From Head to Toe
Visual Stereotyping as Practice in Pre-Modern European Works of Art

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Abstract

By taking the basic idea of democratic ideals about equal coexistence and inclusion of all society members as a theoretical starting point, I focus on those (historical) social processes that contradict this vision, such as forms of group-focused discrimination. From an art-historical perspective, it seems conclusive to proceed from the artistic representation of human beings. This article asks for the artistic methods of early stereotyping in pre-modern European visual culture, which consolidated already existing practices and transmitted them as visual knowledge to subsequent generations. Benefiting from sociological reflections on the visual methods of social discrimination, these insights are brought to bear for art-historical considerations on the representation of Black people. The approach shows a deconstructive artistic access to Black body figurations, which correspond to already prevalent stereotyping processes and include forms of homogenization and fragmentation. The text argues for an analytical differentiation into group and single figure representations. In this way, the question can be answered whether possible conventions were resorted to when artists depicted Black individuals in a collective. Further, it discusses the fragmented use of the head in the heraldic tradition, which has subsequently been adopted as stereotyped form for the conceptualization of Black figures in some narrative artistic compositions. Finally, those strategies are discussed particularly in the iconography of the prominent so-called "Leg Miracle"—legend of Sts. Cosmas and Damian described in the *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine. The different artistic realizations of the theme not only confirm the incorporation of the practices mentioned, but furthermore demonstrate a European perception of Black bodies as a collective marker, which is still a constitutive element in racist knowledge formation today. The direct argumentative involvement of the artists shows their participation in social processes of perception and knowledge formation, instead of excluding them, especially where their artistic practice is concerned.

Introduction

Discrimination is contrary to the idea of equal coexistence of all members of society. Thus, it clearly attacks democratic ideals on every level of social life. Forms of group-focused discrimination such as racism are historically evolved social phenomena. Their impact and knowledge systems reach into all areas of society, including the field of visual culture. Stereotyping can be one element of their mediation. The mechanisms are characterized by their reference to the human being, their immutability and their continuity over long periods of time, despite new or even contrary experiences (Hillmann 1994, 842-843). The considerations on their essential characteristics can certainly be transferred to the visual mode (Hoffmann 2002), which will be discussed here through the example of the artistic conceptualization of Blacks in pre-modernity, which considers the role that the traditions of visual art play in the formation of social knowledge. The general question could be asked how much social impact these visual interpretations had, if the artists mainly engage them with discourses on the miraculous, alterity and foreignness.

Reflections on the Transmission
of Stereotypes and Social Knowledge

When it comes to group-focused discrimination the effectiveness and persistence of stereotypes cannot be underestimated. From a sociopsychological perspective stereotypes are fundamental narratives in discriminatory social practice. Admittedly, the term 'group-focused discrimination' is not a medieval or an early modern one, it is a contemporary term. Discrimination is defined as:

> a social construction and use of distinctions between categories of people and imagined groups associated with ideas about similarity and strangeness, belonging and non-belonging, and appropriate positions in the fabric of social inequality. […] [D]iscriminatory distinctions [are] anchored in specific ways in the structures of social subsystems and inscribed in socially influential discourses and ideologies. (Scherr 2017, 39)[1]

Their modes of operation cannot be explained solely through speech or action in isolated interactions. Sociologically, discrimination cannot be traced back to individual attitudes or actions, which are not the starting point or cause, but rather are the part and result of social structures and processes (Scherr 2017, 39-40). In this sense, we cannot explain the prevalent systems that lead to discrimination through the cultural studies analysis of specific objects alone, but rather we should

understand these objects as components of social communication and resources of knowledge that help maintain, propagate, and stabilize those systems. Such a comprehensive analysis of visual culture can reveal implications and recourse to such knowledge, and initiate a critical discussion about the possible spectrum of their social impact.

Various forms of discrimination have developed over a long period of time and can be self-perpetuating (Pettigrew and Taylor 1990, 501; Scherr 2017, 41). As Scherr explains, "the consequences of past discrimination can lead to certain conditions and social orders that […], in conjunction with the transmission of ideologies, discourses, and stereotypes, enable and make likely further discrimination" (2017, 41).[2] Discrimination has a self-reinforcing effect, e.g. when its consequences are not perceived as the result of social structures and processes, so the causes are therefore not recognized (Scherr 2017, 41). If they are instead interpreted as an expression of the supposedly typical characteristics of the discriminated group, this can lead to a confirmation, consolidation and possibly reinforcement of already existing stereotypes and established patterns of action (Scherr 2017, 41).

The visual mode is also considered in discrimination research. Thus, Reisigl (2017, 95-96) cites the considerations of the socio-semiotician Theo van Leeuwen, who distinguishes different forms of discrimination in the field of contemporary visual communication. Among these, he names strategies such as homogenization, i.e. de-individualizing egalitarianism (Reisigl 2017, 95-96). Discriminatory stereotyping of certain groups through visual representations is clearly named as a practice, although art works are not explicitly mentioned here (Reisigl 2017, 96). Furthermore visual fragmentation is cited, in which people interpreted as belonging to a marked group are reduced to certain body parts (Reisigl 2017, 96).

Taking these considerations into account, I examine the practice of visual stereotyping in pre-modernity. Artistic images can serve as potential orientation aids for the perception of the surrounding world. I understand visual stereotyping in the sense of Hoffmann (2002), who, also following perceptual-psychological considerations, understands it as something unchangeable that is based on duplication and not on modification. The fact that the images themselves may not offer a key to resolution or relativization holds potential for conflict. It then arises when the visual stereotype "which is a scheme, an idea, a generality" makes the claim "that the things of the world look as they do in the picture"—a conflict that is inevitably invoked in naturalistic and illusionistic painting (Hoffmann 2002, 84).[3]

In this article I am not aiming to tell a 'history of racism' from past to present. Rather, I want to pose the question differently here, in order to clarify what points of contact exists between social processes and their cultural expression at different times in history. My considerations are therefore based on the following question: What discriminatory potential do pre-modern articulations hold if they a) show parallels to later racisms or racist content (in word and image) and b) can be used without hesitation to underpin and disseminate (modern) racist knowledge formation?

Lowe's studies, which focus primarily the Mediterranean, already demonstrated the close interconnection of stereotyping and representation that unfolded in the context of early travel accounts and the West African slave trade of the 15th and 16th centuries. Using various sources, she formulates the interrelationship of socio-historical, economic as well as cultural factors that together form a knowledge system for stereotyping to find its way into contemporary visual culture (Lowe 2010). Likewise Kümper (2011) asked what contribution the study of European pre-modernity could make to the research field of early stereotyping. Kümper shows how stereotypes about the sexuality of Black men were already prevalent in European medieval discourses. According to Kümper (2011, 949-950), numerous texts speak of a supposedly heightened, disinhibited libido of 'the' Black man and even make comparisons with wild animals, such as the ape. The historically recurring stereotype of the uncivilized savage is the worst intensification of this supposed disinhibition, even today pejorative comparisons with animals can still be detected.[4] Stereotypes, as Kümper defines them, are essentially assertions of identity that are projected onto an individual or a group (of individuals) on the basis of one or a combination of several markers, such as body color, religion or origin, from which presuppositions about the nature, way of life or action of that individual or group are derived (Kümper 2011, 944). Regardless of which markers are chosen, the perception of the individual in question takes place exclusively in relation to an (abstract) group[5] to which they attributed, intentionally or unintentionally. The element of group construction is decisive here. It makes no difference whether the individual 'feels' that they belong to the group or whether the supposed members of the constructed group really know each other and share a collective identity. Stereotypes are assigned from the outside. Based on certain markers, actions and character traits are always evaluated as an expression of a collective (as whose alleged representative they act), rather than of an individual. With reference to the chosen markers, it is already inherent in the concept of such a social practice that the individual dissolves in the collective.

Dissolving in the Collective:
Visual Fragmentation & Homogenization

Representational practices in Western European countries historically prioritized non-Black subjects, which means that previous art-historical considerations regarding the depiction of Black individuals and collectives need to be reevaluated. The representation of Black bodies (as single figures as well as in depiction of groups) have to be examined separately in order to understand the possible social impact of certain artistic strategies in images made for and by people who are not Black[6]. Since our attention is on aspects of stereotyping, artistic approaches to the pictorial conceptualization of individualization and human collectiveness play a decisive role here.

Besides several biblical and holy personages, such as the prominent St. Maurice and the Queen of Sheba, have been depicted as single figures with dark *inkarnat*[7] in late medieval works of art, there are also noteworthy examples showing group representations of Black individuals. Occasionally, in images of the Queen of Sheba or the adoration of the magi from around 1400 onwards, Black figures are included in the entourage of the royal representatives. Although there are several depictions as recognizably cohesive groups or gatherings of figures, they receive less art-historical attention than those single figure depictions. While group representations are subsumed under the broad category of 'images of Blacks' they are rarely examined as motifs in their own right. Still to be addressed are questions about the artistic concepts that shaped group constellations, which present varying degrees of attention to the physical appearance of Black bodies.

One could certainly ask how collective are conceptualized artistically, and if particular conventions are used in group representations of Black individuals. Here, it might be helpful to carry out detailed studies of compositions, as well as the inner-image constellations and relationships. Unlike representations of non-Black persona, there is already an established artistic tradition in European visual culture that is most closely linked to the representation of Black people. Some artistic approaches seem to draw on this very tradition for their multi-figure compositions, incorporating and translating stereotypes into visual form.

Depictions of Black bodies entered society's perceptual spectrum with different understandings of their mapping function in pre-modern European artistic practice.[8] Sometimes the body is shown as a whole, while at other times it appears fragmented and refers, as pars pro toto, to both the body's presence and absence. In yet other representations, both approaches are used to conceptualize the figure.

Such fragmented bodies often appear in the visual traditions of European heraldry (Devisse and Mollat 2010)[9], in most cases in the form of the Black Head on the armorial bearings (Fig. 1). The heraldic motif usually shows a male head, sometimes bust length, in profile, aligned to the left. In various cases there is a white bandeau on the forehead added to the isolated head, which is interpreted as a sign of African or at least foreign origin. Especially from the late Middle Ages, several prominent families, in the north as well as in the south, are known to have used the Black head in their family coat of arms, such as the Florentine Pucci family (Fig. 2) or the Moreels from Bruges (Fig. 3) (McGrath 2002; De Vos 1994, cat. No. 22, 131). The heads have a similar appearance with only few variations. Accordingly, in its use as a symbol of identification, it works foremost through its patterns of repetition and uniformity. The constant repetition of more or less the same design, which at best reflected a Western-European idea of a person of color, may have shaped audience reception in such a way that those images became automatically associated with Black people in the minds of white European viewers. There seems to be at least some evidence for this when we examine representations of Black people in the period that followed. After all, it must be remembered that behind the artistic practice there also stands a socialized individual who is shaped by his environment and its culture of knowledge, and, in the task of pictorially representing a person of color, resorts to precisely those patterns.

Figure 1. a-c: Armorial bearings of a) Coenrat van Elvervelde (Berg),
b) H'Henric van Bruecdorp (Holstein), c) H'Henric van Eswielre (Jülich),
from the Bellenville Armorial, MS fr. 5230, fols. 69r, 72r, 69v (details), Paris, BnF.
Image available from the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).
See also: Bindman/ Gates 2010, 33, fig. 1.

Figure 2. Coat of arms of the Pucci family upon Palazzo Pucci in Florence, Italy.
Photo by Giovanni Dall'Orto. January 27, 2008. Licensed under CC0 1.0.

Figure 3. Hans Memling, coat of arms of the Moreel family, portrait backsides, c. 1472-75.
Image in the public domain.

The established pictorial means used in heraldry to depict Black figures seemed to offer suitable models for artists, for we see essential elements that are adopted in the narrative scenes of various works. In the 14th century artists began to illustrate stories based on the crusades and, as Devisse/Mollat put it, "[…] the law of the genre, of course, dictated that adversary should be treated with obloquy. Heraldry was the first means used to accomplish this end" (2010, 92).[10] Executed in 1337, on fol. 19r of the *Roman de Godefroi de Bouillon* we see such an artistic adaption that clearly incorporates elements derived from heraldry (Fig. 4) (Devisse and Mollat 2010, 92). The miniature shows crusaders fighting against Saracens with a brownish *inkarnat*. The white bandeau, which we know from the heraldic motif, is here used as an attribute for the viewer to identify the opponents as Saracenes and does not appear in their heraldic emblems. The one ahead of the group carries a shield with three Black heads in profile, which is repeated numerous times on his horse's caparison.
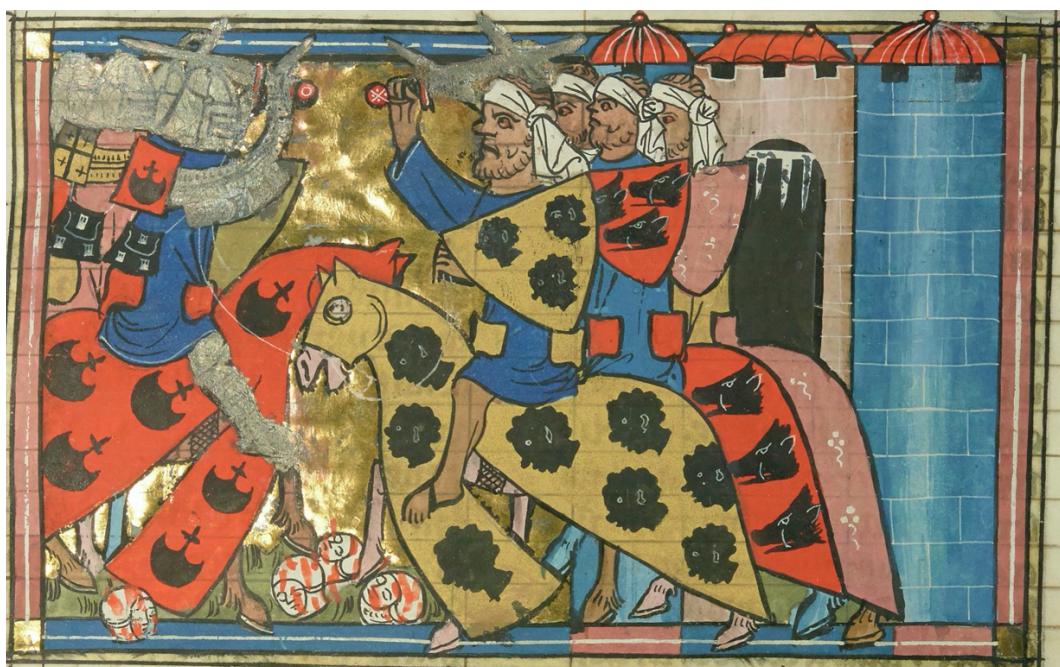

Figure 4. *Roman de Godefroi de Bouillon*, MS fr. 22495, fol. 19r (detail), 1337, Paris, BnF.
Image available from the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

While this miniature obviously represents heraldic objects due to the military context of the scene, an example of a manuscript dated in the second half of the 15th century shows how the well-established iconography originating from heraldic aesthetics is applied to the figuration of then 'acting' Black characters in narrative scenes more broadly. Fol. 31r of the *Roman de Troie*—so far, a truly unique and unusual realization of the theme—shows the departure of the famous Argonauts (Fig. 5). The figures preparing and loading the Argo for the upcoming mission resemble the heraldic motif so closely that it seems as if bodies have simply been attached to the recognizable schematic heads. Although the figures differ from another in the color of their garments, they hardly show any forms of variability in their figurative physique. This becomes all the more evident when we compare them with the non-Black figures in the foreground, who are also indicated as laborers, or with the non-Black figures of Jason and Hercules on the left, shown playing chess while waiting for the vessel to be ready to sail. Now, of course, one could argue that in many examples of medieval illuminations, it is not unusual for staffage figures, often appearing in groups, to have few individualized traits. But the question must be asked whether this does not have a completely different social impact in terms of stereotyping the supposedly other and foreign.

Figure 5. *Roman de Troie*, MS Douce 353, fol. 31r (detail), France, c. 1470, Oxford, Bodleian Library. Photo: © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. Licensed under CC-BY-NC 4.0.

The pictorial vocabulary that is chosen here is part of a repertoire that can be observed many times, from which European artists seem to have made selective use of for the representation of Black figures, particularly evident in facial features. This is also true regarding the single figure of the king, for which artists choose very different approaches. The detailed, naturalistic realization of Hans Memling in the so-called Prado triptych is unquestionably opposed to the king on the Polling panel, which is dated about twenty-six years earlier.[11] The schematized physical features such as a broad nose, thick lips, visibly white teeth and eyes, and short frizzy hair clearly point in the direction of an established stereotyping practice in the visual sphere (Mellinkoff 1993, 127). Sometimes such tendencies can also be discerned when the artist has visibly sought to render highly sophisticated and nuanced scenes. It is precisely here that the focus on pictorial group constellations can help to bring to light comparative insights. A good example is a Gospel book housed in the Austrian National Library, probably dating from the second half of the 14th century.[12] The scribe named is John Oppava (Johann von Troppau), at that time parish priest in Landskron (Villach, Austria). It was commissioned by Duke Albrecht III. of Austria and was later in the possession of Emperor Frederick III.[13] The elaborately designed manuscript contains 189 leaves and features numerous miniatures, ornamental details and several full-page images, some of which are dedicated to the lives and legends of the evangelists.[14] In considering how certain artistic approaches convey notions of a Black body, this miniature cycle allows us to study a specific work that presents multi-figure constellations of pale and dark *inkarnat* in direct comparison to each other. Fol. 1v shows St. Matthew's miracles in Ethiopia (Fig. 6).

Figure 6. John of Oppava (Johann von Troppau), *Evangelistary*,
Cod. 1182 HAN MAG, fol. 1v, 1368, Vienna, Austrian National Library.
Image available from the Austrian National Library (ÖNB).

The folio presents an almost full-page framed image field, with detailed chronological scenes divided into twelve sequences. As Devisse/Mollat state, the artist "strove to re-create the setting of Matthew's mission as concretely as possible" (2010, 50). The depicted scenes are set in Ethiopia, where, according to legend, Matthew was missionary.[15] In the city of Nadaber, Matthew confronts two powerful sorcerers named Zaroes and Arphaxat, who were accompanied by two dangerous dragons. He exposed their tricks and the dragons submitted to him in the name of Christ. After this success Matthew begins his preaching, and miraculously resurrects king Eggipus's son, inspiring the king, his family and their

people convert to Christianity and get baptized by the apostle. As Matthew continues his preaching, the king dies and Hirtacus succeeds him. Hirtacus falls in love with Egippus' daughter Ephigenia, who escapes by taking the veil. Enraged by this, the new king holds the apostle responsible and has him sentenced to death. The middle scene of the last row shows Matthew being stabbed in the back by one of the king's henchmen. Even after the apostle's death, Ephigenia refused Hirtacus, who, again enraged, set her house on fire to kill her and her virgins. But Matthew appeared and directed the flames to the royal palace instead, where Hirtacus and his only son just barely escaped the fire. The son is then immediately seized by the devil and confesses his father's deeds at the apostle's tomb.

The story ends tragically, as we see in the last scene at the bottom right the repentant son lying in front of the tomb and on the right his father, who stabs himself with his own sword. The issue here is not whether the figures with dark *inkarnat* are portrayed negatively. Quite the contrary, as Devisse/Mollat have already noted. The Ethiopians depicted here are characterized as human and sympathetic figures, despite some of their transgressions, as in the case of Hirtacus (Devisse and Mollat 2010, 50). The image's statement here certainly concerns the character traits attributed to this group. In this respect, it hardly distinguishes them from other people who engage in morally dubious acts. The visibly, most obvious distinction in the pictorial representation between this scene and comparable compositions with saints and groups without dark *inkarnat* is that here they are missionized by a figure, who does not share the same complexion as they do. Interestingly the sorcerers are presented as figures with pale *inkarnat* like the apostles. We therefore see no primary interest in depicting dark *inkarnat* as an aesthetic indicator of immorality. As far as the body figurations are concerned, it is apparent that the artist shows a high degree of compositional detail and a variety of facial expressions and gesture to express a wide range of emotions, but it is also noticeable that he uses the same head pattern for the features of the Ethiopians, both for the male and female figures (Fig. 7).

This seems to be in direct contrast to the figures with pale *inkarnat*, who demonstrate a clear variability in their appearance, such as in facial features, age characteristics, and hairstyles and hair colors. Only tentatively and at certain points in the cycle does he seem to deviate from this approach for mediating (or symbolic) reasons, such as in the scene of the penultimate row in which Matthew explains to the Ethiopians that their worship should not be to him and that they should spend their precious gifts on building a magnificent church in praise the Lord Jesus Christ (Fig. 8).[16]
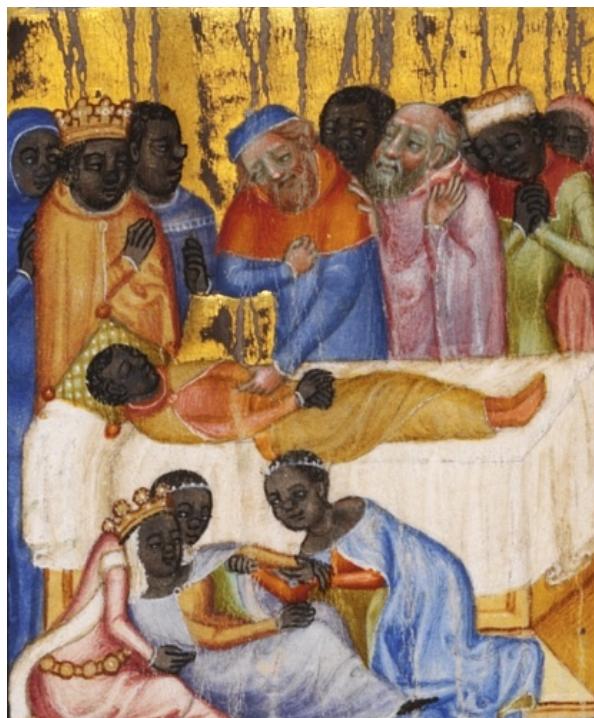
Figure 7. John of Oppava (Johann von Troppau),
Evangelistary, fol. 1v (detail), 1368, Vienna, Austrian National Library.
Image available from the Austrian National Library (ÖNB).

Figure 8. John of Oppava (Johann von Troppau), *Evangelistary*,
fol. 1v (detail), 1368, Vienna, Austrian National Library.
Image available from the Austrian National Library (ÖNB).

The figure, which interacts directly with the apostle, seems to mirror the latter and echo certain characteristics. The striking external similarity in this context could also be understood here as an inner, religious rapprochement, which is sealed in the following scene by the baptism of the king. While the figures with pale *inkarnat* show much more variability in their physical presence, the Black figures in most cases seem to follow an established pattern of schematized basic features, although the artist would demonstrably have had other means at his disposal. Cases of duplicating an ever-same physiognomy in favor of reinforcing the perception of individuals as a homogeneous group can be discovered in very different pictorial contexts, as examples from France, Italy or Portugal show (Fig. 9, 10, 11). In considering how social stereotyping functions visually, the question arises as to whether such a practice may have contributed the limited European social perception of diverse Black bodies and to the understanding of Black individuals solely in collective terms.

Figure 9. *Les Secrets de l'histoire naturelle contenant les merveilles et choses mémorables du monde*, MS fr. 22971, fol 2r (detail), France, c. 1480, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale.
Image available from the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Figure 10. Triumph of Julius Caesar, *Romuleon*, MS 667, fol. 170r
(detail), Italy, late 15th c., Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal.
Image available from the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Figure 11. Detail of the *Marriage of St. Ursula to Prince Conan*,
panel of the Santa Auta Altarpiece, Monastery of Madre de Deus
in Lisbon, c. 1520, Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga.
Photo by Sailko. Licensed under CC BY 3.0.

Figures 12–13. Master of the Rinuccini Chapel, Miracle of the Leg and Matyrdom (details), predella of the altarpiece of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, left and right panel, Raleigh, Samuel H. Kress Collection, North Carolina Museum of Art. Image in the public domain, available from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

Between 'Some-body' and 'No-body':
The Case of the "Miracle of the Leg"

The visual fragmentation and de-individualizing tendencies of depictions of Black figures are also notably evident in the so-called "Miracle of the Leg"—legend of Sts. Cosmas and Damian. The two patrons of medicine (Artelt 1974) are particularly known for 'transplanting' a Black leg (Zimmerman 2013), which has been often discussed in the context of early medical history as a representation of a 'surgical' procedure (Lippi 2009).

According to the story in Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, a man was once serving in a church dedicated to the two saints in Rome when his leg was consumed by cancer. At night, as he slept, the saints appeared and discussed where they could find a leg to replace it. It occurred to them that an Ethiopian was buried on the same day in the cemetery of St. Peter in Chains, and they decided to exchange the diseased leg with the one from the dead Ethiopian. This they did and the man woke up with a healthy leg.[17] Voragine was the first to mention that the substitute derives from a Black person (De Long 2013, 39). Interestingly and in contrast to the Latin text, the older Greek legend does not mention an Ethiopian, but rather indicates that "both the recipient and the donor of the leg belonged to the same ethnic group" (Fracchia 2013, 87).[18]

One could argue that fragmentation of bodies, regardless of their complexion, was not that unusual, especially if we think of medieval relic cult.[19] But the integration of a Black individual into this legend and its iconography provides a significant social dimension to the artistic treatment as well as to its reception. The close visual relationship to the heraldic motif is particularly evident in one of the earliest depictions of this legend on the predella of an altarpiece by the Tuscan Master of the Rinuccini Chapel (c. 1370, Fig. 12, 13) (Devisse and Mollat 2010, 101). The fragmentary reference to the Black body image is articulated twice: First, in the scene if the leg-miracle, and second, in another scene showing the beheading of the saints in the presence of the emperor and his men, who bear the head emblem on their shields (Devisse and Mollat 2010, 101). Here, a pejorative notion emerges in the "degrading use" (Devisse and Mollat 2010, 101) of the heraldic head. The deconstructive character in the intentional utilization of Black figure bodies suggests a direct connection between the heraldic tradition and the iconography of the leg-miracle. Thus Devisse/Mollat note: "There is also the possibility that heraldic art […] may have inspired the painters to propose new forms, of which the Black leg would be an example" (2010, 101). I would like to emphasize that depending on how the Black body is referred to in the composition, the social assertion can be reinforced.

Figure 14. The Miracle of the Leg by Sts. Cosmas and Damian, *Legenda Aurea*, fol 132r
(detail), copy of French origin, 13th c., HM 3027, San Marino, CA, Huntington Library.
This image is available from the Huntington Library/ Digital Library.

The iconography of this miracle shows different artistic approaches to the visibility of the Black body. Voragine's text offered painters an attractive source, because the concept of contrast was easy and perceptible to implement visually (Devisse and Mollat 2010, 229).[20] The difficulty the painters faced was rather to integrate the transplanted Black leg as such into the composition in a way that was comprehensible to the audience, without looking like a stocking (Devisse and Mollat 2010, 229). For it is only with the Black leg—and this lies at the heart of the Latin version—that the miracle becomes a miracle and achieves the desired effect. Mostly we see compositions that integrate the figure of the Ethiopian donor and/ or showing the procedure in process, while sometimes displaying the removed diseased leg (Devisse and Mollat 2010, 229). Several possible solutions seemed to emerge, in which either an absence or presence of the Black corpse was chosen. In the earliest known realization of the story, a miniature from the *Legenda Aurea* from the end of the 13th century, we see the latter. The two saints are shown at the patient's bedside attaching the Black leg onto the awake man, but with an absent corpse and thus any visible explanation of the new leg's origin (Fig. 14) (Zimmerman 2013, 18, Fig. 01). Others expanded it to include a scene showing the saints at the cemetery exhuming the dead man, as can be seen on the inner side door of a late 14th century Cosmas-and-Damian-reliquary in the Jesuit church of St. Michael in Munich.
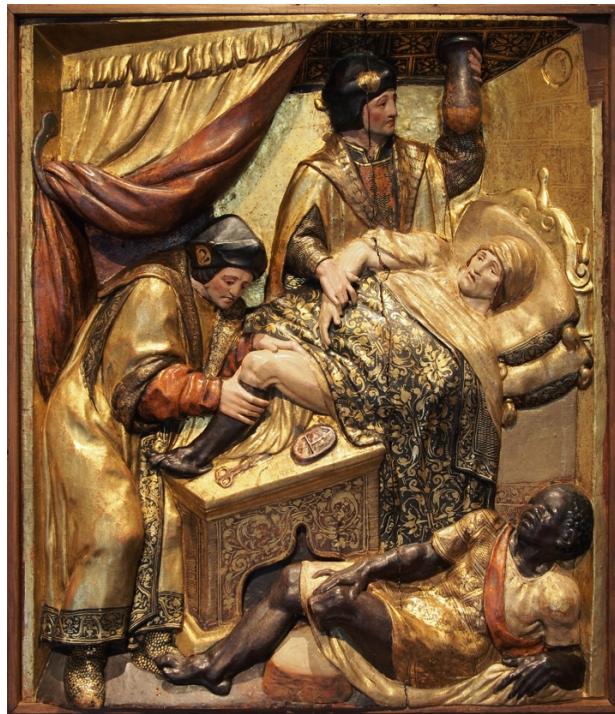
Figure 15. Isidro Villoldo, Miracle of the Leg, Monastery of San Francisco in
Valladolid, Spain, 16th c., Valladolid, Museo Nacional del Esculturas.
Photo by Luis Fernández García. 3 July 2014. Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

The socio-political undertone of the motif is elaborated particularly in the context of late 15th/ 16th century Spain and unmistakably brought to the forefront of the scene, when merging the former two separated settings (bedroom and graveyard) into one (Fracchia 2019, 143-153). The presence of the Black corpse in the same pictorial space as the procedure provides completely new semantic content. Especially when it is not instantly obvious from the pictorial context whether the Black figure is still alive.[21] In this respect, a version of this motif that expresses a "gratuitous cruelty" as shown in the studies of Carmen Fracchia, is very clear (2019, 143-153; 2013, 79-91; 2007, 181-184). Illustrations show a significant shift "in which the 'Ethiopian's' corpse becomes the enslaved Afro-Hispanic man who suffers *in vivo* amputation" (Fracchia 2019, 143). Two works by Isidro Villoldo show a mutilated African man lying at the bed end. While a relief in Ávila (1538-43) shows the man in chains, at a polychrome bas-relief in Valladolid (c. 1539) we see a man obviously in great pain, reaching for his stump (Fig. 15). The violent interpretations of the legend are linked to the earliest known image of the 'in vivo-type' on a wooden polychrome relief by Felipe Vigarny in the Cathedral of Palencia (Fracchia 2019, 145). Fracchia places the compositions in close relation to the reality of slavery in early modern Spain and shows how the artistic realization resembles actual political practices. The motif "refers to the methods of control of the social behavior of the slave population deployed by 'local police forces,' known in Spain as the Holy Brotherhood (*Santa Hermandad*)" (Fracchia 2019, 148).

Figure 16. *Miracle of the Leg*, early 16th c., Stuttgart, Landesmuseum Württemberg. Photo by ©Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart / P. Frankenstein; H. Zwietasch. Licensed under CC BY-SA.

The practice of amputations and mutilations as punishments (e.g., for escape attempts) seems to be literally embodied in the violated Black figure of the Christian subject. Such violent and dramatic interpretations of the legend are not known outside of Spain and are unique, due to its local and historical specificities. Nevertheless, it was probably also true for other regions where the iconography referring to Voragine's version prevailed, that a certain degree of socio-political significance about the relationship of one's own, mainly white society towards members or other people of color was effective. In their function as mediators of knowledge, images continue to communicate and generate a certain spectrum of social knowledge that can be consciously or unconsciously accessed as pictorial evidence. Therefore, it would be rash to completely disregard the social and political implications that the images certainly contain, despite the different historical and geographical circumstances.[22] In this respect, not only the presence of the (involuntary) Black donor/body that can open a de facto socio-political level of interpretation, but also the absence of the Black' donor'-body.

The detail of the Black leg, which we find introduced in Voragine's version, does not happen without reason: It is only through this that the miraculous potential of the legend is further increased, which is reinforced by the means of contrast (white leg – black leg) (Fichtner 1968, 96; Devisse and Mollat 2010, 229-230; Greve 2013, 166-167). Something seemingly impossible becomes possible through the healing powers of the two saints, which only succeeds with God's help. Already the literary introduction of the Black figure does not reveal any information about a specific individual. Thus, it is explained that it is an Ethiopian, who in the further course of the legend is referred to as "Mauri".[23] For the intention of the text, the reference to any Black body is sufficient, thus making the physical appearance a group marker. It is the lack of any literary information or explanation of the Black individual in the legend that generates an anonymity of the Black body.

The 'no-body-type' draws the focus to the procedure. For a better comprehension of the legend's content, artists use the means of present the already removed cancerous leg, as illustrated by the early French miniature (Fig. 14) and other later works (Fig. 16, 17). It points just as much to the fact that the removed leg has not (yet?) been attached to the corpse.

Figure 17. *Miracle of the Leg*, panel from the *Retable de St. Jean l'évangéliste,* L'église Sainte-Marie, Palau del Vidre, France, 15th c. Image by Kees W. Zimmerman. Source: One Leg in the Grave Revisited. The miracle of the transplantation of the black leg by saints Cosmas and Damian, edited by Kees W. Zimmerman 2013. With kind permission of Kees W. Zimmerman.

Whereas in some Spanish images Fracchia sees in the absence "a reminder of the law promulgated by the Catholic Monarchs during the last decade of the fifteenth century ordering the expulsion of the Moors from the crowns of Castile and Leon" (Fracchia 2013, 80) we cannot name a similarly concrete political context for the 'no-body-type' versions outside Spain. But what else can it mean for the reception on the social level if the scene is reduced to the procedure alone and the Black body from which the leg came is not thematized? It cannot be entirely dismissed that there is a certain conspicuousness involved when the image does not communicate what is happening to the 'donor-body.' Something worth thinking about, because the literary sources themselves certainly provide an explanation for the not unimportant detail of attaching the removed leg from the patient to the corpse: that the body will be intact on the day of the resurrection (Fracchia 2019, 143; Fracchia 2013, 89). So what is being referred to here is an exchange to ensure the integrity of both bodies (despite the possibly questionable access to the body of the unknown deceased, which resonates subliminally). The removal

and division of bodies, especially holy or royal ones, was a common medieval practice. But because the body was "integral to person," it was accompanied by "ambivalence, controversy and profound inconsistency" (Bynum 1995, 204-205). According to Bynum (1995, 205) it could be both acceptable and offensive. In this sense, Bynum also understands the miracle, in which she sees the "triumph over partition […] as an expression of sanctity" (1995, 208). While compositions including the corpse address this part of the legend, the question of the integrity of the body in the 'no-body-types' remains completely open and thus possibly disappears from the reception horizon of the viewers. While scholars occasionally referred to the Black as a "pagan," Helas (2010, 313) pointed out that it must be a Christian, as he was buried in the church cemetery.[24] If we think about questions of coexistence of all society members, this is an important note to consider in the 'no-body-type,' because if attention is drawn away from the Black corpse to the body part as a fragment, the image solely addresses its function as a substitute object and the figure literally becomes by its bodily absence a 'no-body' within the Christian iconography. Here, anonymity and objectification converge.

Conclusion

The stereotypical modes of representation that early artistic practices employed show that dark body color as a collective marker had social and political implications. Essential elements of such representations were handed down in the art of heraldry, which were apparently adopted as the basis for narrative scenes. The aforementioned considerations are expressed above all in the example of the prominent miracle of the leg-legend by Jacobus de Voragine. Its iconography demonstrates that these implications, which are already inherent in the Latin source, can be artistically elaborated in various degrees using a deconstructive access to Black body figurations, which, as has been shown, finds its most drastic version in the adaption of some Spanish compositions. The tendencies of objectification and simplification as well as the intentional use of Black figures as contrast foils for white ones, form a vocabulary that artists could incorporate and refine in the conceptualization of their figures with dark *inkarnat*. In such a manner, as practiced by some pre-modern artists, qualities of stereotyping are formulated for social perception, and are conveyed and made adaptable for subsequent generations. Established visually in this way, stereotyping of this kind can enter discriminatory discourse practices as supposed knowledge.

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Notes

1. Scherr 2017, 39. My translation.

2. Scherr 2017, 41. My translation.

3. Hoffmann 2002, 84. My translation.

4. E. g. if we think of racism in context of European football games, at which fans in the stadium stands imitating insulting monkey sounds to attack Black players of the opposing team.

5. Georg Simmel uses the term „abstrakte Gruppen", cf. Simmel 1968, 335; see also Scherr 2017, 40, footnote 2.

6. On this subject see also Greve 2013.

7. In German art-historical literature the term "Inkarnat" refers to painted flesh color. In this use I endorse the remarks of Daniela Bohde and Mechthild Fend (2007). Accordingly, *inkarnat* means the medial representation of skin and refers to a critical distinction between the object and its pictorial representation. Thus, in the examination of the work, the subjective concept of the artist is explicitly included in the process of applying the paint.

8. On "body-mapping" see Biddick 1993; Diprose and Ferrell 1991; Sarasin 1999.

9. Cf. Chapter "The Shield and the Crown", 31-82.

10. Cf. Chapter "The Appeal to the Ethiopian", 92.

11. In his great study Paul H. D. Kaplan also notes that the figure is more like a "caricature" than a naturalistic representation of an African, cf. Kaplan 1985, 99.

12. ÖNB Cod. 1182 HAN MAG.

13. Johann, Albrecht III, and Friedrich III. Evangeliarium: so-called "Troppauer-Evangeliar", 1368. Accessed 30.06.2021: http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC13953158.

14. Interestingly the adoration of the magi scene on fol. 3v does not show a Black magus. This indicates a status of its iconography, in which the introduction of a king figure with dark *inkarnat* had not yet begun or been established. This will happen in the course of the 15th century. On this subject see also Avkiran 2018.

15. Cf. Art. 140. Saint Matthew, Apostle in: The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints, transl. by William G. Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 569-574, here 569-572.

16. Cf. Art. 140. Saint Matthew, Apostle in: The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints, transl. by William G. Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 570-571.

17. Cf. Art. 143. Saints Cosmas and Damian in: The Golden Legend. Readings on the Saints, transl. by William G. Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 582-584, here 584.

18. See also Jović and Theologou 2015, 335; Artelt 1974, col. 350.

19. See Bynum 1995, in particular chapter 5, 200-225.

20. Cf. Chapter "The African Transposed", 229.

21. See Fig. 21 and 24 in Zimmerman 2013, 70, 73.

22. The question of how this scene should actually be understood in a social context is not entirely new and was already posed tentatively by Devisse and Mollat (2010, 101). It shows the strong socio-political undertone of the legend that always resonates.

23. Cf. Legenda aurea ed. Graesse 1846, 639.

24. Bynum also noted: "By the twelfth century, it is clear that burial outside consecrated ground usually marked one as a sinner or a nonperson." (1995, 204).

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