Research Article

Blacks in the Middle Ages – What About Racism in the Past? Literary and Art-Historical Reflections

Albrecht Classen[1]

1. University of Arizona, United States

Undoubtedly, racism is a deeply-anchored problem that continues to vex our world. There is a long history behind it, which can easily be traced to the Middle Ages and beyond. This article, however, takes into consideration a number of medieval narratives and art works in which surprisingly positive images of Blacks are provided. The encounter with black-skinned people tended to create problems even for the best-intended white intellectual or poet, but the examples studied here reveal that long before the modern age there was already an alternative discourse to embrace at least individual Blacks as equals within the courtly and the religious context. Since Europe did not yet know the large-scale form of slavery, as it emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were much less contacts between Blacks and Whites. Nevertheless, the evidence brought to the table here clearly signals that we would commit a serious mistake by equating modern-day racism with the situation in the Middle Ages, as much as modern research (Heng) has argued along those lines.

Introduction

The recent years have witnessed an explosion of heated discussions about racism not only in our day and age, but also in previous centuries, in fact, going as far back as the Middle Ages. It seems as if currently every cultural, literary, philosophical, artistic, musical, even scientific aspect is re-examined with respect to its racist roots and character. Both from a theoretical and a practical perspective, this departure in research and also in political activism has certainly positive consequences since it forces us all to reflect once again upon the basic resources we rely on in our research and on the theoretical models that we embrace to carry out that research. Most dramatically, perhaps, the entire work of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) has become the subject of critical, at

 doi.org/10.32388/KIJP54

times acrimonious investigations driven by Critical Race Theory (CRT) (cf. now Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh 2023; for the role of Blacks in Renaissance England, see Earle and Lowe, ed., 2005). Unfortunately, CRT itself has become highly politicized, or is a political issue at current times bitterly fought over by the left and the right.

Racism seems to lurk everywhere as soon as we lift the veil of many of the pre-modern documents, as numerous scholars have recently argued (Lindsey 2018; Crenshaw, ed., 2019). Hence, we would need to ask ourselves once again why there is such an apparently universal need among people to marginalize, repress, and mistreat minority groups, or to make one section of the population, such as women, to a secondary class (Walcott 2014)? Both religion and racism, gender conflicts and social antagonism always appear to be at play in this universal conundrum of humanity (Opitz 1992). And then there is also the need for a scapegoat, a universal tendency always to blame a minority for whatever the majority considers as a threat, embarrassment, or its own failure, as expressed extraordinarily well by the Swiss writer Max Frisch in his play *Andorra* from 1961 (Frisch 1961).

One of the most recent issues of *German Quarterly* (Layne and Thurman 2022) was dedicated to the discussion of racism in the history of German literature, but the medieval and early modern period was entirely left out. Was there no racism then? This rhetorical question can easily be answered with a resounding 'no,' there was racism, of course, but the real issue is what the relevant sources or documents can tell us about the relationship between Christian white Europeans (complete dominance, of course), and Blacks in those societies. The placement of Blacks in Africa and their negative evaluation goes back, as we all know, to the Old Testament (Braude 1997), so the pre-modern period, in its Christian framework, was racist from the beginning, although the New Testament argued pretty much the opposite way.

As Dorothy Kim formulates in the introduction to a special issue of *Literature Compass*,

> The story of premodern critical race cannot and should not be written without Black, indigenous, and people of color, without asking question about the experiences, ideas, or history of the racially-marked people of the premodern past."It is not only nonsensical but also unethical to continue" to discuss race without asking what that meant to the racialized bodies of this premodern past (echoing Johnson). Race is not a theoretical abstraction; race is not an intellectual debate. Race has a body count. Race is political. Race matters now and race matters in the premodern past (13).

What this argument entails, and what many younger scholars seem to demand, would be to identify a black voice in the Middle Ages and to listen to him/her, which would thus provide some equality in the discourse on race. Such a voice, however, does not exist, and we are limited to narrative by white Europeans who commented at times on black people and/or integrated Blacks as protagonists.

Undoubtedly, while the western world has progressed a lot over the last century or so and tries hard to distance itself from its racist past, especially among modern scholars, racism is alive and well today, as experiences in every sector of our society (USA) tragically demonstrate, whether in our schools or in the streets with racist police offers hunting down and killing innocent black people, at least in the worst-case scenarios, whether in our political system or in the legal courts. Racism is also present in other (if not all) parts of the world, sometimes directed against Whites, Asians, Natives, and sometimes against other ethnic groups. We could even reach the frustrating conclusion that it constitutes one of the inherent problems in all of human life so desperately in need of finding one's own identity by means to distancing oneself from others by racist and other pejorative strategies.

Understandably, there is much anger among the affected and targeted social or ethnic groups about institutionalized racism, often embedded also in our literary canon until today. However, as this brief article will demonstrate, we have to be careful not to throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water and become overly obsessed with reading every historical or literary document through that lens, as if racism has always been the all and only issue relevant for the critical reading of a literary text or art work. It would amount to a political decision to place the investigation of racism, which was certainly in place also in the past, if not even more so than today, up front before all other issues.

The current, certainly valid fight against racism, also in the Middle Ages, for instance, the focus of this paper, should not mislead us into equating modern forms of racism with parallel phenomena in the past, as similar as they often seem to be. Moreover, we need to be aware about the specific differences between racism as an observable ideology across social classes or estates, gender lines and age groups in medieval society, and the rather unexpected forms of open-minded relationships between the races as described in some art works and literary texts from that time period. This epithet, 'open-minded,' might be questioned by some critics, but we would not pursue a fair path of investigation if we cast everything in the same category as racist just because a black person is presented somewhere in art or literature in negative or simply neutral light. As we will observe, counter to many modern assumptions, numerous medieval poets and artists felt no hesitation to incorporate black characters into their works and to give them relatively full credit or acknowledgment (Collins and Keene, ed.,

2023). What this all might entail regarding racism, remains a highly complex issue, but if we examine the concrete data available to us in texts and images, we should be able to discriminate further and to gain a more objective perspective.

Theoretical Problematics

But we have to be very careful with our terminology which can be extremely slippery, particularly because the ideological battle over this bad issue has reached a superheated pitch in current politics. Teaching of CRT in public schools has been banned in numerous US states, many conservative politicians appear to be deeply scared of allowing public libraries to hold and lend books in which the history of racism is being taught. At the same time, we observe a trend toward mass incarceration in the USA, which predominantly affects Black Americans (Alexander 2010/2020; Stovall 2021). All those ideological battles are very much on the minds of current scholarship, but if we want to approach the issue, we must embrace the principle of *sine ira et studio* to be fair and open-minded toward the relevant sources containing important data for our investigation. As numerous scholars have already alerted us, 'racism' does not only pertain to the conflict between people with different skin colors. It also entails the general process of marginalizing and repression entire sections of the population, such as Jews and Muslims, as we can observe vividly in medieval Spain, for instance (Morera 2022). The critical question pertains to the officially supported presentation of public images in art and literature, for instance, and hence to the hidden agenda by the authorities determining the dominant culture at a certain period (Patton, Perry, and Heng 2019). Geraldine Heng had outlined her project of investigating race in the Middle Ages as follows:

> The Invention of Race works to retrieve the economic and social relations between ethnoracial groups; grasp the politics of international war, colonizing expeditions, and commercial trade; unravel the meaning of iconic artifacts or phenomena – such as the baffling statue of a black African St. Maurice in Germany or Marco Polo's mercantile gaze on the races of the world – or calibrate from eyewitness and other accounts the West's understanding of global ethnoracial relations in macrohistorical time. (Heng 2018, 6)

She offers an extensive discussion of Blacks in literature and the arts of the Middle Ages and reaches this conclusion:

> Unsurprisingly, black Africans who appear in twelfth and thirteenth century European literature – especially the heroic epics and romances that are the staple narratives depicting martial encounter – are often rendered as Saracens or heathens, this formulation becoming something of a literary commonplace. (193)

I can only defer to her impressive work as the groundbreaking study in this field and continue to study a number of examples she has already included in her investigations that both confirm and also contradict her observations. I hope thereby to diversify the discourse on this topic further and bring more relevant material to the table so that we can, perhaps, defuse or depoliticize the entire debate on racism and literature and the arts.

Outline

The first step will be to acknowledge that in the Middle Ages, the public discourse about race was rather different than what we might conceive of today, especially because in very practical terms most Christian Europeans had either very little or no experiences with non-white people. Then, I will examine several major literary texts where blackness suddenly matters, but not in explicit racist terms. Finally, I want to alert us to several significant art works that shed important light on this topic and that force us to discriminate the entire debate considerably. It would far from me to try to whitewash (pardon the pun) the Middle Ages of racism, but the situation as described by various poets and as depicted by various artists was more complex than has often been assumed (Heng 2018, offers impressively critical comments and deserves much respect for her close reading of some of the narratives that I will address as well). The intellectual conundrum rests in the issue whether we can draw direct lines of connection between medieval racism and modern-day racism, and hence whether all those forms of hatred, including Antisemitism or Islamophobia, follow the same pattern throughout history, or whether we must distinguish between cultures and periods (Eliav-Feldon, Isaac, and Ziegler, ed., 2009).

There is also the danger that we accept certain data concerning the treatment of minority groups as the all-determining ones, which would blind us to alternative voices or images. Considering the large number of relevant studies addressing these issues, we can firmly conclude that those matter centrally today and hence need to be discussed from many perspectives (for a partial bibliography, see Hsy and Orlemanski, ed., 2017). In this regard, the Middle Ages deeply matter for us today because if we can discover the roots of racism in that age, then we would have a consistent line of argument available

concerning its historical evolution. Tackling racism at its roots would hence empower the present generation of readers or scholars to address it constructively, and from a deep perspective. What seems most worrisome then would be the observation that racism appears to be the outgrowth of fundamental human tendencies to divide society into a majority and a minority group, to marginalize the latter, and to repress them by way of developing racist concepts (Mellinkoff 1993). I venture already here to question this assumption which threatens to flatten all historical epistemology and denies human ability to grow, or to evolve, and thus also to overcome racism (Ramey 2014).

Subsequently, hence, I propose to take a more discriminating approach and to draw on several literary documents and some art works where Blacks appear as equal members of the court next to the white courtiers.

Of course, the evil black knight

In the rather odd Occitan romance, *Blandin de Cornoalha* (ca. second half of the thirteenth century), recently edited and translated by Margaret Burrell and Wendy Pfeffer (2022), we encounter also a black knight, whose appearance is obviously modelled after many other opponents in previous romances. Intriguingly, the first time we hear of him a messenger informs one of the protagonists, Guilhot, at least indirectly, that the other man is a worthy good warrior (l. 656); and naturally, Guilhot wants to fight against him but the messenger warns him that all other knights who had tried their luck in such a joust had failed and had died at the black knight's hands – clearly an allusion to similar themes in Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec* and *Yvain*, and also in the Welsh *Owein*, for instance (Pfeffer 2022, 64; she also refers to the Black Knight in *Jaufre*). Subsequently, Guilhot enters the wasteland where the future opponent reside and protects his orchard from foreign intruders, and after a short angry exchange with the black knight, the two men fight bitterly all day long. At one point, both are so exhausted that they have to sit down and rest, but only to resume their battle until their swords break and they resort to their knives.

Although Guilhot bleeds profusely, he finally manages to stab the Black Knight through the neck which then kills him. Interestingly enough, while the latter lies on the floor, about to exhale, he bags Guilhot to fetch him some water to drink from the pond. The latter happily complies and does not voice any negative opinions about the dying knight whom he actually treats with great respect in that situation. In fact, one the Black Knight has died, the narrator comments: "de que Guilhot fut mot dolent" (776; for which Guilhoc was most sad). He appeals to God to grant mercy and forgiveness to

the dead man (77–82) and then throws the corpse into the fishpond because he does not want any animal to eat the body.

But not enough with these few comments, Guilhot rides off, himself badly wounded, and is welcomed and treated by a hermit who wonders about his major injuries. The answer sheds significant light on the Black Knight since he is identified as "un noble cavllier apert" (805; There was a noble knight). The hermit is pleased to hear that news because too many other knights had been killed in their battles against the by now dead man, but he also identifies him as the member of a worthy noble family: "So era hom de gran corage / et atressis de gran lingnage" (817–18; He was a man of great valor / and likewise of a good family). The hermit then warns Guilhot to be on his guard because the Black Knight's family members might avenge his death. To provide him with a safeguard, the hermit urges Guilhot to stay in his humble abode, where he recovers completely, As soon as he has left, he encounters the Black Knight's brother who deeply laments the latter's death, and both then fight against each other, with Guilhot being victorious again, killing the brother as well.

But was he really a black man, like his brother. The narrative specifies that he was "un cavaler armat de negre" (861; a knight armed in black) but does not say anything about his skin color or race. Of course, Guilhot has to face both brothers, one after the other, and subsequently a whole band of knights who all try to capture him. At the end, they defeat him and take him to a prison (981), from where his friend, Blandin, later has to liberate him, which does not concern us here any longer. The first reference to the Black Knight, however, is not limited to his armor, and yet there are no clear indications that the narrator would have viewed his blackness in any negative terms. He is simply a formidable opponent whom Guilhot has to overcome and kill in order to prove his own knightly prowess.

Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*

There are many reasons to study this major Grail romance composed in Middle High German sometime around 1205, based in part on Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval* (ca. 1180). For our purposes, there is one unique episode which has already attracted much attention by Germanists (for critical summaries of the relevant research, cf. Bumke; Hartmann), but also by scholars such as Heng (2018) focusing on racism in the pre-modern world. Gahmuret, Parzival's father, though a most outstanding knight who cannot be defeated unless magic is involved, which ultimately leads to his death, is a strangely unreliable, highly selfish individual. He seems not to be bound to any social commitments,

and even love, marriage, and fatherhood do not seem to matter much to him. All that matters to him proves to be knighthood in which he excels extremely. Significantly, Gahmuret does not care about Christianity as such, as much as he later pretends to his wife Belacane that their differences in faith was the main cause for his leaving her. He is not attached to any national, political, or dynastic entity, and he serves whoever might need him. In a way, we might call him already a global citizen in the Middle Ages, although in this context it might be regarded as a negative (e.g., Hermans, ed., 2020; Borgolte 2022; Baumgärtner, forthcoming). As the narrator informs us, Gahmuret gains fame both "in Morocco and in Persia. His hand took such toll elsewhere, too – in Damascus and in Aleppo, and wherever knightly deeds were proffered, in Arabia and before Araby" (Wolfram, trans. Edwards, 8–9).

At one point, Gahmuret also reaches a kingdom somewhere in the East where an unmarried black queen, Belacane, is under the heavy siege of a hostile prince. Gahmuret, although abhorred about her black skin at first, then decides to help her; he overcomes the enemy, liberates the city, and then falls in love with the queen, with whom he will later have a son, though by that time he has already left again, in his typical fashion of not letting any person tie him down to marriage or any other commitment.

Reading the narrator's comments carefully, we discover many significant perspectives toward this black person. She rules over the kingdom of Zazamanc and had been wooed by the knight Isenhart who tragically then died fighting to defend her, which all citizens mourn deeply. Out of his desire to prove his love for Belacane, Isenhart had jousted against another knight without wearing armor, which led to his death. His friends and relatives blame Belacane for this tragic outcome and destroy her kingdom in revenge, until Gahmuret appears and defeats the completely (Brüggen and Bumke 2011, 887–88).

The further details do not concern us here, whereas the narrator's comments regarding the personal relationship between Parzival's father and this black queen assume central importance. He characterizes Belacane as "that gentle lady free of falsity" (9), but she is also feisty enough to fend off the enemies, even though with difficulties, which makes Gahmuret's sudden appearance especially important. Although he is somewhat taken aback by the fact that all the people of Zazamac are black – in their company time seemed to him to pass slowly" (9) – he happily offers to help them for an appropriate remuneration, although he is not in need of any money or gold. Gahmuret orchestrates a splendid entry into the city and notes, as the narrator remarks, that they were all black: "of the raven's hue was their complexion" (10). Nevertheless, there does not seem to be any cultural

difference between the world of a western Christian court and that of Zazamanc, with all the same trappings, norms of behavior, and the political and administrative organization. For instance, "The burgrave of the city then graciously requested his guest not to forbear to press whatever claim he wished upon his property and person" (10). Gahmuret is then invited to kiss the burgrave's wife, "though he took little pleasure in that" (11), obviously because she is black. Gahmuret displays, however, an arrogant attitude throughout because he knows only too well that he is the best knight anywhere and can demand the global respect which everyone pays him.

At the same time, the narrator paints a most impressive picture of the black queen although she is lacking in the beauty of a "dewy rose" (12). Despite the negative comments about blackness, Belacane is praised for her "womanly feelings" who was "in other respects of courtly disposition" (12). In the subsequent conversation, in which she reveals all her trials and tribulations over Isenhart's death, she emerges as a most worthy noble lady, so when she concludes: "Now my bashful womanhood has protracted his reward and my suffering" (13). And: "Grief blooms upon my loyalty. I never became wife to any man" (13).

Gahmuret is deeply stricken by Belacane's beauty, and her blackness suddenly no longer matters to him: "although she was a heathen, a more womanly and loyal disposition had never glided into a woman's heart. Her chastity was a pure baptism, as was the rain which poured upon her, the flood that flowed from her eyes down upon her sable and her breast. Contrition's cult was her delight, and true grief's doctrine" (14). Undoubtedly, love has sunk into both of their hearts, as the subsequent events indicate, leading both to their marriage and sexual union. Blackness no longer matters here at all, and Gahmuret suddenly demonstrates his soft side, feeling bashful and embarrassed when she serves him at a dinner as a sign of her gracious hospitality (16).

Wolfram, however, continues to inject facetious remarks about their racial difference, which cannot be denied altogether, and which plays no real role in their subsequent love-making: "Then the queen practised noble, sweet love, as did Gahmuret, her heart's beloved. Yet their skins were unalike" (20). However, as soon as all knightly challenges are overcome and there is nothing more to do for him, he cares little about being the new lord of Zazamanc, although love binds him strongly with Belacane:

> Yet the black woman was dearer to him than his own life. Never was a woman better shaped. That lady's heart never neglected to give him good company – womanly bearing alongside true chastity. (24)

Nevertheless, Gahmuret is and remains a womanizer and thus soon chooses an opportunity to sneak away in the middle of the night, leaving behind only a letter addressed to Belacane which scholarship has discussed already many times (see, e.g., Mielke 1992, 41–45, who cites long passages from Wolfram's *Parzival*). It is filled with numerous contradictions and feigned complains about her different religion (presumably, Islam) which would make their living together impossible. He pretends that he would feel love pangs forever, but he does not mean it, as all the circumstances indicate. The concluding line tells it all: "Lady, if you'll be baptized, you may yet win me for your own" (25).

Poor Belacane is deeply distraught, but also somewhat angry because she would not have been opposed to baptism: "I would gladly be baptized and live as he would wish" (25). In other words, the two had never discussed that issue, although they both are filled with deep love for each other. Religion is not ever truly at stake here, and the difference in skin color does not play any noteworthy role either, as much as Gahmuret at first had felt some disgust, obviously because of his Christian, white, European background. Love had forged the two together, yet his irrepressible desire for masculine performance and self-affirmation separates them as well.

We only would have to add here that in the last section of the romance, Wolfram has their son, Feirefiz, appear who proves to be worthy Parzival's equal. Ironically, either out of ignorance or playfulness, the poet describes him as checkered like a magpie because he is the result of a black woman and a white man. Otherwise, however, Feirefiz demonstrates greatest courtly and knightly qualities, and once his half-brother Parzival has redeemed the Grail with the crucial question to King Anfortas, Feirefiz accepts baptism for himself because he wants to marry the Grail maiden, Repanse de Schoye.

Feirefiz is identified both as a heathen (Muslim?) and as a mixed-race person, and yet, nothing matters to the poet, the narrator, and to Parzival and the entire Arthurian and then the Grail court. They all admire him for his knightly prowess, being an equal match to his half-brother; they are stunned by the wealth that he commands and the enormous army he leads, and they find him charming and entertaining, especially when he is so desirous to get baptized which would allow him both to see the Grail and to marry the Grail maiden: "The host laughed much at that, and Anfortas still more" (341). The audience then is also invited to enjoy this hilarious scene, with Feirefiz being prepared to do whatever it might take to allow him to marry Repanse de Schoye, as if baptism were nothing but a barter for love. The splendid half-black knight states: "'If it helps me against distress,

I'll believe all that you command. If her love rewards me, then I'll gladly carry out his command. Brother, if your aunt has a a god, I believe in him and in her – I never met with such great extremity! All my gods are renounced!" (342–43).

Again, just in the case with his mother, Feirefiz's blackness, or mixed race, is not even commented on and disappears from the narrator's view entirely because Parzival's half-brother is such a worthy character who deserves full respect. Dynastic interests, religious ideals, ethical concerns, chivalry, knighthood, and the Grail itself dominate the entire final section of Wolfram's romance. Racial differences are basically irrelevant for him, and we only learn that Feirefiz actually marries Repanse, with whom he then moves back home somewhere in the Middle East, here vaguely specified as India, where she delivers a son, the future famous Prester John (344), but his racial background is not even mentioned, although he would have been a quarter black through his grandmother.

Granted, Wolfram created only a fictional romance, but he can be identified as the most important medieval poet to address the interaction between Blacks and Whites. There are some whiffs of racism, hidden behind some ironic comments, but in essence, Wolfram can be credited with having composed a work astoundingly free of racist ideology, as far as we can tell, even though recent critics such as Heng have tended to argue differently (2018, 194–95, et passim). She tries hard, coming from many different angles, to characterize Wolfram as a racist, so when she claims: "Blackness of skin, plus religion, is what prevents this foreign corner of the world from looking like Europe" (199). In reality, Zazamanc and Feirefiz's in India empires are hardly distinguishable from the Arthurian world since the same global values of courtliness and knighthood dominate, and so also the ideal of courtly love. Racism, at least in the modern sense of the word, has no place in this remarkable romance. Consequently, we can agree with Heng's reading when she comments: "A White Knight of dubious morality, who ends his life in that global outside and never returns, has discovered that the rest of the world looks greatly like Europe, except for its extraordinary wealth, its lack of Christianity, and the presence of black-skinned peoples" (200; for other studies on this phenomenon, see, for instance, Gray 1974; Brüggen 2014).

As Andreas Mielke (1992) has demonstrated through his text anthology, throughout medieval literature, we come across some black people, often described as slaves, sometimes as African kings, or as black merchants and administrators. But Wolfram's efforts truly go far above all those by his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors because he imagined an erotic relationship between a black woman and a white man. The racial dimension, however, quickly falls away altogether and gives

room to religious differentiation (Christianity vs. Islam), although Belacane and later her son Feirefiz demonstrate no particular interest in their own faith. She would have converted if she had been asked; he does quickly convert and submits under a baptism because it is the requirement for him to receive the permission to marry the Grail maid.

In most other cases, the poets, such as Rudolf von Ems, The Stricker, Hans Vintler, or Konrad von Megenberg, engage with black people in conjunction with references to the biblical text or classical stories, especially the account of Aeneas's escape from the burning Troy, reaching Carthage where he falls in love with the Queen Dido (Heinrich von Veldeke or Heinrich von dem Türlin). We also hear once of Apollonius of Tyre who has a love affair with a black queen, Palmina, that is, simply a sexual encounter, at first against his own intention, but she can seduce him at night, which causes deep trouble for him back home because his true love, Queen Diomena, discovers the two through a miraculous mirror (Heinrich von Neustadt). While he at first tries to resist the black woman's seduction, Diomena is deeply enraged that he has this affair with a "schwartzen zigen" (p. 58, 14312; black goat).

The parallels with Wolfram's *Parzival* are obvious, but here the narrator adds unusual comments, such as that black women know particularly well how to provide sexual pleasures. At one point, Apollonius is even transformed into a black man, which horrifies him, but ultimately helps him to recover his sense. But at first, he insists on having the privilege of enjoying this affair with the black woman, who has been impregnated by him (14467). The subsequent events are too complicated to summarize them, and it suffices here to conclude that Heinrich also incorporated the same theme, the marriage of a black woman with a white man. The romance outlines in impressive details Palmina's own life, her character, and individuality. She is self-assured, strong in her actions, and independent in her decision-making.

The fact that Diomena views her as a dangerous competitor and hence puts her down in racial terms does not need to surprise us because she is simply afraid of losing Apollonius as her own husband (Ebenbauer 1984; Birkhan 2001). Apollonius finally leaves his black lady because he wants to see his children again after many years of separation, which she does not like at all, obviously out of fear never to see him again, but she lets him go, which basically turns the narrative entirely away from the world of the moors, as they are called here in a pejorative fashion. Both here and in Wolfram's work, the woman's blackness is described in the dialectical formula borrowed from the Song of Solomon 1:4: 'I am black but beautiful' (Mielke 1992, 108–14).

A Black Knight in Medieval Dutch Literature

Medieval poets enjoyed considerable liberty to experiment with all kinds of narrative settings, so it does not really come as a surprise that they also included references to black queens and black knights. A most remarkable case can be observed in the Medieval Dutch *Romance of Moriaen* (middle of the thirteenth century; for useful introductions, see Darrup 1999; Brandsma, McFadyen, and Leah, 2017; see also the useful summary and commentary online at https://books.openedition.org/ugaeditions/19820?lang=en), which has attracted considerable attention in recent years (Wells 1971; for an edition, see Finet-Van Der Schaaf 2009).

Just as in the case of Wolfram's *Parzival*, Moriaen is the product of a mixed race marriage, that is, of a black-skinned mother (the Queen of the Moors, unnamed) and a white-skinned father (Sir Agloval, knight of King Arthur's court). The narrator comments with astonishment how dark-skinned this knight is; only his teeth had the color of white (418–27). As in the case of *Blandin*, even his armor and weapons are black. We meet him early on when he encounters the two knights Lancelot and Walewein and pronounces that he must fight every knight he would come across unless the latter would have answered his question. However, in that situation, he raises that question only later, after Lancelot has managed to separate him from Walewein in their evenly matched joust against each other. The question pertains only to the whereabouts of his father, King Aglovat, who had engaged with his black mother just as Gahmuret had done with Belacane in Wolfram's *Parzival*.

Lancelot at first worries that the black man might have originated from hell, but since the stranger had appealed to God, he has to dismiss this racist thought, which indicates the true degree to which European mentality was determined by religious concerned about black people whom they obviously could not situate properly. Moriaen is on a search for his father, and since the two other knights cannot help him, he breaks down emotionally, which moves the others deeply. The narrator makes considerable effort to picture Moriaen in his most impressive physique, towering considerably over the other knights (763–75). The most important line in the narrator's comments proves to be: "Al was hi sward, wat scaetde dat?" (771; Although he was black, that did not matter all). Both in his knightly prowess and his bodily appearance, Moriaen cuts an excellent figure, at least in Lancelot's and Walewein's eyes who, after they have overcome the first shock, treat him completely as an equal.

This, however, is not at all the case elsewhere because people flee in great fear when they espy Moriaen whom they equate with the devil (2408–30). There are numerous episodes in which

Moriaen's friends (white) have to resort to trickery to prevent people from running away from them out of fear of the black man, whom they regularly identify with the devil. But the friends then move into the Moorish kingdom, where the encounter the usual problems in such cases as described in many other romances of that time period. Agloval and his black bride marry officially, and the wedding lasts an entire fortnight, when Gawain, Lancelot and Perceval depart to be back home for Pentecost.

Agloval, as a white knight and husband of the Moorish queen, however, stays behind, which does not constitute any problem for the overall design of the romance. Moriaen is not even depicted like Feirefiz as a mixed-race person, instead he is entirely black, which deeply scares people around him when he operates in Christian white Europe. However, as soon as the other knights get to know him, they embrace him as their equal and defend him against the hostility or mistreatment by others. Similarly, in the Moorish kingdom, the white knights operate without encountering any racism against them. So, altogether, as much as the poet mirrored clear examples of racist feelings, those regularly result from religiously driven fear since a black person is commonly identified with the devil. But Moriaen, as a knight, commands most respectful characteristics and seems even to be more powerful and skilled than the white knights.

Just as in Wolfram's *Parzival*, Moriaen's mother is presented in a most dignified and worthy manner, respected as a princess, until she has delivered a child with the father nowhere around. But later, once Agloval has returned and married her officially, she regains her status and thus also becomes completely acceptable to the European audience. As Darrup observes, "the medieval poet allays his audience's fears, controls its response, and lessens xenophobia by eliminating the character's exotic qualities" (Darrup 1999, 22; cf. also DeWeever 1990, 529, on whom Darrup relies herself). The very opposite exists in medieval German literature as well, such as the highly negative, racist depiction of a black king in the army of the Muslim ruler Marsilie in Spain, Cernubiles, as described by Priest Konrad in his *Rolandslied* (Tinsley 2011, 75). But both there and in the Dutch romance, there is a clear sense of Europe being a continent really only at the margin, and that there are many peoples of different races. Whereas Konrad viewed this with great alarm and pushed that aside with the help of a glorious victory brought about by Charlemagne after Roland's death, the Dutch poet of *Romance of Moriaen* took a definite step forward in rejecting this traditional racism by portraying the protagonist, in his blackness, as an innocent victim of people's terrible prejudice, and this despite his glorious chivalric

qualification and ethical ideals that make him to a shining example of a knight compared to those extraordinary heroes as Lancelot or Walewein.

In the Old French *Chanson de Roland*, the Muslim forces also consist of a contingent of black people: "they are large-nosed and broad-eared / and are altogether more than fifty thousand" (Duggan and Rejhon, trans., 2012, The Oxford version, laisse 143, 1917–19). The narrator emphasizes, as was typically in the Middle Ages, that they "are blacker than ink – / all that is white is their teeth" (laisse 144, 1933–34). Since they fight on the 'wrong' side of history, against the Christian warriors, they are, of course the accursed people" (laisse 144, 1932). One of the worst is Abisme, "the most vicious in his company" (laisse 125, 1632), who is characterizes as purely evil, which finds its external expression in his skin color: "he is black as melted pitch" (laisse 125, 1635). But neither the Old French nor the Middle High German version of this *chanson de geste* serves well to identify specifics of medieval racism, as obvious as it proves to be here. Both poets relied on strong binary opposites, here the good Christian Franks, there the evil Muslims, or Saracens, many of whom are marked by their dark or black skin color. There is no black warrior in Roland's rearguard or in Charlemagne's army since both texts served explicitly nationalistic (French) or religious (German) purposes.

Blacks in Medieval Manuscript Illuminations

King Alfonso X el Sabio

There would be much to say about the amazing Castilian King Alfonso X (1252–1284) who made greatest efforts to bring together the various cultures, religions, and races at his court in Toledo. He composed both major poetry, such as his Galician *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, and had some scribes create major law books, his *Fuero Real* and his *Siete Partidas*. He is also well remembered until today for his impressive book of games, his *Libros del ajedrez, dados y tablas* (1283), in which the three types of games, represented by playing with dice, backgammon, and chess, are closely discussed and explained. Dice is determined by fortune, chess is a game of intellectual skill, and backgammon combines both aspects in one.

Among the many illustrations showing various members of his court, we also find, for instance, on fol. 22r, a group of noble (?) black chess players who are entertained by a (female?) musician performing on a hand-held harp; the entire group is shown to be in intensive debates over a chess problem, and in that regard this setting does not differ from all the others. For instance, on fol. 25v, two

representatives of monastic orders debate certain moves on the board; on fol. 33v, two male adult men instruct two boys how to play chess; on fol. 40r, a noble lady debates with a noble courtier about a chess figure, which she holds in her right hand, on fol. 41r, two Arabic-looking men exchange their ideas about the chess game, the one on the right holding a book in his right hand which might contain instructions about the game itself, just as on fol. 45v where the judge on the right has placed a manuscript with Arabic letters on his lap, and on fol. 63r two Oriental-looking men discuss with each other over the development of the game, considering a particular setting or problem, etc., with the man on the left possibly a Jew and the one on the right a Muslim, judging by their headgears. Chess is thus described here as a playful but essential medium for communication among equal-minded individuals who share the same interest and culture, education and passion, and this obviously in utter disregard of their different religious backgrounds.

There is no indication whatsoever that the king would have tolerated any negative depiction of Arabs and Blacks in his highly representative work (Alfonso X; cf. Kennedy 2019). Instead, these black players are identified as worthy individuals who apparently understand that game well and hence also deserved a dignified space in this splendid luxury manuscript. It seems as if Alfonso deliberately ordered his illuminators to incorporate this scene because he wanted to demonstrate to his public – it is unclear who might have even been allowed to view and study this valuable manuscript – that all races were welcome at his court. Altogether, however, there is only one scene involving blacks.

Conrad Kyeser

In the remarkable manuscript by the Eichstätt engineer and artist, Conrad Kyeser, containing his *Bellifortis* (1405), we do not only come across a large number of drawings of weapons, tools, siege engines, belts, locks, and the like, but also a drawing of the black Queen Saba, or Sheba (Kyeser 1967, vol. 1, fol. 122 r; for a b/w reproduction, see the frontispiece in Mielke 1992; for an excellent overview of this queen's mythical origin, her role in medieval and early modern art, and in modern cinema and theater, along with numerous illustrations, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_of_Sheba). She takes on the typical pose of a Gothic lady, with her body slightly curved in the form of an S; wearing a splendid dress in green, with ermine fur sowed at the edges, a crown, a scepter in her left hand, and an object topped with a cross. Her neck, face, and hands reveal her black skin. She wears a heavy necklace, and there is nothing about her that would describe her in any negative light. Instead, she completely conforms with the standard ideals of a courtly lady, except that she is black. This queen leaves a

stunning impression of a most attractive person, whose dark brown skin color pleasantly harmonizes with her silk dress. Curiously, however, Kyeser included only this one black person in his entire *Bellifortis* (Quard 1967, vol. 2 of Kyeser 1967, 90). Until today, her image is regularly reproduced online as a significant illustration of this famous queen, such as in *National Geographic* (https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/mysterious-queen-sheba-legend-church-archaeology).

Since the late fourteenth century, black figures appear in German visual arts, in coats of art, and altar pieces, normally depicting the black Magi, one of the Three Holy Magi, identified only since the tenth century as Balthazar. As Paul H. D. Kaplan emphasizes, "The Black magus/king was a predominantly positive character entwined in a web of attitudes which could damage as well as support the position of Black people in European society" (1992, 119). There are countless examples depicting a dignified Balthazar, especially since the late fourteenth century, especially within the framework of the Holy Roman Empire, if we think of artists such as Hans Multscher (ca. 1400–1467), Georges Trubert (fl. 1469–1508), Hieronymus Bosch (ca. 1450–1516), Hugo van der Goes (ca. 1440–1482), Andrea Mantegna (ca. 1460–1465), and Hans Memling (1430/40–1494) (Collins and Keene 2023). Of course, as one of the Three Holy Magi, Balthazar assumed a special place and was hence not viewed the same way as a black knight was as discussed in literary texts, or in reality. Much depended on the person's individual history or religious role, which explains the significant respect paid to the first martyr, a black man, St. Maurice, a sculpture of whom was even placed in the Magdeburg cathedral (ca. 1230; for a depiction, see Collins and Keene, ed., 2023, fig. 13, p. 12).

Maurice was a Roman general of African background and died, along with his entire legion, the death of a martyr in 290 C.E. Later even became the patron saint of the Kingdom of Burgundy in 888 and of the Holy Roman Empire in the tenth century. Since then, countless images or sculptures of him were created, and his name serves until today for apothecaries in Germany, for instance, and for towns, churches, and altars in Switzerland and France. Numerous chivalric orders carry his name, and he is even the patron saint of the Duchy of Savoy in France and of the Valais in Switzerland as well as of soldiers, swordsmiths, armies, and infantrymen. He is also the patron saint of the Brotherhood of Blackheads (Latvia and Lithuania) and of the Franconian town of Coburg in northern Bavaria (for more details and good images, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Maurice; cf. also Suckale-Redlefsen 1987).

Conclusion

Around 1525 to 1530, the Dutch painter Jan Mostaert created a stunning portrait of a black soldier, perhaps even a high-ranking officer. Although art historians have not been able fully to identify the person portrayed here, he is certainly presented in a most impressive, almost admirable fashion, not giving an inch to racism. As Collins and Keene (2023, 84) now conclude, "the subject of this painting makes clear that members of the African diaspora mingled with white Europeans in royal courts at the same time that images of a Black king Balthazar proliferated." To this amazing portrait we can add also a major painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder from 1520–1525 and of Matthias Grünewald from ca. 1520–1524 showing St. Maurice in a most fashionable Renaissance appearance, highly dignified, with blackness serving only as a distinctive feature of this attractive man.

There is a certain carelessness combined with a political agenda to use the term 'racism' in an inflationary manner, and to work in an anachronistic fashion of equating modern-day racism with the phenomena (plural!) that we can observe in the past. As Vanitha Seth now comments, "What is clear, however, is that in the European Middle Ages, 'black' and 'white' were charged descriptors that often conveyed moral meaning" (Seth 2020; online). In my selection of texts and images, most of the black individuals are outstanding personalities who attract much attention and even admiration (!). Undoubtedly, this did probably not reflect the general attitudes toward blackness, especially because medieval societies were still much less exposed to the meetings of people of different skin color. Our evidence points in the direction that the ideology of racism was not yet fully developed, and within this vacuum, poets and artists discovered opportunities to describe Blacks simply as physically slightly others, but not at all in ethical or moral terms.

When the Priest Konrad talks about the evil and vicious black prince in Marsilie's army, for instance, he simply belonged to the broad category of non-Christians who threatened the Christian world and who were thus automatically viewed as 'evil.' In short, I seriously question that the Middle Ages already knew a form of systematic racism as it emerged in the modern age, maybe as late as in the nineteenth century. After all, in the eighteenth century, it was still possible that the young slave boy Anton Wilhelm Amo (ca. 1703–ca. 1759), who had originated from what we call today Ghana – he was a member of the Nzema – could be raised at the court of Anthony Ulrich, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel (1633–1714) and then was allowed to enter first the university of Halle and then the university of Wittenberg where he earned his doctorate in 1734. He subsequently held a position as a

professor of philosophy in Halle in 1736, and in 1740 in Jena, but finally left Germany certainly under racist harassment and political duress and returned to his homeland in 1747 (Abraham 1996; Ette 2014/2020).

I do not need to address racism as it evolved ever since; instead, it is possible to conclude that it is certainly important to turn to the Middle Ages when black individuals already emerged on the mental horizon and assumed both negative and positive positions and characteristics. Already then, the ordinary people were apparently deeply scared of the Blacks out of religious reasons, equating them with the devil, but both courtly poets (twelfth and thirteenth centuries) and many different artists (especially since the fifteenth century) were remarkably open enough to include at times significant black individuals, and occasionally even as protagonists within the narratives or in the visual presentation. In other words, if we want to understand racism and its historical evolution, we must also recognize and acknowledge the rather complex and much more diverse conditions vis-à-vis black contemporaries in the pre-modern world. It remains to be seen whether Wolfram von Eschenbach and the anonymous Dutch author of the *Romance of Moriaen* were unique exceptions, or whether they reflected more widespread attitudes toward Blacks, at least within the world of the courts.

doi.org/10.32388/KIJP54

Jan Mostaert (ca. 1475–1552/1553),

Portrait of an African Man (Christophle le More?); Rijksmuseum SK-A-4986.jpeg (public domain), By Jan Mostaert - http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/collectie/SK-A-4986, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34312161

Works consulted

- Abraham, William E. 1996. "The Life and Times of Anton Wilhelm Amo, the First African (Black) Philosopher in Europe." *African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources*, ed. Molefi Kete Asante and Abu S. Abarry. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 424–40.
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010/2020. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of* Colorblindness New York and London: The New Press.
- Alfonso X el Sabio., King of Castile and Leon. 1987. *Libros de ajedrez, dados y tablas*. 2 vols. Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional. Transcription from the original by Mechthild Crombach.
- Birkhan, Helmut, trans. 2001. *Leben und Abenteuer des großen Königs Apollonius von Tyrus zu Land und zur See. Ein Abenteuerroman von Heinrich von Neustadt verfaßt zu Wien um 1300 nach Gottes Geburt*. Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang.
- Borgolte, Michael. 2022. *Die Welten des Mittelalters: Globalgeschichte eines Jahrtausends*. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- Brandsma, Frank, Johnny McFadyen, and Leah Tether. 2017. "The Roman van Walewein and Moriaen: Travelling through Landscapes and Foreign Countries." *Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur's Court in Medieval European Literature*, ed. Leah Tether, Johnny McFadyen, Keith Busby, and Ad Putter. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 415–30.
- Braude, Benjamin. 1997. "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54.1, 103–42.
- Brüggen, Elke. 2014. "Belacâne, Feirefîz und die anderen: zur Narrativierung von Kulturkontakten im 'Parzival' Wolframs von Eschenbach." *Figuren des Globalen: Weltbezug und Welterzeugung in Literatur, Kunst und Medien*, ed. Christian Moser and Linda Simonis. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 673–92.
- Brüggen, Elke and Joachim Bumke. 2011. "Figuren-Lexikon." *Wolfram von Eschenbach: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Joachim Heinzle. Vol. II. Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 835–938.

- Bumke, Joachim. 2004. *Wolfram von Eschenbach*. 8th completely rev. ed. Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler.
- Baumgärtner, Ingrid. Forthcoming. *Mapping Narrations – Narrating Maps: Concepts of the World in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period*. Research in Medieval and Early Modern Culture. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications.
- Collins, Kristen and Bryan C. Keene, ed. 2023. *Balthazar: A Black African King in Medieval and Renaissance Art*. Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum.
- Collins, Kristen and Bryan C. Keene. 2023. "An African King in Art and Legend." *Balthazar: A Black African King in Medieval and Renaissance Art*. Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1–33.
- Crenshaw, K. W., ed. 2019. *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dadabhoy, Ambereen, and Nedda Mehdizadeh. 2023. *Anti-Racist Shakespeare*. Elements in Shakespeare and Pedagogy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Darrup, Cathy C. 1999. "Gender, Skin Color and the Power of Place in the Medieval Dutch *Romance of Moriaen*," *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 27, 15–24; online at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1329&context=mff.
- DeWeever, Jacqueline. 1990. "Candace in the Alexander Romances: Variations on the Portrait Theme." *Romance Philology* 43, 529–46.
- Duggan, Joseph and Annalee C. Rejhon, trans. 2012. *The Song of Roland: Translations of the Versions in Assonance and Rhyme of the Chanson de Roland*. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Earle, T. F., and K. J. P. Lowe, ed. 2005. *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ebenbauer, Alfred. 1984. "Es gibt ain mörynne vil dick susse mynne: Belakanes Landsleute in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters." *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 113, 16–42.
- Eliav-Feldon, Miriam, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, ed. 2009. The Origins of Racism in the West. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ette, Ottmar. 2014/2020. *Anton Wilhelm Amo – Philosophieren ohne festen Wohnsitz: eine Philosophie der Aufklärung zwischen Europa und Afrika*. 2nd ed. Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos.
- Finet-Van Der Schaaf, Baukje, ed. and trans. 2009. *Le roman de Moriaen/Roman van Moriaen*. Moyen âge européen. Grenoble: ELLUG.
- Frisch, Max. 1961. Andorra. Stück in zwölf Bildern. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

- Gray, Clayton. 1974. "The Symbolic Role of Wolfram's Feirefiz." Journal of English and Germanic Philology 73.3, 363–74.
- Hartmann, Heiko. 2015. *Einführung in das Werk Wolframs von Eschenbach*. Einführungen Germanistik. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Heng, Geraldine. 2018. *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hermans, Erik, ed. 2020. *A Companion to the Global Early Middle* Ages. Leeds: Arc Humanities Press.
- Hsy, Jonathan and Julie Orlemanski, ed. 2017. "Race and Medieval Studies, a Partial Bibliography."*postmedieval* 8.4 (2017): 500–531. https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/s41280-017-0072-0.pdf
- Kaplan, M. Lindsay. 2018. *Figuring Racism in Medieval Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kaplan Paul H. D. 1985. *The Role of the Black Magus in Western Art*: Studies in the Fine Arts: Iconography. Ann Arbur, MI: UMI Research Press.
- Kim, Dorothy. 2019. "Introduction to Literature Compass Special Cluster: Critical Race and the Middle Ages." *Literature Compass* 16.9–10, 1–16; online at https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1329&context=mff.
- Layne, Priscilla and Kira Thurman. 2022. "Introduction: Black German Studies." *German Quarterly* 95.4, Special Issue, 359–371.
- Mellinkoff, Ruth. 1993. *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*. 2 vols. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Morera, Luis X. 2022. "Performative Subjugation and the Invention of Race: The Danzas de Judios y Moros, Festivals, and Ceremonies in Late Medieval Iberia," *Mediaevalia* 43.1: Special Issue: *Medieval Unfreedoms in Global Context*, 205–38; DOI:10.1353/mdi.0.0007.
- Kenney, Kirstin. 2019. *Alfonso X of Castile-León: Royal Patronage, Self-Promotion and Manuscripts in Thirteenth-Century Spain*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Kyeser, Conrad. 1967. *Bellifortis*. Vol. 1: *Facsimile-Druck der Pergament-Handschrift Cod. Ms. philos. 63 der Niedersächsischen Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen*. Vol. 2: *Umschrift und Übersetzung* by Götz Quarg. Düsseldorf, VDI-Verlag.
- Opitz, May. 1992. "Racism, Sexism, and Precolonial Images of Africa in Germany." *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, ed. Katharina Oguntoye, May Opitz, and Dagmar Schultz. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1–76.

- Patton, Pamela A., David Perry, and Geraldine Heng. 2019. "Blackness, Whiteness, and the Idea of Race in Medieval European Art," *Whose Middle Ages?: Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past*, ed. Andrew Albin, Mary C. Erler, Thomas O'Donnell, Nicholas L. Paul, and Nina Rowe. New York: Fordham University Press, 154–65.
- Pfeffer, Wendy, ed. 2022. *Blandin de Cornoalha: A Comic Occitan Romance. A New Critical Edition and Translation*, trans. by Margaret Burrell and Wendy Pfeffer. TEAMS Varia Series. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications.
- Ramey, Lynn T. 2014. *Black Legacies: Race and the European Middle Ages*. Gainesville, Tallahassee, et al., FL: University Press of Florida.
- Seth, Vanita. 2020. "The Origins of Racism: A Critique of the History of Ideas," *History & Theory* 59.3, 343–68; online at: DOI: 10.1111/hith.12163.
- Stovall, Tyler. 2021. *White Freedom: The Racial History of an Idea: The Racist Llegacy Behind the Western Idea of Freedom*. Race, Justice & Equity. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Suckale-Redlefsen, Gude. 1987. *Mauritius: Der heilige Mohr. The Black Saint Maurice*. Munich: Schnell und Steiner/Houston: Menil Foundation.
- Tinsley, David F. 2011. "Mapping the Muslims: Images of Islam in Middle High German Literature of the Thirteenth Century." *Contextualizing the Muslim Other in Medieval Christian Discourse*, ed. Jerold C. Frakes. The New Middle Ages. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 65–101.
- Walcott, Rinaldo. 2014. "The Problem of the Human: Black Ontologies and 'the Coloniality of Our Being.'" *Postcoloniality – Decoloniality – Black Critique: Joints and Fissures*, ed. Sabine Broeck and Carsten Junker. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2014, 93–105.
- Wells, D. A. 1971. "The Middle Dutch *Moriaen*, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, and Medieval Tradition." *Studia Neerlandica* 2, 243–81.
- Wolfram von Eschenbach. 2004/2006. Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival* and *Titurel*, trans. and notes by Cyril Edwards. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wolfram von Eschenbach. 1998. *Parzival*. Studienausgabe. Mittelhochdeutscher Text nach der sechsten Ausgabe von Karl Lachmann. Übersetzung von Peter Knecht. Einführung zum Text von Bernd Schirok. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Declarations

Funding: No specific funding was received for this work.

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.