



Ivory and Whiteness

Marian Bleeker · *Cleveland State University*

Recommended Citation: Marian Bleeker, "Ivory and Whiteness," *Different Visions: New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 6 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.61302/HKNO8554>.

In the Spring of 2017, posters from the white supremacist group Identity Evropa appeared on college campuses across the United States.^[1] These posters used black-and-white photographs of white marble sculptures to suggest a continuity of white identity extending back to the ancient past, to promote that identity in the present, and to project it into the future. One poster in particular combined a photograph of the sculpture known as the Apollo Belvedere – a Roman marble copy of a Greek bronze original – with the slogan "Our Future Belongs to Us."^[2] In June 2017, the classicist Sarah Bond published an article in the online magazine *Hyperallergic* that, from the timing of its publication and from a small reference in the article itself, seems to have been intended as a response to these posters.^[3] In the article, Bond problematizes the posters' use of classical sculptures in two ways. First, she points to the fact that ancient Greek and Roman sculptures were frequently painted, documenting that point with reconstructions of the original colors on various sculptures from the exhibit *Gods in Color*.^[4] Secondly, she historicizes the connection between the Apollo Belvedere and white identity: she locates the initial celebration of this sculpture as an ideal form—and as ideal in its whiteness—in Johann Joachim Winckelmann's influential eighteenth-century history of ancient art and traces its use representing an ideal European form in racist pseudoscience from the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries.^[5] She thus undercuts the notion of a continuity in white identity embodied in the use of white marble by showing that idea to be founded on a misunderstanding of ancient sculpture and to be itself the product of history.

Bond's article in *Hyperallergic* is a prominent example of the intersection between two sets of current interests or concerns in both Classical and Medieval Studies. On the one hand, there is the interest in materiality and so in artistic materials, such as marble, which includes interests in their histories and their role in shaping the meanings of works of art.[6] And on the other, there is the concern with race and racism in the periods of the past that we study, in that study as it is conducted today in our fields and disciplines, and in the ways in which these periods are represented in contemporary culture.[7] In this paper, I focus on ivory as a material used in medieval art that is analogous to marble. Both ivory and marble bring together issues of materiality and race; they intersect at whiteness, a term that has origins in discussions of art and in discussions of race that reinforce one another.[8] In this essay I first define whiteness, drawing on both of these origin points and emphasizing their intersections. Next I review the scholarship on color in medieval ivories and demonstrate the ways in which this work has been shaped by whiteness. This review of the literature highlights the importance of considering the nineteenth century for understanding the traces of color that remain on medieval ivories today, and so I briefly examine the use of ivory in nineteenth-century sculpture as revealing of the way in which the material was understood at the time. In the second half of the paper, I focus on the use of bare ivory to represent flesh tones as white. Here I argue that this use of ivory was a choice made by artists in various times and places, rather than a norm that can simply be taken for granted. I then examine the significance of that choice specifically for ivories made in western Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a peak period in ivory production in the medieval west. I argue that this use of ivory should be seen in racial terms as part of the medieval construction of white identity and suggest that the increased availability of ivory objects during this period may have functioned to expand access to the power and privilege of whiteness across class lines. Finally, I reflect on the significance of the whiteness of ivory for our understanding of the Middle Ages and of race and racism.

Defining Whiteness

As an analytical and critical term in discussions of art, whiteness has an origin point in David Batchelor's book *Chromophobia*, published in 2000. The book begins with Batchelor describing his visit to the house of an art collector and his experience of its all-white interior. He writes:

There is a white that is more than white, and this was that kind of white. There is a kind of white that repels everything that is inferior to it, and that is almost everything. This was that kind of white. There is a kind of white that is not created by bleach but itself is bleach. This was that kind of white. This white was aggressively white. It did its work on everything around it, and nothing escaped.[9]

The first chapter of the book identifies this white as whiteness, defined as a generalized white and as white understood as the opposite of color, rather than as a color or colors itself.[10] Batchelor traces whiteness in this form in writing about art and architecture from Wicklemann through Walter Pater to Le Corbusier.[11] He quotes the following from the artist and architect Theo van Doesburg (d. 1931):

WHITE is the spiritual colour of our times, the clearness which directs all our actions. It is neither grey white nor ivory white, but pure white.

WHITE is the colour of modern times, the colour which dissipates a whole era; our era is one of perfection, purity, and certitude.

WHITE it includes everything. We have superseded both the “brown” of decadence and classicism and the “blue” of divisionism, the cult of the blue sky, the gods with green beards and the spectrum. WHITE pure white.[12]

From these texts, and from further examples in philosophy and film, Batchelor identifies the ideological significance that whiteness carries in western culture: whiteness as colorlessness has been treated as transparent, pure, abstract, detached, and disinterested. It has been identified with reason, order, the mind, and the absolute: in sum, all of the good things.[13] Drawing on additional examples in philosophy and writing about art, from Plato and Aristotle to Charles le Blanc, Rousseau, Joshua Reynolds, and Bernard Berenson, Batchelor demonstrates that color, in contrast to whiteness (and to line, form, design, and language), has been considered superficial, supplementary, inessential, deceptive, and seductive. It has been identified as feminine, oriental, infantile, vulgar, and queer and has been treated as alien and dangerous.[14]

While Batchelor recognizes associations between color and the eastern or oriental, he does not address issues of race and seems not to have been aware of the prior use of whiteness as a term in the context of race.[15] For whiteness as a term of analysis has an earlier point of origin in critical race studies, where it is used to name the

power and privilege that accrue through social structures and systems to people identified as white: people such as myself. In a classic essay from 1993, Cheryl Harris identifies whiteness as a form of property in that “in a society structured on racial subordination, white privilege became an expectation,” something that people identified as white “used and enjoyed” each time they “took advantage of the privileges accorded to white people simply by virtue of their whiteness” and “exercised any number of rights reserved for the holders for whiteness.”^[16] In critical race studies, as in Batchelor’s use of the term, whiteness functions as transparent, as an absence rather than a presence, for the power and privilege it confers are invisible to the very people who benefit from them and that invisibility allows white people to take their cultural norms and practices for granted as universal. Thus Richard Dyer identifies whiteness as “everything and nothing,” a position of privilege that pretends to be no particular position at all.^[17] Thus white people have the privilege of not thinking of themselves as white or as marked by race at all.

Finally, in critical race studies and in Batchelor’s work, whiteness is relational in that it is premised on an opposition that is also a hierarchy: in the case of critical race studies, the opposition between white and black people that is the foundation of our racist society. For the power and privilege that whiteness bestows on those who are identified as white comes at the expense of those who are excluded from that category. Toni Morrison has described how, in the American context, the understanding of white and black developed from the opposition between free and unfree peoples such that, for white Americans, the existence of the unfree came to be necessary for defining the self as a free person.^[18] And bell hooks writes of how white Americans imagine their whiteness to be invisible above all, to black Americans, demonstrating an assumed white control over the black gaze and a denial of subjectivity to black people.^[19]

In what follows I make use of whiteness as a term of analysis as defined both by Batchelor and in critical race theory. I use Batchelor’s work to analyze additional examples of writing about art, focusing on the scholarship about color in medieval ivories, and to analyze works of art and their reception, focusing on sculptures from the nineteenth century that shed light on the later histories of medieval ivories. I then use whiteness as defined in critical race theory to examine the context for the production of ivory sculptures in the late nineteenth century and to argue for ivory’s role in the development of white identity in the later Middle Ages.



Figure 1. Diptych of the Life of St. Martin of Tours. Cologne, 1340-1360. Cleveland Museum of Art, 1971.103

The Color of Ivory I: Scholarship

First, to document the use of color on medieval ivories: a fourteenth-century plaque depicting the life of St. Martin of Tours, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, shows a particularly extensive use of color (Fig. 1). The architecture of the upper portion is primarily red with accents in gold leaf and in the white of the unpainted ivory. The background of the lower portion has been painted blue, with the figures reserved in unpainted ivory. Details in their forms have been picked out with gold, and there is a trace of a donor figure on the left panel, originally painted in gold on the blue

background.[20] The amount of color that remains on this object is exceptional: medieval ivories today typically show only traces of their original coloring. For example, traces of color remain on a fourteenth-century plaque of the Coronation of the Virgin, also now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, in the greenish stains on the figures' garments and the outline of a halo on behind the child's head (Fig. 2).[21] And most medieval ivories have no remaining visible traces of color, so that the overwhelming visual impression given by these objects today is of a monochrome white art form. Likewise, the scholarship on medieval ivories has not focused on color, with a few notable exceptions discussed below. Instead, the scholarship in general demonstrates another feature of Batchelor's conception of whiteness: the ability to not see color, even when it is or was originally there.[22]



Figure 2. Coronation of the Virgin, central panel of an ivory triptych. Paris, 1320-1330. Cleveland Museum of Art, 1923.719

The major exception to the general neglect of color in the scholarship on medieval ivories is Carolyn Connor's work from the 1990s on color specifically on late antique and Byzantine ivories.[23] Connor reports on her close examination of one hundred such ivories in various museums and her finding that ninety-five of them had at least traces of color, while those that did not appeared to have been bleached or otherwise cleaned.[24] In addition, she reports on scientific study of five ivories using a scanning electron microscope that documents the presence of the mineral-based pigments typically used in medieval art and documented in medieval texts on art-making, including ultramarine or lapis lazuli for blue, cinnabar and vermillion reds, and greens made from malachite, verdigris, and other substances.[25] Based on her examinations, she presents proposed reconstructions of the color on a number of ivory plaques: in general these show rich colors used for the backgrounds and for the figures' clothing. According to Connor, the coloring of these ivories gave them a "uniform jewel-like richness of effect" and so made them more like other forms of Byzantine art such as mosaics, manuscript illumination, and metalwork.[26] She frames her work around the question, why paint ivory, given the supposedly inherent beauty of the material?[27] She thus anticipated, rightly, that her work would be difficult for scholars in the field to accept. The terms of this question again point to whiteness, in Batchelor's terms, to the presumption that the addition of color to ivory could only take away from its aesthetic appeal, rather than adding to it.[28] Connor argues that the opposite was true for the Byzantine makers, owners, and viewers of these objects: for them, she writes, the addition of costly mineral pigments and of gold to the ivory made the already precious material even more valuable.[29]

Connor's most pointed critic was Anthony Cutler, whose own work on Byzantine ivories made much of the natural grain of the material as a meaningful aspect of the finished works of art. According to Cutler, master carvers of ivory incorporated the grain into their work by using it to help model forms, avoiding it in areas representing cloth, and highlighting the patterns it produces. This reading of ivory of course depends on its bare surface remaining visible and so on it not being painted. Cutler thus dismisses most of the traces of color that appear on Byzantine ivories as the remnants of later, likely eighteenth- or nineteenth-century, "medievalizing" additions.[30] He does so, in part, by pointing to the nineteenth-century interest in colored sculpture, including nineteenth-century reconstructions of the color on ancient sculptures. He compares those reconstructions to Connor's, not to suggest as she does that Byzantine ivories shared the use of color with ancient work, but to identify them all as products of the nineteenth century.[31] He likewise dismisses Connor's scientific evidence, arguing that these mineral-based pigments continued to be used after the Middle Ages.[32] And he dismisses Connor's argument that the addition of color to ivory made it more like other forms of Byzantine art as "naïve,"

based on the fact that color would be an addition to ivory whereas, in metalwork and other forms, it is intrinsic to the material itself.[33] According to Cutler, ivory differed from other media used in Byzantine art in its “fidelity to its beginnings” and in the fact that ivory workers “adhered to the inherent form of dentine.”[34] Whiteness, in Batchelor’s terms, is at work here in value given to transparency in materials or truth to materials and the devaluing of color as secondary, supplementary, and inessential. The value judgments that lie behind Cutler’s argument are made clear when he describes monochrome ivories as “pure” in contrast to the “gaudy” use of color.[35]

While he is critical of Connor, Cutler makes positive references to an earlier article by Paul Williamson and Leslie Webster on color in early medieval English ivories. Their work has both similarities and differences to Connor’s: it also rests on the close visual analysis of a number of ivories, although not as many as Connor’s (twenty-three rather than one hundred), and pigment was found on a smaller number of these ivories (only two).[36] Like Connor, Williamson and Webster point to the possibility of pigment having been removed from ivories, possibly as a result of the production of plaster casts of the ivories in the nineteenth century.[37] And also like Connor, they compare the colors found on the two ivories to those used in contemporary manuscript illumination.[38] On the other hand, they argue that some early medieval English ivories were never painted, but were embellished in other ways, including the addition of gold leaf to their backgrounds. They then compare these uncolored ivories to uncolored line drawings that appear in English manuscripts of the same period.[39]

Finally, Danielle Gaborit-Chopin published an essay on color in Gothic ivories based on close examination and scientific study of objects at the Louvre, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the catalog for the exhibition *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*. [40] Unlike Cutler, she does not dismiss the traces of color found on these objects as later additions, but she does point to later over-painting and re-painting as a problem for understanding the original appearance of these objects. She thus acknowledges that Gothic ivories were painted, but she minimizes that fact by emphasizing that the color was never meant to entirely cover the surface of the object, but was only added in small touches to “enhance the sheer sumptuous value” of the ivory material itself.[41] Again, her comments reveal the impact of whiteness in Batchelor’s terms, in the presumption that the all-over coloring of the ivory would reduce rather than enhance its appeal. And again the nineteenth century is important to her account, although interestingly as both a time when color would have been added to ivories by dealers in order to satisfy collectors who knew that medieval ivories ought to be painted, and a time when color would have been removed, both deliberately in order to satisfy the

contemporary, neoclassical taste, for white sculpture, and incidentally through the process of casting.[42]

Ivory and Whiteness in the Nineteenth Century

This review of the existing scholarship makes clear that it is important to consider the nineteenth century in attempting to understand the traces of color that remain on medieval ivories. However, the review also makes clear that it is far from clear what happened to medieval ivories in the nineteenth century in terms of color and how that related to contemporary sculptural production and taste. This is because—like all periods—the nineteenth century was a complicated period in the history of sculpture and cannot be reduced to any one style or trend. On the one hand, the tradition of neoclassical sculpture in white marble that dated back to the Renaissance continued well into the nineteenth century.[43] On the other hand, scholars, artists, and others were increasingly aware of the fact that ancient Greek and Roman sculpture had been painted: the 1863 discovery of the Augustus of Prima Porta with clear traces of its original color made that fact indisputable.[44] Certain artists experimented with incorporating this new-ancient aesthetic into their own work, notably Henry Gibson whose *Tinted Venus* was exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition in London. The addition of color to the marble used for this sculpture made it difficult for viewers at the time to accept: a naked female form done in white marble in the neoclassical tradition could be readily accepted as an elevated and ideal form, but the coloring of Gibson's sculpture transformed it for contemporary viewers into something vulgar.[45] Here again we see whiteness at work, in Batchelor's sense of that term, in which color in general is devalued in contrast to idealized purity of monochrome white.

As an alternative to adding color to materials like white marble, some nineteenth-century sculptors used combinations of colored materials—each with its own inherent color—to create multi-colored forms. Certain of these artists incorporated ivory into their sculptures, and there are patterns in the way in which the material was used in these objects that point to the way in which it was perceived at the time. Ivory was sometimes combined with other materials in order to create contrasts in colors and/or textures that were then given meaning by the surfaces and subjects the different materials were used to represent. For example, in Clovis Delacour's *Andromeda*, from 1900, the different materials create a contrast between the smoothness of the highly polished ivory and the roughness of the granite behind her (Fig. 3).[46] Taking a different route to a similar end, Julien Dillien's *Allegretto*, from 1894, combines ivory with wisps of silver instead of contrasting it against dark metal or rough stone (Fig. 4).[47] Both are similarly smooth and shiny

surfaces and so the silver works to identify the ivory as a similarly precious substance. In both of these examples, the soft, light, smooth, surface figured by the ivory is the flesh of a female figure and the identities of these figures further inform the meaning of their white flesh. Andromeda's exposed ivory body is delicate and vulnerable, and yet is also highly sexualized, and so is intended to be read as highly desirable. *Allegretto's* identity as an allegory of briskness and lightness in music further identifies her ivory body with elegance and refinement. In each of these examples, the female figures' white flesh is identified as ideal in some way, recalling the idealization of white itself that is central to whiteness in Batchelor's definition of that term. While both of these examples use the white of the ivory specifically for female flesh, and at the time ivory was frequently used for female bodies, it was also used in similar ways for other subjects.^[48] In Philippe Wolfers' *Civilization and Barbarism* from 1887-8, for example, a silver bird and serpent confront each other as they twist around a hollow ivory container (Fig. 5). As in *Allegretto*, here the ivory is combined with silver and onyx to identify it as a similarly smooth, shiny, and precious substance. The ivory has been carved with a flower in relief that further identifies it as something soft, smooth, and delicate. The ivory is thus a worthy object for the creatures' conflict and the title of the piece gives that conflict a larger meaning.



Figure 3. Clovis Delacour, Andromeda. 1900. Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 4. Julien Dillens, Allegretto. 1894. Photo: © KIK-IRPA, Brussels.



Figure 5. Philippe Wolfers, *Civilization and Barbarism*, 1897-8. King Baudouin Foundation, entrusted to the Art & History Museum, Brussels. Photo: © Studio Philippe de Formanoir

The context for the production of this particular piece helps to explicate that meaning: it was made as a gift from King Leopold II of Belgium to Edmond Van Eetvelde as a reward for his work as the Head of the Colonial Administration in the Congo. In the terms given by this work of art, the Belgian colonial project is the struggle of civilization against barbarism and ivory is the prize for the victor in that struggle.[49] At the time in which all three of these objects were made, the very end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth, Leopold was promoting ivory as an export commodity from the Congo, which was his own personal possession. Here whiteness in Batchelor's terms meets whiteness in the terms of critical race theory head on, for Leopold's promotion of ivory enriched him at the direct expense of the Congo and its people. Estimates are that thirty elephants were killed per day in the Congo in the 1890s, decimating the herds, and until a railroad was completed in 1898, Congolese people were forced to carry the tusks out to the

coast for shipment to Europe.[50] One result of Leopold's promotion of ivory was a revival of its use as a material for sculpture. Ivory, including ivory sculptures, figured prominently at the colonial expositions he sponsored in Antwerp in 1894 and Tervuren in 1897: Dillen's *Allegretto* was displayed at both.[51] Sébastien Clerbois writes of the meaning that ivory as a sculptural material carried in this context:

Beyond the iconographies of the individual works, the subject of these sculptures is, in reality, the transformation of the material into something pure and transcendent. In certain cases, the ivory remains close to its animal, African origins, but in others it shines among other semi-precious materials like in some sort of great concert, where it loses its material substance: the press reports show that it was this particular aspect that undoubtedly captured the attention of the public. What they saw was not ivory any more, but rather the luxurious connotations of ivory, visual proof that a material from far away was suited to submission to the canons of European beauty.[52]

Ivory's white color, finally, was central to its perception as precious, pure, and transcendent: it was identified as "white treasure" or "white gold" and at the Tervuren exhibition its white color was highlighted as it was displayed alongside painted plaster casts of groups of Congolese people in dioramas of colonial life.[53]

This evidence for the way in which ivory as a material was valued and used in the nineteenth century, finally, is at least suggestive of the ways in which medieval ivories would have been treated at the time. Given the nineteenth century interest in bare ivory as a soft, smooth, shiny, precious, and desirable white material, it seems more likely that color would have been removed from medieval ivories than that color would have been newly added to such objects. Color may have been restored to some medieval ivories that had significant remaining traces, to satisfy specialists' interest in historical authenticity, but it seems unlikely that it would have been added to ivories where no traces of color remained and so where no color was originally present. This nineteenth century material thus provides additional evidence, beyond close examination and scientific study, that the traces of color remaining on medieval ivories need to be taken seriously as suggesting their original polychromed appearance, rather than being dismissed as later additions.

The Color of Ivory II: Flesh Tones and Staining

At first glance, based on Connor and Gaborit-Chopin's work, it would seem that

medieval ivories in general resembled nineteenth-century ivories in using the bare material to represent flesh. The reconstructions of late antique and Byzantine ivories included in Connor's book show that use of the bare ivory, although it takes on a greyish cast from the underlying black and white photographs used in her work. And the scientific study of objects in the Louvre reported by Gaborit-Chopin has shown that the pink tones that appear on the flesh areas of a small number of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century statuettes are not original: for example, the pink flesh on a fourteenth-century image of St. Margaret appears to be the result of overpainting, with no original pink beneath it, although otherwise the current color scheme does seem to reflect the sculpture's original appearance (Fig. 6).[54] Likewise, at first glance, this apparent similarity in the use of ivory in Byzantium, in western Europe during the later Middle Ages, and in the nineteenth century might seem to suggest that bare ivory was always used for the flesh areas in ivory carvings and so can be taken for granted as a norm. However, in her examination of ivory in the ancient world, and her discussion of certain late antique and Byzantine objects, Connor actually points to the possibility of ivory being colored equally when it was used to represent flesh.



Figure 6. St. Margaret triumphing over the Dragon. Paris, 1325-50. British Museum, 858,0428.1. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

In her discussion of the monumental Athena from the interior of the Parthenon, for example, Connor suggests that the ivory used for the flesh areas would have been colored, at least in part, in order to show a blush or flush on the goddess' cheeks. Connor's evidence for this is textual: it has to be since the sculpture itself has long-since disappeared. She quotes the rhetorician Himerius, discussing the sculptor Pheidias's work, stating that he "applied ornament to the Maiden, spreading a flush over her cheek, that the beauty of the goddess might be covered by this instead of a helmet." [55] It seems likely that this portion of the ivory covering for the statue would have stained or dyed either red or pink, for a wide range of ancient texts use the staining or dyeing of ivory as an image for a blush and so for color coming over skin. For example, Connor quotes the following from the *Aeneid*: "And just as when a craftsman stains Indian ivory with blood-red purple or when white lilies, mixed with many roses blush; even such, the colors of the virgin." [56] And the following from Claudian's *Rape of Properine*, a text from c. 396 CE: "A glowing blush that mantled to her clear cheeks suffused her fair countenance and lit the torches of stainless purity. Not so beautiful even the glow of ivory which a Lydian maid has stained with Sidon's scarlet dye." [57]

The number of ancient texts that use the staining or dyeing of ivory as an image for blushing suggests that the material was regularly treated in this way in the ancient world. And Connor presents additional evidence that certain late antique and early Byzantine ivories were likewise stained or dyed, red or purple, in their entirety, and so including the figures' flesh. In particular, she argues that late antique consular diptychs and early Byzantine ivories that show the coronation of the emperor or empress by Christ or the Virgin were colored in this way in order to mark their subjects' status and imperial associations. [58] One example is the diptych of the Symmachorum and Nichomachorum, the two halves of which today appear radically different. Connor argues that, because of its fragile state, the highly damaged Nichomachorum side has actually retained more of its original appearance, including the dark color produced by an overall reddish dye (Fig. 7). By contrast, she writes, Symmachorum panel, because it is in better shape, has been treated more harshly and in ways that have transformed its appearance, including a cleaning or bleaching and the use of the object for the production of plaster casts (Fig. 8) [59]



Figure 7. Diptych of Nicomachorum and Symmachorum: det.: woman sacrificing. Musée de Cluny, Cl. 17048. Photo: Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.



Figure 8. Diptych of Nicomachorum and Symmachorum: Priestess of Bacchus. Rome, 400. Victoria and Albert Museum, no.212-1865. Photo: © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Ivory objects continued to be stained or dyed, and so given an overall coloring that includes flesh areas, well into the Middle Ages, as is demonstrated by primary source texts about artistic production and by some surviving objects. The twelfth-century text *On Divers Arts* describes staining ivory red with madder and then using the material to make staffs or croziers along with knobs for other types of objects.[60] Four mid-twelfth-century ivory game pieces now in Victoria and Albert Museum were stained red, most likely to distinguish them from unstained white pieces that were part of the same game set.[61] A twelfth-century English Virgin and Child and an accompanying Magus, from a scene of the Adoration of the Magi, made of walrus rather than elephant ivory, were stained an overall greyish purple color.[62] And a thirteenth-century English and a fourteenth-century French statuette of the Virgin and Child, along with a late-thirteenth- to early-fourteenth-century French tabernacle containing the Virgin and Child – all now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art – also appear to have been stained dark red (Fig. 9).[63] This use of staining for representations of the Virgin is particularly interesting given that it is sometimes claimed that ivory was considered particularly appropriate for images of the Virgin because its whiteness could represent her unstained purity.[64] These surviving objects suggest that not all medieval artists and patrons were invested in ivory's white color nor in whiteness understood in these terms.



Figure 9. Seated Virgin & Child, French, 1300–1325. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.213.

Race and Whiteness in the Middle Ages and Medieval Studies

This evidence from the ancient world and the Middle Ages demonstrates that it cannot be taken for granted that the flesh areas of ivory carvings will remain bare and so will figure that flesh as white in color. Instead, it indicates that particular use of ivory is a choice made by artists and their patrons, a choice made in various times and places. Based on Gaborit-Chopin's evidence, this choice was made for most ivories produced in western Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, again a peak period in the production of ivory carvings in the medieval west. Recognizing this use of the bare ivory as a choice raises the question of how that choice is to be understood. One resource for answering that question is other artistic media: Madeline Caviness has identified a similar choice in the depiction of skin in manuscript painting and stained glass, a choice also made beginning in the late thirteenth century. In manuscript painting up until that time, skin tones were built up from layers of different colors, including blues, greens, browns and pinks. Likewise, flesh tones in earlier stained glass were typically made up of gray washes layered over a pinkish glass that contained manganese. However, beginning in the later thirteenth century, flesh in manuscript painting is depicted as white and in stained glass it is rendered in colorless or only slightly tinted glass with little to no modeling.[65] One result of this change, Caviness writes, was that it made possible a strong visual contrast between "good" figures, represented with white flesh, and "the bad and the ugly," represented with darker skin tones: for example, in an image from the early fourteenth-century *Livre d'images of Madame Marie*, a bright white fleshed St. Lucy is executed by a grimacing dark-skinned figure.[66] This use of differences in skin tone points towards Caviness' explanation for the change in the way in which flesh was represented in manuscript painting and glass. She argues that Europeans at this time began to construct their own identity as a white people, by way of contrast with the darker-skinned peoples they increasingly encountered on crusade and in other ways.[67]

Caviness' article demonstrates several shifts in the scholarly discussion around the issue of race in the Middle Ages. In 2001, the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* published a special issue on "Race and Ethnicity," the central question for which was whether or not race was an issue in the medieval past.[68] In his introduction to a 2015 special issue of *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, Cord Whitaker asserts that progress in the field since 2001 allows him to answer that question in the positive and to instead ask questions about how race functioned in the Middle Ages. He writes:

yes, the Middle Ages have been thoroughly raced. The question at hand is, exactly how are they raced? Not whether, but how is medieval race-thinking different from modern racism? What can we decipher of the...dynamics that give rise to race-thinking in the Middle Ages? In short, how does medieval race work from the inside out?[69]

Crucial to this shift is a change in which race itself is understood in the scholarship, not as a fixed feature of specific groups of people, but instead as a structure of power that takes different forms in specific historical moments. In Geraldine Heng's influential definition:

"Race" is one of the primary names we have...that is attached to a repeating tendency, of the gravest import, to demarcate human beings through differences among humans that are selectively essentialized as absolute and fundamental, in order to distribute positions and powers differentially to human groups. Race-making thus operates as specific historical occasions in which strategic essentialisms are posited and assigned through a variety of practices and pressures, so as to construct a hierarchy of peoples for differential treatment.[70]

Finally, along with these shifts in perspective, has come an expansion in content of scholarship on race in the Middle Ages, from a focus on black figures to include an interest in the medieval construction of whiteness, understood in the terms of critical race theory as described above.[71] Caviness' 2008 article (published in the inaugural issue of *Different Visions*) is an early contribution to this body of work. She writes that her goal in the piece is to "explore the historical contingency of white identity" and to reexamine "the Christian European construction of a 'Self.'"[72] Examining the Middle Ages is, in fact, crucial to the study of whiteness in these terms, in that it allows us to see the historical construction of white identity, and so allows us to both see that identity and see it as constructed, challenging its current status as the invisible norm.[73]

While some of Caviness' manuscript examples feature strong contrasts between white and dark-skinned figures, others show exclusively white-skinned characters: thirteenth- and fourteenth-century ivories appear to have resembled the latter group of manuscript images. Their surviving traces of color do not suggest that there were strong contrasts in the skin tones of their figures, but that the objects were either entirely stained or the bare ivory was used to represent the figures' flesh tones as white while other colors were used for their clothing and for the backgrounds of

reliefs. Analyses of the construction of racial difference in texts and images from the Middle Ages and beyond, however, demonstrate that white and black skin tones do not need to be directly or immediately contrasted for them to function as racial signifiers. In discussing medieval texts, Whitaker describes the potential of black skin in what he terms the “black metaphor” to call up a range of opposing meanings, “sameness and otherness, spiritual purity and sinfulness, salvation and damnation.”[74] Black works in this way, he writes, because it signifies through its opposition to white and that opposition calls up other opposing pairs which lend it a range of potential meanings. For the alignments between these pairs, and so of white with sameness, purity, and salvation, and black with their opposites, are essentially arbitrary, but have become “expected and entrenched” over time.[75] That process of ideological entrenchment was underway already in the Middle Ages, Whitaker argues, so that later medieval texts could play with the expected meanings of black and white in order to create unexpected effects.[76]

If black on its own can call up this system of meanings, so can white. Whitaker’s work builds on Toni Morrison’s observation that, in American literature, black on its own calls up a similar range of opposed meanings, but that white on its own is “mute, meaningless, unfathomable, pointless.”[77] Importantly, however, her ultimate point is that white in fact never signifies on its own, but always does so through its opposition to black, even if the black or “Africanist” presence is not directly visible in a text.[78] Richard Dyer similarly argues that while whiteness as a racial identity is a product of difference, it is present in all images that feature white-skinned figures, even if they do not also include black figures. To not recognize whiteness in these contexts is to reinforce its privileged status as an unmarked norm by allowing it to remain invisible even as images are dominated by white people.[79]

Ivory and Whiteness in the Later Middle Ages

Thus the use of bare ivory for flesh on medieval ivories mattered: it was the product of a choice in how to treat the material and so cannot be taken for granted. And it mattered in terms of race, as part of the construction of whiteness as a racial identity in the Middle Ages. The remaining questions concern what ivory carving has to tell us about the medieval history of whiteness and the dynamics of its development. Based on parallels in the histories of ivory carving and white identity, I argue for a connection between the two: that in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries consuming objects made out of ivory became one way in which members of the urban bourgeoisie were able to claim white identity for themselves.

Throughout much of the Middle Ages, ivory was a rare material, which rendered it precious and reserved it for use in works of art made for elite patrons. That began to change in the thirteenth century. As Sarah Guérin has documented, at that time Italian merchants established new trade routes that brought ivory from sources in western Africa, along with silks, spices, and alum for use in textile production, to ports in northern Europe.[80] These new trade routes would have functioned as one of the ways in which western Europeans in the later Middle Ages had increased contact with darker-skinned peoples. These new trade routes also dramatically increased the amount of ivory available in western Europe in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As a result, ivory carving boomed and differentiated: artists developed new uses for it and it became available to new groups of consumers, in particular the urban bourgeoisie. In a study of fourteenth-century ivory Crucifixion reliefs, Nina Rowe identifies high, middle, and low-end products that would have been available at different price points to different purchasers. She argues that ivory was desirable for the urban bourgeoisie because it made the look of something like the elaborate metalwork objects that were the primary focus for elite courtly patronage at the time available to them. Color is key to this part of her argument, as it was the addition of color to ivory that allowed it to approximate the look of elite metalwork, including the use of white tones for flesh that was figured in either bare ivory or bright white enamel. Likewise, Rowe argues that the overall elegant style of the Crucifixion reliefs, which minimized the violence inherent in that scene, marked them as desirably courtly objects for their new consumers.[81]

In medieval texts, white skin tone likewise functioned as a marker of both elite status and desirability. For example, in thirteenth-century Old French epics, “Saracen” queens and princesses could be described as white in order to mark them as appropriate objects of desire both for French knights within the texts and for the text’s readers.[82] Likewise, in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s early thirteenth-century *Parzival*, white skin tone is attributed to a range of characters from Parzival’s mother Herzelayde to the members of King Arthur’s court, to Parzival himself as a knight worthy of the Grail, and to various maidens he encounters along the way. The result, in Geraldine Heng’s words, is that whiteness is identified with “sanctity, maternity, erotic female bodies, and secular aristocratic identity of the noblest (Arthurian) kind.”[83] This association of white skin tone with elite status and other desirable qualities worked with its role as a racial marker: Heng has written of race’s capacity to “stalk and merge” with other forms of hierarchy, including class, religion, and sexuality.[84] The result is that white as a racial identity was itself identified as desirable. That can be seen in other thirteenth-century Arthurian texts that use those stories to claim white racial identity for various groups. For example, Coral Lumbley writes of the thirteenth-century Welsh text *Peredur* that works to claim white

identity for the Welsh, who had previously been identified as “dark,” by casting them in opposition to Africans who are characterized as black skinned and as animalistic and repulsive.[85] And Nahir Otaño Gracia writes that the Icelandic *Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd* casts Tristram as Spanish, but also as clearly identifies Spain with Scandinavia as similarly European territories, and so claims white identity for Scandinavians while casting their local, often Russian, antagonists as black Africans and dehumanizing them.[86]

The history of ivory as a material in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries suggests that it functioned like Arthurian literature as a medium for claiming white identity, in this case for members of the urban bourgeoisie. As they were newly able to purchase and own objects made from ivory, and so could appropriate for themselves this desirable marker of elite identity, so they would have been newly able to see themselves as white, seeing that desirable racial identity in the bare material used for the flesh tones of their ivory works of art. The process of various groups claiming white identity for themselves has continued beyond the Middle Ages and this continuity is important for how we think about both the medieval past and race and racism.[87] First, it makes it impossible to identify the Middle Ages as time marked off from modernity by the absence of race or of racial thinking and so as either irrelevant to these issues or as absolved from them.[88] In particular, as Cord Whitaker writes, it argues against the contemporary alt-Right fantasy of the medieval past as a time of white innocence, which depends on the notion that everyone in the medieval past was white and that white was not a racial identity.[89] Furthermore, this continuity shows, in Geraldine Heng’s terms the “tenacity, duration, and malleability of race, racial practices, and racial institutions.”[90] With a history that goes back to at least the thirteenth century, whiteness has shown itself to be tenacious. Dislodging it, as is the goal of critical scholarly work on whiteness—including this essay—will not be easy. Whiteness has been held up since the Middle Ages as an object of desire, as standing at the top of a racial hierarchy, but it has also been an achievable object, at least for some. As Richard Dyer writes, the possibility of becoming white and gaining its rewards, including the reward of not having to think about one’s race, is what is “enthraling” about whiteness, what gives the idea its power, and what makes it such a difficult construct to shift.[91] Seeing whiteness wherever, whenever, and however it appears—in the skin tones of later medieval ivory carvings, in nineteenth-century sculptures, and in art-historical scholarship—is a crucial step.

An early version of this paper was presented in the session “Materiality and...” at the 54th International Congress on Medieval Studies in May 2019. My thanks to the organizers, Miranda Wilcix and Maile Hutterer, and to the audience, for their suggestions.

References

- 1 “Identity Evropa,” *SPLC: Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed January 20, 2020, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/identity-evropa>.
- 2 On the posters, see Ben Davis, “The New White Nationalisms’ Sloppy Use of Art History, Decoded: Identity Evropa has been terrorizing college campuses across the country,” *ArtNet News*, March 7, 2017, accessed August 27, 2019, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/identity-evropa-posters-art-symbolism-881747>.
- 3 Sarah E. Bond, “Why We Need to Start Seeing the Classical World in Color,” *Hyperallergic*, June 7, 2017, accessed August 27, 2019, <https://hyperallergic.com/383776/why-we-need-to-start-seeing-the-classical-world-in-color/>.
- 4 Vinzenz Brinkmann, Renée Dreyfus, and Ulrike Koch-Brinkmann, eds., *Gods in Color: Polychromy in the Ancient World* (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor, 2017).
- 5 On Winklemann see Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 59-62; and on white marble, color, and race in the nineteenth century see Charmaine A. Nelson, *The Color of Sculpture: Sculpting the Black Female Subject in Nineteenth-Century America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
- 6 On materiality and artistic materials see, among others, Ursula Klein and E.C. Spary, *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Sébastien Clerbois and Martina Droth, eds., *Revival and Invention: Sculpture through its Material Histories* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011); Maggie Williams and Karen Eileen Overbey, eds., *Transparent Things: A Cabinet* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013); Christy Anderson, Anne Dunlop, and Pamela H. Smith, eds., *The Matter of Art: Materials, Practices, Cultural Logics, c. 1250-1750* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2015); Spike Bucklow, *The Alchemy of Paint: Art, Science, and Secrets from the Middle Ages* (London: Marion Boyers, 2009); Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013); Spike Bucklow, *The Riddle of the Image: The Secret Science of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: An*

Ecology of the Inhuman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Ittai Weinryb, *The Bronze Object in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

- 7** On race and racism in the Middle Ages and Medieval Studies see, among others: Thomas Hahn, ed., special issue of *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31/1 (Winter 2001); Cord J. Whitaker, ed., special issue of *postmedieval* 6/1 (2015); and Dorothy Kim., ed., special issue of *Literature Compass* 16 (2019); Lymm T. Ramey, *Black Legacies: Race and the European Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2014); Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Cord J. Whitaker, *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Sierra Lomuto, "Public Medievalism and the Rigor of Anti-Racist Critique," *In The Middle*, accessed January 20, 2020, <http://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2019/04/public-medievalism-and-rigor-of-anti.html>; and Kimberly Anne Coles, Kim F. Hall, and Ayanna Thompson, "BlackKKKShakespearean: A Call to Action for Medieval and Early Modern Studies," *MLA Profession*, accessed January 20, 2020, https://profession.mla.org/blackkkshakespearean-a-call-to-action-for-medieval-and-early-modern-studies/?fbclid=IwARISi9TazAB_L7pvJgZs8rRpbCFSGp5ZuSUU9mxphnBM-__OdjK-1XS5_R4.
- 8** On ivory, whiteness, and race in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries see Catherine E. Kelly, "The Color of Whiteness: Picturing Race on Ivory," in Martha J. McNamara and Georgia B. Barnhill, eds., *New Views of New England: Studies in Material and Visual Culture, 1630-1830* (Boston: Publications of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2012), <https://www.colonialsociety.org/node/1412#ch07>.
- 9** David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 10.
- 10** Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 12-13
- 11** Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 17, 41-47.
- 12** Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 46-47.
- 13** Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 17, 46-49. Batchelor also identifies a counter-tradition, particularly in the work of Melville and Conrad, in which whiteness appears as excessive, terrorizing, and tied to death: *Chromophobia*, 15-16, 19.
-

- 14 Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 23-31, 53, 71, 73. Here again, Batchelor also recognizes a counter-tradition in which color has been valued for the same set of associations. He identifies this in the writings of Huxley, Cezanne, Moreau, Baudelaire, Huysmans, and others: *Chromophobia*, 32-35, 54-60, 74-9, 82-3.
- 15 Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 26, 29, 38, 41, 73.
- 16 Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106/8 (June 1993): 1730, 1734. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1341787>
- 17 Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), 39.
- 18 Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 38-52.
- 19 bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 167-8.
- 20 See Peter Barnet, ed., *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Golden Age* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts and Princeton University Press, 1997), catalogue entry 41, 198-99; and Richard H. Randall, Jr., *The Golden Age of Ivory: Gothic Carvings in American Collections* (New York: Hudson Hills, 1993), catalogue 88, 81-82.
- 21 Randall, Jr., *The Golden Age of Ivory*, catalogue 39, 54-55.
- 22 Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 47.
- 23 Carolyn L. Connor, "New Perspectives on Byzantine Ivories" *Gesta* 30/2 (1991): 100-112; *The Color of Ivory: Polychromy on Byzantine Ivories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). <https://doi.org/10.2307/767053>
- 24 Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 14.
- 25 Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 25-31.
- 26 Connor, "New Perspectives," 105, 108; *The Color of Ivory*, 32, 75-78.
- 27 Connor, "New Perspectives," 103; *The Color of Ivory*, 5.
- 28 Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 23.
- 29 Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 78-80.

-
- 30** Anthony Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 79-81, 129-31.
-
- 31** Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 69-71; Anthony Cutler, review of *The Color of Ivory: Polychromy on Byzantine Ivories*, by Carolyn L. Connor, *CAA Reviews* (October 1, 1998), accessed September 2, 2019, <http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/274>
-
- 32** Cutler, review of *The Color of Ivory*.
-
- 33** Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 145-49.
-
- 34** Cutler, *The Hand of the Master*, 35.
-
- 35** Cutler. *The Craft of Ivory: Sources, Techniques, and Uses in the Mediterranean World, AD 200-1400* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), 50.
-
- 36** Paul Williamson and Leslie Webster, "The Coloured Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Ivory Carvings," in *Early Medieval Wall Painting and Painted Sculpture in England*, eds. Sharon Cather, David Park, and Paul Williamson (BAR British Series 216, 1990), 182-186.
-
- 37** Williamson and Webster, "The Coloured Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Ivory Carvings," 180, footnote 15. For their discussion of plaster casting and its possible impact on the appearance of ivories today, Williamson and Webster rely on J.O. Westwood's *Descriptive Catalogue of the Fictile Ivories in the South Kensington Museum*. In recounting the process used to produce a cast, Westwood describes first washing the ivory with water and potentially with soap and a brush, then pressing warm *gutta percha* (a type of latex made from tree sap) onto its surface, and finally removing the *gutta percha* in order to use it as a mold. It seems likely that pigment would be removed from the ivory's surface as a result of this process. Interestingly, Westwood next describes dipping the plaster cast into stearine (a type of wax) and then coloring it with watercolors in order to match the colors of the original ivory as closely as possible. His goal was to make the plaster cast or "fictile ivory" as close to a perfect copy of the original as possible and color was crucial to achieving that goal; he writes "when properly made and carefully coloured by hand from the original...it is next to impossible to distinguish one of these casts from the original." The catalogue of casts includes several that were colored: for example, no. '58.231 is described as having a blue background with red arches and nos. '73.186 and '65.11 are both described as having fleur-de-lys backgrounds, most likely done in blue and gold. J.O. Westwood's *Descriptive Catalogue of the Fictile Ivories in the South Kensington Museum* (London, 1876), x-xi, 175, 209.
-

-
- 38** Williamson and Webster, "The Coloured Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Ivory Carvings," 180, footnote 15.
-
- 39** Williamson and Webster, "The Coloured Decoration of Anglo-Saxon Ivory Carvings," 178.
-
- 40** Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, "The Polychrome Decoration of Gothic Ivories" in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 47-61.
The scientific study on which she basis this essay found the same types of pigments as Connor and her collaborators: see Bernard Guineau, "Étude des couleurs dans la polychromie des ivoires médiévaux," *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1996, 1999): 188-210. For a more recent scientific analysis of polychromy on medieval ivories, focused on differentiating between binders used with the pigments, see Christine Kowalski, "Polychromy on Medieval Ivories from the LVR-LandesMuseum, Bonn," *Sculpture Journal* 23/1 (2014): 95-98. <https://doi.org/10.3406/bsnaf.1999.11343>
-
- 41** Gaborit-Chopin, "The Polychrome Decoration of Gothic Ivories," 47-48, 52, 55.
-
- 42** Gaborit-Chopin, "The Polychrome Decoration of Gothic Ivories," 48-9.
-
- 43** Wolfgang Drost, "Colour, Sculpture, Mimesis: A Nineteenth Century Debate," in *The Colour of Sculpture, 1840-1910* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 1996), 61-62; Roberta Panzanelli, "Beyond the Pale: Polychromy and Western Art," in *The Color of Life: Polychromy in Sculpture from Antiquity to the Present*, eds. Roberta Panzanelli, Eike D. Schmidt, and Kenneth Lapatin (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum and Getty Research Center, 2008), 8-9; Sheena Wagstaff, "Embodied Histories" and Luke Syson, "Polychromy and its Discontents: A History" in *Like Life: Sculpture, Color, and the Body* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), 2-3, 16-18.
-
- 44** Vinzenz Brinkman, "A History of Research and Scholarship on the Polychromy of Ancient Sculpture," in *Gods in Color*, 15-19; Jan Stubbe Østergaard, "Emerging Color: Roman Sculptural Polychromy Revived," in *The Color of Life*, 40.
-
- 45** Drost, "Colour, Sculpture, Mimesis," 66-70; Alison Yarrington, "Under the Spell of Madame Tussaud: Aspects of 'High' and 'Low' in Nineteenth Century Polychromed Sculpture," in *The Colour of Sculpture*, 90; Catalog entry 7 in *The Colour of Sculpture*, 122; Catalog entry 33 in *The Color of Life*, 164; Emerson Bowyer, "The Presumption of White," in *Like Life*, 79.
-
- 46** Catalog entry 60 in *The Colour of Sculpture*, 189.
-

-
- 47** Catalog entry 88 in *The Colour of Sculpture*, 226.
-
- 48** On the use of ivory specifically for female figures, see Andreas Blühm, “In Living Colour: A Short History of Colour in Sculpture in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Colour of Sculpture*, 56-57.
-
- 49** Sébastien Clerbois, “The Revival of Ivory Sculpture in Belgium (1890-1919): The Material in Question,” in *Revival and Invention*, 237-38, 241-42.
-
- 50** Clerbois, “The Revival of Ivory Sculpture in Belgium,” 239. Sarah Guérin emphasizes that the medieval trade in ivory was organized differently and was “cooperative with the people who sourced it, rather than exploitative.” See Sarah M. Guérin, “Ivory and the Ties that Bind,” in *Whose Middle Ages: Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past*, Andrew Albin, Mary C. Erler, Thomas O’Donnell, Nicholas L. Paul, and Nina Rowe (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 140-153. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvnwbxk3.17>
-
- 51** Clerbois, “The Revival of Ivory Sculpture in Belgium,” 237-8; Blühm, “In Living Colour,” 56 and *The Colour of Sculpture*, 226.
-
- 52** Clerbois, “The Revival of Ivory Sculpture in Belgium,” 244.
-
- 53** Clerbois, “The Revival of Ivory Sculpture in Belgium,” 238, 240; Blühm, “In Living Colour,” 56.
-
- 54** Gaborit-Chopin, “The Polychrome Decoration of Gothic Ivories,” 54-55 and *Images in Ivory* catalogue 27, 163-64.
-
- 55** Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 56.
-
- 56** Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 58.
-
- 57** Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 59.
-
- 58** Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 16-18.
-
- 59** Connor, *The Color of Ivory*, 15-16.
-
- 60** Theophilus, *On Divers Arts*, trans. John G. Hawthorne and Cyril Stanley Smith (New York: Dover, 1979), 188-89.
-
- 61** Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings: Early Christian to Romanesque*, catalogue 113, 426-27.
-

- 62** The Virgin and Child is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, A.25-1933, and the Magus is in the Dorset Country Museum. See *English Romanesque Art: 1066-1200* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984) catalogue numbers 209-10, 226-27; Archer St. Clair and Elizabeth Parker McLachlan, eds., *The Carver's Art: Medieval Sculpture in Ivory, Bone, and Horn* (Rutgers, 1989), catalogue 74, 118-19; and Paul Williamson, *Medieval Ivory Carvings: Early Christian to Romanesque* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2010), catalogue 99, 395-6.
- 63** Metropolitan Museum of Art inventory numbers 1979.402, 17.190.213, and 17.190.290. On this group of objects see William Wixom, "A Late 13th Century English Ivory Virgin," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 50/3 (1987): 342-3, including footnote 10; on the English statuette, see Barnet, *Images in Ivory*, catalogue number 35, p. 182-83; and on the other two examples see St. Clair and McLachlan, *The Carver's Art*, catalogue number 11, pp. 39-40, and catalogue number 74, p. 119.
- 64** Alexa Sand writes that "liturgical and homiletic sources stress the parallel between ivory's whiteness and translucence and the Virgin's luminous purity" and cites for support articles by W.H. Monroe and Sarah Guérin. Monroe identifies multiple properties of ivory, "firmness, whiteness, coldness, and lucidity" as making it "an ideal means for representing the Virgin, who in her purity and chastity metaphorically embodies these same qualities." Guérin, by contrast, emphasizes ivory's quality of coldness as making it appropriate to represent the chaste flesh of the Virgin and other saints. See Alexa Sand, "Materia Meditandi: Haptic Perception and Some Parisian Ivories of the Virgin and Child, ca. 1300," *Different Visions* 4 (2014): 2; W.H. Monroe, "An Early French Ivory of the Virgin and Child," *Museum Studies* 9 (1978): 24-25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4115929>; Sarah M. Guérin, "Meaningful Spectacles: Gothic Ivories Staging the Divine," *Art Bulletin* 95 (March 2013): 62-66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2013.10786106>
- 65** Madeline Caviness, "From the Self-Invention of the Whiteman in the Thirteenth Century to *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*," *Different Visions* 1 (2008): 13, 17-18. <https://doi.org/10.61302/YOTW3684>
- 66** Caviness, "From the Self-Invention of the Whiteman in the Thirteenth Century," 18, 22, Figure 45.
- 67** Caviness, "From the Self-Invention of the Whiteman in the Thirteenth Century," 22.
- 68** See Thomas Hahn, "The Difference the Middle Ages Makes: Color and Race before the Modern World," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31/1 (Winter 2001): 1-37, along with the other essays in this issue of the journal. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-31-1-1>

- 69** Cord J. Whitaker, "Race-ing the Dragon: The Middle Ages, Race, and Trippin' into the Future," *postmedieval: a journal of medieval studies* 6/1 (2015): 6-7. Where Whitaker sees progress in the field from 2001 to 2015, Dorothy Kim argues instead for a split between two "genealogies" in work on race in the Middle Ages and in medieval studies, one a genealogy of historians in particular who deny the relevance of race for the medieval past and whose work is represented in the 2001 special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, and the other a genealogy in literature and other fields that has engaged with critical race studies in order to examine the role of race in the medieval and in medieval studies. See Dorothy Kim, "Introduction to Literature Compass Special Cluster: Critical Race and the Middle Ages," *Literature Compass* 16 (2019): <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12549>.
- 70** Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 3, 27.
- 71** Whitaker, "Race-ing the Dragon," 8-9; Heng, *The Invention of Race*, 24-26, 42-45, 182.
- 72** Caviness, "From the Self-Invention of the Whiteman in the Thirteenth Century," 1, 9. <https://doi.org/10.61302/YOTW3684>
- 73** Whitaker, "Race-ing the Dragon," 8-9; Cord J. Whitaker, *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 2-3, 191-93.
- 74** Cord J. Whitaker, "Black Metaphors in the King of Tars," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (2013), 170. <https://doi.org/10.5406/jenglgermphil.112.2.0169>
- 75** Whitaker, "Black Metaphors," 177-78; Whitaker, *Black Metaphors*, 6-7, 18-19, 31, 137, 152-4, 159-6, 182-4.
- 76** Whitaker, "Black Metaphors," 179-81, 187, 192-93; Whitaker, *Black Metaphors*, 20, 32-40, 46-7.
- 77** Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 32-33, 58-59. <https://doi.org/10.1353/bcc.2005.0275>
- 78** Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 5, 13, 46.
- 79** Dyer, *White*, 13, 39, 44-45.

- 80** Sarah M. Guérin, "Aorio d'ogni ragione: The Supply of Elephant Ivory to Northern Europe in the Gothic Era," *Journal of Medieval History* 36 (2010): 168-73.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmedhist.2010.03.003>
- 81** Nina Rowe, "Pocket Crucifixions: Jesus, Jews, and Ownership in Fourteenth-Century Ivories," *Studies in Iconography* 32 (2011): 83-84, 88-92, 101-4, 106.
- 82** Jacqueline de Weever, *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic* (New York: Garland, 1998) xi-xxix, 5-29, 33, 38, 116-20, 140-42, 173-4.
- 83** Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, 195. Heng goes on to discuss the complications that black figures introduce into this text.
- 84** Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, 16-20.
- 85** Coral Lumbley, "The 'dark Welsh': Color, Race, and Alterity in the Matter of Medieval Wales," *Literature Compass* 16 (2019): <http://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12538>.
- 86** Nahir I. Otaño Gracia, "Towards a Decentered Global North Atlantic: Blackness in Saga af Tristram ok Ísod," *Literature Compass* 16 (2019):
<https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12545>.
- 87** See Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2010), 198-205, 336-7; and David R. Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: How American's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).
- 88** Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, 21.
- 89** Whitaker, *Black Metaphors*, 1-3, 191-93.
- 90** Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*, 23.
- 91** Dyer, *White*, 20, 70.