

In vacuum pontem gallus processit – Some Hypotheses on the Duel of Manlius Torquatus and a Gaul

Antti Lampinen

This article, or rather a case study, is based on a paper given at the *Colloquium of Methodological Issues in the Study of Celtic Religion* at the department of Comparative Religion in Helsinki in August 2008, and stems from a recent revisit to a rather well-known passage in Livy describing the duel that earned Manlius Torquatus and the whole subsequent patrician *gens* the famous nickname. As a proposal for alternative interpretation of the mentalities and symbolisms concerned, this collection of hypotheses may have some bearing on Roman notions of ritualised duel with the Gauls and possible war-time interaction of Roman and Celtic images of sanctity of water-crossings, providing as well certain tentative proposals of putative Irish parallels for such ritualism associated with duels at the fords.

The Sources and Date for Torquatus' Duel with the Gaul

When reading the story of Manlius Torquatus' famous duel on the bridge over river Anio from the seventh book of Livy's histories, the aspect one notes immediately after registering the actual course of events is the very dramatic, even calculating way the author builds the action and pathos. This is, to be sure, one of the hallmarks of Livy's much imitated style, and therefore hardly surprising—especially in the context of Gallic adversaries, since it is often in descriptions of such situations that we observe Livy at his most eloquent. The operations of Fate are always implied in the Livian narrative when the Romans deal with their northern barbarian neighbours.¹ After the whole theatrical and carefully constructed description, however, the beginning of the next passage, designed to sum up the action, draws one's attention with its cursory, even hasty note: *et hercule tanti ea ad universi*

1 A telling evidence of this can be found in Livy's description of the original Gallic invasion, during which the hostilities begin in an atmosphere where "the fates were already urging Rome on [towards the crisis]" when the Roman envoys take up their arms at Clusium against the universal laws of diplomacy: *Ibi iam urgentibus Romanam urbem fatis legati contra ius gentium arma capiunt*: Livy 5.36.6. The translations from Livy and other authors are those of my own, unless otherwise stated.

*belli eventum momenti dimicatio fuit, ut Gallorum exercitus proxima nocte relictis trepide castris in Tiburtem agrum [...] transierit.*²

The remark, so self-evident at face value, naturally begs the question: if the Romans saw the outcome of the incident in this light, what was its significance for the Celts concerned? This point, with its general flavour of historical image research, has hitherto not been examined in interpretations of the passage, including the very magisterial treatise of S. P. Oakley in his *Commentary on Livy VI-X* (Oakley 1998, 113 ff). This reflects the wider situation in the field of Classical Studies, where the motives of Gauls or other barbarian adversaries are rarely examined. Of course, it could be rightly argued that for most of the time the motives of the barbarians are not evident at all in our classical literary sources, but in some cases and with due caution the views and values of the barbarians may be extracted with reasonable accuracy. Hence, in this instance, too, it might be worthwhile to venture an interpretation of the single combat in question from the Roman and Gallic points of view, respectively.

Dating the Incident and its Sources

Florus—usually labelled as an epitomator of Livy but sometimes known to have used other sources too—naturally mentions the duel of Manlius and the Gaul, dating it to the consulship of Gaius Sulpicius—that is, 358 BCE,³ whereas Claudius Quadrigarius seems to envisage the incident happening in 367 BCE. Of the modern commentators, Holford-Strevens has proposed the date 349 BCE, and wishes to equate the invasion with that mentioned in Polybius 2.18.7-8 (Holford-Strevens 1984, 148). Notwithstanding the exact correctness of these proposed dates, the overall time period is certainly correct, and the event should be placed in the context of the middle-fourth century BCE. The one notable aspect for the general time period we are concerned here with, is its relative temporal proximity to the famed and traumatic sack of Rome by the Gauls, conventionally dated either to 390 BC according to Livian chronology or to the slightly more probable 386 BC that is given by Polybius. The main point is that the Romans at this stage certainly felt very strongly about Gallic threat.⁴ As is well known, even hundreds of years later any disturbance involving Gauls (and through extension of images, northern

2 Livy 7.11.1; “And indeed the combat [of Torquatus at the bridge] was of such importance to the issue of the whole war, that the army of the Gauls withdrew in fright from their camp on the succeeding night and moved into the territory of Tibur.”

3 Oakley 1998, 113 discusses Florus’ date and does not concur with it—quite understandably, since Florus’ chronology can most of the time be somewhat faulty.

4 Cf. Saddington 1961, 97, 100.

barbarians more generally) was treated as a major menace to the Republic—the institutionalised legal effects of a *tumultus Gallicus* are described by Appian (*B Civ.* 2.150), who notes that when Gauls presented a threat to the state, even those otherwise excused from the military service were levied. This concern is reflected also in Livy’s reasoning of why there was a dictator appointed at the time of Manlius’ feat. After discarding the evidence of Licinius Macer as family factionalism he proposes that *magis ut belli Gallici causa dictatorem creatum arbitrer inclinatus animus*.⁵

Livy is, of course, not the first Roman historian to describe the Gallic Wars in Republican Italy, although his account is the most intact one surviving. His sources have been studied exhaustively in the past, and thus only a few points are made here. A very important Livian source for the Republican history is Quintus Claudius Quadrigarius’ lost annalistic work, a fragment of which concerning the very duel of Manlius and the Gaul has been preserved in Aulus Gellius’ *Noctes Atticae*.⁶ As a direct comparison between the earlier source and the Livian version is possible in this rare instance, several thematic and verbal influences of the former upon the latter have been reliably detected. Interestingly, Livy seems to have switched his primary source to Quadrigarius shortly before narrating the Manlius-incident, which is revealed by certain inconsistencies with his treatment of Tibur at this part of the narrative. It may be surmised—though not conclusively proved—that Quadrigarius was his preferred source on the duel at river Anio (Oakley 1998, 114-5). Florus, being both late and largely depending on Livy, is not of great importance as an independent source—though his attempt at dating the event has been already noted.

The Course of Events

The Livian narrative of the action is without doubt the most elaborate one available, and exhibits many traits of conscious modifications. This need not, however, deflect us from reading the course of events as an account of Roman

- 5 Livy 7.9.6: "I am more inclined to think that it rather was a Gallic war which necessitated the appointment of a dictator."
- 6 Gell. *NA* 9.13 *passim*. As an interesting side-note, Gellius mentions Favorinus of Arelate, a contemporary Gallic sophist of great erudition, as reading the passage from Quadrigarius’ *Annals* and commenting that "his mind was no less stirred and affected by emotion and excitement than if he had been an eye-witness of the combat" (*ibid.* 9.13.5). It is tempting to speculate that this emotional reaction was not simply evoked by the famously pure and clear diction of Quadrigarius, but stemmed perhaps also from the momentous historical significance of the combat for a reader of self-professed Gallic ethnicity; for his origins and self-identification as a Gaul see Philostr. *VS* 489.

mentalities—and perhaps even Gallic ones—provided that the interpretation is careful and thorough enough. The factual course of action in this case is likely to reveal some endeavour on the part of Romans to deal with the Gallic incursion with minimal recourse to direct confrontation in an open battle, which at a time so soon after the defeat at Allia would surely have seemed as inviting disaster. The Gallic mentalities involved can only be inferred from the available account and thus must remain conjectural, though an attempt at reconstruction will be made presently.

Livy describes the turn of events as follows (7.9.3-11.1). The Gauls, apparently originating in Cisalpine Gaul—that is, the Northern Italy—had camped at the third milestone of Via Salaria northeast of Rome, at river Anio (modern Aniene), while the Romans were busy preparing for war against the town of Tibur on the upper course of the same river. The Romans were clearly alarmed by this, which becomes evident when the measures taken by the newly-appointed dictator Titus Quinctius Poenus to counter the barbarian threat are described: *dictator cum tumultus Gallici causa iustitium edixisset, omnes iuniores sacramento adegit ingentique exercitu ab urbe profectus in citeriore ripa Anienis castra posuit.*⁷ A bridge was situated between the evenly matched armies, becoming a focal point of the confrontation, with neither side willing to break it “lest it should be seen as a sign of fear”. This deadlock is solved by a Gaul of extraordinary size, who advances upon the empty bridge and in a loud voice challenges the Romans to send forth their bravest fighter to determine the outcome of the conflict.⁸

As a master of dramatic pauses Livy now inserts a shocked silence among his young Roman nobles, which is broken only when Titus Manlius leaves his station and asks the dictator for permission to fight the Gaul. In his request Manlius alludes to the feats his family has previously performed against the Gauls, including their repulse from the Capitolium. The dictator applauds his virtue and gives his assent in somewhat old and formulaic language. Manlius is armed, and approaches the Gaul who “in his stupid glee” thrusts out his tongue derisively. A short, polarising description of the combatants’ accoutrements and behaviour follows, the crux of which is to stress the idle boastfulness and ferocity of the Gallic Goliath *vis-à-vis* the calm and calculating discipline of Manlius, who (as a good Roman) would never dance about or make faces. The combat itself is described as a very brief

7 Livy 7.9.6: “Having suspended the courts on account of the Gallic tumult, the dictator administered the oath to all of military age and marched from the city with a huge army, camping on the hither bank of the Anio.”

8 The depiction may partly reflect two general *topoi* of Classical literature that are frequently found in conjunction with the Gauls; firstly their large bodily size, and secondly their loud voice; of the former theme a prime specimen in the Italian context can be found in Polyb. 2.27-30 (at the battle of Sentinum), of the latter, a fine example is a fragment of Accius’ *praetexta* play *Decius: Gallei voce canora fremitu peragrant mintabiliter. Scaen. Rom. Frag.* (Klotz), Accius *Decius* fr. 8.

business, with Manlius blocking his enemy's first swing and, with his short sword well suited for close combat, making short work of the towering Gaul.⁹ Finally, despite having the opportunity to plunder his fallen enemy's rich equipment, he simply takes the torque from the neck of the Gallic champion—thus gaining a name for himself and all the subsequent Manlii Torquati. The Gauls are transfixed with fear and admiration, Livy tells us, and quit their camp the following night, moving upstream the Anio towards Tibur, with which they form an alliance (*societas belli*).

The version of Quadrigarius preserved in Gellius offers some interesting variations—or rather, shows where Livy has chosen to deviate from the older tradition. Interestingly, the annalistic tradition seems not to have portrayed the Gaul in splendid battle attire, but instead naked, which may well reflect a real circumstance as well as being a rather widely distributed *topos* in classical literature already at that date.¹⁰ The Gaul in Quadrigarius fights with only a torque, bracelets, a shield and two swords as his equipment, as well as a putative belt wherefrom the other sword must have been suspended—a detail corroborated by broadly contemporary Greek and Italian sculptural depictions such as the Dying Gaul and the Civitalba Frieze. Moreover, Manlius is described by Quadrigarius as decapitating the Gaul before adorning his own neck with the “bloodied torque”. It is relatively easy to surmise why Livy chose to drop this detail of archaic spoliation from his account—the heroism of his Roman characters stems often from their *moderatio*, which their barbarian adversaries entirely lack. Similarly, the rich spoils in the form of the fallen Gaul's equipment are all the more effective when they are scorned by conquering Manlius.

The Roman Perspective

As noted above, it can be inferred from various sources that in all probability a Gallic intrusion such as that leading to Manlius' duel was treated by the Romans of the Middle Republic with utmost seriousness—as the most strident example, Orosius in his barely independent compilation uses expression *terribilis Gallorum inundatio iuxta Anienem fluvium*,¹¹ which probably reflects some Republican source

9 Such use of the short Roman swords (anachronistically called ‘Hispanic’ by Livy) against the Gauls is also described in Polyb. 2.33.5, with the North-Italian Insubres as opponents.

10 The nakedness of the Gauls as something deeply disturbing to Republican Romans is also mentioned in the context of the battle at Telamon (in 225 BCE) as narrated by Polybius and his source for the passage, the first Roman annalist Fabius Pictor; Polyb. 2.27-30. Similarly the habit is noted by Diod. Sic. 5.29.1.

11 Oros. 3.6.1: “a terrible flood of Gauls by the river Anio”. The allusion to a force of nature is interesting, and may well shed light to the apprehension of the Romans at such a menace.

of his. Moreover, as will be suggested, it may be that some of the Roman actions in the conflict leading up to confrontation at the Anio were motivated by a desire to use to Roman advantage the possible Celtic disposition of solving conflicts with ritualised battle.

The first evidence for possible calculated Roman use of the Gallic mentalities involved may be found in the very existence of a water-crossing at a time of war. Why hadn't the Romans dismantled the bridge over Anio when faced with a Gallic host? There are some indications in the literary sources that such an action was sometimes thought to have happened in similar circumstances, though not specifically against a Gallic enemy. Livy himself mentions how the Pons Salaricus was burned down by flammable rafts in the times of king Tarquin the Elder in front of a Sabine enemy (1.37.1). At any rate, the Pons Salaricus over Anio was not a stone bridge at the time of the duel—making the dismantling quite feasible.¹² The early Roman wars had seen such bridges torn down, at least if the tradition concerning Horatius Cocles at the Sulpician Bridge is based on historical facts (Livy 2.10).

Naturally the choice for the site of confrontation did not lie only in the hands of Romans; in fact the crossing-point of Anio probably was strategically the last possible point where the Romans could meet the Gauls without resorting to an open field battle. Certainly the enemy could not be confronted at river Allia a little way north from Anio (even if the invaders had not already advanced beyond it), since it was there the Romans had suffered the calamitous defeat at the hands of Gauls some fifty years earlier, and Roman sensibilities and superstitions in such matters were very acute, with historical *exempla* being entirely valid reasons for refraining from military action.¹³

The strategic and tactical motives notwithstanding, could the Romans also have pursued some other, less material and less evident advantages in their rush to confront the Gauls at the Salarian bridge over Anio? What did a bridge mean to Romans of Manlius Torquatus' day? After Louise Adams Holland published her

12 As the earliest known Roman stone bridge (over Tiber) is the *pons Aemilius* of 179 BCE (cf. Livy 40.51.4), it would seem extremely probable that the Pons Salaricus over Anio was of timber and thus more easily demolished. Even the stone bridge at the site was dismantled as recently as 1867 to slow down a northern invasion towards Rome, though, ironically, on that occasion the invaders were Italians led by Garibaldi, whereas the defenders were French.

13 A fine treatment of the power of *exempla* in Roman imagination is Chaplin 2000, *passim*. An interesting indication of the military use of these mentalities is a stratagem of the Praenestines described in Livy 6.28.5-6: *Inde agrum late populantes [...] truces Gallorum sonumque vocis in oculis atque auribus fore*. The enemy attacks on the same day that the Romans had suffered their calamitous defeat at Allia, conscious of the *exemplum* that the portentous day draws upon, but since there are no Gauls involved, the Romans are able to carry the day; cf. 'reading the past' in Chaplin 200, 73-4. In essence, the Romans are effectively shown as affirming their full control over their own history by negating the scheme by the outsider Praenestine foe to abuse the Roman *exempla*.

magisterial monograph *Janus and the Bridge* in 1961, it has become established that the Romans of Republican period regarded the bridge as a construct of profound ritual importance. The early Republican bridges were essentially crossings of not only waterways, but also of symbolic barriers. The constructs themselves may even have included two posts supporting a horizontal beam at each end of the bridge, thus effectively forming a liminal space, well suited for ritual acts.¹⁴ It is not improbable that the Pons Salaris would have been of similar construction at the time, or at least that it would have represented similar notions of traversing something more than just a stream. Thus it would have provided a most suitable setting for a single combat. As a consequence, the Livian reasoning for the preservation of the bridge by both sides “lest it be regarded as an indication of fear”¹⁵ does not seem authentic, probably representing instead an explanation invented by Livy himself to fill the silence of his sources on the subject and perhaps to add a further dramatic element. Worth of note is the fact that Quadrigarius describes the battle as already raging on and around the bridge, when the Gallic champion silences both sides and demands a single combat (Quadr. *ap. Gell. NA* 9.13.8-9). Hence the nervous suspension of both sides is probably not part of the pre-Livian version, the more plausible reason for the need of a ritualised combat to arise being the equal strength of the opposing sides—reflected in the Quadrigarian narrative as well as in the Livian *incertis viribus* (7.9.7). For such a trial the bridge, self-evidently the focal point of tensions, offered a natural yet symbolically charged stage. It may well be that in the Roman minds such nebulous concepts merged with the much more acute need to deflect the Gallic incursion, and to do so without risking an open battle—or if the battle had already started, as Quadrigarius seems to imply, without heavy casualties on their side.

The issue of single combat among the Romans has been extensively studied,¹⁶ and the remarkable preponderance of Gallic opponents in these duels during the Republic has been noted (Oakley 1985, 400; Jantz 1995, 137). Famous monomachists who at some time or another faced Gauls in single combat include Livius Drusus, Claudius Marcellus and Valerius Corvus—all members of old patrician *gentes*.¹⁷

14 Holland 1961, 301-309, 332-342. A pictorial representation of such a type of Janus-bridge is provided at *op. cit.* pl. 1, fig. 1.

15 Livy 7.9.7: *pons in medio erat, neutris eum rumpentibus, ne timoris indicium esset.*

16 A most useful discussion, as well as a list of all the certain cases of single combat in the Republican period, is provided by Oakley 1985, *passim*.

17 The source for Drusus is Suet. *Tib.* 3.2; for Marcellus Plut. *Marc.* 2.1; for Corvus (or Corvinus, as he is sometimes known) Livy 7.26.1-10, Dion. Hal. 15.1.1-4, Zon. 7.25, Gell. *NA* 9.11.1-10. At this point the theory of Holford-Strevens concerning the respective traditions on Valerius Corvus and Manlius Torquatus should be noted; he sees them both as stemming from a single Gallic invasion (that of Polyb. 2.18.7-8), the repulsion of which was appropriated by both the Valerii and the Manlii in their family traditions as two competing narratives: Holford-Strevens 1984, 148.

The fact that the noble family of the Manlii was actively involved in upholding the Roman religion, may also be a point worth noting in interpreting the tradition concerning Manlius' feat, particularly as the correct procedures of Roman cults always seem to have obtained increased symbolism in times of *tumultus Gallicus*. Single combat existed in Rome as a tradition entirely separately from the Gallic wars, but it has been suggested that in fighting the Gauls—who themselves were often observed using ritualised duels in resolving conflicts—the tension to revert to similar individualistic behaviour increased among the Romans, especially among the *iuventus*—the younger conscripts of the citizen-army, who were eager for glory and spoils (Neraudeau 1976, 692). These in turn could be converted into political capital, in ways inherently rather similar to those employed by the Gauls.

Finally, as a side note concerning the Roman mindset in the conflict, it should be pointed out that the alliance between the Gauls and the Tiburtines seems to have been used by the Romans as a handy pretext for an all-out war that again demanded the nomination of a dictator, though “against a Tiburtine foe the state would have been satisfied with consul as a commander”.¹⁸ A further choice of words may be an interesting reflection of this partial assimilation of Tibur to the specific subclass of Gallic enemies in the Roman mind; after their defeat at a battle near the Colline Gate, the Gauls withdrew to Tibur “as though it were a stronghold in a Gallic war”.¹⁹ Livy's statement may reflect Roman indignation at an Italian town giving shelter and support for a barbarian enemy. The Gauls were seen as outsiders who had no business residing in Italy, for they had penetrated the natural barrier of the Alps which had at least since Cato the Elder's time been seen as a “wall of Italy”.²⁰

The Gallic Perspective

As noted above, the Republican Romans were well aware of the ritual and symbolic importance of bridges, and thus they did not probably need to resort to pure conjecture in projecting similar mentalities to their Gallic opponents. At any rate, the knowledge that a victorious duel could potentially prevent the Gauls from crossing the Anio would have been very advantageous to the Romans eager not to

18 Livy 7.11.4: *et cum adversus Tiburtem hostem duce consule contenta res publica esset, Gallicus tumultus dictatorem creari coegit.*

19 Livy 7.11.7: *fuga Tibur sicut arcem belli Gallici petunt.*

20 Cato *Orig.* 85 (Peter) *ap. Serv. ad Aen.* 10.13: *Alpes quae secundum Catonem et Livium muri vice tuebantur Italiam.* The Livian passage referred to by Servius is probably 39.54.12, in which the envoys of Senate command the Gauls that had invaded Veneto in 183 BCE to return where they had come from, since the Alps were “almost an impassable barrier in between”: *prope inxsuperabilem finem in medio.* The symbolism is clear and poignant; the Gauls were unwanted outsiders in Italy, and should be expelled from there. For a very valuable discussion of these themes *vide* Williams 2001, 55-8, 77-8, 103-4 and 175-82.

risk a duplication of Allia. Whether such mentalities were truly shared by the Gauls is another matter entirely, but there are some hints as to suggest that the Gauls, too, saw the duel at the Salarian bridge as an act replete with symbolic significance.

The Gauls, to be sure, were not strangers to duels themselves. On the contrary, the custom of monomachy among the Celts had become something of a commonplace among the Greco-Roman writers at least by Posidonius' time,²¹ and without doubt Livy accepted it as an act characteristic to Gauls. Moreover, the factual inclusion of duels in Continental Celtic warfare need not be seriously doubted due to the additional testimony of insular sources. Worth of note, as well, is the similarity in motives of both Romans and Celts engaging in single combat: among both peoples the personal prowess could be most useful in gaining support, fame and followers—and quite probably the narratives of such exploits were just as highly appreciated and often repeated in the family traditions of the Gallic champions as they were in those of the Romans, for which we have literary and numismatic attestations.²²

In Livy, the Gallic warrior seems explicit on the purpose of the duel: to see whether the Romans or the Gauls are better at war. Although this seems a mindset entirely compatible with the endeavour to resolve a conflict of evenly matched forces by single combat, it seems unlikely that the exact wording (or even the general purpose) of the challenge would have been preserved in long and prevalently oral family traditions of Roman patrician *gentes*. Livy, at any rate, cannot be considered a faithful repository of the Gallic sentiments in this case, if ever—his overriding concern is with the depiction of Roman *virtus* and the great unfurling narrative of the city's rise. The older version of the story, however, seems to include some aspects that could be read as possibly reflecting Gallic attitudes.

One noteworthy factor is the attire of the Gaul. The Livian depiction, with its rich details focusing on the Gaul's cape and armour, is quite tempting to dismiss as a secondary thematic introduced to underline Manlius' *moderatio*, as has been noted already. In addition, the shorter and older version of Quadrigarius is preferable to the Livian one by simple textual criticism. The earlier version as preserved in Gellius depicts the Gaul nearly naked, and has many parallels in Republican literature—the most famous of which involves the Transalpine Gaesatae fighting nude in the battle of Telamon about a hundred and thirty years later (Polyb. 2.28.8,

21 As quoted in Diod. Sic. 5.29.2-3. On the custom among the Gauls cf. also Polyb. 3.62.5. Cf. Jantz 1995, 137.

22 Cic. *Brut.* 61-2 is a useful implication of the Late Republican mentalities concerning the credibility of earlier, oral family traditions that were widely used in the early Roman historical works, often coloured by factionalism and clannish pride. Cf. Livy's objections in 7.9.5-6 (fn. 5 above). On family traditions see also Ogilvie 1965, 359, and more recently Rodríguez Mayorgas 2007, *passim*. Numismatic commemoration of the tradition concerning the name of Manlii Torquati (by showing the torque), see for instance *RRC* 295, 337/1-2, 411.

29.7.), quite possibly on magico-religious grounds not unknown among the insular Celts, either.²³ Compared to the Roman point-of-view examined earlier, we can see how the attire of the Gaul in battle, too, was probably interpreted very differently by the Roman writers and the Gauls themselves.

As a further indication of the Gallic treatment of the duel as ritualistic combat, the Quadrigarian version of the account describes the Gaul as approaching Manlius *cantabundus* (Quadr. *ap.* Gell. *NA* 9.13.8). Besides having an obvious connection to the literary *topos* of the Gallic loudness and an obvious meaning of singing,²⁴ the word itself can be taken to denote a chanting of incantation or spell, and is used as such by Republican writers. While the evidence as such is not very conclusive, it is conceivable how a Gallic warrior preparing to fight in a ritualistic duel as a champion of his army might use some protective incantations or magical formulas to give just that extra punch.

Things, however, did not go particularly well for the anonymous Gallic champion, which brings us back to the starting-point of this article and the night-time retreat of the Gauls. The motif has sometimes been treated simply as a narrative element lifted by Livy from its original place (in a context of a 349 BCE invasion described by Polyb. 2.18.7-8) to colour his account of Torquatus' feat.²⁵ Perhaps crucially, such an assertion neglects to take into account the broader context of the narrative, namely, the action that leads the Romans to go to war against the Tiburtines. Either we may suppose that the whole Gallic invasion described in both the annalistic tradition and later historians did not happen at that time, and thus there was no collaboration between the Gauls and the citizens of Tibur—the motif simply being one invented by Romans to better justify their war with the Tiburtines; or we may choose to give some credence to the Roman tradition of the attack, and see the defeat of the Gallic champion as one possible reason for their retreat from the crossing of Anio and march upstream to Tibur. Thus it might be suggested that after the victory of Torquatus the Gauls actually could not have crossed the Anio at Via Salaria even had they wanted to: having been defeated in a ritualistic duel at a water-crossing they had to search for another point along the river to cross. The latter interpretation is intriguingly supported by certain insular sources that may tentatively be examined as possible parallels to the behaviour and mentality of Celtic warbands in situations of ritualistic duel at a water-crossing.

23 Although depictions of richly adorned warriors, too, can be found in insular sources—a prime example of which is the combat between Cúchulainn and Ferdiad in the *TBC*.

24 Examples include Liv. 5.37.5, Polyb. 2.29.5-8, Corn. Sisenna *hist.* 4 (fr. 71 Peter) *apud.* Non. *s.v.* *molimentum*, 142. See also fn. 8 above.

25 As suggested in Holford-Strevens 1984, 148.

Tentative Irish Parallels and Conclusion

As a classicist, I am acutely conscious of treading on an alien ground while examining the vernacular insular sources. Hence the following suggestions for the hypothetical Irish parallels for the action at the bridge of Anio should be read exactly as such: a few simple suggestions waiting for discussion and commentary by true celtologists, for whom certain passages in the Irish texts have probably already suggested themselves as possibly pertaining to the motif of a combat at a river crossing. I will specifically suggest two such instances, which (if reflecting a wider Celtic reverence for rituals at the fords) may offer some explanation to the behaviour of the Gauls after their champion's fall at river Anio. Apparently the river crossings are regarded by the heroes of the Irish narratives as places suitable for challenging each other—in a way that reminds one of the Norse tradition of *hólmganga*, or trials by combat on islands, which are, of course, liminal places by their very nature.²⁶

The first possible parallel may be encountered in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, where several duels are fought on fords as Cúchulainn endeavours to slow the march of the Connachtmén returning with the Brown Bull of Ulster. As Cúchulainn defeats their champions one after the other, the army of Connacht is prevented from crossing, and has to march from ford to ford in hopes of getting rid of the Ulster champion. The most interesting of these single combats is the climactic duel between Cúchulainn and Ferdiad (which very much takes place *incertis viribus* in the narrative), since the fourth and conclusive day of fighting is set in the very waters of the ford itself, perhaps significantly (71, *fol.* 81 a).

Another passage that may have some bearing on the subject at hand can be found in *Cath Maige Tuired* 93.440, where during the action leading to the battle of Mag Tuired, Indech's daughter, after their erotic (and slightly scatological) encounter, threatens to block the Dagda's passage at fords through magical means:

- 'Ni rogae, 'ol en ben, 'ar boam cloch-sou a mbéulai gech áthau nod-ragau.'

- 'Bid fir, 'or ion Dagdae, 'acht nim-gébou dei. Ragat-so go trén tar cech n-alich, & biaid látraoch mo sáulu-sau i ngech ailic go brath.'

- 'Bid fir, acht bud síos consífiter cona aicíther: Ni rago torm-sai gom m-árail maccu Tethra hi sidaib. Ar bon rail-sie daruch i ncech áth & i ngech belagi not-ragai.'²⁷

26 Examples of *hólmganga* in Norse literature abound, but some examples include *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar* 67, *Kormáks saga* 9-10, and *Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu* 7.

27 *Cath Maige Tuired* 93.441-448 (tr. E. Gray): "You will not go," said the woman, "because I will be a stone at the mouth of every ford you will cross."

"That will be true," said the Dagda, "but you will not keep me from it. I will tread heavily on every stone, and the trace of my heel will remain on every stone forever."

"That will be true, but they will be turned over so that you may not see them. You will not go past me until I summon the sons of Tethra [i.e. the *Fomoire*] from the *síd*-mounds, because I will be a giant oak in every ford and in every pass you will cross."

Here, we find an entirely magical and somewhat mythologised account of the challenge-at-a-ford theme. Perhaps it was on a similar vein that the *cantabundus* Gaul confronting Manlius spoke his verses. The mention of an oak is especially interesting, particularly when compared to the Ulster Cycle; in the *Táin Cúchulainn* cuts out a tree-fork at Ath Gabla, and sticks it in the middle of the stream, impaling four Connachtmen's heads in it. The display is interpreted in the narrative by Fergus mac Róich as invoking a *geása*, and indeed has all the trappings of a magical act on it.²⁸

So, whether used in ways magical or physical, the Celts seem to have regarded water crossings as a natural setting for ritualised duels, making thus at least possible that the invading Gallic army in Livy did not simply depart in dismay of the Roman prowess after Manlius' victory, but rather because they had been ritually prevented from crossing the Anio. Naturally, they began to search for another crossing, which could be found upriver at Tibur. Romans, on the other hand, interpreted (at least at Livy's time) such sudden departure as a sign of the characteristic Gallic *mobilitas animi*, glad to have averted the dreaded barbarian threat so fortuitously—though whether the Romans had knowingly abused the Gallic mentality in their own advantage, must remain conjectural. The one thing that does emerge clearly from the Republican sources examined is that the Gallic invasions were still at that point experienced very strongly by the Romans—a claim reinforced by the sheer amount of heroic acts and aetiological incidents (with the feat of Manlius Torquatus pertaining to both categories) dated by later authors to those invasions.

After discussing both the oral and literary Roman traditions concerning the duel of Manlius Torquatus and the Gallic champion, as well as offering some tentative parallels to the behaviour of the champions in the Irish sources, I would suggest that the incident described by both Livy and Claudius Quadrigarius was interpreted differently not only by the two Roman authors, but more importantly by the Romans and the Gauls involved. Moreover, it seems that by reading the Roman testimonies closely, and perhaps by comparing them with what we learn of the Celtic disposition from the insular sources, it may be possible to explain the sudden departure of the Gallic host in a more satisfactory manner than Livy, for whom the main *raison d'être* of barbarians was to be defeated by the Romans.

28 Such notions may have something in common with the widespread folktale motif of the first creature to cross a (new) bridge being snatched by the devil or dying, exemplified by folktale type AT 1191. In any case, crossing running water seems to have been an act of passage that very easily lent itself to death-symbolism.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Accius, *Scenicorum Romanorum Fragmenta. Volumen prius, Tragicorum Fragmenta*. Ed. A. Klotz 1953. München: R. Oldenbourg.
- Appian, *Appiani Historia Romana*. Edd. P. Viereck & A. G. Roos 1962-1986. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Cath Maige Tuired. The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*. Ed. & transl. E. Gray 1982. Dublin: Irish Texts Society.
- Cato the Elder, *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae*. Ed. H. Peter 1914. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Cicero, *Brutus*. Ed. & transl. J. Martha 1931. Paris: Les belles lettres.
- Dionysius, *Antiquités Romaines / Dénys d'Halicarnasse*. Ed. & transl. J.-H. Sautel 1999. Paris : Les belles lettres.
- Egils saga. The story of Egil Skallagrimsson*. Transl. W. C. Green 1893. London: Elliot Stock.
- Gellius, *A. Gellii Noctes Atticae*. Ed. & transl. P. K. Marshall 1968. Oxford : Clarendon Press.
- Gunnlaugs saga. La Saga de Gunnlaug Langue de Serpent*. Transl. F. Wagner 1899. Paris: E. Leroux.
- Kormáks saga. The Sagas of Kormák and The Sworn Brothers*. Ed. L. M. Hollander 1949. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Livy, *Titi Livi Ab urbe condita*. Edd. R. S. Conway, C. F. Walters & P. G. Walsh *et. al.* 1914-1999. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nonius Marcellus, *Nonii Marcelli De compendiosa doctrina*. 3 vols. Ed. W. M. Lindsay 1903. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Orosius, *Historia adversus paganos*. Ed. & transl. M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet 1991, *Histoires (contre les païens), tome II, livres IV-VI*. Paris: Les belles lettres.
- Philostratus, *Philostratorum et Callistrati Opera*. Ed. A. Westermann 1878. Paris: Firmin-Didot.
- Plutarch, *Vitae Parallelae*. Edd. Cl. Lindskog & K. Ziegler 1960-1980. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Polybius, *Historiae*. Ed. L. Dindorf 1867-89. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Servius, *Servii grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii*. Edd. G. Thilo & H. Hagen 1881-1902. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Suetonius, *C. Suetoni Tranquilli Opera*. Ed. M. Ihm 1908. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Táin Bó Cúailnge from the Book of Leinster*. Ed. & transl. C. O'Rahilly 1967. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.
- Zonaras, *Ioannis Zonarae Epitome Historiarum*. Ed. L. A. Dindorf 1868-1875. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.

Secondary Literature

- Chaplin, J. D. 2000. *Livy's Exemplary History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holford-Strevens, L. A. 1984. 'More notes on Aulus Gellius'. *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 9.10, 146-151.
- Holland, L. A. 1961. *Janus and the Bridge*. Rome: American Academy of Rome.
- Jantz, M. 1995. *Das Fremdenbild in der Literatur der Römischen Republik und der Augusteischen Zeit. Vorstellungen und Sichtweisen am Beispiel von Hispanien und Gallien*. Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang.
- Neraudeau, J.-P. 1976. 'L'Exploit de Titus Manlius Torquatus'. *Mélanges offerts à Jacques Heurgon. L'Italie préromaine et la Rome républicaine*. Rome: École Française de Rome, 685-94.
- Oakley, S. P. 1985. 'Single Combat in the Roman Republic'. *Classical Quarterly* 35.2, 392-410.
- Oakley, S. P. 1998. *A Commentary on Livy, books VI-X, in two volumes*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ogilvie, R. M. 1965. *A Commentary on Livy, books I-V*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Rodríguez Mayorgas, A. 2007. *La memoria de Roma: oralidad, escritura e historia en la República romana*. Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd.

- Saddington, D. B. 1961. 'Roman Attitudes to the *Externae Gentes* of the North'. *Acta Classica* 4, 90-102.
- Williams, J. H. C. 2001. *Beyond the Rubicon: Romans and Gauls in Republican Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.