racial logic itself, in the form of a genealogy of ideas' ('Was There Race Before Modernity?' 262).

The contributors to Hahn's issue perform supple readings of literary texts and images, within established paradigms of body-centered race; in the same issue, Jordan's response to the articles expresses a number of reservations, and the view that it is unuseful to apply paradigms of race to the medieval period, especially to imaginative literature. Since it is impossible to do justice to premodernist work on race in this summary survey (condensed here in endnotes because of main-text length limitations), I highly recommend that readers consult the scholarship listed in the Works Cited. Medievalist work on race is unpacked more fully in my monograph-in-process.

[19] The Introduction in Eliav-Feldon et al. discusses examples of those who believe that the key determinant to whether we can discuss race and racisms in the Middle Ages is what medieval peoples thought about their own identity and behavior. The insistence that the word 'race' must first exist in European languages prior to racial phenomena and practices has also led to disagreements over where the term first appears. De Miramon, arguing against common belief that Iberia is where the word 'race' first issues, finds late-15th century French poems as the earliest provenance. He also finds that the sorting of kinds performed by the word closely relates race to nobility and noble blood.

[20] See also Chakrabarty, in Ghosh and Chakrabarty 165, on 'homologies between racism and [religious] communalism'. Fredrickson wavers on whether premodern race exists and whether religion can constitute racial discourses. He outlines conditions through which anti-Judaism becomes anti-Semitism, and anti-Semitism becomes racism (19), which seems to allow for the possibility of premodern race, given the fulfillment of his conditions. But Fredrickson also concludes that only 'the racial antisemitism of the modern era' (23) constitutes racism in 'full flower' (47) since the 'supernaturalist racism' (46) of the 'late medieval and early modern periods' was 'primarily religious rather than naturalistic or scientific' (46) and 'racism had to be emancipated from Christian universalism' (47) first.

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