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ROMAN ASSIMILATIONS OF THE OTHER: 

HUMANITAS AT ROME

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ABSTRACT

I argue that modern lexicographical analyses and wider discussions of the term humanitas do not accurately reflect its significance in the Roman construction of themselves and others. My study of the word suggests that the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae and Oxford Latin Dictionary entries miss the most important points: that the concept is used either inclusively or exclusively and that the exclusive usage predominates. This renders the Roman idea of humanitas—a tool to distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them’—significantly different from the inclusive tendency of the modern term ‘humanity’.

Further, humanitas as ‘culture’ links with concepts of latinitas and urbnitas and hence with ideas of Roman-ness, which I call Romanitas. An examination of the pressures to conformity upon the Roman elite and others who wanted to join that elite suggests that humanitas and Romanitas converge. This, finally, raises questions for us as classicists: in our study of ‘Humanity’ and ‘the humanities’ are we party to a blinkered elitism or are we prepared to embrace issues such as slavery, gender and multiculturalism?

The theme of the 22nd CASA conference was ‘Multiculturalism in Antiquity.’ This paper is my response to that theme. Since a central issue in multiculturalism is how human beings cope when confronted with strange and unfamiliar phenomena, readily summarised in the anthropologists’ term ‘the other’, this paper focuses upon encounters with ‘the other’ in antiquity, specifically, Roman antiquity. As Rome extended her power

1. Friends and colleagues in the UK at Royal Holloway in October 1996 and in South Africa at the CASA conference at Pretoria in January 1997 heard (versions of) this paper: I am hugely grateful to you all for your encouraging reception of the paper and for the helpful comments and criticisms you offered. (That’s especially Richard Alston, Richard Hawley, Boris Rankov, Lene Rubinstein, Mary Siani-Davies—and Adam Morton.) For the shortcomings that remain, the buck stops with me.
through the Mediterranean lands and beyond, she encountered peoples to whom she could readily give the label of ‘other’. The diversity of the Roman empire fed back into the city of Rome itself: we need look no further than the depiction of the city of Rome in satire, above all, in Juvenal’s third satire, to realise that the multiculturalism of Roman society was a lasting issue—without, of course, accepting that the condemnation of ‘foreigners’ in Rome by Juvenal’s character Umbricius would have been widely endorsed; on the contrary, there are strong reasons for believing that Umbricius is a character designed by Juvenal to invite ridicule on himself. In this paper, I shall focus upon one specific term that is central to the issue of multiculturalism in ancient Rome—namely, humanitas—and I shall interrogate its significance in Roman thought and ideology.

But before considering the nature of humanitas in Roman thought, it is worth reflecting briefly on our own preconceptions about ‘humanity’. The OED entry reflects contemporary thought and usage by connecting the word ‘humanity’ with the words ‘human’ and ‘humane’. Thus ‘humanity’ as connected with the adjective ‘human’ is ‘the condition of being human; the human faculties or attributes collectively; human nature; man in the abstract’ and hence ‘the human race; mankind; human beings collectively’. And ‘humanity’ as connected with ‘humane’ is defined as ‘the character or quality of being humane; behaviour or disposition towards others such as befits a human being, disposition to treat human beings and animals with consideration and compassion; kindness, benevolence’. So much is uncontroversial. Yet what it is to be human is contested, particularly in discussions of topical issues like abortion and euthanasia and persistent vegetative state, and modern philosophers continue to debate the point. An excellent example is the Australian Peter Singer who in Rethinking Life and Death quotes from Longfellow’s Song of Hiawatha the words ‘Every human heart is human’ to tease out some of the differences lurking within the adjective ‘human’. This is a salutary reminder that the concept of ‘humanity’ is not simple or monolithic.  

Humanitas is potentially an enormous subject which has been discussed quite extensively, largely by German scholars during the last century or so. The most recent monograph is Rieks’ Homo. Humanus, Humanitas,
a study of ‘Humanitat’ in its widest and most ideal form in the Latin literature of the first century AD. Accordingly, Rieks presents a broadly chronological analysis of the nexus of ideas of ‘Humanitat’ in first century authors, including Vitruvius and Ovid; Manilius; Velleius Paterculus and Valerius Maximus; Phaedrus; Seneca, who receives a substantial chapter of course; Petronius; Lucan; Persius; Statius and the younger Pliny. That list alone will convey some idea of the enormity of the topic. More recently still, Veyne brings a rather different methodology to bear in an exciting essay entitled ‘Humanitas: Romans and non-Romans’. He emphasises the gulf between twentieth-century abstract universalism and the essential pragmatism of the ancient idea of humanitas, particularly in relation to status, war and imperialism. Instead of retreading the same ground as the German scholarship, my method here will be to start with scrutiny of the entries for humanitas in the major dictionaries. This will lead me to similar conclusions to those of Veyne but by a very different route.

The categories in the Oxford Latin Dictionary are as follows:

1. Human nature or character.
2. The quality distinguishing civilized man from savages or beasts, civilization, culture.
3. Humane character, kindness, human feeling.

In Lewis & Short as follows:

Human nature, humanity (in a good sense); the qualities, feelings, and inclinations of mankind.

I In gen., (for the most part only in Cicero).
B Transf., concr., i.e. humanum genus, the human race, mankind (very rare; mostly post-class.).
II In part.
A Human or gentle conduct towards others, humanity, philanthropy, gentleness, kindness, politeness (syn. comitas, facilitas, mansuetudo, clementia, opp. severitas; very freq. and class.).
B Mental cultivation befitting a man, liberal education, good breeding, elegance of manners or language, refinement.

other material, e.g., in addition to the items listed at TLL 3077.20–8, F. Klingner, Humanitat (1947).
6. In addition, there are treatments of humanitas in specific authors, e.g., J. Mayer’s 1951 Freiberg dissertation, Humanitas bei Cicero.
Finally, I offer a condensation of the nine-column entry by W. Ehlers in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (omitting some of the Christian material) as follows:

I of the natural state of humans  
   A 1 human nature  
      2 Platonic Form  
      3 metonymically: the human race, human beings  
   B in genitive case = humanus  

II with emphasis on the state which suits human beings worthy of the name  
   A of sound sense, = prudentia  
   B of breeding (*de generositate*)  
      1 denoting the state advanced beyond barbarian life (with reference to some form of culture, either customs (*mores*) or education (*doctrina*)  
      2 denoting the elevated perfection of human nature  
         a of proper or honourable behaviour (*dignitas, honestas*) spec. of culture, wit, elegance (*lepos, facetia, elegantia*)  
         b of learning, education, sophistication (*eruditio, doctrina, urbanitas*)  
         c of kindness, generosity, mercy (*comitas, benignitas, clementia, φιλανθρωπία*)  
            (I) kindness in general  
               (A) of people  
                  (1) towards people (inc the dead)  
                  (2) towards animals  
               (B) of men in public life  
                  (1) magistrates  
                  (2) emperors  
               (C) of the gods  
                  (II) equivalent to hospitality  
                  (III) equivalent to munificence  
                  (IV) equivalent to fairness (of sentencing)  

A study of these analyses, with their divisions and sub-divisions of material, suggested to me that all three entries miss the most important point. The most central aspect of *humanitas* always derives from the context—which indicates that the concept is being used EITHER inclusively OR exclusively. Not only is this distinction fundamental but, in Roman texts (in stark contrast to modern tendencies with the word ‘humanity’), the exclusive usage predominates. This needs expansion.

The inclusive use is when a generalising statement is being made about phenomena that apply to the entire human race and that connect all the
members of the human race with one another. From a modern perspective, this is hardly surprising or striking. In the same way in Roman antiquity, we find Seneca using *humanitas* to refer to what is, in effect, the Platonic Form of humankind at Ep. 65.7 ‘itaque homines quidem pereunt, ipsa autem humanitas ad quam homo effingitur permanet et hominibus laborantibus, intereuntibus illa nihil patitur’ (‘Therefore though humans die, Humanity itself, according to which humans are moulded, lasts and though humans toil and pass away, it suffers no change’). Jerome later goes further when he defines *humanitas* thus (Ep. 55.3.4): ‘*humanitatem* in hoc loco dicimus homansuetudinem et clementiam, quam Graeci *philetvraiov* vocant, sed omne hominum genus’ (‘*humanitas* is not pity and mercy, which the Greeks call *philetvraiov*, but the entire race of humankind’). It is here that my most famous quotation belongs, even though it does not actually use the word *humanitas*: Terence’s ‘*homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto*’ (Hoeauton Timoraumenos 77): ‘I am a human being and I reckon nothing human alien to me.’ Never mind that in its original context this sentiment is uttered by Chremes, the inquisitive, insensitive and self-satisfied old fool, who of all the characters in the play knows perhaps the least about human nature. It is more important that the quotation is lifted from its original comic context to become part of serious discourse, for example when Cicero uses it without attribution in a discussion of nature and justice at De Legibus 1.33 and with attribution but entirely seriously in a discussion of duty and justice at De Officiis 1.30. Similarly, Seneca in Epistle 95 uses the quotation, again without attribution, as an articulation of his argument for the commonality of humankind, in a passage which culminates in the memorable simile of the stone arch which would collapse if the stones didn’t mutually support each other (Ep. 95.52-3). This is essentially an assimilating use which ignores or overrides any differences, in order to emphasise shared ‘human-ness’.

This notion can be illustrated in a number of texts, for example, another passage from Seneca’s Letters, where in an obvious rewording of Terence he says of *humanitas* that ‘nullum malum alienum putat’ (‘it counts no evil as belonging entirely to someone else’, Ep. 88.30). It is here that the dictionary definitions of *humanitas* as denoting some kind of ‘fellow-feeling’ (Greek *eµµaixeva*) belong. At the basis of this is the idea that *humanitas* goes hand in hand with what the Romans call *sensus communis*, which is not ‘common sense’ in our sense but an awareness of shared experience. To go again to Seneca’s Letters, he argues to Lucilius that *philosophia* offers *sensus communem, humanitatem et congregationem* ... (‘Shared experience, fellow-feeling, sociability’, Ep. 5.4). This then accounts for the close links between *humanitas* and concepts of humaneness and kindness and compassion, expressed in terms like *benignitas, misericordia, mansuetudo* and *clementia*. For instance, Valerius Maximus, writing under
Tiberius a compendium of *exempla* (exemplary stories) for orators, has a single section entitled *De humanitate et clementia* (5.1) in which he uses the two terms *humanitas* and *clementia* interchangeably and in which the overriding theme is that most basic of human needs, to receive a proper funeral and burial. He includes examples of fierce enmity between Romans and foreigners nevertheless overcome to accommodate a fitting respect to the dead: that is *humanitas*.\(^8\) Examples include the Senate’s burial of king Perseus who died in custody in Alba, the honours shown by Cornelius to the Carthagian Hannu after his death and by Hannibal to Roman generals who died in the Second Punic War, and Mark Antony’s gift of his own military cloak for the burial of Brutus. Similarly, early in Book 12 of Statius’ *Thebaid*, Creon’s denial of burial for Polynices is described as a lack of *humanitas*: ‘bello cogendus et armis | in mores hominemque | Creon’ (*Theb.* 12.165–6; in Melville’s translation, ‘By war | and weapons | Creon must be forced towards | Humanity’). These few examples make it clear that this inclusive use of the term *humanitas* is very similar to the Greek concept of φύλλωτρον; indeed, as we shall soon see, the two terms were often regarded as equivalent. It is also very similar to our idea of humanity; for example, it underpins the giving of humanitarian aid.

The inclusive use described above accounts for a fair proportion of usages of the word *humanitas*. But a much greater share is taken by the exclusive use of the term. What I mean by ‘exclusive’ use is contexts in which the term *humanitas* is used to differentiate one group from another, with a view to creating a telling distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In some contexts, this differentiation is simply between human and beast—and this usage is, obviously, closest to the inclusive use above, but with the important difference that the context actually draws attention to the ‘non-beast-ness’ involved in being human. More often, though, the category ‘beast’ is metaphorical. That is, one category of humans is distinguished from another by labelling one group as ‘bestial’ or ‘savage’ and another as ‘civilised’. This is often expressed by evoking an underlying antithesis between ‘barbarity’ and ‘civilisation’. One notorious example of this is from Tacitus’ *Agricola*, where Tacitus is praising Agricola’s skill in dealing with the native Britons. He describes their gradual conversion from barbarism to culture, *humanitas*, culminating in their appropriation of Roman amenities such as ‘arcades and bathhouses and sumptuous banquets’ (‘paulatimque descensum ad delenimenta uitiorum, porticus et balinea et comuniornium elegantiam’). He caps his catalogue of the ‘allurements of vice’ (‘delenimenta uitiorum’) with the caustic comment that ‘idque apud imperitos humanitas

\(^8\) An important point about burial is that it is the lowest common denominator: archaeologists and anthropologists use data about burial customs to draw inferences about cultural structures. That is, burial is one way of judging who is included in and excluded from the category of *humanitas*. 

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nocabatur, cum pars seruitutis esset' ('among the inexperienced these were called "civilisation", when really they were just a feature of their enslavement'. Agr. 21.3). That is, Tacitus is aware of the cachet of the outward signs of 'civilisation' but at the same time, with his comment into his sleeve about slavery, suggests that this may be misleading. In contexts like this, humanitas is a flexible term which can be applied in order to differentiate any group from any other on grounds of cultural superiority/inferiority. It is this which renders the Roman idea of humanitas so significantly different from the all-embracing, inclusive tendency of modern western usages of the term 'humanity'. And since the differentiation is so often based on an assertion of cultural superiority, that makes it imperative to consider the issue of culture.

Accordingly, that will be central to rest of this paper, as I scrutinise texts where the word humanitas features and which contribute to our understanding of Roman ideas of humanitas.

**Defining humanitas as paideia**

From the second century CE, Gellius offers his definition of humanitas. He takes trouble to distinguish his 'proper' understanding of the term from the common identification of humanitas with Greek ἐργασια (Attic Nights 13.17):

> qui uerba Latina fecerunt quique ii probe usi sunt humanitatem non id esse voluerunt quod uulgis existimat quod Graecis ἐργασια dicitur et significat dexteritatem quam benevolentiamque erga omnes homines promiscum; sed humanitatem appellauerunt id propemodum quod Graeci νομισον uocant, nos eruditionem institutionemque in bonas artes dicimus; quas qui sinceriter cupiunt cupidissime, hi sunt uel maxime humanissimi. huius enim scientiae cura et disciplina ex uniuersis animantibus uni homini data est, idcirco humanitas appellata est.

*Those who have spoken Latin and have used the language correctly do not give to the word humanitas the meaning which it is commonly thought to have, namely, what the Greeks call ἐργασια, signifying a kind of friendly spirit and good-feeling towards all men without distinction; but they gave to humanitas about the force of the Greek νομισον, that is, what we call education and training in the liberal arts. Those who most earnestly desire and seek after these are the most highly humanised. For the pursuit of that kind of knowledge, and the training given by it, have been granted to man alone of all the animals, and for that reason it is termed 'humanity'.*

For Gellius, humanitas is something learned: paideia, or education, in the broadest possible sense. I shall now explore this sense of humanitas as
paideia, showing how it is used in various contexts as a powerful tool to distinguish 'us' from 'them', before going on to make some connections with issues of tolerance and assimilation and cultural imperialism.

The origin of humanitas

Greece is (not surprisingly) seen as the provenance of humanitas (Plin. Ep. 8.24.2), especially Athens (Cic. Flacc. 62). We can be more specific than that: according to Cicero at Div. 1.2, religion is a feature which distinguishes humanus from barbarus, and at De Legibus 2.36 he is more specific still: he says that it was the mystery religions of Athens that brought people from barbarism to humanitas. He has Marcus say to Atticus:

For among the many excellent and indeed divine institutions which your Athens has brought forth and contributed to human life (in uitam hominem), none in my opinion is better than those mysteries. For through them we have been brought out of our barbarous and savage mode of life and educated and refined to a state of civilisation' (ex agresti immanique vita exculti ad humanitatem et mitigati sumus).

So Greece and specifically Athens provides the origin of humanitas.

Such ideas seem to plug directly into the familiar phenomenon of Rome's sense of cultural inferiority to Greece, which is succinctly expressed by Horace: 'Graecia capta ferum uictorem cepit' ('Conquered Greece conquered her wild invader', Ep. 2.1.156). The continuation of the quotation is important, though less often cited: 'et artes / intulit agresti Latio' ('and brought the arts to rustic Latium'). Horace articulates an awareness that Rome imported artes (in the sense which includes that used by Gellius) from Greece and from Greek culture. But this sense of inferiority obscures Rome's other cultural debts. After all, Ennius, the father of Latin literature, spoke three languages: Greek, Oscan and Latin (Gell. 17.17.1). Yet the Roman debt to native Italian cultures—such as the Sabines and above all the Etruscans—is largely erased or at least overshadowed in Latin texts by the need to describe the relationship with Greek culture, a relationship which is always shot with ambivalence, as Erich Gruen, for example, has shown in the way a distinction was drawn between Hellenism and Hellenes even by Roman intellectuals, who, in Gruen's words, 'absorbed and benefited from Hellenic culture but felt free to belittle and defame its representatives' without seeing any contradiction.9

That picture of self-definition in terms of a relationship to Greek 'otherness' predominates through the Republic. And yet, in the first century CE,

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it is at least possible to make another claim entirely. Ovid, for instance, sees Rome as Athens' successor in propagating the refinement of humanity (Pont. 2.9.48: 'emollit mores nec sinit esse feros': 'she softened men's ways and forbade them be wild'). And Pliny the Elder, instead of picturing Athens as the cradle of humanity, celebrates Italy as divinely designed to 'give humankind civilisation' ('humanitatem homini daret'), in a passage at least partly inspired by Virgil's 'praises of Italy', 'laudes Italici', in Georgics 2.136–76 and with an essentially similar emphasis on Italy's multifaceted natural richness (NH 3.39):

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\text{...}
\]

I am well aware that I may with justice be considered ungrateful and lazy if I describe in this casual and cursory manner a land which is at once the nursing and the mother of all other lands, chosen by the providence of the gods to make heaven itself more glorious, to unite scattered empires, to make manners gentle, to draw together in converse by community of languages the jarring and uncouth tongues of so many nations, to give humankind civilisation and in a word to become throughout the world the single fatherland of all the races.

Now this praise of Italy as the cradle of civilisation permits a pretty big 'us': all of Italy in all its diversity. In this passage, Pliny names many different races, but puts them all under one umbrella. And he even feels able to acknowledge the relationship with Greece by referring to the name given to a small part of Italy, Magna Graecia (NH 3.42). This nomenclature he interprets as a compliment by the Greeks, an attitude at some distance away from the cultural inferiority of a century earlier. What the Pliny passage demonstrates is that in the mid-first century CE, the 'we' who have humanitas can be seen as Italian rather than as Greek. This provokes an enquiry into how this change in perspective took place, a potentially huge question, of which one aspect will be examined here.

It seems important that Pliny leads into his attribution of humanitas by reference to language (NH 3.39). Humanitas, then, has a close connection with language—and in that respect we should remember that the Greek term barbaros is in origin a linguistic term which assimilates the languages of others to the inchoate and incomprehensible noises made by animals. Of ἑξεταστοι were, according to LSJ, originally 'all non-Greek-speaking peoples'. Language, suggests Pliny, is a unifying and civilising force. Hence
it seems likely that *latinitas* is an important component of the Roman idea of *humanitas*.

**Humanitas and latinitas**

It seems there was a Greek concept of purity in language called *hellenismos* by Diogenes of Babylon, a Stoic writing in the early 2nd century BCE. Diogenes seems to use this term to denote language that is not *barbarismos* or *solecismos*. The Roman reaction to the necessary implication that Latin is barbaric is, at least sometimes, ironic. Hence Plautus writes in the prologue to the *Trinummus*: ‘Philemon scripsit, Plautus uortit barbarum’ (‘Philemon wrote the play and Plautus has translated it into barbarian’, *Trin. 19*, cf. *Asin. 11*). Yet it is not very long before Romans adopt the same categories, with the substitution of *latinitas* for *hellenismos* (e.g. *Rh. ad Herenn.*, 80s BCE), a development at least in part made possible by the development of an elite literary language. From this point on, great importance was attached to the purity of *latinitas*. This is manifested in, for example, the intolerance shown towards solecisms and provincial accents at Rome. Catullus’ Harrius and his unwonted aspirations in Poem 84 immediately spring to mind. Less well known is Statius’ poem in praise of Septimius Severus, who was born in Libya (*Silv. 4.5.45–8*):

> non sermo Poenus, non habitus tibi,  
> non externa mens: Italus, Italus.  
> sunt Vrbe Romanisque turmis  
> qui Libyam decantant alumnii.  

*Your speech is not Punic, nor your bearing;  
your outlook is not foreign: you’re Italian, Italian.  
In the City and among Roman knights there are  
foster-children to do Libya credit.*

It seems clear that there was considerable pressure for the full assimilation of provincial accents, such as Spanish and African accents, at Rome. Quintilian says that one’s words should have nothing *peregrina et externa* about them (*10 8.1.2–3*):

> quare, si fieri potest et uerba omnia et uox huius alumnum Vrbis  
> oleant, ut oratio Romana plane videatur, non ciuitate donata.  

*If possible our voice and all our words should be such as to reveal the native of this city, so that our speech may seem to be of genuine Roman origin and not merely to have presented with Roman citizenship.*

Elsewhere he is a little more accommodating. He differentiates between two categories of words: *latina* and *peregrina* (IO 1.5.55–6) and on this basis, he is prepared to overlook Livy's *Patavinitas* and to count all Italian accents as Roman (1.5.56: 'licet omnia Italic pro Romanis habeam'). Livy is the classic case who is cited as an exception to pure *latinitas*. This focus is quite striking, given the diversity of origin of Latin writers. But the fact that more exceptions are not pointed out suggests a remarkably high level of assimilation. Latin writers, wherever they come from, it seems, write in a Roman voice.

And these standards are not merely linguistic. They apply to conduct too. So Cicero roundly condemns behaviour on the basis that it does not exemplify *humanitas*—for example, at *De Officiis* 1.145, that all too human activity of singing in the street:

\[ ea quae multum ab humanitate discrepant, ut si qui in foro cantet aut si qua est alia magna peruersitas \]

*flagrant breaches of good breeding, like singing in the streets or any other gross misconduct.*

**Humanitas and urbanitas**

Such infringements of *humanitas*, in both word and deed, are at the same time infringements of *urbanitas*. In fact, these two words make their earliest appearances in literature at around the same time, *humanitas*, according to Rieks, in the *Ad Herennium* written in the 80s BCE, and *urbanitas*, according to Ramage, in Cicero's speech for Roscius Amerinus, delivered in 80 BCE. In the *Pro Roscio Amerino*, *urbanitas* is glossed by the word *humanitas* and is evidently virtually synonymous. For Cicero, both *humanitas* and *urbanitas* denote 'refinement' and 'culture'.

The implication of these developments of the first century BCE, including the displacement of the term *hellenismos* by *latinitas* in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and the virtual synonymity of the terms *humanitas* and *urbanitas*, is that Romans such as Cicero see themselves as the arbiters of 'civilisation' and no longer in total thrall to Greek culture. 'Culture' as represented in the qualities of *humanitas* is rooted in the great city of Rome, the *Vrbs* from which is derived the noun *urbanitas*.

In all this, Roman *humanitas* is evidently a highly specific cultural construct which can be used as a way of asserting a crucial difference, of distinguishing the in-crowd from the rest. It is, to go back to Gellius' definition, *ereditionem institutionemque in bonas artes*. It consists of an education, in the broadest sense of the word, which instils the right way of

thinking, the right mores, which in a Roman context, will largely consist of mos maiorum. 'How we behave' at the centre is how anyone else from anywhere else must also behave if they are to be deemed in possession of humanitas, which is thus more or less identified not only with urbanitas but also with what I shall call Romanitas. That in turn raises two large questions: what does Romanitas consist of and how does the elite ensure its perpetuation?

**Romanitas in words and ideas**

It is striking that there is no such Latin word as Romanitas (at least, not until Tertullian). This is presumably because it is the default, in the mouths of those who authored the texts that we read: it is 'us'. The search for the word Romanitas is a vain one. The words, then, to look for are nos and noster/rāstum. The Mediterranean Sea is mare nostrum. Claudius (according to Tacitus at Ann. 11.24) talks about all Italy—all its terrae and gentes—coalescing in nomen nostrum.12

Once this definitional point is accepted, there are many texts which could be brought to bear as articulations of Romanitas. I shall confine myself to two central authors: a familiar text and a not-so-familiar one. First of all, there is Virgil's articulation of what it is to be Roman in Book 6 of the Aeneid, an articulation which is almost official, almost authorised, supplemented with a passage from Book 12 where Virgil expands on that to reveal the especially Italian roots (and the explicitly not-Trojan roots) of the qualities he has designated as Roman (Aen. 6.847-53 and 12.821-88, tr. R. Fitzgerald):

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excudent alii spirantia mollius aera
credo equidem, uiuos ducent de marmore uoltus,
orabunt causas melius, caelique meatus
describent radio et surgentia sidera dicent:
tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento
(hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem,
par cere subiectis et debellare superbos.
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Others will cast more tenderly in bronze
Their breathing figures, I can well believe,
And bring more lifelike portraits out of marble;
Argue more eloquently, use the pointer
To trace the paths of heaven accurately

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12. This phenomenon can be paralleled in other languages where the word for 'us' (i.e. the people in question) means, basically 'people'. So Deutsch is cognate with deutsch, i.e. intelligible. And I wonder if it is just a coincidence that the United States is regularly referred to as the U.S. (US!)—and that Western Europe gives the abbreviation W.E.?
And accurately foretell the rising stars.
Roman, remember by your strength to rule
Earth's peoples—for your arts are to be these:
To pacify, to impose the rule of law,
To spare the conquered, battle down the proud.

And:

cum iam conjubiis pacem felicibus, esto,
component, cum iam leges et foedera iungent,
ne uetus indigenas nomen mutare Latinos
neu Troas fieri iubeas Teucrosque uocari
aut uocem mutare uiros aut uertere uestem.
sit Latium, sint Albani per saecula reges,
sit Romana potens Itala uirtute propago;
occidit, occideritque sinus cum nomine Troia.

when presently
They crown peace with a happy wedding day—
So let it be—and merge their laws and treaties,
Never command the land's own Latin folk
To change their old name, to become new Trojans,
Known as Teucrians; never make them alter
Dialect or dress. Let Latium be.
Let there be Alban kings for generations,
And let Italian valor be the strength
Of Rome in after times. Once and for all
Troy fell, and with her name let her lie fallen.

The less familiar passage is from the opening of Cicero's Tusculan Disputations, where he is justifying his writing of philosophy in Latin (Tusc. Dis. 1.1-2):

...non quia philosophia Graecis et litteris et doctoribus percipi non posset, sed neum semper judicium fuit omnia nostros aut inuenisse per se sapientius quam Graecos aut accepta ab illis fecisse meliora, quae quidem digna statuissent in quibus elaborarent. nam mores et instituta uitae domesticas ac familiares nos profecto et melius tuueri et lautius, rem uero publicam nostri maiores certe melioribus temperanerunt et institutis et legibus. quid loquar de re militari? in qua cum uirtute nostri multum valuerunt tum plus etiam disciplina. iam illa quae natura non litteris adsecuta est, neque cum Graecia neque uilla cum gente sunt conferenda.

...not that philosophy could not be learnt from Greek writers and teachers, but it has always been my conviction that our countrymen have shown more wisdom everywhere than the Greeks, either
in making discoveries for themselves, or else in improving upon what
they had received from Greece—in such subjects at least as they had
judged worthy of the devotion of their efforts. For morality, rules of
life, family and household economy are surely maintained by us in a
better and more dignified way; and beyond question our ancestors have
adopted better regulations and laws than others in directing the policy
of government. What shall I say of the art of war? In this sphere
our countrymen have proved their superiority by valour as well as in
an even greater degree by discipline. When we come to natural gifts
apart from book-learning they are above comparisons with the Greeks
or any such people.

In the light of those expressions of Romanitas it is now important to
consider some specific ways in which the ideals of Romanitas were instilled
and perpetuated.

**Teaching Romanitas**

Powerful forces towards assimilation were exerted on élite Romans and
in turn on would-be Romans who received (some of) the same education
and acculturation. This was a highly conformist society in which the only
place for individuality was in out-achieving the great achievements of one’s
ancestors. For a son of an élite family (the focus on males reflects my
emphasis upon public life), we need look no further than the pressure to
emulate the great achievements of the maiores, the ancestors, literally ‘the
greater ones’: the imaginæ (masks) of the ancestors were present and on
display in the atrium, the public part of the house, where visitors were
received. Imagines played an important role in the Roman funeral: they
conveyed messages for the young men of the house and for the wider public,
as is illustrated particularly graphically in an account of a typical funeral of
a great man in Roman society written from the perspective of an outsider,
the Greek historian Polybius, writing in the second century BCE (6.53). As
well as the concrete imaginæ before their eyes, young Romans had role
models dinned into their ears, through the emphasis put on exemplarity in
the Roman education system. Valerius Maximus provides no less than 967
exempla providing patterns of how and how not to behave.

The power of these forces of Romanisation is indicated in Tacitus’ elo­
quent version of Claudius’ speech about admitting Gauls to the Senate
when he provides what amounts to a catalogue of assimilation: cases of
great Roman families with origins elsewhere whose loyalty is now to their
Roman patria. And it is, above all, education Roman-style (even if that
incorporates or even simply repackages substantial Greek elements) that
is the agent of this assimilation. So Juvenal, in Satire 15, a poem on the
theme of man’s inhumanity to man, including an incident of cannibalism,
a poem which generally chews over issues of 'humanity', surveys the huge spread of civilised ideas:

\[ \text{mune totus Graias nostrasque habet orbis Athenas,} \\
\text{Gallia causidicos docuit facunda Britannos,} \\
\text{de conducendo loquitur iam rhetor Thyle.} \]

_Today the whole world has its Greek and its Roman Athens; eloquent Gaul has trained the pleaders of Britain and distant Thule talks of hiring a rhetorician (15.110–12)._

The standards set by the centre—by the powerful elite at Rome—are thus held up for the rest of the empire (and perhaps the rest of the world) to aspire to and to emulate. But how does this sit with the toleration of local differences which is seen by some as the hallmark of the Roman administration and the key to its enduring hold upon power?

**Romanitas, humanitas, toleration and assimilation**

In the extensive debate among ancient historians about toleration, Peter Garnsey argues against an active concept of toleration by attributing to Rome’s leaders ‘nothing more grandiose than an appreciation of the distinctness of the different peoples who made up their empire, combined with an implicit recognition of their inability to control their subjects beyond a certain point and the unwisdom of rousing local passions.’ That is, he suggests that Roman ‘toleration’ of local variations amounts to indifference or a laissez-faire attitude. That certainly seems more plausible than Karl Galinsky’s upbeat argument in his essay on multiculturalism in Greece and Rome that the Roman attitude to the local variations they found was one of respect. Peter Brown, discussing ‘The Limits of Intolerance’ in the context of the Christianisation of the Roman world, emphasises the importance of the tried and tested methods of governing an enormous empire.

For him this consists importantly of winning the cooperation and loyalty of local élites—and this is achieved by behaving to them and expecting them to behave according to what he calls ‘an ancient ideal of civility’ which was inculcated primarily through their shared education (he uses the Greek word _paideia_ but would not wish to limit his comments to the Greek east). This seems persuasive. And Brown’s concept of ‘civility’ for the later Roman period seems to overlap very substantially with what I am

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calling *humanitas* at an earlier period. In both cases, Brown's 'civility' and my *humanitas*, neither is an explicitly philosophical concept and both are highly pragmatic, with their recognition of the need for the assimilation of the local elites.

Ethnography clearly is an important potential source here; limits of space permit only a gesture. Latin ethnography is a complicated category of discourse, not least because it is clearly a continuation of a Greek intellectual pursuit, as Momigliano illustrated extensively in *Alien Wisdom*, and the default language for the writing of ethnography remained Greek. That said, the central question is whether and to what extent ethnography in Latin literature sets out to objectify 'the other' or to understand it from the inside, as modern anthropology claims to do. An initial impression of Latin ethnography is a tendency towards *mirabilia* and tabloid-style sensationalism, with very little effort to understand different cultures from their own point of view. And even where we do seem to find appreciation of some characteristics of the 'other', for example, in Tacitus' 'noble savage' type, it remains the case that such descriptions are seldom attempts to see things from the inside but, rather, serve other political and ideological interests. I do not detect any profound *humanitas*, in the sense of λαονθεκαika or σοματάδεν, in Latin ethnographies. In fact, these ethnographies serve the function of reaffirming Roman culture by drawing particular clear boundaries between 'us' and the 'other'.

This takes us back again to *humanitas*—defined much as Gellius defines it—as a tool of Roman cultural imperialism. It says, learn to be like 'us' and then you can join 'us'. *Humanitas* and *Romanitas* converge in a process of assimilation of local elites to the Roman elite. This assimilation must, of course, be confined to the local elites whose cooperation and loyalty are needed for the smooth running of the empire. Yet there is another way in which a weaker sense of *Romanitas* is much more widespread.

**Cosmopolitanism and Romanitas**

Cosmopolitanism—being a citizen of the world—is an idea which seems to arise in the Hellenistic period, associated initially with the Cynics especially, who wished to deny allegiance to any particular local political centre or leader. For the purposes of the present paper, the origins of the idea are less important than their manifestation in Roman ideology. If we look at Seneca, we find a Stoicised cosmopolitanism in his view that each individual is a citizen in the cosmos, without his denying the possibility of engagement in local political activity if that individual so wishes. That realisation in turn provokes the suggestion that the idea of cosmopolitanism manifests itself in a very specific form under the Roman empire, in the

gradual extension of Roman citizenship through the centuries from Rome through Italy and beyond, until the universal grant of citizenship by the 
*constitutio Antoniniana* in 212 CE. If the Roman empire is presented as 
world empire, as 'imperium sine fine' (to use Virgil's phrase), then to be a 
citizen of such an empire is, in effect, to be a citizen of the cosmos. This 
argument connects with and may give rise to the later association of the 
words *VRBS* and *ORBIS* and the implied convergence of those categories. 
The consequences of this kind of vision are celebrated by Aelius Aristides—
another outsider like Polybius, an 'admiring provincial' writing in Greek—
in his 26th Oration delivered in the imperial court in 155 CE. Among the 
many things he celebrates about Rome is that 'all lies open to all men'
and 'no one is a foreigner here who deserves to hold office or to be trusted'
(60); that 'what a city is to its boundaries and its territories, so this city
is to the whole inhabited world' (61); and that 'in your pride you have not
made it admired by giving no one else a share of it, but you have sought
citizenship worthy of it, and you have caused the word "Roman" to
belong not to a city but to be the name of a sort of common race' (63). In
short, Aelius Aristides celebrates a cosmopolitan vision of the relation of
Rome with the rest of the world.

And, if Rome is the world, then *Romanitas is humanitas*. As Byron,
quoting the words of Bede, said (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* IV.cxlv):

> While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;  
> When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall;  
> And when Rome falls—the World.

The Coliseum is of course a potent image of Rome, perhaps because of its
*circularity*, its enclosure, its representation in microcosm of the world. But
to close I shall focus upon another circular Roman building which seems to
convey the same nexus of ideas even more powerfully—the Pantheon. In
this structure, the temple first built by Agrippa and redesigned and rebuilt
by Hadrian in the form of the rotunda that we know today, the message
conveyed by the use of symbolism and space is still more powerful. Whether
or not we are convinced by Ziolkowski's recent argument that Agrippa's
original construction was a temple of Mars, it is clear that the building was
widely known as the Pantheon from the mid-first century CE. Cassius
Dio, writing early in the third century, speculates upon what 'Pantheon'
stood for (53.27.2). He considers the possibility that the name derives from
the many effigies of gods there, but prefers to think that it is because the
dome resembles the sky. On either of Dio's views, the name of the Pantheon
alone expresses its all-inclusive religious symbolism.

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17. Adam Ziolkowski, 'Was Agrippa's Pantheon the temple of Mars in *Campo*?', *PBSR*
Palladio recorded the widespread opinion that the Pantheon was 'an image of the world'. The reason is this. In the interior of the Pantheon, the vertical cylinder and the hemispherical dome are of equal height, with the radius and height of the cylinder the same. Or, to put it another way, the dome takes half the height of the interior and if continued would form a perfect sphere touching the floor. That is, the Pantheon seems to be designed as a symbol of universality. The dome, the home of 'all the gods', represents the heavens, and the circumference of the dome and the cylinder represent an idealised circumference of universal empire, coterminous with the circumference of the heavens. The rotunda is a seamless and unified whole and as such implies that the same qualities of seamlessness and unity exist in the empire of which it is at the centre. There surely cannot be any more totalising image to illustrate the overlay of Romanitas upon humanitas.

That totalisation persists even to this day. In the Scottish universities, the term 'Humanity' is still used to denote the study of Latin language and literature. And according to the OED, 'humanity' more generally denotes 'Learning or literature concerned with human culture: a term including the various branches of polite scholarship, as grammar, rhetoric, poetry, and esp. of the ancient Greek and Latin classics.' This raises all kinds of issues about the canon, about which texts and ideas are studied and why: why certain 'classic' texts and not others are deemed to constitute the 'humanities'. The Classics profession has often been regarded, in the UK at any rate, as a backward and elitist area. But does the study of 'Humanity' and the humanities have to be elitist? Not intrinsically. Edward Said, in Culture and Imperialism, laments the fact that 'Most professional humanists ... are unable to make the connection between the prolonged and sordid cruelty of such practices as slavery, colonialist and racial oppression, and imperial subjection on the one hand, and the poetry, fiction, and philosophy of the society that engages in these practices on the other.' Said's targets are, I take it, recent British and American scholars. But in any case, he is too pessimistic. I for one am greatly heartened by the fact that Classics can reach out and discuss issues such as slavery, gender and multiculturalism. This is in itself the most optimistic sign I can imagine. It is my firm belief that the study of the ancient world can invite us to look at our own world with new eyes and can give us the intellectual tools we need to face a changing and ever more multicultural world into the next millennium.

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