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Goût d'empire

Andrew Dalby



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GOÛT D'EMPIRE

I aim to show by examples how the literature of two hundred interesting years during which the Roman Republic turned into an empire may be made to yield a geography of the Roman imagination. To any who doubt whether this approach can be fruitful I propose as forerunner and inspiration Edward Schafer, whose works *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* and *The Vermilion Bird*¹ showed how the exotic south and the mysterious west contributed their sense-impressions to the Tang dynasty poetry of medieval China.

My first attempt at a similar exploration in Roman literature was encouraged by Richard Stoneman, publisher at Routledge, who saw that what I proposed could be a kind of *géographie des mentalités* (or perhaps *des sensualités*). The book appeared nineteen years ago as *Empire of Pleasures*.² Recently the emergence of an archaeology of the senses,³ and the application of these archaeological insights to the Roman Empire, promise new perspectives on the exploration that I proposed. In some of this new work literary texts are fully used. Kelli C. Rudolph edited *Taste and the Ancient Senses* in a multi-volume series from Routledge, including papers on the Roman world by Emily Gowers and Laura Banducci.⁴ There is another 2017 volume edited by Eleanor Betts, *Senses of the Empire: Multisensory Approaches to Roman Culture*, fruit of an Open University conference, notably including a paper by Candace Weddell on touch and taste in ancient sacrifice.⁵ The latest issue of the Toulouse journal *Pallas* (no. 106, 2018) includes a dossier *Goûts et odeurs dans l'Antiquité*, edited by Jean-Christophe Courtil and Régis Courtray. In this volume Courtil's own paper "Le goût de la sagesse: Sénèque et les assaisonnements" is most relevant here.⁶ Given this burst of new activity, all the more reason to extend the present enquiry.

1. Schafer 1963; Schafer 1967.

2. Dalby 2000.

3. Here I must cite Price 2018 and Day 2013.

4. Rudolph 2017; Gowers 2017; Banducci 2017.

5. See Weddell 2017.

6. Courtil 2018. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for reminding me of these relevant recent publications, the last of which had not, I think, appeared when this paper was presented. Let me add one other recent volume, Haug & Kreuz 2016.

This paper, then, offers a brief demonstration that literature remains a major source for the construction of a sensual geography, specifically using epithets attached to geographical names and geographical epithets attached to the names of sensual objects. A noun-adjective phrase is all that is needed to stick a pin in the map, but that first step already demands reading with new eyes. We have been tempted to dismiss the epithets, equally in the Homeric epics and in Augustan Latin, and to overlook the geographical undertones. We need to give them full weight. Three initial examples will confirm that the exercise is not a simple one.

Consider a north African cowboy. Vergil evokes the repetitive formulae of Homeric epic (formulae that were once the building blocks of oral verse) in poetry that is anything but repetitive and anything but orally composed:

[...] *Omnia secum
armentarius Afer agit, tectumque Laremque
armaque Amyclaeumque canem Cressamque pharetram* (georg. 3.343-345).

A Libyan nomad with a Roman household god, a Cretan quiver and a hunting dog of Laconian breed is an accredited citizen of the world of the imagination that we aim to discover.

Consider the fruit named *persica*. The single word brings to mind a sweet, juicy, downy luxury that had become familiar in the Mediterranean world and, at the same time, the central Asian region from which this fruit had in the last few centuries spread westwards with human encouragement. Persia was the fruit's origin in the Roman imagination, as Pliny the Elder confirms (*nat.* 12.14; 15.44), although, as we now know from archaeobotany, that was only a stage in a much longer journey. Peaches had been domesticated in the lower Yangzi valley several thousand years earlier.⁷ Established, then, in central Asia, the growing of peaches did not pass to Italy in a single step. *Persica* may take an adjective, *persica Asiatica*, with reference to the province of Asia in western Asia Minor (Pliny, *nat.* 15.39; the single word *Asiatica* is used in the same sense, Columella (10.412): this is the name of a variety known to the Romans from what was once their easternmost province – which, evidently, was a step in the westward migration of this cultivated species.

Now consider a farmyard, sketched by Martial (3.58.15-17), in which are to be seen *Numidicae* [...] *guttatae*, *impiorum phasiana Colchorum*, and *Rhodiae* [...] *feminae*. It is perfectly likely that a Roman farmer's wife in Martial's time would keep all these, the "speckled Numidians" (guinea-fowl, named in Latin after the North African province of Numidia), "pheasants from impious Colchis" (named after the river Phasis in Colchis, impious because Medea the Colchian killed her

7. Zheng *et al.* 2014.

own children) and Rhodian hens, a well-known breed from the Dodecanese. All three, originating from three far distant and widely separated regions, had become naturalized (like peaches and many other domesticated plants and animals) across what was now a Mediterranean empire, and in that empire's homeland in particular.

So much so that, unlike the surrounding provinces, Italy as a whole scarcely wants a literary epithet except the all-embracing *dives Ausonia* "rich Ausonia" of Silius Italicus (4.220), but the regions of Italy are distinguished for the products of which they are individually proud.

Ad victum optima fert ager Campanus frumentum, Falernus vinum, Casinas oleum, Tusculanus ficum, mel Tarentinus, piscem Tiberis:

"Best for food: Campanian farmland yields the grain, Falernian the wine, Casinan the oil, Tusculan the figs, Tarentine the honey – and the Tiber the fish" (Varro, *On Human Affairs* quoted by Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.16.12⁸). The fish that Varro had in mind, as Macrobius observes, will be the *lupus* or bass, fattest because it fed on the sewage of the Cloaca maxima (Juvenal, 5.104-106). As to wine, Varro noted elsewhere, Italy was now even richer than Φρυγίην [...] ἀμπελόεσσον, "Phrygia rich in grapes" of the Greek epic formula (*Iliad*, III.184; Varro, *rust.* 1.2.7), and a later agricultural author was able to claim universal agreement that the four best wines in the world were Massic, Sorrentine, Alban and Caecuban, all four of them Italian (Columella, 3.8.5). But no one cared to claim that the crop varieties so rewardingly grown had arisen in Italy.

Flavours of the Empire

Seeking more examples, let us begin a sensory journey in Rome itself, following the eyes of Rutilius Namatianus (1.189-192) as, from the crest of the first hill on the Via Aurelia, he takes a last glance at the city, following the contours to the point where lies (if he could still see it) the *grata regio*, the scene of his pleasures. In presenting this paper I showed, with the help of Paul Bigot's three-dimensional plan of classical Rome now to be seen at Caen, that this "beloved district" in its intimate valley, only just visible from the Janiculum, was the quarter known to other poets as *fervens* [...] *Subura* "seething Subura" (Juvenal, 11.51), *vigilax* [...] *Subura* "wakeful Subura" (Propertius, 4.7.15), *clamosa* [...] *Subura* "clamorous Subura" (Mart. 12.18.2). It seethed because it was crowded night and day, but the term reminds us of its street food – of its *candiduli divina tomacula porci* "divine little sausages of white pork" (Juvenal, 10.355); *tomacula ferventia* "sizzling sausages" (Petronius, 31.11); *fumantia*

8. Unless otherwise indicated all translations are my own.

[...] *tomacla* “smoking sausages” (Martial 1.41.9; cf. Horace, *sat.* 2.4.59-62). We begin here because to taste the pleasures of their Empire Romans needed to go no further than the markets of Subura. Martial (10.94) tells us so more than once:

*Non mea Massylus servat pomaria serpens,
regius Alcinoi nec mihi servit ager,
sed Nomentana securus germinat hortus
arbore, nec furem plumbea mala timent.
Haec igitur media quae sunt modo nata Subura
mittimus autumnii cerea poma mei:*

“No Massylian serpent guards my fruit-trees; I have not the royal orchard of an Alcinous. My garden is both safe and fertile in its Nomentan fruit; my leaden apples fear no thief. Accept this waxy fruit of my own harvest, grown for me in the middle of Subura”. A Massylian serpent, somewhere in north Africa, guarded the garden of the Hesperides; Alcinous owned the Phaeacian, possibly Corcyrean, orchards admired by Odysseus (see below). In a parallel epigram (7.31) Martial names chickens, eggs, Chian figs (a variety grown near Rome but betraying its origin by its name), a suckling kid, green olives and a fresh parsnip as produce that might have come from his property at Nomentum but had, in fact, been bought in Subura.

The agriculture of the small towns near Rome, including Nomentum with its cheap wine, made these towns’ reputation. Northwards Falerii supplied short fat sausages, *breves Falisci*, while its meadows, *herba Falisca*, nourished a famous herd of cattle. To the east was *spumans immitti Signia musto* “foaming Signia with its sour must” (Silius, 8.378) from which an astringent medicinal wine was made (Vergil, *Aen.* 7.682; *Epitome of Athenaeus* 27c). Tusculum produced figs (Varro, quoted above) roses and violets; Cato, who had his suburban farm there, knew what to grow for the Roman market (*agr.* 7-8). Alba Longa gave its name to a famous wine, *Albanum*, and to raisins (Horace, *sat.* 2.4.72); Setia, offering pendulous grapes and wine that was good enough for Bacchus, was *pendula* [...] *Setia* “hanging Setia” (Martial 13.112; Silius, 8.376-377). Praeneste produced roses and hazelnuts, *nuces* [...] *Praenestinae* (Cato, *agr.* 8.2). Apples were the speciality of Tibur: the river Anio, flowing through Tiburtine orchards, was therefore *pomifer* “apple-laden” (Ovid, *am.* 3.6.46; Propertius, 4.7.81; cf. Horace, *sat.* 2.4.70). Some unwary editors of Ovid and Propertius, remembering that apples do not grow in rivers, have made the easy change to *spumifer* “spray-laden”. A little further off were the vineyards that produced the most famous of all wines, *Caecubum*, then *Massicum* and *Falernum*. *Massicus uvifer* “grape-bearing mount Massicus” (Statius, *silv.* 4.3.64) yielded *obliviosum Massicum* “forgetful Massic” (Horace, *carm.* 2.7.21), close neighbour to *ardens, forte, severum* [...] *Falernum* “fiery, strong, severe Falernian” (Horace, *carm.* 1.27.9-10). At the edge of Sabine country *unctum* [...] *Venafrum* (Martial,

12.63), *viride* [...] *Venafrum* “oily, green Venafrum” (Horace, *carm.* 2.6.15-16), famed for its “berry” (*baca*: that is, for its olive groves), was the source of the finest green olive oil, *Venafranum* (Juvenal, 5.86), best for flavour, best also as a vehicle for perfumes. Abella in Campania was “poor in cereal fields”, *pauper sulci cerealis Abella* (Silius, 8.543), but cereals are not everything: it was linked with cultivated hazelnuts or filberts, *nuces Abellanae* (*Priapea* 51; cf. Cato, *agr.* 8.2; hence French *aveline* ‘filbert’), and in poetry we hear of *maliferae* [...] *moenia Abellae*, the “walls of apple-bearing Abella” (Vergil, *Aen.* 7.740), suggesting a link between the place-name and an Indo-European word for ‘apple’.

Along the volcanic coast of the gulf of Naples, a holiday region for Romans, the gastronomic speciality was naturally marine. The name of a seafood dish commemorated Baiae, the most famous of all these resorts:

Embractum Baianum: ostreas minutas, sfondilos, orticas in caccabum mittes; nucleos tostos concisos, rutam, apium, piper, coriandrum, cuminum, passum, liquamen careotam, oleum:

“Baian casserole: minced oysters, mussels, sea urchins. Put in the saucepan chopped toasted pine kernels, rue, celery, pepper, coriander, cumin, raisin wine, fish sauce, caryota dates, oil” (*Apicius*, 9.11). A short exposition by Horace, *sat.* 2.4.32-34, helps to show how it might be sourced. The following rules, with the caveat that they are part of a satire on a gastronome, are to be taken quite seriously: they agree with numerous other literary sources.

*murice Baiano melior Lucrina peloris,
ostrea Circeis, Miseno oriuntur echini,
pectinibus patulis iactat se molle Tarentum:*

Within a few steps of Baiae, sea urchins were best at Misenum while the Lucrine lake offered various shellfish, *Lucrina* [...] *conchylia* (Horace, *epod.* 2.49) and in particular *Lucrina peloris*, palourde or Venus-shell. There were oysters, relatively small (Xenocrates quoted by Oribasius, *Medical Collections* 2.57.96; Pliny, *nat.* 32.62), but Horace suggests going further for the best oysters, to Circeii just south of Rome. Meanwhile, across the peninsula, “soft Tarentum glories in its broad clams”. However soft Tarentum may have been, the flesh of its clams was softer.

In the wilder and mountainous lands that separated Naples from Tarentum, *Quid* [...] *Calabris saltibus / adiecti Lucani?* “why add Lucanian mountain pastures to your Calabrian ones?” Horace (*epist.* 2.2.177-178) asks an imaginary tycoon, and elsewhere (*epod.* 1.27-28; cf. Vergil, *georg.* 2.195-199) gives a reason: from winter pastures in Calabria sheep migrated to summer pastures in Lucania. The product for which the name of Lucania remains famous in large parts of the world is therefore

a sausage, *lucanica*, typically smoked, typically made of lamb or mutton, a standby for transmigrating shepherds and for the soldiers who brought it to Rome (Cicero, *fam.* 9.16.8; Statius, *silv.* 4.9.35; Martial, 13.35).⁹

The strait of Otranto marked the boundary, in the world of Roman gastronomy, between wines that were *cis mare nati* “born on this side of the sea”, including Spanish, Gallic, Italian, and those called *transmarini* “overseas”, including Greek, Anatolian, Syrian and Egyptian. Taking ship from Hydruntum or Brundisium, bound for Greece, the traveller would pass Corcyra, famous for its fruit trees – because on this island had flourished the *Phaeaciae* [...] *silvae* “Phaeacian woods” (Propertius, 3.2.13) or *Corcyraei* [...] *horti* “Corcyraean gardens” (Martial, 13.37) or more precisely “the twice-bearing orchards of Alcinoös” *bifera Alcinoi* [...] *pomaria* (Statius, *silv.* 1.3.81-82), just as described in the narrative of Odysseus (*Od.* VII.112-121).

Four of the flavours of Greek lands will conclude this first journey. Cydonia in Crete grew quinces, *Cydonia mala* “Cydonian apples” if one adopts their Greek name: Calpurnius Siculus (*ecl.* 2.91) calls them *cerea sub tenui* [...] *Cydonia lana* ‘waxy quinces covered by a light down’, and archaeologists have identified the ancient nurseries and orchards. Thessaly was notorious for poisons, *Thessale* [...] *venena* (Horace, *carm.* 1.27.21-22; cf. Ovid, *am.* 3.7.27 *Thessalico* [...] *veneno*) or magic potions, *Thessala* [...] *philtrā* (Juvenal, 6.610-611), or, shall we say, famous for wild herbs (Catullus 64.280-282). The salted tunny of Byzantium, a much-respected delicacy on classical Greek menus, was enjoyed by Romans too: Horace (*sat.* 2.4.66) gives us *Byzantia* [...] *orca*, a barrel from Byzantium, containing tuna pickled in strong-smelling brine, and Statius (*silv.* 4.9.10-13) offers a fleeting savour of *Byzantiaci* [...] *lacerti* “Byzantine chub mackerel”, smoked or dried and wrapped in the papyrus of worthless secondhand books. As for the venerable cultural capital, familiar to the many Romans who went there to study rhetoric and philosophy, Athens under the Empire relied on only one product for its gustatory fame. “The best honey is Attic, and the best of Attic the Hymettian”, so the *Geoponica* asserts (15.7). *Mel Atticum* (Petronius, 38,3) or *mella* [...] *Hymettia* (Martial, 11.42,3) produced by *Cecropiae* [...] *apes* “Cecropian bees” (Vergil, *georg.* 4.177), “the bees that wander the Cecropian mountain” (Martial, 6.34,4), and browsed the nectar of *Cecropius thymus* “Cecropian thyme” (Vergil, *georg.* 4.270), was traditionally demanded for the sweet *mulsum* that preceded a meal: “Your best *mulsum* is mixed from new Hymettian honey and well-aged Falernian wine” (Macrobius, *Sat.* 7.12.9).¹⁰

9. It was λουκάνικα in Greek (note the Latin accentuation), *naqāniq* in Jewish Aramaic (Goitein 1967, 115). See Mathiesen 1993, 3.

10. Jones 1976.

People of the Empire

Greeks, as I have argued elsewhere,¹¹ were the people who began to map this geography of the senses, but when did they begin? The poet sent Telemachos Σπάρτην ἐς καλλιγύναικα “to Sparta of beautiful women” (*Odyssey*, XIII.412), and this formulaic epithet already did not represent a random judgment. Apollo’s priestess at Delphi included in a famous oracle an evaluation of Greeks, both male and female, and their horses, agreeing with the *Odyssey*:

ἵππον Θεσσαλικόν, Λακεδαιμονίαν δὲ γυναῖκα,
ἄνδρας θ' οἱ πίνουσιν ὕδωρ ἱερῆς Ἀρεθούσης...

“The Thessalian horse, the Spartan woman, the men who drink the water of fair Arethusa” (Strabo X.1.13).¹² Latin poets, when writing on the subject of Greeks, are less discriminating and less complimentary than the Delphic priestess. Horace (*epist.* 2.1.32) gives us *Achivi uncti*, ‘greased Greeks’, Varro (*Men.* 311 Bücheler) *coma promissa, rasa barba, pallia trahentes* ‘long-haired, smooth-chinned gown-trailers’: these effeminate gown-trailers are a neat reminiscence of the Trojan women who trailed their gowns in a Homeric epithet, Τρωάδας ἔλκεσιπέπλους (*Il.* VI.442).

Let this second journey, seeking characterizations of people rather than of flavours, begin on the eastern edge of the Empire. We find Syrians as typical traders, like *Syrophoenix* the innkeeper (Juvenal, 8.159) and a freedman grown rich in trade (*Id.*, 1.102-108), and typical lazy soldiers, “mutinous, disobedient, seldom with their units, straying in front of their prescribed posts, roving about like scouts, tipsy from noon one day to the next, unwilling even to carry their arms” (Fronto, *Principia historiae*, 12 [Haines 1920, 208 sq.]).

An Egyptian will be *tinctus colore noctis* “painted with the colour of night” (Petronius, *frg.* 19), hence Martial (9.35.7) writes of *fusca Syene* ‘brown-skinned Syene’, the city on the southernmost frontier of Empire and Petronius (*frg.* 19) of *Memphitides puellae sacris deum paratae*. The adjective *Memphiticus*, literally ‘from Memphis’ the old capital of Egypt, surely identifies colour more than geographical origin when Martial (7.30,3-4) lists, among the lovers of a promiscuous Roman lady, ‘Memphitic sailors from the city of the *Pharos*’, which is not Memphis but Alexandria.

If Syria and Egypt call forth images of servility, the northern and western reaches of the Empire are fraught with war and danger. At the deepest recess of the Adriatic lay the *intima* [...] *regna Liburnorum*, “hidden realms of the Liburni” (Vergil, *Aen.* 1.243-244), recently a nest of pirates, as was this whole fractured coastline: Livy (10.2.4) classed *Illyrii Liburnique et Histri* together as savage peoples, infamous for

11. Dalby & Dalby 2017, 58-60.

12. Parke & Wormell 1956, II, 1-2.

piracy, descending on merchant ships and harbour towns in their swift ships, *saeva Liburna* “wild Liburnians”.¹³ The region was now a source of slaves. The *clamans Liburnus* (Juvenal, 4.75), *horridus Liburnus* “bristling Liburnian” (Martial, 1.49.33), typical porter and usher in the streets of Rome, bristled because he wore a rough woollen hooded cloak, *cucullus Liburnicus* (Martial, 14.140[139]).

The best known facts about the distant Britons were that they were fierce and blue, *caerulei* [...] *Britanni* (Martial, 11.53.1), *picti* [...] *Britanni* (*Id.*, 14.99.1), using blue woad as war-paint; and that they wore baggy trousers (*Id.*, 11.21.9). In a list of places best left unvisited, Horace (*carm.* 3.4.33) includes *Britanni hospitibus feri* “Britons, fierce to their guests”, and although he hoped to see *Britannus* [...] *catenatus* “a Briton in chains” (*epod.* 7.7-8) he probably never did. Juvenal (14.196) imagined *castella Brigantum* “castles of the Brigantes” in the far north, a structure more typical of Dacians than of Celts.

Spaniards were as fierce as Britons, in earlier Roman poetry: we find *truces Iiberi* “cruel Iberians” (Martial, 10.78), *impacati Iiberi* “unpacified Iberians” (Vergil, *georg.* 3.408); *bellicosus Cantaber* “warlike Cantabrians” (Horace, *carm.* 2.11.1) and *Cantaber indoctus* “untaught Cantabrians” (*ibid.* 2.6.2); Horace looks forward with irony to the *peritus* [...] *Iiber*, the “educated Spaniard” (*ibid.* 2.20.19-20). The typical Spaniard looked very different from Gauls or Britons. Martial was a Celtiberian; and whatever the ethnic mixture that created this people, in looks he describes himself as an Iberian and not a Celt. “You walk about with your wavy locks shining, I am unruly with my Spanish hair. You are smooth from your daily resin, I have hairy legs and hairy jowls. You have lisping lips and a feeble tongue: why, my little girl has a stronger voice than you [...]. Stop calling me ‘brother’, Charmenio, or I may start calling you ‘sister’” (10.65.6-15).

At the western extremity of the province of Baetica and of the whole imagined Roman world was Gades (modern Cadiz), an ancient place, capital long ago of Tartessus: *remotae Gades* “distant Gades” (Horace, *carm.* 2.2.10-11), *occiduae* [...] *Gades* “western Gades” (Claudian, *in Gildonem* 159), *hominum finis Gades* “Gades, the end of humankind” (Silius, 1.141). In particular *improbae* [...] *Gades* “naughty Gades” (Martial, 5.78.26), *iocosae* [...] *Gades* “sexy Gades” (*Id.*, 1.61.9) was famous for the slave dancers it sent to Rome. One of these, named Telethusa, stars in the *Priapeia* (19.1) and in Martial (6.71.5), dancing to “Baetic rhythms”, *Baetica crumata* (*Id.*, 6.71.1), skilled in the modes of Gades, *Gaditanis* [...] *modis* (*Id.*, 6.71.2). Performers set up their rhythm with cymbals (*Tartesiaca* [...] *atera* “Tartessian bronze”: *Id.*, 11.16.4) and bells (hence Statius’s *cymbala tinnulaeque Gades: silv.* 1.6.71) for a dance so erotic that Martial (1.41.12) extends the epithet *improbus*

13. Panciera 1956.

from the dancers themselves to their trainer, producing an *improbus magister* “improper impresario from Gades”, one of the more daring of the transferred epithets of Roman poetry.

Whether the dancing girls of Gades had any link with those of Syria is, I think, unknown, though the ancient trading connection between Phoenicia and Tartessus makes it not impossible. At any rate Syrian women, too, figure in Roman literature as servants in taverns, dancing girls and prostitutes, notably the *copa Surisca*, “young Syrian bar-girl” of the *Appendix Vergiliana* (*Copa* 1), a member, one might say, of the *ambubaiarum collegia* “companies of flute-girls” (Horace, *sat.* 1.2.1; cf. Petronius, 74.13). The strange word *ambubaia* originates in Aramaic ‘*abbuba*’ ‘flute’. Already in Republican times these guilds had reached Rome in the west and the Chinese court of the Han emperor in the far east, for the “skilled performers” obtained from Nabataea and sent to China as a gift by the Parthian king, around 120 BC, evidently included Syrian dancing girls (Sima Qian 1996, 278-279 Watson). A little later we note the “Hebrew flute-girl” whom the apostle Thomas encountered at dinner on his journey to India (*Acts of Thomas* 4-16).

Gaul: its people and its tastes

It seems appropriate to conclude these brief explorations closer to home and, with equal brevity, to notice three later developments in the story.

The typical Gaul or Celt, *Rhodani potor* “Rhone-drinker” (Horace, *carm.* 2.20.20) was big and fleshy in the view of the Spaniard Martial, who writes (8.75.2 and 6) of a *Lingonus* [...] *ingens* “huge Lingonian” (member of a Belgic people) and of *crassa* [...] *Burdigala* “fat Bordeaux” (9.32.6). The same Gaul was also white-skinned (*colla* [...] *lactea*: Silius, 4.154): Giton, in Petronius’s fiction (102.14), drily suggests a disguise as Gaulish slaves, “chalking our faces so that Gaul will recognise us as one of her own”. Some were fair-haired, like the *Carnutus flavus* remembered by Tibullus (1.7.12), and they had a fair or red-haired northern neighbour, the *auricomus* (Silius, 3.608) or *russus* [...] *Batavus* (Martial, 14.176.1).

Typical Gallic military costume was a cloak and striped trousers; warrior ornament included a torque, a collar of twisted gold:

*Aurea caesaries ollis atque aurea vestis,
virgatis lucent sagulis, tum lactea colla
auro innectuntur* (Vergil, *Aen.* 8.659-661).

“Their hair was golden, golden were their beards; bright were their striped capes, and their milk-white necks were encircled with gold”: thus Vergil imagined the early Gauls who had captured Rome. In the later epic by Silius the leader of the Celtic Boii has a very similar look: “A golden collar glittered on his milk-white

neck; his garments were striped with gold [...]” (Silius, 4.154-156). Vergil’s *vestis*, translated “beards” in the text quoted, was (not unreasonably) understood by Silius as “clothes”; hence Silius makes the Gaulish garments “gold-striped”, believing that he is following Vergil’s precedent. *Galla credulitas* “Gallic credulity” was a commonplace (Martial, 5.1.10) ever since Caesar asserted that the Gauls were ready to base important decisions on rumour: he further denigrated his redoubtable opponents with *novis plerumque rebus student* “they are mostly inclined to revolution” (*Gall.* 4.5.1 and 3). Horace seized on this very trait to reproach the Allobroges of the Rhone valley. His formula *novis rebus infidelis Allobrox* (*epod.* 16.6) expresses, far more persuasively than a longer sentence could have done, the undoubted fact that the Allobroges had once been “unreliable when *we* were having a revolution”: they had taken up arms against Rome at the time when the state was in turmoil because of the attempted reforms of the Gracchi. The Belgae of the northeast were more warlike than other Gauls, as Caesar explained (*Gall.* 1.1.3). This was the first occurrence of the Belgae in literature. Persuaded by it, Propertius, anachronistically, calls the Cisalpine leader killed in single combat by Marcellus, in 222 BC, a *Belga* (4.10.40). The Gauls would eventually have even more dangerous northwestern neighbours, the *insidiatores* [...] *Britannos* “terrorist Bretons” of the sixth century (Venantius Fortunatus, *carm.* 3.8.41).

If we look for Gaulish flavours in Roman literature – excluding geographical, agricultural and other technical texts, and excluding archaeology –, we find that Gaul does not have a prominent place in the Roman Empire of the senses. There were the *inproba Massiliae* [...] *fumaria* “wicked smokeries of Marseille” (Martial. 10.36.1). Pliny would have preferred not to say what Martial 10.36 and elsewhere meant by this, but he said it none the less: the wine producers of Gallia Narbonensis smoked their wines and added herbs and drugs to flavour them (*nat.* 14.68). Martial, however, liked the wine of Vienne in the Rhone valley, *pulchra Vienna* “beautiful Vienne” (7.88.2), *vitifera* [...] *Vienna* “wine-bearing Vienne” (13.107.1); he noticed (12.32.18) “*pavés* of Tolosan cheese”, *quadra* [...] *casei Tolosatis*. Then there is nothing more, but this is a sign of the lack of sources, not the absence of good flavours. Towards the end of the fourth century Ausonius has plenty to say of the fish and the wine of the Moselle, the already-respected wine of Bordeaux and the *flavens Garumna*, the oysters of the Médoc and several other districts on the Atlantic coast (*Mos.* *passim*; *epist.* 9.18-40). One more step towards hexagonal gastronomy came only in the late fifth century, as the highly respectable Sidonius Apollinaris imagines retreating to a boozy inn, somewhere in Gaul, in whose smoky kitchen “aromatic saucepans give off the scent of sausage and thyme and *bacae*, and the steam of stewing pots mingles with the smoke from spitting frying pans” (*epist.* 8.11.3 lines 45-48): the union of sausages, thyme and *bacae* (juniper berries) may be the first textual evidence of a distinctively Gallic cuisine.

A cuisine that is certainly in full swing by the twelfth century, when Jean d'Hauville in his description of Paris as a whole world, *Greca libris, Inda studiis, Romana poetis* “[...] Greek in its books, Indian in its colleges, Roman in its poets [...]” (*Architrenius* 2.485) can add with pride *sua mensis et sua potu* “all its own in its food and wine” (*ibid.* 2.487).

Andrew DALBY

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