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ROMAN PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS

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Abstract. Certain preconceptions about 'blacks' in predominantly 'white' societies have distorted modern visions of the ways in which Aethiopes were perceived in Roman society, resulting in much misinterpretation of the relevant texts. In Roman perceptions categories like black African, white, 'paleface' and swarthy were neither communities nor socially defined 'races' with ascribed group-statuses. Categorisation was determined by the physical appearance of the individual person, not by parentage or 'blood'.

In a recent discussion of 'medium and message' and 'objectivity in the translator', Peter Green saw 'a certain element of unreality' in questions as to whether the translator's objective should be 'to convey the alien quality of his original, however much violence that may do to the language into which he is translating and the culture it represents', or whether one should make classical authors speak as one 'imagines they might have done' if they had been born in one's own time and country. Green concludes that, in any case, the result is bound to be a 'reflection, not of the alien culture' one is transposing, but of one's own 'age and social context'.⁽¹⁾ This discussion does not specifically touch upon the problem of transposing important alien concepts; and it no doubt explains Green's own English translation (in the Penguin series) of Juvenal's *loripedem rectus derideat, Aethiopem albus* (which he renders as 'It takes a hale man to mock a cripple, / And you can't bait niggers when you're tarred with the same brush', Juv. 2.23).⁽²⁾ Quite obviously this translation unwarrantedly sets the Roman satirist in a modern racist social and psychological context, in so far as the phrase 'tarred with the same brush' combines with the word 'niggers' to present a picture of familiar Western social situations in which so-called 'black blood' is perceived as a social taint and blacks and whites are socially defined categories or 'races'. The translation unjustifiably implies that the Latin word Aethiops, when used by Romans negatively, carried the same social-psychological import as 'nigger' does in contemporary Western usage (as a contemptuous and savagely disparaging expression applicable to any black by any white person in any situation, whatever their respective social positions). It thus suggests to the unwary reader in Green's own society that the same racist perception of blacks (or of the black 'race') with which he or

she is all too familiar was also a characteristic of ancient Roman society, and it serves to fortify already existing assumptions of that sort, such as those portrayed by D. S. Wiesen's interpretation of this same text of Juvenal. Wiesen saw this text as evidence of a Roman perception of blacks as natural inferiors of 'the white man', in so far as the text reveals a perception of the black African phenotype as 'a kind of parody upon nature' or as 'an insult to nature and nature's proper product of the white man'.⁽³⁾ Here Wiesen could readily transpose to Roman society the entirely modern taxonomic construct 'the white man', despite his awareness of the fact that Romans also perceived Germanic blue eyes and blond hair (and not only the Aethiops phenotype) as natural 'defects' (*vitia*) and deviations from 'the norm' (Juv. 13.162-66; Sen. *De Ira* 3.26.3).⁽⁴⁾

Quite obviously classical texts of this kind confront us with what some sociologists would call the Roman or ancient Mediterranean 'somatic norm image' (image of the ideal, appropriate or preferred form of human physical appearance), and with a Roman perception of the Mediterranean phenotype (briefly describable as *albus* or *leukos*) as a type of physiognomy distinct from both the Aethiops and the 'paleface' (*candidus* or *flavus* or *xanthos*) somatic types (Vitruv. 6.1.3-11; Pliny HN 2.189f.; Anon. *De Physiogn.*⁽⁵⁾ 79, 88-92; Ptol. *Tetrab.* 2.2.5; Lucian *Gall.* 14, 17, *Dionys.* 2; Claud. *In Ruf.* 2.108-110, *Cons.Stil.*2.240f., *In Eutrop.* 1.390).⁽⁶⁾ But, contrary to Wiesen's and similar views, such texts have nothing at all to do with Roman evaluations of social superiority or inferiority. To interpret adverse Roman comments on alien phenotypes in that way (assuming that an aesthetic judgment on physique is also necessarily a judgment of social status) is merely to engage in a crudely anachronistic transfer of particularistic modern values to Roman society; for it is very clear that, unlike the situation in certain modern societies, physiognomy did not function as a criterion of social status in the Roman system of stratification. Wiesen is, of course, far from being alone in this particular error. Among others, Etienne Bernand demonstrated the same failing in his misinterpretation of an epigraphic contrast between the unattractive blackness of a slave and the same slave's whiteness of soul, concluding from this simple contrast that blacks as members of society (not merely the colour of blacks) were ascribed a low esteem, *qua* blacks, in Roman society.⁽⁷⁾

In the manner of Peter Green, J. R. C. Martyn translated Juvenal's *quod cum ita sit, tu Gaetulum Ganymedem/respice, cum sities* (5.59f.) as 'Anyway, when you are thirsty, look behind for your nigger Ganymede'.⁽⁸⁾ Here too, with respect to the term 'nigger', the translator obviously reflects his own culture rather than that of Juvenal. It is but a short step from such a translation to Wiesen's grossly misguided conviction that Gaetulus Ganymedes must have conveyed to Romans precisely the same message as 'African Adonis' conveyed to a white American in the cultural context of the 19th-century South, and that Juvenal's contrast between his black and white 'Ganymedes' presents a picture of the 'uppity black' in a situation where 'the assumption of airs by a black man is the ultimate symbol of a society turned upon its head', especially when (as in Juvenal's satirical picture) that uppity behaviour could go unpunished.⁽⁹⁾ This is an obvious case of the interpreter too readily imagining an alien cultural situation to be much the same as his own. For in Juvenal's picture this supposedly 'uppity' black slave's arrogance and scorn is directed at white 'bums' with his master's connivance.⁽¹⁰⁾

The historian as 'translator' has a duty to seek the greatest possible understanding of the aspects of the past that he or she studies. The objective is definitely not one of purveying falsehoods and misinformation by consciously or unconsciously reflecting one's own milieu instead of demonstrating the realities of the alien culture under study; and this objective

demands systematic and critical inquiry: 'a conscious, rational examination of one's subject and its dimensions and implications, as free as one can make oneself of the automatic acceptance of received views, approaches and habits of mind'.⁽¹¹⁾ To be sure, even great scholars may misinterpret a text under the influence of certain assumptions of their own culture and society. But misinterpretation remains misinterpretation and misinformation. One such example which held sway for many years is Hugh Last's discussion of Suetonius' reference to 'purity of blood' (Aug. 40.3) as a major concern of the emperor Augustus in his legislation on the manumission of slaves and in his policy of granting Roman citizenship to foreigners. Last's interpretation of this text rested on an unconscious assumption that the Roman ruling class of the time of Augustus must have perceived slaves of 'Oriental' extraction as 'racially' inferior to slaves originating from the barbarian north-west of Europe.⁽¹²⁾ Such an assumption will have seemed quite 'natural' to Western scholars of Last's generation, since it was a simple reflex of the then dominant Western perception of Orientals as 'wogs': pace Green, an obvious example of a 'translator' (unconsciously) making Romans behave and think as he 'imagines they might have done' had they been born in his or her own time and country.⁽¹³⁾

A particularly notable example of this same syndrome has been the propagation of the 'Hamitic myth' according to which 'the civilisations of Africa are the civilisations of the Hamites'.⁽¹⁴⁾ As Daniel McCall observed, Westerners of the grand era of European colonialism naturally assumed that the 'white' (or 'whitish') Hamitic-speaking peoples must have felt as they themselves did about 'race' and 'would immediately and 'naturally' react towards the dark skin as a sign of inferiority': scholars like C. G. Seligman thus 'took it for granted that in the past, as in the colonial period in which he flourished, the white would inevitably dominate the black', and that aristocracies in Africa depended upon 'the percentage of white ancestry'.⁽¹⁵⁾

Many of the several published misinterpretations of Roman literary references to (and iconographic representations of) Aethiopes are to be explained mainly as a consequence of simplistic adherence (conscious or unconscious) to the kind of translation principle advocated by Green. In recent years a grand multi-volume and multi-authored work appeared under the title of *The Image of the Black in Western Art*. Despite the merits of some of its contents, the title of this work is bogus--though I am unaware of any review which draws attention to that fact. To speak of the image of the black in such a context is to make the ridiculous presumption of a monolithic and ever-constant social object ('the black'), perceived in the same way everywhere and at all times by artists and craftsmen of the various lands which count as Western. It is an obvious nonsense, and it is in fact contradicted by several comments in the work itself as well as by other discussions such as that of Rolf Winkes which draw attention to Roman artists' presentation of a pejorative image of the barbarian black as well as a positive image of the Romanised black.⁽¹⁶⁾ In this connection it may also be noted that Grace Beardsley told us far more about her own America of the 1920s than she did about Rome when she put forward the silly view that the Roman practice of decorating ordinary household objects and personal trinkets with depictions of blacks is clear evidence of a contemptuous attitude towards blacks as a 'race'.⁽¹⁷⁾

When we move from iconography to literature we find reflections of several Roman images of blacks, some positive and others (the majority) negative, and all of them in their different ways and particular circumstances undoubtedly playing some role in the formation of prejudgments about black strangers encountered by Roman individuals from time to time: images of Aethiopes as sharp-witted and crafty southerners; or as 'lustful, darkly mysterious

and sexually fascinating' people; or as backward barbarians 'addicted to horrid practices'; or (in the post-Severan era) as brothers of the militant Sudanese warriors and marauders who were then causing havoc on the southern frontier of Egypt; or as members of a far-distant, exotic, noble-natured and pious nation of which Homer had sung in praise; or, again as strangers with a natural tendency to evil who were also harbingers of bad luck and disaster.[\(18\)](#)

But even if specific evidence on the Roman concept Aethiops were entirely lacking (which is not the case: see Pet. Sat. 102; Pliny HN 7.51), the careful interpreter would be in duty bound to recognise a need to avoid construing these various (and sometimes contradictory) references to blacks in a familiar context of modern assumptions about so-called 'race', in so far as those assumptions are historically peculiar and relevant only to the last two hundred years or so of Western social history.[\(19\)](#) The slaveholding society of ancient Rome was a precapitalist society in which the overwhelming majority of slaves and subjects was 'white'. By contrast, in the Western capitalist cultures of recent centuries, the statuses of slave and subject were both rigidly reserved for non-whites while freedom and dominance were monopolised by whites. Moreover, in the then current and historically peculiar ideology of 'race', 'white' and 'non-white' were socially-defined categories, and membership of the 'non-white' or 'black' category was ascribed strictly on the basis of possession of 'black blood'. However, despite this highly significant contrast between the two worlds, observations by scholars on Roman texts referring to blacks have betrayed, time and again, a presumption that Roman society must have manifested in its black-white social relations something akin to the peculiar situations found in recent or contemporary Western history.[\(20\)](#)

Petronius and the elder Pliny offer crucial information on Roman perceptions of Aethiopes and on the Roman concept Aethiops or 'black African' (Pet. Sat. 101f.; Pliny HN 7.51; cf. Mart. 6.39.6-9): first, mere blackness of skin did not suffice to ensure categorisation as Aethiops, for the categorisation depended on possession of the concomitant characteristics of black African hair, lips, and (according to Martial) nose; secondly, so-called 'black blood' was definitely not the yardstick by which membership of this category was perceived. In Roman perceptions the progeny (and a fortiori the later descendants) of a black-white mating might be 'swarthy' or 'black' or 'white'; and such a person might produce a black offspring by mating with a white partner, just as he or she might produce non-black children from the same partner. In this perception, categorisation of a person as white or 'swarthy' or black African (Aethiops) or northern 'paleface' rested entirely on the individual observer's optical registration of personal somatic characteristics, altogether uninfluenced by any facts of the observed person's parentage or ancestry (Juv. 6.600; Lucian Philops. 34; Plut. De sera num. vind. [\(21\)](#) [563a]; Ach.Tat. 3.9.2; Lucr. 4.1210-32; PL 64.30, 56, 79, 132f., 145f. [Boethius]; 85.378 [Fulgentius]; PG 65.469 [Philostorgius]).²¹ That is why Ptolemy can speak of the people of the region of Meroe as by and large the first 'real Aethiopes' encountered in 'Aethiopia' as indigenes by a person travelling up the Nile (Ptol. Geog. 1.9.7-10; cf. 1.8.5, 4.65).

This makes it perfectly obvious that Roman society knew no such social object as a 'black' person who was not physically and visibly black. The very idea of a 'black' who is 'black' only sociologically, but not physically and visibly, is in fact unimaginable outside the constraints of racist ideologies (the kind of culture that nurtured Madison Grant's fervent conviction that 'the cross between a white man and a negro is a negro; the cross between a white man and a Hindu is a Hindu; the cross between any of the three European races and a Jew is a Jew'[\(22\)](#)). But despite the firm Roman evidence to the contrary several modern

comments on blacks in Roman society appear to rest on the pretence that, throughout history, every society has manifested the same kind of consciousness of human colour-differences and the same vision of discontinuity in colour categories (or 'racial' categories) that has characterised the Western world in the past two centuries: white, black, coloured, yellow, red, brown; or negro, mulatto, quadroon, octoroon and mustee; and so on. The work of F. M. Snowden thus presents the internal contradiction of postulating a non-racial Roman society in which people were nonetheless perceived in American 'racial' terms: as mulatto, quadroon and the like; and in which people of these kinds, though not visibly black or 'easily recognisable as Negroes', were still blacks or negroes, like the woman represented by a marble statue of the first century AD from Lower Egypt who is at once 'a mulatto woman' with 'flat nose, thick lips (neither very pronounced) and long flowing hair', and 'a charming Negro woman'; or Poulsen's white 'lad of distinctly plebeian type' and Bonacasa's 'Egyptian or Libyan' and Cumont's 'goddess Libya' who are respectively Snowden's 'young mulatto', 'well-to-do black', and 'mulatto or quadroon'.⁽²³⁾ Snowden rather strangely presumes that artists of the Roman world shared his own society's concept of 'the black' or 'the negro', and so he can say that 'the blacks of the ancient artists' closely resemble modern blacks, including those today described as 'coloured' or 'of mixed black and white descent'.⁽²⁴⁾ He likewise sees in the iconography 'a wide range' of 'black' types with 'varying degrees of Caucasoid admixture' and resembling in physical appearance 'many a descendant of black-white mixture in various parts of the world today'.⁽²⁵⁾ Unable to break free of the tyranny of such modern habits of mind, scholars have also ('naturally') misinterpreted Lucian's tripartite division of humanity into the categories leukoi, xanthoi and Aithiopes (Lucian Herm. 31), seeing this as a categorisation of 'whites', 'yellow' peoples like the Chinese (Mongoloids), and blacks,⁽²⁶⁾ instead of (as Lucian clearly intended it) a categorisation of Mediterraneans, Central-Northern Europeans ('yellow-haired palefaces'), and blacks. Evidently, in the perception here demonstrated by Lucian, so-called Mongoloids like the Japanese and Chinese were generally categorised as 'white' (with some individuals being perceived as 'swarthy' as was the case even for some Italians), and African albinos were perceived as 'white' also (albeit 'whites' with rather unusual facial shapes and hair-texture, somewhat like the snub-nosed or heavy-lipped Mediterranean whites to whom Lucian occasionally refers [Lucian Navig. 2, 45; Catap. 15; Gall. 14; Philops. 34]).⁽²⁷⁾ But an excessive intrusion of modern preconceptions about 'blood' and 'race' will naturally blind one to this truth, just as it induced Snowden to misinterpret Statius' allusion (Theb. 5.427f.) to the African peoples of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean areas ('the Red Aethiopes' or 'Erythraean Africans') as a reference to 'Negroes of a red, copper-coloured complexion'.⁽²⁸⁾

Grace Beardsley's pseudo-sociological forays remain the crudest expressions of this same syndrome to date, being hardly more than effusions (however unconscious) of the American racism of her own milieu. They are attributable to the same basic flaw observable in much of the subsequent American work on blacks in antiquity, whether written by whites or by blacks, and whether propounding the thesis of a Roman racism or the opposite. One notes in this literature a tendency to begin with the wrong question: namely, enquiring into 'the status of the black race' in ancient Roman society, overtly or unconsciously.⁽²⁹⁾ That is a question that makes sense only if one is already certain that one is studying a racist society; for no other kind of society ascribes a particular status to groups such as 'blacks' or 'whites'. Beardsley's 'natural' answer to this bogus question (overtly posed by her) about Roman society was that blacks as a group must have been ascribed a degraded status in Roman society, as was obviously the case in her own society.⁽³⁰⁾ She interpreted all negative references and allusions to blacks as expressions of this Roman 'racial feeling', and many of her observations offer crude revelations of a mental and intellectual enslavement to the norms and assumptions

of her own society: Juvenal's allusion to mocking of blacks must mean that Roman whites possessed and exercised qua whites a right to bait and badger blacks qua blacks, irrespective of the personal status of the individuals in such an encounter (since blacks, as a group, are presumed to have an ascribed status inferior to that of whites); black slaves were appreciated for 'what are now considered to be among the best of negro qualities, personal loyalty, ready laughter, and a gift for song and dance'; iconographic portrayals prove that these blacks 'sang songs which, to judge from the plaintive expressions on their faces, were the ancestors of the present-day negro spirituals' (a comment that in itself ascribes to these ancient blacks the same consciousness of an inescapable group-degradation as was evident in American blacks of this scholar's time, and the same need for spiritual release from the permanent tribulations of that condition). For Beardsley, it was similarly a very simple matter to detect in the iconography individual blacks 'of the lowest kind of intelligence'; and the artistic motif of a black boy seized by a crocodile 'naturally' had the same comic intention that lay behind American cartoons of blacks caught by alligators ('a motif very common in the magazines of humour a generation ago and still found in the souvenir statuettes sold at Southern resorts'); it is also 'impossible to dissociate from the comic' any realistic portrait of a negro, since 'the average white man is inclined to view humorously a serious realistic portrait of an African negro'; the negro, 'perhaps unfortunately, has always appealed to the comic side of the Caucasian'; the negro's 'propensity to quick laughter, his feeling for music and the dramatic, and his loose-jointed dancing have always made him a popular comedian', and over the ages 'these characteristics have changed no more than the physiognomy'; so ancient whites 'probably enjoyed them as much as we do'.[\(31\)](#)

To take up only the point already raised in relation to Wiesen's article, scholarly professionalism leads one to ask what Beardsley's concepts 'the white man' and 'the Caucasian' have to do with the world of Roman antiquity. Beyond that, these various observations must be allowed to speak for themselves as silly effusions of particularistic cultural preconceptions. It is particularly odd that this American scholar of the 1920s (presumably not unfamiliar with the New Testament) took no notice of the Biblical account of the encounter between the apostle Philip and the black eunuch and Treasury Minister from the Meroitic kingdom whose display of certain conventional Roman status-symbols (literacy, carriage and horses, and attendance by personal servants) was enough to occasion instant perception of him as 'a man of authority' (dynastês) in the context of the values of the Roman world and the system of social stratification that governed the lives of all inhabitants of that world (Acts of the Apostles 8.27f.).

Several Roman texts clearly attest a quite widespread upper class perception of the Aethiops phenotype as a combination of certain somatic 'defects' or 'flaws' (vitia): colour, hair, facial morphology, and (in black women) over- large breasts (Juv. 13.162-66; Sen. De Ira 3.26.3; Mart. 6.39.6-9, 7.89.2; Pet. Sat. 102; Anth.Lat. 182f.; Moretum 31- 35; Claud. Bell.Gild. 193; Luxorius 43, 71, 78). It may reasonably be deduced that, in general, 'sensory aversions to the physiognomy of Aethiopes were less powerful and durable' among the peasantry and the lower classes as a whole, 'since the ideals of beauty and "the appropriate" in facial and bodily shape were generally much more remote from everyday reality among the humble and toiling masses than they were among the refined and leisured rich'.[\(32\)](#) The physiognomy of white peasants and members of the 'sordid plebs' was, like that of the Aethiops, frequently a target of upper class mockery (Cat. 39.12; Mart. 10.68.3; Lucian Navig. 2.45, Philops. 34; Anon. De Physiogn. 14, 79, 90, 92).[\(33\)](#) But many texts also attest the currency, among people of all social classes, of a negative symbolism of the colour black which fed a superstitious belief that a chance meeting with a black stranger was an ominous presage of bad luck or disaster

(Plut. Brut. 48, App. BC 4,17; Florus 2.17.7f.; HA Sev. 22.4f.; Pet. Sat. 74; Apul. Met. 6.26; Lucian Philops. 16, 31, Charon 1; ps.-Lucian Lucius 22; Claud. Bell.Gild. 188-195; Juv. 2.23, 15.49f.; Suet. Calig. 57.4; Anth.Lat. 182f., 189). This superstition was evidently at its strongest among those members of the illiterate lower classes who were also unfamiliar with the sight of black people, and in such cases perceptions of blacks were likely to be modified only in consequence of growing familiarity with the presence or company of one or more black persons.(34) Snowden has put much unnecessary effort into attempts to play down the obvious fact that a good number of white people in Roman antiquity felt a sensory aversion to the black African physiognomy. His motive was no doubt mainly a false conviction (nurtured by his own social and cultural environment) that this phenomenon, like the public and unashamed mockery of the black phenotype that evidently occurred in certain circumstances in the Roman world, necessarily attests racism.(35) But, in an evidently non-racist society like that of ancient Rome, this purely ethnocentric kind of adverse perception of the black phenotype has to be considered in the context of other social facts relating to blacks--in particular, the Roman ideology relating to social status, which (as is well known) definitely gave no role to phenotype in the system of social stratification.(36)

The texts which reveal a distaste for the black phenotype in no way permit us to operate on the assumption that black-white social relations in the Roman world (or in any other predominantly 'white' social space) were (or are) necessarily governed by familiar Western ideological constraints, or that blacks in Roman society (who were evidently slaves for the most part (37)) 'naturally' constituted a community. The notion of a 'black community' will easily intrude itself upon minds unreleased from the tyranny of modern Western preconceptions (especially when one has been socialised into seeing as 'natural' a partition of society into 'communities' of 'Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and Whites of every kind'(38)). The notion of a 'black community' in Roman social space is part and parcel of the same mind-set that prompts misguided questions about the group-status of the black 'race' in Roman society. It is otherwise quite impossible to envisage a small black population constituting a community in social conditions such as those of ancient Rome. In the first place, blacks in Roman society were at all times largely slave-immigrants or progeny of such immigrants; secondly, their numbers were always small; thirdly, black newcomers had a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds and (being largely slaves) were dispersed in widely separate localities; fourthly, every Roman slave had to live as part of a predominantly white familia of widely different individual national origins; finally, the descendants of blacks in the Roman world were much more often than not 'swarthy' or 'white' people in the Roman perceptual context.(39) Indeed, in this connection, it is important to ask whether American blacks would have come to constitute their present 'black community' within the nation of the United States if their original desire for individual integration into the society of the dominant white population had not been systematically and viciously blocked after the abolition of slavery. It was as a consequence of his pilgrimage to Mecca that Malcolm X acquired his first experience of a real world in which the very notion of a nation consisting of centuries-old and distinct black and white 'communities' began to seem absurd: until that time he would almost certainly have dismissed as absurd any report he had received about the reality of a non-racist society in which the majority of the population was white and a minority black.(40)

To be sure, from time to time quite a number of Roman individuals unused to the sight of black faces must have perceived blacks as very alien (and sometimes alarming) social objects. In some cases the novel experience of encountering a black person must have created a situation like that encountered by James Baldwin in a remote Swiss village where he lived for some time and where, 'from all available evidence, no black man had ever set foot' before.

At first the unaccustomed spectacle of this black man created an air of 'astonishment, curiosity, amusement, and outrage', with children shouting 'Neger! Neger!' as Baldwin walked by, and a few of them 'screaming in genuine anguish' at the unfamiliar sight. In none of this, however, was there any 'element of intentional unkindness'. As familiarisation grew with time, the children's call of 'Neger!' was full of 'good humour', and Baldwin could notice the more daring of them 'swell with pride when I stop to speak to them'. The villagers by this time 'wonder less about the texture of my hair' and 'wonder more about me'; many of them now 'never pass without a friendly greeting' or a conversation. Baldwin noticed 'a dreadful abyss' between this situation with its shouts of 'Neger!' and that of his own homeland with its shouts of 'Nigger!' as 'the abyss is experience, the American experience'.⁽⁴¹⁾

In itself, the evidence for matings of blacks and whites in Roman society (like the evidence for other forms of intensive relationships between black and white individuals) implies that familiarisation reduced and eliminated any initially adverse perceptions of blacks on the part of those whites who became involved in such relationships (Ach. Tat. 3.9.2; Mart. 6.39.6-9, 10.87; Juv. 6.597-600, 15.49; Plut. De sera num. vind. 21 [563a]; Pliny HN 7.51, 10.121f.; Calp. Flacc. 2; ⁽⁴²⁾ Quintil. fr. 8; ⁽⁴³⁾ Moretum 31-35; HA Sev. 22.4f.; Luxorius 67.6-14).⁽⁴⁴⁾ Hence the attested fact of white mothers publicly claiming a black ancestry as a biological explanation of their own non-white infants (which must often actually have been the fruits of such women's own adultery with black men [Pliny HN 7.51; Plut. De sera num. vind. 21 (563a); Lucr. 4.1283; Ov. Ars Am. 2.653f.]). This social phenomenon of publicly expressed claims to black parentage or ancestry on the part of whites is entirely incompatible with the sort of perception of blacks and the sort of black-white social relations which scholars have generally imagined that their own studies have brought to light about the ancient Roman world.

FOOT NOTES

1. P. Green, *Classical Bearings: Interpreting Ancient History and Culture* (London 1989) 261.
2. P. Green, *Juvenal: The Sixteen Satires* (Harmondsworth 1967) 75.
3. D. S. Wiesen, 'Juvenal and the Blacks', *C&M* 31 (1970) 133-35.
4. Wiesen [] 133-48; cf. L. A. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (London 1989) 33-36.
5. J. Andre (ed.), *Anonyme Latin: Traite de Physiognomonie* (Paris 1981).
6. Cf. J. André, *Étude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine* (Paris 1949), 123-130, 327; Thompson [4] 62f.; on 'somatic norm image', see H. Hoetink, *The Two Variants in Caribbean Race Relations* (London 1967).
7. E. Bernand, *Inscriptions metriques de l'Egypte greco-romaine* (Paris 1969) 143-47; for similar instances of anachronism, cf. G. H. Beardsley, *The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilisation* (Baltimore 1929) ix-xii, 20f., 37f., 62f., 78f., 82f., 111f.; M. Rosenblum, *Luxorius* (New York 1961) 209; F. Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna* (Rome 1967) 140; Wiesen [] 133-48; A. Bourgeois, *La Grèce devant la négritude* (Paris 1971) 120; J. M. Cook, 'Fusci et formosi', *CR* 22 (1972) 254; R. Winkes, 'Physiognomonica: Probleme der Charakterinterpretation römischer Portrats', *ANRW* 1.4 (1973) 909f.; P. Mayerson, 'Anti-black Sentiment in the *Vitae Patrum*', *HTR* 71 (1978) 304f.; R. Lonis, 'Les trois approches de

l'Ethiopien par l'opinion greco-romaine', *Ktema* 6 (1981) 83f.; J. Devisse, 'From the Demoniac Threat to the Incarnation of Sainthood: Christians and Black', in J. Vercoutter et al., *The Image of the Black in Western Art 2.1* (Cambridge, Mass. 1979) 37f., 50f., 61f.; J.M. Courtès, 'The theme of "Ethiopia" and "Ethiopians" in Patristic Literature', in Vercoutter [above, this note] 19-21.

8. J.R.C. Martyn, 'Juvenal's Wit', *GB* 8 (1979) 230f.

9. Wiesen [] 139 (my emphasis).

10. Thompson [n.4] 33-36. The term 'bum' is aptly used in Green's Penguin translation with reference to the degraded clients of the black slave's master: Green [] 119; Juv. 5.52-66.

11. M. I. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History* (London 1975) 55; cf. L. O. Mink, 'The Autonomy of Historical Understanding', *History and Theory* 5 (1966) 24-47; L. Febvre, *Combats pour l'histoire* (Paris 1965) 20.

12. *The Cambridge Ancient History* 10 (1934) 425f.; cf. A. M. Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire* (Cambridge 1958) 30f.; N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, *Roman Civilisation 2* (New York 1955) 52; M. Bonjour, *Terre natale: Etudes sur une composante affective du patriotisme romain* (Paris 1975) 31.

13. For some re-examinations of Suetonius' text (conducted by the authors in total independence of each other), see C. Cogrossi, 'Preoccupazioni etniche nelle legge di Augusto sulla manumissio servorum?', in M. Sordi (ed.), *Cognoscenze etniche e rapporti di convivenza nel antichità* (Milan 1979) 158-77; L. A. Thompson, 'The Concept of Purity of Blood in Suetonius' *Life of Augustus*', *Museum Africum* 7 (1981) 35-46; K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire* (Brussels 1984) 84f., 148f.

14. C. G. Seligman, *The Races of Africa*³ (London 1957) 85.

15. D. F. McCall, *Africa in Time-Perspective* (London 1969) 136-38; cf. B. G. Trigger, 'Nubian, Negro, Black, Nilotic?', in J. Hochfield and E. Riefstahl (edd.), *Africa in Antiquity: The Arts of Ancient Nubia and the Sudan 1* (New York 1978) 28; W. Y. Adams, *Nubia: Corridor to Africa* (London 1977) 8; Thompson [] 13.

16. Winkes [] 899-944; F. M. Snowden, 'Iconographical Evidence on the Black Populations in Greek and Roman Antiquity' in J. Vercoutter et al., *The Image of the Black in Western Art 1* (New York 1976) 229-32; J. Desanges, 'The Iconography of the Black in Ancient North Africa', in Vercoutter [above, this note] 251-58; J. Leclant, 'Egypt, Land of Africa, in the Graeco-Roman World', in Vercoutter [above, this note] 273.

17. Beardsley [] 115. See, however, Thompson [] 25; L. Bugner, 'Introduction', in Vercoutter [] 12f.; Snowden [] 229-32; Desanges [] 258.

18. Thompson [] 86-124; L. C. Ruggini, 'Leggenda e realtà degli Etiopi nella cultura tardo imperiale', in *Atti del IVo congresso internazionale di studi etiopici*, 1 (Rome 1974) 141-93; 'Il negro buono e il negro malvagio nel mondo antico', in Sordi [] 108-33.

19. Thompson [] 5-11.

20. Misguided observations of this kind are to be found in Beardsley [] ix-xii, 20f., 37f., 62f., 78f., 82f., 111f.; Paschoud [] 140; F. M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass. 1970) vii, ix, 2, 143, 163, 181f., 186f., 270 n. 3, 329 nn. 159-161; [] 174-84, 216, 238; *Before Color Prejudice* (Cambridge, Mass. 1983) 17, 56, 63f., 88-92; Lonis [] 82-87; Bernand [] 143-47; Wiesen [] 133-48; Bourgeois [] 120; Cook [] 254; Winkes [] 908f.; Mayerson [] 304-311; Devisse [] 50-51; Courtès [] 19-21.

21. Cf. G. E. R. Lloyd, *Science, Folklore and Ideology: Studies in the Life Sciences in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1983) 58-111; Thompson [] 62-85.

22. Cited by M. Banton, *White and Coloured: The Behaviour of British People Towards Coloured Immigrants* (London 1959) 63f.

23. Snowden [] 217 and fig. 286, 184, 238 and fig. 329; Snowden 1970 [] 91 and fig. 69; 88 and fig. 63, 184f.; Snowden 1983 [] 63-66; F. Poulsen, *Catalogue of the Ancient Sculpture in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek* (Copenhagen 1951) 166 no. 229b; N. Bonacasa, *Ritratti greci e romani della Sicilia* (Palermo 1964) 25f. no. 27 pl. 12.1f.; W. Zschietzschmann, *Hellas and Rome* (London 1959) 150.

24. Snowden 1970 [] 88 and figs. 63, 67; Snowden [] 257 and fig. 286; Snowden 1983 [] 17 (my emphasis), 63-66 and fig. 25.

25. Snowden [] 174, 183f., 216, 238, 242 and figs. 231-33, 265, 286, 290-92, 300, 303, 334.

26. Snowden 1983 [] 37; S. I. Oost, *Galla Placidia Augusta: A Biographic Essay* (Chicago 1968) 39.

27. Cf. Thompson [] 51, 61, 191f. nn. 164f..

28. Snowden 1983 [] 4.

29. Beardsley [] ix, 116; Snowden 1970 [] 184-86; 1983 [] 17; Wiesen [] 133f., 138f.; cf. Bourgeois [] 120; W. Den Boer, *Review of Snowden 1970* [], *Mnem.* 24 (1971) 439; Bernand [] 143-47; Lonis [] 82-87; Devisse [] 50f.

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32. Thompson [] 164.

33. Cf. Andre [] 55f., 123f., 324.

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35. Snowden 1970 [] 176, 181f., 196f., 322 n. 82; 'Romans and Blacks: A Review Essay', *AJP* 111 (1990) 543-57.

36. Cf. R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations* (New Haven 1974); P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1970); J. Gagé, *Les classes sociales dans l'Empire romain* (Paris 1964); J. A. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (London 1967); Thompson [] 142 f.

37. Thompson [] 84, 179 n. 32.

38. *The Economist* (22 October 1988) 54. The present writer appealed in vain to this great and influential 'newsweekly' for clarification as to whether the 'Asian community' of the United States includes people with 'biological origins' in the northern and central parts of Western Asia, or whether such people fall into the category of whites 'of some kind', and whether an immigrant from Spain instantly ceases to be white and becomes 'Hispanic' instead.

39. Thompson [] 84.

40. James Baldwin, *One Day When I Was Lost: A Scenario Based on the Autobiography of Malcolm X* (London 1972) 140-55.

41. J. Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (London 1965) 133f.

42. G. Lehnert (ed.), *Calpurnii Flacci Declamationes* (Leipzig 1903).

43. G. Lehnert (ed.), *Quintiliani Quae Feruntur Declamationes XIX Maiores* (Leipzig 1905).

44. Snowden 1970 [] 184-85 and figs. 118f.; Snowden [] figs. 288f.; Snowden 1983 [] figs. 60f.; Leclant [] 278-85 and figs. 375, 383f.; J. M. C. Toynbee, *The Art of the Romans* (London 1965) fig. 78.

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