

CHAPTER TWO

Race, Environment, Culture

Medieval Indigeneity, Race and Racialization

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The study of the history of race and racialization is not complete without a full and thoughtful engagement with indigeneity, both as a concept and a term that has its own history; and, in turn, a full and thoughtful engagement with indigeneity would be fundamentally flawed if it were not attentive to the writings and other forms of teaching by Indigenous writers, scholars and artists working today. This chapter is an effort to think through the medieval practices of racialization and constructions of race, focusing particularly on the ways in which indigeneity was understood during the Middle Ages. This effort is informed by pre-modern critical race theory and is attentive to the work of Indigenous researchers and artists, through both the written and the spoken word, to whom I am grateful for sharing their knowledge.

This chapter was difficult to write, in spite of the fact that I have been working for almost thirty years on the history of how medieval Christian Europeans thought about and described bodily difference and religious alterity. I foreground this difficulty as a way of making explicit the challenges that are posed by a respectful engagement with Indigenous epistemologies. Tarren Andrews addresses these challenges in the brilliant introduction to her co-edited special issue of *English Language Notes*, ‘Indigenous Futures and Medieval Pasts’:

Recent Indigenous studies scholarship assumes an advanced degree of experience with contemporary Indigeneity that many readers simply do not have and cannot easily access. In general, scholars raised outside Indigenous communities and trained outside a dedicated Indigenous studies program lack the theoretical and epistemological foundations to engage with Indigenous studies in a way that does not essentialize and appropriate Indigenous knowledges.

(Andrews 2020: 11)

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In other words, it is not enough to do the reading; learning to recognize the land one lives on, seeking to live in good relations that are characterized by generosity and a sense of kinship, and having a good heart and good mind are also fundamental. This is a long path, and I am aware of how few steps I have taken on it so far. Mindful, though, of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's words in her important article 'Land as Pedagogy', I am going to do my best in this chapter to 'wear my teachings' in a way that honours and expresses gratitude to those who have shared their knowledge:¹

Although individuals have the responsibility to self-actualize within this system, intelligence in this context is not an individual's property to own; once an individual has carried a particular teaching around to the point where they can easily embody that teaching, they, then, also become responsible for sharing it according to the ethics and protocols of the system. This is primarily done by modeling the teaching or, as Elder Edna Manitowabi says, 'wearing your teachings'.

(Simpson 2014: 11)

RACE, NATION, LAND

The English term 'indigenous' is derived from the late Latin *indigena*, *indigenus*, meaning born in a particular country, or native to it. Already in the seventeenth century, the word was used to refer to newly colonized regions: Thomas Browne writes in his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, 'In many parts thereof it be confessed there bee at present swarmes of Negroes serving under the Spaniard, yet were they all transported from Africa, since the discovery of Columbus, and are not indigenous or proper natives of America' (1646: 325). Here, the distinction is between enslaved Black people, brought from Africa to the Americas, and 'proper natives'. The word 'proper' is used by Browne in the same sense it has in French, *propre* meaning 'one's own' or 'belonging to', thus magnifying or doubling the sense. The use of the term 'indigenous' expanded substantially within the fields of ethnography and anthropology in the nineteenth century; only in the late twentieth century did it become a meaningful term in law, which is one reason it has become such an important term in North American usage (*Oxford English Dictionary* 1989).²

While the term appears in English only in the early modern period, the concept is already present in medieval texts, where an essential or ontological link is posited between the people and the land they live on. The widely disseminated medieval encyclopedia *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus provides an extended account of how the properties of various lands give rise to the properties – including anatomy, physiology and even habits of mind – found in the people who live in those lands. The following pages will provide some background on ancient and medieval climate theory that informs Bartholomaeus's encyclopedia before turning to a comparison with some related passages appearing in *The Book of John Mandeville*.³ The second section of this chapter illustrates how the relationship of people and the land they inhabit is manifested in medieval ethnography and romance, drawing upon Gerald of Wales's *Descriptio Kambriae* (Description of Wales) and Thomas of Kent's *Roman de toute chevalerie* (Romance of All Chivalry), while the third section concludes by exploring some modern contexts for how indigeneity might be understood.

With the reintroduction of the Aristotelian corpus during the thirteenth century, accompanied by the rich commentaries of Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), the view of natural diversity that had been inherited from

Pliny, by way of Solinus and Isidore of Seville, was substantially altered. It was no longer sufficient to describe and label the heterogeneous range of monstrous races and fabulous animals; instead, it became necessary to categorize them, to account for how their unusual features had come to be and to explain how bodily differences such as skin colour shaded off into monstrosity, marking a significant epistemological shift.⁴ The importance of climate and, consequently, native land in determining the natural diversity of humankind is emphasized in both the astronomical and the medical tradition. In the *De sphaera*, a popular treatise based on Ptolemy's cosmology, the astronomer Sacrobosco explains that Ethiopia must be located at the equator, that is, in the torrid zone, for (he writes) the inhabitants 'would not be so black if they were born in the temperate habitable zone' (Thorndike 1949: 107, 137). Sacrobosco's commentators, influenced by Aristotelian explanations of causation and change, elaborated on this passage enthusiastically. One early thirteenth-century commentator took Sacrobosco's words as an opportunity for a digression on the physiology of the people of Ethiopia: 'An example of the blackening of Ethiopians is the cooking of golden honey. First it is golden, then reddish, and finally by long cooking it becomes black and bitter, and that which was at first sweet is now salty. And it is just this way all over Ethiopia' (Thorndike 1949: 334; my translation). This anonymous commentator goes on to explain that the Ethiopians' blood is drawn to the surface of the skin by the great heat, where it becomes 'black and bitter, and in this way', he concludes, 'it can be clearly seen why the Ethiopian is black' (334; my translation).⁵

In the mid-thirteenth century, the encyclopedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus took up the explanations of the effects of the climate on bodies found in the medical tradition and, influenced by the astronomy of Sacrobosco, integrated these views into his geographical survey of the world. In other words, he took medical theories that distinguished between northern and southern bodies in general and applied them to a range of specific countries. In doing this, he participates in a larger late medieval shift that saw a realignment of the properties associated with the four cardinal directions, and the consequent emergence of an idea of northern whiteness as not a peculiar extreme but rather a desirable ideal (Akbari 2000). Bartholomaeus's encyclopedia was extremely popular both in its Latin original and in vernacular translations; the late fourteenth-century translation by John Trevisa was among the earliest texts printed by William Caxton. Bartholomaeus's description of world geography, found in book 15 of his *De proprietatibus rerum*, follows the outline of world geography found in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*, an encyclopedia of the seventh century. But by integrating medical and astronomical theories with the standard geography received from Isidore, Bartholomaeus is very different from his contemporary encyclopedist Vincent of Beauvais, who largely just follows Isidore. Even though Vincent is clearly familiar with the theories of Ibn Sina and Constantinus Africanus, and even quotes the relevant passages from each of them elsewhere in his enormous encyclopedia, he does not draw out the implications of their work within the geographical sections. In his geography, by contrast, Bartholomaeus takes pains to note the correspondence of climate to the properties of the land, and then the correspondence of the land to the plants, animals and people that inhabit it. Those of the northern countries, such as Albania and 'Almania' (Germany), for example, are large-bodied and fair-skinned, with blond, straight hair (1975–88: 728; [1601] 1964: 15.7, 627; and 1975–88: 732; [1601] 1964: 15.15, 630).⁶ Those of the southern countries, such as Ethiopia and Libya, have smaller bodies, with dark skin and 'crisp' hair (754; 15.52, 649; and 779; 15.91, 671). Monstrosities – that is, bodies that are 'wondrous and horribilche yshape' – are found here, in the torrid regions, where excess of heat affects conception and digestion (754; 15.52, 649).

Yet Bartholomaeus goes still further. In his geography, he repeatedly emphasizes not just the diversity of humanity, but its balance: each climatic extreme, each geographical location, has its opposite or its counterpart. Thus he writes of Gallia that ‘by the dyuersite of heuene, face and colour of men and hertes and witte and quantite of bodyes ben dyuers. Therefore Rome gendreth heuy men, Grece light men, Affrica gyleful men, and Fraunce kyndeliche fers men and sharpe of witte’ (763; 15.66, 657). In his entry on ‘Europe’, we can see the binary opposition that underlies this exuberant diversity, as well as the hierarchical relation that emerges from that binary:

Yif this partie of the worlde be lesse than Asia, yitte is it pere therto in nombre and noblete of men, for as Plius seithe, he [the sun] fedeth men that ben more huge in bodie, more stronge in myghte and vertue, more bolde of herte, more faire and semeliche of shape, thanne men of the cuntres and londes of Asia other of Affrica. For the sonne abideth longe ouer the Affers, men of Affrica, and brennen and wasten humours and maken ham short of body, blacke of face, with crispe here. And for spirites passe outte atte pores that ben open, so they be more cowardes of herte.

An the cuntraye is of men of the northe londe: for coldenes that is withoute stoppeth the pores and breedeth humours of the bodye [that] maketh men more ful and huge; and coolde that is modir of whitenesse maketh hem the more white in face and in skynne, and vapoures and spirites ben ysmyten inward and maken hatter withinne and so the more bolde and hardy.

(752–3; 15.50, 648)

This binary opposition of northern and southern bodies, their qualities predicated on the land that these bodies emerge from, is not particularly innovative. It appears in the *Pantegni* of Constantinus Africanus, as well as the writings of Ibn Sina and Albertus Magnus. What is unusual, however, is Bartholomaeus’s praise of the ‘semeliche’ bodies of the ‘bolde and hardy’ northern men, and denigration of the southern men who are ‘cowardes of herte’. Here, not the temperate mean but the northern extreme is presented as the beautiful and desirable ideal. This marks an important transition in the process of racialization, the emergence of a new phase in ‘race-making’ or ‘race-thinking’, to use the terms that Geraldine Heng (2018b) and Cord Whitaker (2019a), respectively, have used to describe the process of racialization in pre-modern literature.

Heng’s *Invention of Race* has made a crucial intervention into the study of racialization and has done more than any other work of scholarship to cause pre-modern critical race theory to become an essential element in the field of medieval studies. Heng argues that it is possible to observe the fundamental continuity of the process of ‘race-making’ over time while also historicizing particular instances of racialization: ‘This is not to claim ... that race-making throughout the medieval period is in any way uniform, homogeneous, constant, stable, or free of contradiction or local differences Neither is it to concede, in reverse, that local differences ... must always render it impossible to think translocally in the medieval period’ (Heng 2018b: 33). This is a difficult balance to maintain, at once recognizing the continuity of racialization over time while remaining attentive to the specificity of particular forms of racialization in different times and places. The balance is made more tenuous by the fact that Heng assimilates religious orientation to race, presenting Jewish identity as the foundational ‘case study’ for pre-modern race-making, similar to yet distinct from ‘the racing of the Islamic Saracen’ (55).⁷ David Nirenberg, writing of the ways in which Jewish identity is inextricably bound up with the

pre-modern history of racialization, signals the difficulty of recognizing both continuity and disjunction, and indicates that the choice of which to select in a given moment – continuity or disjunction – is necessarily ‘strategic’:

There will always be strategic reasons for choosing to represent the relationship of ideas about the natural reproduction of culture that are scattered across time and space in terms of filiations or, conversely, in terms of disjuncture (or even to refuse the possibility of such an idea at all). Yet the choice can only be situational and polemical, in the sense that its recognition of significance springs from the needs and struggles (theological, political, philosophical, professional, etc.) of a specific moment. The polemics produced by such choices are invaluable when they stimulate us to comparison and self-consciousness. If, however, we treat them as anything but strategic, we simply exchange one lack of consciousness for another.

(Nirenberg 2014: 189)

Nirenberg’s insistence on the ‘situational’ nature of the choice, the ‘specific moment’ in which it takes place, is crucial. It illuminates not only Heng’s own work, where the expansive argument of *The Invention of Race* consists of a ‘strategic’ choice to disrupt earlier efforts to historicize race that failed to recognize the continuities that link pre-modern and modern racialization, but also the critiques of Heng’s work that have begun to appear. Sarah Pearce’s (2020) stern and restrictive critique, in particular, can be read as motivated by ‘strategic’ considerations that are deeply intertwined with disciplinary formations, not only the history versus literature divide that underlies much current scholarship on histories of race but also the particular roles of Jewish studies and Iberian studies (and, increasingly, Islamic studies) within the historiography of race.⁸

In his *Black Metaphors*, Whitaker is both more cautious and more nuanced than Heng with regard to the relationship of religion and race. At the same time, his choice of terminology – ‘race-thinking’, as opposed to Heng’s ‘race-making’ – subtly manifests the complicated way that racial and religious difference have been intertwined, both during the Middle Ages and in the present day. The term ‘race-thinking’ refers at once to the medieval past and to Hannah Arendt’s use of that same term in her important article ‘Race-Thinking Before Racism’. Published in January 1944, Arendt’s article identifies ‘race-thinking’ as the nineteenth-century precursor to the horrors of the twentieth; yet Arendt also makes room for the eighteenth-century ‘roots’ (1944: 36) of this phenomenon, recognizing that it has a deep history.⁹ While Whitaker does not write about Arendt in *Black Metaphors*, he does make the debt explicit in the dissertation that lies behind the book, in which the engagement with Arendt specifically evokes the historical moment when religion has been racialized in the most extreme way (Whitaker 2009: 8–21). This connection between medieval and modern manifestations of race-thinking is both powerful and moving, reminding us of the ways in which the present is always connected to multiple moments in the past, in a kind of intertemporal web. Nirenberg might call this a ‘strategic’ move.

Whitaker’s *Black Metaphors* also provides a useful perspective on how we can historicize racialization. He suggests that

medieval race is arguably different from modern race because it was not yet loaded with the history of early modern and modern chattel slavery and the ‘scientific’ racial taxonomies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nonetheless, it exposes what

remains true about race today: in addition to biology and phenotype, race also engages culture and customs. At their cores, medieval and modern race are quite similar.

(Whitaker 2019a: 76)

The climate-based racialization we find in Bartholomaeus Anglicus and his precursors is not identical with modern ‘racial taxonomies’, not least in its primary focus on environment rather than heredity. It is, however, a scientific system for explaining the diversity of humankind, which posits an essential linkage between the land and the living creatures – plant, animal, human – that are proper to it.

In some ways, this theory of how climate governs land and, consequently, governs all the things that grow from it seems ideal and even utopian in its harmonious diversity.¹⁰ On the other hand, we cannot forget that this theory also contains within it the elements of an intellectual system, based on the relationship of climate to human physiology, that could be used to justify the subjugation of peoples and would be used before long to justify the institution of slavery. As early as the sixteenth century, the philosopher Jean Bodin suggested that the principles of political administration should be tailored to match the predisposition of different national groups (Tooley 1953: 80–1). In other words, Bodin suggested that form of government would vary depending upon the tractability of each national group, whose behavioural characteristics were determined by the land that they emerged from, as affected by the climate. Here, Bodin uses Aristotelian notions concerning the role of climate in human development and applies them to the question of how to govern effectively (80–1). And even earlier, in the late fifteenth century, Aristotelian climatic theories were being applied to the Indigenous peoples of North America. These so-called Indians were, supposedly, identical to the Indians of India: they tended by virtue of their climate to be prone to disease, easily drunk (like the Ethiopians) and generally debauched. Their enslavement under European settler colonialism was thus rationalized as biological destiny.¹¹ Finally, climatic theory was used to explain the suitability of Africans for enslavement, until climate-based explanations of their supposed natural inferiority were replaced, during the eighteenth century, by theories based primarily on heredity.

Bartholomaeus’s encyclopedia was widely read, and we can see the impact of its account of how the properties of a land give rise to the properties of its people in another widely disseminated book: *The Book of John Mandeville*. Written (in French) just over a century after Bartholomaeus Anglicus’s encyclopedia and almost immediately translated into a wide range of vernaculars as well as into Latin, Mandeville’s *Book* builds upon its precursor by using climate theory to provide a sense of the underlying natural order of the world. Bodily diversity is accounted for both in terms of heredity and in terms of climatic influence, though climate continues to be the main focus. The existence of so-called monstrous races is explained as the consequence of the curse placed by Noah on the descendants of his son Ham following the Great Deluge; their monstrous features, however, are explained by the natural consequence of the climates they come to inhabit in exile, the torrid extremes of Ethiopia and India. For each land described, its climate – which gives each land its distinct properties – is identified as the cause that determines the anatomy and physiology of the inhabitants.

For example, in Mandeville’s account of the land of the Pygmies, the people are said to be only a few spans in height, which is appropriate to their climate. But, the author adds, when men of normal stature come there to live, their offspring are also of

a diminutive stature, like the Pygmies. The reason for this, he said, is that ‘the nature of the land is such’ (Mandeville 1967: 152; 2000: 22, 365).¹² Here, climate governs not only the physiology of the native inhabitants of the land but also that of those who pass through. The land affects not only those who have been there for generations but also those who come to live upon its soil. This suggests that, for Mandeville, the effects of climate are mutable; in other words, the bodily diversity of humanity is not essential but changeable depending upon the environment. In this, Mandeville resembles Albertus Magnus, who in his *De natura loci* suggests that if Ethiopians were removed from the first climate to the fourth or fifth climate (that is, from the area of the equator to a more temperate climate), within a few generations they would be altered: their offspring would have white skin and all the other attributes of northern climates.¹³ Albertus is unusual, however, in his strict application of Aristotelian theory to human physiology; it’s more common to see a mixture of climate theory and genealogical descent. We can see this, for example, in Bartholomaeus Anglicus’s chapter on ‘Pictavia’. Even though Bartholomaeus usually sticks to a climate-based theory of human diversity, here he inserts heredity into his account of the properties of the inhabitants of this land. Their qualities appear to be a strange combination of what might be found in more northern and more southern climates. Bartholomaeus explains that this is ‘no wondir’ because the men of Pictavia are of mixed descent, a combination of ‘Pictes’ and ‘Frenshe men’. They have the qualities of each nation, qualities that were first formed by ‘kynde of clymes’ (the nature of the climates) and subsequently combined through heredity (768; 15.22, 689). Here, two seemingly mutually exclusive theories of bodily diversity – climate and heredity – are linked together.

Another apparently anomalous case appears in Bartholomaeus’s account of India, which is amplified further in the account of India that we find in *The Book of John Mandeville*. As noted above, northern and southern climates produce extremes: the effects of climate produce bodily diversity that is at its greatest at the far North and South, and more moderate and subtle at the in-between climates. As Bartholomaeus puts it, in keeping with medieval medical theory:

In the north lond ben men hiye of stature and faire of shappe; by coldenesse of the owtwarde ayer the pores ben stopped and the kynde hete is holde withynne, and by virtue thereof the stature is hoge and the shappe of body faire and seemly. And ... men of the south lond ben contrarie to men of the north londe in stature and in shappe.

(694; 14.1, 593)

Not just men but also animals of the North are naturally large in size and white in colour: in northern countries such as Albania and Almania, therefore, the land is populated with ‘huge’ dogs and ‘huge’ fair-skinned men (728; 15.7, 627; and 732; 15.15, 630), whereas southern countries such as Ethiopia and Libya have dark inhabitants who are short in stature, with both men and beasts ‘wondirful and horribleche yshape’ (754; 15.52, 649).

India, however, is even more wonderful than these torrid regions of Libya and Ethiopia, because it contains not only those monstrous races whose bodies are ‘wondirliche yshape’, along with ‘beestes wondirliche yshape’, but also another kind of wonderful sight: it contains men of ‘grete stature’, men whose appearance would be perfectly normal in the colder climes of the North, but which is dramatically out of place in the far south. ‘Huge beestes’ and ‘grete houndes’ are found not in the far North, as climatic theory would

dictate, but ‘in longe space toward Ethiopia’ (770–1; 15.73, 661–2). It is natural to find ‘gret houndes’ in chilly Albania, and indeed they show up in that entry; the ‘grete houndes’ found in steamy India, however, are totally out of place (728; 15.7, 627). In *The Book of John Mandeville*, this anomaly appears again. The author describes India as a land that contains men and beasts that are extraordinary, owing not only to their unnatural stature but also to their white colour. In spite of the extreme heat, the narrator finds in India ‘huge’ snails, ‘gret white wormes’ and ‘lyouns alle white and as grete as oxen’ (142 and 145; 21, 349 and 353). In Bartholomaeus’s account of India and, still more, in Mandeville’s account, the experience of wonder is occasioned precisely by the fact that the climatic model is violated. This is something that we will see again shortly, when we see the travels of Alexander the Great into the far South, where he finds ‘white Ethiopians’.

In Bartholomaeus’s encyclopedia and, more briefly, in *The Book of John Mandeville*, we have seen how climate theory accounts for the underlying order of the world. We have also seen, however, anomalies. One of these concerns the intertwined function of environment and heredity, in the case of the people of Pictavia, who arise from the combination of two peoples, each formed by a different land. The other anomaly we have seen concerns the appearance of features that violate the expectations of climate theory. In broader terms, we have seen the scientific underpinnings of pre-modern race theory. Before the eighteenth century, when theories of race based on the role of heredity came to be dominant, writers produced climate-based explanations of the causes of bodily diversity that bear a close resemblance to those found in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts. From the thirteenth century to the late seventeenth, we find heredity and climate variously and inconsistently identified as the causes of bodily diversity. By the eighteenth century, however, we find a conception of bodily diversity that sees physical and behavioural differences as essential, fixed and immutable. Well before the period of the European slave trade in Africa, a system of knowledge had been developed that would facilitate and rationalize the process. Europeans were ready to enslave Africans and to attempt to exterminate Indigenous people long before these acts were underway. In this case at least, the discourse of race, and the process of racialization, came to exist before the exercise of power in the colonial setting.

CLIMATE IN ETHNOGRAPHY AND ROMANCE

Even before the emergence of the systematic linkage of the properties of the land and its people that we find in Bartholomaeus Anglicus’s mid-thirteenth-century encyclopedia, we find a more general association of land and people in the *Descriptio Kambriae* or *Description of Wales* written by Gerald of Wales in the late twelfth century. As Coral Lumbley has shown, Gerald’s account of the distinctive qualities of the Welsh people can be seen as part of a longer history of racialization, extending from the Anglo-Saxon riddles of the Exeter Book to the late medieval Welsh romance *Peredur* (also *Peredur son of Efrawg*, preserved in four manuscripts dating to the fourteenth century) (Lumbley 2019: 5–7). While Lumbley emphasizes skin colour (or what she calls ‘epidermal race’ [2]) in Gerald’s account, it is also worth noting the ways in which the physiological and anatomical properties of the Welsh emerge from the land they inhabit – even while other, heredity-based models of descent are also invoked in the very same passage. Gerald explains that the ‘cold nature’ of the ‘frozen polar regions’ gives rise to the bodily nature of the Saxons and the Germans, as well as the English – even though they no longer live as far North as they formerly did, the English retain the properties conferred on

them by their original frigid climate. Similarly, the Britons or Welsh retain the properties conferred on them by their own native land, 'the hot and arid regions of the Trojan plain'. These include not only visible bodily traits, including 'dark' or earthy colour, but also physiological traits that give rise to features of character, such as 'warmth of personality', 'hot temper' and 'confidence':

The Saxons and the Germans derive their cold nature from the frozen polar regions which lie adjacent to them. In the same way the English, although they now live elsewhere, still retain their outward fairness of complexion and their inward coldness of disposition from what nature had given them earlier on. The Britons, on the contrary, transplanted from the hot and arid regions of the Trojan plain, keep their dark coloring, which reminds one of the earth itself, their natural warmth of personality and their hot temper, all of which gives them confidence in themselves.

(Gerald of Wales 1978: 245)

Saxones igitur et Germani, a gelida poli regione cui subjacent, hanc contrahunt et naturae geliditatem. Angli quoque, quanquam olim a regione remoti, originali tamen natura tam exteriorem in candore qualitatem, quam etiam interiorem illam geliditatis, eadem ex causa, liquida scilicet et gelida complexionis natura, proprietatem inseparabiliter tenent. Britones autem e diverso ex calida et adusta Dardaniae plaga, quanquam in fines hos temperatos advecti, quia 'Coelum, non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt,' tam exterius fuscum illum cognatumque terrae colorem, quam etiam naturalem interius ex adusto humore calorem, unde securitas, originaliter trahunt.

(Gerald of Wales 1868: 193)

Here, a cold climate produces one set of traits, a hot climate, another; in each case, however, those traits absorbed from and produced by the native land continue to be carried even long after its people have been transplanted into new soil.

Gerald goes on to add a secondary explanation of the nature of the Welsh, this one based purely on heredity, without reference to climate. He explains that the Britons – that is, the Welsh – are one of three peoples descended from the Trojans after the fall of their city. This descent gives each of them 'the great courage' as well as 'their magnanimity, their ancient blood, their quick-wittedness, and their ability to speak up for themselves':

After the fall of Troy three peoples managed to escape from Asia Minor to different parts of Europe, 'Those left by pitiless Achilles and the Greeks': the Romans under their leader Aeneas, the Franks under Antenor and the Britons under Brutus. From this line of descent comes the great courage of these three nations, their magnanimity, their ancient blood, their quick-wittedness and their ability to speak up for themselves. Of the three peoples left alive after the fall of Troy, the Britons alone kept the vocabulary of their race [gentis] and the grammatical properties of their original tongue.

(Gerald of Wales 1978: 245–6)

Tres etenim populi, Romani Enea duce, Franci Antenore, Britones Bruto, post Trojanum excidium, 'Reliquiae Danaum atque immitis Achillis,' ab Asia in Europam varias ad partes profugerunt. Tribus igitur his nationibus hinc animositas, hinc nobilitas, et tanta generositas antiquitas; hinc perspicacis ingenii subtilitas, et loquendi securitas.

Inter has autem gentes, quae Trojani reliquiae sunt excidii, soli Britones ... primaeva gentis suae vocabula, et originalis linguae proprietatem abundantius retinuerent.

(Gerald of Wales 1868: 193–4)

From this brief look at Gerald's *Description of Wales*, in the context of the more elaborate climate theory found in Bartholomaeus Anglicus's encyclopedia and elaborated in Mandeville's *Book*, we can draw the following conclusion. The necessary relationship of people to the land they inhabit is a scientific theory that emerges in antiquity (with Pliny) and develops over time, until in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it becomes localized. An optimal climate is identified and, ultimately, a discourse emerges that supports racialized categories. In the twelfth century, with Gerald of Wales, this system of thought – that is, 'race-making' or 'race-thinking' (to use Heng's and Whitaker's terms) predicated on climate theory – is still inchoate.

In his thoughtful account of Gerald of Wales's works, Matthew X. Vernon draws out the transhistorical implications of Gerald's description of Irish and Welsh bodies in terms of the history of racialization. Referring specifically to Gerald's *Topographia Hibernica*, Vernon writes: 'there is a striking consonance between Gerald's descriptions of the Irish living under English rule in the twelfth century and Fanon's descriptions eight hundred years later of the colonized as seen through the eyes of the European colonist. Both writers center their attention on the subjects as incomplete humans, incapable of normative humanity's achievements' (2018: 174). He prefaces this comparison with a passage from Frantz Fanon's *Damnés de la Terre* (Wretched of the Earth), stating that, for Fanon, 'colonized subjects are transmogrified in the narratives of the colonizer: "In plain talk, [the colonized] is reduced to the state of an animal. And consequently, when the colonist speaks of the colonized he uses zoological terms"' (Vernon 2018: 174; brackets in original). Interestingly, the passage from Fanon that Vernon quotes comes just a few pages after another where Fanon posits, not the binary opposition of colonizer and colonized, but rather that of European and 'indigène': 'the colonial world is a compartmentalized world', he writes, in which we can contrast 'indigenous towns and European towns, schools for indigenous persons and schools for Europeans'.¹⁴ For Fanon, the binary opposition of Indigenous person and European is brought into being through the colonial relation, a structure of power that affects every aspect of culture and society.¹⁵ Vernon's reading of Gerald of Wales through Fanon provides another way to recognize the evocation of something like the colonial relationship that produces the 'indigène', just below the surface of the twelfth-century text.

With the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, we turn to another narrative of conquest and, accordingly, another evocation of Fanon's 'indigène' as imagined within the discursive frameworks of the twelfth century. Here, however, we observe many of the same assumptions about the relationship of land and people, and the shaping influence of climate, expressed within the very different genre of romance. Thomas of Kent's late-twelfth-century work centres on the itinerary of conquest followed by Alexander the Great, and emerges from a widespread tradition of narratives about the Macedonian ruler, in Greek and Latin as well as vernacular languages. The third-century Greek account of pseudo-Callisthenes gave rise to both the abundant European versions of the text and those found in Asia and Africa, the European ones mainly by way of the fourth-century Latin adaptation attributed to Julius Valerius, and the ones in Asia and Africa primarily through the early Syriac translation. There are medieval Alexander narratives

in Castilian, Catalan, Dutch, English, French, German, Icelandic, Italian and so on; and there are also Arabic, Ge'ez, Hebrew and Persian versions – and many others. A recent collection of essays edited by Markus Stock includes contributions ranging from the Hebrew Alexander texts, by Shamma Boyarin (2016), to those of Southeast Asia, by Su Fang Ng (2016).¹⁶ The *Roman de toute chevalerie* stands out among the many Alexander narratives for the way in which it uses climate theory to describe the relationship between the lands the conqueror and his armies encounter and the people who inhabit them. As in the texts described above, the properties of the land give rise to the properties of the plants, animals and people who are native to them. The occasional wondrous exceptions we saw in Bartholomaeus Anglicus and Mandeville, however – especially in India – also appear in the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, this time in connection with a different land, but one often associated with India on medieval maps: that is, Ethiopia.

The *Roman de toute chevalerie* differs from earlier accounts of Alexander the Great in several ways, including the way the text presents the path of Alexander's conquests. While following the basic trajectory of conquest outlined in the Latin text of Julius Valerius' *Epitome*, Thomas of Kent maps out the world brought under the yoke of Alexander in terms of the cardinal directions, within an elaborate quadripartite model of the world that is drawn mainly from the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister. This allows Thomas to rationalize and explicate the nature of the wonders to be found as one approaches the limits of each cardinal direction in terms of climate theory. His account of the extreme southern climates, however, differs significantly from the writers discussed above. While Bartholomaeus Anglicus and the author of *The Book of John Mandeville* (and even Gerald of Wales, in a more limited way) all attribute the bodily diversity of the southern regions to the effects of the hot climate, Thomas instead attributes it to their unusual behaviour. He writes, 'In Ethiopia there are people of diverse natures, of diverse lineages, of diverse languages, because everyone there is diversely engendered [*sunt de diverse engendrure*]' (6702–4).¹⁷ Thomas explains that Ethiopians' great diversity is due to their sexual promiscuity, such that no man knows his father, nor any father his sons: he writes, 'Tuit sunt commun entr-els cum bestes en pasture' (All is common among them, like beasts in the field [6708]). As in the regions of the remote East and North, the southern expanse contains a numerous, heterogeneous collection of peoples: some who have a dog for their king, others who have four eyes and worship Mercury; those who eat lions and have one eye; those who bark like dogs; those who ride elephants; those who have no mouths and communicate by sign language; and so on.

As Alexander moves through Ethiopia, its resemblance to the Indian regions where he began his journey becomes more evident. The marvellous races, the wondrous animals and even the land itself recall the India he left behind, for there are said to be two Ethiopias ('Deus Ethiopes sunt' [6776]), just as there were two Indias (4601). After venturing into the remote East and paying a visit to the enigmatic and oracular Trees of the Sun and Moon, Alexander returns to Ethiopia where he encounters its queen, Candace. The elaborate account found in the *Roman de toute chevalerie* is based on that found in the Latin text of Julius Valerius's *Epitome*. Thomas of Kent embellishes that account, however, making the land of Ethiopia into an ambiguous space that provides both the familiar comforts of home and the exotic and erotic excess of the Orient.

Initially, Alexander's encounter with Candace seems as though it could have taken place in the courts of France or England. This Oriental queen is 'bele e blanche' (6943; cf. 7751), as beautiful and fair-skinned as any European. Alexander does not approach her;

instead, she approaches him, sending messengers bearing luxurious gifts ranging from camels loaded with baskets of emeralds to a thousand armed ‘white Ethiopians’ (6971). The inclusion of Ethiopian soldiers in the tribute offered by Candace is conventional; what is peculiar is their description as ‘blans’ or white. It is clear their skin colour is meant, because Thomas goes on to reiterate that ‘Il sunt plus blanc qe neif e plus qe lion fier’ (They are whiter than snow and fiercer than lions [6976]). This is remarkable precisely because Thomas has so elaborately embellished the text of his romance with references to how climate affects the flora and fauna of a land. As we saw, medieval scientific texts and encyclopedias point out that different climates give rise to different species: accordingly, creatures of the North tend to be larger and whiter, whereas creatures of the South tend to be smaller and darker. Those of the North have their spirits driven within them by the cold, producing fierce and bold temperaments; those of the South exude their spirits through their pores, producing lethargic, lascivious temperaments. White Ethiopians, then, are not just an anomaly but a paradox. They are the product of a land profoundly marked by the heat of the sun, but their bodies do not reflect the nature of that land. They are a wondrous exception to the conventional relationship of a land and its people.

The reason for this exceptional wonder has much to do with the place of Ethiopia in the medieval European imagination. In theological terms, Ethiopia was understood as a place of special grace and apocalyptic expectation. In the Hebrew Bible, the story of Solomon and Sheba was interpreted in terms of a mystical union that brought the earthly Jerusalem into contact with the southern riches of Ethiopia; in the Acts of the Apostles, the queen of Ethiopia, named Candace (or Kandake), is identified as the ruler of the Ethiopian eunuch who converts to Christianity. Apocryphal stories of the Magi also associate one of the three wise men with Ethiopia, in a reassertion of the fundamentally tripartite division of the world found in the medieval world maps and medieval encyclopedias. These texts divide the world into three parts – Asia, Africa and Europe – to correspond to the three sons of Noah: Shem is associated with Asia, the biggest part; Ham, the outcast, with Africa; and Japheth, the youngest, with Europe. The three Magi recapitulate the sons of Noah, but while the sons of Noah are scattered outward into the wide world after the Flood, their descendants populating each of the three continents, the three Magi come inward towards the sacred centre of the nativity. This can be illustrated, for example, in a manuscript of Beatus of Liebana’s *Apocalypse* that depicts the Virgin and Child with the Magi, in a series of linked circles, plus the familiar form of the T-O world map at the top left (Figure 2.1).¹⁸ Interestingly, the T-O map includes not just the names of the three continents, but also the three sons of Noah, as a visible reminder of the Old Testament prefiguration of the three Magi, who appear at the right. Here, the economy of type and antitype is expressed in terms of word and image, with the names of the sons of Noah foreshadowing the vivid human forms of the three Magi.

Depictions of the Magi vary in how they present the ethnic origins of each of the three kings. Some, such as the Beatus image described above, show exotic dress but only moderate differences of physiognomy, whereas others, such as in the Prayer Book of Albrecht of Brandenburg illuminated by Simon Bening (1525–30), show bodily diversity more vividly, with black skin. Like the Ethiopian magus, depictions of the Queen of Sheba also vary in how they portray ethnicity. While there was a rich medieval commentary tradition on the Song of Songs that interpreted the allegory of the beautiful and Black bride in historical terms, as the Ethiopian Queen of Sheba, pictorial depictions of the encounter of Solomon and Sheba often show the queen as fair-skinned, as in the illuminated page by Simon Bening that faces his image of the Magi (Figure 2.2). The

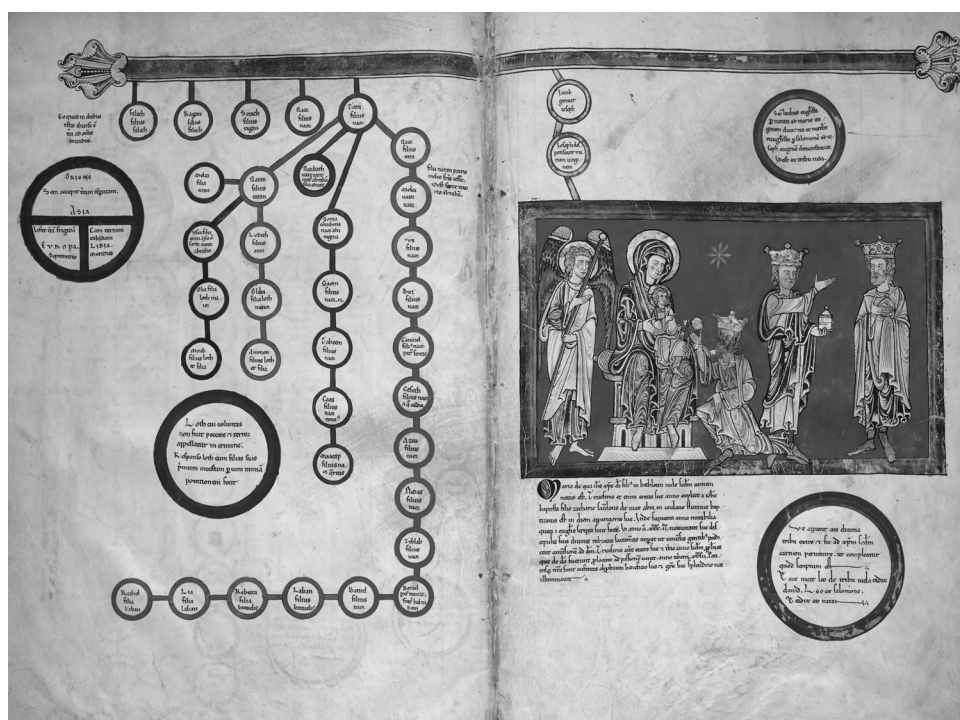


FIGURE 2.1 Beatus of Liebana, *Apocalypse* (bifolium), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art MS 1991.232.1, fol. 2b-c. © Heritage Images/Hulton Archive/Getty Images.

queen is attended by two other women, her attendance on Solomon and offering of gifts appearing as a counterpart to the offerings of the three Magi. To put it another way, a chain of typological prefigurations links various moments in salvation history, with each one of them rooted in an essential notion of Ethiopian identity. In one typological relationship, the sons of Noah prefigure, and are fulfilled in, the three Magi. In a second typological relationship, the encounter of Solomon and Sheba, and the tribute offered by the Ethiopian queen to the king of Israel, is fulfilled in the tribute offered by the Ethiopian magus to the newborn king of the new Israel.¹⁹

The presence of Ethiopian identity as a key point of reference in salvation history was not limited to explicit citations from the Bible and apocrypha, such as Solomon and Sheba, the three Magi and the Ethiopian convert described in the Acts of the Apostles. It also appears in what we might call the 'secular' strands within salvation history, where typological relationships continue to be central. These include the legend of Alexander the Great, which for medieval Europeans (especially in the twelfth century) was central to crusading ideologies, and the fantasy of Prester John, the mythical king of a remote region who would, one day, come to the rescue of the crusader armies in the Holy Land. As in the medieval scientific texts described above, as well as the encyclopedia of Bartholomaeus Anglicus and *The Book of John Mandeville*, the Alexander romances use Ethiopia as a way to name the geographical limit case, the remote place of extremes. The Pillars of Hercules, marking the borders of the known world, are said to be located in this region, and the exotic queen of the Ethiopians, Candace, has an encounter with



FIGURE 2.2 The Adoration of the Magi; the Queen of Sheba visits King Solomon. From Simon Bening (Flemish), *The Prayer Book of Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg* (c. 1525–30). Getty MS Ludwig IX 10, fols. 36v and 37r. © Getty Museum (open content program).

Alexander the Great. In some versions, but not all, their relation is an amorous one. The erotic encounter of Alexander and Candace found in *Roman de toute chevalerie* bears a startling resemblance to the Ethiopian narrative of the early fourteenth-century *Kebra Nagast* (Book of the Glory of Kings), which centres on the relationship of Solomon and the queen of Ethiopia. Several Alexander narratives explicitly associate Candace with the Queen of Sheba, following an account by Josephus (37–c. 100 CE) that identifies her as the ruler of Ethiopia; moreover, the name appears in the Acts of the Apostles (8.27) to refer to the ruler of the Ethiopian eunuch who converts to Christianity. This intertwined lineage of encounters with Ethiopians – first, in the biblical account of Solomon, also recounted in Josephus’s history; second, in the Acts of the Apostles and commentaries on it; and, finally, in the many versions of the Alexander romance – served to provide an image of Ethiopia that was paradoxically ancient and novel, with each encounter repeating a narrative of spiritual and material exchange. This was a geographical location, but one almost as deeply enmeshed in salvation history as Jerusalem itself.

We have seen how medieval indigeneity works in a range of pre-modern texts, including the encyclopedia of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, the travel narrative of Mandeville, the ethnographic description of Wales by Gerald of Wales and the romance in Thomas of Kent's *Roman de toute chevalerie*. In each of these, every land has its own specific properties, and these give rise to the qualities of the plants, animals and people who inhabit that land. These qualities are both exterior, including anatomy and other visible traits such as skin colour, and interior, including properties of spirit affected by humoral complexion. At the same time, as Gerald of Wales makes clear and Bartholomaeus also indicates, traits acquired from the land can be carried by a people when they move from one climate to another. Indigeneity is, so to speak, portable. In addition, wondrous exceptions are possible, whether in the torrid India of Mandeville's *Book* or the southern expanses of Candace's Ethiopia in the *Roman de toute chevalerie*. This is a vision of the natural world that is underpinned by the effect of religious orientation not just at the level of the individual but as the fundamental ordering principle of historical time and human geography.

The notion of indigeneity that we see in twelfth-century texts such as Thomas of Kent's *Roman de toute chevalerie* and Gerald of Wales's *Description of Wales* inhabits that diffuse space of 'race-thinking' or 'race-making' that we see in the period when racialization is taking place, but the system – or, in Foucauldian terms, the discourse – is not yet fully operational, as it will become in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Religion – understood, as suggested above, not merely as the confessional orientation of the individual person, but rather as an underlying template that provides a fundamental order and teleology to history at large – was deeply intertwined with this emergent discourse of race. Medieval indigeneity, understood as an essential linkage of people to the land, is in some ways at cross-purposes with pre-modern racialization, which is often linked to religious orientation, and which makes room for the role of heredity, so that people can carry their 'natural' traits with them into exile – or conquest.

Moreover, while medieval indigeneity overlaps with but also can be distinguished from medieval discourses of racial difference and practices of racialization, it is also the case that modern conceptions of Indigenous identity also distinguish it from race, while noting the overlap and potential synergies. This is pointed out by Adam Miyashiro (2019), in his masterful account of the intertwined nature of race, settler colonialism and 'medieval heritage politics'. Miyashiro emphasizes that modern concepts of indigeneity cannot simply be conflated with race, drawing on the work of J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, who offers a way to distinguish race from indigeneity:

Just as critical race studies scholars insist that race is a useful category that is a distinct social formation rather than a derivative category emerging from class and/or ethnicity, indigeneity is a category of analysis that is distinct from race, ethnicity, and nationality – even as it entails elements of all three of these Like race, indigeneity is a socially constructed category rather than one based on the notion of immutable biological characteristics.

(Kauanui 2016: 4)

Miyashiro goes on to enlarge on Kauanui's point, asserting that 'Race, nation, and ethnicity are all categories that white supremacist ideologies conflate, and the emergent idea of "white ethnostate" [em]bodies the confluence of settler colonialism and white supremacist racism built on ethno-racial imaginings. The inclusion of "Indigeneity" is a

new category among neo-fascists in Europe and the Americas but has been in use since Nazi Germany' (Miyashiro 2019: 5). In other words, Miyashiro makes it clear how white ethnonationalism deploys 'indigeneity' as yet another flavour of ethnic identity.

In sum, both medieval indigeneity and modern indigeneity are distinct from and overlap with race; but the ways in which they do so are distinct. Medieval indigeneity differs from medieval race in being cut off from the role of religious orientation, which plays a key role in the articulation of medieval racial identities. Modern indigeneity differs from modern race in refusing to make room for biological essentialism – at least, this is the case in the work of Indigenous scholars.²⁰ White supremacists, who also take on the mantle of 'indigeneity', are a different matter. In the remaining pages of this chapter, I will offer a brief account of some modern expressions of indigeneity in the service of white ethnonationalism, before turning to a more positive and even hopeful account of how Indigenous perspectives on the medieval past might offer a way forward.

INDIGENEITY AND THE MEDIEVAL

It is an unfortunate fact that the extreme right has adopted the notion of 'indigeneity' in order to justify what is sometimes called 'white pride', and which, as Miyashiro makes clear, can be more accurately described as ethnonationalism (Miyashiro 2019: 5). This practice lays claim to 'indigenous' European identities, as on the homepage of the 'NativeEuropean' Twitter account, which reads 'Interested in European indigenous beliefs as part of my heritage. All cultures should look back to their indigenous traditions as an antidote to modernity.'²¹ Yet white supremacists simultaneously lay claim to North American indigenous traditions, in concert with the claim of 'European' indigeneity: this is particularly vivid in the figure of the so-called 'Q Shaman' (Jake Angeli), whose horned headgear could be read alternatively as 'Viking' or as Native American. As Cherokee scholar Joseph M. Pierce puts it, 'White supremacists like Angeli pose as Indians in order to create an image of themselves as inseparable from the land itself. They imitate Indigenous people and they justify their actions by imagining themselves as the natural heirs to a land retroactively emptied of Native Americans.' The Norse runes of Angeli's Odinist tattoos evoke 'European' indigeneity, while his clothing participates in 'a long tradition of what scholar Philip Deloria (Standing Rock Sioux) described as "playing Indian" – mimicking stereotypical imagery of Native Americans in a quest to assert a US national identity while also denigrating contemporary Indigenous people' (Pierce 2021).

In the same way that so-called 'white pride' is put forth as a meaningful counterpart to 'Black pride', 'European indigeneity' is put forth as a meaningful counterpart to other kinds of – or, we might more accurately say, actual – indigeneity. 'Tribal' identity is also part of this language of European indigeneity, as we can see in a tweet by NativeEuropean showing a map of 'ancient Germanic and Celtic tribes'.²² NativeEuropean also follows unabashed white supremacists, including one that simply names itself with the Othala rune, used formerly by two units in the Waffen SS and now a white supremacist emblem. NativeEuropean says that 'there is no indigenous remaining in Europe', and that the land has been 'wipe[d] ... of its indigenous beliefs and traditions'.²³ NativeEuropean is in favour of essential gender differences, opposed to trans identities and scornful of climate change. But the main focus of NativeEuropean is 'indigeneity', understood in terms of genetic make-up. Presumably using something like the '23andMe' genetic testing

kit, NativeEuropean has determined that they are ‘75% “Germanic”’.²⁴ (A better term than ‘Aryan’, perhaps.) NativeEuropean is excited by @SurvivetheJive’s video on ‘White mummies in China’, presumably for what this can tell us about the pre-modern diffusion of white people in East Asia.²⁵ NativeEuropean retweets @SurvivetheJive’s other efforts to provide access to ‘the medieval mind’, and shares a reminder from @EchoesofthePas1 (‘Echoes of the Past’) to ‘not forget’ where you came from and maintain your fundamental ‘connection to Soil and Blood!’²⁶

I share this, unpleasant but (I think) necessary, brief overview to provide some sense of how the term ‘indigenous’ and related concepts are being mobilized within ethnonationalist discourse today. It goes without saying that this connection of ‘blood and soil’, an essential link between people and the land they come from, is very different from the relationship of people and land as it is articulated within Indigenous communities. There the relationship is one of stewardship, of layered history, of story that both emerge from and teach reciprocity with the land and with all those that inhabit it. As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson puts it, speaking of Nishnaabeg knowledge:

Like governance, leadership and every other aspect of reciprocated life, education comes from the roots up. It comes from being enveloped by land You can’t graduate from Nishnaabewin; it is a gift to be practiced and reproduced. And while each individual must have the skills and knowledge to ensure their own safety, survival and prosperity in both the physical and spiritual realm, their existence is ultimately dependent upon intimate relationships of reciprocity, humility, honesty and respect with all elements of creation, including plants and animals.

(Simpson 2014: 9–10)

Joanne Barker anchors her teaching in the Lenape story ‘Woman Who Fell from the Sky’, which ‘outlines our individual and collective responsibilities to and between multispecies beings and the land on which we live together [and] requires that we begin with a purposeful attention to where we are’ (2018: 34). Simpson and Barker ground their epistemology in different Indigenous traditions, Nishnaabeg and Lenape, and in different storylines, ‘Kwezens makes a lovely discovery’ and ‘Woman Who Fell from the Sky’. Both, however, return to the fundamental ground of the land itself, the living things who inhabit it, and the kinship relation they all share, articulated through reciprocity and grounded in respect.

It is in the light of Simpson’s and Barker’s teachings that I would like to illustrate Indigenous responses to the medieval past, and to Eurocentric history in general, using the beautiful work of Kent Monkman. Monkman is a member of the Cree nation, whose work draws upon the trickster figure of ‘Miss Chief’ to enter into historical moments and recreate them with a focus on the experience of Indigenous people. Monkman and his studio team created two monumental historical paintings in 2019 as part of a commission from The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. During 2019 and 2020, the twinned paintings were displayed in the Great Hall on each side of the primary entrance to the museum. The visitor does not see the paintings immediately upon entering; instead, they look back at the main gateway to see the two paintings to the left and right. The pair is collectively called *mistikôsiwak* (*Wooden Boat People*), and the image depicted in Figure 2.3, titled *Welcoming the Newcomers*, is mounted on the left. The other, titled *Resurgence of the People*, is mounted on the right.

Monkman's main frame of reference, in iconographic terms, is historical paintings, such as *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, painted by Emanuel Leutze in 1851. Miss Chief stands in the place of Washington in *Resurgence of the People*, while the painting also alludes to Delacroix's 1830 work *Liberty Leading the People*. In this visual intertext, Miss Chief stands in the place of Liberty, personified as a woman bearing a tricoloured banner. Miss Chief instead bears an eagle feather. If we turn to the first of the two paintings that together make up *mistikôsiwak* (*Wooden Boat People*), we see a different historical referent. *Welcoming the Newcomers* (Figure 2.3) alludes to Géricault's 1818–19 painting *Raft of the Medusa* (Figure 2.4) both in the gathering of native people on the landmass at left and in the cluster of settler people clinging to the overturned boat at upper right, in the background. The native people are endangered – just at the point of being invaded – by the settlers, who appear at once to be helpless supplicants and loathsome predators. Note, for example, the extended hand of the man in the white shirt, who reaches towards the newborn baby in its father's arms. In all three cases, the iconographic reference is to, first, the founding myths of the nations and, second, revolution. Space does not permit a full analysis of Monkman's *mistikôsiwak*, rich as that analysis would be. Instead, I will just briefly point out an aspect of the paintings that has not been noted previously: Monkman's evocation of the medieval.

In *Welcoming the Newcomers*, on the right side of the image, we see Miss Chief extending her hand downward to aid the three figures in the water. The figure in the foreground is white, wearing the helmet of a Spanish conquistador; the one to his right is Black, wearing the chains of an enslaved person; and the one to his left, slightly behind the other two, appears to be Asian, wearing an exotic turban-like headdress. Miss Chief reaches her hand out in what Monkman, in a video about the paintings, describes as a gesture of 'generosity', expressing the way in which the first people welcomed the settlers to the so-called 'New World'.²⁷ But she also looks outward at us, across time, with the



FIGURE 2.3 Kent Monkman (Cree, b. 1965), *mistikôsiwak: Welcoming the Newcomers*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 335.28 × 670.6 cm (132 × 264 in). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Donald R. Sobe Foundation CAF Canada Project Gift, 2020. © Kent Monkman/The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



FIGURE 2.4 Theodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818–19. © Heritage Images/Getty Images.

knowledge of the harm to her people that will accompany these three apparently helpless victims – purposefully, in the case of the European settler, but also through the African bearing the chains that signal his forced diaspora.²⁸ Looking at these three figures, it is difficult not to be reminded of other templates for dividing the world into three. For example, we might compare the three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, as seen on schematic T-O maps of the world. Or we might compare Heinrich Bünting's image of 'the whole world in a cloverleaf', included in his 1581 *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae* (*Travel through Holy Scripture*). Bünting's map shows the three usual continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, along with (in the lower left) 'die neue Welt', the New World. We might even recall the Magi attending the Christ Child, depicted in Simon Bening's painting of the early sixteenth century, or in an anonymous late twelfth-century painting from northern England, showing the Magi on the road to Bethlehem (*Journey of the Magi* 1190–1200). This sacred geography, this vision of history and this pre-modern conception of racial difference, grounded on the correspondence of land and people, are all called into question in Monkman's powerful historical painting.

In closing, I would like to suggest some future directions inspired by Tarren Andrews's thoughtful and powerful words. In the shared dialogue with Wallace Cleaves that concludes the special issue of *English Language Notes* edited by Andrews together with Tiffany Beachy, she identifies the motivation for the volume: 'one of my concerns – the reason I really wanted to do this special issue – is my own sense of worry about appropriation' (Andrews and Cleaves 2020: 170). The ensuing dialogue recognizes the importance of intention ('the intention still matters' [170]), and the challenge in

negotiating the range of Indigenous epistemologies, where one is ‘always in danger of being appropriative’ (171). If this is true even for an Indigenous person who draws upon a knowledge system that emerges from a nation other than their own, it is an infinitely greater danger for a non-Indigenous person. Cleaves believes that this challenge can be met, although ‘it is only possible with a great deal of commitment, energy, time, understanding, and humility’ – the last of these, ‘the idea of humility’, seconded by Andrews (171). In her introduction, Andrews explicitly cautions non-Indigenous scholars to ‘recognize the limitations of Western epistemologies and methodologies’, which ‘all too often result in good intentions that are fundamentally appropriative and complicit in ongoing Indigenous erasure’ (Andrews 2020: 12). The solution, Andrews suggests, is to take it slowly – ‘to slow down medievalist engagement with Indigenous studies, to ask us all to be more deliberate, to be thoughtful, and to consider first the ethics of kinship and reciprocity’ (2).

In this spirit, taking it slowly, I would encourage medievalists to begin the long process of unsettling and then relearning patterns of thought and methods of research. In using these words, I am following Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang who ground their foundational article, ‘Decolonization is Not a Metaphor’, on the urgency – and necessary discomfort – of ‘unsettling’: ‘Our goal in this essay is to remind readers what is unsettling about decolonization – what is unsettling and what should be unsettling’ (2012: 3). In the histories of race and racialization we recount, we need to think carefully and deliberately about the nature of indigeneity, both as it is reflected in pre-modern sources and as it is understood today, remaining consistently attentive to the voices of Indigenous writers, researchers and artists. As Andrews puts it, non-Indigenous medievalists need ‘to ask what it might look like to “extend an invitation”, rather than “engage with”, Indigenous studies scholars’ (2020: 2). Only by extending an invitation and then in turn being invited in does it become possible to participate in doing the necessary work – and, in time, to attain what Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle describes as ‘the good mind’ (2015: 11) or, in Bitterroot Salish scholar Andrews’s words, ‘a good heart’ (*x̣est spúʔus* [2020: 2]).

NOTES

Introduction

- 1 Two recent collections demonstrating the need for and practice of critical medieval race studies include the collection edited by Andrew Albin et al. (2019), *Whose Middle Ages? Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past*, and the special issue ‘Critical Race in the Middle Ages’ in *Literature Compass* edited by Dorothy Kim (2019a).
- 2 I will retain Heng’s term when referring to actions in the material world, such as the veneration of a holy figure discussed below. I will use my term when referring to the discursive, artistic and theoretical moves relevant to the conceptual development and maintenance of racial ideology.
- 3 See my discussion of Chaucer’s *Miller’s Tale* in *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race Thinking* (Whitaker 2019a: esp. 85–8).
- 4 The African representative among the three magi is sometimes Balthasar and sometimes Jaspas. According to tradition, the three magi, or wise men, worshipped the infant Christ in Bethlehem, and they each represented one of the three known continents (Africa, Asia and Europe). For a more in-depth discussion of the tradition, see my chapter on the *Three Kings of Cologne* titled ‘Black Metaphors Inside and Out in Their Narrative and Spiritual Contexts’ (Whitaker 2019a: esp. 97–122).
- 5 For further discussion of the victimhood complex that attends white supremacism, see Whitaker (2019a: 194–95).
- 6 For ‘heritage politics’, Miyashiro relies on the work of Danielle Christmas (2019) and on Rambaran-Olm’s (2018) arguments concerning white supremacists’ claims to ‘European indigeneity’ and attendant claims that they are suffering ‘white genocide’.
- 7 They seem to obliquely refer to her excavations of the La Venta site in the early 1980s. See González Lauck (1990).
- 8 Translation is mine, with reference to Bartholomaeus Anglicus (1975–88). My translation also appears in Whitaker (2014: 166).

Chapter 2

- 1 On this sense of gratitude, see Akbari (2020: 324–25). Wallace Cleaves (Tongva) beautifully articulates the importance of situating oneself: ‘I’m centering myself in the field and using my own narrative to explore the work of decolonizing medieval studies, or at least I hope that I am. My focus and the attendant direction of my research is influenced by my own perspective, as it must always be. If we really want to decolonize the field, we have to meaningfully do that through self-examination and active practice’ (Cleaves 2020: 24). See also Tarren Andrews (Bitterroot Salish), who argues for the value of ‘emic scholarship’ and calls for ‘a new kind of field—one that recognizes the power of subjectivity in all facets of our scholarship’ (Andrews 2020: 7). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) places this requirement in explicitly ethical terms: ‘Within Nishnaabewin, I am responsible for my thoughts and ideas. I am responsible for my own interpretations and that is why you’ll always hear from our Elders what appears to be them ‘qualifying’ their teachings with statements that position

- them as learners, that position their ideas as their own understandings, and place their teachings within the context of their own lived experience. This is deliberate, ethical and profoundly careful within Nishnaabewin because to do otherwise is considered arrogant and intrusive' (Simpson 2014: 11).
- 2 For an overview of the term's usage from the seventeenth century to the present, see Wilton (2020).
 - 3 An early account of bodily diversity in Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum* and related texts on climate can be found in Akbari (2004: 157–66).
 - 4 On the role of nature in the discourses of racialization found in Pliny, Augustine, and Isidore, and developed richly in Higden's *Polychronicon* and the Middle English *Kyng Alisaunder*, see Miyashiro (2021).
 - 5 This commentary is possibly by Michael Scot.
 - 6 For the sake of brevity, I quote from John Trevisa's very literal late fourteenth-century Middle English translation but also provide the book, chapter and page citation for the Latin text. The Middle English translation appears in Bartholomaeus Anglicus (1975–88). In the absence of a modern critical edition of the Latin text, I cite Bartholomaeus Anglicus ([1601] 1964). Citations are first to the page number of the Middle English translation, then to book, chapter and page number in the Latin text.
 - 7 For a more detailed analysis of the relationship of the racialization of Jewish and Muslim identities in the Middle Ages, see Akbari (2009: 112–54 [ch. 3, 'The Place of the Jews'], 155–99 [ch. 4, 'The Saracen Body']). For an important corrective on the use of the term *Saracen*, see Rajabzadeh (2019b).
 - 8 Space does not permit me to engage with Pearce's provocative and stimulating (yet also harsh) critique here, but see Akbari (forthcoming).
 - 9 Arendt republished 'Race-Thinking Before Racism' in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). For an account of this article in the context of Arendt's views on anti-Black racism, see Gines (2007). As Burroughs puts it, 'Given her work on racism and her own personal experiences with anti-Semitism it is quite possible that Arendt possessed insights on race-based discrimination that were not available to other, non-oppressed whites.... But Arendt is also white, thinking and writing about anti-black racism in a society structured by norms of white superiority and black inferiority. As a white person (a member of the dominant social group in a white supremacist society), Arendt remains susceptible to dysfunctional norms associated with white ignorance' (2015: 67).
 - 10 On harmony in diversity as seen in the *De proprietatibus rerum*, see Akbari (2004: 160–64).
 - 11 Nicolás Wey Gómez illustrates the reception of Albertus Magnus's climate theory by way of writers such as Pierre d'Ailly in the travel logs of Columbus: 'As Columbus's *Diario* shows, the deferral of human monstrosity to the outer margins of the archipelago he thought he had found in the Indies was directly informed not only by the notion that extreme latitudes gave way to extreme natures but also by the urge to identify a somatic substitute for blackness in the newly discovered peoples—and along with this substitute (physical deformity) a negative moral trait (anthropophagy) that would serve as justification for capturing slaves' (2008: 316). On Albertus Magnus, see N. Gómez (2008: 278–80). I am grateful to Valeria López Fadul for pointing out Gómez' work to me.
 - 12 For the sake of brevity, I quote from the Middle English translation of *The Book of John Mandeville*, based on London British Library MS Cotton Titus C.xvi (Mandeville 1967) but also provide the citation for the French edition (Mandeville 2000). Citations are in the text, first to the page number of the Middle English translation, then to the chapter and page number in the French text.

- 13 'Licet autem huiusmodi nigri aliquando nascantur etiam in aliis climatibus, sicut in quarto vel in quinto, tamen nigredinem accipiunt a primis generantibus, quae complexionata sunt in climatibus primo et secundo, et paulatim alterantur ad albedinem, quando ad alia climata transferuntur' (Albertus Magnus 1980: 27).
- 14 'Le monde colonial est un monde compartimenté. Sans doute est-il superflu, sur le plan de la description, de rappeler l'existence de villes indigènes et de villes européennes, d'écoles pour indigènes et d'écoles pour Européens, comme il est superflu de rappeler y apartheid en Afrique du Sud' (Fanon 2002: 41). The quotation cited by Vernon (2018) appears at p. 45 in the French text. Translations are my own.
- 15 For an incisive account of how Fanon's work might be mobilized within North American Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism's politics of 'recognition', see Glen Sean Coulthard (2014).
- 16 On the value of Alexander romances as a widely disseminated set of texts for approaches to medieval world literature, see Akbari (2017: 7).
- 17 Quotations from the *Roman de toute chevalerie* are from the edition of Brian Foster and Ian Short (Thomas of Kent 1976–7) and are cited in the text by line number. Translations are my own.
- 18 Beatus of Liebana, *Apocalypse* (bifolium), New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art MS 1991.232.1, fol. 2b–c.
- 19 For a more detailed account of the depiction of Ethiopians in pictorial art and textual traditions, see Akbari (2019b: 81–7).
- 20 For a powerful articulation of the disjunction between determinations of indigeneity on the basis of genetic ancestry and those made by Indigenous tribes or nations, see TallBear (2013).
- 21 NativeEuropean (@european_native), joined January 2020 (accessed 29 January 2020). This account has since then been deleted or suspended.
- 22 @european_native, 'Map of ancient Germanic and Celtic tribes', 28 January 2020 (accessed 29 January, 2020).
- 23 @european_native, 'Charles Martel stopped the first invasion at Tours, 200 years after Mohammad's death. His descendants then went on to wipe Europe of its indigenous beliefs and traditions. 1288 years later... there is no indigenous remaining in Europe, and no Charles Martel', 25 January 2020 (accessed 29 January 2020).
- 24 @european_native, 'Comparing my genome against the library of catalogued genomes from antiquity. Appears 15% "Celtic", mainly Insular, and 75% "Germanic", with heavy influence from the North Germanic, including the Lombards after their migration', 14 January 2020 (accessed 29 January 2020).
- 25 @european_native re-tweeting @SurvivetheJive, 'Blond Mummies, Tocharians and Indo-Europeans of China', 18 January 2020 (accessed 29 January 2020).
- 26 @european_native re-tweeting @SurvivetheJive, 'Tomorrow at 1500 GMT: Jive Talk with @RFultonBrown, from the Department of History at the University of Chicago. We will discuss how a religious perspective is necessary for understanding the medieval mind', 15 January 2020 (accessed 29 January 2020). @european_native re-tweeting @EchoesofthePas1, 'Do not forget that within you YOU carry the seed of thousands that came before you! Do not become an offspring of civilization—without memory; without connection to Soil and Blood!', 9 January 2020 (accessed 29 January 2020).
- 27 'The title of this exhibition is *mistikôsiwak* (*Wooden Boat People*), a Cree word to describe that when the French arrived, they arrived in wooden boats. The two paintings together really speak about the arrivals and migrations and displacements of people around the world.

And the Great Hall, of course, is this place of people entering and people leaving. In the left painting, *Welcoming the Newcomers*, Miss Chief is literally bending over to assist people arriving to North America. That has to do with generosity. In the second painting, *Resurgence of the People*, Miss Chief is commanding this boat, which looks a lot like a migrant vessel, and many people across the world are being displaced from their own lands. Miss Chief is leading this resurgence of the people to represent a return to our languages and a return to our traditions' (Metropolitan Museum of Art 2019).

- 28 On the relationship of Black and Indigenous identities within North American tribal nations (both those recognized by the American federal government and/or American state governments, and those who as yet lack that recognition), see Hlebowicz's nuanced account of language revitalization that draws attention to the complex situation of the Lumbees living in what is now North Carolina; the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, in southern New Jersey; and the Ramapough Lunaape Nation, in northern New Jersey and the border with New York (2019: 61–2): 'Four hundred years of contact with more powerful European colonizers gradually changed Indian communities into tiny pockets of people living on obscure reservations (e.g. Pequots in Connecticut or Pamunkeys, Mattaponis in Virginia) or dispersed among much greater non-Indian populations, intermarrying with other ethnic groups and even seen as "coloured", "Mullatoes" or "Black", not Indians anymore' (58).

Chapter 3

- 1 Translation of verses from the Qur'ān are from Nasr et al. (2015).
- 2 For two examples of this complaint, see Loomba (2009) and Nirenberg (2009).
- 3 See, for example, the Loeb Classics edition of Pseudo-Aristotle (*Problems* 878a, 20–8; Aristotle 2011) and Lehoux (2014).
- 4 I do not know of any work comparing Aristotle and Pāṇini's reproductive analogies, but for a comparative approach that opens philosophical horizons, see Staal ([1965] 1988).
- 5 For a general survey of the Almohads, see Bennison (2016). Fierro's work in the field has been fundamental; see her essays collected in Fierro (2012). On their conversionary policies, see Fierro (2010) and García-Arenal (1992: 95). Stroumsa (2009) provides a sophisticated treatment of the impact of the Almohads on Jewish thought. For debates over Maimonides' conversion, see Kraemer (2008: 116–24).
- 6 The story is told by told by 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī (1963: 383), who had connections to the Almohad court, in his history of the Almohads. See also the earlier edition by Reinhardt Dozy (al-Marrākushī 1881: 223–24). I cite here the translation by Paul Fenton, whose work on the North African converts (Ibn Zikrī 2016) is indispensable for the topic.
- 7 Joseph ben Judah ibn 'Aqnīn is discussed by Fenton (Ibn Zikrī 2016: 15–18). The citations are from his *Ṭibb al-nufūs* (Ben Judah Ibn 'Aqnīn n.d.: 143a–46).
- 8 On the use and various etymologies of *bildī*, see Fenton (Ibn Zikrī 2016: 23–5).
- 9 Ibn Sakkāk is quoted by Ibn Zikrī (2016: 135 [Arabic pagination]), who disputes that Ibn Sakkāk could ever have made such a statement (27).
- 10 Al-Januwī is the subject of ongoing research by Manuela Ceballos, whose unpublished manuscript 'Theology from the Margins: Sīdī Ridwān al-Januwī and his Community of Outsiders' (n.d.) brought him to my attention. Her work is largely based on the unpublished biography written by his disciple Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Sijilmāsī (n.d.; Rabat, Bibliothèque Générale, MS 114K). She cites the point about leading prayer from page 92 of Vincent Cornell's (unpublished) transcription of that work. It may be that certain schools of Sufism were more open to *muhājirūn* than others. See Fenton (2005: 513–20).