Challenging the Modern Comparison: A New Approach to Studying Racial Formations in Roman Society

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This thesis explores how to conceptualize and analyze the racial system of Ancient Roman society. Evaluating the broad range of scholarly theory on the topic and using ethnographic accounts from Roman authors writing in Latin between 88 BCE and 117 CE, I conclude that 1) racial distinction was a factor in Roman ideology that was heavily influenced by imperial expansion, and 2) the Roman system of racialization was subject to its own ideology and Latin terminology, which cannot and should not be interpreted according to modern ideological constructs of race.
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**Introduction**

Race and ethnicity, much like water and air, are all around us...the only way to confront this demon is to continually shed light upon it...Discrete episodes must be approached over time if we are to identify racial periods, systems and processes.¹

These observations by Rodney Coates aptly summarize the essence of this paper; the three main divisions of the present study can be identified with each of these thoughts. Race and ethnicity are all around us, and Part I of this paper aims to clarify these concepts and our approach to studying them in the ancient Roman world. By analyzing Roman literary accounts in Part II, it is hoped that such light will be said, as Coates encourages. Lastly, by tracing observations across time in Part III, evidence is put into perspective in order to gain an idea of the racial system at play in ancient Roman society.

**Objectives**

This study concerns itself with perceptions of race in ancient Roman ideology. There are two essential ways in which the term “race”² is used in the English language. In the first, “race” is an ideological construct according to which humans categorize each other, as seen in the sentence “race remains a pervasive force in Western society.” This usage refers to an abstract concept of differentiating groups of people. The second way is as a classifying term used in the modern day to denote a level of this construct, as seen in the sentence “as what race do you identify?” This usage refers to a specific label within the larger ideological

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² In the identity sense, not the competition sense.
construct of difference. In this paper, I analyze race in the former sense, exploring the
cultural conceptualization of racial difference in the ancient Roman perspective.
Accordingly, my goal is not to delineate the so-called “races” in the Roman Empire, for this
application of the term (an example of the latter usage) would require me to
anachronistically apply a modern level of identity “race” onto the ancient Roman construct.
This label would connote modern concern for skin color along with many other factors
inappropriate to the Roman racial scene. Furthermore, it would bias our modern
understanding to mirror a modern one. Rather than produce such an anachronistic and
therefore misleading list, I seek to discern what levels of identity Romans did employ in
their ideological construct of racial categorization.

No doubt exacerbated by the above ambiguity of the word, “race” is an immensely
controversial term in scholarly discourse on the ancient Mediterranean, one from which
many shy. Indeed, a number of scholars deny its very applicability to the ancient world.³
Some denounce its use as a concept at all.⁴ Conversely, yet others offer staunch views of
classical antiquity as the root of our modern racial system.⁵ While my usage of the term will
be treated in much more detail later in a larger discussion of terminology, it is perhaps
useful to know from the start that I use the term “race” as opposed to other categorical
delineations such as “ethnicity” or “cultural identity” among which I draw contrast, but
rather summarily in place of them. As such, for the time being, use of the term in this paper

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³ See for example Cravins (1997).
⁵ Ironically, also Isaac (2004).
can be understood to mean the system according to which Othered persons were categorized in the Roman mind.

In approaching this broad and weighty subject, two main questions largely guided the course of my research: how formed was a system of racialization in the Roman literary mind, and what was the structure of this racial system? And can a correlation be seen between the prejudicial views projected by Romans—views which today might be understood as ‘racist’—and Rome’s imperial expansion? The first question seeks to understand the cultural constructions of society and the world at large to which Roman subscribed, that is, the ways in which they categorized people both into groups and as separate beings from themselves. It also aims to explore the ways that Romans projected prejudices by generalizing these groups. In short, I want to understand how Romans conceived of the many peoples they encountered and how they located themselves amongst them. The second question involves the evolutions that naturally and obviously occurred in Roman views of individual peoples and Rome’s own role within the Mediterranean. This query aims to account for such ideological change by understanding the evolving social and political breadth of the expanding empire.

Like the work of Benjamin Isaac, whose book *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* was both most frequently recommended to me during the course of my research and most thought-provoking, this study does not account for the actual experiences of Othered groups in Roman society. Rather, it centers upon the views of Others constructed and projected by Romans, as preserved in their extant literature. While Isaac does not give explanation, this focus is more feasible, because we cannot know the actual treatment of

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6 Isaac, ibid.
certain groups on a large scale. It is difficult to ascertain from literary accounts much besides a few personal examples. While legal texts may shed light on the official status of certain groups and indeed histories are rife with catalogues of economic roles of various cities, we have nothing extant akin to the modern survey or social study to indicate the everyday experience of provincials or foreigners in Rome. Similarly, because much of what sources we have originate from Romans themselves, we can gain a much richer understanding of the way Romans thought about, say, Gauls and Germans, than the way Gauls or Germans were treated (or even felt they were treated) by Romans.

In addition to being conscious of the limits of investigation, this study is intended to be sensitive to the civilization, chronology, and historical context of the evidence explored. Far too many books and articles treating race, ethnicity, and identity in the classical world lump together Greeks and Romans. While for centuries scholars have thought of these two civilizations as a pair, a socio-historical study must account for the difference in cultural atmosphere and worldview between Greek and Roman civilizations. To be sure, not every individual within the Roman Empire, let alone all of Roman history or, even worse, all of Greek and Roman civilization, felt and thought the same way. For this reason, I have chosen to focus on Roman evidence, to the exclusion of Greek material, although this was certainly highly influential on the ideologies expressed in the Roman literature. This disregard for cultural difference on the part of scholars has been exacerbated by an accompanying indifference to temporal significance; so often in these scholarly works, a thematic topic may be supported by evidence from fifth-century Athens, directly followed by a passage

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7 For example, Pliny consistently identifies location in his *Historiae Naturalis* along a formulaic spectrum of rights and relation to Rome.
from St. Augustine, with no indication of how one source relates to another.\textsuperscript{8} The implication of such arrangements seems to be that the vast range of thought in all of Greek and Roman literature can be generalized into one conception of the “classical view,” a generalization that is rather ironic in treatises on prejudice. Instead, this thesis approaches material chronologically. Contemporary historical events are also considered to provide context to the otherwise isolated accounts. In this way, a better understanding of not only the complexity, but also the evolution, of ideology can be achieved.

**Parameters**

As the breadth of the topic is already quite extensive in itself, it was especially necessary to limit the scope of this project. My study begins with the extension of rights to Italians in 88 BCE. This proved to be a much more desirable starting point, logically, as it seeks to bypass the complications inherent in “Roman” identity itself, a topic deserving of a study of its own.\textsuperscript{9} Since my objective targets the study of Roman racism against Others and not internal Roman racism—Sabine versus Etruscan lineage, e.g.—it seemed appropriate to begin with the establishment of the Italian center of the empire. This granting of rights to all Italian peoples sets up Italy as the privileged center to the Roman Empire, a center from which Roman authors expressed their views of the peoples at their periphery.

A starting date established, the next task was to pinpoint a logical year at which to end this investigation. That year is 117 CE, the year in which the Emperor Hadrian terminated the expansionist policy of the Empire, a logical choice for an investigation that seeks to explore the connection between racial ideology and imperial expansion. This is not

\textsuperscript{8} This sort of presentation can be found in Jahoda (1999).

\textsuperscript{9} These issues would have complicated a study beginning at an earlier date, e.g., the achievement of Roman supremacy over the Mediterranean after the defeat of Carthage.
to suggest that racial views experienced an immediate impact from conquest and expansion, nor that racist thought did not persist past the point of expansion, nor even that the subsequent alterations to the borders of the Roman Empire after the days of Hadrian are not worth equal consideration. This period from 88 BCE to 117 CE simply marks what appears to be the most apt ideological setting in which to pursue a study with these objectives—a time in which the Roman center actively pursued expansionism and conquest of its peripheries. It should also be noted that the temporal scope of 88 BCE to 117 CE does not refer to the content of the literature I will look to for evidence, but rather the dates for the lifetime and authorship of the authors, as it is the views they present that I am analyzing as indications of the ideologies prevalent in Rome during their time.

While the corpus of extant Roman authors is quite extensive, I have found it most practical to limit my view to the treatments of foreign peoples rendered in historical and geographic works. Originally I had intended to address these sources in addition to the many instances of racist slights and slurs that have been brought to my attention throughout my readings. After extensively deliberating how best to incorporate these while preserving an awareness of chronology and context, since the intent in such remarks differ greatly from that behind a history or geography, I ultimately decided to omit them. While such accounts lend important evidence of views some Romans did have, ethnographically-rich accounts by Roman historians and geographers not only indicate Roman views, but also give a sense of the authors’ worldview and cultural construct of the ways humans differ on more than an individual scale.
Structure

As indicated in the discussion of Rodney Coates’ quotation, three core sections comprise this study. The first is a reassessment of the way in which we should approach the study of race in antiquity, the conclusions of which largely informed my decisions regarding method and scope. This reassessment itself consists of three discussions. First of these is a tracing of themes in the secondary scholarship of roughly the last century concerned with topics of race, ethnicity, and cultural identity in the ancient world. I explore how the focus of such scholarship has changed with an eye to the societal influences that shaped modern thought on the matter. Certain periods and decades feature similar ways of viewing phenomena of race and ethnicity in Greece and Rome. I not only critique methods and conclusions, but also analyze the progresses of modern perceptions of the classical world. The second factor in this reassessment looks beyond the work of classicists, social historians, archaeologists, and other students of the ancient world, providing a similar literature review but of the study of race, ethnicity, and identity itself. This scholarship originates primarily from sociologists and anthropologists, and its focus is upon the definitions of these concepts and the valuations of them as constructs helpful to understanding human experience. I not only utilize these various thoughts and opinions on the nature of race to inform my understanding of race, but also offer them as helpful and instrumental tools in approaching a study that investigates social and ideological thought. After and enriched by these two literary reviews of scholarship, I offer a discussion of relevant terminology, making clear the meanings which I am attributing to words such as “race,” so that even if my readers do not agree with my definitions, they may at least understand my usage of terms.
The second main section is arguably the most important, namely the evidence. It is the exploration of the ethnographically-rich accounts of foreign peoples by Roman historians and geographers who lived and wrote in Latin between 88 BCE and 117 CE. The list includes Sallust’s *Bellum Iugurthinum*, Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico*, Pomponius Mela’s *Chorographia*, Pliny the Elder’s *Historia Naturalis*, and Tacitus’ *Germania*.\(^\text{10}\) I address each author individually, attempting to take into account factors such as contemporary events, political motivations, audience, and the like. I consider aspects of these works and their treatises on Other peoples: the range and types of issues discussed; an emphasis on or importance of physical appearances; the creation of a link between physical attributes and mental faculties or behavior; the author’s use of categorizational labels, such as *gens*; the author’s seeming degree of judgment and use of words such as *barbarus*. By considering these factors, I hope to unearth the relative position of peoples with respect to each other and to Romans within Roman thought, to shed light on how racialized foreigners become, and to gain an understanding of Roman worldview and processes of racial formation.\(^\text{11}\)

Lastly, my final section will attempt to sort out all the evidence and view it with an eye to the evolution of ideology. To answer my guiding research questions, I analyze the literary material in three ways. First, I address the relative perceptions of individual peoples and how they change over time. This analysis seeks to rectify the change in perspective with changing borders of the empire and the social ramifications of expansion. The second method of analysis looks at how the worldview of the Roman people as superior evolves with the empire. Third, I take a diachronic view of the categorizational

\(^{10}\) A fuller explanation of these choices is provided in Part II, however, I will state here Livy should have been included.

\(^{11}\) Any translations presented of the Latin are my own.
diction employed by authors to see how certain words evolve in meaning and intimate a 
more structured conception of a racial system. In other words, I attempt to analyze the 
vocabulary of the authors as a means to unearth racial formation processes at work in 
Roman culture across the period of this study.

By the end of this work, I hope to have shown that while, yes, ancient Rome did not 
experience the same forms of racial formations as modern Western nations, it clearly had 
its own systems of understanding human difference, which I am choosing to call a “racial 
system.” The stubborn need to compare ancient Roman social systems with our own has 
resulted in the adoption of polarized extremes, neither of which can fully account for the 
ancient reality; according to these extremes, either Romans maintained nothing resembling 
racist thought or they established the very roots of our modern racism. Counterexamples 
can be found for both of these views. We must realize that a study which compares 
antiquity to the modern day in order to appeal to issues of modern relevancy and 
importance runs the risk of distorting the ancient evidence. Rather than trying to classify 
how racist Rome was compared to modern sentiments, we should seek to understand the 
social constructs that clearly and necessarily existed within Roman culture as phenomena 
within a larger intellectual and ideological framework that grew and evolved, just as 
modern ideology grows and evolves.

A Note about Audience

Why is all this important, and who cares? These are complex questions, yet ones for 
which my answers are quite simple. In my opinion, it is important to understand the 
construction of racial identity in Roman ideology, because such an understanding will shed 
light on all areas of social investigation. Such understanding is obviously, then, most
important to classicists, ancient historians, archaeologists, and other scholars of the ancient Mediterranean. Therefore, it is important to know, because we want to know; and it is important to those who want to know.

Among the scholars who acknowledge the presence of racist and prejudicial thought in ancient Roman society, it has been a common trend to attribute their studies to a far greater purpose and a far wider audience than I have done. Gustav Jahoda, in his work on prejudicial imagery entitled *Images of Savages: Ancient roots of modern prejudice in western culture*,\(^\text{12}\) begins with an anecdote of witnessing racial sentiments among his academic professional peers. He makes clear that his goal, in writing his book, is to explain the recurring characterizations in modern racist sentiment by exploring the history of these concepts from ancient western civilization, looking in particular at the psychological significance of such visualizations.\(^\text{13}\) Thus, his book has a view to the present, and he seems to imply its importance to overcoming racist ideals in the modern day. He returns to this theme again in his conclusion, confirming his aim to promote social change in the present by shedding light on racialized images of the past and also highlighting the progressive reduction of racist thought over time.\(^\text{14}\)

In a similar vein, Benjamin Isaac’s book, already mentioned, also looks towards the present in motivation. Isaac justifies the significance of his study thus:

> since racism, ethnic prejudice, and xenophobia are so widespread in our times and have played such a dominant role in recent history, it is obviously important to understand how these phenomena developed, as attitudes of mind and intellectual concepts.\(^\text{15}\)


\(^{13}\) Ibid., xi.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 248.

\(^{15}\) Isaac, 1.
Like Jahoda, Isaac sees a parallel and causal link between the racial prejudices evident in ancient classical society and those of our modern day. Thus, both scholars’ valuation of their work lies in its usefulness to solving modern social problems. Isaac later says,

   it is my hope that all those who care about antecedents of the problems we have faced over the past century and are still facing would find it [his book] instructive...I hope the book will also be of use to contemporary manifestations of discrimination, anti-semitism, and group hatred.\(^\text{16}\)

He here indicates his audience as encompassing any and all proponents of social change as regards racism in modern society.

While I immensely respect the agendas of both authors and fully acknowledge that understanding is a crucial step in resolving any problem, I cannot help but feel that these applications, while feasible and sensible, are overly ambitious. Both of these authors disclose their own social locations,\(^\text{17}\) according to which each seems to identify with targets of a form of racial prejudice in our modern world. While I cannot say whether these experiences are the basis for wishing their studies to be so directly applicable to solving our contemporary world’s woes, I can say that I think my lack of identification with being such a target\(^\text{18}\) may be a factor in my lack of faith in a direct application to modern society. I cannot imagine that modern sociologists, anthropologists, or social justice workers will utilize a treatise on ancient perceptions of race to shed light on his or her next move. I expect that such works, and indeed this study, will be of most interest to scholars of ancient Rome, and that its use derives from promoting a better understanding of Roman ideological and sociological constructions within their own cultural framework. I do agree that a better

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 3.
\(^{17}\) Jahoda describes his stay as a professor in South Africa encountering racism among his white colleagues (p. xi), while Isaac mentions the prejudice he faced growing up as a Jew in post-World War II Amsterdam, (p. 51).
\(^{18}\) Although I, like most of us, have witnessed enough displays of prejudice and racism.
understanding of the Roman situation may yield more informed comparisons between past and present, but this is neither my goal nor my motivation. Indeed, the issue I take with the form of such comparisons will be discussed in my survey of scholarship in section two.

Suffice it to say, this study is intended to shed light on Roman society for those for whom Roman society is an interest.
Part I: A Reassessment

1.1 Scholarly Approaches to the Study of Race in Antiquity

This review of the scholarship on the topics of race, racism, and the many other labels applied to similar and related concepts in antiquity is meant to serve two main functions. First, it provides a sampling of the many diverse views on these topics and the varied approaches that have been taken in such studies. This is helpful not only in order to understand the complexity of the subject, but also to put into perspective my own views and approaches. Secondly, and perhaps more self-serving, it allows me to evaluate a number of studies that have been conducted thus far, pinpointing which methods I found most effective and which conclusions most compelling, in order to make my own views clear and to justify my own methodology.

Nationalism and Ethnic Purity

Some of the ideology behind Nazi Germany provides a haunting example of the possibilities of combining a unique construction of racial difference with an interpretation of ancient Roman sources. Indeed, Christopher Krebs, as the title of his 2011 book on the influence of the *Germania* upon the Third Reich suggests, considers Tacitus’ treatise on the ancient Germans “a most dangerous book.” Since this period of intellectual history in the Western world, that is the years leading up to and through the Second World War,

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19 *A Most Dangerous Book: Tacitus’ Germania from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co.:2011).
witnessed much in the way of both racial theory and reinterpretation of ancient Rome, it provides an apt place to begin a review of scholarship on racial issues in the classical world.

Early articles of the Twentieth Century focus on societal issues of interest in the contemporary world wars. Just as they have been rampant in certain modern nations, topics of nationalism, ethnic and cultural purity, and concern over the dilution of such unity by the influx of diverse peoples served as the foci of studies of the ancient Greek and Roman racial scene. The emphasis on nationalism in particular in such studies perhaps originated from its crucial growth in the aftermath of World War I and its importance as a factor leading to World War II. Scholars of the ancient world during these decades imposed similar concerns for nationalistic unity onto their studies of ancient Rome, seeking to explain the collapse of the Roman Empire on these terms. Tenney Frank’s 1916 article “Race Mixture in the Roman Empire” posits just such a stance, charging the racial shift from the original “Roman” stock of Rome to an unidentified “different race” as the reason for imperial dissolution. Articulated in his own words, “but what lay behind and constantly reacted upon all such causes of Rome’s disintegration was, after all, to a considerable extent, the fact that the people who built Rome had given way to a different race.” In Frank’s eyes, it was largely the extinction of the original Italian families over time that weakened the values and discipline of the old regime and its coincident Roman grandeur. “Oriental blood,” he claims, ran through as much as 90% of “free plebeians on the streets of Rome” in the times of Juvenal and Tacitus. It was presumably this sort of dilution of pure Roman blood that led to the Empire’s demise. It is important to understand Frank’s

21 Ibid., 705.
22 Ibid., 690.
theories as the product of contemporary ideology. While Frank's views, understandably controversial to subsequent generations, have been rebuked and addressed many times, it is enough for the purposes of this study to note his assumption of the importance of racial difference and his correlation of racial impurity and the collapse of the empire. He imposed issues at hand in the modern world onto his assessment of the ancient.

A similar line of reasoning is taken by Clifford Moore in his 1917 study “The Decay of Nationalism under the Roman Empire.” While he does acknowledge the inherent complications of diversity, stating, “the difficulties which racial diversity causes are only well too known to us from our own country,” Moore blames more the “native” Romans rather than the foreigners for national decline. In illustration, he draws a sharp contrast between the patriotism of Cicero, Virgil, and Horace and the disillusionment with Rome given voice in the writings of authors like Tacitus. He goes on to attribute this decline in patriotic sentiment to a devaluation of citizens’ political power during the Empire. This conclusion that the propensity for self-criticism indicates a lack of patriotism, however, does not follow. Cannot a heightened sense of security and pride in one’s nation also lead an author to voice criticisms of behavior he thinks unworthy?

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24 Ibid., 33. Moore, born in Massachusetts only one year after the abolition of slavery by the Thirteenth Amendment, refers here to the United States.
25 Ibid., 32. P. A. Brunt later counters this view of the devaluation of citizenship, claiming that despite Caracalla’s granting of citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Empire in the third century CE, the new citizenship did not bestow equal rights upon all. P. A. Brunt, “Reflections on British and Roman Imperialism,” Comparative Studies in Society and History 7.3 (Apr., 1965), 274.
26 To make an analogy to the modern U.S., it would be foolish to assume that the internally aimed satire expressed on popular late night television series such as Saturday Night Live is mutually exclusive with patriotic sentiment; one need only look at celebrations on the Fourth of July to understand that patriotism and self-awareness and criticism can exist symbiotically.
concerns himself with much of the same issues as Frank, although leading to alternative
direction and explication.

Moving slightly beyond the terms of race, C. E. van Sickle’s 1930 “Particularism in
the Roman Empire during the Military Anarchy”\(^{27}\) agrees that a multiplicity of cultural units
may have attributed to the disintegration of the Empire, yet seeks to account for this along
the terms of “particularism”—the fracturing of society into local units rather than a
cohesive national one. Although van Sickle seems to imply that such units were centered
around racial groups, the issue is one of political semantics and not inherent racial worth.
Thus, in this way, he builds upon Frank’s and Moore’s theories, but cites a lack of social and
political cohesion in the place of any inherent correlation between nobility and the Roman
“race,” as was implied by Frank. William Salant (1938) rounds out this scholarly scene by
positing that the Roman Empire stifled scientific innovation as its cultural makeup
declined, similarly leading to collapse.\(^{28}\) Thus, in the early decades of the Twentieth
Century, scholars of the ancient world were concerned with nationalism and racial
diversity, reflecting contemporary societal issues.

·Ideological Upheaval and Paradigmatic Shift·

By the mid-1960s, many of these views and paradigms had been turned on their
head, no doubt correlated with the new ideologies of the social movements of the era. P. A.
Brunt in his 1965 article “Reflections on British and Roman Imperialism,”\(^{29}\) focuses on the

\(^{27}\) C. E. van Sickle, “Particularism in the Roman Empire during the Military Anarchy,” \textit{The American Journal of
Philology} 51.4 (1930), 343-57.

\(^{28}\) William Salant, “Science and Society in Ancient Rome,” \textit{The Scientific Monthly} 47.6 (Dec., 1938), 525-535.

\(^{29}\) P. A. Brunt, “Reflections on British and Roman Imperialism,” \textit{Comparative Studies in Society and History} 7.3 (Apr.,
1965), 267-88.
unity of Rome despite its diversity and points out the “barbarity” the Romans brought to the peoples they conquered. Brunt sees multiple levels of identity (though he does not utilize this term) at work within the Empire, according to which there was “a genuine sentiment of unity and loyalty among all the peoples.” He rationalizes that it was in the best interest of the various peoples in the Empire to maintain unity, and that Rome’s disintegration was lamented by these groups, not celebrated. He attributes the collapse of the Empire to other factors, his aim being not to identify those factors, but to shed light on the irrelevance of ethnic and racial diversity to the decline. He therefore rebuts the previous views expressed in the 1910s and 1930s.

Introducing a new wave in scholarship on race in antiquity, Frank Snowden (1970) and Meyer Reinhold (1971) in the early 1970s argued that racial prejudice was absent from ancient Roman society, a stance likely unfathomable to the scholars of the early century concerned with race-mixing. Snowden’s first book on the subject, *Blacks in Antiquity*, came highly recommended in the course of my research. Snowden initiated and championed the stance that color prejudice and racism were not phenomena within ancient ideology. While considerations were made previously of the racial makeup of Rome and its influence on the Empire’s functionality, Snowden, following the example of A. N. Sherwin-White, ushered in an era of the study of racism in antiquity. While Snowden’s

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30 As example, he specifies gladiatorial games brought to the Greek world, ibid., 269.
31 Ibid., 267.
discourse on the “true Negro” and method of profiling “Blacks”\textsuperscript{35} in antiquity by modern stereotypes may strike the modern reader as “dated” or “offensive,” these were yet again the products of contemporary anthropological consensus. What is important to note is Snowden’s conclusion that “Romans attached no special stigma to color...and developed no special racial theory about the inferiority of darker people qua darker people.”\textsuperscript{36} He is one of the earliest and most fervent proponents of this view, and therefore I may make reference to this stance as the “Snowden camp.” Reinhold upholds Snowden’s view. The focus of Reinhold’s study is not race, but rather the use and abuse of status symbols, particularly their illegal usurpation. In the course of his paper, however, Reinhold explains that Rome was “in general” free of ethnic and racial prejudice,\textsuperscript{37} signaling the immediate impact of Snowden’s perspective. Theory on race in antiquity had now reversed from an imposition of modern issues on the social landscape of ancient Rome to an assertion that the ancient situation was in fact the opposite of the modern.

Much like Snowden, Herbert J. Foster also challenged the status quo on modern assumptions of Blacks in antiquity in his 1974 article, “The Ethnicity of the Ancient Egyptians.”\textsuperscript{38} Foster’s study sought to resolve the “historical controversy”\textsuperscript{39} surrounding the ethnicity of the ancient Egyptians by positing that Black Africans lived in all levels of Egyptian society and therefore necessarily accounted for part of ancient Egyptian ethnic makeup. While I respect his conclusions, I take issue with Foster’s very objective. Foster has the insight to characterize this concern over the Blackness of Egyptians that had

\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, many of the phenotypic characteristics used by Snowden to assert the Blackness of ancient images are also consistent with the traditional image of the cherub found in many Renaissance paintings.

\textsuperscript{36} Snowden, ibid., 176.

\textsuperscript{37} Reinhold, 275.


\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 176.
plagued a number of centuries of Western thought as “symptomatic of the nature of race relations at given points in history.” In other words, he recognizes at some level that the very question is anachronistic. Yet his follow-up claim that Black Africans would have been living in Egyptian society and therefore deserve some level of credit for Egyptian achievement seems to negate the insight of his observation. He was simply playing into the concern for the historical “worthiness” of “Blacks,” rather than realizing that the category “Blacks” is a modern cultural construct and would not have conveyed a societal meaning relevant to the ancient Egyptians. Nevertheless, we can see that the 1970s saw a large concern for the position of Blacks in the ancient Mediterranean and a refutation of racist sentiment in antiquity.

Transitional Period

The following decade of scholarship did not witness so much a surge in new theory and perspectives as a gradual shift. There seems to be a transitional period in the scholarship on the subject during the 1980s, embracing some of this challenging tone while shifting focal points to themes that would emerge more fully in the following decade. In his 1983 Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient Views of Blacks, Frank Snowden softened some of the categorizations of human types he presented in his previous work and began to distance himself from belief in anthropological classifications of race as a scientific system. He utilized the label “Black” more and “Negroid” less. His theory progressed in that he realized the separation between ancient and modern thinking in discussing features that today would be considered “black.” Snowden’s verdicts seem to allow more flexibility

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40 Ibid.
42 Snowden, 1983, 17.
than previously. He notes "the absence of a bitter antagonism toward Blacks in the ancient world" and "nothing comparable to the virulent color prejudice of modern times." These pronouncements seem fairly tame readings on the basis of the ancient evidence. By appealing to comparison with the modern day, they avoid absolutes that might render his theory fallacious. Roman prejudice simply is not comparable with modern prejudice. Thus, while still presenting the same revolutionary view, Snowden became less absolute and confrontational in his approach.

Likewise, Lukas de Blois maintained some of the challenging tone of the ‘70s in looking at the barbarity of Romans, like Brunt, but also foreshadowed the focus on “identity” that became more prominent in the 1990s and 2000s. De Blois’ 1984 article “The Third Century Crisis and the Greek Elite in the Roman Empire” turned the metaphorical table by analyzing Greek views of Romans as flawed, corrupt, and degenerate. This idea hearkens back to Brunt’s observation of the barbarity inherent in gladiatorial shows, which Romans brought to peoples and territories. Just so, de Blois showed how a number of Roman behaviors were interpreted in Greek culture as barbaric. Furthermore, de Blois stressed the maintenance of Greek cultural identity, even through assimilation to the Roman Empire and Roman cultural norms. This approach evidences the beginning of a focus on “identity” as a level of personal definition within society, a focus which becomes much more prominent in the study of race in antiquity as we proceed more closely to the present.

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43 Ibid., vii.
44 Ibid., 63.
45 *Historia* 33.3, 358-77.
46 Brunt, ibid.
47 de Blois, ibid., 360.
These concerns for more evaluative, culturally-aware, and identity-based studies developed throughout the subsequent decade. Gary B. Miles (1990) and Jochen Martin (1995) adhered to political science approaches, putting discussions of race on a temporary back-burner. Miles’ “Roman and Modern Imperialism: A Reassessment” brought back the old issue of nationalism, but this time pivoting it towards the opposite conclusion. Rather than the previous argument that ethnic-based unities undermined overall Roman nationalism, Miles argued that an ethnic-based nationalistic uprisings did not occur, obviating the need to impose imperial domination, and ultimately leading to disintegration of Roman cohesiveness. In other words, the cooperation of pacified peoples led to Roman disintegration, because Rome did not need to unite to quell rebellion. Rome is here defined as a “single territorial state” in lieu of a conglomeration of many different cultural states. In this way, political semantics are presented as justifications for imperial demise, subverting the discussion of diversity as a factor in collapse. Martin similarly looked to issues of political and social agency in an explanation of the interworkings of Roman expansion.

George G. Cravins once again brought race back into the limelight, actualizing the absence noted among Miles and Martin by challenging its use as a construct. Cravins’ 1997 article “'Race' as a Scientific and Organizational Construct: A Critique” fulfilled the claims expressed by Snowden that our conception of race developed much later in history than the classical civilizations. Like Snowden’s distancing of himself from race as a scientific fact, Cravins articulates, “race is meaningless, as it has long lost its significance on purely

\[\text{Ibid., 632.}\]
\[\text{GeoJournal 41.3 (Mar., 1997), 233-43.}\]
scientific grounds.”50 While this assessment is accurate as regards a scientific basis for racial categories, it is difficult to label race meaningless when it is a cultural construct that plays such an influential role in society. It is clearly appropriate to recognize race’s form as culturally constructed, but it goes too far to say it has no meaning; indeed, “race” holds much meaning for many people. Furthermore, Cravins’ line of reasoning comes off as more than a little confusing. He begins his study by denouncing any traces of racialism in the ancient Mediterranean, only then to catalogue such traces. He concludes that these traces are not enough to constitute a racially-charged society such as exists in modernity. I cannot, however, conceive of why it is so revolutionary for scholars to point out that ancient peoples thought differently from modern peoples, nor on the basis of this observation to count as inconsequential these ancient peoples’ own racial formations.

·The Modern Spectrum·

With the turn of the century, scholarship became more diversified and challenging of race as a scholarly subject. One example of this was the preference for “identity” studies in lieu of investigations of the now-controversial “race.” Understandably, scholarship of the ancient world in the last decade and a half presents much concern over the complications of studying race—at all, but especially in antiquity. Additionally, stronger views have emerged that challenge the foundations of the “racism” study initiated by Snowden; despite previous attestations that ancient systems of prejudice were nothing like those of the modern day, scholars begin to assert that antiquity planted the very seeds of modern racist sentiment.

50 Cravins, ibid., 233.
Gustav Jahoda’s 1999 *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture* is an early example of this new counter-view. In this volume, Jahoda surveys the repeated appearance of common stereotypical images throughout time to promote understanding of their current incarnations. In this process, he jumps across time periods and covers material by themes, thereby obscuring the precise connections or level of influence among materials. Although Jahoda does not explicitly articulate the prejudicial material he analyzes as racism, his connection of ancient prejudice to modern prejudice brings his work very close to the discourse on racism. Moreover, his self-stated motive to explain the characterizations evident in modern racism strengthens his relevancy to the scholarly perception of race and racism in antiquity. Contrary to what the title may seem to suggest, the bulk of Jahoda’s study is actually not ancient material; while Jahoda begins his study with Pliny’s presentation of unusual peoples encountered by the Romans, he quickly jumps through late antiquity to conceptions of Others during the Middle Ages. The connection between such conceptions and Pliny is only implied. Furthermore, he does not even attempt to account for these initial Plinian images within the cultural framework of Roman society. Thus, at best he shows a continuity of similar thoughts, but fails to evidence either the actual sowing of prejudicial “roots” or the flourishing of those roots into more formed prejudices.

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52 He introduces the book with an initial subheading “The ‘monstrous’ or ‘Plinian’ races” and by the end of the first page has leapt to an account of an eleventh century bishop.
Just two years later, Charles Orser, in his introduction to *Race and the Archaeology of Identity*,\(^5^3\) expounds upon the difficulties of studying race, yet nevertheless implies it is an endeavor that should be undertaken. As he articulates,

> the subject of race figures prominently in the litany of difficult issues that confront modern nations across the world today, and our personal experiences with the complexities, contradictions, and vagaries of race convince us that archaeologists will face profound difficulties when attempting any analysis of race.\(^5^4\)

Here Orser addresses the common objection to exploring race in the past and touches upon the difficulty of approaching such a study. As his tone suggests, however, this is perhaps only an assumption, based upon modern discomfort with the term. Although we may convince ourselves that the task is too daunting, nonetheless, race (or whatever one prefers to call it) remains an important and serious subject for study.

Intensifying Jahoda’s claims and embodying Orser’s observations, Benjamin Isaac (2004) eschews the discussion of race and instead argues for *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*.\(^5^5\) Denying the very existence of “race,” Isaac identifies what he calls “proto-racism” in ancient Greek and Roman literature, which he sees as the roots of the modern racism that ultimately took shape in the eighteenth century. Isaac’s study range incorporates all Greek and Roman literature from the fifth century BCE to late antiquity and the advent of the Middle Ages, a study much too broad to engender any appreciation of the specific cultural systems covered. Isaac draws distinctions between xenophobia, ethnic prejudice and racism, distinctions which seem arbitrary and confused, and he asserts the presence of early forms of racist thought in classical literature. His primary concern, thus, is

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\(^5^4\) Ibid., 1.

to make a point about ancient societies’ relation to modern ones, rather than to study ancient society on its own terms. He sees the dissension of other scholars as stemming from a desire to preserve the image of Greco-Roman foundations of “liberty” and “constitutionalism,” a desire which we can only hope Isaac exaggerates.

Studies by Ralph W. Mathisen (2006 and 2009), Martin Pitts (2007), and Francesco de Angelis (2009) return to the focus on identity as social locator in ancient society instead of race. Both works by Mathisen focus on the rights of so-called barbarians within the Roman world. In the first, carefully avoiding the term “race,” he accounts for the different levels on which persons in Rome could identify—“various manifestations of citizenship—civic, provincial, religious, and ethnic—that could create different kinds of personal and legal identities and interact in different ways.” He implies throughout the articles that legal inequalities disadvantaged foreigners within the Empire. While admittedly multiple means of classification and levels of identification existed in Roman society, the correlation between non-native groups in Rome and inequality suggests a racialized tenet of civic structure. Where Mathisen silently excludes racial considerations, Martin Pitts openly posits a need to broaden such considerations through identity studies. He criticizes the methodology of identity studies of the 1990s and exhorts, “in order to remain a valid research theme, we must study identity holistically rather than focus solely on the ethnic dimensions.” Thus, Pitts would not only condone Mathisen’s approach of

56 Ibid., 4.
58 “The Emperor’s New Clothes? The Utility of Identity in Roman Archaeology,” American Journal of Archaeology 111.4 (Oct., 2007), 693-713.
60 Mathisen (2006), 1015.
multi-dimensional identity, but seems to suggest a turn away from invalid “ethnic” considerations; although he does not call for the abandonment of ethnicity entirely, it is apparently no longer valid as a research subject in itself. My understanding of Pitts’ use of “ethnicity” is as a more socially acceptable and politically correct stand-in for “race.”

Francesco de Angelis rounds out the picture of identity-focused ancient scholarship with a discussion of the divide between Greek and Roman presented in Pliny’s discussion of art in his Historia Naturalis. He notes the “geoethnographic categories in ancient thinking,” but states little else as regards racial systems.

Revisiting the themes presented by Isaac in 2004, the 2009 *The Origins of Racism in the West* is a collaborative volume on issues of racism in Western culture edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, articulating more clearly some of the distinctions made previously by Isaac. Like Pitts, Eliav-Feldon et al. note that “the difficulty of studying the history of racism is compounded by profound differences in perception of the phenomenon.” Indeed, this very same hurdle can be seen to be the case when it comes to the study of race itself, a concept which Eliav-Feldon et al. similarly denounce. As with Isaac, this rejection of race in a work that studies bigotry based upon race seems illogical. I take these authors’ denial of the existence of race simply to mean that they do not support a theory of fixed racial categories, a consensus already reached that we should be able to move past. Nonetheless, some system of race by which humans are categorized into groups must exist in order for a “social hatred” based up on it to exist. While it is obviously fluid, the concept of race is very real to many persons, most especially

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61 De Angelis, 79.
63 Ibid., 2.
those who present the views which Eliav-Feldon, Isaac, and Zeigler study. Additionally, I would disagree with these scholars’ characterization of racism as “social hatred” and as “irrational,” for racism comes in many forms. Applying modern judgments as to what sorts of depictions are “truly racist” or not does little to promote understanding of the ancient viewpoint. In contrast, I see racism more as an involuntary construction of racial categorization; it is not necessarily “created” from malicious intent. “Hatred” is a very active word with strong connotations of violence, whereas much racist sentiment can be passive assumptions about the world. “Hatred,” again, suggests the idea of perpetrators and victims. Yet everyone is a victim of his worldviews; a “bigot” may have had no conscious desire to be so, whereas a social activist may similarly have had no active choice in feeling those inclinations to affect change. We must seek first to understand the cultural foundations that led each to believe his view of the world. Similarly, if all racism were so irrational, one would think few would fall into its snare. Rather than applying judgments to such worldviews, especially in the contexts of ancient civilizations, a more useful approach, it seems to me at least, would be to understand how such racialized views came to be deemed rational perspectives in the cultures which spawned them.

Last, but certainly not least, I shall turn to the two most compelling scholars I encountered on the matter and the last volumes in this review of scholarship. Erich S. Gruen’s 2011 *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* adopts a more evaluative approach to studying the nature of Othering in classical societies. In describing the age-old practice of Othering, Gruen hits upon what I consider to be a much better definition of racism than many other scholars’ attempts to define this prickly term. He thus describes Othering as

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“trading in stereotypes, manufacturing traits, and branding those who are different as inferior, objectionable, or menacing.”\(^{65}\) Additionally, I agree with Gruen’s qualification of the mass of scholarly work on the subject, namely, that ancient civilizations “had far more mixed, nuanced, and complex opinions about other peoples.”\(^{66}\) Gruen’s work takes an alternative approach to the subject by considering the ways in which ancient civilizations maintained a cultural unity despite and simultaneously with Othering. Where his study seeks to discern unity, mine, like the many before, seek out social separation. I do, however, attempt to maintain a similar tone to Gruen of non-judgmental understanding,\(^ {67}\) which I consider intrinsic to the traditional anthropological tenet of cultural relativism.\(^ {68}\)

Like Gruen, Denise McCoskey also maintains an open approach to the study of race in antiquity in her 2012 book *Race: Antiquity and Its Legacy.*\(^ {69}\) In this work, she seeks to understand ancient structures without skewing them towards a yardstick of modern racial concerns. She rebuts the claim that race is a modern construct, and encourages the reclamation of the term. I was most compelled by her work and seek to apply much the same understanding of race to my study of imperialistic Rome;\(^ {70}\) specifically, her remark on the misuse of antiquity is particularly striking and finds resonance within this study: “so

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 1.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 3. I confess that this agreement is slightly hypocritical on my part since it is my objective in the third part of this study to mold the ancient evidence into one nice pattern. This is, however, intended more for the purposes of yielding a “big picture,” which will be easier to comprehend, than as my goal in and of itself or as a stand-in for true understanding of the complexities of Roman views.

\(^{67}\) As he states, “It is easy enough to gather individual derogatory remarks (often out of context), piecemeal comments, and particular observations that suggest bias or antipathy,” but “it is a very different matter, however, to tar them with a blanket characterization of xenophobia and ethnocentrism, let alone racism,” ibid., 3.

\(^{68}\) On the subject of partiality, Isaac (2004) has strong opinions, stating that scholars’ views are “wholly determined and thus distorted by current consensus,” p. 51. This is too absolute, as it does not allow for innovation and progression; if this were true, there would be no progress in thought.


\(^{70}\) I say imperialistic Rome and not Imperial Rome, as I am focused on the era of Roman civilization that was most expansionist and driven by imperialistic agenda, which began before the advent of “the Empire” and ended considerably before the Empire’s collapse.
unceasing has the use and abuse of the ancient world been that, as we shall see, it seems to have become central to the very constitution of modernity, a period that remains bound within its own fractured attempts to reconcile past and present.”71 McCoskey aptly articulates the ways in which modern fascination with self-comparison in the study of antiquity is an “abuse” of the past. This very abuse is what I hope to rectify in this thesis, by attempting to understand racial formation in ancient Roman society on its own terms.

Thus we see that there remain many views on the subjects of race and racism in antiquity. On several levels, the subject is polarized into two different camps: there are some who think of race as a concept of modern invention, and there are those who posit that it is just the case that its definition has changed over time; there are those who see antiquity as nothing remotely close to racist, while others yet cite the ancient world as the origin of modern racism. In addition to the multiplicity of perspectives on these matters, a number of issues complicate achieving a thorough understanding of ancient racial systems. First, as we have discussed, is the tendency to generalize antiquity as possessing one mind, most especially in regards to “Greek and Roman thought.” Such generalization can proffer little in the way of understanding the way racial formations took place within cultural frameworks. Secondly, the wide range of applicable and utilized terminology creates a confusion of concepts whose distinctions are blurred and vary from scholar to scholar. These varying levels of identity and buzz-words, which I will discuss more thoroughly in the following section, over-complicate any study with anachronistic labels. Third, and most importantly, as so often happens with theories, a theoretical pendulum swing has been created by the penchant for modern comparison, a swing which entirely misses the mark.

71 McCoskey, ibid., 33.
Scholars arguing that “no, ancient prejudice was nothing like out modern racism,” or “yes, it was at the very root of it,” distort the ancient evidence in attempts to prove their modern agendas. Life and society was very different in an ancient civilization such as Rome; clearly, the exact forms of prejudice differed from those seen around the world today. As humanity has certain common tendencies, however, it is also obvious that the practice of generalizing and judging people who are different from oneself is timeless, and not an invention of modernity. Studying ancient society in the terms of modern society limits the progress one can make in comprehending ancient society. My objection to the modern comparison is much the same as my objection to “proving” African involvement in Egyptian civilization: it is beside the point and buys into the anachronistic and controversial premise that these concerns are important. Just as validating the blackness of Egyptians validates the notion that Blacks need to “prove” their cultural worth, so too “proving” that ancient racism was either like or unlike ours validates the notion that the past is only important as it reflects the present. Such comparison undermines, by overlooking, the cultural systems of Rome, and in this way the comparison detracts from our understanding. Cultural systems do not have to be like our own to be worth acknowledging. We should neither apologize for nor criminalize the societal views of ancient Romans, but simply seek to understand them.

1.2 A Spectrum of Views on Race

This review of scholarship is briefer in nature than the last and looks at conceptualizations of race more broadly. It is meant to be simply a taste of the many definitions of race that exist and to show the basic progression of thought on the concept among scholars across fields. It looks at conceptions of race (and its accompanying
terminological baggage) from several disciplines and perspectives, from scholars of modern statistics, education, social development, sociology, and cultural and physical anthropology. Supplementing coverage of the trends in ancient scholarship, this survey discusses the understanding of race as a societal force in preparation for a larger discussion of terminology.

To begin, much as the existence of scientific racial categories was assumed in the scholarship on antiquity in the early 1900s, so is it similarly taken for granted in early anthropological discussion. J. R. Kantor’s 1925 article “Anthropology, Race, Psychology, and Culture” builds upon the premise of fixed racial groups, although it seeks to reform ideology behind the concept of race that leads to racism and discrimination. The guiding question of Kantor’s work was “how much of the achievement or superior achievement of a group may be traced to the native mental endowment or superiority of (the members of) that group?” This question posed in the present day would raise a few eyebrows, yet at the time this was a very progressive query. We can see that even while issues of racial mixture leading to cultural decline were still being explored in the ancient scholarship a decade later, anthropologists were already reforming assumptions of racial hierarchy. Ultimately Kantor’s conclusion debunked “native mentality,” as regards the “scientific” characterization of racial groups. He thereby established that there is no actual basis for such racialized generalizations of a racial category’s mental ability or behavioral proclivity by virtue of its biology. His very asking of the question, however, points to an ideology that nonetheless persist within racist thought.

73 Ibid., 268.
74 E.g., van Sickle (1930) and Salant (1938).
75 Kantor (1925), 272.
Kantor’s push towards ideological progression, however, did not result in the realization that racial categories are culturally constructed and relevant. Over twenty years later, anthropological thought still maintained certain fixed racial categories. Wilton Marion Krogman, in his 1948 article “Physical Anthropology and Race Relations” evaluated the degree to which humans vary on a scientific level. While he began somewhat progressively by pointing out modern humanity’s common species, asserting that humans are 99.44% alike, he did in fact delineate the three to four “great groups of mankind” that account for the .56% of difference, which he said have been called “stocks,” “ethnic groups,” and “races”: 1) Causoids, 2) Negroids, 3) Mongoloids, and 4) (a potentially separate category) Archaic Caucasoids. Snowden (1970) and Foster (1974) evidenced the fact that these racial categories were alive and well in scholarly thought decades later. Snowden (1983) signaled the ongoing shift away from these terms, as race began to be regarded as a culturally-relative and socially-controversial concept.

By the 1990s, such a shift in the perception of “race” had occurred. Nancy Edwards (1992) analyzed the use of “ethnicity” as a study variable in community health research. She noted that “increasingly ethnicity appears to be replacing terms which have traditionally been used to designate race,” and concluded that because of ethnicity’s (and, thus, by proxy, race’s) openness to interpretation, it cannot be easily used as a reliable research variable. This avoidance of the use of the term “race” is also noted by Vivian Rohrl in her 1995 article “The Anthropology of Race: A Study of Ways of Looking at the

77 Ibid., 318.
79 Ibid., 31.
Past.” Rohrl began by recalling the observation of a colleague, a French anthropologist, that “race and ethnicity” was absent in American social science books. Rohrl sought to remedy this lapse by revisiting “race” and rearticulating it in a way that rectifies it with progressive social science. She pointed out, “in order to understand the idea of race, we should realize that there is no one over-all definition of it.” Hal Levine (1999) similarly abandoned the term “race” and noted the controversy over “ethnicity:” “weakly theorized, lacking even an agreed definition, ethnicity has joined the list of deconstructed concepts in anthropology.” He pithily traced the progression of thought on the concepts of race and ethnicity, including “stagnation, agenda-hopping and the post-modern demolition.”

As Edwards, Rohrl, and Levine point out, race had become a taboo subject and replaced with the term “ethnicity,” which similarly suffered from the same denotational controversy. As they indicate by their studies, however, the idea of race remains nonetheless important to understand even if uncomfortable and tricky to discuss. Eugenia Shanklin (2000) notes the topic’s absence, suggests that American anthropology needs to make up for lost time, and presents “some new approaches to teaching race and racism,” because, after all, they are such influential components of the human experience. Sarah White, in her 2002 article “Thinking Race, Thinking Development,” supports this call to action, claiming that “the silence on race is a determining silence, which both masks and marks its centrality.” In other words, this is an important issue, and ignoring it only

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80 This is counter to the observations of Eliav-Feldon et. al.(2009).
83 Ibid., 166.
denies empirical observation and prevents progressive thought and understanding of society. Indeed, Thomas Craemer (2007) exemplifies the way in which race can be studied, analyzing the different types of “racial attitudes,” which he distinguishes as “socially-shared” and “idiosyncratic” views. Thus, having accepted the complexities inherent in the topic and embraced the importance of the study, Craemer is able to shed light in the phenomenon of racial thought.

The respective approaches of Pagliai (2009), Warikoo and Carter (2009), and Park and Denison (2009) exemplify the range in contemporary scholarly thought on race. Despite the backlash the avoidance of “race” has received, many scholars still shy from it in preferring the catch phrase “race and ethnicity.” Natasha Warikoo and Prudence Carter (2009), accordingly, study “racial and ethnic stratification,” while Julie Park and Nida Denson (2009) seek to understand views of “racial/ethnic diversity” in their article. “Race” clearly remains both an uncomfortable topic and one that nevertheless begs analysis and study. This seeming contradiction exemplifies a major strain of current thought on the concept of race: a confliction between wanting to avoid it, but needing to address it. Pagliai, on the other hand, notes the “substitution of the term ‘ethnicity’ to replace the scorned term ‘race’” and articulates a definition of “New Racism,” a concept which takes into account “a shift in ideologies from basing racial differences in biology to basing them in a reified and naturalized concept of cultural differences.” Thus, we must understand that any cultural difference can be racialized, a realization that is important to interpreting the evidence for racial formations in ancient Rome.

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To summarize, we can see a general progression of ideas regarding race. At first, there was the assumption of the existence of racial categories, first on biological grounds and then on observable grounds of cultural difference. As the scientific basis for race was debunked, a struggle to redefine race satisfactorily occurred, eventually opening up discourse on how too variable a concept race is to be useful as a term. As this doubt concerning the validity of race grew, other terms usurped race’s place in social discourse. Eventually, because of the term’s complications and the growing social taboo of its use, race disappeared from scholarship, and the doubts it engendered lingered on for its replacement terms and concepts. The absence of race from scholarship became noticed. The theory emerged that the silence on race only exacerbates racial concerns, and there was an attempt to readdress race, sometimes in slightly altered forms such as “racialization” and “racial formation.” This all culminated in the current situation—a eclectic mixture in which some of all these strains of thought remain: there are still those who shy from addressing or using the word “race,” or use bulkier phraseology to be more politically correct and socially acceptable; there are still those caught-up in the agenda of challenging, who denounce the validity of race as a concept; and, thankfully, there are still those trying to readdress the situation, and rearticulate race in a way that remains applicable to society and useful to studies. All these views are evident in the studies of race in antiquity.88

Thus race has had a checkered past. It has been assumed, and challenged; it has been explained away, and explained back; it has been renamed/abandoned for other terms, 

88 In fact, we see a consistent parallel between conceptions of race in social science and how the concept is viewed in work by ancient scholars, although there is a lag between the emergence of thought on the social science scene and its incarnation in scholarship on the ancient world.
and redefined. All the while its inherent complications have been pointed out, but, as so many scholars and so many studies have indicated, it remains important and represents a reality of humanity.

1.3 A Discussion of Terminology

A whole host of terminology is mixed up in the study of race in antiquity—race, racism, racial formation, culture, ethnicity, Other, prejudice, nationalism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, stereotype. This list goes on. As such, it will be helpful to clarify my views on meanings and distinctions among all these terms and concepts.

- Levels of Bigotry: Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Racism -

To start, there has been a concern in recent scholarship over the differentiation among types of "bigoted" sentiment, that is, between stereotypes, prejudice, and racism. Benjamin Isaac is one such author who stresses the importance of differentiating "prejudice in general, and racial prejudice in particular." He further adds ethnic prejudice into the mix, saying that "ethnic prejudice, as distinct from racism, maintains some flexibility towards the individual." Thus, in his mind, racist thought is invariably fixed, never to be changed, while "ethnic prejudice" and, presumably, "general" prejudice allows for epiphanies. The main point of separation, thus, between prejudice and racism, according to Isaac, is flexibility. Furthermore, Isaac also accounts for a difference in content. He discusses mere "group prejudice," such as that against religions or regions, as

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89 Isaac (2004), 16.
90 Ibid., 25.
91 I would like to point out that by this definition, very few persons would actually qualify as racist, for even the most "racist" of persons I have encountered have had exceptions and caveats to their bigoted ideology. Proclaiming that racism must not possess the very human ability to evolve and take account of new information seems too harsh a statement.
distinct from ethnic prejudice. The question remains then, exactly what is ethnicity, if religious and location-based elements of culture are not? A limited sphere of culture remains to comprise it. These types of clarifications are made finer by Eliav-Feldon, Issac, and Zeigler (2004). In the vision of Elaiv-Feldon et al., racism is distinct from “ethnic and cultural stereotypes and prejudice,” because it is “more than an attitude or set of attitudes; it is an ideology.” Accordingly, a stereotype represents an attitude, a prejudice a set of them, and racism an ideology formed upon them. This sort of hierarchal conception of the development and breadth of the idea makes better sense than attributing certain qualities exclusively to each type of bigoted sentiment.

My usage of these words will be much like that presented by Eliav-Feldon et al. These concepts vary in terms of degree, not content. In my view, a stereotype is an assumption that generalizes an entire group of people based upon slim or scanty evidence; a prejudice is an attitude about an entire group that has been generalized; and racism is an ideology regarding a group that has been generalized. In this way, each builds upon the previous, yielding a more staunch belief system. It is not necessary to distinguish what is prejudicial and what is racist, then, but rather to understand that they are a close web; systems of racism include both stereotyping and prejudice, and similarly instances of stereotyping and prejudice may indicate a larger system of racism. It is not for us to quantify the level of racialized views we see in ancient society, but to attempt to qualify those views by careful analysis.

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92 Isaac, ibid., 24.
93 It should certainly be mentioned that Isaac does acknowledge that “it may well be the case that the distinction between various forms of prejudice is more important to us than it was to the Greeks and Romans,” 24; I think that this is very likely the case.
94 Eliav-Feldon et al. ibid., 1.
·“Us v. Them”: Nationalism, Ethnocentrism, and Xenophobia·

Similarly, concepts of xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and nationalism also enter the racial scene and have close relationships. All these factors likely occur in most nations to varying degrees. Certainly some of each of these concepts were in play in the Roman socio-political scene. While each can take hostile tones and provoke hostility, they need not have been so active. As Gruen’s statement that “it is a very different matter, however, to tar them [ancient societies] with a blanket characterization of xenophobia and ethnocentrism, let alone racism”\(^95\) suggests, xenophobic and ethnocentric thought can be viewed on a spectrum with racism as outwardly projected negative sentiment. In a trivialized way, I suppose, the difference between nationalism and racism can be equated to the difference between cheering on one’s team and booing the other. These concepts can also be more inwardly directed, however. More neutrally (even positively), “nationalism” can be described as a patriotic zeal for one’s own political unit, “ethnocentrism” as the natural tendency to view the world with the pre-suppositions of one’s own culture, and “xenophobia” as a perhaps understandable fear of the unknown. We so often seek out the negative results of these concepts, but the ways in which these views seem natural and logical should not be overlooked.

·Types of Identity·

Caught in and pertinent to all of these distinctions are the bundled concepts of identity—race, ethnicity, and culture. Much in the same way as stereotypes, prejudice, and racism, I see culture, ethnicity, and racism as denoting the same phenomenon with varying connotations and levels of degree. “Culture,” in my view, is a broader concept that provides

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\(^95\) Gruen, ibid., 3.
the material which comprises both of the other terms, yet lacks the tension created by
those specific words. In the words of Warikoo and Carter, “culture is characterized by
shared values, beliefs, behaviors, styles...practices ranging from speech styles and
language, to specific kinds of physical interaction, to tastes in music, clothing, and food.”96 It
can be used generally to describe what sorts of things people do, and in this way avoids the
complications of dividing peoples into groups—everyone has culture. This is not to say,
however, that “culturalism” did not became a more socially acceptable way to refer to the
categorization of groups implicit in race. It is perhaps the politest way to refer to difference
in practice between peoples and, as such, the least controversial term.

By far, the biggest confusion of terminology and blurring of lines has occurred
between the concepts of race and ethnicity. “Ethnicity” seems to be used as a term in three
fundamentally different ways. The first is perhaps an attempt to rectify “race” with
“ethnicity.” In this usage, “ethnicity” refers to a sub-group of race. Thus, what constitutes a
race to any individual or society might constitute several ethnicities. A more common usage
for the term, at least in scholarship, is as a stand-in for “race” for various reasons, whether
social taboo or frustration over the functionality of such a complex term. This term-
switching accounts for much of the silence on racism noted by anthropologists in the last
section. Thirdly, scholars sometimes view “race” and “ethnicity” as entirely separate
phenomena, which, after we have disowned the notion of scientifically-based race, seems
neither necessary nor meaningful. Eliav-Feldon et al. note the confusion of these terms,
although with ironic conclusion: noting the persistent use of the term “race” in American
scholarship despite its (appropriate, it is implied) abandonment by European scholars,

96 Warikoo and Carter, ibid., 368.
Eliav-Feldon et al. explain that “the existence of both ethnic and racial groups is taken for granted in this approach and the mix of social, cultural and physical features results in serious confusion.”97 Accurately, it is observed that confusion results from embracing both terms. The observation is ironic as it used to support the case that “race” does not exist. This, combined with other views of Eliav-Feldon et al., yields the confused proposition that ethnic differences exist while racial ones do not, yet prejudices based upon both exist and are important to distinguish. This view, however, complicated in itself, seems to be an attempt to rectify “race” with its abandonment as a term.

In contrast, many scholars believe in race as a concept and have provided a number of definitions for the term that are worth considering. Thought on the subject has come a long way since Krogman’s specification of four racial types, although his description of race as “great groups of mankind”98 is not an erroneous one (except perhaps in the connotations of “great”). Cravins, although he thinks race is a modern construct, provides the following definitions: an “ideological construct;” “a notion whose applied manifestations and consequences are intellectually, socially, politically and economically significant;” “an organizational construct that played a significant role in shaping personal worldviews, individual and group identities and primary social relationships.”99 These are all helpful ways to view race as a system, which carefully recognize its basis as a cultural construction and not a scientific “reality.” Put more simply by Coates, “race is a process of structured events which over time demonstrate a system whereby groups and individuals are

97 Eliav-Feldon et al., 7.
98 Krogman, ibid., 318.
99 All quotes, Cravins, 233.
racialized.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, we can not only understand race as a concept and structure accounting for thought and behavior, but also as a process, changing and evolving constantly, and relative to the beholder.

In pursuing this phenomenon as it appears in ancient Roman literature, I adhere most closely to the views of two scholars: student of the ancient world McCoskey rationally observes that “at its most basic, race is an ideological structure that organizes and classifies perceived human variation;”¹⁰¹ a sociologist, Pagliai reminds us that, it is important to emphasize that any difference can be racialized, not just skin color differences. In fact, skin color categories (like others based on biological difference) are invented as a result of racial formation processes, rather than existing before them. Nor can we immediately uphold a division between ‘biological’ and ‘cultural’ characteristics, lest we forget that what is ascribed to culture in one historical context has been attributed to nature in others (for example, gender roles).¹⁰²

Having ourselves evolved from a belief in fixed racial categories and come to grips with the reality of the vast variety of racialization, we may now produce more informed investigations of race as a human phenomenon.

- The Other -

Throughout my research, I have found it helpful to think of the nature of race and racism along the lines of Other and Othering. To return to Gruen's definition of Othering—“trading in stereotypes, manufacturing traits, and branding those who are different as inferior, objectionable, or menacing”¹⁰³—this understanding of Othering can provide a conceptual frame from which to understand systems of race. Just as Othering and Othered

¹⁰⁰ Coates, S. Also, “Clearly, race, racialization, and racism operate in multidimensional spaces associated with psychology, history, economic activity, politics, sociology, anthropology, literature, etc.,” 13.
¹⁰¹ McCoskey (2012), 2.
¹⁰² Pagliai, ibid., 551.
groups can be defined in a number of ways, in and on a number of levels, based on a number of things, and in a hierarchal system or individually, so too can race and racism. I prefer to use the diction of race instead of that of Othering, because it allows us to more specifically diagnose the ideological construct employed by ancient Romans when viewing Others: “others” allows us to establish a sense of “us” versus “them,” that is, the Romans and those considered non-Romans; articulating a racial system allows us to delineate and organize the multiple “thems” as they existed in the Romen mind. Therefore, while Othering is an excellent framework for Rome’s racial system, “race” allows a more thorough prognosis of societal thought.

-Etic and Emic-

Another relevant discussion is that of emic (internal) versus etic (external) perspectives. According to Eliav-Feldon et al., the studies of identity and racism are incompatible because one is emic and one etic. The observation regarding eticness and emicness is true, but the conclusion of incompatibility not so. McCoskey deals with the issue of etic and emic perspectives well and rearticulates them within a framework of the study of race. Accordingly, so long as one is careful to distinguish between “racial identification” (emic) and “racial category” (etic), both etic and emic perspectives can be articulated on the terms of race. White does not even hesitate in her articulation of race in this way, defining it as “a socio-historical construct, which operates simultaneously as an aspect of identity and as an organizing principle in forging social structure.” Thus, while

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104 Eliav-Feldon et. al., ibid.
105 McCoskey, ibid.
106 White, ibid., 408.
certain terminology is often utilized in a way that analyzes either etic or emic perspectives, a study of racial formations can take both perspectives into account.

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In summation, scholars often utilize broad phraseology such as “ethnic, racial, and national,” or, most commonly, the catch-phrase “race and ethnicity” to avoid objection or discomfort with the usage of “race” alone. This approach is statistically advantageous as one’s audience is bound to agree with at least one of the applied labels. I too have frequently utilized “race and ethnicity” in this way in past works to forestall objection. In fact this issue prompted the most commonly asked question posed to me about the present thesis: *Do you feel comfortable calling it “race”?* The answer is yes, but a better question is this: Do I mean anything different by saying “race and ethnicity” instead of simply “race”? I find that, in fact, I do not.

So many labels have been applied to the phenomenon of organizing humans conceptually and ideologically. I hope that I have at least made clear my views on the subject, so that, even should the reader disagree, my use of such words is intelligible. The Romans had certain categorizations which they used to group people as well as certain views of variously grouped peoples. By exploring the presentation of the categorized groups, we can begin to understand Roman society’s racial formations.
Part II: The Ancient Evidence

2.1 A note on Authors and Works

After all, many men of letters, particularly historiographers, belonged to the educated, administratively active, landowning upper crust of Italy and the cultured central provinces of the Roman Empire. Inevitably, this influenced their concept of political deeds and social groups. Another determining factor was certainly the literary tradition of which they were a part, a tradition that was itself old and characterized by a wide variety of phrases and commonplaces that could serve as so many labels for movements and forms of behavior.₁⁰⁷

Lukas de Blois’ above observation of the complexity involved in interpreting an ancient written source encourages a healthily skeptical lens at the beginning of this chapter that explores literary sources as evidence for ancient society. As de Blois makes clear, there are many considerations that must be taken into account when utilizing literature as a source for social reality: the socio-political stature of the author, the author’s provenance; the conventions of the genre at hand; and any personal agendas the author might wish to accomplish with his subject matter. Burdened by all these variables, a study of ancient literature might seem doomed before it is begun as regards it ability to produce reliable knowledge of ancient life.

The fact of the matter is, however, that if we were to explain away the credibility of all written accounts that tell us about the ancient world, because they can tell us nothing definitive beyond an individual’s perspective and beliefs, we would be fatally crippled in our ability to understand ancient society. This sort of post-modernist approach is only

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₁⁰⁷ Lukas de Blois, “The Third Century Crisis and the Greek Elite in the Roman Empire,” Historia 33.3 (1984), 358.
destructive and not constructive. While it is important to recognize and account for authors’ inevitable bias in their works, we must nevertheless make the best of the evidence they provide. In a society such as Rome’s, in which was practiced the erasing of persons’ memories, we must take some consideration of what it means for certain works to have survived. Accordingly, while literary accounts can only necessarily indicate what their authors’ claim to think, it is likely that their views were shared by others in the Roman world.\footnote{In support of literature as a source for societal information, see: more generally, Thomas H. Estes and Dorothy Vasquez-Levy, who assert that all stories are about values, and are therefore indicative of society, “Literature as a Source of Information and Values,” \textit{The Phi Delta Kappan} 82.7 (Mar., 2001), 507-510; more specifically, Thomas Habinek, in whose opinion texts “are and always have been imbedded in networks of practices,” in “Latin Literature Between Text and Practice,” \textit{Transactions of the American Philological Association} 135.1 (Spring, 2005), 83.}

This section presents a small selection of the evidence from ancient Rome that pertains to the study of race. By no means is this analysis meant to be an exhaustive treatment of all the available sources. Nearly every writing reveals something of the ancient authors’ worldview and cultural construction of social categories. Modern scholars simply lack the emic perspective necessary for drawing out all the cultural implications and assembling the subtle puzzle pieces, or indeed, even recognizing that they are pieces to a puzzle at all.\footnote{In the words of Milman Parry, “the literature of every country and of every time is understood as it ought to be only by the author and his contemporaries,” \textit{The Making of Homeric Verse: the Collected Papers of Milman Parry}, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 1.} Understanding these limitations of our modern ability to glean knowledge of cultural institutions from ancient literary accounts, this thesis approaches those literary works that make themselves known as commentaries upon the racial formations at Rome—namely the ethnographic accounts of historians and geographers.

Within the window of study from 88 BCE to 117 CE, such sources include Julius Caesar’s \textit{De Bello Gallico}, Sallust’s \textit{Bellum Iugurthinum}, Pomponius Mela’s \textit{Chorographia},
Pliny the Elder’s *Historiae Naturalis*, and Tacitus’ *Germania*. These works either include what appears to be an ethnographic account of one or more non-Roman people(s) (e.g., *De Bello Gallico*, *Bellum Iugurthinum*), or the entire work purports to be a treatise on such peoples (i.e., the *Germania* focuses entirely on describing the Germans, while the *Historiae Naturalis* and the *Chorographia* intend to describe all peoples in the known world).¹¹⁰

I consider several aspects of these works’ treatments of Other peoples: the range and types of issues discussed; emphasis on or importance of physical condition or appearance; the creation of a link between physical attributes and mental faculties and behavior; the author’s use of categorizational labels, such as *gens*; and the author’s seeming degree of judgment and use of the word *barbarus*.¹¹¹ These aspects in particular are taken into consideration, because they address common elements of the previously surveyed definition of race. Although I support the more liberal understanding of the term as applicable to nearly any social group along nearly any lines,¹¹² many persons still adhere to a physical element in defining race. Many scholars also cited an assumption of mental ability based upon physical or biological factors as the basis for racism as well.¹¹³ Thus, with an understanding of these views on race and racism in mind, I consider the extent to which “the physical” is emphasized in accounts. By considering these and the other above-mentioned factors, I hope to shed light in the Roman worldview subscribed to by these

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¹¹⁰ Livy might also have been included in this survey, but due to the vastness of his corpus and the lack of clear and isolated ethnographic accounts within it, he has been regrettably omitted. From what we understand from testimonia, Livy’s Books 104-108 dealt with the Gallic Wars and would have been useful to this study, but are unfortunately not extant. Velleius Paterculus was also considered, but found similarly lacking in clear ethnographic accounts.

¹¹¹ I use the English verb “barbarize” to mean that the Roman author applies the label *barbarus* to a certain group.


¹¹³ As Isaac (2004) and Eliav-Feldon et al. (2009).
authors and the processes of racial formation in Roman society of the late Republic and early Empire.

2.2 Julius Caesar’s De Bello Gallico

Julius Caesar was born of a patrician family in the heart of Roman Italy. As such, he may represent the elite Roman perspective, looking from the center out towards the periphery. At the time of Julius Caesar’s writing in the 50s BCE, much of Western Europe was yet unconquered by Rome. Gallia Cisalpina in modern Northern Italy and Gallia Narbonensis in present southwest France were already Roman provinces, as well as Hispania Ulterior and Citerior. Caesar made it his task to fill in the blanks, so to speak, and pacify the remaining section of Gallic Europe.

Since he was a general, especially one transcribing an account of warfare he was currently undertaking, much of Caesar’s descriptions are of a militaristic nature. Caesar’s work, to be precise, is described as a commentary, not a history. As Herbert Benario explains, the difference between the two is that a commentary is meant to be a thorough record with which another person might compose a history.\(^{114}\) While De Bello Gallico, then, is not a history in the proper sense, it nevertheless provides rich accounts of Roman views of Others—not just the Gauls, Galli, but also the Germans, Germani, and Britons, Britanni, whom Caesar and his troops encountered.\(^{115}\) In the first seven books, De Bello Gallico describes Caesar’s pacification of Gaul, wars with the Germans, and excursions to Briton. The last book, Book 8, was not written by Caesar, but rather was added to Caesar’s

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\(^{115}\) The names I use to refer to these groups are simply the anglicized versions of the Latin names, and their use in this paper is not meant to bear relation to modern groups of the same name.
previous seven by one of his generals during the Gallic wars, Aulus Hirtius.\footnote{Ibid.} While ethnographic details are peppered throughout the entire work, by far the most rich account is given in Book 6, which is Caesar’s attempt to solidly describe the Gallic and Germanic people whom he has been discussing.

Throughout the work, Caesar discusses a numbers of attributes of the various groups he encounters—Gauls, Germans, and Britons. By far, most description is given to the Gauls. The Germans are, nevertheless, constantly kept in mind throughout the work, although the range of their cultural institutions addressed by Caesar is smaller than that of the Gauls. Similarly, the breadth of coverage on the Britons is even more scanty, with the result that the further the people from Rome, the less fully Caesar describes them. Many aspects of Gallic life are accounted for in Caesar’s commentary. These include: their laws and official customs (1.7; 5.56; 6.16); government (1.16; 7.32); social hierarchy (6.11); religion (6.13-17); family life (6.19); the climate, geography, and wildlife of their lands (4.20; 5.3; 5.7; 6.25-28); housing and residence patterns (5.34); language (5.48); war tactics, weapons, and naval ability (1.25; 2.33; 3.8; 3.13; 7.22); level of technological innovation (1.14); physical appearance (1.1; 2.30); and character traits, including valor (2.4; 2.5; 2.27; 5.34), self-discipline (2.15), treachery and fickleness (2.17; 3.8; 4.5), proclivity to war (3.17), and even their aversion towards political speech (6.20). Thus, he gives a broad range of information, detailing typical elements of society. He places emphasis upon military components, in accordance with his investment in Gaul as a region for pacification. He also gives more extensive account of character traits than physical ones, viewing Gallic character from both positive and negative angles.
Of the Germans, Caesar tells us less, but still a decent amount of information, including: housing and residence patterns (1.36; 6.22); subsistence and economy (4.1-3); gender roles (1.50); regard for chastity (6.21); political organization (6.22-23); religion (6.21); diet (6.22); value of hospitality (6.23); war tactics and weaponry (1.52); physical appearance (1.39; 4.1; 6.21); and character traits, such as ferocity and warlike nature (1.36; 1.47), treachery (4.13), and discipline (4.2; 6.22). His emphasis is more upon how these people survive—their agriculture, economy, and diet—than it was with the Gauls. He also includes more physical description. Caesar seems more invested in describing peculiarities of the Germans than he did with the Gauls, perhaps because they are more of an Other and therefore a greater curiosity.

The Britons, lastly, are given the least range of treatment. The attributes of their society which Caesar describes are as follows: population and settlement pattern (5.12); climate (5.12); natural resources (5.12); war tactics (4.33); currency (5.12); diet (5.12-14); marriage practice (5.14); government (5.25); religion (6.13); and physical appearance (5.14). The types of description here are similar to the Germans, although more fleeting in detail. There is a concern, primarily, for where people sleep and what people eat, concerns that reappear in subsequent Roman ethnographic accounts.

As we can see, the physical appearance of all three groups is accounted for in De Bello Gallico. Proportionately, therefore, there is an increasing percentage of description that is physically based as we proceed from Gaul to German to Briton, since the range of societal aspects discussed decreases from Gaul to German to Briton as well. For the Gauls,

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117 E.g., we were not given information about male versus female behavior, or the value of hospitality in the case of the Gauls.

118 This is by proxy when he is discussing the origins of Druidism among the Gauls.
Caesar limits physical description to their height, which is taller than Romans (2.30). He gives this information seemingly off-hand. The Germans, similarly, are noted for having large and powerful bodies (1.39). This physical aspect is mentioned from the very beginning of the work, and Caesar reminds the reader of it several times throughout the commentary. All that we hear of the Britons, physically speaking, is of their blue-dyed bodies, a fact which comes across more as an obvious observation Caesar must mention than an important component of their characterization. By far, Caesar places most emphasis upon physicality in his characterization of the Germans, likely a result of their looming proximity to Rome and their “unpacified” state.

As for a link between biology or physicality and mental ability of the Gauls, Germans, and Britons, this is not evident in Caesar’s account. There is some connection made between isolation and character, and this connection works both positively and negatively. At the beginning of Book 1, Caesar admires the Belgae, a Gallic group geographically proximate to the Germans, whose strength and bravery he attributes to their separation from the Roman province and its merchants who sell effeminate luxuries (1.1). In Book 2, Caesar explains that of the Belgae, the Nervi are most fierce (maxime feri) and also most distant (longissimeque) (2.4). A similar sentiment is expressed about the Suebi, a German gens, in Book 4. These people do not import wine, for wine softens them: “quod ea re ad laborem ferendum remollescere homines atque effeminari arbitrantur,”119 “which thing they judge to soften men towards bearing labor and to make them effeminate” (4.2). In these ways, contact with the Roman world is characterized as potentially corrupting by virtue of the many luxuries it brings with it. Isolation, thus, preserves the

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natural strength of these peoples. Caesar also conveys the opposite notion, however, painting contact with Romans as a civilizing force. This is so in his description of the Germanic Ubii people, whom he says trades with the outside world and is also more civilized: “paulo sunt eisdem generis ceteris humaniores, propterea quod Rhenum attingunt multumque ad eos mercatores veniant” “they are a little more human than the other races, on account of that they touch the Rhine and merchants visit them often” (4.3). Caesar also sees a positive influence of Roman cultural contact, then. Just as Roman trade has the power to corrupt, so too does it have the power to humanize. Thus, in Caesar’s eyes it would seem, aspects of Roman culture are neither inherently positive or negative, but give to peoples new resources that they can then use to either better themselves or spoil themselves.

A negative rendering of the Germans is clear from Caesar’s description of the Ubii. Caesar’s level of judgment with which he imbues his descriptions varies according to group and evolves as the commentary progresses. Overall, Caesar becomes harsher towards the Gauls the further into the commentary one reads. This is explainable in view of the theory that he composed the commentary annually as he undertook Gallic pacification: Caesar’s views of the Gauls would have naturally evolved as his difficulties with them persisted. Initially, Caesar makes a point to be evaluative of Gallic groups, yet as he recounts that uprisings keep occurring, he begins to be more critical of their behavior and more generalizing in the way he describes them. Just as his characterizations become harsher, application of the word barbarus to the Gauls also increases as the work progresses. The term barbarus is applied to the Gauls only a few times in De Bello Gallico, and all of them in

120 Benario, ibid., 8.
the second half. The first use of the word is actually a denial of the label by a Gallic Aeduan leader, who says that he is not such a barbarian that he is ignorant of recent affairs between Rome and the Gauls (1.44). Thus, this instance, while allowing for the likelihood that Romans think Gauls barbarians, is actually not a labelling of them as such by a Roman. The next instance, however, is a direct application of the word by Caesar to the Gallic and Germanic forces opposing the Romans (5.34). Therefore, it is only when the Gauls become generalized with the Germans as rebels that they are called such.121

The Germans, on the other hand are called barbari from the very beginning. There is no hesitation on Caesar’s part to describe them as such, as there is with the Gauls. A Gallic leader calls the Germans barbarians (1.31) and Caesar calls them such three times just in Book 1 (1.31; 1.33; 1.40). The Britons are similarly barbarized immediately (4.32; 4.34). Thus, the Germans and Britons are called barbarians from the first mentioning of them by Caesar, while the Gauls are not called this until after Caesar is recalled from his excursions in Briton to deal with their revolts. This shift in attitude is parallel to Caesar’s shift in referring to the Gauls. While initially Caesar is careful to specify individual Gallic peoples, he eventually turns to describing the Gauls as a whole, stating that all Gallia was in rebellion. It is at this juncture that he first labels the Gauls as barbarians.

By looking only at the judgments he applies in his descriptions, one can easily take away the erroneous, one-sided impression that Caesar was largely negative about the Gauls. Caesar does make a strong attempt at neutrality. At several points, admittedly towards the beginning of the work, Caesar normalizes certain groups of Gauls, describing them as if they might have been Romans. For example, in Book 1, Caesar explains that the

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121 The last two instances come in Book 8 (8.15 and 8.25), the author of which is, in general, much more free with this word than Caesar himself.
Gallic Aedui are almost family to the Romans: “Aeduos, fratres consanguineosque saepe numero a senatu appellatos” “the Aedui, often called brothers and kindred by the senate” (1.33). This is admittedly applied only to one group of Gauls that has been extremely cooperative with Rome, however, it is indicative of Caesar’s willingness to look at Gallic groups individually and not as a generalized Other. In sum, Caesar’s attitude seems to be characterized largely by sympathy for the Gauls and dislike for the Germans, while individual groups among the Gauls are allotted a hierarchy of esteem based upon how malleable and helpful they are to Rome.

Caesar’s reference to groups by their proper name not only contributes to his avoidance of generalization, but also complicates analysis of the ways in which he employs terms for groupings, such as gens and populus. More often than he refers to groups by these terms, he simply calls them, e.g. Aedui. Thus, Caesar’s diction does not give a clear indication of a categorical hierarchy of terminology. He is clear from the beginning that there are three primary cultural divisions of Gauls (partes tres) (1.1). Past this, there is little clear sense of how the many populi, gentes, nationes, and civitates relate to each other organizationally. Caesar is clear and consistent in referring to the Germanic Suebi as a gens (4.1; 5.54), however, he often refers to groups simply as homines or nationes.

Thus, Caesar is rather evaluative in his approach to describing non-Roman groups. He becomes less so the further out the group is from Rome and Roman culture as is evident in his representation of Germans and Britons. These unconquered groups were very much still in conflict with Roman powers, and Caesar hesitates little to judge and criticize them.

122 Cf. 2.33, where Caesar says that the Gallic Aduatuci fought fiercely, as brave but desperate men can be expected: “pugnatumque ab hostibus, ita acriter est, ut a viris fortibus in extrema spe salutis iniquo loco contra eos.” This has an effect of normalizing the opposing Gauls, who are just doing what anyone would do, indeed what Romans might do.
He is more generous in his depiction of the Gauls and is hesitant to generalize them, although he does eventually do so. Caesar seems to value the physicality of groups very little, except as regards the menacing size of the Germans. In any case, the physical realities of these peoples do not define their intellectual abilities in Caesar’s commentary. As he considers Gallic culture more broadly than the fully Othered Germans and Britons, it seems that the Gauls lie either just within or on the line at which barbarians begin in Roman conception at Caesar’s time of writing.

2.3 Sallust’s *Bellum Iugurthinum*

The socio-historical milieu in Rome during the time of Sallust was much the same as that of Caesar, as the two were contemporaries. Sallust’s introductory remarks make clear his disillusionment with the state of Roman nobility in his contemporary world. In this respect, the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, in recounting the war between Rome and the Numidian king Jugurtha, gives Sallust as much material for social commentary about Romans as about Numidians. In addition to the Numidians, Sallust also describes other North African peoples in his history, including the Moors under king Bocchus and the Gaetulians.

Sallust’s main agenda is to account for the war with Jugurtha and the Roman political turmoil that accompanied it. Therefore, like Caesar, he includes descriptions of Numidian customs throughout his historical account. Also like Caesar, Sallust provides an intentional ethnographic account of the peoples he is discussing (17-19.8), although his comes much sooner than Caesar’s which is put off until Book 6. Sallust’s ethnography is recognized as the first of three intentional digressions in Sallust’s narrative.124 Between

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123 By which I refer to the modern continent and not the Roman province.
this ethnography and incidental descriptions, the various aspects of the Numidians and other North African groups Sallust describes include: their origins, or racial makeup (18); law, sometimes a lack thereof (18.1-2; 78.4); diet (18.8; 89.7); housing and residence patterns (18.8); language (18.10); means of subsistence (90.1); war tactics and weapons (74.3; 94.1); marriage practice (80.6-7); government (18.1-2); physical appearance (17.6; 74.3); recreation (6.1); and character traits such as fickleness (46.3; 66.2; 88.6) and treachery (53.6). Between Caesar and Sallust, it seems that such character traits are commonalities noted of wartime enemies. As we noticed before, there is a concern for where people sleep and what they eat.

Physical difference is not emphasized throughout Sallust’s account, not even to the degree of Caesar’s periodic reminder of the Germans’ imposing size. Physicality is, however, one of the very first considerations made in Sallust’s ethnographic digression. Thus, while the physical aspect is not stressed as the definitive basis for Othering, it is nevertheless one of the first things Sallust feels inclined to mention when he begins to explain to his readers the background and culture of the Numidians and their allies. Whether this early position is due to stating what Sallust sees as obvious in order to proceed to more interesting material or whether it signals importance is unclear.\textsuperscript{125} Sallust describes the Numidians thus: “\textit{Genus hominum salubri corpore, velox, patiens laborum;plerosque senectus dissoluit},”\textsuperscript{126} “[They are] a type\textsuperscript{127} of men with a healthy body, swift, and enduring of labor. Old age makes an end to many [of them]” (17.6). Thus, the Numidians

\textsuperscript{125} John Green would have us believe that initial placement is not indicative of emphasis. “Emphasis in Latin Prose,” \textit{The School Review} 15.9 (Nov., 1907), 643-54.

\textsuperscript{126} All Latin text of the \textit{Bellum Iugurthinum} is reproduced from L.D. Reynolds, ed., \textit{C. Sallusti Crispi} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

\textsuperscript{127} I use this intentionally vague word in my translation to remain categorically neutral and not imply that “\textit{genus}” was the Latin equivalent to our modern level of identity classification “race.” Rather, “\textit{genus}” should be understood as its own classificatory level within the Roman racial system.
are, generally speaking, healthy, so much so that they mostly die simply of old age. It is notable that Sallust’s account of the Numidians’ physical bearing does not make reference to skin pigmentation, but rather focuses upon strength and speed.

In line with a lack of emphasis on physicality, Sallust’s Bellum Iugurthinum does not link physicality to the mental faculties or intellectual abilities of the Numidians. Rather, Numidian individuals are treated just like Roman individuals in their characterization. This can be expected considering the views Sallust presents when beginning his work. In his introductory remarks, Sallust establishes his own personal system for evaluating human worth based upon intellect, in which he clearly separates the physicality of a person from his mental capability (1.1-4). While generalizations are certainly made in the work, characters seem to vary according to the individual and are not culturally relative. Roman individuals as well as Numidian individuals are cited for having both high (e.g., Jugurtha, Metullus) and low intellectual abilities (e.g., Gauda, Albinus).

Sallust’s fairness being acknowledged, he is critical of the Numidians and other Africans on a number of occasions throughout the work. One such case occurs in Sallust’s account of the origins of the Numidians. Sallust includes in his ethnographic digression an account of the origins of the “modern” African peoples, which he claims originated from a Punic work composed by King Hiempsal (17.7). He begins this background by explaining that the original two peoples who inhabited the territories of North Africa were the Gaetuli and Libyes, whom Sallust describes as “asperi incultique,” “rough and uncultured” (18.1).

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128 In fact, Sallust explains that the Aethiopians lie just to the south of the Gaetulians, who are just to the south of the Numidians. Past the Aethiopians, he says, lie the lands scorched by the sun (19.6). This association of Aethiopians with areas scorched by the sun is as close as we get in Sallust to an account of Aethiopian coloration, let alone coloration as a result of the heat from the sun, as we get in Ovid.

He continues to say that they had no laws or government and simply roved the land (18.2), a condition which, coming as it does after this blatant judgmental description, seems to evoke Sallust’s disapproval. Furthermore, Sallust next explains that much of Hercules’ army, gathered from peoples of Near Eastern cultures, remained in Africa and intermarried with the indigenous groups, after which more civilized institutions began to arise (18.3-10). This timeline serves to attribute all elements of human accomplishment to Hercules’ army, implying the continued incivility of the Gaetulians and Libyes without cultural influence from the outside. What is more, beyond critiquing the ancestors of the North African peoples, Sallust is even begrudging of contemporary Gaetulian people, explaining that “partim in tiguriis, alios incultius vagos agitare” “some [live] in huts, others, wanderers, roam in a more uncultivated way” (19.5). He makes clear by this repetitious judgment that nomadic lifestyles are uncivilized.130

Additionally, Sallust impeaches the character of the Numidians in a few blanket statements as the war with Jugurtha continues. First of these, Sallust presents the Numidians as a fickle lot in a candid and seemingly factual manner: “sed Metello iam antea experimentis cognitum erat genus, Numidarum infidum, ingenio mobile, novarum rerum avidum esse,” “but Metello already knew from previous experience the lot of treacherous Numidians, [men] of changing mind, to be eager for revolution” (46.1). Here, Sallust not only applies a blanket statement to all Numidians and takes its truth for granted, but outright calls the Numidians untrustworthy. A second instance reveals much the same judgment: “nam dolus Numidarum nihil languidi neque remissi patiebatur,” “for the artifice

130 Cf. 80.1: “Gaetulos, genus hominum ferum incultumque et eo tempore ignorant nominis Romani,” “the Gaetulians, a race of men wild and uncultured, and at that time ignorant of the Romans.”
of the Numidians endures nothing languid or relaxed”\(^\text{131}\) (53.6). In other words, Numidian trickery is relentless. This comment embodies a similar message as the last—that the Numidians are as a group untrustworthy and treacherous.\(^\text{132}\) As the war progresses, then, Sallust does not shy from making bold statements that disparage Rome’s African allies turned enemies.

As well as indicating certain prejudices against Numidians in the Roman view, Sallust also implies the location of the Numidian people along a racialized spectrum of social worth. In two passages, Sallust also indicates the existence of a social hierarchy in which Romans are located above Numidians as well as Latins. First, Sallust reports that a Numidian named Gauda, who was a rival for Jugurtha’s throne, asked for a protective unit of Roman guards from Metullus, who declined because, allegedly, such a task would be beneath Romans: Sallust says Metullus refuses “\textit{praesidium, quod contumeliosum in eos foret, si equites Romani satellites Numidae traderentur},” “the protection, because it would be insulting for them, if Roman knights\(^\text{133}\) were assigned as attendants to a Numidian” (65.2). It is not the case that Metellus cannot spare the men, or even simply that Gauda’s life is not so important for Roman politics,\(^\text{134}\) but that for a Roman to guard a Numidian would be disgraceful. Working off these context clues, it was presumably more natural for a Numidian to serve a Roman than for a Roman to serve a Numidian, suggesting a racial hierarchy in the Roman mind. Whereas one might think the renowned discipline of the

\(^{131}\) Not the most idiomatic translation.

\(^{132}\) Cf. Sallust’s similar criticism of the Numidian commons in 66.2: “\textit{nam volgus, uti plerumque solet et maxume Numidarum, ingenio mobile seditiosum atque discordiosum erat, cupidum novarum rerum, quieti et oto advorsum},” “for the common people, as is often and especially accustomed to Numidians, were seditious and discordant on account of their inborn fickleness, eager for new things, and averse to rest and leisure” (65.2).

\(^{133}\) Not the best word-choice, as it has anachronistic connotations, yet it conveys more of a social rank and militant sense than “horsemen.”

\(^{134}\) This may have been true, but it was not the basis for Metellus’ refusal.
Roman army would make appropriate any task a Roman soldier was assigned, Sallust indicates that some social stigmas transcend even military orders. Socially, Romans would suffer contumely by such an assignment. This reveals that the Numidians were certainly lower in social status than Romans in the view of Sallust’s character Metullus. A second indication of social hierarchy pertains to intra-Italian social strata. Sallust explains that Turpilius was beaten and put to death (verberatusque capite peonas), since he was only “civis ex Latio,” “of Latin citizenship” (69.4), the implication being that were he Roman such punishment would not be appropriate. And so, according to Sallust’ account, not only do Romans rank socially above Numidians, but they also bear legal privileges denied to other groups within Italy proper.

Sallust uses the term barbarus but a handful of times. The first instance is in reference to ancient African peoples when he is explaining the formation of contemporary groups. In this context, Sallust describes the term “Mauri” (Moors) as the product of the word “Medes” filtered through the “barbara lingua,” “barbarian language,” of the ancient Libyans, with whom the Medic soldiers of Hercules’ army reportedly intermarried (18.10). This use of barbara is very much like the word’s original linguistic use in Greek culture as denoting persons who spoke non-Greek. Accordingly, the word seems here only necessarily to connote a difference in language. Sallust’s disparaging remarks about the Numidians and Geatulians, however, suggests that the term might carry deeper cultural meaning for him. He further uses the word to describe the combined forces of Jugurtha’s Numidians and Bocchus’ Moors (98.2; 98.6; 101.2). Like Caesar, then, this term is applied

135 Indeed, J. C. Rolfe asserts that neither punishment was to be inflicted upon persons of Roman citizenship. *Sallust*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), 283.
increasingly as hostilities increase. As the peoples whom Sallust discusses become the 

enemy, they also become generalized and barbarized.

Sallust is slightly more systematic in his use of terminology for groups than Caesar. 
The Roman side of things is rather clear in Bellum Iugurthinum; the Romans are decidedly a 

“populus.” Sallust refers to Rome, almost formulaically, as the “populus Romanus” over 

thirty-five times throughout the work. He also takes pains, as indicated above, to 
distinguish between Roman soldiers and auxiliaries from Latin and Italian allies. When 
speaking of non-Roman Others, Sallust is much more frequent in his usage of “gens” than 

Caesar. He uses it to denote non-Roman groups in general at 31.20 and 81.1. He similarly 

applies this word to refer to the numerous peoples of Africa (17.1), indicating that sub-
groups such as the Numidians or Moors are each a gens. In keeping with this, the 

Numidians are specified as a singular gens at 18.12 and 62.1. In addition, the Gaetulians are 

referred to as a “genus” (80.1). Interestingly, “populus” is used to refer to the groups 
summoned as auxiliaries for the Romans by Marius for his campaign against the Numidians 
(84.2), as well as to Cyrene and Carthage (populi). This application to Carthage puts the 

Carthaginians on the same terminological level as the Romans, their one-time rival. 

Presumably auxiliary groups (likely Latins and Italians) would also be more on par with 

Romans than the Numidians. Thus, whether or not this is an intentional distinction made 
by Sallust is unclear, but there is a consistent separation between the groups he describes 

as a gens and those he labels a populus along either cultural or political terms. Thus, gens 
seems to be, at least for Sallust, the basic unit of Other groups. Some difference in cultural

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137 E.g., “nomine Latino” (39.2; 42.1) and “Italici generis” (47.2); compare also 40.3.
or political significance between a *gens* and a *populus* seems to be being made, although what exactly that difference is unclear.

### 2.4 Pomponius Mela's *Chorographia*

As a geographer, many of the peoples Mela mentions are given little or no description. Like other geographers, Mela's geography can be equated to one big list with opportunities for expansion. Some peoples and regions he takes the time to describe, others not. Similarly, much of what Mela reports pertains to the fame of the region or people described in Roman intellectual history. Thus, Pomponius Mela gives much in the way of historical and mythical reference to the Greco-Roman tradition in his accounts of the world's regions and peoples. This is mostly directly helpful to a study that looks at the ways in which Romans depict Others,\(^{138}\) however, Mela thankfully does expand his list of people and places to relate *some* ethnographic details. Mela gives three rounds of accounts of the world. He first gives a cursory overview of the world, and then he goes back through the regions in greater detail twice—first treating the central regions, i.e., closer to Rome and the Mediterranean Sea, and then treating the interiors of the continents. In his initial survey, he divides the world into three basic units: Asia, Europe, and Africa. He then chiastically begins his more detailed account with Africa, from which he proceeds through Asia and then to Europe.\(^{139}\)

Mela describes people more fully as he proceeds from Africa to Asia to Europe, with the result that less range in detail is given of African groups than for Asian or European

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\(^{138}\) Although that did not allow following this research topic in the present thesis, it could make for a fruitful study to analyze the way Mela applies Greco-Roman tradition to foreigners and to evaluate whether there is any culturally significant meaning behind which groups he associates with Greco-Roman myth and the way in which he does so.

\(^{139}\) This might represent an ascending tricolon of sorts, in which Africa, given first, is considered least important, and Europe, saved for last, the most valued, although Mela’s motivations behind his presentation cannot be known for certain.
The types of issues he discusses of African groups include: religion (1.26: 1.46); language (1.41; 1.44; 3.91); housing and residence patterns (1.41; 1.42; 1.44; 3.103); diet and eating habits (1.42; 1.43; 3.87); the animals of their lands (3.88; 3.98); attire (1.42; 1.47); economy and natural resources (1.42; 3.87; 3.103); law (1.42); marriage practice (1.42; 1.45; 1.46); and appearance and physical condition (1.48; 3.85; 3.91; 3.93; 3.96). Once again there is a concern with eating and sleeping and other basic behaviors of life.

Details given of Asiatic peoples pertain to: their climate, and environment (1.49; 1.512); natural resources and economy (1.61; 3.60; 3.62; 3.70; 3.79-80); housing and residence pattern (1.106; 1.117; 3.75); death and burial (1.57; 3.64-5); gender roles (1.57; 1.114); religion (1.58; 1.117); record keeping (1.59); daily habits (1.57; 1.106); level of innovation (1.65); naval skill and military tactics (1.65); recreation (1.106); diet (1.117; 3.64; 3.75; 3.82); attire (3.63; 3.75); the animals of their lands (3.62; 3.82); law and government (3.60; 1.106); and physical condition and appearance (1.106; 1.117; 3.63; 3.67; 3.75). Mela gives more cultural details here pertaining to the intellectual and social realms than he provided of African peoples. Such a difference in topics is not in itself conclusive but may suggest either Mela’s increased familiarity/knowledge of Asiatic intellectual tradition or a higher estimation of this tradition than the African one.

Lastly, the topics Mela discusses about European peoples are: death and burial (2.9; 2.18-19; 3.19); religion (2.9; 2.15; 2.18; 3.18; 3.37; 3.33; 3.58); economy and natural resources (2.10; 2.86; 3.38); war tactics and weapons (2.11; 3.33; 33.52); subsistence method (2.11); housing and residence pattern (2.10; 3.37); attire (2.14; 3.26; 3.33); climate (2.16; 3.17; 3.51); animals of their lands (2.1; 2.125-6); gender roles (2.19; 3.34-5);

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140 This parallels Caesar’s waning attention to social detail as he proceeds West from Gaul to Briton.
marriage (2.21); diet (2.21; 2.97; 3.56); language (3.15); value of hospitality (3.28); and physical condition and appearance (2.10; 2.32; 3.26; 3.51). Religion (and associated topics—death and burial) seems like a popular topic, more so than usual, perhaps indicating the wide range of culture Mela sees in Europe as compared to elsewhere. Once again, this could be a practical result of familiarity or indicative of cultural assumptions.

Mela has a lot more to say about Europe and Asia than Africa. Racially, this seems to indicate that these peoples were evaluated less fully by the Roman mind and essentialized according to a few characteristics. Mela’s relatively sparse representation here, however, may also be simply a result of the limits of Rome’s known world during his time and is not necessarily indicative of an actively dismissive mindset regarding African peoples. The Sahara Desert limited the extent to which Romans explored Africa, and the heat seems to have dissuaded exploration of the known regions, whereas Europe and Asia were extensively experienced by Roman armies.¹⁴¹

Physical features, by Mela’s account, had begun to define certain groups in the Roman mind. Comparing Mela to Caesar or Sallust is complicated, since Mela discusses all the known peoples of the world rather than simply a few of them as did Caesar or Sallust. Even so, Mela does seem to describe a slightly wider range of physical attributes than these two literary predecessors. Indeed, some groups Mela characterizes exclusively on the basis of appearance, mostly peoples of Africa and the wilds of Europe. Examples of these include the Blemyes, Satyrs, and Aegipanum of Africa and the Agarthyrsi, Hipodes, and Panotii of Europe. The only description provided of such groups is their abnormal physical condition.

¹⁴¹ Not to apologize for Mela, just to consider all possible explanations.
Mela’s treatment of physical difference, however, is not purely negative.¹⁴² He calls the Aethiopians dark (3.67) in a seemingly neutral way, and also remarks upon their physical beauty (3.85). While he mentions that they are concerned for such beauty, it is left open to interpretation whether this trait is indicative of a character flaw or simply a physical virtue.

Mela seems to give trace evidence for what has been described by modern scholars as a climate theory of racialization. One instance of this regards the Thracians, whose character roughens with the climate (2.16). Another pertains to the Germans, whose sturdy frames and endurance Mela suggests result from their habituation to their cold environs (3.26). Lastly, the Sarmatians were also characterized according to the condition of their environment: “gens habitu armisque Parthicae proxima, verum ut caeli asperioris ita ingenii,” “they are a people near to the Parthians in presence and arms, the reality of their nature more rough as indeed the sky”¹⁴³ (3.33). Put more identically, as their climate becomes harsher, so too does Parthians’ nature. Thus, their ferocity is determines by their rough climate.

As well as this climate-based determinant of physical and behavioral temperament, Mela presents a clear connection between isolated peoples at the interior of the continents and their apparent cultural inferiority. To start, the very layout of the work suggests that Mela considers the distinction of geographic location at either the exterior or interior a significant difference, as his first two books deal with the peoples of the exterior, while his third covers the interior groups. This distinction conveys the idea that such persons form a fundamentally different group that should be treated separately. Furthermore, a number of

¹⁴² For an interesting medieval illustration of these so-called “Plinian races,” see Gustav Jahoda, Images of Savages (New York: Routledge, 1999), 3.
passages indicate an ideology that interior equals inferior. For example, African coastal peoples are likened to the Romans, while those of the interior are disparaged as living a crude life (1.41-2). Interior Europe is similarly condemned as cruder than the exterior (2.12). The opposite of interior, but equally isolated, inhabitants of European islands also receive such negative characterization (sunt inculti omnes) (3.51). While Mela does make some exceptions,\textsuperscript{144} by and large he associates geographic distance from Roman contact, defined by interiority, with negative cultural character.

In addition to these judgmental accounts, there are several very Othering moments in Pomponius Mela’ Chorographia. One such moment is Mela’s description of the Atlantes, who alone of all humans do not dream (1.43). By verbalizing that they are alone of humans in this condition, he visually castigates them from the rest of humankind. Another is the account of the Egyptians, who “multo aliter a ceteris agunt,” “live much differently than the rest [of man]” (1.57-8). The inhabitants of India are also singled out as a “vario genere hominum,” “different kind of human” (3.62). Likewise, Mela seems to some degree disparaging on many occasions. The first is in his initial survey, in which he describes a number of African peoples as scarcely human (1.23). Admittedly this description is applied to the likes of Satyrs, yet Mela does not relegate their existence to the realm of myth as he easily could have. As such, he puts these semi-humans on par with other African people. Mela also seems to condemn the sexual habits of the Garamantes (1.45). By emphasizing the genealogical confusion that their indiscriminate couplings create, we can read the shock and horror of a Roman concerned with lineage and social prestige. Asian groups (1.207) and wild people near Cycnus (1.110) are also criticized. Mela speaks very unkindly

\textsuperscript{144} Mela does indicate that the interior of Greece and Macedon are, rather than brutish, famous for past deeds and accomplishments (2.36).
of the Taurians too, who “habent immanemque famam,” “have a horrid repute” (2.11). He is additionally scathing of the Gauls (3.18), Germans (3.28), Sarmatians (3.34), and certain islanders (3.51; 3.53), suggesting that his Roman viewpoint was not reserved in its judgment of Other groups.

For all this negative characterization, Mela uses the word barbarus very seldom—twice by my count. The first is as a simple label applied to the inhabitants of Corsica who are not given further description (2.122). The second is of a far African coastal people, whose name for a spring has been corrupted by their barbarian mouth (3.96). This use would seem purely linguistic in meaning, if it were not for the clear judgment Mela indicates in his account of far distant peoples throughout the Chorographia.

By far, Mela’s most widely used term to denote groups of humans is gens. Some variation of the word appears over thirty-seven times. This is followed closely by populus, used at approximately nineteen places. Mela seems to make a clear distinction between gentes and populi, a distinction which is evident in his discussion of the Sauromatae. Accordingly, the Sauromatae are one gens, but many populi (1.116). Thus, the difference between the two terms is either one of size, in which a gens is a larger category than populus, or one of quality, in which the words represent different elements of identity—i.e., cultural/racial versus political/locational. In support of the former distinction are the usages of each word at 2.59; Mela refers to the many “Italici populi” followed quickly by mention of the “Gallicos Italicosque gentes” (2.59). In the first case, populi refers to the various subgroups of the larger category “Italian.” In the second, the distinction is between two larger categories—“Italian” and “Gallic”—each of which can be identified as a gens. Thus, a gens seems to be a larger cultural category, which consists of multiple groups of
peoples, *populi*, who are differentiated from each other perhaps by political or geographic boundaries but defined by something cultural or typological in addition to geographical that makes them all of the Italian *gens*. That “*gens*” refers to an abstract racial type (defined either physically or culturally) instead of political affiliations is supported by the two uses of the label “Aethiopian,” which, Mela is quick to point out, do not refer to the same group of persons. Thus, two distinguishable parties belonging to the same *gens* much share affinities that transcend more location and convey identity within the Roman system of racialization.

2.5 Pliny the Elder’s *Historiae Naturalis*

Pliny the Elder’s encyclopedia, the *Historiae Naturalis*, is a vast corpus covering many topics. Necessity required limiting the books studied to those most pertinent to the objectives of this thesis. Accordingly, I looked at the first and last books of the encyclopedia, in which Pliny establishes his overall understanding of the world, and Books 3-7, which detail the regions and peoples within the world. Books 3-6 cover places and peoples regionally, while Book 7 explores the customs of humanity, especially oddities. While Book 1 and Book 37 (the last) were helpful for understanding Pliny’s worldview, the focus of my analysis concerns the ethnographic details provided in Books 3-7. Like Pomponius Mela’s *Chorographia*, much of the *Historiae Naturalis* is comprised of lists with occasional expansion and detail. Also like Mela, Pliny separates his account among Europe, Africa, and Asia. Europe is detailed in Books 3 and 4, while Book 5 is split between Africa (5.1-47) and Asia (5.48-151). Book 6 addresses all three areas, and Book 7 is organized topically rather than regionally.
Once again, Africa is given least range in societal consideration, and Asia the most. Europe, on the other hand, is given much more narrative space than both, taking up two books in lieu of part of one, even though the range of details mentioned about European peoples is smaller than that of Asiatic groups. Pliny describes the following of peoples of Europe: environment and climate (3.40-41; 4.29; 4.88; 4.89-91); subsistence method, economy, and natural resources (3.40-41; 3.60; 3.138; 3.152); diet (4.88; 4.95); housing and residence pattern (4.89-91); religion (4.88-91); daily life (4.89); naval ability (4.104); death and burial (4.89-91); character traits, such as lying among the Greeks (5.4); and physical condition and appearance (4.40; 4.88; 4.95).

Once again, Pliny proceeds from Europe south across the Mediterranean and covers the regions and inhabitants of the African continent next. Of African peoples, Pliny describes less: language (5.1; 5.45); the animals of their lands (5.5; 5.18; 5.42); natural resources (5.6; 5.14; 5.22; 5.34); housing and residence pattern (5.1; 5.34; 5.45); climate (5.14; 5.24); diet (5.45); religion (5.45); character traits, such as lasciviousness among the Satyrs (5.7); and physical condition and appearance (5.46). There is little societal coverage here, besides religion, but instead a focus on natural factors. Pliny mentions language, which was not accounted for among European peoples. Likely this is more important in this context as African languages would have been more disparate from Latin than other European tongues.

Asia receives the fullest account. Pliny dwells especially around India. The aspects which he mentions about the various peoples considered to be part of Asia include: economy and natural resources (5.65; 5.76; 6.4; 6.54; 6.67; 6.68-9); innovation (5.67); government (5.82; 6.76; 6.89; 6.186; 6.190); climate (5.88; 6.55; 6.57-8); diet (6.14; 6.34-5;
6.53; 6.55; 6.109; 6.190; 6.195); housing and residence pattern (6.34-5; 6.89; 6.109); naval ability (5.59); law (6.47); social hierarchy (6.66; 6.89); gender roles (6.76; 6.186); language (6.88; 6.95; 6.109); religion (6.89); subsistence method (6.98); attire (6.109; 6.190); the social practice of shunning (6.91); character traits such as being mild-mannered (6.45), fierce (6.47); and hating gold (6.133); and physical condition and appearance (6.11; 6.34-5; 6.88; 6.91; 6.109; 6.162; 6.187; 6.190; 6.195). Pliny's concern for natural resources and luxury commodities is much greater here. He is also very attentive to giving a greater range of social aspects here in addition to the physical observations.

Pliny is very concerned throughout his work to point out cities’ and peoples’ relationship to Rome. As such, for much of the encyclopedia, at least the portions pertaining to regions politically involved with Rome, Pliny is careful to delineate which towns and groups fall on a spectrum of rights, in which Roman municipalities or colonies are at the top, followed by places granted Latin rights, those which are free, those bound to Rome by treaty, and, lastly, those which pay tribute. Thus, Pliny’s view of the world is one that is relative to Roman politics and characterized by Roman conquest.

Pliny’s focus on physical aspects of difference is greater than that of the previous authors. He gives more diverse information about phenotypic attributes. He relates the color of eyes, hair and skin on a number of occasions. We are also apprised of peoples’ height and agility. Longevity and hairiness are recounted. Pliny even describes special physical abnormalities (beyond the dog-headed deformity types), such as a group’s ability to disappear or to cure ailments with its members’ saliva (7.13-15). It is also worth mentioning that Pliny notes that the most wondrous of peoples—namely the Aethiopians and the Indians—are also the darkest (7.21). Much like the range in description in general,
Pliny’s accounts of physicality are most numerous for Asia, at eleven descriptions, and least numerous for Africa at three. Of the oddities noted in Book 7, five descriptions pertain to physical appearance or conditions, all of which are of peoples in Africa or Asia.

Pliny presents a definite link between both a group’s geography and their physical type and between their physical and behavioral realities. In 6.18, Pliny connects physicality to behavior as a determining factor when he discusses the Aethiopians:

Animalium hominumque monstratificas effigies circa extremitates eius gigni minime mirum, artifici ad formanda corpora effigiesque caelandas mobilitate ignea.145

It is no wonder the extremities of this place birthed monstrous forms of animals and humans, their bodies and shapes being carved by fire, on account of the mobility of fire. (6.18)

Thus, the Aethiopians’ known proximity to the fiery, uninhabitable central zone of the earth causes Pliny to depict their physical composition as being determined by their climate. Furthermore, he articulates physical condition as resultant from geographical location in two instances. First, he mentions a group in the Himalayas who cannot leave the region, because they are unable to breath elsewhere (7.11). Thus, these people are very literally tied to their geographical location, their physical condition not allowing them to survive elsewhere. Then, when Pliny is describing the Aethiopians, he says that they are tall and painless, for the sun makes them so hardy: “tam moderato solis vapore durari,” “hardy to such an extent on account of the heat of the sun” (7.22). Pliny, thus, presents an intensified version of the climate theory of racialization evident in Pomponius Mela’s Chorographia.

Much as the climate-based racialization is more intense in Pliny’s Historiae Naturalis, so too do his judgments seem to be amplifications of the observations presented

by Mela. Many of the very same accounts appear in Pliny’s encyclopedia exaggerated and racialized compared to his predecessor (e.g. the non-dreaming Atlantes). On many occasions, Pliny is critical of the peoples whom he describes. He notes of certain Liburnian groups “populorum pauca effatu digna,” “few of the peoples are worthy of mention” (3.139). The Greeks are cited on three occasions for character flaws—unreliability (3.152), vanity (4.4), and lying (5.4). Pliny demeans the Scythians (4.80; 5.53), condemns the African Atalantes (5.45), whom Mela merely Othered, and speaks harshly of the Numidians (5.22). He says that Egypt is of no importance (5.60), compares the Seres to animals (5.55), and articulates the animality of foreigners (7.7). While this last observation is perhaps some mitigating blip of self-awareness meant to temper the accounts Pliny has given, its assumption as fact indicates a more highly racialized worldview than that of Caesar, who took pains to differentiate between various peoples among the Gauls and Germans. Much like this explanation of human tendency, Pliny attempts to rationalize some of the very traits which he portrays harshly, such as cannibalism, which he relates to Greco-Roman mythic traditions (7.9-10). This has the effect of almost normalizing the difference Pliny observes, because he can still relate them to his own cultural tradition, albeit a cultural tradition of the mythic Other.

Perhaps simply the result of the length of the work, which is much longer than the previous authors, Pliny also much more prolific in his labelling of groups as barbarians. He does so for a number of reasons and in a number of ways. He applies the term generally to peoples of a certain area of Spain (3.28). The first precise application is to two groups in

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146 These people, simply cited as strange by Mela, Pliny describes as inferior on account of their strangeness.
147 This particular passage will be addressed more fully in section three on p. 89.
148 Cf. 6.2; 6.88; 6.168; 6.190.
149 Specifically, the Odyssey’s Laestragonians and Cyclops.
Macedon (3.145), followed by the Scythians (4.44) and a people near the Cimbri (4.99). These Northern groups, we have seen, were typically thought of as barbaric in Roman thought. All the peoples near Mt. Atlas are called *barbari* (5.11), as well as some Syrians (5.82), the inhabitants of Thynia (5.151) and certain Armenians (6.27). Another general use applies the term to whatever barbaric peoples destroyed a city founded by Alexander the great (6.47). Pliny uses the word *barbarus* a total of nine times throughout the five books on peoples.

Pliny seems to employ terms denoting social categories in a deliberate fashion. He uses some form of *gens* some ninety times, and *populus* over twenty-four times. In the very beginning of this treatise on the world’s peoples, Pliny portrays Rome as the conqueror of all *gentes* (3.5). This statement suggests that Pliny views the *gens* as the basic unit of categorizing humans. In Pliny’s encyclopedia, *gens* transcends location (3.13); the Seres, Aethiopians, and Pygmies are all mentioned in multiple locations, suggesting that that these categories must be something racially-based and not tied to a specific political body. By comparison, terms such as *genus/genera* seems to denote larger groups, as we see them applied to the groups Greeks (3.42), Germans (4.99-100), and Gauls (4.104), each of which consists of a number of *gentes*. Moreover, terms such as *tribus*, which Pliny uses but once in these books, seem to connote primitiveness (3.116). As we saw with Mela, a *gens* according to Pliny consists of several *populi* (e.g., 3.124; 3.133; 4.6). Pliny also indicates the difference in scope between *civitates* and *nationes* (which seems to have political ramifications not conveyed by the culturally-significant *gens*), the latter of which is larger (5.30).
2.6 Tacitus’ Germania

Tacitus is the last author analyzed in this study, and the dates of his work, *de origine et situ Germanorum*, or the *Germania* for short, are within two decades of the terminal date of our study period.\(^{150}\) The *Germania*, as the original title suggests, is an ethnographic account of the German peoples of north Europe. The ethnography was written shortly after Tacitus’ first work, the *Agricola*, both published c. 98 CE.\(^{151}\) Tacitus came from an equestrian family, likely located in Northern Italy or Gallia Narbonensis.\(^{152}\) As J. B. Rives notes, he was “a political historian, concerned with analysing the nature and effects of power.”\(^{153}\) This is evident in the *Germania*, in which Tacitus finds ample opportunity to comment upon Roman societal flaws, presumably fueled by power and imperialistic agenda, through comparison with German mores.

Since Tacitus discusses the Germans throughout the entire *Germania*, he is able to cover many components of German culture, such as: racial mixture/purity (2.1); government (12.3); social hierarchy and slavery (7.1; 13.3-4 25); settlement patterns (15.1); method of subsistence (45.3-4) environment and climate (2.2; 5.1-2); language (43.2 45.2); record keeping (2.3); religion (2.3; 9.1-3; 39.2; 43.4); mythic tradition (3.3)economy and natural resources (5.4; 6.1); divination (10.1-6); level of technological innovation (16.3-4); diet (23); burial practice (27); coming of age ritual (13.1); clothing (6.3; 17.1-3); war-centricity (3.1); discipline (5.3); weapons and war tactics (6.1-2; 45.3-4); ships (44.3); entertainment (24); succession and family life (19.5; 20.1; 20.5); chastity and

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\(^{151}\) For a timeline of Tacitus’ works and their importance to the modern understanding of Roman history, see Rhiannon Ash’s “Introduction” to *Oxford Readings in Tacitus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp 1-35.


\(^{153}\) Ibid., 45.
marriage (18-19); gender roles (7.4; 8.1-2); assembly and political life (11.6-12.3); physicality and appearance (4.2-3; 20.1; 20.3; 38.2-4); and character traits, such as laziness (15.1). There is more emphasis on the occult—religion, myth, divination—than seen previously. Tacitus is also very concerned with social order, evidenced by his focus on gender roles, social strata, government, and assembly.

Tacitus focuses on physical or appearance-based elements in his descriptions to a much larger extent than other authors we have looked at, especially Caesar and Sallust. He accordingly provides a greater variety of appearance-based descriptions, so that his audience is left with a much more vivid image of the Germans about whom he writes. We learn that the Germans have blue eyes and red hair, are tall and strong, and are enduring of the elements (4.2-3). Tacitus makes clear that Germans on the whole share this identical physique (4.2-3). We also are told of the Germans’ casual nudity (20.1) and unique hairstylings (38.2-4), about which Tacitus goes into some detail. He even explains that German girls are also tall (20.3), a consideration not previously seen in the Roman authors—previous authors left descriptions of physical appearance in the general, and did not account for difference by gender. Tacitus thinks that the difference in appearance of these people are worth considering in full, and these apparent differences do seem to form a substantial basis for their Othering. In fact, the visceral effect of the very sight of the Germans is evident in a passage of the Germania:

\[
\text{Ceterum Harii super vires; quibus enumeratos paulo ante populos antecedunt,}
\text{truces insitae feritati arte ac tempore lenocinantur: nigra scuta, tincta corpora:}
\text{atras ad proelia noctes legunt ipsaque formidine atque umbra feralis exercitus}
\text{terrorem inferunt, nullo hostium sustinente novum ac velut infernum adspectum.}^{154}
\]

The Harii, beyond the strength in which they surpass those peoples previously enumerated, are ferocious and further this inborn ferocity by cunning and timing: shields black, bodies dyed, they choose dark nights for battles and by dread itself and deathly shades they instill terror in the army; no one of [their] enemy sustaining this new and seemingly infernal spectacle. (43.5)

And so, the very sight of the Germans instills the fear of death, quite literally, into the Roman army. Tacitus describes that the soldiers are unable to bear such a hellish vision.

Just as Tacitus values the appearance of the Germans more than earlier Roman writers, he also presents a link between Germanic physical reality and character. This link comes in the form of a climate theory of racialization, which, we may recall, scholas often remark about Greco-Roman civilizations. Accordingly, based upon their geographic location and its climate, peoples’ temperaments and physicality are determined and fixed.

In the Germania, a somewhat subtler version is presented by Tacitus in his first description of Germanic appearance.

Unde habitus quoque corporum, quamquam in tanto hominum numero, idem omnibus: truces et caeruli oculi, rutilae comae, magna corpora et tantum ad impetum valida: laboris atque operum non eadem patientia, minimeque sitim aestumque tolerare, frigora atque inediam caelo solove adsueverunt.

Whence the appearance of their bodies, as much as possible in such a number of men, is identical among them all. Fierce blue eyes, red hair, great bodies and so powerful in attack; nor the same endurance of labor and work, and less so tolerance of thirst and heat, cold and hunger; they are so accustomed on account of the soil and sky. (4.2-3)

The Greeks are strong and powerful, but neither enduring nor tolerant of physical discomfort—both conditions resultant from their environment. Thus, it is not so much in Tacitus’ case that the Germans’ physicality determines their character, but rather that their
geography determines both, and thereby their physicality can be indicative of their character.

On a number of occasions, Tacitus provides seeming criticism of the Germans and their lifestyle, or otherwise indicates that he finds their habits unusual. First among these, he is rather condemning of Germania as a place to live. He describes the land thus:

*Quis porro, praeter periculum horridi et ignoti maris, Asia aut Africa aut Italia relica Germaniam peteret, informem terris, asperam caelo, tristem cultu aspectuque, nisi si patria sit?*

Moreover who, other than on account of the dangers of a horrid and unknown sea, having left Asia or Africa or Italy, would seek Germany, unsightly with respect to its lands, rough in climate, gloomy in cultivation and appearance, unless it was his fatherland? (2.2)

This description is rather Othering in that it singles out the Germans completely from the rest of the world's peoples. Furthermore, Tacitus seems to characterize the Germans as lazy, beyond which he articulates that their assortment of character traits—warlike and lazy—is odd: (15.1). Just as he finds this mixture of temperament strange, he wonders rather disparagingly at their dirty, nude condition (20.1).155

Tacitus does not use the word barbarian very often, yet his assumption of the Germans as such is nevertheless lurking behind his accounts and reveals itself at several points in the narrative. He first calls the Germans this at 18.1, when he is describing their chaste lifestyle: “*nam prope soli barbarorum singulis oxoribus contenti sunt,*” “for they, nearly alone of barbarians, are content with single wives” (18.1). He juxtaposes their barbarous state with this cultural value and custom, as if to say, “who would have thought that barbarians could be so noble?” His comment reveals a basic assumption of their barbarousness, since this cultural aspect is not the basis for Tacitus ascribing the to them.

155 Cf. two other judgmental passages at 36.2 and 46.3-6.
Conversely, Tacitus does barbarize the Germans on account of the customs he describes among them in the case of certain religious practices they allegedly keep, namely, human sacrifice: “caesoque publice homine celebrant barbari ritus horrenda primordia,” “with a human slaughtered in public, they celebrate the horrendous commencement of their barbaric rite” (39.2). Tacitus at least has a reasoning behind this judgment, however right or wrong this claim may be. Just further in the narrative, however, he once again simply labels the Germanic Aestii barbari, with no accompanying explanatory detail except that the Aestii do not know the value of amber (45.5). Indeed, it seems that Tacitus does not feel he must explain this labelling, suggesting that the Barbarian status of the Germans was a fixed tenant of Roman worldview. In all, Tacitus indicates that balefulness to other humans and ignorance of economic value define the barbarian, which he presupposes the Germans to be from the start anyway.

Tacitus uses the word gens very frequently, over thirty-six times throughout the work. He seems to utilize “gens” to denote two different levels of categorization of Germans. In the first section of his ethnography, he treats the Germans as a whole, providing information about larger customs which pervade most Germans peoples’ lives. The general treatise extends from 1.1 to 27.3. During this portion of the text, Tacitus refers to the Germans as a whole as a gens, as when he insists that all Germans are, in fact the same group, “similem gentem,” (4.1). After 27.3, conversely, Tacitus discusses the different subgroups of German and the various customs of each. During this segment he refers to many of these subgroups as gentes as well, although he is careful to delineate how certain groups are sub-categories of larger groups. This seems to suggest that gens represents a
basic unit of distinction for Tacitus, so that what qualifies as a *gens* changes as his scope changes.

...

Thus, as we progress through the authors, certain evolutions in ethnographic presentation occur. Judgment, Othering, generalization, and criticism of groups seem to increase. Indicative of this is the rise in labelling groups as barbarians. Additionally, there is an increasingly systematic application of terms for grouping humans, indicating a more structured racial system. Both such shifts, in combination with an increased focus on conquest in the texts, suggest a correlation between expansion of the Empire and more developed racial ideology.
Part III: Diachronic Analysis

To return to our opening quote by Rodney Coates, then,

Race and ethnicity, much like water and air, are all around us...the only way to confront this demon is to continually shed light upon it...Discrete episodes must be approached over time if we are to identify racial periods, systems and processes.\(^\text{156}\)

As the last of these observations suggests, in order to get a sense of the larger racial system at play in Roman society, it is necessary to take a diachronic look at the evidence. Individual accounts can give us important information, but only when we assemble these pieces into the larger puzzle can we get a sense of the cultural system as a whole.

3.1 Views of specific groups across authors

In the previous section, we examined the ways in which each of our five authors depicted Other peoples, addressing both the types of detail given about them and the level of judgment made about their customs. In most cases, we were able to discern differences between the way an author depicted one group versus another, indicating the range of racializations a Roman might have subscribed to at a given point in time. Whereas that was a study of the Roman worldview of numerous Others at a given point, here we will do the opposite and look at how the view of a particular group changed through time, as evidenced by the authors’ depictions. This will afford us a diachronic view of Roman perceptions of specific peoples. We have seen that, even within a single work, the view of a group can change, as with the Gauls in Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* or the Numidians in

Sallust’s *Bellum Iugurthinum*, who were increasingly generalized, Othered, and criticized as they continued to be enemies of the Roman people. In addition to intra-author evolutions, inter-author evolutions in representation of specific groups indicate the changing and evolving location of each group in Rome’s racial system. This author-to-author analysis is meant to enhance an understanding of the evolutions in Roman viewpoint already apparent.

For the sake of time and facility, we will look at the groupings most commonly addressed across the works—in Europe, the Gauls, Germans, and Britons, and in Africa, the Numidians. Of these groups, the Gauls and Germans are given more extensive treatment. Representations of their cultures appear in Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico*, Pomponius Mela’s *Chorographia*, Pliny the Elder’s *Historiae Naturalis*, and Tacitus’ *Germania*. The Britons and Numidians are treated less fully across the authors. In the case of the Numidians, we can compare representations in Sallust’s *Bellum Iugurthinum* with those in Pliny’s *Historiae Naturalis*. Mela, unfortunately, has little to say about the Numidians. For the Britons, we can compare representations by Caesar and Mela, as Pliny and Tacitus have minimal treatment of their isle.

These four peoples provide an excellent range of Others to analyze from the Roman perspective, as each group had a different experience with the Roman Empire. The Gauls actually became incorporated in the Empire and were assimilated culturally (at least to some degree), if we can believe the authors. This sets them apart from the other groups,

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157 It should be noted that my treatment of these groups is not an attestation that such categories are equal to our modern understanding of “races,” or even that they represent categories on the same level within the racial system. These are simply the peoples whom our authors discuss at some length or who appear across multiple works. Indeed, Numidians seem to be a smaller category than the Germans or Gauls—a *gens* as opposed to *genera*. 

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because at the onset of our study they are Others, currently being conquered, and by the end, they are part of the Roman Empire, assimilated for over a hundred years. They thus seem to make a transition across the barbarian line.

The Germans, on the other hand, are never fully incorporated into Rome. Despite a number of conquests throughout the decades of the late Republic and early Empire, the last author in our time range, Tacitus, makes it clear that the border of Rome’s *imperium* is the Rhine, beyond which lie the Germans (*Germania*, 30.1). Therefore, the Germans are always right on the edge of Roman rule, neighboring barbarians who accordingly posed a constant threat. This perhaps explains their continuous representation in Roman literature as menacing and ferocious and why war is the largest focus in their portrayals.

The Britons experienced something in between these two groups, and to much less an extent. They were somewhat “conquered” and incorporated, yet being so far from Rome posed little threat anyway. The British Isles experienced war, conquest, and withdrawal at the hands of the Romans. During the time rang of our study, they were largely unknown barbarian peoples whom, Mela informs us, where conquered mid-first century CE. Their representations by these authors seem to embody a Roman curiosity for the distant Other, without the personal investment evoked by a nearby threat.

Lastly, the Numidians maintained a different relationship with Rome. At the beginning of our study, the kingdom of Numidia is an ally and client state of Rome. It therefore does not experience the same degree of Othering and the same assumption of barbarity, although the Numidians were certainly regarded as different and somewhat inferior to Romans. Rather than shifting from being outside of Rome to being within Rome, the Numidians simply underwent a change in legal status, from ally to province. The war
with Jugurtha is represented as more of a political dispute than a cultural conquest, as in the case of the Gallic Wars. Thus, treated as an unruly vassal state, instead of fearsome barbarian Others, Numidian representations are coolly judgmental in lieu of viciously barbarizing.

We will begin with the Gauls, whose representation across the authors is most complex, and proceed through the European groups, touching upon the Numidians last.

·Gauls·

The perceptions of the Gauls in the Roman literature remains mixed as we proceed from author to author. The complexity of the category "Gallic" seems to have created this ambivalence in the Roman mind, according to which some Gauls (the more assimilated) were praiseworthy while others (closer to *Germania*) were still uncivilized.

Julius Caesar is the first of these authors to describe Gallic society and, as perhaps expected, has the most to say about the Gauls. We learn a lot about individual Gallic peoples over the course of the commentary. On a general level, Caesar explains that the Gauls used to be fiercer than they currently were in Caesar’s time, fiercer even than the Germans (5.54; 6.24), and that they became weak on account of Roman luxuries (6.24). This comment, however, is not an apology for the Gauls or a condemnation of Roman culture, as it might be read in Tacitus. Caesar is a firm disciplinarian, and would likely condemn such self-indulgence among Romans too. It is the Gauls’ flaw that they allowed themselves to lose their discipline, however, this is a common vice that plagues Romans and Gauls alike, and therefore does not seem to be the basis of Othering in Caesar’s view. There are definite instances of Othering, such as the supposed practice of human sacrifice in Gallic religion (6.16), but, by and large, Caesar seems to evaluate Gallic culture as something able to be
compared with Roman society, and not as belonging to an entirely alien category. The aspects of Gallic life which Caesar relates in his ethnographical remarks in Book 6 touch upon Gallic government, religion, and family life, issues that were important in late Republican Rome. Thus, overall, Caesar's perspective of the Gauls seems reasonably non-racialized, commenting upon Gallic virtue and vice much as he might about Roman, although his account does become more generalizing and critical as hostilities ensue.

By the time Pomponius Mela wrote his *Chorographia*, some ninety years had passed since Caesar's Gallic Wars. Mela's account displays ambivalence towards Gauls, according to geographic location. In his account of the exteriors, that is the lands and peoples closest to the Mediterranean coasts and Rome, Mela has good things to say about Gallia Narbonensis, the province of Gaul just to the west of Italy, present south-west France. "Haec a Phocaeis oriunda et olim inter asperos posita, nunc ut pacatis ita dissimillimiis tamen vicina gentibus," "this place, originating from Phocaeans and once situated among crude [people], now neighbors as dissimilar as they are pacified" (2.77). The interior, or more isolated regions of Gaul do not fare so well; while Mela calls the land "amoena," "pleasant," he notes the people are not, citing in specific their practice of human sacrifice (3.17-18).

In the *Historiae Naturalis*, Pliny similarly gives several treatments of the Gauls. He praises Narbonensis, citing its "virorumque morumque dignatione," "worthiness of men and customs" (3.31), going so far as to say that it is practically part of Italy: "breviterque Italia verius quam provincia," "and in short [it is] more truthfully Italy than a province" (3.31). Gallia Transpadana he also calls the eleventh region of Italy (3.123). Thus, he focuses on the positive assimilations of Gaul.
Tacitus’ *Germania* was written over a hundred years after Caesar’s conquests, yet presents much of the same mixed perception of the Gauls that we have seen thus far. Tacitus, although his focus is upon the Germani, speaks about the Gauls in his account of true German groups. He mentions the existence of internal racism according to individual groups’ Germanness (28.4). He also portrays some Gallic peoples as literal tools of the Roman army, comparing them to swords and spears (29.3). This characterization paints them favorably in terms of Roman esteem, but objectifies and dehumanizes them. Ultimately Tacitus explains that some Gauls are considered very Roman (29.3) while others are rather contemptible (24.4). Here, we can see that the line between barbarian and Roman lies somewhere within Gaul, dividing the Gallic peoples between Rome’s own and Other. According to which side of the line Gallic peoples were located, they either became increasingly praised or increasingly criticized in Roman literature as time passed.

-Germans-

Representation of the Germans, whose identity must be distinguished from the nationality of the modern day,\(^{158}\) remained fixedly barbaric throughout Roman accounts. Caesar introduces the group as “*hominis feros ac barbaros temperaturos*,” “men of fierce and barbarous temperament” (1.33). Caesar is the first Roman author to treat the Germani as distinct from the Gauls,\(^{159}\) and therefore his characterization sets the scene for their perception by Romans. Pomponius Mela’s coverage upholds this portrayal of the Germans as fierce barbarians, as the Germani are not included in his first survey of the more civilized “exterior” peoples of the world. Included in the “interior” portion of his geography, the

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\(^{158}\) For a fuller treatment on complexity of issues concerning the use of the label “Germans” to refer to the Germani, see J. B. Rives, *Tacitus: Germania* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

\(^{159}\) Ibid., 21.
Germans are reduced to being huge and fierce (3.26), "asper incultique," "crude and uncivilized" (3.28). Pliny follows this characterization, tracing the Germans to Scythian origins\(^{160}\) (4.81), and labelling the Germanic Cimbri "barbaris" (4.97). Tacitus, who provides the most thorough account of the Germani, is similarly not afraid to barbarize them. Although the scope of his *Germania* suggests a more evaluative approach to interpreting the Germans, his treatment of the Germans, as has been pointed out by scholars,\(^{161}\) is oriented more towards commentary upon Rome than it is upon salvaging the reputation of the Germans. Indeed, Tacitus’ casual use of the word barbarian and racialized accounts of German customs reveals that despite his admiration of certain noble qualities, he still very much considers the Germans barbarian Others. Tacitus’ Germans are noble savages, but still savages.

Britons

From the start, the Britons are distinguished as Others. Caesar is the first to attempt to conquer Briton, and approaches them as a barbarian enemy. Caesar describes a certain people in Briton, the Canti, as "humanissimi," "most human" (5.14), implying that the general lot is not very human, and these persons are simply more so than others. He includes in his relatively brief treatment of the Britons the fact that the Romans are superior to them (5.15). By the era in which Pomponius Mela composed his *Chorographia*, Briton had been recently "conquered," and Mela promises that more information about these largely unknown peoples will come soon after the impending triumph (3.49). He does not give too many details about the Britons, presumably because he does not have them,

\(^{160}\) Another Northern group whose barbarity is frequently remarked in the geographies.

and characterizes them as a whole as “inculti omnes,” “all uncivilized” (3.51). He is also very scathing of Ireland, the farthest removed of these far removed islands (3.53). Thus, as peripheral entities, the Britons rank rather low in Mela’s geographic view of culture. Interestingly, Pliny is silent about the customs of the Britons, suggesting that Mela may have been erroneous in his prediction that the Roman world would soon know much more about the Britons. Tacitus also says nothing of the Britons, although this is arguably less surprising considering his aim to detail the Germans.

-Numidians-

Sallust’s depiction of the Numidians undergoes a change as his narrative progresses, just as Caesar’s representation of the Gauls did. The reason for this change is less obvious, as at least in Caesar’s case he composed his commentary annually and was actually engaging with the Gauls during the time of composition. Sallust’s history was composed after the actual events of the war with Jugurtha, however, it may be that as the narrative shifted to a focus on war it was necessary to generalize and Other the Numidians to correspond with their position as enemy. Even so, Sallust begins the work treating Numidian individuals as he might Roman individuals in the way he builds their character and evaluates their personal virtues and flaws. It is only as the war continues that he begins to make over-arching generalizations about the Numidian people as a whole, citing their fickleness and treachery. The perspective on Numidians in Pliny’s ethnographic books is less rounded in addition to being less kind. Pliny basically reduces Numidia to marble and beasts (the animal kind, not a judgment about Numidian humanity) (5.22) and is quick to point out that Numidia is under Rome’s imperium (5.29). Therefore, what respect was

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162 Pliny’s account of Britain (4.102-104) simply surveys the location and size of the various islands and remarks upon the unusual calendric situation of some of the regions, where day and night have odd cycles.
accorded in Sallust seems to have been removed from the Roman perspective by Pliny’s
time a century later.

Thus, we see that by and large the depiction of Othered groups grew more critical
and demeaning as time passed. While the Gauls of Narbonensis, already Romanized by the
advent of the Empire, were able to fully assimilate, and therefore the Roman perception of
them became more flattering with time, the other groups retained their status as Other and
experienced increasingly derogatory portrayals.

3.2 Evolution in Worldview: Roman Superiority

Caesar makes sure to emphasize the superiority of the Roman troops in his account
of the Britons: “tamen ut nostri omnibus partibus superiors fuerint,” “our [soldiers],
however, were superior in all respects” (5.15). The superiority of Rome is also implied by
the very details of the Gallic Wars. Rome is in a position to conquer and determine the
proceedings of other groups of people, Gauls and Germans alike. The portrayed sentiments
of the German king Ariovistus implies at least a German view of all the cultures—German,
Gallic, and Roman—as equals. Ariovistus argues that it should not mean anything to Caesar
or to Rome for his Germanic people to conquer Gallic ones. He presumes he has as much
agency as Rome. The very fact that Rome can and does intercede to determine the political
landscape of Europe portrays Roman political supremacy. Thus, it would be a mistake to
claim that Caesar does not portray Rome as superior in his account. That being said, the
supposed superiority of Rome in De Bello Gallico is neither constantly flaunted nor rooted
in racial difference. Rather Caesar’s portrayal of Rome’s preeminence can be interpreted as
a simple matter of political and martial strategy and might. Rome is successful, in this view,
not because she must be, but because she is in the hands of able and disciplined men.
Sallust is a bit more forward about Roman supremacy. He articulates that Rome was born to power (31.11) and is the ruler of all (31.20). Like Caesar, though, these comments merely seem to explain the political control Rome was currently exerting over her surrounding territory. They do not seek to justify Rome’s inherent supremacy. Pomponius Mela remains rather reserved in this regard, simply acknowledging Italy’s fame (2.58) as the reasoning behind his lack of description of the land.

This is not the case for Pliny the Elder, who gives many accounts of Roman world dominance and justifies Roman superiority on the basis of divine intent and cultural mission.

Nec ignoro ingrati ac segnis animi existimari posse merito si obiter atque in transcurso ad hunc modum dicatur terra omnium terrarum alumna eadem et parens, numine deum electa quae caelum ipsum clarius faceret, sparsa congregaret imperia ritusque molliret et tot populorum discordes ferasque linguas sermonis commercia contraheret ad colloquia et humanitatem homini dare, breviterque una cunctarum gentium in toto orbe patria fieret.

I am not ignorant that I may be deemed ungrateful and lazy in mind, worthily so, if I should speak this way in passing and in haste about the land that is at the same time the nurslng and parent of all lands, chosen by the power of the gods to make heaven itself more brilliant, to gather dispersed empires and to soften customs and to draw together to conversation, by the commerce of speech, the discordant and wild tongues of peoples and to dare to give humanity to men and, in short, to be the one fatherland of all the peoples in the whole world. (3.39)

Thus, Pliny very explicitly delineates Rome’s mission to civilize the world. He attributes Roman political success to divine will, claiming that Rome has been charged by the gods to spread her culture to the peoples of the world in order to glorify the heavens. The numerous tasks Pliny attributes to Rome’s mission include uniting existing political entities, making groups’ customs more gentle and refined, spreading the Latin language, and thereby promoting humanity. Rome, then, in Pliny’s mind is superior to other peoples.
linguistically, culturally, and religiously. These are the main bases upon which other groups are different and also inferior. Pliny’s statement that Rome should bring humanity to the world suggests that these peoples do not already have humanity. Therefore, Rome is the cultural salvation and pinnacle of civilization.

Further, Pliny verbalizes his conception of the Roman view of Others in a harshly honest way: “parvum dictu sed inmensum aestimatione, tot gentium sermones, tot linguae, tanta loquendi varietas ut externus alieno paene non sit hominis vice,” “it is small to say but immense to estimate, there are so many speeches among peoples, so many languages, such variety in speaking that an outsider is scarcely human to a person from another culture” (7.7). This observation further calls into question the humanity of foreigners and similarly cites language as an essential basis for Othering.

Tacitus seems to take a reactionary stance to this understanding. In line with his emphasis on the effects of political power, he seems to be telling a cautionary tale in pointing out Roman vice. As Ellen O’Gorman points out, Tacitus portrays Rome as precipitously situated at the top of the world.\(^\text{163}\) Thus, the supremacy of Rome having already been established, Tacitus does not need to emphasize it any further. He does, however, seem concerned that Rome stay in her current supreme state, and therefore utilizes his ethnography of the Germans to point out areas in which Roman society could and should improve. He says that Rome is superior in discipline (30.2); this is an articulation of the portrayal created by Caesar, but also seems to be something Tacitus attributes to Romans inherently, not something that they have honed.

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\(^{163}\) O’Gorman, ibid., 111.
Therefore, Roman perception of Rome’s own superiority seems to have grown and become racialized over time.

3.4 The diction of classification: ? > Genus > Gens > Populus

Language is an excellent medium for communication. Words have both denotations and connotations and are thereby able to communicate much beyond simply their agreed upon meanings. As such, the way an individual uses language to express a concept can give an idea of how that individual feels about the concept. Indeed, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva articulates the importance of language to ideology: “the style of an ideology refers to its peculiar linguistic manners and rhetorical strategies...the technical tools that allow users to articulate its frames and story lines.”

Thus, because word choice is such an important factor in the expression of ideas, studying the specific words utilized by Roman authors in their description of societal categories can shed light upon the structure of and ideology behind their racial system. This section explores the use of categorizational terms across the authors with an aim to create a picture of the larger system within which the authors place the groups of people they discuss.

From Caesar to Tacitus a more systematic employment of categorizing terminology arises. Caesar’s use of this sort of terminology was very minimal. More often than not, he avoided the application of classificatory terms in favor of simply using proper nouns. Furthermore, he frequently used general words denoting humanity, such as “hominis.” Sallust was slightly more forthcoming with his use of group labels like gens. He seems to differentiate between populus and gens, although the exact nature of the differentiation is not clear. Pomponius Mela utilized clearly in several cases gens as a larger classification

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consisting of numerous *populi*. Pliny added a third level to the mix, utilizing *genus* as a grouping larger than *gens*. Tacitus then illustrates the way in which *gens*, and presumably other levels of classification, could be used according to the scope of the system of peoples discussed, making clear that *gens* was likely the most basic unit of differentiation in Roman society and that use of classificatory terminology was relative to the needs of the discussion. Thus, the ideological construct behind Rome’s system of racialization evolved and become more structured as time passed and the complexity of Roman society grew with expansion.

The later system of terms, as employed by Tacitus, can be understood as a construct akin to modern taxonomy. According to modern biological consensus, organisms are organized into a hierarchical system of classification, according to which, at the most specific level (pun intended), organisms differ by “species.” At the broadest level, they are distinguished by “kingdom.” The terminology utilized by the Roman authors indicates a similar hierarchical system of classification for grouping humans. This system seems to develop as we proceed from Caesar to Pliny and Tacitus, for Caesar often uses general terms such as “*homines*,” “men,” while Pliny especially but also Tacitus, our last two authors, make frequent use of classificatory terms. At this latest, and seemingly most developed stage, there seems to be four major levels of human classification. *Genus/genera, gens/gentes, and populus/populi* are used frequently in the texts to refer to specific groups. The application of these terms indicates that *genus* is the largest category, while *populus*, the smallest. By the very virtue of its use, however, *genus* requires the existence of a larger category. For example, Pliny tells us that there are three “*genera*” of Gauls. “Gauls” then is a larger category. Because, naturally, the proper names for groups are given in such
descriptions, there does not seem to be a Latin word for this largest category. By their most frequent usage and cultural undertones—i.e., their ability to convey a “type” regardless of geographic location—these terms can be understood to be a part of Roman society’s racial system, as opposed to other terms like “natio” or “civitas,” which carry political implications.

The various level at which any one group is identified may change from author to author as the system changes, yet this seems to be the most developed form evident in the literature of our study period. The consistent usage of gens most frequently of all these terms by the authors suggests that the gens was the level at which most basic distinctions between human groups were made. The fundamental nature of gens is supported by the usage of the word already in Roman society, applied internally to denote various families or clans in Roman aristocracy.165

Now as for which level we might equate to our modern classification “race,” that would depend upon one’s definition of “race,” which, as we have seen, is variable, changing, and complex—a prickly definition to pin down. Furthermore, our classificatory level “race” stands seemingly alone, while Rome’s hierarchical system of classification is comprised of several layers. Therefore, anachronistically relating one level of Rome’s system with race as a label (e.g. the Black or White race) would cast into confusion the other levels of identity existing in Roman society. We might choose genera to associate with the modern grouping of races, because they represent larger categories of difference like the few races acknowledged in modern Western culture. Similarly, we might also gentes, since they

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165 Max Radin notes three uses of gens: to denote 1) groups of peoples, such as the modern terms “tribe,” “race,” or “stock” 2) a Roman family or clan 3) specifically a patrician family. Radin, “Gens, Familia, Stirpe,” Classical Philology 9.3 (Jun., 1914), 236-7.
represent the most basic unit of differentiation. Arguments could be made in any number of directions. The crux of the issue is, however, how would we rectify Roman society’s multiple levels of identity with a modern, uni-level conception of race? Instead of this futile endeavor, then, we should instead understand Roman society’s racial system as its own system, formed by Roman cultural exchanges and perceptions of Others, not a system relative to our own.
Conclusions

To return to the first of my guiding questions, how formed was a system of racialization in the Roman literary mind, and what was the structure of this racial system? There is evidence for structured systems of classification based upon cultural differences and affinities within the representations by these Roman historians and geographers of the world and peoples around them. There is also evidence of judgments made of these groups based upon difference. I consider this system of categorizing people Rome’s “racial system,” accepting the interpretations of racialization presented by Valentina Pagliai, who asserts that any difference can be racialized, not exclusively biological ones. Due to race’s variability in interpretation, however, I have indicated the ways in which other frequently identified components of race and racism—an inclusion of physicality in categorizing Others and a racialized link between the physical reality of groups and the assumption of their behavior and intellect—are also evident in the ancient Roman literary sources. Thus, it seems to me that it is difficult to deny the existence of a racial system in ancient Roman society, if we accept this progressive, culturally-relative understanding of the concept. To strip Roman society of such a system would be to assert that distribution of wealth or class distinction were the only significant ways in which persons differed in Roman society.

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166 Pagliai (2009).
which a glance at any piece of ancient literature would challenge. To call such a system an ethnic one, and not a racial one, would be to say the same thing with a different anachronistic label.

A frequent expectation of this study that I have encountered is the production of a list, if you will, of groups that qualified in the Roman viewpoint, as “races.” To apply such labels, however, would be counter-productive. To say that the Germans, Germani, e.g., are a “race” according to the Roman worldview, would be meaningless, anachronistic, and contrary to the point that I have attempted to make, which is this: the Romans had a hierarchical system for categorizing Other peoples with respect to each other and especially with respect to themselves. This system was constantly in flux and open to the individuals’ interpretation. We cannot pinpoint Rome’s “races”, because the Roman worldview and ideology on racial groups was not the same as that of the modern day, which, in itself, varies greatly according to both nation and individual. The Romans did not use the word “race,” they used terms such as gens, genus and genera, and populus. If we were to choose one and equate it to our modern label “race,” what would we call the others? Furthermore, we have seen that the systemization of these terms as applied to specific groups evolved through time and by author. Therefore, if we did equate one level to “race,” the groups that qualified as a “race” would change as the application of the terms did. Thus, race in Rome was a system and not a label. The Romans had their own system of racial formation which is not equivalent to ours and should therefore be understood in its own terms and not modern ones.

We can get a hint of the system’s formation by analyzing the changes and continuities of the representations of Others in Roman literature, which seem to
correspond to warfare and the cultural dialogue between Romans and the peoples in question. This brings us back to our second guiding question: can a correlation be seen between the prejudicial views projected by Romans—views which today might be understood as ‘racist’—and Rome's imperial expansion? To be sure, there is not a neat and pretty linear progression from “utterly egalitarian” to “supremely racist” as Rome continues to expand, but there does seem to be both an increase in the conception of Roman superiority and a corresponding increase in racialized judgment of Others as Rome’s conquest and imperialistic agenda continue.

This understanding of a race, that is, as a system and not explicitly grounded in biology, is a difficult pill to swallow for some. Attempting to shed some of our modern ideological baggage may alleviate this burden. In modern society, where such things exist as a world court and international law, and where the “nation” is a firmly established cultural, political, economic, and even racial division, we hold a number of levels of identity. Nearly all peoples have nationalities that identify and define them. These nationalities typically have further breakdowns on the basis of region, province, or state. Because of this developed and globally-recognized system of identity, largely rooted in political and geographic boundaries, modern society’s “racial system” is relegated to identifiers not explicitly captured by the nationality system. According, the system consists of a number of “races,” which are defined on terms not purely geographic or political, although races can be associated with specific nationalities.

In the ancient world, the concept of the nation was not nearly as established or fundamental as it is today. Therefore, it is likely that the preoccupation with distinguishing political identity from cultural identity via “nationality” and “race” is a modern one that
would not have resonated in ancient society. In a period and society such as that known to ancient Rome, in which nations were not so fundamental, cultural identity blurred the lines between “national” and “racial.” The ancient Roman racial system comprised a number of levels, in the absence of an entirely separate system of identity based on nationality. For instance, *Germani* referred to a people defined by location, political affiliation, ancestry, physical type, and cultural norms. Therefore, we should understand that Romans viewed the world and peoples around them differently than modern persons and pursue the study of the system according to which Romans racialized Others into identity groups.

Approaching the Roman ethnographic literature devoid of the modern preoccupation with biological difference and with an open understanding of racialization, the study makes several observations. The literary evidence may well signify the existence of a multi-tiered racial system that developed and evolved from Republic to Empire. Certain words Roman authors use to denote non-Roman groups, such as *genus*, *gens*, and *populus*, connote culture and type beyond the mere location of the group’s political unit, as indicated by *gens’* ability to represent the same cultural party on numerous continents. *Gens*, by its most frequent use, appears to be the most basic unit at which human groups differ. Such words, then, may be indicative of a hierarchical system of race in the Roman mindset. This diction becomes more systematic over time, suggesting the formation of a more structured ideological system regarding Others as the Empire matures.

Roman society’s system of racialization can be seen in the progression of describing groups as having certain character traits, to describing them as different *because* they have certain character traits, to describing them as *inferior* because they are different in having certain character traits. The Roman author’s appeal to a climate theory of racialization
although advances in this way: early authors note nothing of the land’s determinacy upon the character of its people; Mela initiates the dichotomy of interior and exterior; Pliny and Tacitus articulate more boldly climates’ direct effect in body type. Thus, as well, the climatic shift progressed form affecting character to affecting body.

Several elements of Rome’s racial system seem likely. First, while physical type is evident as a factor in Othering, additional non-physiological elements commonly characterize non-Roman groups. For instance, from the repeated and nearly unfailing mention of these factors throughout the Latin ethnographic record, we gather that where and what persons eat and where and how they sleep seem to be crucial elements of their identity. Furthermore, that Romans were, logically, socially at the top of their racial system is evident through comparison of treatment of Romans and non-Romans and through helpful textual episodes, like Sallust’s Metellus’ refusal of protection. Moreover, the further the Roman author proceeds from Rome, the more he generalizes, criticizes, and labels as barbari those persons whom he describes, supporting this conclusion.

In addition, change over time in representation of certain groups reveals that successfully assimilated groups received better treatment by Roman authors as time passed, while groups still considered Other were treated increasingly more harshly. The reasons behind these evolutions are inconclusive from this study. It is possible that the social atmosphere of incorporation changed during the late Republic, preventing groups from truly being able to make the switch from “them” to “us.” Such an ideological transition may further evidence the emergence of a racial system. Indeed, the shift within individual author’s representations of a group indicates the process of expansion and pacification as the agent of judgment and criticism, as we see in the accounts of Caesar of the Gauls and
Sallust of the Numidians. The dichotomy in treatment of groups across authors, however, may simply indicate that the study window was not large enough to witness the full transition of an Othered group, and social transition which perhaps takes decades and even centuries.

Much remains in the way of further research to shed more light upon these issues. Roman society appears to become more racialized: Roman conception of Roman superiority becomes racialized; Othered groups become racialized; and a corresponding system of classificatory terminology develops. The exact nature of Roman society’s racial system (especially at individual points in time), however, leaves much to be studied. The particular societal reasons behind racialization—whether the consequential social ramifications of imperial expansion or other causes entirely—also require further research. While this study limited its scope to certain ethnographic accounts, incorporation of additional Roman historians, such a Livy and Vellius Paterculus, as well as analyzing additional works by some of the represented authors (e.g., Caesar’s *De Bello Africo* and *De Bello Hispaniensi*, Tacitus’ *Agricola*) would provide a fuller set of date from which to draw conclusions. Additionally, a sacrificed component of the original plan for this thesis was to include a chapter analyzing the visual and artistic representation of racial difference as evident from official, state-sponsored triumphal monuments and architecture. A comparison between literary and visual representations of specific groups may yet be enlightening as to their position in the Roman ideological construct.

Thus, much work remains to unearth the ideological construction of ancient Roman society’s racial system. This much seems clear, however; if we hope to glean social historical understanding beyond the polarized conclusions that racialization in Rome either
was or was not like that of modern western society, we should shed our preoccupation with modern relevancy. To impose modern connotations of race, that is, skin color, might lead us the conclusion that Gauls and Germans were not distinguishable, however, their literary representations defy this. Furthermore, we might notice that Numidians fair better than Germans in certain accounts and conclude that racism and prejudice did not exist in Roman society, a conclusion which certain passages within the same works would dissuade. Imposing a modern paradigm in the study of ancient Roman society only results in concluding that Roman society does not exactly fit the modern mold. Instead of approaching study of Roman social and intellectual history with a mold in mind, we might attempt to discover Rome’s own ideological constructs and intellectual and social institutions. This study had barely scratched the surface in this regard, but hopefully represents a step in the right direction. Much research remains to be undertaken in order to gain a more thorough understanding of racial formations in ancient Rome, but that research will require putting aside modern prejudice.

Therefore, to return to the introductory quotation and theme, for the Romans, as with us, race and ethnicity was all around them like water and air. These cultural constructions remain for us, as scholars of the ancient world, to continue to shed light upon them.
Bibliography


