

# Review of: "Blacks in the Middle Ages – What About Racism in the Past? Literary and Art-Historical Reflections"

Luiz Valério P. Trindade<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Southampton

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Given the fact that most of the critical race theory (CRT) literature focuses on contemporary societies and the colonial legacy in shaping current racial relations, this article brings a fresh and innovative perspective by addressing the topic in the historical context of the middle ages. That is, it changes our standpoint and sheds light on the critical analysis of racism in ways not commonly seen in many studies.

As the article rightly argues, this critical analysis is not made with the aim to equate modern forms of racism with parallel phenomena in the pre-colonial era, but rather to help us to understand how this system of oppression operated at different times in human history.

Within that, among the several interesting passages of this article, it has called my attention the argument that although racism was present in middle age societies, there is a lack of documentation revealing the actual racial relations between the hegemonic white Christian Europeans and the marginalised 'others' (i.e., blacks and indigenous peoples). However, the system of oppression was in place anyway.

In a certain way, this reflection resembles the fact that in colonial Brazil (which, likewise the US, also had an enduring history of slavery), African people were considered merchandise devoid of humanity and any social relevance. Nonetheless, the moment they were emancipated, they became the subject of derogatory jokes, which served the purpose to relocate them in a position of social inferiority. In other words, likewise in the middle ages, racism was always embedded in colonial societies, it permeated racial relations and was at the core of the system of oppression (Willems, 1970; Conrad, 1983; Trindade, 2020).

Having said that, one aspect that I consider that, eventually, could be addressed in this paper comprises a brief critical analysis regarding possible similarities or convergence of portrayals of African and indigenous populations in the medieval era and the ones made in colonial Brazil. They were made by European travellers such as, for example, Henry Koster (1816), Henry Chamberlain (1822), and Jean Baptiste Debret (1839).

Moreover, the adoption of this cross-cultural approach could contribute to strengthening the article and provide the reader with a broader perspective concerning the European depiction of blackness in other cultures and fully contextualise them.

Nonetheless, all things considered, the study represents an invaluable contribution to the study of race and

blackness representation in medieval Europe, and this important debate has not yet been fully addressed in the CRT literature.

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