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# The Negro in Classical Italy

Frank M. Snowden

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## THE NEGRO IN CLASSICAL ITALY.

Until the study of Mrs. Beardsley<sup>1</sup> appeared about fifteen years ago, no detailed study of the Negro in Greek and Roman civilization had been published. Mrs. Beardsley's study, however, confined treatment of the Negro in Roman civilization to nineteen pages, of which thirteen were devoted to a description of the Negro in Roman art. The other six pages constituted a chapter entitled "The Ethiopian in Roman Literature," in which scant use was made of the ancient literary references to the Negroid type in Roman civilization. The purpose of the present study has been to collect and to interpret the scattered references to the Negro in Latin authors, and, wherever possible, to supplement this material with archaeological evidence and interpretation in the light of modern anthropological and sociological research.

### I. DESCRIPTION OF NEGROES IN ROMAN AUTHORS.

According to modern scientific standards, certain Roman writers would be rated as competent anthropologists in respect to their observations on the Negro. Except for the omission of anthropometric data, certain Roman descriptions of the Negro agree with those of the most careful of modern scientists.

Classifications of the Negroid type are found in three Roman sources. Since a consideration of these passages is important for a justification of the words Ethiopian, Negro, and Negroid as used in this paper, it is essential to cite the passages and to discuss certain key words appearing in them.

erat unica custos

Afra genus, tota patriam testante figura,  
torta comam labroque tumens et fusca colore,  
pectore lata, iacens mammis, compressor alvo,  
cruribus exilis, spatiosa prodiga planta.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. H. Beardsley, *The Negro in Greek and Roman Civilization: A Study of the Ethiopian Type* (Baltimore, 1929).

<sup>2</sup> *Moretum*, 31-35. This description bears striking resemblance to the following passage from a modern anthropologist:

"Narrow heads and wide noses, thick lips and thin legs, protruding jaws and receding chins, integument rich in pigment but poor in hairy growth, flat feet and round foreheads, tiny curls and big



“Eumolpus tanquam litterarum studiosus utique atramentum habet. hoc ergo remedio mutemus colores a capillis usque ad unguis. ita tanquam servi Aethiopes et praesto tibi erimus . . . et permutato colore imponemus inimicis.” “quidni?” inquit Giton “. . . tanquam hic solus color figuram possit pervertere et non multa una oporteat consentiant [et non] ratione, ut mendacium constet. puta infectam medicamine faciem diutius durare posse . . . age, numquid et labra possumus tumore taeterrimo implere? numquid et crines calamistro convertere?”<sup>3</sup>

Contextenda sunt his caelestibus nexa causis namque et Aethiops vicini sideris vapore torreri adustisque similis gigni barba et capillo vibrato non est dubium, et adversa plaga mundi candida atque glaciali cute esse gentes flavis promissis crinibus, trucus vero ex caeli rigore has, illas mobilitate sapientes. . . .<sup>4</sup>

All three passages have in common the fact that they call attention to the color of the skin and to the form of the hair. It is fortunate for our purposes of identification that the writers have mentioned these characteristics, which are two of the most important used by modern anthropologists in their classifications of the Negro. Furthermore, two of the observers refer to the thick lips characteristic of the race.

Since the racial features noted by these writers form the basis for a discussion of the Negro among the Romans, it is necessary

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smiles—these are outstanding features of the ancient and specialized Negro division of mankind” (E. A. Hooton, *Up From The Ape* [New York, 1931], pp. 540-541).

<sup>3</sup> Petronius, *Sat.*, 102.

<sup>4</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 189. This passage from Pliny probably reflects Greek views of the effect of climate and geography on the human physique and the formation of racial characteristics (cf. K. Reinhardt, *Poseidonios* [Munich, 1921], pp. 67 ff.). I include it, however, because Pliny, like other Romans (cf. Ovid, *Met.*, II, 235-236, Lucretius, VI, 722, 1109), apparently accepted Greek scientific theory as an explanation for the racial characteristics of the Negroes whom he mentions elsewhere (cf. *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 51; VIII, 131; X, 122). The passage, however, does not provide any evidence for the presence of Negroes on Roman soil; nevertheless, it is important in a discussion of the terms which the Romans used to describe the Negro. Although Vitruvius (VI, 1, 3), in a similar contrast of racial types, does not use the word *Aethiopes*, it is highly probable that he is referring to Ethiopians in the same way as Pliny (II, 189) and Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, II, 2, both of whom make specific mention of the Ethiopians. The resemblances between the Vitruvius and the Ptolemy passages are striking.

to examine the use of certain terms appearing in these and other Roman authors. In this way alone is it possible to interpret adequately the evidence in the literary and archaeological sources.

A. The Use of *Aethiops*, *Afer*, *Maurus*, and *Indus* as Designations for Negroes

*Aethiops*

*Aethiops*, the most common generic word used by the Romans to designate a Negro or a Negroid type, came to the Romans from the Greeks. An examination, therefore, of the Greek usage of *Aιθιοψ* is valuable for the light it throws on the meaning of the word borrowed by the Romans. Although there are many problems connected with Greek views on the exact location of regions in Africa inhabited by the *Aιθιοπες*,<sup>5</sup> the nature of this study requires only an investigation to determine the extent to which the Greeks used the word as a designation for the Negroid type. In general, the Ethiopians of early Greek writers are rather vague and shadowy individuals.<sup>6</sup> Beginning with Herodotus, however, Greek knowledge of the Ethiopian type becomes more accurate. Herodotus differentiates between the woolly-haired and the straight-haired Ethiopians, dwelling respectively to the West and to the East.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed study of the Greek views in regard to the territory occupied by the Ethiopians, see S. Gsell, *Histoire Ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord* (Paris, I<sup>3</sup> [1921]), pp. 295-304. Cf. also Gsell, *op. cit.*, p. 299: "Il [le mot *Aιθιοπες*] s'appliquait aux véritables nègres. Il a pu désigner aussi des hommes dont la peau, sans être absolument noire, était naturellement très foncée."

<sup>6</sup> Beardsley, *op. cit.*, p. 6: "The Ethiopians of the poets—Homer, Hesiod, Mimnermus, Aeschylus, Euripides, Apollonius—are mythical or partly mythical creatures, while the writers of prose—Herodotus, Strabo, Pliny, Heliodorus—dealt with African reality."

<sup>7</sup> VII, 70. The western Ethiopians, according to Herodotus (VII, 69-70) are those "from the region above Egypt" or "from Libya." Although ethnologists are in doubt about the exact location of the eastern Ethiopians, it is generally assumed that the Eastern branch lived in Southeastern Baluchistan. Cf. R. W. Macan, *Herodotus* (London, 1908), I, part I, p. 94; A. D. Fraser, "The Panoply of the Ethiopian Warrior," *A. J. A.*, XXXIX (1935), pp. 43-44; and C. F. Smith and A. G. Laird, *Herodotus: Books VII and VIII* (New York, 1908), p. 157, "A remnant of the Eastern or Asiatic Ethiopians is to be

What a Greek who had definite knowledge of the Negroid type meant by the word *Αἰθίοψ* can be judged by a consideration of the following data:

1. *Αἰθίοψ* associated with black skin, woolly hair, and flat nose
  - a. Arrian, *Indica*, 6, 9
  - b. Diodorus Siculus, III, 8, 2
2. *Αἰθίοψ* associated with black skin and woolly hair
  - a. Strabo, XV, 1, 24
  - b. Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, II, 2
3. *Αἰθίοψ* associated with black skin and flat nose
  - a. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Ethicos*, 43
  - b. Xenophanes, Frag. 14 (Diehl)
4. *Αἰθίοψ* associated with woolly hair
  - a. Herodotus, VII, 70
  - b. Aristotle, *Physiognomonica*, 812 b.
  - c. Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium*, V, 3
5. *Αἰθίοψ* associated with black or dark skin
  - a. Theocritus, XVII, 89
  - b. Aristotle, *Physiognomonica*, 812 a
  - c. Aristotle, *Problemata*, X, 66
  - d. Lucian, *Bis Accusatus*, 6
  - e. Lucian, *Adversus Indoctum*, 28
  - f. Achilles Tatius, IV, 5
  - g. Quintus Smyrnaeus, II, 101
  - h. Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Physicos*, I, 247, 249
  - i. Arrian, *Anabasis*, V, 4, 4.

found in the black Brahûi of Beloochistan." The Ethiopians on a series of "Negro alabastra" (Beardsley, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-50) have been identified by Fraser (*loc. cit.*, pp. 41-44) as belonging to the Asiatic rather than the African division of the Ethiopians. Fraser's identification is based largely on the apparent similarity of the costumes of the alabastra Ethiopians to the cotton dress of the Indians. Since the equipment of the Eastern Ethiopians, according to Herodotus (VII, 70) was in most points like that of the Indians with whom they fought, Fraser concludes that there is a strong probability that the vase painters were depicting the Eastern Ethiopians of Baluchistan. The view that the Ethiopians on the alabastra represented the Western branch seems to Graindor more reasonable for the following reasons: (1) Herodotus' description of the Asiatic Ethiopians bears no resemblance to the alabastra Negroes; (2) in the absence of other evidence, there is no reason to doubt that the alabastra depict the Ethiopians of the Sudan, since Egypt at the time of the Persian Wars was under Persian domination. Cf. P. Graindor, "Mélanges d'Archéologie," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts (Cairo)*, III (1936), part II, p. 110.

References in the extant literature indicate clearly that the Greeks used the word *Aiθίovς* of a racial type which is designated today as Negroid. Although the flat nose and woolly hair were regarded as distinctive features of the Negro, it was the color of the skin which was apparently uppermost in the mind of the Greek. This awareness of a difference in skin-color probably accounts for the fact that the Greeks not only referred often to the effect of the sun upon the Ethiopian's skin<sup>8</sup> but also described his skin as the blackest in the world.<sup>9</sup> Apparently the color of the skin was sufficient to identify an Ethiopian. The evidence also seems to indicate that by the use of the word *Aiθίovς* the Greeks, unless special note was made, were referring to the African rather than to the Eastern Ethiopians mentioned by Herodotus.<sup>10</sup>

Following the practice of the Greek from whom he adopted the word, the Roman by his use of the word *Aethiops* meant, in most instances, either the full-blooded Negro or a Negroid type.<sup>11</sup> *Aethiops* had definitely for the Roman the connotation of a black or dark color (usually *niger* or *fuscus*) and of kinky or frizzly hair,<sup>12</sup> generally associated with the Negro. Important passages which indicate this meaning appear below:

1. *Aethiops* and the Ethiopian type associated with *niger*
  - a. Ovid, *Met.*, II, 235-236
  - b. Claudian, *Carm. Min.*, XXVIII, 16
  - c. Macrobius, *Somn. Scip.*, II, 10, 11
  - d. *Corp. Gloss. Lat.*, IV, 65, 47; 511, 39; V, 262, 71; 291, 6
  - e. Boethius, *Comm. in Libr. Aristotelis περὶ ἔμφυελας*, II, 7
  - f. Lucretius, VI, 722, 1109
2. Ethiopian type associated with *fuscus*
  - a. *Moretum*, 33
  - b. Propertius, IV, 6, 78

<sup>8</sup> Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, II, 2; Theodectas, cited by Strabo, XV, 1, 24; Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Physicos*, I, 247, 249.

<sup>9</sup> Arrian, *Anabasis*, V, 404; Aristotle, *Problemata*, X, 66.

<sup>10</sup> VII, 70.

<sup>11</sup> *Aethiops* is used poetically by Horace (*Carm.*, III, 6, 14) for *Aegyptius*. For an example of the more normal usage, see *per Aegyptios et Aethiops* (Suetonius, *Cal.*, 57, 4).

<sup>12</sup> *Infra*, pp. 281-2. One characteristic of the Negro—the flat nose—noted by the Greeks does not appear in Roman descriptions of the type.

3. *Aethiops* associated with color (but uncertain from context whether *fuscus* or *niger* was intended)
- a. Varro, *L. L.*, VIII, 38; 41; IX, 42 (*albus* and *Aethiops* contrasted)
  - b. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 189; XXII, 2
  - c. Seneca, *De Ira*, III, 26, 3
  - d. Petronius, *Sat.*, 102
  - e. Juvenal, II, 23; VIII, 33 (*Aethiops* and *cycnus* contrasted)
  - f. Boethius, *Comm. in Libr. Aristotelis περὶ ἔμφυεῖας*, II, 6 (*Aethiops* and *albus* contrasted); III, 9 (*Aethiops* and *candidus* contrasted)
  - g. Isidore, *Orig.*, XIV, 5, 14
  - h. Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, LXV, cols. 378-379 (letter of Fer-  
randus to Fulgentius and Fulgentius' reply)

### *Afer*

The *Moretum* passage, which contains the most detailed description of a Negro in Roman literature, uses *Afra* of a woman about whose racial identity there can be no doubt.<sup>13</sup> This usage of *Afra* is evidence that *Afer*, which generally indicates African or Libyan origin,<sup>14</sup> may refer also to a racial type that is unquestionably Negroid.<sup>15</sup> The Roman application of *Afra* to a Negroid type raises the question of the extent to which Negro extraction is indicated by the cognomen *Afer*. In the light of the *Moretum* passage, it is not unlikely that *Afer* as a cognomen was used at times<sup>16</sup> in the sense of Negro or Negroid.

The present study has little to add to the views which have been expressed concerning Terence's race.<sup>17</sup> It seems to me, how-

<sup>13</sup> 32.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. S. Gsell, *Hist. Anc. de l'Afrique du Nord* (Paris, VII [1928]), pp. 2-8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7: "Le nom d'*Afri* fut quelquefois aussi attribué à tous les habitants du continent, Noirs comme Blancs, extension que n'avait pas reçue le terme *Αἰθῶπες*."

<sup>16</sup> Apparently on the basis of such an interpretation, Della Corte describes *Helpis Afra* (*C. I. L.*, IV, 2993zγ) as follows: "una donna, greca anche essa di nome, *Helpis*, ma negra di colore, se nel cognomen *Afer*, che ella reca, ne era consecrata, come io credo, la patria d'origine." Cf. M. Della Corte, "Case ed Abitanti a Pompei," *Riv. Indo-Greco-Italica*, VII (1923), p. 85). *Domitius Afer et al.*, however, are proof that the cognomen *Afer* by no means implies Negroid extraction.

<sup>17</sup> M. Schanz and C. Hosius, *Gesch. d. röm. Lit.*, 1<sup>4</sup> (1927), p. 103: "doch war er, nach dem Beinamen zu schliessen, kein Punier, sondern

ever, that earlier studies have not given sufficient emphasis to two points. Both *Afer* and *fuscus*, which appear in Suetonius' description of Terence,<sup>18</sup> have an important anthropological significance when they are considered in the light of the *Moretum* passage. Particularly worthy of note is the fact that two words found in the key *Moretum* passage are applied to Terence. This combination of two words of anthropological significance should not be overlooked, especially when one of the words—*fuscus*—describes a feature which the Romans regarded as one of the Negro's most distinctive characteristics and used as an easy mark of identification.<sup>19</sup> Since the Negroid type was rather well established in Carthage,<sup>20</sup> the possibility of Negro extraction cannot be excluded from a consideration of the question of Terence's race. Unless archaeology brings to light more ex-

gehörte einem afrischen (libyschen) Stamme an"; G. Norwood, *Plautus and Terence* (New York, 1932), p. 100: "He was a native of Africa (as his cognomen proves) and apparently a mulatto or a quadroon"; J. W. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome* (New York, 1932), p. 203: "His cognomen 'Afer' rather suggests that he belonged to some native tribe conquered by the Carthaginians"; T. Frank, "On Suetonius' Life of Terence," *A. J. P.*, LIV (1933), pp. 272-273: "it is not improbable that his mother was one of Hannibal's Italian captives . . . She may have been an Italic Greek, a Lucanian, a Campanian, or of some other Italic tribe . . . It is even possible that he was born of free Punic parents and kidnapped for the market"; E. K. Rand, *The Building of Eternal Rome* (Cambridge, 1943), p. 100: "His name, Publius Terentius Afer, suggests that he might have been of negro extraction. If so—it is not at all certain—he was a worthy predecessor of Alexander Dumas fils."

<sup>18</sup> J. C. Rolfe (Loeb), II, pp. 452-463.

<sup>19</sup> *Infra*, pp. 277-9.

<sup>20</sup> On Negro skulls in Carthaginian cemeteries, see M. Bertholon, "La Population et les Races en Tunisie," *Revue Générale des Sciences Pures et Appliquées*, VII (1896), pp. 972, 974; A. L. Delattre, "La Nécropole Punique de Douimes," *Le Cosmos*, XXXVI (1897), pp. 754-755. This evidence, together with North African mosaics representing Negroes (A. Ballu, "Fouilles Archéologiques d'Algérie en 1905," *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, XXIV [1906], p. 209; F. G. Pachtere, "Les Nouvelles Fouilles d'Hippone," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et de l'École Française de Rome*, XXXI [1911], pp. 334-354), is sufficient evidence against Prescott's view (review of Norwood's *Plautus and Terence* in *C. J.*, XXVIII [1932], p. 215) that the races of Northern Africa were totally distinct from the Negroes of Central Africa.

amples of *Afer* associated either with the racial features described in the *Moretum* or with *fuscus* applied to a type unquestionably Negroid, nothing more definite can be said in this connection about Terence's race than that Terence might have been of Negroid extraction.<sup>21</sup>

#### *Maurus* and *Indus*

Vergil's reference<sup>22</sup> to the Nile *usque coloratis amnis deveexus ab Indis* may attest merely the common ancient confusion between East and South,<sup>23</sup> and so there is no clear evidence that African Negroes were called by the Roman poets *Indi*, who, of course, were also of dark skin. On the other hand, the term *Maurus* occasionally does seem to be a poetical equivalent. Juvenal's phrase *nigri Mauri*<sup>24</sup> appears in a passage which alludes to the belief that the color of the Negro's skin was ominous.<sup>25</sup> Martial mentions a *retorto crine Maurus*.<sup>26</sup> The phrase *retorto crine* suggests the kinky or frizzly hair associated with the Negro. That the word *Maurus* by itself implies here the Negro or Negroid is perhaps not a necessary conclusion<sup>27</sup> but quite possible.

#### B. Skin-Color

The Romans, like many moderns, naturally used the color of the skin as an easy mark of identification for the Negroid type. This character was apparently uppermost in the Roman's mind as one of the distinctive features of the Negro, for, as Seneca<sup>28</sup> observed:

Non est Aethiopsis inter suos insignitus color . . .

The Roman's association of skin-color with the Negro is seen also in Ovid:<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. E. K. Rand, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>22</sup> *Georgics*, IV, 293.

<sup>23</sup> See U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Hellenistische Litteratur im Zeitalter von Kallimachos* (Berlin, 1924), II, p. 70. *Niger Indus* (Martial, VII, 30, 4) has been interpreted as referring to Ethiopians. Cf. L. Friedlaender, *M. Valeri Martialis Epigrammaton Libri*, I (Leipzig, 1886), p. 489: "Hier wohl in dem weiteren Sinne zu verstehen, in welchem es auch Nubier und Aethiopier bezeichnet."

<sup>24</sup> V, 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> VI, 39, 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Infra*, p. 288.

<sup>27</sup> *Infra*, p. 282.

<sup>28</sup> *De Ira*, III, 26, 3.

<sup>29</sup> *Met.*, II, 235-236. Cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 51; Petronius, *Sat.*,

Sanguine tum credunt in corpora summa vocato  
Aethiopum populos nigrum traxisse colorem.

It is not surprising to find that the Romans employed a variety of expressions to denote the color of the Negro's skin, because the color of African Negroes varies widely and ranges from an intense black to a light yellow.<sup>30</sup> An examination of the Roman use of *niger*, *perniger*, *nigerrimus*, *fuscus*, *decolor*, and *rubens* reveals an accuracy based on keen observation and on an awareness of the same difficulties recognized by modern scientists. The various usages of these terms will now be critically examined.

### *Niger* and *Fuscus*

The uses of *niger* and *fuscus* cited above prove that both these adjectives were used by the Romans to describe the skin-color of the *Aethiops*.<sup>31</sup> That the Romans, however, did not always mean a Negro by the use of these adjectives is clear from the frequent use of *niger* and *fuscus* to describe peoples of various racial origins who were dark-complexioned.<sup>32</sup> These two adjectives

102; and Lucretius, who, in two instances (VI, 722 and 1109), referred to *Aethiopes* as follows: . . . *nigra virum percocto saecula colore*; Manilius, IV, 758-759; Apuleius, *Met.*, XI, 5; Isidore, *Orig.*, XIV, 5, 14; Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, LXV, cols. 378-379 (letter of Ferrandus to Fulgentius and Fulgentius' reply).

<sup>30</sup> J. H. Lewis, *The Biology of the Negro* (Chicago, 1942), p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> This application of *niger* and *fuscus* has been noted by early students of the subject. Cf. T. R. Price, "The Color-System of Vergil," *A. J. P.*, IV (1883), p. 16; and H. Blümner, *Die Farbenbezeichnungen bei den römischen Dichtern (Berliner Studien für klassische Philologie und Archaeologie, XIII [1892], Heft 3)*, pp. 55-56, 98.

<sup>32</sup> The uses of *niger* and *fuscus* to describe non-Negro people may be summarized as follows: (1) to designate the brown or blackish skin of non-European peoples; (2) to describe members of the white race whose skin, for any reason, becomes brown or darkish; cf. Blümner, *op. cit.*, pp. 56, 98.

### *Niger*

- (a) Sidonius, *Carm.*, V, 346—*bracchia Massylus iactaret nigra natator*
- (b) Ammianus, XXI, 16, 19—*subniger* [Constantius]
- (c) Ammianus, XXIII, 6, 75—*subnigri* [Persians]

### *Fuscus*

- (a) Propertius, II, 33, 15—*fuscis Aegyptus alumnis*
- (b) Tibullus, II, 3, 55—*comites fusci quos India torret*
- (c) Ovid, *Fast.*, III, 493—*fuscae mihi* [Ariadne]
- (d) S. H. A., *Tyranni Triginta*, 30—*fusci coloris* [Zenobia]
- (e) Ammianus, XXII, 16, 23—*subfusculi* [Egyptians]



tives, therefore, were used by the Romans to designate not only the skin-color of the *Aethiopes* but also the dark complexion of various non-Negro people. It is also necessary, however, to determine to what extent *niger* and *fuscus*, when used alone, i. e., without *Aethiops*, designated the Negroid type.

### 1. *Niger* as the Equivalent of *Aethiops*

a. Memnon, legendary king of the Ethiopians, is referred to as *Memnonis Aethiopsis* in Catullus<sup>33</sup> and as *nigri Memnonis* in Ovid<sup>34</sup> and Vergil.<sup>35</sup> In other words, Ovid and Vergil use *niger* to describe a person regarded by the Romans as *Aethiops*. In the light of this evidence, there is little doubt that Ethiopians are described in the following:

nigra coloratus produceret agmina Memnon.<sup>36</sup>

b. Lucretius is unquestionably writing of Ethiopians in these lines:

inter nigra virum percocto saecla colore<sup>37</sup>

and

usque ad nigra virum percocto saecla colore.<sup>38</sup>

c. Again, in the line:

Nigris Meroe fecunda colonis,<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> 66, 52.

<sup>34</sup> *Am.*, I, 8, 3-4. Cf. Ovid, *Pont.*, III, 3, 96-97:

Memnonio cyncos esse colore putem  
sed neque mutatur nigra pice lacteus humor,

and *Am.*, I, 13, 33-34:

. . . Quod erat tibi filius ater  
materni fuerat pectoris ille color.

In support of the view that Memnon was sired by a Negro lover of Aurora, Fränkel cites Ovid, *Am.*, I, 13, 33-36 and III, 5, 43-44; cf. H. Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet between Two Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1945), pp. 14 and 178.

<sup>35</sup> *Aen.*, I, 489. Cf. Manilius, *Astron.*, I, 767: *Auroraeque nigrum partum*; Corippus, *Iohan.*, I, 186: *niger Memnon*. See also Blümner, *op. cit.*, pp. 43 and 55-56; and Beardsley, *op. cit.*, p. 7, "The practical Romans finally made Memnon an outright Ethiopian."

<sup>36</sup> Claudian, *De Cons. Stil.*, I, 265; cf. Claudian, *Carm. Min.*, XXVIII, 16.

<sup>37</sup> VI, 722; cf. Silius, III, 265.

<sup>38</sup> VI, 1109.

<sup>39</sup> Lucretius, X, 303. Cf. Propertius, IV, 6, 78: *Cepheam hic Meroen fuscaque regna canat*. See also Ausonius, XIX, 41, 9-19:

*nigris* is used in the sense of *Aethiopes* if we accept the opinion of scholars who hold that a strong Negroid element was present in the population of Meroe.<sup>40</sup>

d. The use of *niger* to designate the Negroid type is found also in the following:

Rector Libyci niger caballi.<sup>41</sup>

e. A stone<sup>42</sup> discovered at Rusicade (modern Philippeville) preserves the bust of a woman described by Bertrand as follows: "un buste de femme aux cheveux crépus, au nez épaté, aux lèvres épaisses, aux oreilles larges et écartées,<sup>43</sup> dont la tête, en un mot, accuse bien le type nègre." If Bertrand's interpretation<sup>44</sup> of the woman's name, i. e., Julia Nigra, is correct, this evidence is significant, because *Nigra* in this instance would certainly denote Ethiopian extraction.

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et tu sic Meroe, non quod sis atra colore  
ut quae Niliaca nascitur in Meroe.

There are only a few examples of *ater* as an epithet for Egyptians, Indians, and Negroes. *Niger* and *fuscus* are the more usual words; cf. Blümner, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>40</sup> For the presence of Negro blood in the Meroites, see C. T. Seltman, "Two Heads of Negresses," *A. J. A.*, XXIV (1920), pp. 21-22, "The indigenous population of the country was largely negroid and upon this was imposed in the reign of Psammetichus I a ruling caste of Egyptian warriors." Reliefs from Meroitic temples are proof to Seltman that Negroid characteristics were not rare among the inhabitants of Meroe. See also E. A. W. Budge, *The Egyptian Sudan* (London, 1907), I, pp. 407, 411 and II, p. 135 for evidence of Negroid characteristics among the Meroitic rulers. Sayce, however, believes that certain monuments found at Meroe prove that the Ethiopians had no Negro blood in their veins (J. Garstang, A. H. Sayce, and F. Ll. Griffith, *Meroe: The City of the Ethiopians* [Oxford, 1911], p. 4).

<sup>41</sup> Martial, XII, 24, 6; cf. Sidonius, *Carm.*, V, 53-54. See also Blümner, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> *C. I. L.*, VIII, 19888.

<sup>43</sup> M. L. Bertrand, *Bulletin de l'Académie d'Hippone: Comptes-Rendus des Réunions* (Bone, Algeria, 1892), p. L.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*; R. Cagnat, however, says in his report (*Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques* [Paris, 1892], p. 495) that the end of the second line of the inscription is mutilated and suggests the reading: NICRO[SA].

f. The intense black, mentioned by Lewis,<sup>45</sup> was what Plautus and Frontinus were referring to in the former's description of a child's nurse (*ore et oculis pernigris*)<sup>46</sup> and in the latter's account of the black soldiers (*nigerrimi*)<sup>47</sup> who fought with the Carthaginians against Gelon of Syracuse.<sup>48</sup>

## 2. *Fuscus* as the Equivalent of *Aethiops*

*Fuscus*, it is clear, usually indicated to the Roman a lighter hue than *niger*. Sidonius<sup>49</sup> observed

. . . sicuti, si vestiatur albo fuscus quisque fit nigrior . . .

Ovid<sup>50</sup> offers the following advice to lovers:

Nominibus mollire licet mala: fusca vocetur,  
Nigrior Illyrica cui pice sanguis erit.

Although *fuscus*, as indicated above, is used to describe dark complexioned persons of varied racial origins, it was also applied by the Romans to persons of unquestionable Ethiopian extraction.

<sup>45</sup> J. H. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 27. See note 9 above for intense black associated by the Greek with the Ethiopian.

<sup>46</sup> *Poen.*, 1114. Blümner, *op. cit.*, p. 56 points out that in all cases *niger*, when used alone, refers only to the color of the skin and not to the hair. *Niger*, therefore, differs from adjectives such as *flavus*, *canus*, *rufus*, etc. in that it must be accompanied by *coma*, *crinis*, and the like if the color of the hair is to be indicated.

<sup>47</sup> *Strat.*, I, 11, 18. Cf. . . . *gens nigerrimae cutis de terra Aethiopiae, dicta vulgariter Azopart*, from the *Historia Hierosolymitana* of Albertus Aquensis, VI, 41, in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux* (Paris, 1879), IV, 490. Perhaps in this same class of intense black belong the woman described by Martial in I, 115, 4-5 and the *Aegyptini* in Plautus, *Poen.*, 1291. (*Aegyptini* in *Poen.*, 1291 has been interpreted as the equivalent of *Aethiopes*; cf. Paulus ex Fest. [K. O. Müller's edition], p. 28; P. Nixon, *Plautus*, Loeb, IV, p. 131; G. E. Duckworth, *The Complete Roman Drama* [New York, 1942], I, p. 777.)

<sup>48</sup> The presence of Negroes in Sicily is also attested by the discovery of an archaic mask, portraying vividly the thick lips, flat nose, and short curly hair of a Negro; cf. *Illustrated London News*, CLXXXVIII (1931), p. 959 for photographs and descriptions of this mask.

<sup>49</sup> *Ep.*, II, 10, 4.

<sup>50</sup> *A. A.*, II, 657-658. Cf. *Rem. Am.*, 327; Martial, IV, 62; VII, 13; Lucretius, IV, 1160.

*Fuscus* is applied in the *Moretum*<sup>51</sup> to the skin of Scybale, about whose racial identity there can be no doubt, because mention is also made of her kinky hair, thick lips, etc. *Fuscus* was also applied to *Aethiopes* in the following:

Cepheam hic Meroen fuscaque regna canat.<sup>52</sup>

### 3. Summary of the Uses of *Niger* and *Fuscus* in the Sense of *Aethiops*

An examination of the usages of *niger* and *fuscus*, therefore, reveals that both of these adjectives, even in the absence of *Aethiops*, were used at times by the Romans to denote the Ethiopian type. In all of the cases cited above, it is certain that Ethiopians were meant, because such an interpretation was supported either by the context or by archaeological evidence.

The Roman usage of *fuscus*, *niger*, *perniger*, and *nigerrimus*, together with *decolor* and *rubens*,<sup>53</sup> is in keeping with the practices of modern anthropologists. According to modern descriptions, the color of the True Negro's skin is very black; the Bantu's varies from black to yellowish-brown, the prevalent color being a dark chocolate with a basic reddish tint; the Pygmy's is reddish, yellow-brown, or very dark.<sup>54</sup> Also, there is no inconsistency in the fact that these adjectives were used to describe the skin-color of both Negroes and non-Negroes, for the skin-color of certain Negroes and Mediterraneans is often of approximately the same hue. Further, if modern scientists experience difficulty in describing accurately the color of the skin, allowance must be made in considering Roman usage.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> 33.

<sup>52</sup> Propertius, IV, 6, 78.

<sup>53</sup> *Infra*, pp. 280-1.

<sup>54</sup> Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21. Cf. T. R. Price, *loc. cit.*, p. 16, who, on the basis of an examination of Vergil's color-system, states that *fuscus* indicates a blackness approached through red and brown, with the Negro's complexion as the physical standard. Similarly, he refers to *niger* as "blackness approached through red (negro)."

<sup>55</sup> Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 29. "Anthropologists experience difficulty in accurately describing the various colors met with in human skins." The Roman attempt to differentiate at times more precisely between the skin-

These additional conclusions may also be drawn from the evidence: (a) Whenever *niger* and *fuscus* are accompanied by other significant data, especially anthropological details cited in the passages quoted above, there is little doubt that the Romans were referring to the Negroid type; (b) since these adjectives, especially *niger*, are the adjectives most commonly used to describe the skin-color of the *Aethiopes*, it may with some confidence be claimed that *niger* and *fuscus*, even in the absence of other evidence, at times indicate Ethiopian extraction.<sup>56</sup>

The following inscription from a Pompeian *lupanar* should be examined in this connection:

candida me docuit nigras odisse puellas  
 odero si potero, sed non invitus amabo.<sup>57</sup>

*Candidus* is frequently used in Latin literature to denote fair complexion or beauty and, of course, might be used in such a sense in this passage. In one of the important anthropological descriptions cited above, however, the scientist Pliny, after describing the skin of the Ethiopian burnt by the sun and his frizzly hair, contrasts him with the Northerners whose skin he refers to as *candida atque glaciali cute*.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, although *candida* might mean "fair" and *niger* "dark" in the Pompeian inscription, the fact that the Roman scientist contrasted the terms *candidus* and *Aethiops* admits the possibility that *nigras*

color of Negroes and non-Negroes is seen in the following instances: Ammianus, XXII, 16, 23, *subfusculi* of Egyptians and XXIII, 6, 75, *subnigri* of Persians.

<sup>56</sup> This is not a rash assumption in the light of the evidence which indicates that the color of the Negro's skin was regarded by both the Greek and the Roman as a simple means of identification. See *supra*, pp. 273 ff. and the following medieval usage of *niger* to indicate the Ethiopians in the army of Saladin: *gens . . . nigro colore*. Cf. *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, edited by W. Stubbs (London, 1864), I, p. 83 and P. Meyer, "Les Achoparts," *Romania*, VII (1878), p. 440.

<sup>57</sup> *C. I. L.*, IV, 1520; E. Breton, *Pompeia Décrite et Dessinée* (Paris, 1855), p. 286; P. Gusman, *Pompei, la Ville, les Moeurs, les Arts* (Paris, 1900), p. 56. For other examples of Negroes in Pompeii, see references cited on p. 286 under Actor, Balneator, Charioteer, etc. Cf. also R. S. Lull, *Organic Evolution* (New York), p. 413.

<sup>58</sup> Blümner, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

designates *Aethiopes* in this case.<sup>59</sup> In fact, Gusman translates *nigras* as *noires*.<sup>60</sup>

In the light of the evidence above, it is possible that Negroes were described in at least some of the following instances:

- a. et Maecenati, Maro cum cantaret Alexin  
nota tamen Marsi fusca Melaenis erat<sup>61</sup>

The combination of *fusca* and *Melaenis* is particularly significant.

- b. nigra melichrus est . . .<sup>62</sup>  
c. sic quae nigrrior est cadente moro  
cerussata sibi placet Lycoris<sup>63</sup>  
d. Digna tuo cur sis indignaque nomine dicam  
frigida es et nigra es: non es et es Chione<sup>64</sup>

### *Decolor*

*Decolor*, a word used to describe the skin-color of the people of India and Mauretania, was also applied by the Romans to the offspring of an Ethiopian father and a white mother. Juvenal speaks of a *decolor heres*,<sup>65</sup> who is the child of such a union.

<sup>59</sup> *Nat. Hist.*, II, 189; cf. Boethius, *Comm. in Libro Aristotelis περὶ ἐμπνεύσεως*, II, 7 (*Gallus* . . . *candidus* and *Aethiops nigerrimus*), and III, 9. See also S. Gsell, *op. cit.*, I<sup>3</sup>, p. 299, note 5: "L'antithèse entre 'blancs' et 'Éthiopiens' est classique." Cf. also the contrast in Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, II, 2: μέλας τὰ σώματα . . . λευκοί τε τὰ χρώματα . . . , as well as the numerous Janiform objects which contrasted white and Negroid types, Beardsley, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-30, especially p. 31, "All the vases show a desire for effective contrast. The hair was left dull in order to emphasize the shiny black skin. On the Janiform vases the severe white face is introduced for sharp contrast."

<sup>60</sup> P. Gusman, *op. cit.*, p. 67: "une blanche jeune fille m'a appris à détester les noires." *Niger* and *candidus* in Vergil, *Ecl.*, II, 16 have been interpreted as "dark" and "fair." Cf. Beardsley, *op. cit.*, p. 118 and E. L. Highbarger, "Notes on Vergil's *Bucolics*," *Class. Phil.*, XL (1945), p. 45. However, there is considerable evidence for the presence of the *Aethiops* in Campania, which, of course, was well known to Vergil.

<sup>61</sup> Martial, VII, 29, 7-8.

<sup>62</sup> Lucretius, IV, 1160; W. H. D. Rouse translates this "The black girl is a nut-brown maid . . ." (Loeb, p. 331); cf. Ovid, *A. A.*, II, 657-658; *Rem. Am.*, 327.

<sup>63</sup> Martial, I, 72, 5-6.

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*, III, 34.

<sup>65</sup> VI, 600.

A similar use of the word *discolor* is found in Claudian.<sup>66</sup> The Roman usage of this word indicates that a child born of Ethiopian and white parents resembles in color the people of India and Mauretania to whom *decolor* is generally applied.<sup>67</sup> In other words, such a Black-White cross is neither *niger* nor *fuscus* but *decolor*. Mulatto might be a good word to use in translating *decolor* in instances where it refers to Black-White crosses.<sup>68</sup>

### *Rubens*

Though I found only one instance of *rubens*<sup>69</sup> applied to Ethiopians, I include it because it reveals the accuracy of the Roman's knowledge of the Ethiopian type. Negroes of a red, copper-colored complexion are known among African tribes.<sup>70</sup>

### C. The Form of the Hair

The form of the hair is regarded by anthropologists as a very important characteristic in the classification of the Negroid type. The ancient descriptions of the Negroid hair correspond very remarkably to the modern terms "kinky" or "frizzly." The following instances should be noted:

- a. *torta comam* (kinky)<sup>71</sup>
- b. *torta caput* (kinky)<sup>72</sup>
- c. *capillo vibrato* (frizzly)<sup>73</sup>
- d. *tortis crinibus* (kinky)<sup>74</sup>
- e. *Aethiopes capillati* (long-haired)<sup>75</sup>
- f. *retorto crine* (kinky)<sup>76</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *Bell. Gild.*, I, 192-193, *discolor infans*.

<sup>67</sup> Ovid, *Trist.*, V, 324, *decolor Indus*; *Met.*, IV, 21, *decolor . . . India*; Propertius, IV, 3, 10, *decolor Indus*; Lucan, IV, 678-679, *tum concolor Indo Maurus*.

<sup>68</sup> Mrs. Beardsley (*op. cit.*, p. 118), in my judgment, is wrong in regarding *decolor* as synonymous with *Aethiops*. Cf. L. Friedlaender, *D. Junii Juvenalis Saturarum Libri V* (Leipzig, 1895), p. 356.

<sup>69</sup> Statius, *Theb.*, V, 427.

<sup>70</sup> Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 27. To the Romans, *rubens* indicated the color of the crab when cooked. Cf. Vergil, *Georg.*, IV, 47-48: . . . *neve rubentis ure foco caneros . . .*

<sup>71</sup> *Moretum*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> Lucan, X, 132.

<sup>73</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 189.

<sup>74</sup> Martial, *De Spect.*, 3, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Petronius, 34.

<sup>76</sup> Martial, VI, 39, 6.

In the first four cases, the references are clearly to the full-blooded Negro, whose woolly or frizzly hair often evoked comment among the Romans.<sup>77</sup> The other two instances, however, may be explained in several ways. For the phrase *Aethiopes capillati* (long-haired) some commentators have excogitated fanciful explanations.<sup>78</sup> Since Petronius mentions *Aethiopes* without the qualifying adjective *capillati* in a passage where full-blooded Negroes are meant, an attempt must be made to explain the word *capillati* as applying in this instance to Negroes. Since a late writer like Petronius would hardly be referring to the eastern "Ethiopian" whose hair was straight,<sup>79</sup> Waters<sup>80</sup> was probably near the truth in regarding the term *capillati* as indicating that these servants were not full-blooded Africans. That is, they were Negroes with hair not generally associated with the Negro, and, consequently, worthy of note.<sup>81</sup> Conversely Martial mentions a *retorto crine Maurus*.<sup>82</sup> If in this case Martial is not using the word *Maurus* loosely, the phrase *retorto crine Maurus* may indicate the descendant of a Negro-White cross, i. e., one with the skin-color of a *Maurus* and the hair of an *Aethiops*.

## II. PROVENIENCE OF NEGRO SLAVES IN ITALY.

That most of the Negroes arrived in Italy as slaves is evident from the literary references to Ethiopian servants. The existence of well-established commercial relations between Italy and Africa would naturally point to certain African cities as the sources from which the Romans imported Negro slaves.<sup>83</sup> The most

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Petronius, 102: *Numquid et crines calamistro convertere?*

<sup>78</sup> E. g., W. B. Sedgwick, *The Cena Trimalchionis of Petronius* (Oxford, 1939), p. 94. "Ethiopians never have long hair; so these must be ordinary slaves, dressed as Negroes."

<sup>79</sup> Herodotus, VII, 70.

<sup>80</sup> W. E. Waters, *Cena Trimalchionis* (Boston, 1902), p. 70.

<sup>81</sup> Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 62 ". . . it is commonly observed that descendants of Negro-White crosses may be dark and yet have the straight hair of the white . . ."

<sup>82</sup> VI, 39, 6.

<sup>83</sup> For discussions of this point, see M. Bang, "Die Herkunft der römischen Sklaven," *Röm. Mitt.*, XXV (1910), p. 248; L. C. West, "Phases of Commercial Life in Roman Egypt," *J. R. S.*, VII (1917), p. 54; Beardsley, *op. cit.*, p. 116; W. L. Westermann, "Sklaverei," Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, Supplementband VI (1935), cols. 1004-1005.



likely sources were Egypt and North African cities situated near the terminals of important caravan routes. The Negro had long been a familiar type in Egypt, whither he had been brought from the South by way of the Red Sea or the Nile River. Even Negroes identical with types found in central Africa appeared in Alexandria.<sup>84</sup> Carthage, where, too, the Negro was known in classical times, was apparently supplied with slaves brought from inner Africa along caravan routes.<sup>85</sup> It is also possible that the Roman campaign against the Ethiopians in 23 B. C. provided the Romans with immediate opportunities to traffic in Negro slaves.<sup>86</sup>

### III. THE HISTORY OF THE NEGRO IN CLASSICAL ITALY.

The earliest mention of the Negroid type in Roman literature occurs in Plautus' description of a nurse.<sup>87</sup> In the *Eunuchus* of Terence an Ethiopian slave girl is one of two valuable gifts which Parmeno has brought Thais.<sup>88</sup> One hundred Negro hunts-

<sup>84</sup> I. Noshy, *The Arts in Ptolemaic Egypt* (London, 1937), p. 98.

<sup>85</sup> For Negro element in the population of Carthage, see S. Gsell, *op. cit.*, I<sup>3</sup>, p. 302; cf. O. Bates, *The Eastern Libyans* (London, 1914), pp. 44-45 for Negroid traits in African peoples. Kairwan, not far from Carthage and Tunis, is an important caravan terminus; cf. E. W. Bovill, *Caravans of the Old Sahara* (Oxford University Press, 1933), map opposite pp. 246-247; cf. M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1926), p. 66 (= Italian edition, p. 74).

<sup>86</sup> To check the Ethiopians, who under the leadership of the queen of Ethiopia had advanced into Egypt as far as Elephantine, Gaius Petronius, praefect of Egypt, marched south in 23 B. C., wrested from the Ethiopians Pselchis, an Egyptian town that had fallen into their hands, captured several Ethiopian towns, and destroyed Napata, the second city of the Ethiopian kingdom; cf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VI, 181; Cassius Dio, LIV, 5, 4; Strabo, XVII, 1, 54. Neugebauer argues that this campaign inspired the bronze of a Negro in Berlin. Cf. K. A. Neugebauer, "Aus der Werkstatt eines griechischen Toreuten in Ägypten," in *Schumacher-Festschrift* (Römisch-Germanischen Zentral-Museums in Mainz, 1930), p. 236 and plate 23. For the relations between Rome and the Meroitic kingdom see M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Storia economica e sociale dell' impero Romano* (Florence, 1933), pp. 351-360 and the literature there cited.

<sup>87</sup> *Poen.*, 1114, *ore et oculis pernigris*. The Negroid type was well known in Carthage; cf. note 20, *supra*.

<sup>88</sup> *Eun.*, 165-167. Since these comedies were based on Greek originals, these two references (*Poen.*, 1114 and *Eun.*, 165-167) are not in themselves evidence that Plautus and Terence were referring to Negroes on

men, together with the same number of Numidian bears, were presented in the Circus by Domitius Ahenobarbus as curule aedile in 61 B. C.<sup>89</sup> To the Republican period also belongs the servant described as *Aethiops qui ad balneas veniet*.<sup>90</sup>

The Negro appears more frequently in the literature of the Empire than in Republican literature. This is not surprising in the light of increased Roman activity in the North African provinces during the Empire.

Scybale, whose racial features are so realistically described, was without doubt a type with which the author of the *Moretum*<sup>91</sup> was well acquainted. Increased interest in the Negro, possibly because he was beginning to appear in Italy in greater numbers, may account for the fact that the most detailed anthropological descriptions of the Negro date from the early Empire, i. e., *Moretum*, Pliny the Elder, and Petronius. Seneca<sup>92</sup> tells us that among his own people the Negro's color is not noticeable. Ethiopian servants are mentioned twice in Petronius.<sup>93</sup> During the principate of Tiberius two Ethiopians carried the draped bier of a famed talking raven.<sup>94</sup> Ethiopians were among those

Italian soil. It is not unlikely, however, that Negroes were present in Italy at the time Plautus and Terence wrote their comedies. The Roman contact with the Carthaginians during and after the Hannibalic war may have resulted in the introduction of some Negroes into Italy. It is interesting in this connection to note the bronze coins with the head of a Negro, and one of Hannibal's elephants on the reverse. (For Negroes as drivers of elephants, see the terracotta from Pompeii, *Röm. Mitt.*, XIII [1898], pp. 19-20; Achilles Tatius, IV, 4, 6, and Juvenal, X, 150. For Negroes as elephant-fighters and elephant-hunters, see Diodorus, III, 26-27.) C. T. Seltman (*Greek Coins: A History of Metallic Currency and Coinage Down to the Fall of the Hellenistic Kingdoms* [London, 1933], p. 250) suggests that these bronze coins, minted in Etruria, may have been among the coins which were supplied by Hannibal's allies in Italy. These coins, when considered in the light of the use made of Negro auxiliaries in the Mediterranean (cf. note 102, *infra*), may be evidence that Hannibal's forces included some Negroes. After the war, the Romans no doubt imported slaves from Carthage. Terence himself had been a slave from Carthage.

<sup>89</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VIII, 131. Mrs. Beardsley's statement (*op. cit.*, p. 120) that Pliny the Elder mentions no Ethiopians at Rome overlooks this reference, as well as X, 122.

<sup>90</sup> *Ad Her.*, IV, 50, 63.

<sup>91</sup> 31-35.

<sup>92</sup> *De Ira*, III, 26, 3.

<sup>93</sup> *Sat.*, 35 and 102.

<sup>94</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, X, 122.

who enacted scenes from the lower world at nocturnal performances under Caligula.<sup>95</sup> During a gladiatorial exhibition which Nero gave to entertain Tiridates, only Ethiopians—men, women, and children—entered the theater at Puteoli.<sup>96</sup> Negro dancers are known also from a figure found in Campania.<sup>97</sup> To approximately the same period belong the Negro participants in the worship of Isis.<sup>98</sup>

Juvenal writes of Negroes several times;<sup>99</sup> likewise his contemporary Martial. Since Martial was a rather accurate observer of the passing scene, we may safely assume that Negroes were not uncommon in the Empire. *Tortis crinibus Aethiopes* were present at the opening of the Colosseum in sufficient numbers to have attracted the attention of the poet.<sup>100</sup> In addition to the references cited elsewhere in this paper, Martial mentions also a *tristi Aethiope*.<sup>101</sup> A Negro soldier, renowned for his wit, was among the troops of Septimius Severus in Britain.<sup>102</sup> Elagabalus' friends were forced to spend the night *cum Aethiopicibus aniculis*.<sup>103</sup>

Although statistics are not available, the frequent mention of Negroes by Martial in his panoramic view of the Empire, together with the other evidence presented in this paper, suggests that the Negroid element in the Roman population may have

<sup>95</sup> Suetonius, *Cal.*, 57, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Cassius Dio, *Epit.*, LXII, 3, 1.

<sup>97</sup> H. Roux and M. L. Barré, *Herculanum et Pompéi, Recueil Général des Peintures, Bronzes, etc.*, VI (Paris, 1870), pl. 104.

<sup>98</sup> *Infra*, pp. 286-7.

<sup>99</sup> II, 23; VI, 600; VIII, 33.

<sup>100</sup> Martial, *De Spect.*, 3, 10.

<sup>101</sup> VII, 87, 2.

<sup>102</sup> S. H. A., *Septimius Severus*, 22, 4-5. Negroes had been used as auxiliaries by the Minoans and Persians; cf. A. Evans, *The Palace of Minos* (London, 1921), I, p. 302; II (1928), part II, pp. 755-757 and plate XIII; Herodotus, VII, 69-70. The use of Negroes as soldiers by other Mediterranean peoples is seen also in Ammianus, XXIX, 5, 37 and in Frontinus, *Strat.*, I, 11, 18. A terracotta figurine of a Negro or Negroid warrior (date uncertain) appears in M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic Empire*, II (Oxford, 1941), plate CI and commentary on page 900. On the equipment of the Negro Soldier, see A. D. Fraser, "The Panoply of the Ethiopian Warrior," *A. J. A.*, XXXIX (1935), pp. 35-45 and plates VII-XI.

<sup>103</sup> S. H. A., *Elagabalus*, 32, 5, 6.

been larger than is generally recognized.<sup>104</sup> At any rate, it is reasonable to assume that Negroes were more common on the streets of Rome and in Italy during the Empire than they had been in Republican Rome.

The rôle the Negro played in the daily life of the Romans is indicated by the following activities in which he engaged.

- ACTOR, DANCER, AND ACROBAT—Suetonius, *Cal.*, 57, 4; H. Roux and M. L. Barré, *Herculanum et Pompéi, Recueil Général des Peintures, Bronzes, Mosaïques, etc.*, VI (Paris, 1870), pl. 104, and pp. 199-200
- BALNEATOR—*Ad Her.*, IV, 50, 63; Martial, VII, 35; A. Maiuri, *La Casa del Menandro e Il suo Tesoro di Argenteria* (Rome, La Libreria dello Stato, I, 1933), pp. 146-148 and p. 224; S. Reinach, *Répertoire des Peintures Grecques et Romaines* (Paris, 1922), p. 250, no. 11
- BOOTBLACK—S. Reinach, *Répertoire de la Statuaire Grecque et Romaine* (Paris, 1904), III, p. 158, no. 3
- CHARIOTEER—F. and F. Niccolini, *Le Case ed i Monumenti di Pompei* (Naples, 1896), IV, p. 1 and pl. III; *Anthol. Lat.* (A. Reise's edition), no. 293
- COOK—Scybale, *Moretum*, 31. See also Martial (ed. Lindsay), VI, 39, 6, where *co<c>i Santrae* is a simple and convincing emendation
- DIVER—S. Reinach, *Répertoire de la Statuaire Grecque et Romaine* (Paris, 1904), III, p. 158, no. 6; H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Bronzes, Greek, Roman, and Etruscan in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (London, 1899), p. 269, nos. 1674, 1675; cf. Beardsley, *op. cit.*, nos. 269-273
- PUGILIST—Nicaeus, Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 51
- SERVANTS OF VARIOUS SORTS—Terence, *Eun.*, 165-167; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, X, 122; Petronius, *Sat.*, 35
- SOLDIER—S. H. A., *Septimius Severus*, 22, 4-5; cf. *supra*
- VENATOR—Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VIII, 131

#### IV. THE RELIGION OF THE NEGRO.

In Italy Negroes participated in the worship of Isis. A wall-painting<sup>105</sup> from Herculaneum shows a Negro among the

<sup>104</sup> E. g., R. H. Barrow, *Slavery in the Roman Empire* (New York, 1928), pp. 15-21, 208-229; A. M. Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1928), pp. 1-11.

<sup>105</sup> P. Gusman, *Pompeii: The City, Its Life and Art*, translated by

devotees of Isis. The dancing of the Negro suggests in many ways certain dances of native African tribes. The blacks represented in another part of the ceremony have been identified as attendants of the priests.<sup>106</sup> These attendants apparently belonged to the same class of *linigeri calvi* as the mulatto priest of Isis from Athens, who, according to Poulsen, represented an inferior priestly order which wore linen robes extending from the armpits to the feet.<sup>107</sup> At least three of the blacks in the Herculaneum fresco are dressed in this type of garment which distinguishes them clearly from the other priests whose robes extend from the shoulders to the feet. Since many Negroes in Africa were followers of the Isis-cult,<sup>108</sup> it is probable that some of the Negro worshippers were initiated into the cult in their native country and continued their associations with the goddess after they had been transported to Italy.

#### V. THE ROMAN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE NEGRO.

The Negro in ancient Rome, it would appear, fared no differently from slaves of other racial origins. A black soldier who served in the Roman army had a wide reputation for his wit—*celebratorum semper iocorum*.<sup>109</sup> The black man made his contribution to the entertainment of the ancient world, as actor, acrobat, boxer, charioteer, or *venator*. The one hundred *venatores*

F. Simonds and M. Jourdain (London, 1900), p. 79; A. Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, translated by F. W. Kelsey (New York, 1907), pp. 177-179.

<sup>106</sup> M. Rostovtzeff, *A History of the Ancient World*, II (Rome) (Oxford, reprint 1938), plate XC, no. 2, and commentary on p. 342.

<sup>107</sup> F. Poulsen, "Tête de Prêtre d'Isis Trouvée à Athènes," *Mélanges Holleaux* (Paris, 1913), plate VI and 221.

<sup>108</sup> Apuleius, *Met.*, XI, 5; Diodorus Siculus, III, 9, 2. Cf. Juvenal, VI, 526-529. Cf. A. Erman, *A Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, translated by A. S. Griffith (London, 1907), p. 201. According to Erman, Isis and Osiris attained the highest rank among the Nubians, who preferred to continue the worship of Isis long after the Christian religion had triumphed in Egypt. Two great columnar statues of an Ethiopian queen were found in a temple of Isis at Meroe; cf. C. T. Seltman, *A. J. A.*, XXIV (1920), p. 23; E. A. W. Budge, *The Egyptian Sudan*, I, p. 407, for a king of distinctly Negroid characteristics, behind whom is a figure of Isis.

<sup>109</sup> S. H. A., *Septimius Severus*, 22, 4-5.

imported by Domitius Ahenobarbus, no doubt, won the plaudits of those present at the circus.<sup>110</sup> One charioteer was preserved in marble.<sup>111</sup> The boxer Nicaeus was described as *nobilis pycta*.<sup>112</sup> The devoted Scybale and others of her sort probably won the affection of their masters.<sup>113</sup>

There was a belief in certain circles among the Romans that the color of the Negro's skin was ominous. Roman historians, in recounting the omens presaging disaster, observed that ill-starred individuals were known to have seen a Negro just before their misfortune.<sup>114</sup> The existence of this superstition, however, apparently did not prevent certain Romans from association with persons whose skin was dark or black.<sup>115</sup>

There was no color bar. The Roman, scientist and layman alike, thought in no terms of contempt or of "racial purity" in his observations on the Negro. Like the Syrian, the Greek, and others of slave origin, the Negro was brought to Rome; he worked in the household, or in the *thermae*, or for the municipality; he provided entertainment for the populace;<sup>116</sup> he worshipped the same gods, at the same place of worship, together with the other slaves and freedmen;<sup>117</sup> his blood was interfused with that of other peoples.<sup>118</sup> Among the Romans as among the Greeks,<sup>119</sup> there was apparently no trace of "color-prejudice."<sup>120</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VIII, 131.

<sup>111</sup> F. and F. Niccolini, *op. cit.*, p. 1 and pl. III.

<sup>112</sup> Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 51. <sup>113</sup> *Moretum*, 31.

<sup>114</sup> Appian, *B. C.*, IV, 134; Florus, II, 17, 7-8; Plutarch, *Brut.*, 48 (all three of these refer to the same incident); S. H. A., *Septimius Severus*, 22, 4-5; and perhaps Juvenal, V, 53-54, if Juvenal is using *nigri Mauri* to designate an *Aethiops*. Line 54 may be evidence, however, that the skin-color not only of *Aethiopes* but also of *Mauri* was considered ominous.

<sup>115</sup> *Supra*, pp. 283-7 and *infra*, pp. 290-2.

<sup>116</sup> *Supra*, p. 286. It is interesting to note references in medieval French literature to the entertainment provided by Negro acrobats, tumblers, leapers, etc.; cf. E. C. Armstrong, "Old-French *Açopart*, 'Ethiopian,'" *Modern Philology*, XXXVIII (1941), pp. 246-250.

<sup>117</sup> *Supra*, pp. 286-7.

<sup>118</sup> *Infra*, pp. 290-2.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. A. E. Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth* (ed. 5, Oxford, 1931), p. 323, "The Greeks thought negroes very interesting looking people and were amused at their woolly hair, but they show no trace of 'color-prejudice'." See also W. L. Westermann, "Slavery and the Elements of Freedom," *Quarterly Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America*, I (1943), p. 346.

<sup>120</sup> Mrs. Beardsley (*op. cit.*, pp. 119-120), in my judgment, is wrong in

Herodes Atticus, although Greek, was a most influential member of the international aristocracy of the second century after Christ, a *consularis* and a relative of a great Italian family.

her conclusion that the Roman attitude toward the Negro crystallized into racial feeling. In support of her view that the Romans referred to the Ethiopians at Rome in a superior and contemptuous tone, Mrs. Beardsley includes the following passages: (1) Cicero, *Red. in Sen.*, 6, 14 (cited incorrectly as *De Sen.*, 6); (2) Martial, VI, 39, 6; (3) Juvenal, II, 23. Cicero, *Red. in Sen.*, 6, 14: . . . *cum hoc homine an stipite Aethiope . . .*, as Mrs. Beardsley admits, does not appear in all the manuscripts and is omitted in the best established texts. A consideration of the context leads me to believe that the editors (Oxford, Teubner, Loeb) are right in rejecting *Aethiope* or *stipite Aethiope* and in reading *stipite*. Nevertheless, the appearance of the variant indicates that the author of the reading used *Aethiope* in a derogatory sense. (It is possible that the pejorative meaning of *aethiops* was a medieval development. Cf. E. C. Armstrong, *loc. cit.*, p. 244, note 7.) An entirely different view of the race, however, is found in one of the detailed anthropological descriptions in which Ethiopians are referred to as "sapientes" (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 189). In this passage Pliny is no doubt recording the view of the Ethiopians found in several Greek authors, e. g. Diodorus, III, 2, 1-4, who speaks highly of the civilized Ethiopians who inhabited Meroe and the land adjoining Egypt, and Lucian, *De Astrologia*, 3. I can see no "unmistakable contempt of the woolly hair" (Beardsley, *op. cit.*, p. 119) in Martial, VI, 39, 6. The poet's *retorto crine Maurus* merely describes a racial type as does his *tortis crinibus Aethiopes* (*De Spect.*, 3, 10). Juvenal in his second satire is talking about moralists without morals. After illustrating his point by saying that those who denounce evil then practice vice, he continues

loripedem rectus derideat, Aethiopem albus,  
quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione querentes?

I doubt whether the context justifies Mrs. Beardsley's conclusion (*op. cit.*, p. 120) that in these words—*derideat Aethiopem albus*—Juvenal sums up the racial feeling in Rome. Juvenal's attitude toward Greeks and Orientals certainly suggests that the poet, had he been disposed, would have spoken against Negroes more caustically and explicitly than he does here or elsewhere. The attitude of the Romans towards persons described by the adjectives *fuscus* or *niger* (whether persons so described were Negroid or not) apparently varied with the individual. Ovid (*A. A.*, III, 269-270) has some advice on this matter for the ladies:

Pallida purpureis spargat sua corpora virgis,  
Nigrior ad Pharii confuge piscis opem.

A.

Passages which suggest the desirability of a "candidus" type:

condemn adultery when a mulatto child is evidence of such illicit relations but say nothing of racial purity. The Roman scientist Pliny,<sup>133</sup> like Aristotle<sup>134</sup> and Plutarch,<sup>135</sup> comments on the racial characteristics of second and third generation Black-White crosses as a scientist and gives no indication of modern concepts of "racial purity."

FRANK M. SNOWDEN, JR.

HOWARD UNIVERSITY.

<sup>133</sup> *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 51.

<sup>134</sup> *De Gen. Animal.*, I, 18.

<sup>135</sup> *De Sera Numinis Vindicta*, 21. Similarly, if Fränkel's conjecture (*op. cit.*, pp. 14 and 178) is correct, Ovid, too, says that the black child is evidence of adultery but says nothing of racial purity.