

Cruel and Unusual? The Idea of ‘Celtic justice’ in the Greco-Roman Lighter Literature

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Abstract

This article seeks to demonstrate that dramatically illustrated examples of the Celts’ sense of justice emerge as a minor trope in Greek and Roman ‘lighter literature’. In sources ranging from the Hellenistic to the Imperial era, novelistic narratives taking their cue from the register of lighter literature—with its emphasis on pathos, cultural difference, and romantic themes—feature several barbarian characters, characterised as ‘Celts’ or ‘Galatae’, who act according to a code of conduct that was constructed purposefully as barbarian, archaic, and alien. This set of motifs I venture to call the trope of ‘Celtic justice’. While almost certainly devoid of historical source value to actual judicial cultures of Iron Age Europeans, neither are these references mere *alterité*. Instead, their relationship with other literary registers demonstrate the literariness of certain modes of thought that came to inform the enquiry of Greek and Roman observers into the Celtic northerners. Their ostensibly ethnographical contents emerge as markers of complex textual strategies and vibrant reception of literary motifs. While lacking ‘anthropological’ source value, these texts demonstrate the variety and intensity with which the contacts between Greeks and Celts affected the epistemic regime of the Mediterranean societies.*

From the 270s onwards the Hellenistic era witnessed among the Greeks an intense and emotionally charged interest in Celts. After whatever happened at Delphi (the traditions being very hazy about details, and whether the whole of the sanctuary was preserved), the Greek shock and relief was channelled to the religious commemoration of the deliverance, the *Σωτηρία*, to which Greek poleis were invited to send their participants.¹ Soon, having crossed to Asia Minor as mercenaries, these same groups of *Γαλάται* (*Galatae*) were opportunistically

* This article is based to a great extent on the discussion of the ‘emotional galatography’ in the relevant chapters of my PhD thesis: Lampinen 2013, 62-88, but with notable revisions and some tentative connections within the register of ‘lighter literature’. I am deeply thankful for the suggestions, comments, and corrections I have received not only from my Finnish colleagues, but also from my external assessor, Professor Thomas Harrison (University of Liverpool), and my dissertational opponent, Professor Greg Woolf (University of St. Andrews).

interfering in the internal squabbles of local dynasts, and in the process helping themselves to any possible plunder or extorted protection money. This sudden appearance of a new factor into the Hellenistic power game engendered many historical, mythological, or etymological explanations as to the origin and nature of these new barbarians. At the very same time, moreover, Callimachus composed in Alexandria the first largely extant poetic commemoration of the barbarian crisis averted. His *Hymn to Delos* is an impressive but political piece of work, which celebrated the efforts of king Ptolemy II and the god Apollo in repelling Celtic invaders, who 'rushed from the furthest west numerous as snowflakes'.² During these years, no Greek in the East Mediterranean could have failed to hear about these invading Γαλάται or Κέλτοί.

Whether or not ancient 'lighter literature'—a term many deem more suitable than the older denominations 'romance', or even the more flexible 'novel'—was a truly demotic or at least more democratic form of literature, is still debatable and possibly unsolvable.³ But what we hear about the Celts in the available remains of this literary register is both interesting and symptomatic of the broader developments evidenced in other forms of literature. Among the typical elements of Hellenistic lighter literature has been noted a growing interest in non-Greek cultures, the relations (both actual and mythical) between different peoples, and widespread travels: all in a world that seemed in the wake of Alexander's conquest and the establishment of far-ranging Hellenistic kingdoms to contain much more than during the Classical age.⁴ Celts, for their part, became almost paradigmatic as the 'northerners'—partly because of their earlier presence in ethnographical passages (tradition being a strong conditioning factor for the ancient use of ethnonyms)—and the first Greek impression characterised by fear and incomprehension matured into a more inquisitive attitude towards them. In lighter literature, though, the emphasis remained largely on the dramatic, wondrous and strange; although there, too, chronologically later examples seem to display a more complex engagement with cultural critique and 'alien wisdom'.

References to Celtic sense of justice (or its absence) conform to this basic structure, and should alert us to the emergence of ostensibly ethnographic elements

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- 1 The surviving proclamation of the foundation of the Delphic Σωτηρία, *SIG*³ 398, is dated to the first half of the year 278 BCE; see Nachtergaele 1977 and Champion 1995. Literary accounts of the events at Delphi include Diod. XXII.9, Paus. X.23, and Just. XXIV.8.
 - 2 Callim. *Hymn* IV.162-87. Ptolemy's contribution in this defence of the Greek world was a victory over his insurgent Galatian mercenaries: Paus. I.7.2; *Schol. vet. in Callim. Hymn.* 4.175-187. The dating of this is c. 275: Bing 2008, 91ff.
 - 3 Cf. Krasser in *BNP* s.v. 'Light reading'. On the various connections of the 'novelistic' register with historiography, rhetoric, and drama, see Ruiz-Montero 1996, 42-8, 65-70, 48-54, respectively.
 - 4 Romm 1992, 93, 121f.

in contexts which are wholly literary. In this article I will seek to demonstrate that the literary use of authenticating, ‘quasi-ethnographical’ elements on the Celts within the register of lighter literature testifies to an enduring fascination with the European northerners flourishing concurrently with the technique of using these groups as narrative ciphers and devices without any ostensible intention to communicate new information regarding them. Their literary use was, in fact, patently dependent upon the readers already recognizing certain purported cultural traits as ‘Celtic’; thus, even non-technical literature could reinforce the received stereotypes about barbarian groups. Focusing on novelistic and associated registers of writing allows us a better focus, while at the same time making plain the weaknesses of our modern occupation with drawing out generic delineations upon the ancient material.

Early examples

Among the very earliest examples of ‘pathetic galatography’, with some relevance to the perception of their sense of justice, is a purported funerary epigram to three maidens of Miletus, attributed to Anyte in the *Anthologia Graeca* (VII.492).⁵ These young unwed women, facing the choice of submitting to the ‘lawless hubris’ of their Galatian kidnappers (τὰν ἄνομον Γαλατᾶν ὕβριν), or ending their own lives, they opted for the latter. While the piece is not part of a novelistic text as such—and the subject matter of an epigram of three suicides might seem tenuous in the context of ‘lighter literature’—the theme of a young woman dying for her honour is a stock motif both in emotional poetry and (often on the level of an unrealised possibility or a suspense-building threat) ancient novels. Literariness is very evident in the piece, for instance in the use of the already clichéd, poetic expression Κελτῶν [...] Ἄρης.⁶ But connections with other genres than poetry are also possible; indeed, the Loeb editor Paton (1917, 267) suggested that the story may have ‘derived from some romance.’ Whether or not the epigram copies a genuine exemplar set

5 Anyte of Tegea, the attributed author of the piece, was of early Hellenistic date. The content of the epigram, although with seven maidens, is also reported by Jerome in *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.186. The piece seems to become a commonplace, though its later manifestations are not necessarily just literary *topoi*. For instance, one can mention the Christian funerary epigram of Domitilla, found from Karzene in Asia Minor and dating from between the 255 and 257 CE (Lebek 1985), records the death of this young woman in the hands of the marauding Goths, and celebrates her as the epitome of Greek wisdom (σωφοσύνη), in contrast with the barbarian hubris (lines 3-4, 7) unleashed by the divine anger (θεῶν χόλος, line 5). See Palumbo Stracca 1997.

6 The ‘Celtic Ares’ becomes a commonplace very early on: Paus. 10.21.5 reporting the epitaph of Cydias, which, if genuine, is chronologically the first attestation; Callim. *Hymn* IV.172f.; *SH* 969; *IG* xi.4.1105, a Delian dedicatory epigram of the middle of 3rd century; *Paeon Delph. 1 anon. in Apoll.* F 1 col. ii line 25 *ap. Coll. Alex.* 141 (*FD* iii 2.147ff.), the first one of the famous Delphic hymns to Apollo, preserved with the ancient notation.

in stone, its drama and emotional tone find correspondences with both the literary and epigraphic commemorations of the Galatian depredations. Kidnappings were no doubt a reality, and this made them a poignant motif to be used both in poetic constructions and (as we see below) novelistic stories. A genuine epigraphic example is *TAM* V.2.881 from Thyatira, in which Argeios and his family thank Apollo for having been saved from their imprisonment with the Galatians.⁷

From such beginnings, expressed through tragic tales of kidnappings, threats to female integrity, and deaths when facing the Celts, the dramatic potential of these new barbarians became more elaborated, bringing nuances and ethnographically plausible flourishes to the description of generic 'barbarian hubris'. The Galatians provided a continued source of turmoil in Asia Minor, even after they were settled in the area of central Anatolia after the so-called 'Elephant Battle' (275 BCE) against Antiochus I. Cities like Cyzicus and Priene have provided epigraphic evidence for warlike clashes with the Celts.⁸ A series of stories featuring references to the Galatians' sense of justice can most plausibly be understood to have their origins in this geographical and cultural context, mostly during the second century BCE.

Galatian women taking vengeance

Two stories with 'novelistic' colouring and a relevance to the framework of this article originate from the interactions between the Galatians and their neighbours during the second century BCE. The story of Chiomara, narrated by Livy, Valerius Maximus, and Plutarch, is implied by the last of the three to be based on Polybius' own autoptic interview with the Galatian noblewoman.⁹ She is taken captive after the Romans, under Manlius Vulso, defeat the Galatians in 189 BCE, and is raped by the cruel Roman centurion who has obtained her as his slave. But when her kin offers ransom, greed overtakes even lust in the mind of the Roman, and he agrees to a swap at a river crossing. As soon as Chiomara is safely among her own, she orders her kinsmen to decapitate the centurion, who is absorbed in weighing his gold. Plutarch ends the story with a vaguely gnomic exchange of words between Chiomara and her husband Ortiagon, about a virtuous wife preferring there be only one man alive who has had relations with her.¹⁰ The moralizing pattern of the earlier Greek epitaphs is turned on its head, with the Roman officer cast as

7 Cf. Loicq-Berger 1984, 52.

8 Smith & de Rustafjaell 1902, 193, *Ist. Arch. Mus. Inv.* 564; *JvP* 17 (*OGIS* 765). Written sources testify to other (partly mythologised) incidents of Galatian threat: cf. Paus. X.30.9 on Celaenae, X.32.4f. on Themisonion.

9 Livy XXXVIII.24.2-11; Val. Max. VI.1.2; Plut. *De mul. virt.* 22. For Polybius and Chiomara, see Berger 1992, 121.

10 Gnomic speech was an established minor *topos* in connection with the Celts: Cato F 94 Peter (*argute loqui*), Diod. V.31.1. Later examples include Lucian *Herc.* 1, Diog. Laert. I.6, Amm. Marc. XV.12.1.

the brute. This sort of story could well have appealed to the Greeks of the second century, newly subjected to the rule of Romans, who themselves were ambiguously situated along the barbarians-Greeks axis.¹¹

Another Galatian woman whose vengeance Plutarch narrates is Camma. We do not know from which author Plutarch found her story, but taken together with that of Chiomara, it would seem to point to the existence of a minor *topos* dealing with the ways in which independent Celtic women take justice to those who have wronged them. Such stories would mostly have been circulated in collections of deeds and sayings, exemplified by Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, or in collections of gendered anecdotes, of which Plutarch's *De mulierum virtute* is a prime example. In *De mul. virt.* 20, Camma the priestess of Artemis deals with Sinorix, the murderer and kinsman of her husband Sinatus. Sinorix, who had been a competitor to Sinatus for Camma's hand, approaches the mourning widow and proposes marriage to her, in seclusion at Artemis' temple. Camma acts as though she consents to Sinorix's advances, and her family urges her to accept her influential suitor. She agrees, but demands the pact be solemnized at the temple. When the eager Sinorix arrives, Camma offers him a poisoned drink sweetened with honey, tasting it first to alleviate his suspicions. After he has drunken the concoction, the priestess reveals her revenge and calls upon the goddess to witness her act. Sinorix attempts to mitigate the effects of the poison by driving in his chariot and exercising, but dies that evening. Camma, having endured until she is told of her husband's murderer's fate, expires in good cheer and without anguish. The 'Celtic' flavour of this story, too, is constructed from bits that would have been familiar to the majority of the audience, and the type of justice exacted by both Galatian women is of relentless, bloody and personal fashion, with an emphasis on deception.¹²

11 For the Romans' ambiguous status as civilised insiders: Marincola 2011. Their posturing as defenders of Greece from the northerners was part of their search for shared parameters of cultural inclusion with the Greeks. Vulso's campaign, however, came under criticism, and he was accused of waging war *contra ius gentium* (Livy XXXVIII.45.11-46.3). This may be part of the explanation for the reversed polarities in the story of Chiomara.

12 'Ethnicizing' elements in Camma's story include the importance of kinsfolk, fearlessness when faced with the death, a drink of honey (cf. Diod. V.26.2), and the use of chariot. The significance of Artemis is expressly introduced as an 'ethnographical' detail: she is said to be the most favoured goddess among the Galatians. For Artemis in the novelistic tale of Acontius and Cydippe: Ruiz-Montero 1996, 79. Later, and probably purely literary instances of Artemis-cults among the northerners include Eumath. *Hysm.* 8.7. The interpretation of Artemis' role in Galatia by Strobel 2009, 134 seems to disregard the possibility of such mentions being literary artefacts. The female angle, though also typical to many stories of 'lighter literature', is a further motif giving 'ethniced' flavour to the stories, just as it does in the Hellenistic anonymous text *De mulieribus claris in bello*, Gera 1997, 10 (queen Onomaris of the Γαλάται).

Parthenius

For an elaborate and even surprising 'novelistic' reference to Celtic justice, we next turn to a collection of short romantic tales, the *Narrationes amatoriae* (Ἐρωτικὰ Παθήματα) of Parthenius of Nicaea, who wrote in Rome during the Late Republic. In introducing his *Narratio* number 8 Parthenius, a native of Asia Minor, mentions having found it from the grammarian Aristodemus of Nysa, whose *Histories* date from the second century.¹³ This miniature romance tells the story of Herippe, one among a group of Milesian women who are kidnapped by Galatians during the celebrations of Thesmophoria.¹⁴ Xanthus, Herippe's husband, tracks her down all the way to Gaul, where she has been sold to. Xanthus is received at the household of a wealthy Gaul called Kauaras, who now owns Herippe, and ends up paying 'much less than he expected' for her wife's freedom. Apparently of trusting sort, Xanthus discloses to Kauaras that he actually has twice as much gold with him as the price. Herippe, now revealed as the villain of the piece, attempts to convince Kauaras to play foul with Xanthus, as she would rather stay in Gaul. Kauaras, revolted by such disloyalty, sets himself to dispatch an example of Celtic justice. Having escorted Xanthus and Herippe to the border of the Κελτικῆ, he uses the pretext of performing a traditional departing sacrifice to cut the throat of the objectionable Herippe instead. The understandably upset Xanthus is soothed by Kauaras with the information on his wife's disloyalty, and is allowed to keep all his gold. The story's ends in a note of male solidarity that crosses cultural boundaries as it reinforces the patriarchal social norm.

It has been suggested that Parthenius wanted to impress his influential dedicatee Cornelius Gallus, hailing from Forum Iulii in Narbonensis, by including tales with a Gallic reference point: in addition to Herippe we have a short, rather typically Hellenistic aetiologial story (*Narratio* 30) about Heracles' tryst with a Celtic princess.¹⁵ The story of Herippe contains several authenticating elements which would have produced a 'Celtic' association to its audience, but with some of them

13 The reference to Aristodemus has been demonstrated to be a genuine part of Parthenius' text: see Cameron 2004, 106-14, *contra* Lightfoot 1999, 248.

14 The motif of a religious festival as a starting point of a romantic novel was a rather well-known device: Hägg 1983, 24, 77, 122f. In any case, Miletus' cult of Demeter and Kore (the presiding deities of Thesmophoriae all over the Greek world) was situated within the city walls, making the initial narrative setting for the kidnapping somewhat implausible: see Lampinen 2013, 79-80.

15 On Parthenius and Cornelius Gallus, Lightfoot 1999, 413. *Narratio* 30 can be compared on formal grounds with what Timagenes, Parthenius' contemporary, wrote about Heracles and his descendants in Gaul (*FGrH* 88 F 2 *ap.* Amm. Marc. 15.9.6). *Diod.* V.24.2f. is also a parallel story, probably testifying to a period when such stories were adopted by Gallic communities as part of the cultural processes in the 'middle ground'; cf. Woolf 2012.

it is difficult to judge which date from Aristodemus, and which from Parthenius.¹⁶ One of these is that Herippe seems to begin to act like the independent Celtic women who had become a commonplace in Greek prose literature (Polybius' Chiomara, Parthenius' princess Keltine in *Narratio* 30), even though her insubordination is punished with a method that was by Parthenius' time proverbially Celtic: decapitation—something which was also seen in the story of Chiomara.¹⁷ Another conventional stereotype is referred to when Xanthus is surprised by Kauaras' reasonability with regards to the ransom.¹⁸ The Gallic noble is proved to be a fair, though barbarously blunt, dispatcher of justice—complicating the received image of a 'greedy Celt' in a way that would have been pleasing for Parthenius' patron Cornelius Gallus. Yet even in his execution of Herippe, Kauaras mixes barbarous directness with initial dissimulation (pretending to conduct a traditional departure sacrifice). This reminds one of Diodorus' roughly contemporary description of Gauls speaking in riddles and ambiguities, yet also boasting and threatening in pompous fashion (5.31.1): the variance, perhaps reminiscent of many later examples of colonial distrust towards the 'difficult to read' colonized, maintains the image of cleverness disguised by impulsivity.

The presence of these authenticating elements should alert us to the fact that the ostensibly ethnographical elements about 'Celts' found in registers where they are usually given credit and source value—historiography and ethnography are the most

16 For instance, the name Kauaras, which Lightfoot 1999, *ad loc.* takes as self-evidently referring to the *Καυάρου* of Narbonensis, could in fact be more plausibly associated with Kauaras, king of the Thracian Gauls in Polyb. IV.46, 52, with VIII.22, interestingly, commenting on the king's magnanimity and noble demeanour; also cf. Ath. VI.252d), especially as it was Aristodemus who called the Gallic chief by that name. Indeed, we could go as far as to say that the connection with Gaul was only Parthenius' doing; for all we know Aristodemus could have produced a story set firmly in the east. In this case, Cornelius Gallus' patronage would have motivated Parthenius to move his narrative to the west. Loicq-Berger 1984, 50 thought that behind Parthenius' more realistic pieces of information stood the original version of Aristodemus, who in turn would have been informed by Posidonius. This smacks of the typical over-Posidonization of ancient galatography, but cannot be dismissed outright.

17 The most famous ancient reference to decapitated heads is ascribed by Strabo (IV.4.5) to Posidonius (Edelstein-Kidd F 274), but in literature this was preceded, for instance, by Polyb. II.27.10 on the battle of Telamon; Livy XXIII.24.7 on another Republican incident. Aristodemus, beginning his career around c. 150 bce, would probably have been aware of stories such as that of Chiomara (see above), and may have structured his account on it. Both the story about Chiomara and that of Herippe involve the motifs of ransom paid in gold, and a decapitation of the iniquitous one, and they may represent two elaborations of the same theme.

18 Parth. *Narr. amat.* 8; cf. a similar tone in Diod. V.27.4. The consuming and shameless greed of Celts was a literary motif that first surfaced in order to explain their attack against Delphi, but its political adaptability—along with its implication of impiety and iniquity of the northerners—ensured its active use in later centuries, too: cf. Polyb. I.66f, II.17.11, 22.2, IV.46.3; Livy V.48, XLIV.26. The Posidonian fragments deploy this element for moralizing purposes: F 272 *ap. Str.* VII.2.1-2, F 273 *ap. Str.* IV.1.3.

usual candidates—are found also in narratives where their role is almost certainly literary. This is reinforced by the use of dramatic, almost novelistic passages in works of historiography. For instance, in many studies using Julius Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, celebrated for its descriptions of Gauls, Germans, and Britons, the obvious political motivation and literary manipulation have been downplayed in favour of trustful readings of its 'ethnographical' contents.¹⁹ Yet, the scene in *B Gall.* I.53.5-7 where Ariovistus' prisoner Gaius Valerius Procillus is saved from an immediate death by fire when a lot was cast signifying his release, is a calculated and dramatic piece, which has been noted to derive from the fact that Caesar's account needed a reliable eye-witness who could be argued to have seen the female Germanic soothsayers.²⁰

'Novelistic writing' of the Imperial Era

Parthenius' short tales offer a wonderful glimpse at what sort of plots ancient writers of 'lighter literature' based some of their moralistic and/or dramatic tales of romance and travel. Among the ancient novels as narrowly understood, however, our enquiry is generally hindered by the narrow survival of material. The *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, the *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon of Ephesus, and the *Leucippe and Clitophon* of Achilles Tatius all take place around the eastern Mediterranean, but this may be a factor of their Byzantine reception, which would have naturally felt more interest in the easterly direction. That there were exciting tales of romance, mystery and intrigue connected with the western and northern directions is attested by what we know about Antonius Diogenes' aretalogical novel *Marvels beyond Thule* (Τὰ ὑπὲρ Θούλην ἄπιστα) from the middle imperial period. The lengthy novel's synopsis is preserved in Photius' *Bibliotheca* (116.111a-b), and, interestingly, the work is said to have been dedicated to Diogenes' sister, who apparently loved that sort of literature. While the theme of barbarian justice is not present in the surviving account of its contents, *Marvels beyond Thule* affirms that the north and west offered areas that could be wholeheartedly exploited in lighter literature. Celts are mentioned, and characterised by a very conventional expression 'cruel and senseless folk' (περιπεπτόκασι τοῖς Κελτοῖς, ἔθνει ὠμῶ καὶ ἡλιθίῳ).²¹ Thaumasiographic marvels and wholly novelistic plot turns were joined

19 For a modern study returning the attention to Caesar as a literary propagandist, see Riggsby 2006.

20 Burns 2003, 112ff.

21 Ant. Diog. *ap.* Phot. *Bibl.* 166.109b. This locus also contains the motif of an Iberian town where the inhabitants can see at night and are blind during the daytime. This has notable parallels in Eudox. *FGrH* 79 F 2 *ap.* Apoll. *Mirab.* 24; Steph. Byz. *s.v.* Γέρμαρα, and would plausibly derive from a thaumasiographic source; Diogenes could have found this element either from Ephorus (*FGrH* 70 F 134a *ap.* Str. V.4.5 on the troglodytic 'Cimmerians' at Cumae) or Apollonius the Paradoxographer (*loc. cit.*). The Iberian context brings to mind the nightly dances among the Celtiberians in Str. III.4.16.

in Diogenes' work to Pythagorean aretology and a remarkable degree of pseudo-documentarism used as a stylistic device.²² Photius scolds Antonius' habit of appealing to the authority of earlier authors in presenting his marvels: apparently every book began with a list of earlier writers on subjects that appeared therein (111a). It is a text which further demonstrates the broad connections and variable appeal of 'lighter literature', and the way it could bring a very wide range of beliefs, rumors, and marvels connected with 'Celts' together in a single text.

Another fascinating, though difficult to interpret, Imperial-era reference to Celtic justice comes from Petronius' famous but fragmentary novel *Satyricon*. We learn from Servius, the commentator on *Aeneid*, that a purificatory rite with Gallic origins was practiced among the Massalians, and was described by Petronius. Servius, in explaining the Vergilian phrase *auri sacra fames* notes that *tractus est autem sermo ex more Gallorum (loc. cit.)* before proceeding to describe the Massalian practice of using one of the paupers of the city as the scape goat for the sins of the rest. In the fourth-century *Commentary on the Thebaid of Statius* attributed to Lactantius Placidus, a cruel and archaic purificatory rite is ascribed to Gauls.²³ The implications as to the Gallic practice of justice are rather grim, and have something in common with the Caesarian observation about the *plebs* of Gaul being in thrall to the higher social orders (*BGall.* VI.11, 13). It is possible that Petronius had already expressed the Gallic connection or origins of this custom, as he is known to have situated one episode of *Satyricon* in Massalia—and if it shared the spirit with the rest of his work, it could have been a racy affair. Massalia certainly had an established role as the gateway to the Κελτική—we have already seen this in connection with Parthenius, and the sentiment predated him by many centuries. Moreover, Massalia's location seems to have given rise to the belief that its inhabitants had not only imparted some of the Greek civilization to the Gauls, but also been made grimmer and more archaic by their Celtic neighbours.²⁴

22 Antonius' work as aretology: Fauth 1978. Antonius' pseudo-documentarism: Ní Mheallaigh 2008, 415-19. Also see Stephens 1996, 674-80.

23 Petron. *Sat.* F 1 *ap. Serv. Ad Aen.* III.57: *hoc autem in Petronio lectum est.* As noted above, the Celtic greed for gold was already proverbial, and hence could easily be related to the origins of the expression *auri sacra fames*. Lact. Plac. *Comm. in Stat. Theb.* 10.793: *LUSTRALEMNE lustrate civitatem humana hostia Gallicus mos est. nam aliquis de egentissimis prolicebatur praemiis, ut se ad hoc venderet. qui anno toto publicis sumptibus alebantur purioribus cibis, denique certo et sollemni die per totam civitatem ductus ex urbe extra pomeria saxis occidebatur a populo.*

24 Massalia civilizing the Gauls: Amm. Marc. XV.9.7-8; Massalians becoming like their Gallic neighbours: Livy XXXVIII.17.11 (*Massilia inter Gallos sita, traxit aliquantum ab accolis animorum*). Momigliano 1975, 56f. suggests, quite plausibly, that Massalians themselves cultivated the image of an unchanged archaic Greek simplicity and severity, possibly conscious of the implications cast upon their Hellenicity by their frequent contacts with barbarians.

Celtic paternity test

We finally turn to a distinct literary *topos* which could be called 'the river arbitrates'. The strikingly long reception of this minor narrative motif may offer one further demonstration of the staying power of literary galatography, crossing and re-crossing from philosophical to lighter literature, and from poetry to doxography. Its beginnings may lie in Aristotle's approving note in his *Politica* 1336a about 'many barbarian peoples' being known for plunging their new-born into a cold stream in order to accustom them to hardship. The Celts are introduced as a variant of this custom, as they clothe their babies only in light wrappings. The moralizing tone is already present, very much in keeping with the habit of Greek theoretical writers to find 'good old times', often quite close to the perceived life-style of the Spartans, still enduring among some barbarian peoples.²⁵ From the Homeric epics onwards, the 'most just of men' could have been found in the northerly direction.²⁶

By the Late Republic and early Imperial era the motif of the 'frozen baptism' had begun to be applied to other northern groups, probably under the influence of Caesar's *BGall.* IV.1.10 about the Germans hardening themselves by bathing in cold rivers.²⁷ If the account by the Paradoxographus Vaticanus derives from the wonder-writer Isigonus of Nicaea (first century, either BCE or CE), we have an attestation of the motif having acquired its connection with the Germans and the Rhine by this period, as well as the connection to judging the legitimacy of offspring.²⁸ In its subsequent form the motif exhibits prominently the aspect of a paternity test. This is the guise in which we meet it in a poem of the *Greek Anthology* (IX.125) which, though sometimes suggested to date from the Hellenistic era, is more probably of Imperial provenance on the account of its mention of the Rhine.²⁹ The 'fearless Celts' test their children in their holy, 'jealous Rhine', with the father unsympathetic until the child (who is lowered into the river on a shield, in itself

25 For this tendency, see Nippel 2007, 38; Evans 2008. A *locus classicus* is Thuc. 1.5f.

26 Hom. *Il.* 13.5f., cited for instance by Str. VII.3.8. Strabo goes on to discuss the Scythians in Ephorus' writings, where he suspects them to be portrayed as very just simply for the sake of compensating for the contrary opinion.

27 Possibly connected with this sort of information is the comment of Plutarch in his biography of Caesar that the Germans foretell the future by observing the eddies of rivers, as well as their noise (Plut. *Caes.* 19.8).

28 Par. Vat. 18 Giannini: καὶ παρὰ Γερμανοῖς ὁ Τῆνος ἐλέγγει: ἐμβληθὲν γὰρ τὸ παιδίον, εἰ μὲν μοιχευθείσης ἐστὶ, θνήσκει, εἰ δ' οὖν, ζῆ. Considering the almost wholly Greek reception of this motif, it seems in any case likely that its invigoration must post-date the Greek renditions of Caesar's narratives of the Gallic war: at least it seems secure that Plut. *Caes.* 19.8 about Germanic female soothsayers taking omens from the flow of the rivers influenced Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.15.72, and the currency of this element would probably have made it easier for the idea of 'river adjudicates'—trope to take root among Greek writers.

29 Dated to the Hellenistic era by Koch & Carey 2003, 8, but without accounting for the mention of the Rhine, which would constitute a first instance in ancient literature of using the name. A later date is safer and more probable.

a constant trope met with in connection with the Celts) is proved to be his. The mother, still in pains from her labour, seems to recognize the inconstancy of the river's judgements, and waits in apprehension. The poet's focus on the emotions of both mother and father, as well as evoking the pity of the audience towards mother and child, are plausible connections with the tradition of 'lighter literature.' Yet even such a technical writer as Galen can be found referring to it, though obviously with less emphasis on its dramatic aspects.³⁰

'The river arbitrates' motif, or in particular its original Aristotelian core, the idea of a 'frozen baptism', turned out to be frequently cited well into the Christian period, and shows ambiguous but enduring connections with the discourse on northern barbarian morality. The emperor Julian speaks of Celts and an unnamed river, and the sophist Libanius echoes him.³¹ Among the Christians, the motif is used by Gregory of Nazianzus, (*Adv. mul. se nimis ornantes* 221; *Nicobuli filii ad patre* 141-3), while his scholiast, Cosmas the Melodist, elaborates on it (*ad loc.*). The Aristotelian commentary variably attributed either to David the Invincible or Elias discusses the motif in *In Arist. Categ. prooem.* 125, 128 with mentions of both Celts and Rhine. Interestingly, he treats the subject in close connection with the Pythagorean notions on dreams. It is also used in the historical works of Theophylact Simocatta (*Ep.* 10, omitting the name of the river) and George the Pisidian (*Exp. Pers.* 1.39-41). The 10th-century historian Leo the Deacon transmutes the motif slightly in his heavily classicising description of the Rus.³² Even the late 12th-century Michael Acominatus uses it in his letter to Nicolaus Caloducas (*Ep. ad Nicolaum Caloducam* 115). These late attestations do not strictly speaking partake in the tradition of 'lighter literature'; instead, the motif's use in them should rather be regarded as part of the moralizing discourse—which of course was part of its origin. Something resembling a parallel of this theme can be found in Eustathius Macrembolites' (12th century) Byzantine romantic novel *De Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus* (8.7.1-6), where a bath in a spring near the 'Celtic river Rhine' is linked with virginity; the locale is named Ἀρτύκωμις and

30 Galen, *De san. Tuenda* I.10. A peripatetic origin seems likely in this case of the motif's reception.

31 Julian *Or.* II.81d; cf. [Julian] *Ep. spur.* 191 *Maximo phil.*; Liban. *Or.* 12.48, *Progymn.* 2.37 Περὶ Πρῖνον. Other late pagans using the theme include Nonnus (*Dion.* XXIII.89-96), Pamprepicus of Panopolis (*Paneg. ad Theagenem* F 4.10 *ap. P.Vindob.* 29788a-c on Germans), and Priscian of Lydia *Solutiones ad Chosroem* 72.2-12.

32 The Rus' are said to make sacrifices by plunging young babies together with chickens into the Danube's swift waters (Leo Diaconus *Hist.* 9.6). The classicising tone is clear from his linking of these sacrifices to the Pythagorean doctrines of the ancient sages Anacharsis the Scythian and Zalmoxis the Thracian. Kaldellis 2013, 104 compares Leo's description with a Procopian passage, but does not seek a common origin beyond historiography.

connected with the worship of Artemis, a literary element which was connected with Galatians already in the Hellenistic era.³³

Conclusions

What we read about Celtic sense of justice in these examples of Greek (and Roman) novelistic writing conforms well to our other testimonies about the Mediterranean societies' views about their northern neighbours. This is not surprising, and there is very little reason to expect otherwise. With the recognition of the fluidity of ancient genre boundaries, and in particular with regard to the comparatively wide demographics of the 'lighter literature', texts in this register could partake in the established 'commonly held' stereotypes, rhetorical techniques designed to induce pathos, and learned speculation alike. The long life of the tradition enabled many elements first used during the Hellenistic era to be propagated (with occasional retouching) all the way until Late Antiquity. In their approach to dispensing justice, the northern barbarians—among whom the 'Celts' were long considered paradigmatic—were perceived to manifest a titillating mix of explosive spontaneity, grimly archaic *mores*, and 'a certain barbarous magnanimity' (Diod. V.29.5). With such themes, a feeling of both spatial and temporal remoteness could be conveyed to the Greek readership, among whom the rhetorical convention of dichotomy-based debates fostered an interest in moral dilemmas and their solutions—even of alien nature. The genre of writing about other peoples' νόμοι, with both Herodotean and Aristotelian tones, has not left us an extant treatment of the customs of the Celts, but vestiges of rather widely circulating ideas can be gathered from a wide range of sources, as I have tried to show.

One of the most striking aspects of all these examples of the Celts' sense of justice being imagined by the Greeks and Romans is the amount of ostensibly 'ethnographic', roughly plausible 'ethnographic' details being used to authenticate the stories. It has not been the purpose of this article to claim that the literariness of these details would disprove the possible presence of such cultural forms or societal conditions among some Iron Age Europeans. What I argue instead is that the presence in the lighter literature of elements with convincing correspondences to the archaeological findings or insular parallels, has only very tenuously dependent upon the real-life existence of these correspondences. The imagery of the 'Celts' made sense to the Greek and Roman audiences—both learned and less so—because of its emotional and epistemic plausibility within their own cultural context, not its objective plausibility vis-à-vis possible anthropological 'realities'. These literary devices and conventional 'ethnographicizing' (or quasi-ethnographic) markers

33 Kaldellis 2013, 56 points out the revivification of the genre of romance in the twelfth century, and notes the amounts of fictional ethnography that it came to include—often more than the historiography of the age.

were used for reasons other than educating their audience about the ‘Celts’. Instead, they communicated shared ideas of Hellenicity between the writers and their audiences, mostly reinforcing—but occasionally also challenging—what was perceived as the cultural norm. In some instances, such as when Parthenius manipulated his received material to better catch the attention of a Roman patron, political and personal agendas can be perceived. In literature, both the ‘Celts’ and their sense of justice—such as it was—act both as a cipher and a template, and the component parts of the overall image should be treated with minimalism as literary artefacts.

Abbreviations

BNP – *Brill's New Pauly Online* (<http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-pauly>).

Coll. Alex. – *Collectanea Alexandrina* (Powell 1925).

FD – *Fouilles de Delphes* (5 vols., 1922-1976).

FGrH – *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Jacoby 1923-1958).

IG – *Inscriptiones Graecae* (1873-2012).

IvP – *Inchriften von Priene* (Fredrich & al. 1968).

Ist. Arch. Mus. – Istanbul Archaeological Museums / İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri

OGIS – *Oriens Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae* (Dittenberger 1903-1905).

P.Vindob. – *Papyri Vindobonenses*

SH – *Supplementum Hellenisticum* (Lloyd-Jones & Parsons 1983).

SIG³ – *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3rd edition (Dittenberger 1915-1924).

TAM – *Tituli Asiae Minoris V: Tituli Lydiae* (3 fasc. 1989-2007).

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