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FRAGMENTS FROM THE 'MIDDLE GROUND' – POSIDONIUS' NORTHERN ETHNOGRAPHY*

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Introduction

Posidonius of Apamea (d. 51 BCE) is often described as a fundamental contributor to ancient ethnographic writing, perhaps most famously about the northerners. A polymath of Stoic persuasion, he is among other accolades regarded as the first and authoritative source on druids, bards, and many 'Celtic' customs, and possibly the first ancient writer to mention the ethnonym Γερμανοί.[1] Although we only possess a fraction of the original contents of Posidonius' works via fragments, he has been a consistent favourite figure for scholars of ancient history seeking a point of transition where the broadly "Herodotean" style of sparsely confirmed, anecdotal 'ethnography' gave way to a purported autopsy-based precursor of anthropology. The existence of such a point in the history of ancient ethnographic writing has now been called into question by many scholars.[2]

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* This article is based to a great extent on the relevant chapters (II.1c–d) of my doctoral thesis (Lampinen 2013, 177–99). It has greatly benefited from the helpful and learned comments by my external assessors Prof. Thomas Harrison and Prof. Greg Woolf. When preparing the chapters on Posidonius for my thesis manuscript, I also gave a conference presentation on 'Over-Posidonisation' of Gallic ethnography in the XII International Symposium of Societas Celtologica Nordica, organised in Helsinki 11–13 July 2012. In addition to the lively discussion among the participants, I would in particular like to thank Dr. Jane Webster for her feedback.

[1] With reference to 'Celts', these modern interpretations are summed up in *CCHE s.v.* 'Athenaeus', 'bard [I] in classical accounts', 'Diodorus Siculus', 'druids [I] classical accounts', and 'Posidonius'. For the idea that Posidonius was the first to mention Germania, see Hansen 1989; also Dobesch 1995, 61–3. Mazzarino 1957 dates the ethnonym to already before Posidonius.

[2] Herodotus' example remained influential for most of antiquity, as has been noted about Posidonius in particular by Clarke 1999, 164f. That Herodotus continued to enjoy remarkable

Based on these advances, this article will attempt to provide a realistic, contextualised estimate regarding the formation and extent of Posidonius' literary contribution to the description of Gauls – and less directly, northerners as a commonality. The significance of being able to assess correctly the contents and the context of Posidonius' so-called 'ethnography' is obvious, especially when keeping in mind the optimistic and trusting tone that some reconstructions of his fragments have exhibited. With all the accruing understanding of the tradition of ancient ethnographical writing, a critical eye must be cast at a contribution so often postulated as unsurpassed in its influence.[3] It cannot be doubted that Posidonius' impact in antiquity was significant – that is borne out by the amount of his preserved fragments and testimonies – but he may have been given undue prominence because of the more complete loss of his contemporaries has blurred our picture of the cultural dynamics at play.

The main problem in assessing Posidonius' role in the ancient tradition of ethnographic writing seems to be that he is such a plausible candidate for an autoptic, "scientific" observer of anthropological realities in the field. Posidonius' perceived methodological "modernity" was favourably commented upon by A. Momigliano, and he was, conveniently, "one of the most acute observers of antiquity" to J. J. Tierney. E. R. Dodds characterized Posidonius as "the first true field anthropologist".[4] Such ahistorical favouritism, or at least an admiration towards Posidonius' apparently encyclopaedic and doctrinally homogeneous oeuvre, led already in the early 20th century to warnings about an "over-Posidonization" of the history of ancient philosophy.[5] But what is necessary to realise is that most of the glowing assessments of Posidonius' impact on several fields of knowledge is crucially facilitated by the fragmentary status of his writings. This has enabled

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exemplarity, is demonstrated in the context of Late Antique and Byzantine ethnography by Kaldellis 2013.

[3] For recent contributions to our understanding of ancient ethnographical writing, see, for instance, many of the articles edited in Raaflaub – Talbert 2010 and Almagor – Skinner 2013.

[4] Momigliano 1975, 69; Tierney 1960, 223; Dodds 1973, 19.

[5] This was noted early-on by Dobson 1918, 179–95, but his sensible view seems to have only a limited impact; possibly the scholarly trends were against rigorous minimalism, rather favouring contributions such as Trüdinger 1918. Later, Nock 1959 sketched out some of the developments in the Posidonian reception that led to his glowing reputation already in antiquity, though Nock's attributions of Posidonian fragments are notable in their convenience and capaciousness, and he often expresses the view that Posidonius produced a body of work with a consistent, rational Stoic foundation. Thomas 1982, 117f. pointed to criticism of 'panposidonianism' that saw Posidonius' philosophical influence in poetry.

modern scholars to project – often almost unwittingly – their own expectations and desires onto the interpretations drawn from both the extent and the content of the Posidonian fragments. Clarke put it in a typically succinct way: "[a]s Diodorus and Strabo are stripped of their 'clever' passages, they become increasingly unworthy of such pieces and all the more likely to lose them. As Posidonius is accorded more of these intellectual highlights, he becomes proportionately more intelligent and all the more likely to have been the source of high-level discourse".[6] Diodorus has particularly suffered in this process, silent as he often is about his sources.

The early 20th century enthusiasm in Posidonius was directed at this ethnographic contributions by Eduard Norden, who assessed the Posidonian input as crucial for ethnographic writing, though he also recognised the literary character of many of the components in the tradition. These he named *Wandermotive*.[7] While the term is in some ways problematic – not least because it implies some agency on the part of the motifs themselves, instead of authorial strategies, literary *imitatio*, and culturally shared discourse as vehicles of transmission – Norden's idea of literary stock descriptions has in its essentials endured. In the more recent, post-(socio)linguistic-turn scholarship, our understanding of topoi and literary commonplaces has become much more nuanced than at Norden's time, even though much of the modern scholarship is hampered by our less encyclopaedic knowledge of the literary tradition itself. A sad symptom of our times and the compromised state of classical curricula.

Perhaps no wonder, then, that the subject of a fragmentary polymath's relation to the tradition of ethnographical writing has lain largely dormant for some years now. Posidonius' significance has been reassessed in many other regards, but his ethnography is still treated in a capacious way in many modern contributions – partly because he forms a passable framework to compilations of things written in antiquity about the Celts, and partly simply because his fragmentary status seems to allow it.[8] I hasten to add that this current article is but a narrow venture, addressing only the material considered to have originated in Posidonius' 'ethnography of Gaul'. Regarding this subject, two contributions with a still-evident influence are the 1960 article by Tierney, and the 1976 response to

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6 Clarke 1999, 132.

7 Norden 1922, 56.

8 Two examples of recent books, partly directed at the general audience, which use Posidonius as a framework are Freeman 2006 and Martin 2011.

it by D. Nash.[9] Tierney's article included a lengthy treatment of the formation of the Greek ethnographical tradition, pointing out particular subjects with a long standing among the elements included in ethnographic descriptions (e.g. 192). He likewise noted the connections that ethnographic writing exhibits to other literary registers, such as wonder-writing and utopias, though he worked still on the assumption that writing on 'Celts' formed a process of accruing information, forming a more and more 'truthful' picture of an anthropological reality.[10] Posidonius' Celtic ethnography was, according to Tierney, reconstructable from the fragments preserved in Caesar, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and Athenaeus.

Tierney's conclusions on Posidonius became quite influential – partly through Rankin 1987 – even though they also elicited a spirited response from Nash. Her much-praised contribution introduced a welcome note of caution into Posidonian studies, and successfully demolished Tierney's argument of Caesar's dependence on Posidonian ethnography – a claim that was somewhat untenable to begin with. Nash is entirely correct in pointing out that Posidonius was not the only source available to the Late Republican or Augustan writers on Gauls.[11] Nor was he necessarily the most authoritative one at that stage: Caesar's recent first-hand experience and attractive style would have steered many writers to consult him. Moreover, as will be discussed more fully below, there would have been even more plentiful oral sources than were available for Posidonius: after the Gallic Wars and the first decades of Roman rule in Gaul there were naturally more Roman informants available than ever before, ready to narrate their anecdotes and pronounce their opinions on northerners.

Other enthusiastic expositions of Posidonius' role, such as Freeman 2006 and Martin 2011, will largely be left out of consideration in this instance on account of their semi-popular nature, though it must be said that their sweeping claims (such as his *History* being an account of his journey to the west, 'a marvel of ethnic study that became a best-seller across the Mediterranean world', Free-

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9 Tierney 1960; Nash 1976.

10 Tierney 1960, 195: "these stories must be echoes of some contemporary disaster", when discussing the motif of an oceanic inundation harassing a northern population. Such an explanation is not needed: the element, already attested in Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1115b) and Ephorus (*ap.* Str. 7,2,1–3), could simply result from Greek knowledge about the Atlantic tides, perhaps accentuated by climatological considerations, which ever since the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places* had envisioned the western lands rendered unamenable for human habitation on account of the overabundance of water.

11 Nash 1976, 112.

man, 4) in no way help to dispel the simplistic lumping that seems to characterise Posidonian reception. It seems plausible that Posidonius did travel to the Atlantic coast in order to observe tidal movements, and (on the basis of T 1a and T 23 Edelstein-Kidd) he is attested to have visited both Liguria and Rome, but he was no explorer. Even more importantly, he certainly did not travel as extensively in Gaul as has occasionally been claimed.[12] In fact, in his testimonia and fragments there is no explicit confirmation of his visit even to Massilia. Even so, it would have been a natural port of call in his westward journey.[13] If he did observe old displays of decapitated heads (F 274, see below), he need not have wandered deep into the province: skull niches have been found in pillars from both Roquepertuse and Entremont, near Aquae Sextiae.[14]

Posidonius' fragments *sensu stricto*

A crucial prerequisite for the study of Posidonius' contribution to ancient writing about the northerners is a plausible delineation of the extent of his fragments. We are fortunate to be able to rely on the excellent critical edition begun by L. Edelstein and finalised by I. G. Kidd (first edition in 1972). The Edelstein-Kidd edition is more rigorous in tone than the *FGrH* 97 of Jacoby (a great admirer of Posidonius), and much more so than the posthumous edition of W. Theiler (1982) – the publication of which prompted Kidd to issue a second, revised edition in 1989. While the Edelstein-Kidd edition has been very well received within the classics, its impact among the Celtic studies has not been very visible.[15] Moreover, J. Ma-

[12] E.g. Hatt 1984, 82: "Posidonius, qui avait séjourné longtemps en Gaule". This is not only a completely unsupported claim, but also emblematic of the wishful thinking often met in connection with Posidonius; just cf. Freeman 2006, 121f.; Martin 2011, 61f.

[13] A visit to Massilia seems to be implied by F 269, although the meaning would strictly speaking be that Charmoleon, himself a Massiliote, was his host at Liguria. The tenuous evidence of Posidonius' Massilian visit was noted by Laffranque 1964, 82 with admirable minimalism. Posidonius' return trip took him along the coast of Africa: T 21–22.

[14] Kidd 1988, II 937. The numbering of Posidonius' fragments in this article corresponds to the Edelstein – Kidd edition.

[15] Edelstein – Kidd 1989 (1972); Theiler 1982. Rankin 1987, though aware of the Edelstein – Kidd edition, avoids the implications of their work, and on several occasion attributes to Posidonius passages that either are wholly topical, relate to a commonly shared pool of cultural stereotypes (and hence are barely attributable), or are derived from authors that could have had independent or non-Posidonian sources on 'Celts', too. Even the recent and valuable sourcebook

litz's widely cited study of Posidonius' *Histories* has propagated Theiler's broad attribution of Posidonian fragments, which often included passages unattributed to any particular author, but which could on wholly external and preconceived grounds imagined to stem from Posidonius. The 2004 edition of Vimercati explicitly aims to find a middle way between Edelstein – Kidd and Theiler, and will be occasionally referred to.[16]

The method of Edelstein and Kidd was to reject every purported fragment not attributed to Posidonius by name – the only conceivable way to build a reasoned and truly trustworthy corpus of fragments. It is undeniable, however, that because of the laxity of attributions in ancient citing habits this minimalistic outlook will result in some genuine fragments being omitted. In what follows, I will first look at the securely attested Posidonian fragments stemming from his possible 'Gallic' ethnography. Afterwards, I will look at a few of the passages attributed to him by Vimercati but omitted by Edelstein and Kidd. Since these have most often been included as fragments by Jacoby and Theiler, the whole problem of over-capacious 'Posidonianism' is focused on their interpretation and attribution. Often, the minimalistic and rational argumentation in Clarke's *Between Geography and History* helps us to question certain givens which even Kidd has taken for granted in his interpretation of Posidonian fragments.

On Κελτοί

We first look at Posidonius' F 67 (*ap.* Athen. 4,151e–152f), which concerns Celtic banqueting customs, and is thus quite typical of fragments cited by Athenaeus. A particularly interesting detail is the description of a Gallic noble Luvernius, who appealed to the masses by distributing precious metals from his chariot and arranging sumptuous feasts. This is not Posidonian autopsy. Firstly, the passage refers to the father of Bituitus, who himself was deposed after the Allobrogan war in 121 BCE by Fabius Maximus.[17] Secondly, the theme of populist members of

Hofeneder 2005 bases its discussion of Posidonius (112–57) prevalently on Theiler. Ruggeri 2000, though using the Edelstein – Kidd edition of Posidonian fragments, is determinedly optimistic about its subject.

[16] Malitz 1983; Vimercati 2004, 14.

[17] As noted by Clarke 1999, 364f., this reference cannot even be made to support the old idea of Jacoby (which Kidd still retains) that saw it as a proof for the context into which Posidonius inserted his 'Gallic ethnography' in his *Histories*. The fragment can be compared with App.

the elite currying the favour of the *plebs* was a source of increasing unease for the Late Republican political establishment, and hence can reflect Roman concerns and focus.[18] Thirdly, the motifs connecting northerners in general and 'Celts' in particular with precious metals and banquets had a long literary history by the time of Posidonius.[19] Interestingly, the inclusion of both silver and gold among the metals that Luvernius scatters to the common folk seems to contrast Diod. 5,27, commenting on the rarity of silver in Gaul. The phrase in Athenaeus may be a stylistic elaboration, and must alert us to the possibility that Athenaeus may have modified other Posidonian material, as well.

F 68 (*ap.* Athen. 4,154a–c) continues the theme of bangueting, with special attention paid to the duels fought during the feasts. The theme of Celts being always armed makes its appearance; this notion was a long-lived topos used in connection with primitive societies (even the early Greek society).[20] A notional connection with the Homeric descriptions of bangueting culture is possible, especially in the common element of portions of meat being divided on the basis of perceived virtue of the participants.[21] It is possible that this theme adds Posidonius' own information to themes which earlier Greek writing had already taken up, for instance in Phylarchus' writings.[22] Within Athenaeus' work, Posidonius' F

Celt. F 12,1–3 *ap. Exc. de legationibus* 1,2 524,7–18. One cannot discount the possibility that references to Celtic praise singers in Appian and Athenaeus share a link.

[18] It may also have been a focus for Posidonius' moral condemnation: Malitz 1983, 178f.; Kidd 1988, I 315 compares this with Pos. F 75 *ap.* Athen. 4,153b–c on Heracleon of Beroia and F 253 *ap.* Athen. 5,211d–215b on Athenion the tyrant.

[19] Valuable metals and other 'bling' is also present in Polybius' description (sourced from Fabius Pictor) of the Gallic host at the battle of Telamon: Polyb. 2,29,6–9, and hence may testify to a relatively early perception among the Romans. Posidonius himself in F 273 *ap.* Str. 4,1,13; the theme of Gallic greed was well-known to Romans: Polyb. 1.66f., 2,17,11; 2,22,2; 4,46,3; Liv. 5,48; 44,26.

[20] Already Thuc. 1,5,5–6,1. The theme of fights or duels during the feasts was an ethnographic commonplace, and amidst his Posidonian quotations about Celts Athenaeus has, interestingly, placed a fragment from Nicolaus of Damascus and another from Euphorion of Chalcis (from whom *Et. Magn. s.v.* Γαιζήται preserves an etymology for this name of invaders fought against by Romans: οἱ Γαλάται· οἱ τὴν γῆν ζητοῦντες) pertaining to Roman duels and decapitation contests: Nic. Dam. *ap.* Athen. 4,153f, Euph. Chalc. F 4 *ap.* Athen. 4,154c.

[21] The connection between Homeric and Celtic feasting customs is more accentuated in Diod. 5,28, which refers to *Il.* 7,321 after describing the Celtic dining practice of awarding choicest portions to the bravest fighters.

[22] On banquets: Phylarchus' *FGrH* 81 F 2 *ap.* Athen. 4,150d–f particularly speaks of Galatians'

69 (6,246c–d) seems more connected with F 67, focusing as it is on the role of the eulogising 'parasites' who accompany their patrons even to war. The mention is not neutral in tone: it stands in relation to Greek discourse on the nature of autocratic power and the moral defects of parasites and hangers-around.[23] F 69 extends to the mention of the apparently separate group of βάρδοι: Athenaeus' wording does not resemble Ammian's rendition of Timagenes of Alexandria, though the contents agree (τὰ δὲ ἀκούσματα αὐτῶν εἰσιν οἱ καλούμενοι βάρδοι: ποιηταὶ δὲ οὗτοι τυγχάνουσι μετ᾽ ᾠδῆς ἐπαίνους λέγοντες).[24]

F 274 *ap.* Str. 4,4,5, perhaps the most famous 'Celtic' fragment of Posidonius, concerns the display of decapitated heads. Diodorus' unattributed account (5,29,4–5), incorporating many similarities, probably embroiders more basic – probably Posidonian – information (as Kidd 1988, II 938 suggests). But Diodorus would also undoubtedly have benefited from the increased currency of colourful tales about Gauls, newly circulating in Rome after Caesar's wars. It has often been supposed that Posidonius' autopsy would have taken place near Massilia; this view is made more attractive by the ostensible confirmation it gets from the archaeological material unearthed close to Marseille (see above fn. 13).[25] Even this supposition, however, relies on conjecture. We know that Charmoleon, who hosted Posidonius in Liguria, was a Massiliote, and it would seem likely that Posidonius would have stopped in Massilia on his way to the west. His extant fragments discussing the area, though, do not explicitly mention his presence in the city, and the one citing his autopsy (our fragment F 274 about the display of heads) does not mention Massilia. The contents of this fragment are, besides, quite topical. Northerners had been described as decapitating their enemies since

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feasts, and Athenaeus' own discourse includes another potentially influential example in the form of Xenophon's description of Thracian feasts (*ap.* Athen. 150f–151e; Xenoph. *Anab.* 3,21). *CCHE s.v.* 'Champion's portion': "it is clear from the account of Athenaeus that Posidonius did not claim to have witnessed the practice."

[23] Posidonius' own moralising judgement comes clear from F 56, on Hierax, a parasite of the Ptolemies.

[24] Cf. Amm. 15,9,2 (Timagenes F 2 *FGrH* 88) *et bardi quidem fortia virorum illustrium facta heroicis composita versibus cum dulcibus lyrae modulis cantitarunt*, which bears more similarity with Diodorus' account on bards.

[25] A very worthwhile critical treatment on the difficulty of relating archaeological material to literary accounts on 'Celtic' ritual life can be found in Fitzpatrick 1991.

Herodotus, and the Roman family traditions seem to have referred to particular occasions of this happening.[26]

On 'Hyperboreans' in the Alps

F 270 *ap. Schol. in Apoll. Rhod.* 2,675 is a garbled but intriguing reference to Posidonius' view on Hyperboreans, which has been rather briefly treated in previous scholarship.[27] I will tentatively argue that Posidonius' treatment of the Hyperboreans, in the form transmitted by the scholiast, exhibits a complex relation with the inherited form of Herodotean ethnographical enquiry, and Posidonius' own drive towards harmonization of received knowledge instead of overturning it. Herodotus (4,36) was famously sceptical regarding the existence of Hyperboreans, and Posidonius may have attempted to reconcile the epic ethnonym to the contemporary situation. In this, his method may resemble that of Heraclides Ponticus, but it also allowed Posidonius to pose an alternative to Eratosthenes' view (cited in Str. 1,3,22), which sought to abolish the use of 'Hyperboreans' when speaking of contemporary groups.

It is very difficult to reconstruct the original context of Posidonius' Hyperborean passage, and while it is possible that he was offering a euhemerizing αἴτιον, it would not be unparalleled within the tradition of ancient ethnographical writing for this note to represent a less defined intermediate space between mythogeography and ethnography. In such a space, historians, geographers, and mythographers were all able to operate within the parameters of inherited elements, while offering their own interpretations of the material's relationship with their current worldview.[28] Another, more famous, fragment in which Posidonius

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[26] Hdt. 4,64–5; 4,103 (on the Taurian habit of impaling the enemies' heads next to their dwellings as an apotropaic ward: the similarity to Str. 4,4,5 is striking); the element possibly existed in Hellenistic tradition, too: cf. Polyb. 21 F 38 *ap.* Plut. *De mul. virt.* 22; Parth. *Narr. amat.* 8. Roman cases include the fate of Postumius Albinus, Polyb. 3,118,6, and that of Gaius Acilius, Polyb. 2,28,10, possibly on the basis of Fabius Pictor; a possible inversion of the motif is found in Quadr. F 7 Chassignet *ap.* Gell. *NA* 17,12,14.

[27] Dobesch 1995, 106f.; Marco Simón 2000, 133; even Bridgman 2005, 153, otherwise offering enthusiastic (over)interpretations on many passages on Hyperboreans, seems unsure what to make of it. Laffranque 1964, 207 connected the motif with Pytheas' periploutic narrative of the North, but the link seems rather tenuous.

[28] For an examination of such textual-epistemic negotiations, one may refer, for instance, to

seems to have exhibited a desire to reconcile Homeric ethnonyms and geography with his current-day understanding is F 276 *ap.* Str. 7,3,2–7 on the Mysians and *Il.* 13,3–5. It seems that in his remark about the Hyperboreans in the Alps, Posidonius has put a contemporary concern with the area into a relation with the literary tradition, and given the mythogeographical detail an ethnographicizing turn, though not without a moralizing component.[29]

Another Posidonian fragment may help us explain what Posidonius was trying to achieve with his Hyperboreans. In detailing the peoples encountered by the westward-wandering Cimbri in F 272 *ap.* Str. 7,2,1–2, Posidonius included the detail about how Helvetii, "peaceable men rich in gold", were induced to join the Cimbri after they witnessed the even greater amount of gold that the invaders had gathered. This is probably the original context of Posidonius' Hyperboreans in the F 270, too. It would have been a natural occasion to euhemeristically associate the peaceable and bounteous Hyperboreans, living behind their mountain wall, with the Helvetii of his own day. This Alpine mountain wall, moreover, was further etymologized by Posidonius into the Rhipaean mountains of legend, behind which the Hyperboreans were said to live, via the intermediate stage of 'Olbian mountains' in F 240a *ap.* Athen. 6,233d. Kidd (1988, II 919) compares F 270 with F 240a and sees this, plausibly, as another instance of Posidonius' claimed euhemerizing or realist method; Posidonius was writing of a historical state of affairs, explaining the Alps as an area where the Hyperboreans had previously lived. If in so doing he could challenge the stance of his influential predecessor Eratosthenes, so much for the better.

On Cimbri[30]

So it would seem that the Cimbric wanderings gave an occasion to Posidonius to not only suggest an emendation to the other conjectures regarding the mythical Hyperboreans, but also to issue moralizing debates about the influence of min-

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Zuckermann 2006.

[29] See Kidd 1989, 46f. for the view that ethnography was fundamental for Posidonius' conception of history, which in turn was a subservient component for moral philosophy.

[30] For the sake of simplicity, I will not distinguish between the literary attestations of Cimbri, Teutones, Ambrones, and Tigurini – groups which all were described, often in interchangeable textual constructions, to have taken part in the barbarian *tumultus*. Posidonius' fragments only seem to contain the name of Cimbri, which otherwise, too, came to be used *pars pro toto*.

eral wealth to the character of peoples. His F 239 *ap.* Str. 3,2,9 (on the metals of Hispania) also exhibit a concern with the moral corollaries of excessive wealth, and the same can be said of F 240a *ap.* Athen. 6,234a–c on the Scordisci, a reference closely connected with his remark on the Helvetii (Athen. 6,233d–e), examined above.[31] Barbarian greed was a wholly established Hellenistic topos, which would have been recognizable for most of Posidonius' audience. Cimbri, for their part, would no doubt have been a natural source for such a moralizing rhetoric, since their vast and disruptive wanderings seemed to have been motivated by depredation.[32] No doubt there was much interest in the Cimbri during Posidonius' lifetime, and their final defeat after many years of panic and vexation was still within the recent Roman memory.[33] F 272a–b *ap.* Str. 7,2,1–2 is a lengthy explanation of their origin and wanderings, interspersed with Strabo's own additions (mentioning Augustus) and probably summarizing a more spread-out discussion in Posidonius. The theory of their departure resulting from marine floods is debunked (a), and the name of the Cimmerian Bosporos is derived from their name (b). It is however important to note that he would not have been able to observe their sacrificial customs (described in Strabo's follow-up in 7,2,3) in person – he was at least a decade too late for that.[34] Instead the most natural assumption is that he relied upon Roman informants. It also seems likely that in explaining the origins of this sudden barbarian *tumultus*, Posidonius was responding to a Roman epistemic demand.

Essentially, Posidonius' Herodoteanising take on the 'Cimmerian' Cimbri parallels his identification of the Helvetii as Hyperboreans.[35] The stories of their

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[31] Posidonius' interest in Scordisci would no doubt have been affected by the recent Roman military campaigns against them, as Kidd 1988, II 839 notes. They, too, just like the Cimbri before Caesar, were classed as 'Celts': *SIG*^{3} 710 A–B; Liv. *per.* 63; Dio 22,74,1.

[32] See Kidd 1989, 47.

[33] The first Roman consular army defeated by the Cimbri was that of Cn. Papirius Carbo at Noreia in 113 BCE (Liv. *epit.* 63). In 109 BCE they bested the consular army of M. Iunius Silanus (*ibid.* 65), and in 107 that of L. Cassius Longinus suffered a defeat at the hands of the Tigurini, allies of the Cimbri (Caes. *BG* 1,7,4; Liv. *epit.* 65). Lastly, in 105 BCE the heavy Roman defeat at the Battle of Arausio led, according to Sallust (*Iug.* 114 *advorsum Gallos ab ducibus nostris Q. Caepione et Cn. Manlio male pugnatum. Quo metu Italia omnis contremuit.*), to a fundamental crisis of confidence.

[34] This information's possible Posidonian derivation is unnecessarily judged as inconclusive by Günnewig 1998, 128.

[35] On the Cimbri as Cimmerians, see e.g. Dobesch 1995, 63–70. There is also a structural parallel in Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 134a *ap.* Str. 5,4,5, which explains Cimmerians as formerly

depredations could have cast an almost titanic colouring on them (Dobesch 1995, 64), much like what happened with the Greek reaction to the Galatian attack on Delphi. Another 'historical' exemplum would have been the wide-ranging wars of the Scythians and Cimmerians.[36] Their ethnographical classification had by Posidonius' time not been affixed; it has been noted that for him, the identity of the Cimbri would have been either Celtic or Scythian.[37] The 'Germanic' identification of Cimbri only took rise after Caesar, and even then, Diodorus numbers Cimbri among Γαλάται (5,32,4). If Diodorus is so fundamentally dependant on Posidonius as some scholars deem him to be, and if Posidonius wrote about Γερμανοί – a question we turn to next – it would be surprising that Diodorus does not distinguish between Κελτοί and Γερμανοί. As things are, though, Diodorus chose to ignore even Caesar's use of the ethnonym – unlike Strabo (4,4,2).[38]

On Γερμανοί

Posidonius' F 73 (*ap.* Athen. 4,153e), the only one purporting to come from Book 30 of the *Histories*, is a brief remark about Γερμανοί eating meat roasted in whole joints and drinking milk or unmixed wine. Contents-wise this is not ethnography: such an image had become a proverbial marker of a semi-nomadic or nomadic groups in all climes.[39] The fragment has been much discussed, as it would seem to date the origin of the Germanic ethnonym at least to Posidonius, if not earlier. Many scholars have just taken the fragment for its face value. Dobesch thought it likely that the ethnonym Γερμανοί predates Posidonius, but this view is very difficult to substantiate fully.[40] Contributions discussing the pre-Caesarian 'Germani' are mostly focused on the possible real-life referent groups of this ethno-

living underground near the oracle at Κύμη (Cumae).

[36] The 'latter-day Titans' in Callim. *Hymn* 4,171–76. Also see Lampinen 2013, 297–300. On the Scythians and Cimmerians in Herodotus, e.g., 4,11f.

[37] Tierney 1960, 199f. 'Celtoscythians' (Κελτοσκύθαι) as an ethnographicising portmanteau, its use partly reinforced by the established position of the 'Celtiberians' (Κελτίβηρες), is in Str. 11,6,2 (Hell. *FGrH* 4 F 185) a general name for all northern peoples, though this could have reached him through Ephorus (cf. *FGrH* 70 T 30a *ap.* Jos. *C. Ap.* 1,16).

[38] Cf. Perl 1978, mostly focused on Diodorus' use of ethnonyms.

[39] As well demonstrated by Shaw 1982.

[40] Dobesch's references (1995, 62 fn. 233 and 234) make quite clear that there has been no lack of attempts; also see Dobesch 1982.

nym, which certainly keeps the discussion going, but also ensures its conjectural nature. Such discussion is grounded on the presupposition that there must have existed 'Germanic' groups which would in due time become so denoted, and often seeks to downplay studies that demonstrate the extent of the Roman 'invention' of the Germania.[41] As an example of taking Athenaeus' apparent citation as it is, one may mention Hansen's ill-advised emendation of Tac. *Germ.* 2,5 from *a victore ob metum* to *viatore*, with the assumption that such a 'traveller' would have been Posidonius. This relies on the assumption of Posidonius having had a reputation in antiquity of travelling deep into Europe, and omits the question of the fragment's integrity.

Whatever the actual first appearance of the ethnonym *Germani* was, it seems rather unlikely that Posidonius used its Greek form, despite what F 73 seems to state. I would prefer the explanation that Athenaeus or his source to Posidonius (whether direct or anthologized) had substituted Γερμανοί pro Καρμάνιοι, using a much better-known ethnonym, though in so doing relocating the group in question from Persia to Europe.[42] This is not as unlikely as it may first appear. *Excerpta Latina Barbari* 34a demonstrates the possibility of such an error, as it records that in his will Alexander the Great left *Germania* (pro *Carmania*) to Tlepolemus.[43] If this is deemed inconclusive, one may refer to Hdt. 1,125 (Rosén) where the 'Καρμάνιοι' has demonstrably been corrupted in the manuscript tradition into 'Γερμάνιοι' by the greater familiarity of the latter name: by the Imperial Era Γερμανοί would arguably been a more familiar ethnonym of the two. While Athenaeus' methods of working are a matter of conjecture, the corruption itself may not have been due to a purposeful change by Athenaeus.[44] At any rate, he

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[41] For the essentialist presupposition of 'German' pre-existence, see the points made in the preface of Goffart 2006. For the Germania and its inhabitants as a construct permeated by Caesar's artifice, see Riggsby 2006, 21–45; Schadee 2008, 158–80, 167–71.

[42] For the idea that the ethnonym is Athenaeus' substitution, see Pekkanen 1974 with notes. Alternatively we can entertain the possibility that the error has crept in during the manuscript transmission of the *Deipnosophistae*, but the closely similar F 277b *ap.* Eustath. *Ad Il.* 13,6, almost certainly not a direct quote from Posidonius, would in that case be the *terminus ante quem*.

[43] See Garstad 2011, 16 fn. 43 on the understandable error in *ELB*, probably a Merovingian translation from Greek.

[44] Cf. Clarke 1999, 135 with several good points built upon the observations in Pelling 1999, such as the probable lack of textual consultation in passages where an associative chain of examples under a certain topic was influencing the writer. Athenaeus' incorporation of F 73 would appear to be one such instance, with several geographically diverse nations being paraded

refers separately to Posidonius' description of the Carmanian friendship toasts (F 283 *ap.* Athen. 2,45f). It is probably more economical to suppose that Posidonius was only writing about Carmanians in his work instead of introducing an ethnonym which has its first, although still very tentative, attestations at least couple of decades later.[45] That the Γερμανοί here are described as drinking milk is no indication of cultural or geographical belonging, since the element is wholly conventional.

On druids

As we then move to some of the fragments insecurely attributed to Posidonius – the ones upon which the over-confident Posidonisation of ancient northern ethnography often hinges – the first claim to be discussed must be the assumption, made on the basis of Diod. 5,25, that Posidonius described the druids or at least referred to them. Kidd (1988, I 317) thinks it an accident of survival that none of the attested Posidonian fragments mentions the Gallic philosophical class: in his thinking "there can be little doubt that Posidonius knew of their importance, and included them in his ethnography". The common image of druidic importance among the Gauls is mostly built upon Caesar and post-Caesarian sources, as well as the vernacular Insular sources of a much later era; this naturally poses a danger of circularity.[46] There are, however, grounds for arguing that the notion of wise men among the Celts was of Hellenistic pedigree, and hence was probably known to Posidonius and maybe even his audience.

Diodorus 5,25–32, regarded by Vimercati in its entirety as Posidonius' F B17, includes a piece of information that exhibits a long life within ancient lit-

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in a rather complex sequence with several cited authors from Timaeus and Megasthenes to Nicolaus of Damascus and Eratosthenes. Nor should we think his memory absolutely retentive: in introducing F 52 he seems to forget the exact title of Posidonius work.

[45] Possibly transmitted in Liv. *per.* 97; Plut. *Cass.* 9,7; both of whom, of course, post-date Caesar and the construction of *Germani* as the free and uncivilised northerners in the place of the now-subjugated Gauls.

[46] Starkly demonstrated by Tierney 1960, 223f., who argued that what he judged as the sources' ahistorical magnification of the druids' role in Gallic society was already the creation of Posidonius, and Caesar simply found it politically expedient to follow what he found in Posidonius. Nash 1976, on the other hand, wanted to rescue Caesar's source value about Gallic realities, and relegated his role into that of a reporter (122f.). Against these, cf. the modern view of Schadee 2008, 177.

erature, and has a questionable relationship with the more likely Posidonian parts of Diodorus. Using the Celtic dinner practices and duels as a bridge to include the motif of this people's disregard for death, Diodorus goes on to note their confidence in Pythagoras' λόγος on human souls being immortal and returning after an assigned period into other bodies (5,28). This does have a likely Caesarian basis (6,14), but the explicit mention of Pythagoras is a notable addition. Diodorus' methodology has not received all the attention it deserves, but on the basis of our current knowledge and the contents of his relevant *loci* themselves it is safe to say that he could not have and did not depend solely on Posidonius for his 'Celtic ethnography'.[47] There were other and more recent sources available, among them Timagenes' writings – as Kidd notes.[48] Diodorus' information on Gauls demonstrates strong Caesarian influence, as is natural: at the time of his composition, the *Commentarii de bello Gallico* would have had the greatest prestige among works purporting to describe Gauls, and we know that Diodorus knew Latin (1,4,4). It is certain, though, that Vimercati's inclusion of the whole of Diod. 5,25–32 as Posidonian is far too admissive.

There are alternatives to Posidonius. By the time that Caesar, Diodorus and possibly Timagenes were referring to the druids, Alexander Polyhistor, a creative antiquarian and polymath originally from Miletus but working in Rome, had quite likely treated them.[49] Polyhistor, so nicknamed because of his voluminous oeuvre and his wide interests (including thaumasiography and geography), can believably be shown to be a fundamental contributor for many of the associations that the druids elicited in early imperial and later authors, such as their connection with the doctrines of Pythagoras.[50] Among his works two in particular, the Φιλοσόφων Διαδοχαί and the Περὶ Πυθαγορικῶν, could easily have featured the relationship between the Druids and the Pythagoreans – even if he was only

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47 The conventional notion of Diodorus choosing a single source to act as his base (cf. Kidd 1988, I 308f. noting the difficulties involved) for each topic has some merit, but should not be taken as a rigid rule. Cf. Yarrow 2006, 116f. Especially in a subject as salient as the Gauls he would have included 'commonly known' details from memory.

48 Kidd 1988, I 309. Caesar may have been a shared influence behind both Timagenes and Diodorus, partly explaining the similarities between Diodorus and what seems like a predominantly Timagenian fragment in Amm. 15,9,2–7.

49 For the dating (*c.* 80–35 BCE) of Polyhistor's historiographical writings, produced at Rome, Troiani 1988, 9 fn. 1, 15. On Polyhistor as compiler and antiquarian: Long 2013, 141.

50 Cf. Brunaux 2006, 107ff. In more detail, Lampinen 2013, 193f. On Polyhistor's Pythagoreanism, see Long 2013 – noting the importance of Polyhistor as Diogenes' source for Pythagoreanism (140).

transmitting an idea already showcased by the second-century Alexandrian doxographer Sotion, to whom Diogenes Laertius (*VP* 1,1) refers to, alongside the pseudo-Aristotelean *On Magic*, regarding the druids.[51] Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata*, however, cites Polyhistor's 'On Pythagorean Symbols' about Pythagoras consulting Γαλάται (*strom.* 1,15,70,1). The lists of foreign 'wise men' given by Diogenes and Clement are very similar, reinforcing the argument that not only did Polyhistor mention the druids, but that he also connected them with the Pythagoreans. Polyhistor seems a likelier source than Sotion to be read by Timagenes and Diodorus (in addition to Caesar's input, lacking a mention of Pythagoras), even if he simply transmits Sotion's innovation. It would be incautious to ignore the potential influence of a prolific author (Polyhistor) whom we know to have treated the druids, in favour of a slightly earlier one (Posidonius) whose fragments contain no secure mentions of this group.

With most fragments attributed to Posidonius stemming from the Augustan era or later, the idea of Posidonius as the pre-eminent contributor in exclusion to such writers as Polyhistor, Timagenes, and others, is hard to justify. Nothing except the old over-Posidonising view (cf. Tierney 1960, 220) supports the idea that the material found in Ammianus Marcellinus on the authority of Timagenes (Amm. 15,9,2) derives from Posidonius. Timagenes, writing after 55 BCE, had many alternative sources to druids and bards (including, crucially, Caesar), and he certainly did not follow Posidonius in writing about the treasure at Tolosa.[52] Indeed, the actions of Servilius Caepio at the Gallic sanctuary, his eventual fate, and the possible Delphic provenance of the treasure he looted were almost certainly based on information sourced from Romans – providing another testimony for the modes of enquiry for the Late Republican Greek writers. Timagenes was

[51] Diogenes Laertius' reference is sometimes regarded as the earliest testimony about Greek writing on druids: both Sotion and *On Magic* would be of Hellenistic date. Polyhistor may have been repeating a connection made before him by Sotion or the writer(s) of *Pythagorean Hypomnemata* (Diog. Laert. *VP* 1,1–3, 8,25; cf. Brunaux 2006, 108f.), but for the reception of such information, Polyhistor would have been quite crucial. If Sotion really mentioned the Druids in his Διαδοχαὶ τῶν φιλοσόφων, its doxographic emphasis on successive philosophers within their schools would probably have attempted to connect the Druids with some Greek or barbarian group (cf. Hdt. 4,95). Polyhistor, then, would have found the connection between druids and Pythagoras in a doxographical context, and transmitted it in a context where another Pythagorean connection with the West, namely king Numa of Rome (Cic. *Tusc.* 4,1; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2,59; Plut. *Numa* 1,2f., 8,4–10) enjoyed some currency.

[52] Cf. Kidd 1988, II 933–36; on Posidonius' own argument about the gold of the Tectosages, *ibid.* 1989, 48.

available to Strabo (4,1,13) though the latter refers to the Alexandrian by name only once. Timagenes and Polyhistor would have been active in Rome at roughly the same time, and the information on the Pythagorean connection of the druidic learning found in Ammianus – though by his own time quite conventional, even a topos – could have been showcased in Timagenes' work as a recently made, intriguing connection with a respectably Herodotean antecedents. Another demonstration of Timagenes' creative combination of inherited elements and contemporary concerns also engaged with by Posidonius can be glimpsed in Ammianus' description of the druids transmitting the memory of part of the Gauls to have moved there following an oceanic inundation (15,9,4). Speculations engendered by the migration of the Cimbri seem to stand behind this interpretation, too, but Timagenes has harmonised his theory with originally Aristotelian speculation, yet presents it with the additional inclusion of the druids.

Ethnographical writing , Posidonius, and his predecessors

Momigliano (1975, 69) imagined that "[Posidonius'] approach to the Celts was deliberate; he intended to preserve the physiognomy of a world in danger of disappearing". This is, of course, an exceptionally deterministic sentiment, and can in no way be justified by the Posidonian fragments on Gauls. Providing an observationally based, 'anthropological' description of the Celts was neither Posidonius' own intention, nor a recognizable aim for any of his ancient predecessors – or followers, for that matter. While ethnographical description would have been almost by default a part of a historical narrative for Posidonius, T 80 (*ap.* Athen. 4,151e) seems to bear out a belief – at least in Athenaeus' mind – that Posidonius' way of writing about population groups was strongly connected with his philosophy.[53] In this, he certainly differed from his predecessor Polybius, though the resulting moralizing tone may have brought him closer to the 'rhetorical historiography' of Ephorus, full of pathos and moral evaluations.[54]

The role of Posidonius has partly been played up by contrasting him with 'romantic' or 'thaumasiographic' predecessors or contemporaries; in this F 49c (*ap.* Str. 2,3,4) has often given the cue for modern attitudes, though properly speaking it reflects Strabo's polemic against what he perceived as fabulistic tendencies.

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[53] This allegation is examined in Kidd 1989, 39–41, who suggests that for Posidonius, history performed the same function to moral philosophy as sciences did to natural philosophy.

[54] Kidd 1989, 46; on Ephorus see Parmeggianini 2011, 34–66.

Importantly, we note in F 49c that after partly excusing Antiphanes of Perge, Eudoxus of Rhodes, and others on account of their faulted genre of writing, Strabo directs his particular rebuke at Posidonius, who should have known better.[55] A look at Eudoxus, a third-century BCE historian, affords a glimpse on what Greek audiences in the generations before Posidonius wanted to learn about the Κελτοί. Eudoxus' F 4 *ap.* Ael. *NA* 17,19 tells of 'eastern Γαλάται' who combat invasions of locusts by charming birds through prayer and sacrifice, and protecting these birds on the pain of death.[56] His F 2 *ap.* Apoll. *mir.* 24 is more bizarre, telling of a Celtic ἔθνος which τὴν ἡμέραν οὐ βλέπειν, τὴν δὲ νύκτα ὁρᾶν.[57]

The appraisal of previous scholarly generations should not blind us to the fact that Posidonius could certainly report thaumasiographic elements on his own, too. Perhaps not incidentally, Strabo introduces F 276 (4,4,6), which certainly is rather fabulistic in content, right before continuing with paradoxographic material from the geographer Artemidorus of Ephesus, who predated Posidonius only slightly. The fragment records the Dionysiac rites, complete with frenzy and *sparagmos*, of a group of female priests of Namnitai (*Namnetes* in Caes. *BG* 3,9). As Kidd (1988, II 940) notes, Posidonius had not been to the mouth of the Loire, where he located the holy island of the Namnitai. Artemidorus was also suggested by Norden (1922, 468) as the author who propagated the already existing idea of

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[55] Cf. Romm 1992, 198, correct in pointing out the context of describing the peripheric areas, which could open, it seems, even otherwise well-reputed geographers to aspersion.

[56] A minor late-Hellenistic motif seems to have connected 'Celts' with sacred birds in particular. Trogus (Just. *epit.* 24,4,3) reported that *in augurandi studio Galli praeter ceteros callent*; in 32,3,9f. the Tectosagi use augury to a good effect in order to rid themselves of the curse of their Delphic loot (unlike Pos. F 273 *ap.* Str. 4,1,13 and slightly differently from Timag. F 11 *ap.* Str. *loc cit.*). Str. 4,4,6 cites Artemidorus on the Celtic harbour town of 'Two Crows' where the eponymous birds arbitrate in disputes. Cic. *div.* 1,15 and 1,90 may tap into these common perceptions.

[57] The interpretation of Marco Simón 2007, 174f., taking this as a reference to the importance of night-time to Celtic rituals (largely in much later contexts and among far removed groups), seems far too literalist a reading. A possible parallel for this motif is met in the context of Antonius Diogenes' romantic tale *Unbelievable Things Beyond Thule* (*ap.* Phot. *Bibl.* 166,109b). A literary inspiration for this group of Κελτοί may be the Homeric Cimmerians, whom Ephorus had explained as underground-dwelling caretakers at the oracle of Cumae (*FGrH* 70 F 134a *ap.* Str. 5,4,5). Also related may be the entry in Steph. Byz. *ethn. s.v.* Γέρμαρα: Κελτικῆς ἔθνος, ὃ τὴν ἡμέραν οὐ βλέπει, ὡς Ἀριστοτέλης περὶ θαυμασίων, τοὺς δὲ Λωτοφάγους καθεύδειν ἑξάμηνον. Mazzarino 1957, 79 regards this piece of pseudo-Aristotelian thaumasiography as connected to current of thought that sought links between Homeric peoples with contemporary northern groups. The technique seems akin to what Posidonius attempted with the Hyperboreans.

oceanic inundation as the cause of the Cimbric (or Celtic, which would also have been the pre-Caesarian affiliation of the Cimbri) migrations, which Posidonius criticises in F 272. Among the Greek writers on the West, Artemidorus' information on Spain would certainly have been something Posidonius would have had to take into account. Indeed, the problem of distinguishing between potentially Posidonian elements in Strabo from those of Artemidorus was already noted by Tierney (1960, 219). Nonetheless, the power of Posidonisation was demonstrated by Tierney's confident claim that Posidonius' views on ethnography were "so very much his own that they stand out clearly against of the normal pedestrian periplus of Artemidorus" (*loc. cit*). Along similar lines, Momigliano (1975, 67) envisioned, somewhat deterministically, Artemidorus providing important ground work for Posidonius' more sober writings. The same consensus in condemning by faint praise is echoed by Alonso-Núñez, calling Artemidorus the most important figure between Polybius and Posidonius, but "not in the same class" as these two authors.[58] This sentiment (for it is barely anything more) hardly helps us form an accurate picture of Posidonius' relationship with earlier writers on the West.

It has already been noted above that Posidonius probably sought to compete with Eratosthenes' ethno(geo)graphy of Europe. There has been discussion about whether it was the famous Eratosthenes of Cyrene or a younger namesake of his whom Stephanus of Byzantium (*s.v.* Κυρήνη) claims wrote a *Galatica*. P.-M. Duval favoured the identification of Eratosthenes of Cyrene, as seems sensible concerning the fact that the only testimony to this younger Eratosthenes is found in Stephanus, who refers to Eratosthenes' *Galatica* in six instances; this is now supported by K. Geus.[59] Momigliano 1975, 67 disagreed on somewhat obscure grounds, and suggested a dating of c. 150 BCE for Eratosthenes Junior. He may have been influenced by Strabo accusing Eratosthenes 'Senior' on ignorance about the Celts (2,1,40; 2,4,2), as well as F 5 of Eratosthenes' *Galatica*, which ostensibly refers to a battle in Asia Minor in 156 BCE, well after the death of the Cyrenean. The similarity of patronymics in Stephanus (Agacles vs. Aglaos) is close enough to invalidate this as a serious obstacle. Strabo's rebuke would only make sense if Eratosthenes in fact had devoted some attention to Celts, and Geus has dated the battle reference in F 5 to c. 195. It thus seems that Eratosthenes of

[58] Alonso-Núñez 1980, 259.

[59] Duval 1971, 173ff.; Geus 2002. Jacoby treated the 'Younger' Eratosthenes as a distinct historian: *FGrH* 745 F 1–6.

Cyrene did write a *Galatica*, though it is unknown whether it was mostly devoted to matters in Asia Minor (which Strabo's opinion could support).[60]

Polybius is no doubt the most important historiographical predecessor for Posidonius: this has been recognized for a long time, and is reinforced by several points of comparison between the two *Histories*.[61] Importantly, Polybius had investigated the coast of Africa under Scipio, as well as travelled in Spain. Already Nock (1959, 4) pointed out the likely influence of Polybius' example on Posidonius' later travel in addition to the joint geographical and historical investigation. We may ask if it was simply his interest in the Atlantic tides that led him to travel to the west, or if the reasons might not in fact combine literary emulation with Roman patronage. In any case, ethnographic investigation was hardly the primary motivation. Strabo, writing confidently in possession of latest information on Gaul and Britain, lumps up Polybius and Posidonius as predecessors whose ignorance on north could not be excused (unlike the similar lack in Eratosthenes and Dicaearchus) since they were supposed to have had first-hand information (T 25). This passage (Str. 2,4,2) should alert us to the limits of Posidonius' enquiry: it is relatively safe to say that Polybius had not ventured very far north even along the Hispanian coast, and there is little in Posidonius' extant testimonia or fragments which would support any more substantial travel north of Narbonensis and Roman Spain.[62] Moreover, Polybius provided a rather extensive treatment of the Gauls of North Italy, which exhibits many connections to the modes of Herodotean ethnography, and certainly was tailored to reflect the shared Greek and Roman interest in 'Celts', as well as using Roman family traditions as its sources.[63] Polybius' description was authenticated by claims of autopsy, and it

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[60] Geus 2002, 333–35. Nachtergael 1977, 55 thinks Eratosthenes' *Galatica* treated also the western Celts, but the only fragment to bear out this opinion is F 3 (*s.v.* Διανεῖς), the ethnonym of which is a *hapax*. An indication to the contrary is provided by F 1 (*s.v.* Τολιστόβιοι), which details this group as ἔθνος Γαλατῶν ἐσπερίων μετοικησάντων ἐκ τῆς Κελτογαλατίας εἰς Βιθυνίαν. It would seem, then, that Eratosthenes' particular attention was not directed at the western Κελτογαλατία, except as a place of origin for the Galatians of Asia Minor.

[61] Marincola 1997, 239. Posidonius seems to have produced his historical work to stand either in continuation to (Kidd 1999, III 25 on the basis of T 1a–b) or contrast with (Yarrow 2006, 162) that of Polybius.

[62] Str. 4,2,1 refers to Polybius and Scipio conducting interviews about Britain with traders from Massilia, Narbo, and Corbilo (a trading port on the coast of Bay of Biscay).

[63] Williams 2001, 80f. shows that in describing the Transpadane Gauls Polybius had trawled the Greek ethnographical tradition for markers of the primitive. Also see Berger 1992. A good example of Polybius using Roman sources is his reliance on Fabius Pictor on the battle of

is difficult to imagine his continuator and competitor (F 271, 225) to have been content with anything less. Polybius' description was the benchmark Posidonius' *Histories* needed to surpass.

When put into their place next to other Late Hellenistic writings on Gauls, and stripped from their former extra burden in terms of scope and contents, Posidonius' securely identified fragments lead us to call into question the uniqueness of his contribution.[64] It is worth bearing in mind that Posidonius wrote in an age with a keen interest in the weird and wonderful. Besides, the ethnographical register was hardly dissociated from themes and motifs that are wont to be labelled 'thaumasiographic' in modern studies. The division between 'serious' writers and reporters of miracles was far from as clear-cut as it is sometimes taken to be, and both the Greek and Roman audiences of Posidonius would have yearned also for the 'enhanced' thrill of the unfamiliar. That the motif of head-hunting happened to fit both the demands of Posidonius' audience and the actual archaeologically testified practices on the ground, does not mean that the fragments of Posidonius' 'Gallic ethnography' should be read as the remains of a work of anthropology.

In short, Sassi may be close to the truth when she observes that the 'ethnographical' contents of Posidonius' works essentially represent a synthesis.[65] He had plenty of predecessors in writing about the northerners, and he had plentiful sources – both Greek and Roman, oral and written – to build upon as he compiled his own work. Authenticating details, expected curiosities, and epideictic moral points were incorporated into the whole, and the end result cannot easily be slotted into our narrow generic categories. But if not anthropology, what, then, was Posidonius' so-called ethnography? Ancient ethnographical writing has in recent years become under increasing and critical attention. One prominent example of this is the recent collected volume Almagor – Skinner 2013, the contributions in which do a fine job of demonstrating the methodological range and challenges posed by a register of writing that is so diverse both in form. The term 'ethnographical writing' is purposefully chosen to challenge connotations rising from unreflective use of 'ethnography', which has partly obscured the interpretational

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Telamon: Polyb. 2,29. Polybius clearly uses the 'Celts' as a moralizing tool for comparing the Greeks and Romans: Polyb. 2,35,2–9.

64 Cf. above, and also Tierney 1960, 201: "Posidonius, of course, does not belong to this category [of 'less able ethnographers']."

65 Sassi 2001, 128. It may be noted that many of the known titles of Posidonius' writings carry titles which could belong to works of compilation and harmonisation, such as *On Heroes and Demons*, *On the Gods*, and also his influential *On the Ocean*.

difficulties between the ancient literary register and the modern scholarly field denoted by the same name. As pointed out by Clarke (1999, 142f.), both in terms of sources of enquiry, registers of writing, and subject of interest, geographical and ethnographical writers exhibit numerous cross-overs which stymie the neat distinction often constructed between the two. Moreover, ancient tradition of ethnographical writing influenced other registers beyond historiography and geography. Occasionally, elements with apparent anthropological or ethnographical content appear for instance in poetry, in the form of conventional themes and topoi.[66]

The recent monograph of Greg Woolf, in addition to providing a nuanced study of the Late Republican and Imperial ethnographical writing about the western provinces, turned attention to the contexts of enquiry and exchange through which 'ethnographical knowledge' was created in the Roman empire.[67] He applies to these situations the term 'middle ground', which was originally coined in the context of colonial encounters of information exchange and the creation of shared signifiers on the American continent between Europeans and the original inhabitants. While the precise processes of literary transmission between the cultural encounters on the middle ground and the acts of creating our surviving written reflections of them in the centre (whether in Rome or elsewhere), are hard to reconstruct exactly, local communities and learned visitors selectively interviewing their informants would both have been involved.[68] The narrative processes on the 'middle ground' can also be seen to be the epistemic parallels to the concurrent process of 'creolization'.[69] But for a Greek writer to encounter connection-building new narratives worth transmitting it was not always necessary to travel to the provincial 'middle ground': there existed a contested and manipulated source of – often oral – information about the provincials in the very centre of the realm. Competing variant versions of partisan family traditions (cf. Cic. *Brut.* 62), war memories of the members of Roman elite, and their exaggerated flaunting in the funeral orations would all have shaped the way the likes of Posidonius were informed about the subject peoples of Rome.[70]

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66 E.g. Thomas 1982.

67 Woolf 2011.

68 On ethnographic 'middle grounds' in antiquity: Woolf 2011, 17–9, with the Iberia as a case study 24–29.

69 For this more nuanced way of understanding processes which previously were dubbed 'Romanisation', see Webster 2001 and Woolf 1998.

70 Woolf 2011, 60ff. on the interplay of Roman elite power and Greek writers of history

Posidonius and the Romans

In his *Commentary* Kidd repeatedly stresses the need to recognise the existence of Posidonius' oral sources (see, e.g., 1988, I 309). Among these, members of the Roman elite circles would appear as plausible candidates, and very relevant to our current scrutiny. Indeed, to quote Kidd's pithy phrase, Posidonius in his later career was "hobnobbing […] freely with the Roman nobility" (1988, II 896). Yarrow (2006, 101–3) warns against over-interpreting Posidonius' Roman sympathies, and especially against conflating his point of view with those of the Roman elite. Such a conflation would, indeed, be short-sighted, but it is at least safe to say that what is known of Posidonius' Roman friends would seem to support the image of optimate connections.[71] Yarrow herself notes that in the Posidonian references to Celts and Gauls, in particular, the Roman reference points are particularly prevalent (2006, 165). We have seen this point well demonstrated.

For the Romans, relations with Posidonius might have appeared in the light of the famous *exemplum* of Alexander and his tutor Aristotle. The desire to mimic such glorified models was probably part of the motivation for Pompey to correspond with Posidonius: we know from elsewhere that he had aspirations to pose as a latter-day Alexander at least in the connection of his Eastern campaign. For Caesar, likewise, the role model offered by the Macedonian conqueror was quite important, though he seems to have preferred to pose as his own Aristotle.[72] It would have been tremendously advantageous to have such a figure reproduce a particular *gens*' own version of their family history, such as when Posidonius was defending the claim of the Iunii Bruti to descend from the founder of the Republic

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and ethnography; 66–79 on the libraries available to writers at Rome – an asset which would naturally have interfered with a straightforward transmission into literature of both the stories from the 'middle ground' and oral narratives of all kinds. On Roman family traditions as contested partisan narratives, see Rawson 1985, 12, 218f.; Cornell 1986, 52–8, 73–6; Flower 1995, 180; Williams 2001, 41ff., 143; Lampinen 2013, 107–13.

71 Strasburger 1965, 40f., 49; Potter 2011, 73.

72 Spencer 2002, 2–4, 34, 119, 138–42. As is well known, the only reference to Greek authors in the *Gallic War* is to Eratosthenes and '*quidam Graeci*' (*BG* 6,24), but tellingly enough this is located in the "ethnographical" excursus about the Gauls and Germans, where such an epistemic support could have been needed. Posidonius' criticism of Eratosthenes is not the likeliest explanation of Caesar's mention, but it may be significant that Caesar glosses over Eratosthenes' most recent challenger, especially if Posidonius was aligned with the optimates (see above fn. 71).

(F 256 *ap.* Plut. *Brut.* 1).[73] Posidonius even cited as evidence the similarity between living Bruti and the Capitoline statue of Brutus – this would no doubt have been a statue modelled after some Republican Iunius Brutus, and quite plausibly shown to the philosopher in order to propagate the family's claim. Posidonius also included in his *History* an encomium of M. Claudius Marcellus (F 257–59 *ap.* Plut. *Marc.* 20), and speculated as to the possible reason of such an inclusion. I would argue that Momigliano was exactly right (1975, 37f.), and that the encomium reflects the influence of the later Claudii on Posidonius.

Vimercati (2004, 400: F B16a) attributes Diodorus' description of the Ligurians in 4,20 to Posidonius, and indeed the detail of Ligurian women giving birth to their children in the midst of field-work and returning to the task immediately afterwards – so as not to lose any payment – is found in Str. 3,4,17, attributed to Posidonius (F 269 Ed.-Kidd).[74] The information comes across as broadly ethnographical in form, but it is crucial to note the fact that Strabo mentions Charmoleon, Posidonius' Massilian host (though not necessarily his host *in* Massilia), as the source for this information (φησὶν ὁ Ποσειδώνιος διηγήσασθαι τὸν ξένον ἑαυτῶι Χαρμόλεων Μασσαλιώτην ἄνδρα). This points us to an important aspect of such quasi-ethnographic details; that they would often have been obtained from Greek-speaking informants. These, in turn, could reflect narrative or literary motifs which were comparatively widespread (in connection with this particular motif, Kidd quotes Varro *RR* 2,10,9, Ps.-Arist. *mir.* 91, and Clem. Alex. *strom.* 4,8,62,2). Ligurians had been subjected to ridicule among the Romans from Cato onwards, and Cicero apparently found it easy to build upon these perceptions as he joked about Aelius Ligus in a way that approaches an ethnic slur.[75] So, while it may be true that before Posidonius (and Polybius) Romans had not been exposed to ethnographical writing in their historiography (Kidd 1988, I 309), they certainly had inherited a vast amount of orally transmitted elements which were of a similar nature as many of those used in Greek ethnographical register, sometimes even by historians. And when a Greek historian such as Posidonius seems to be recording a personally heard testimony from a local informant, he may in fact be

[73] For the fragment, see Kidd 1988, II 893–96.

[74] As Kidd (1988, II 918) notes, the unattributed version of Diodorus is told in entirely different words, and hence should warn us to Diodorus not being a simple copyist. In retelling material from other authors, his own context and accumulated narrative material (compared with the earlier authors, e.g. Posidonius) would have shaped his rendition.

[75] Cic. *har. resp.* 5,18; also Cic. *Clu.* 72. Cato 2,31–2 *HRR* Peter *ap.* Serv. *Aen.* 11,715, 710 is an early example of Ligurians as an object of scoffing. Also see Williams 2001, 75f., 80.

re-recording a travelling anecdote which this informant has picked to elucidate a perceived characteristic among a local population.

Conclusions

In this contribution – partly a review article of previous scholarship and partly a source critical case study – I have endeavoured to show, firstly, that Posidonius' ethnography should always remain adorned with at least notional scare quotes, with a full recognition of the difficulties associated with the term; and secondly, that the creation of his "ethnographic" Gauls prevalently did not take place in a middle ground of Southern Gaul as the result of the author's personal anthropological autopsy, but instead as the result of a far more complex and politically involved exchange of questions, stories, and literary elements between the writer and his Greek and Roman informants and audiences. His other northerners were similarly contingent, and in the case of the Γερμανοί, may not have been part of the original text at all.

Although Posidonius' contributions to the ancient ethnographical writing on northerners was much less formative than has so often been claimed in the past, it is still quite crucial to 'get Posidonius right'. This is not only because he still retains eminent representativeness as a member of Greek intelligentsia writing in a Roman world, but also because of the dangers posed by attributing to his influence elements which were rather parts of an associative commonality, or entered Posidonian writings from somewhere else than his personal autopsy. Kidd notes rather grandly – almost as if referring to Diodorus' passage (5,26,2) about Celts enjoying their ζῦθος – that of Posidonius' "potent historical brew" of Gallic ethnography, "only the superficial froth has survived" thanks to the selective preservation of his fragments (1988, I 310). But many things can froth when left to stand long enough; and Posidonius' surviving fragments consist, to a notable degree, of long-standing tropes connected with northerners in the Greek tradition of ethnographical writing.

On Posidonius' Gallic "ethnography"

Time and our growing understanding of the ancient tradition of ethnographic writing have, I would argue, partly vindicated some of Tierney's points which ap-

peared so untenable to Nash. I am not claiming that Tierney's vision of Posidonius' influence is correct as such; his capacious view of Posidonius' survival within Strabo and Diodorus, his downplaying of Caesarian influence on the latter two, and indeed his almost complete denial of independent literary creativity to Caesar's *Commentarii* are all demonstrably wrong. I do argue, however, that Nash, in her eagerness to retain the source value of ancient authors to Iron Age Europeans, overlooked aspects in the Greek and Roman sources which complicate the overall image. If most of the ethnographical elements do not relay autoptic observations on the ground, their differences cannot codify anthropological changes. Tierney did take into account the ancient tradition of ethnographic writing in a way that Nash did not, but much like Norden before him, he built upon too capacious an understanding of the Posidonian fragments, and underestimated the social contexts involved in creating ethnographical writing in the Late Republic.

Which among the 'ethnographic' elements which Posidonius are often thought to have introduced, seem to have a topical literary origin instead? The feasting and conspicuous consumption by the 'Celtic' elite should certainly be counted among these. Phylarchus had provided material on this already in the third century BCE, and the dramatic themes of accompanying violence during the feasts can would accord well with Phylarchus' style of historiography (Pol. 2,56). Even if the notion of heroic duels and ritual beheading were introduced by Posidonius, on notional level it would have been connected with the commonly shared idea of northerners decapitating their enemies, already met in Herodotus, and in the context of Celts in Polybius, Hellenistic novelists, and the Roman narrative tradition. Posidonius, even though ostensibly referring to autopsy as regards the display of heads, cannot be pinpointed to have visited any particular sanctuary, or even having incontestably been to Massilia. As to the element of 'hero's portion', found both in Athenaeus and Diodorus, the comparison with Homeric practice may have been present in Posidonius – but this sort of search for literary parallelisms hardly reinforces the idea of autopsy as Posidonius' prime method.

Elements which seem like uncontestably Posidonian contributions to the ancient tradition of septentriography are the non-Delphic provenance of the Tolosan treasure and his account of the origins of the Cimbri. He also may have been the first to mention the Celtic parasites. Moreover, as has been proposed above, Posidonius sought to rehabilitate the Herodotean or mythical Hyperboreans with the European continental ethnography of his own time. A similar aim was partly obtained by his postulated Cimmerian origins of the Cimbri. His counterarguments against the 'flood theory' of the Cimbric migration became authoritative,

but by no means hegemonic despite Strabo's endorsement.[76] Posidonius wrote in a context where the Roman gaze towards the northerners was strongly coloured by the recent shock of the Cimbric *tumultus*, and his motives of discussing them can believably be argued to be motivated by the same Roman concern with northerners that seems to be behind most of his 'Celtic' fragments. It should be noted that all of the securely Posidonian introductions to ethnography of the northerners seem to echo the Romans' focus.

The description of druids and their creed, so often credited to Posidonius, is a complex question. The connection of the northerners' belief in a transmigration of souls – later attributed to druids by Caesar and writers following him – with Pythagoras could be more believably credited to Alexander Polyhistor or perhaps Sotion. While the scant references in Posidonius to Pythagoras have been interpreted by Nock to testify to a Posidonian philosophy of the soul, the passage in Sext. *Adv. Phys.* 1,71ff. is difficult to rely on, and I have suggested above that the druids were more likely to have entered the Greek literature in the context of doxographic writing.[77] As things stand, we should treat Caesar as the first attestation of the druids in Latin literature, and Timagenes and Polyhistor in Greek literature, closely followed by Strabo and Diodorus Siculus.

On Posidonius' ethnographic 'middle grounds'

The optimistic view that Posidonius is objectively reporting his anthropological observations in Gaul, along the lines celebrated by Dodds or Momigliano, can no longer be sustained, though it continues to surface even in scholarly literature. Even if he visited Massilia or Narbo, Posidonius did not venture deep into Narbonensis. His ethnographic descriptions were born primarily through discussions with Greeks and Romans, as well as Posidonius' own reading. But these contexts pose no less a middle ground. Knowledge was created through informants, but they were not necessarily 'native' informants. The old idea of Roman elite

[76] As Kidd 1989, 47 notes, the main import of Posidonius' explanation was that the migrations of the Cimbri were most crucially the consequence of their barbarously greedy nature. This would have been most attractive to the Roman audiences in the immediate aftermath of the Cimbric wars, but the later tradition might have found the notion of the Oceanic inundations more fascinating – pitting against each other the explanatory potential of a topical barbarian characteristic and a famed property of the outer Ocean which had been opened for enquiry under the Romans.

[77] Nock 1959, 11; for a critical and careful view see Long 2013, 145.

hiring Greeks to do the job of observing barbarians for them is too one-sided. Polybius had found use for Fabius Pictor's passages about on the Celts, and like Polybius, Posidonius wrote in a context where the Roman gaze was to a certain extent directed at northern and western barbarian groups. But did this mean that Posidonius would have dutifully gone off to conduct observational anthropology without collecting material from his Roman patrons, culturally conversant (urban) provincials, and other learned writers? The thought seems quite unlikely.

The similarities in Caesar and Posidonius' fragments, previously explained by simple unattributed borrowing, are most believably explained by the similarity in the knowledge base of their audiences – which, though certainly not identical, would have included a number of influential Roman patrons. Likewise, other writers on Celts active during the Late Republic would have been able to tap into a pool of established, orally propagated, and seemingly authoritative traditions of the Romans concerning these northerners. Some of these stories were used to maneuver for galatomachic prestige among Roman elite *gentes*, others were retellings of Greek tales or provincial rumors, and some other would have been based on personal experiences and reminiscences of actual events. There was potentially a wealth of competing interpretations that could be projected into the narrative space between an event in the provincial 'middle ground' and its eventual literary manifestations after all the political, judicial and partisan mutations that took place in the capital. And then there were the provincial informants, such as Charmoleon: ready to entertain a traveller with tales, reminiscences, and excursions.

There existed a wide range of interlocking 'middle grounds' which the ethnographical writers of the Late Republic navigated, even when they pursued goals to which ethnography was wholly subservient – as ancient ethnography nearly always was. Rather than being a record of his personal observations and meetings with Gauls, to a much greater extent the northern ethnography of Posidonius was constructed through literary processes based on his reading and his conversations with Romans and Greeks. The only exceptional thing about the Posidonian 'ethnography' is the amount of modern over-interpretation it has undergone.

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