

The recent global surge in public condemnation of institutionalised and individual racism, highlighted in the Black Lives Matter movement, together with the decolonisation drive in higher education, clearly demonstrates the prevalence and polarising nature of race in the modern day. Evidence of controversial claims placing medieval Europe as "a pre-racial space" with a "white Christian past" used by modern racial supremacists to justify acts of racial hatred, thus demonstrates the need for in-depth study and reconsideration of medieval attitudes towards race.<sup>1</sup>

I intend to use my research opportunity to explore the dynamism of medieval interactions between Latin Christendom and the often conflicting socio-cultural standpoints of the wider world. Therefore, an analysis of the transnational relations reflected in the 13th century Hereford World map's iconography will not only allow me to contribute to the latest strand in medieval historiography, but also provide a new avenue to access and influence very topical and urgent contemporary racial debates.

### **My Research question**

To what extent were medieval European attitudes towards race reflected within the Hereford World map?

The significance of my question lies not only in the potential impact on contemporary racial discourse, but also in the opportunity to demonstrate the importance of visual sources to new and wider audiences. The Hereford map is important because it provides a visual representation of Latin Christendom's global relations through the spatial placement of monstrous iconography and emphasis of spiritual salvation centred at Jerusalem bordered by 'civilised' commercial Europe. Moreover, the ambiguity concerning iconographical interpretations, authorship and basic dating establishes the map's central role in sparking fresh historiographical controversy and furthering our understanding of the medieval period.

### **Objectives of the research**

My project has three clear aims:

#### **Contribute to the latest strands of medieval historiography**

Latest trends in medieval research reflect the controversy and values prominent in contemporary society and as such, I aim to contribute to and increase non-specialist engagement with the growing historiography on medieval race relations championed by the likes of Geraldine Heng.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Collaborate with Hereford Cathedral**

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<sup>1</sup> David Perry, 'Introduction', in Andrew Albin, Mary C. Erler, Thomas O'Donnell, Nicholas L. Paul and Nina Rowe (eds.), *Whose Middle Ages* (New York, 2019), pp. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2018).

The project aims to use the Hereford map as a lens to view medieval European relations with cultures beyond the frontiers of Latin Christendom and to present the findings in both written and visual forms. To facilitate this, I aim to collaborate with Hereford Cathedral to access their visual material and existing knowledge on the spatial, temporal and spiritual placement of iconography on the Hereford map.

### Visually present the outcome of my project

I aspire to present the outcome of my project both traditionally in an academic essay and visually, in a YouTube video, to engage an audience beyond my immediate academic community and facilitate greater social change concerning modern racial assumptions. By aiming to increase my research impact through video, I intend to popularise the use of visual sources such as the Hereford map as an excellent source of knowledge and debate.

### **Project Summary**

Initially, my project will focus on the concept of race in the medieval period. Did Europe's Latin Christians view themselves as one homogeneous race? How did they view those of opposing or 'hybrid' cultural standpoints? What has been the modern legacy of these medieval ideas? The process of creating questions will enable me to divide my project into more accessible sections to research.

In order to answer these questions, I would focus on the influence of 13th century scientific and biblical interpretational innovations on seminal medieval race theories. As well as the attitudes of Latin Christendom's clerical elite demonstrated on the Hereford map, my research would endeavour to compare differing societal worldviews taking into account geography and gender on medieval race relations. Once researched, my final judgement would be written as an essay and potentially circulated in the Josephine Butler Scholarly Journal and the History Department alumni magazine, Symeon.

The final stage of the project would focus on the production of an informative YouTube video that would take advantage of the public platform to allow non-expert engagement. The video would utilise visual material from the Hereford Cathedral in combination with short interviews that I would conduct with leading medievalists of varying geographical specialities. Therefore, the video would provide exciting cutting-edge content in an accessible format for a wider audience.

Overall, in light of the topical and impassioned nature of race in global contemporary society, the significance of my project lies equally in both the prospect of contributing to an exciting new strand of medieval historiography, but also the opportunity to influence significant contemporary debates concerning the medieval roots of racism.