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## BLACK ODYSSEUS, WHITE CAESAR: WHEN DID “WHITE PEOPLE” BECOME “WHITE”?

Nil nimium studeo, Caesar, tibi velle placere,  
nec scire utrum sis **albus an ater** homo.

Catullus’ poem 93 is a famous and cryptic invective against Julius Caesar which concludes with the pointed remark, “I don’t care to know whether you are a white or a black man.” The phrase is a well-attested proverbial expression for complete indifference about someone; most of the parallels cited by moderns are already gathered in Erasmus’ *Adagia* at *Chilias I, Centuria 6*, No. 99.<sup>1</sup> For those not satisfied by such a simplistic and mechanical explanation, Douglas Thomson’s recent edition mentions some more subtle discussions—but there is an interesting issue just below the surface that seems not to be addressed in any Catullan commentary.<sup>2</sup>

We have enough historical information to say with certainty that Caesar was not “black”; but does the “either-or” phrasing imply that, if he wasn’t *ater*, then he must necessarily have been *albus*? Now it is curious (and perhaps a mere red herring) that Julius Caesar’s principal ancient biographers actually *do* say that he had a fair complexion, *candido colore* in Suetonius and λευκός in Plutarch.<sup>3</sup> Of course, *candidus* and *albus* are not synonyms, and one would not take Plutarch’s word on such a matter without solid confirmation from better sources. The biographers’ statements might be part of some hostile propaganda tradition, but if so, it’s surprising that we don’t find similar comments elsewhere—for example, in Cicero’s letters. In any case, if the Greeks and Romans routinely thought of themselves as “white,” what would have been the point in using words

\* An earlier version of this paper was delivered at CAMWS in Knoxville, April 2000; I am grateful for the helpful comments of *CJ*’s referee and several persons at that session.

<sup>1</sup> Inter al., Cic. *Phil.* 2.41 *qui albus aterve fuerit ignoras*; Apul. *Apol.* 16 *albus an ater esses ignoravi*; Jerome, *Adv. Helvid.* 16 *albus, ut aiunt, aterne sis nescio*; cf. Otto 1890, 11. The authoritative edition of Erasmus’ works is *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* (Amsterdam: North Holland/Elsevier 1969- ); the relevant volume of the *Adagia* is II.2, issued in 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson 1997, 523f.

<sup>3</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 45 *fuisse traditur excelsa statura, colore candido, teretibus membris, ore paulo pleniore, nigris vegetisque oculis, valetudine prospera*; Plut. *Caes.* 17 τὴν ἑξιν ὦν ισχνὸς καὶ τὴν σάρκα λευκὸς καὶ ἀπαλός.

like *candidus* or λευκός to describe Caesar in particular? The more important question, then, is general, not specific: did the Greeks and Romans think of themselves as “white people” or as part of a “white race”? And what *are* the classical terms for “white” in this context?

Frank Snowden’s writings, especially *Blacks in Antiquity* and *Before Color Prejudice*, have explored the Greco-Roman experience of and reactions to “blacks” in abundant detail, but he pays almost no attention to the other term in that pair of artificially-applied polar opposites. In a footnote in the latter book (151, n. 247), he calls for an investigation of the development of the “black-white” opposition, which was, he points out, not especially prominent in classical antiquity. Even Bernard Knox, in his 1992 Jefferson Lecture, published as *The Oldest Dead White European Males*, brushes past the topic; he says of the Greeks, “they were undoubtedly white or, to be exact, a sort of Mediterranean olive color” (26).<sup>4</sup> Note that Knox sounds quite pleased to describe the Greeks as “white,” since that is of course the valorized color-term in recent Western European cultural and political history. There is a similar example of this kind of casual but misleading associative thought in J. Desanges’ review of Snowden’s first book: quoting Juvenal 2.23, *loripedem rectus derideat, Aethiopem albus*, he remarks, “si l’opposition du Noir et du Blanc est banale, le parallèle *loripedem/Aethiopem* est arbitraire et donc révélateur.” But the “parallelism” exists only if one assumes that *rectus* and *albus* also form a natural alliance—perhaps an easy leap for moderns, but one which, I suggest, the ancients would not have accepted at all.<sup>5</sup>

Lloyd Thompson’s book makes a significant advance in this area, since he *does* examine both sides of the so-called opposition. He says that there was a tripartite scheme of categorization by skin color in the ancient world: the “black” *Aethiopes* and other μέλανες stand at one extreme, in polar contrast to the barbarian Northern European Celts and especially Germans, often described as *candidi*, *pallidi*, or, in a charming phrase from the Elder Pliny, as *candida atque glaciale cute* (N.H. 2.189), whereas the culturally different but chromatically almost indistinguishable Greeks, Romans, and Near East Asians, including the *Iudaei* and *Arabes*, all occupy the quasi-Aristotelian middle. As Thompson puts it, “the Mediterranean somatic norm is *albus* (‘white,’ in the sense of pale brown),” and he repeats this linkage of the words “Mediterranean” and “white” with the Latin *albus* ten

<sup>4</sup> More carefully, in his chapter on multiculturalism, Karl Galinsky says of Knox’s title phrase, “as inaccurate as it is racist and sexist: ...it is more precise to speak about light- and dark-brown Near Eastern and Mediterranean people” (1992, 116). But the older association reasserts itself on the next page when he refers to “the existence of leading nonwhites.” This paper will argue that, in their own view, the “leading nonwhites” of Greco-Roman antiquity were the Greeks and Romans themselves.

<sup>5</sup> Desanges 1970, 93.

more times within a fifteen-page span.<sup>6</sup> Two pages later, he adds, on the basis of a passage to be quoted shortly, the Greek λευκός as a parallel to Latin *albus* as words for “the Mediterranean somatic norm.”

Three questions come to mind immediately. First, how reliable is the association of *albus* with the “pale brown Mediterranean somatic norm”? Second, does Greek λευκός really correspond to *albus* in this special sense? Third, more generally, why does Thompson, like Knox, seem so desirous of retaining (or, to borrow vogue terminology, “privileging”) the English word “white” for a category of pigmentation that, as both admit, is not literally white at all, but “Mediterranean olive” or “pale brown”? In my classroom-teaching days, I used to hold up a blank sheet of paper and say, “Now *this* is undoubtedly white,” then put my other hand in front of it, and add, “But if you *also* want to call *this* white, there’s some serious semantic distortion going on that might be hard to explain to a visitor from outer space.”

As regards *albus*: we all know that *albus* and *candidus* are not identical; but this particular distinction of meaning does not seem borne out by the evidence. Neither the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* nor the *Thesaurus* shows any overt sign of Thompson’s tripartite schema or of the special senses predicated for those two words, nor does Jacques André’s still-fundamental *Étude sur les termes de couleur* raise this issue. Furthermore—unless I have missed something through simple inattention—among the texts Thompson cites, there is only *one* passage that brings his trio of “black”-“Mediterranean”-“nordic” together. This, of fairly late date, is in Lucian’s *Hermotimus*, where we find three categories of humans: λευκοί, ξανθοί, and μέλανες.<sup>7</sup> Thompson argues that ξανθοί here must be a reference to the group often called “nordics,” alluding to hair-color, rather than Oriental “yellow men,” as the Loeb translator and Professor Snowden suggest.<sup>8</sup> It is however by no means clear from the context that these three terms are intended to encompass the whole of humanity, much less that the λευκοί are Greeks and other Mediterraneans and the ξανθοί are “nordics.” Lucian’s speaker is seeking to demonstrate an error in logic, and for purposes of vividness and simplicity, he

<sup>6</sup> Thompson 1989, 65–80.

<sup>7</sup> Luc. *Herm.* 31 εἰ ... λέγοι μηδαμότι τῆς γῆς ἀνθρώπους εἶναι λευκοὺς ἢ ξανθοὺς μηδὲ ἄλλο τι ἢ μέλανας, ἄρα πιστεύοιτ’ ἂν ὑπ’ αὐτῶν. The speaker is himself a μέλας imagined to have no knowledge of the wider world or the actual diversity of humankind, in contrast to the persons referred to as αὐτοί. I thank Rebecca Wilcox, a graduate student in English at UT Austin, for drawing my attention to the problems latent in this passage, which led to a more thorough examination of the ξανθοί family.

<sup>8</sup> There is an entertaining footnote in Jonathan Hall’s *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (12, n. 54) on what he calls the “bizarre belief” that the supposedly golden-haired Dorians (ξανθοί) were “nordics.”

chooses three strongly contrasting but slightly mismatched words from the color vocabulary (two for skin color and one for hair). Although even a brief glance at LSJ will confirm Thompson's claim that ξανθοί (and its many compounds) must contain a reference to *hair* color, many of those references are to *Greek* persons and things—and not only such epic heroes as Achilles and Menelaus. In addition, I argue below that λευκός is not the standard Greek word for the "Mediterranean somatic norm." Oddly enough, throughout his discussion, Thompson does not mention the Latin proverb or the Catullan poem or Julius Caesar's complexion at all.

One last comment on *albus*: it is one of the little curiosities of Romance philology that the inherited words for the fundamental colors *black*, *red*, *green*—as well as *yellow* and *purple*—have obvious classical origins, whereas the principal word for *white* in Italian, Spanish, and French is a Germanic latecomer (*bianco*, *blanco*, *blanc*), with *albus* surviving primarily in a specialized feminine form meaning "dawn." In his survey of Romance philology, W. D. Elcock suggests that Germanic words for *white*, *brown*, *gray*, and *tawny* were adopted as descriptions of horses—which is all the more unexpected because André spends half a page discussing the special use of *albus* for horses in classical Latin.<sup>9</sup> However that may be, if the successive generations of Latin speakers in classical and late antiquity had been in the habit of referring to and thinking of themselves as "white" with such expressions as *albi homines* or *alba gens*, it seems unlikely that the word would have been so readily and universally replaced.

As for λευκός: in *Iliad* 5.499-505, the Achaeans "become white" because of dust kicked up by horse-hooves.

ὥς δ' ἄνεμος ἄχνας φορέει ιερὰς κατ' ἄλωας  
 ἀνδρῶν λικμώντων, ὅτε τε ξανθὴ Δημήτηρ  
 κρίνη ἐπειγομένων ἀνέμων καρπὸν τε καὶ ἄχνας,  
 αἱ δ' ὑπολευκαίνονται ἀχυρμαί· ὥς τότε Ἀχαιοὶ  
 λευκοὶ ὑπερθε γέγοντο κονισάλῳ, ὃν ῥα δι' αὐτῶν  
 οὐρανὸν ἐς πολύχαλκον ἐπέπληγον πόδες ἵππων  
 ἅψ ἐπιμισγομένων· ὑπὸ δ' ἔστρεφον ἡνιοχῆς.<sup>10</sup>

This, we might think, would be mystifyingly redundant if the Achaeans were already imagined as being λευκοί by nature; how-

<sup>9</sup> Elcock 1960, 208f.; André 1949, 29.

<sup>10</sup> In the interests of candor, I should acknowledge that at two points (*Il.* 11.573=15.316), the phrase λευκὸν χρῶς is used with reference to human skin (of Aias and the Greeks and Trojans collectively), as is χρῶς λειριόνετα (*Il.* 13.830, Aias again). In each case there is a contrast with a dark metal weapon seeking to penetrate that skin, thereby emphasizing even a heroic warrior's physical vulnerability. That such expressions could in fact be formed and yet remain extremely rare is surely significant. I take ὑπερθε to imply "white on the surface (but darker by nature underneath the dust)" rather than "white on the surface (on top of their naturally white skin)."

ever, one could mount the grim counter-argument that we would have little trouble in describing some of the survivors of the World Trade Center attack as both “white people” and “white all over with dust.” But modern English speakers, fully conversant with the two types of usage, would instantly recognize the difference, whereas I suggest that the first one is not available for (male) self-description in classical Greek. Consider the familiar Homeric epithet λευκώλενος, which occurs 39 times in the epics and is always applied to women, for whom that color, both in literature and the iconographical tradition, is quite acceptable as a result of their “unnatural” staying covered-up and indoors.<sup>11</sup> Twenty-four of those occurrences are case-variations of the formula for Zeus’s wife, λευκώλενος Ἥρη. Why don’t we find, applied to one or more of the male characters, the directly parallel and pleasantly mellifluous line-ending phrase, λευκώλενος ἦρως, or an easy variant, λευκώλενος ἀνὴρ? Rather than provide what ought to be a fairly self-evident answer, let us consider the flip-side of the coin.

In *Odyssey* 16.175, Athena transforms Odysseus back to his “normal” self: ἄψ δὲ μελαγχροῖης γένετο; the word μελαγχροῖης is a *hapax legomenon* paralleled only by μελανόχροος, another *hapax*, applied to Odysseus’ herald Eurybates at 19.246. In the Oxford commentary on Book 16, Arie Hoekstra says that this is the only case in Homer (except for that passage in Book 19) where a person is said to have “a sunburnt complexion.”<sup>12</sup> The phrase “sunburnt complexion” is a bit puzzling, since it seems to misread the force of the μελανο- element—although this may perhaps be an instance of a problem arising from a non-native-speaker’s use of English.

However, it is the other passage that leads into more difficult territory, for Frank Snowden has argued that the two-word collocation for Eurybates, μελανόχροος οὐλοκάρηνος, virtually identifies him as an Ethiopian black. Joseph Russo in the Oxford commentary more cautiously says that the expression *may* point to an African origin, and the older commentary of W. B. Stanford does not consider this possibility at all, listing instead a series of *Hellenic* parallels.<sup>13</sup> It should be pointed out that these two are the *only* characters in

<sup>11</sup> There is an extensive discussion of this issue in a section appropriately titled “White Women and Dark Men in Ancient Art and Homer” in Eleanor Irwin’s *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry* (1974, 112-116). As CJ’s referee points out, there is an interesting passage in Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica* (4.8.5, cf. 10.14.3f.), where a white (λευκή) female child is born to an Ethiopian queen, allegedly because she was looking at a painting of a nude and white-skinned Andromeda when the child was conceived. But because women were expected to be “white,” this is not especially problematic from a Greek viewpoint; it would have been more instructive if the child had been a male and described as λευκός.

<sup>12</sup> Hoekstra 1989, 273.

<sup>13</sup> Russo 1992, 90; Stanford 1967, 327.

Homer who share the toponymic adjective Ἰθακήσιος (applied to Eurybates in the *Iliad*)—which surely makes an African background extremely unlikely.

For another example of the occasional “blackness” of Greek males, there is the comic tale of Herakles and the Kerkopes, which pivots on the adjective μελάμπυγος, wittily applied by the latter to the former’s posterior, on which they, hanging upside-down from a pole, had a unique perspective. LSJ s.v. cites a passage from Eubulus, ἐγὼ δ’ εἰμὶ τῶν μελαμπύγων ἔτι, which is a more generalized expression of the instinctive Hellenic association of “swarthinness” with manhood.<sup>14</sup>

Now we come to one last quotation on the subject of λευκός, from Xenophon’s *Agésilas*—another passage, like those just referred to, *not* mentioned by Thompson. To encourage his troops to despise their Persian opponents, Agesilaus had some prisoners displayed naked. When his soldiers saw how *white* (λευκοῦς) and unfit they were (because they did not strip down and exercise in the open air, as Greek men regularly did), they decided that it would be “just like fighting women.”<sup>15</sup> All this should make one hesitant about accepting the term λευκός as appropriate for describing the “Mediterranean somatic norm.” This will be clearer if we simply list the principal categories of mankind for whom, in the eyes of the Greeks, “white” skin was an accepted and expected characteristic: women, barbarians living north of the Alps, the perilously ill, pasty-faced philosophers, and cowards.<sup>16</sup>

On the general issue of “black” and “white” in today’s lexicon: as with Sherlock Holmes’ “curious incident of the dog that did nothing” (from *Silver Blaze*), the most remarkable aspect of all this material is the *absence* of the kind of obsessive and corrosive concern with “whiteness” and “blackness” that so disfigures our modern world. Even though there are some positive connotations for both *albus* and *candidus* and negative ones for *ater* and *niger*, the Latin dictionaries have nothing remotely comparable to the devastating sets of definitions and connotations that are the focus of a memorable

<sup>14</sup> The main literary sources for the Kerkopes are listed at *LIMC* 6.1 (1992) 32. For Eubulus, cf. frag. 61 (Kock CAF, vol. 2, p. 185 = Kassel-Austin PCG, vol. 5, p. 224).

<sup>15</sup> Xen. *Agés.* 1.28 ὁρῶντες οὖν στρατιῶται λευκοῦς μὲν διὰ τὸ μηδέποτε ἐκδύεσθαι, πίονας δὲ καὶ ἀπόνους διὰ τὸ αἰετὶ ὀχημάτων εἶναι, ἐνόμισαν μηδὲν διοίσειν τὸν πόλεμον ἢ εἰ γυναῖξί δέοι μάχεσθαι.

<sup>16</sup> For philosophers, cf. Aristoph. *Nub.* 103, 112, 1171. For cowardice (in addition to better-known texts from Homer forward), cf. the first source cited by *LIMC* for the Kerkopes (above, n. 14), a fragment of Archilochus (*IEG* 1.178), on which M. L. West gathers a set of texts explicating the expression μή τευ μελαμπύγου τύχης. The reference is to a courageous and manly type of eagle, in contrast to the cowardly πύγαργος, about which bird the admittedly late Tzetzes (*in Lycophr.* 91) says ὁ δὲ δειλὸς ... λέγεται, ὡς λευκὴν ἔχων τὴν πυγὴν.

scene in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, in which the convict Malcolm is taken through the prison dictionary's entries for "black" and "white."<sup>17</sup>

Another, very telling example of the obviously loaded nature of the English word "black" comes from *Caught in the Web of Words*, the biography of the *Oxford English Dictionary* editor James Murray, as written by his granddaughter, Kathleen Murray. She quotes him, in a note dated to 1886, as dreading the prospect of dealing with "the terrible word Black and its derivatives."<sup>18</sup> It seems unlikely that he was thinking primarily (or even at all) of Africans—which shows why the word weighs so heavily when it is applied to a whole group of humans.

We have now seen several reasons why the Greeks and Romans do not describe themselves as a λευκὸν γένος or as *albi homines*—or as anything else because they had *no* regular word in their color vocabulary for themselves—and we can see that the concept of a distinct "white race" was not present in the ancient world. Two other, quite familiar cross-cultural oppositions help explain that fact. The classical Greeks divided humans into two classes, *Hellênes*, their word for themselves, and *barbaroi*, which originally meant "non-Greek-speaking foreigners," and they felt, with *some* justification, superior to *all* of them.<sup>19</sup> They were, if anything, "Hellenic Suprema-

<sup>17</sup> There is a close-up of the title page of the dictionary, and at the word "white" the camera tracks from the bottom of one page across the gutter to the top of the next. I found in the University of Texas' Perry-Castañeda Library a copy of the same edition, with an identical page-layout (*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* [Springfield, Mass.: Merriam 1945<sup>5</sup>, 1148f.]); the literal accuracy is all the more remarkable because this is *not* a detail from the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which is for the most part very carefully followed. There, famously, Malcolm says only that he worked through the dictionary from "aardvark" to the end (Haley 1966, 172). A letter to Mr. Lee asking for clarification has gone unanswered. Malcolm's own use of etymological information was sometimes rather less well informed: there are photos and texts indicating that he liked to link Greek *nekros* and English "negro" (cf. William Strickland, *Malcolm X: Make it Plain* [New York: Viking 1994], 118 and the accompanying quote from Benjamin Karim).

<sup>18</sup> Murray 1977, 255. For the continuing problems of "race relations," there is an endless volume of secondary literature—though not much of it focuses on the "white" side of the great divide. Cf., as noted by the referee, the classic works of Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1968) and William R. Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1960). More recent, to name only two, are K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann, *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996) and, on a more personal level, Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Race in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2000). The entire issue of *Discover* magazine for November 1994 is devoted to "the science of race" and is well worth consulting—but back issues are no longer available.

<sup>19</sup> For an exhaustive treatment of the development of the concept of "Greekness," cf. now Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2002).

cists," and they would have laughed at the idea of "Eurocentrism" if it meant linking themselves in any serious way with those barbarian transalpine tribes. When Caesar invaded Britain, the civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt were already several thousand years old, but the ancestors of today's Britons were still living in huts and painting their bodies blue with woad.

The other opposition was the status difference between free citizen and slave. Most Greek city-states restricted citizenship as severely as modern Kuwait, whereas the Romans gradually expanded their citizen-lists as they conquered Italy, the Mediterranean, and beyond. But *both* societies regarded slavery as an Equal Opportunity Employer: slaves could, and did, come from anywhere. Since the vast majority of them were Asian or European, there was *no* automatic connection in thought between being "black" and a slave—or being "white" and free.<sup>20</sup> In all this, classical antiquity seems like an alternative reality, where being "nonwhite" was actually the accepted norm, not an inferior deviation.

So, to return to my title question at last: when *did* "white people" become "white"? The first examples of "white race/people" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* are no earlier than the 1600s, when Europeans were deeply involved in African slave-trading; the same seems to be true of the corresponding terms in the major European languages. At that point, the use of what was by then a powerfully stigmatizing form of polarized terminology must have seemed comfortably appropriate. But that loaded valuation of the colors black and white, as observed by Snowden, had already begun in the late classical period, and we can see by the height of the medieval period the clear and explicit emergence of a prejudicial assignment of whole groups of humans to the diametrically opposed categories of "white"/Christian/good and "black"/Moslem/evil. For example, in the Middle English epic *The King of Tars*, the narrator says that when the Moslem Sultan converted from Islam to Christianity, a miraculous change took place: "his hide, that blac and lothely was, al white bicom, thurth Godes gras, and clere withouten blame" (ll. 928-30, original spellings slightly simplified).<sup>21</sup> This thematic contrast,

<sup>20</sup> The chromatic indistinguishability of most slaves is illustrated in two anecdotes. The "Old Oligarch" says that if someone were to strike a person in Athens, taking him for a slave, it might often turn out to be a citizen, since they look no better than the slaves (*Ath. Pol.* 1.10), and Seneca the Younger tells the story, unanchored in the historical record, that the Senate once proposed to have slaves wear distinctive clothing—until it was realized how dangerous it would be if the slaves could enumerate their masters (*De Clem.* 1.24.1). This circumstance made it easy for those fortunate enough to obtain freedom and citizen status to blend into the body politic without a continuing visible stigma—so different from the freed slaves of the Old South and their descendants.

<sup>21</sup> *The King of Tars*, ed. Judith Perryman (Heidelberg: Winter 1980), 98; cf. also the

based on supposed inherent racial-biological differences, is sounded repeatedly in the work; it is worth noting that although we clearly have European self-identification with “whiteness,” the “blacks” are not sub-Saharan Africans but “Moors” who are not slaves at all.

Other highly charged color terms also have an origin that is comparatively recent in cultural history. Thompson notes that the development of the phrase “yellow men” occurs only in the 19th century, and there is a long article by Alden T. Vaughan in the *American Historical Review* for 1982 which traces the history of the phrase “red man,” a disparaging expression for the Native American Indians which was almost completely absent from the Colonial Period, when they were often considered one of the “Lost Tribes” of Israel.<sup>22</sup>

But, as with unicorns, naming a thing does not cause it to exist, and there is an emerging consensus among geneticists, molecular biologists, and physical anthropologists, documented in the massive 1997 edition of Ashley Montagu’s classic, *Man’s Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*, that there are no distinct human races and that the simplistic thinking found in such phrases as “white race” should be abandoned. You may find the same opinion in, among many others, Michigan Professor Conrad Kottak’s introductory anthropology text, Michigan State biologist Alain Corcos’ *The Myth of Human Races*, the writings of geneticist Luigi Cavalli-Sforza, and the statements of the scientists involved in the recent decipherment of human DNA. One of our tasks as classicists is to remind today’s students—and the public at large—that, even though some people cling with irrational fervor and violence to the notion of a “white race,” it is an idea which has no historical or scientific basis—and one which Caesar & Co. didn’t need at all.

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bizarre tale of cannibalism in the Middle English romance *Richard Coeur de Lyon*, where King Richard twice eats a “black” Saracen, on which episode there is an acute discussion in Geraldine Heng’s “The Romance of England: *Richard Coeur de Lyon*, Saracens, Jews, and the Politics of Race and Nation,” in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Cohen (New York: St Martin’s Press 2000), 135-171, esp. 140-42 and note 7. These references were provided, along with a great quantity of other texts, by Professor Heng, Director of the Medieval Studies Program at UT Austin; without her assistance, this part of the paper would have been seriously deficient. I should also thank UT’s Tom Palaima, whose many interdisciplinary interests led him to put us in touch with each other.

<sup>22</sup> I thank my former UIC colleague Michael Alexander for bringing this article to my attention.

## Addendum

The bibliography on this topic could be expanded indefinitely, but two items are especially worthy of notice; the first was culpably omitted from the original MS, the second became available to me only after it was submitted. Alan Cameron's "Black and White: A Note on Ancient Nicknames," *AJP* 119 (1998) 113-117, has some important material bearing on such supplementary descriptive "names" as μέλας, λευκός, Niger, and Rufus. He says that Catullus 93 "has not always been properly understood" and quotes with approval W. Kroll's comment, "a proverbial phrase ... that has nothing whatever to do with Caesar's character or complexion." However, he misses the opportunity to draw the larger conclusion that Greek and Roman males did not think of themselves as λευκός or *albus* and that they lacked the "white race" concept. Gay L. Byron's new book, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (London/New York: Routledge 2002), has a lengthy treatment of color issues with extensive references to modern secondary literature—but she too does not address the absence of "whiteness."

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