

Telling Tales on the Middle Ground

Pliny on Safari

What did Romans know of their western subjects, and how did they claim to know it? Pliny the Elder, in the short account of Africa that makes up the first thirty chapters of Book 5 of his *Natural History*, offers a convenient starting illustration of the texture of ethnographic writing on the Roman West. This is how he begins.

Africa, the Greeks called Libya, and the sea before it the Libyan Sea. Its limit is Egypt and no other part of the world offers fewer harbours, since the coastline extends from the west in a long curve. The names of its peoples and its towns are mostly impossible to pronounce, except by the natives who live almost entirely in fortresses.¹

Africa in the middle of the first century CE is presented as remote, difficult either to penetrate or comprehend, and its knowledge begins with the Greeks. Africa remains as unfamiliar as ever, indeed it is in some ways more ungraspable and fabulous for Pliny than for some of his predecessors.² I shall return to the apparently irreducible *alterité* of the West in chapter 4. Yet despite these apparent obstacles to comprehension, Pliny has in fact quite a lot to say. As the book proceeds we are introduced to the two Mauretaniae, their legendary foundation by the giant Antaeus and his combat with Hercules deftly interwoven with more recent imperial interventions, Caius' reduction of client kingdoms into provinces, the civic foundations of Claudius and Augustus. When Pliny's account reaches the river Lixus he expands on the gardens of the Hesperides – no golden apples now, just some wild olives and the story of the serpent was perhaps based on a serpent-shaped river channel – and then a

sideswipe at Cornelius Nepos for believing all the Greek lies about the region. Details of Roman colonies lead Pliny to the desert, herds of elephants and ‘the great mountain of Africa also known as the most fabulous Atlas’.³ The rugged west-facing crags, the wooded eastern approaches, its abundant springs and fruit and its eerie daytime silence that at dusk is replaced by the sounds of dancing Pans and satyrs is indeed most fabulous. Pliny is less critical here than he was of Nepos: ‘These things famous authors have reported, alongside the deeds performed there by Hercules and Perseus. An immense and unexplored territory separates it from us.’⁴

From the Atlas, Pliny turns to the coast (ch. 8), citing the commentaries of Hanno the Carthaginian, followed by most Greek and Latin authors, and then going on to the explorations conducted by Polybios in a fleet provided by Scipio Aemilianus. I shall return to this expedition, and others like it, in chapter 3. A long coastal *periplus* follows,⁵ punctuated with comments on the animals found in each region. Pliny then turns to the first Roman military expedition into Mauretania during the reign of Claudius, an expedition that did reach the Atlas. Not only did senatorial generals campaign there, but Roman knights now govern the territory.

There are, as I have said, five colonies in this province and it might seem therefore an area on which it would be easy to gain reliable information. But this – and much else – turns out upon examination to be completely false. For those of high status who cannot be bothered to hunt out the truth, do not wish to seem ignorant and so tell lies. Nothing is so misleading as when an author of repute endorses a false statement.⁶

Pliny again has bad witnesses in his sights, senators corrupted by luxury this time, and corrects them on the basis of local testimony. Then follows (ch. 14) a summary of the report of Suetonius Paulinus, first to cross the Atlas at the head of an army, detailing the unfamiliar flora of the region, the barren desert beyond it, more elephants and a barbarian tribe, the Canari, who eat raw flesh like dogs. Next King Juba, ‘more famous for his research than for his rule’, is cited, again on the peoples and plants of the Atlas. Then (ch. 17) Pliny passes on to the tribes of Mauretania Tingitana, in which the location of various rivers and mountains is interspersed with historical references, some to the period of the Jugurthine War, others to Augustan and later foundations. The accounts of Numidia and Zeugitana are very similar, and Pliny seems a little bored. The land had no interest except as a source of Numidian marble and wild beasts.⁷ Both commodities were, of course, of vital interest to the generation that watched the Colosseum rise in the park of what had once been Nero’s palace.

Once again, a few places are picked out for their historical interest. Utica is famous for the death of Cato, the colony of Great Carthage lies on the ruins of

the Punic city, the boundary of Africa Nova and Africa Vetera is a ditch marking the limit agreed between Scipio Africanus and the kings. The Greater and Lesser Syrtes are described (ch. 26): Pliny provides their dimensions, a desert full of snakes, a forest filled with wild beasts and (inevitably) yet more elephants, then the Garamantes and other peoples of the interior. The place the Lotus Eaters once inhabited and the altars of the Philaeni and the swamp of Tritonis, named by Kallimachos the lake of Pallas Athena, add a slightly mythic air to this last wilderness before the province of Cyrenaica. Chapter 29 summarizes the 516 peoples of Africa, listing Roman colonies, Latin and tributary cities and tribes.

I have summarized Pliny's African ethnography at some length to give a flavour of the sort of things included in accounts of this kind, and in particular to illustrate the very wide range of data he sees suitable for inclusion. Legends of Hercules, Antaeus and Perseus and information about the locations of the Hesperides and the Lotophagoi rub shoulders with turgid administrative detail and detailed itineraries, and with accounts of expeditions, military and otherwise, conducted over a period of half a millennium. How (and how far) ancient writers reconciled mythological knowledge with more scientific accounts will be the subject of chapter 2. But for the moment I want to flag the incommensurability of the data that Pliny gathers.

There is, to be sure, a conventional answer to this sort of disparity when it arises in Pliny's *Natural History* or other compendious encyclopaedic works such as Diodoros' *Library*. This is to claim that the author is a 'mere' compiler, uncritically following his sources, and not particularly interested in the consistency or plausibility of the materials he had gathered. The *Natural History* is particularly liable to such charges since Pliny's own practice of citation makes it rather easier than usual to engage in *Quellenforschung*, the search for the origins of individual data. Pliny constantly represents his great work as a summation of the efforts of countless earlier researchers.⁸ Within this portion, the text refers to Nepos, Hanno (at second hand), Polybios, Agrippa, Suetonius Paulinus, Juba and Kallimachos. Pliny certainly also used Pomponius Mela's shorter account of the same area.⁹ The final chapter has been shown to derive from an administrative document that may be dated with some certainty to the mid-40s BCE.¹⁰ There are numerous references too to what 'the Greeks' say. The list Pliny provides in Book 1 of the *auctores* consulted for Book 5 as a whole includes fourteen Latin authorities, the *fasti triumphales* and forty-five foreigners, mostly Greeks or writing in Greek. Which were useful for Africa we can only guess – Varro? Poseidonios? Diodoros? Timaios? Many are just names. There are, however, a few surprising omissions. Pliny does not name either Sallust or Strabo.¹¹ This is a sobering reminder of how incomplete were even the most compendious of ancient synoptic works.

Yet the notion of the *Natural History* as an ill-disciplined and indiscriminate jumble of facts does not convince. Indeed it flies in the face of the most recent readings of that work.¹² Quite apart from the detailed opening exposition of the structure of the work as a whole and the itemized list of sources, and the conventional organization of his geographical section as a tour (*periplus*) of the known world, the *Natural History* as a whole is unified by consistent preoccupations with the nature of the cosmos and the place of man and human history – including that of the Roman empire – within it.¹³ The image of Pliny as an indiscriminate, eccentric and obsessive collector of ‘facts’ derives ultimately from his nephew’s epistolary memoirs of him, not from the *Natural History* itself, and these letters had their own agenda.¹⁴

Besides, Pliny was not unusual in combining materials we would regard as incompatible. Myth and science already rub shoulders in Herodotos and the Hippocratic corpus.¹⁵ Nor, as some of the passages I have quoted show, does he present himself as an *uncritical* compiler. Quite the reverse. Falsehoods and credulity are clearly marked as flaws, and there is an attempt to adjudicate between rival accounts. Autopsy is praised, and his *auctores* are often treated as authorities. The painstaking inclusion of precise distances and lists of civic statuses asserts an aspiration to accuracy. The range of his ethnography cannot be understood simply as a sign of his imperfections as either compiler or critic.

Pliny’s ethnography is carefully devised. Notice for example the subordination of history to geography.¹⁶ One effect of his choosing an organizational schema adopted from *periplus* narratives (and not all Pliny’s authorities made a similar choice, so his decision to organize his account in this way was a conscious one) was to minimize a sense of change. The ethnographic structure of the world, it insinuates, derives from its overall shape, not from the contingent chance of the moment at which Pliny surveyed it. Pliny has not exactly created an ethnographic present in the modern sense of the term. There is a clear differentiation between a mythological stratum (Hercules and Antaeus), a period from which odd anecdotes may be recalled (Scipio’s camp, the death of Cato) and the most recent period characterized by Roman expeditions and interventions, mostly in fact those of Pliny’s own lifetime. Perhaps surprisingly there is only a handful of references to republican campaigns, and none at all to Punic Africa before Scipio’s sack of Carthage. This too is a deliberate choice, since a great deal of information would have been available on both subjects. Mela’s account – which Pliny knew – is quite different in this respect.¹⁷ The issue of the suppression of time in ancient ethnographic writing will recur in chapter 4. Pliny’s ethnography is not, then, the sum total of what he knew. It is a selection from a larger body of writing and, we must presume, from an even greater body of knowledge. All this makes the nature of that selection all the more important to understand.

Pliny's account of Africa has offered a convenient starting point for this investigation in several ways. Most important, it illustrates nearly the entire range of materials employed by those who composed passages of what I shall be terming ethnographic writing: Greek myth and Roman military history, accounts of marvels, records of military expeditions and voyages of exploration, administrative documents, and the observations and theorizing of natural philosophers. As my own compilation of stories draws in more examples, they will add speculations based on oceanography and astronomy, medicine, sociology and anthropology; eye-witness accounts of peoples, places and monuments; and the results of the interrogation of priests and other locals.

Pliny's Africa also exemplifies a problem that will recur as I mine Diodoros, Strabo and others for tales about the barbarian inhabitants of Rome's Wild West. Although literary works that were primarily ethnographic and geographic in nature clearly once existed, almost all have been lost. In practice, what we mostly have to deal with are 'compilatory' works, like the *Natural History*. Some were organized as universal histories, some as geographies or as *periplus*, others as miscellanies. Pliny's *magnum opus* is not the only one of these to have suffered a poor reputation until recently among scholars. Compilation has often been seen as a secondary activity, and compilers have sometimes been regarded as secondary intellects. Those prejudices derive partly from the habit of rating ancient works on stylistic and rhetorical grounds, partly from modern views of the primacy of original research, and partly from the problems of credibility posed by works of this kind. At best their procedures of selection, paraphrase and compression stand in the way of our access to original observations and formulations. Hence the search to identify and evaluate the lost sources used by those compilers, like Diodoros, who are less explicit than Pliny about the origins of their information, and to reconstruct their methods of compilation. All this is legitimate even if – like the eccentric travesty of Pliny as a scholar presented by his nephew – all we are after is a list of trustworthy facts.

Yet these compendia, like the universal histories to which they are related, responded to a particular set of desires in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. However odd it seems to us, there evidently was a need felt to link the myths of Hercules and Antaeus to Paulinus' account of his conquest of the Atlas. Works like Pliny's *Natural History* which fashioned a vast whole out of so many parts, were one way to satisfy this desire. Diodoros and Pliny also explicitly claim that their huge works would save the reader the trouble of consulting so many separate sources themselves.¹⁸ The modern encyclopaedia offers one image of what they tried to achieve: Diodoros preferred the image of a library. The desire to connect up the disparate parts of knowledge, and a sense of the overwhelming quantity of books already written, were both characteristic of the late republic and early empire. This was the

intellectual world by which the barbarian West was encompassed. It is not necessarily a disadvantage for us to observe it through these great contemporary effort of synthesis.

Ethnography, Ancient and Modern

It is time, perhaps, to define terms. Ethnography in conventional usage – by which I mean *not* that of classicists – describes both a practice and a genre. The term was first coined in the early nineteenth century, and is now inextricably associated with a profession, a discipline and a genre of exposition. For some practitioners at least, ethnography connotes above all an exercise in recording: the recording in words, pictures, audio- and videotapes and other media, of the distinctive customs, artefacts and bodies of alien peoples.¹⁹ At least some ethnography was envisaged as an exercise in recording primitive ways of life that were believed to be vanishing, and as a result tended to edit out obvious recent intrusions and rely on the testimony of those informants who remembered earlier days. As a mode of collecting, one that purported to be dispassionate and scientific, it had much in common with the taxonomic fieldwork of botanists and zoologists. Like those life-scientists, ethnographers worked in the present day, substituting a tacit evolutionism for historical consciousness.²⁰ The basic units of analysis in this case might be races. But more often it was the society or culture, either term being treated as an ontologically unproblematic category. The Nuer of Nuerland were a bounded entity, their language and way of life unique to themselves, and so on. More recent critique has highlighted the impossibility of such dispassionate observation, at least in respect of human subjects. The idea of bounded social entities has also come under scrutiny, and ethnographers are now intensely aware of the specific historical context in which each act of observation and recording takes place.²¹ Ethnographers were by no means lackeys of empire, but their work has inevitably been located within the accelerating globalization of the twentieth century. Obviously enough, nothing like this ever existed in classical antiquity.

Ethnography for classicists has meant something different.²² Most influential is the view of Felix Jacoby who made *Horographie und Ethnographie* (glossed as the history of individual places and of individual peoples) one of the central divisions in his taxonomy of Greek historical writing, alongside *Genealogie und Mythographie* and *Zeitgeschichte* (a term that was further subdivided into Universal History, *Hellenika* and the history of particular periods such as the reign of Alexander or the Punic Wars).²³ Convenient as this schema based on subject matter may have been for the classification of fragments, it has canonized a view of the evolution of successive historical genres to which few would now subscribe.²⁴ More recent accounts of Greek

historiography tend to speak of an ethnographic tradition, one that can be traced back to Herodotos and Hekataios and is thereafter more important for some historians than for others.²⁵ Ethnographic thought itself can be pursued further back via the earliest physicists, notably Herakleitos and Xenophanes, and medical writers to discussions of alien peoples in Homer and Hesiod.²⁶ One result of these discussions has been to make clear that the content of ethnographic knowledge did not vary significantly between texts that we would consider historical, philosophical or poetic. Put otherwise, there were no genre-specific varieties of ethnographic writing or knowledge. Rather ideas about the diversity of humankind and information about specific peoples circulated widely among those who read and wrote in antiquity. Their familiarity and recognition-value meant they were available for appropriation to ends as various as the philosophical history of Poseidonios and Augustan poetics and triumphal imagery.

All this is very different from our modern notion of ethnography as a disciplinary practice or scientific genre.²⁷ Expeditions with a geographical aim are occasionally recorded, like Polybios' Atlantic *periplus* mentioned by Pliny. Greek narratives of travel, from those recorded by Herodotos in his *Researches* to the *Periegesis* of Pausanias or Philostratos' *Life of Apollonios*, make connections between the acquisition of knowledge through personal inspection (sometimes termed autopsy) and the practice of *theoria*, a term that ranges semantically from the experience of spectating at sacred games to consulting an oracle or contemplating sacred images. The term 'pilgrimage' captures only a part of these activities.²⁸ Learning from, as well as about, distant peoples was a common feature of certain kinds of account.²⁹ From Herodotos onwards, historians, philosophers and mystics occasionally claimed to have acquired knowledge from conversations with priests and other wise individuals in distant lands. But almost no journeys were made specifically to observe and record alien peoples.

The question of genre raises other difficulties. The definition of genres in prose, with no performative contexts to help us out, is in any case problematic. Our own descriptions of particular genres are often based either on later critical accounts like those of Aristotle, and the programmatic statements with which particular writers position themselves relative to their predecessors, or else on the prescriptions of late handbooks like that of Menander Rhetor that speak to worlds in which certain compositional habits and expectations had already emerged. That a notion of universal history existed can be inferred from the different accounts of their predecessors offered by Polybios and Diodoros. That history writing was considered a special domain is evident from Lucian's treatise *How To Write History*. No such critical accounts or prescriptions survive for ethnographic writing. Generic conventions were often anchored on canonized classics – positively or negatively, in the sense that knowing the Homeric epics might establish a

set of expectations for the reader of the epic poetry of Apollonius, Ennius or Virgil. Equally the content of a given oratorical genre – panegyric or invective, for example – might be stabilized by educational regimes. Neither consideration can have applied to ethnographic writing, which had no classics (apart from the *Odyssey*)³⁰ and which had almost no place in educational curricula.³¹ There is, to be sure, no reason why particular writing traditions should not develop a tighter and tighter generic definition over time. As it happens our only extant ‘pure’ ethnographies date from the early second century CE. Attempts have been made to discern the essential structural principles of ancient ethnographies from Tacitus’ *Germania*³² and to a lesser extent from Arrian’s *Indica*.³³ But emergent (or convergent) genres of this kind operate in a different way from those orientated from the start on a canonical model. As they proceed in part by refinement, we cannot assume that conventions about what should be included and what excluded from those works would apply to earlier texts. The absence of foundational works is a sure sign that ethnography was never regarded in antiquity as an autonomous discipline. Medicine and mathematics came to be structured around the exegesis of and commentary on sets of classicized texts. Nothing similar happened in ethnography.

The great majority of the passages usually considered as ethnographic or geographic are in fact found within texts of other kinds. This was recognized even in antiquity. So Strabo, beginning Book 8 of his *Geography*, writes

Since I started out from the western parts of Europe, describing those parts contained between the inner and the outer seas, and surveyed all the barbarous nations in this area up to the river Don and a small part of Greece, namely Macedonia, I propose now to give an account of the remainder of the geography of the Greek world. Homer was the first writer on the subject, and was followed by many others, some of whom composed particular treatises, and entitled them *Harbours* or *Circumnavigations* or *Tours of the Earth*, or gave them some name of this kind, and these included the geography of Greece. Some, included separate topography of the continents in their general histories as Ephoros and Polybios did; while others introduced matter relating to geography in their writings on physical and mathematical subjects, as did Poseidonios and Hipparchos.³⁴

Pragmatically, then, we must focus on an ethnographic tradition, considered as a set of writing practices, based on traditions of enquiry and interpretation.

Of what might such a tradition consist? Richard Thomas characterizes it thus, at the start of his *Lands and Peoples in Roman Poetry*:

With its seeds in the Homeric poems, and continuing into late Latin, the tradition of ethnographical writing is one of the most enduring in classical literature. Behind it lies a function which provides the explanation for such

endurance: by creating a formulaic literary genre to describe the features of other lands and the characteristics of their inhabitants, Greek ethnographic writers, and the Romans after them, were able to depict the diversity of mankind, and thereby to reach a fuller understanding of their own cultures and of their place in the world.³⁵

Ethnographic writing for Richard Thomas, then, originated as a response to the perception of human diversity, and subsequently proceeded from its representation to a renewed understanding of local norms. This seems at first to be ground shared with modern ethnography, which sometimes justifies its engagement with the exotic in terms of its capacity to defamiliarize the world from which ethnographers travel out and to which they return.³⁶ Even if we choose not to regard ethnography as a ‘formulaic literary genre’, it is clear that the ethnographic mode included formulaic devices, conventional figures, motifs and presuppositions from which barbarian otherness might be generated and elaborated. That this process involved a consequential normalization of the Greek and the Roman has become a *topos* of subsequent writing on the subject.³⁷ Yet whatever the importance of ethnography in various projects of self-definition, this by no means exhausted its uses.³⁸

The tropes of Roman *alterité* have now been well studied.³⁹ How far they constrained the composition of ethnographic writing is a matter of debate. Some modern accounts stress repeated themes, motifs transferred from one people to another, conventional tendencies to idealization and the like.⁴⁰ There is no doubt there was considerable stability in the treatment of some peoples and places, and that certain stereotypes and motifs remained in use over long periods. I shall return to this in the final chapter. Yet part of the argument of this book is that most ethnographic writing is susceptible to historicizing readings, and that many of the discursive strategies created very early on in the tradition were repeatedly put to new uses, uses that related to the lived experience of those involved in cultural encounters. Not all barbarians were alike. The nature and circumstances of these encounters varied. Greek and Roman norms of representation also evolved, even if many of the tools first created for engineering these understandings remained applicable throughout a long history of (mis)communication.

Among these tropes was contained a range of conventional ways of introducing information, among them claims to autopsy, the reported testimony of local informants and so on, many of course shared with history.⁴¹ Other characteristics of the ethnographic mode include a tendency to slow narrative time, to summon up exotic vistas, and to enhance an emphasis on communal – as opposed to individual – identities. These various effects contributed to making the ethnographic mode a useful register for those composing in genres such as history or philosophy. Slipping in and out of ethnographic mode might be a compositional tactic: what resulted were

not digressions, but rather intricately plotted diversions. Those diversions served a variety of ends.⁴² Most of what we would usually call ‘ancient ethnography’ in fact consists of passages of this kind.

But if this perspective offers a better understanding of the ethnographic texts and part-texts we have, what are the implications for any investigation into how Greeks and Romans understood their neighbours? Distanced from a discipline of observation, or a genre of recording, and almost always subordinated to larger compositional ends, was ancient ethnography empty of real content? Can we be sure it offers any information comparable either to modern ethnographies or even early modern travellers’ tales? It is easy to see why some readings refuse to ask about *Realien*, and why some historians and archaeologists find this style of criticism utterly inimical to their own, rather different, aims.

I wish to argue a more optimistic case. Ethnographic knowledge and texts produced in an ethnographic mode of writing are not the same thing. But the relation between them is not beyond reconstruction. Whether or not Herodotus ever went to the Black Sea, Caesar certainly went to Gaul and at least some of Pliny’s many elephants were real. Authors and readers inhabited the world their texts describe. Some at least commuted between textualized exoticism and the often unfamiliar lifeworlds of which the empire was composed (or compiled?). Paulinus went to Africa with ethnography in his head, and some of those who read him would one day find themselves in the Atlas. Besides, although the schematic effects of othering and geographical stereotypes contributed to the structure and contents of ancient ethnographic passages,⁴³ the variety and detail of these passages is simply too great to be explained entirely in terms of the manipulation of tropes at the centre of the empire.⁴⁴

Getting to Know the Barbarians

Ethnographic knowledge, I take it, is that knowledge we gain of one other in conversation, specifically in dialogues conducted across a gradient of unfamiliarity. Conversations of this kind must have taken place from long before the archaic period. Presumably they increased in frequency as the Mediterranean world and its hinterlands became more and more closely interconnected by trade and settlement, conquest and migration. I am concerned with the latter stages of this process. Most of what was learned in each generation was presumably almost immediately forgotten. But a small amount circulated, became the basis for critical reflection and inspired new enquiries. It is this process to which I most often refer when I speak about the creation of ethnographic knowledge.

Much of this work, I will argue, took place ‘on the middle ground’. The phrase was coined by Richard White in his study of the accommodations

and relations that developed in the Great Lakes region of North America between the mid-seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries.⁴⁵ It describes a relatively stable world created out of the fragments left over from unplanned consequences of European expansion. Old World diseases, the acquisition of firearms and iron by some but not all indigenous groups, the aftershocks of European wars and the penetration of mercantile entrepreneurs combined to cause massive social dislocation, without putting in its place new systems of government and control. On the middle ground peoples of different ethnic origins – Algonquins and Iroquoians, French and English – cohabited for nearly two centuries in a space transformed but not really ordered or disciplined by European power. Jesuits and fur-trappers, soldiers and refugees all played parts in creating new accommodations. The Roman empire in the West was not entirely like this, but there were similarities.⁴⁶ If Roman expansion brought fewer transformative technologies, and nothing like the biological carnage that followed the Columbian Exchange, it did create a world profoundly disrupted by contact yet not, for a long while, intensively assimilated by the invaders. From at least the middle second century BCE traders operated in parts of Spain, Gaul and Africa, far beyond the areas controlled by Roman arms. Usually they only feature in texts when massacres offer a convenient excuse for military action. Yet there is archaeological evidence for the spread of Mediterranean manufactures into selected societies in a vast arc from Romania through Bavaria and Burgundy to the Atlantic. Alongside the artefacts are occasional rare traces of places where entrepreneurs settled, like the Magdalensburg in Austria from where a group of Italians traded in metalware. The opening up of new mines, from the Spanish silver mines described by Polybios to the gold mines in Trajan's newly conquered Dacia, always attracted entrepreneurs from Italy and the interior provinces. From Spain and southern France we know of hybrid communities like Carteia and Lugdunum Convenarum, places that classical writers described as peopled by the offspring of Roman soldiers and local women.⁴⁷ 'Roman' soldiers were in any case often local warriors, and many returned home with or without citizenship and beyond notional frontiers. The same was true within the shifting spheres of Roman authority east of the Rhine and north of the Danube, even in the first century CE.⁴⁸ Nothing like a stable administrative system emerged before the Augustan age. Even then the power of the Roman imperial state to order society and obliterate local accommodations was much less than that of the new American republic that finally brought White's middle ground to an end. Despite the many differences, there is some point in thinking of the Roman West, especially during the republican empire, as a middle ground on which many different kinds of people met, not always in situations where one side was clearly the master. Those encounters, I shall argue, were generative of new knowledge.

Out of these conversations, taking place in army camps and trading bases, in indigenous settlements and in mining communities, via interpreters on the frontier and envoys in the capital, and perhaps eventually between neighbours on the margins of colonized landscapes, emerged new stories and new understandings. These barbarian tales served in part to connect and coordinate world-views, if that is not too grand a way to talk of how strangers satisfied each other's curiosity. And just a tiny portion of these stories found their ways into texts. Once again, we can be absolutely certain that most of the texts that first offered 'pictures from the contact zones'⁴⁹ have been lost. Consider all those authorities on Africa that Pliny could read and we cannot. This is the reason we are so dependent on compilations put together at a later date, usually in the imperial metropolis whither all roads led and where authors of all kinds chose to come to work from the middle of the last century BCE. All the same it is occasionally possible to reconstruct or infer the circumstances of those earliest compositions, and behind them the kinds of conversations in which connections were first made. In a few cases it is even possible to date the invention of particular traditions fairly precisely.⁵⁰

Domesticating the Keltoi

Consider, as a first example, this passage taken from Diodoros' account of the wanderings of Herakles in Book 4 of one of the greatest of these compilations, his *Library*.

Herakles then handed over rule over the Iberians to the best of the natives, while he himself gathered up his forces and marched on into Keltike. Travelling up and down the country he freed it from its lawless habits and ingrained hostility to strangers. Now great crowds of people drawn from every tribe flocked of their own accord to follow his army, so he founded a great city and named it Alesia after the wanderings [*ale*] of his army. And he recruited many of the native people too into the city population, and since these predominated numerically eventually all the inhabitants of the city came to be barbarised [*ekbarbarothennai*]. The Keltoi even now honour this same city as the hearth [*bestia*] and mother city [*metropolis*] of all of Keltike. It remained free and unconquered from the time of Herakles up to our own day. But eventually Gaius Caesar, who on account of the greatness of his deeds has been hailed as a god, seized the city by force, subjecting it and all the other Keltoi to the rule of the Romans.⁵¹

Diodoros then returns to the further wanderings of Herakles. The hero's visit to Gaul and his foundation of Alesia is mentioned again, however, in Book 5 which tells the story of how the eponymous Galates is born after Herakles has sex with the tall and beautiful daughter of the ruler of Keltike.

Once upon a time, so the story goes, a man of striking appearance ruled over Keltike. He had a daughter who was both exceptionally tall and also more beautiful by far than all the other young women. Now her outstanding strength and astonishing beauty made her rather proud and she turned down every man who came seeking her hand in marriage, considering that none of them was worthy of her. But during Herakles' campaign against Geryon, when he invaded Keltike and founded the city of Alesia, this young woman laid eyes on Herakles and was amazed at his prowess and at his splendid physique. After seeking her parents' consent she eagerly welcomed his advances. From her union with Herakles she bore a son named Galates who far surpassed his fellow tribesmen in the force of his character and the strength of his body. When he reached adulthood and took over his ancestral kingdom, he conquered many of the lands that bordered on his own and achieved many military deeds of renown. Famous for his courage, he named those he ruled over Galatai, and the whole of Galatia came in turn to take its name from them.⁵²

Much about these accounts is very familiar. Herakles the culture hero, wandering and taming the West, is a familiar figure, as is Herakles the founding father of an ethnic group.⁵³

This second story offers an account of how Celts and Gauls are related. Diodoros offers a different solution to this ethnonymic puzzle later on, Strabo offers a third version. Other variants appear in texts composed around the same time.⁵⁴ How Galli, Galatai, Keltoi, Keltai and other peoples were connected was clearly a matter of debate in the first century CE as scholars attempted to order and reconcile the various accounts at their disposal. Like scientists today, ancient geographers and historians tried to find a simpler order beneath the diversity of observed phenomena. Discerning a small number of wandering heroes, or a small number of original ethnic groups were alternative (although not incompatible) means to this end.

It also offers an aetiological explanation of the characteristic physiognomy of the Gauls. The princess was distinguished by her *megethos sōmatos* and her *euprepeia*, reiterated almost at once as her *sōmatos rhōme* and *thaumazomenē euprepeia*. She admires Herakles for his *aretē* and *sōmatos hyperochē*. Their son surpasses all those of his ethnos in terms of his *aretē psychōn* and *rhōmē sōmatos*. It is interesting to see how the qualities of the mother play as great a part in explaining the physical superiority of the Gauls as do those of Herakles. The reason, presumably, is that Herakles had so many offspring that differences among them have to be explained as deriving from the variation provided by his brides, notwithstanding the apparent conflict with received medical opinion on the contribution of the mother. It is also interesting to see the interplay in an ethnographic context of physiognomics and genealogy. More on this in chapter 2.

For the moment, however, I want to focus on the story of Alesia. First there is the complex narrative in which the city is first presented as the product of

Herakles' pacification of the lawless and xenophobic Gauls, at the end of the army's great wandering and so a stage in the civilizing process, and is then immediately presented as rebarbarized by the influx of natives. Is this more than the manoeuvring necessary to give the Gauls an ancient Heraklean mother city, and Caesar barbarian opponents? What does it say about Herakles' pacification of the Gauls that Caesar had to do the job again (and what does this say about the prospects for Gallo-Roman civilization if even Heraklean pacification is so easily undone)? Then there is the intrusion into the story of Julius Caesar, moving us abruptly out of the heroic age into very recent history. The gloss, that he was now proclaimed a god as a result of his deeds occurs elsewhere in Diodoros, but it perhaps has an extra resonance in Book 4 which is devoted to heroes and demigods.⁵⁵ The Herakles narrative follows an account of the wanderings of Dionysos and precedes the stories of the Argonauts, Theseus, the Seven against Thebes and other heroes. A foundation myth for a Gallic city, in whatever circumstances it was first conceived and spread, has been inserted into a larger narrative about civilization and the passage from myth to history.

Most striking of all, however, is the chronology of the invention of this story.⁵⁶ The date of the final revision of Diodoros' *Bibliothēke* is usually put in the late thirties BCE. The foundation of the colony of Tauromenium in 36 BCE is the latest event mentioned that can be dated, and there is no reference to Actium or the supremacy of a single man. Any work of this scale would have taken a long time to compose, of course, and some passages may have been effectively complete long before then, but the mention of Caesar's godhead shows this section was revised as late as 44 BCE. Yet Alesia, was a very minor hill-fort, not even a tribal capital, just the central place of the Mandubii, until Caesar invested it in 52 BCE. The creation of a mythic history for the town, and its elevation to be the mother city of Keltike, had evidently been very rapid indeed.

It is most unlikely that Diodoros invented the story, and we have no reason to think he ever travelled in Gaul. Nor was Caesar the source, since his *Commentaries* employ other means to make the siege of Alesia the culmination of his campaigns, and besides the etymology (Alesia from *ale*) works only in Greek. The exact circumstances within which this piece of ethnographic knowledge was first created are unknowable. But the most likely scenario involves the participation of Greek speakers and Gauls in the decade following the Gallic War, the development of a common story and its transmission via one or more stages to Diodoros. All this had to have happened within twenty years at most. It is a creation of the first generation of Roman Gaul.

Being able to pin down this story so precisely is a rare chance. But it is not without parallels. As will be clear, these tales have a number of family likenesses. They also share a contrast with images of Celts and Gauls created

under different conditions. Rome's first encounters with populations from around and beyond the Alps were clearly terrifying, and mediated largely through violence. Unsurprisingly, the dominant themes of the earliest representations are the ferocity and size of their opponents. Polybios and Cato, both writing in the second century BCE, provide views of the populations of the Po valley.⁵⁷ Gauls emerge from both as thoroughly warlike. Polybios' Keltoi

lived in unfortified villages, lacking any permanent buildings whatsoever. Sleeping on straw or leaves, eating only meat, they were interested in nothing but war and farming: they lived simple lives without being acquainted with any science or art whatever. And each man's property consisted only of cattle and gold; as these were the only things that could easily be carried with them, when they wandered from place to place, and changed their dwelling as their fancy directed. They made a great point, however, of companionship: for the man who had the largest number of clients or companions in his wanderings, was looked upon as the most formidable and powerful member of his tribe.⁵⁸

The austerity of their martial mobility – which owes something to their Scythian models – is moderated in Polybios' narrative and also in most of the fragments of Cato in which they appear. But the Gauls' obsession with warfare remains manifested in their fascination with weapons, their constant readiness for a fight, and their willingness to engage as mercenaries. For Cato too 'the greater part of Gaul follows two things with the most energy possible, warfare and fine speaking'.⁵⁹

Polybios and Cato were already selecting from an existing literature in Greek that mentioned Celts.⁶⁰ This literature was not entirely devoted to their martial characteristics. Timaios, for instance, offered his own etymologically based genealogies for the Keltoi as the descendents of the nymph Galatea. Accounts written after those of Polybios and Cato, such as that of Poseidonios produced in the early last century BCE, would introduce (or reintroduce) information about their more exotic customs, diets, social manners, beliefs, theology and so on.⁶¹ Caesar's Gauls too have their complex ethnographies as well as their ferocious *alterité*. One factor shaping the emphasis on mobility and ferocity in the accounts of Polybios and Cato was certainly the Mediterranean experience of migrations into Greece and Asia Minor in the early third century BCE.⁶² But neither the Herodotean model offered by the Scythians, nor accounts of the sack of Delphi compelled imitation.

The reason the ethnographies of Polybios and Cato were so focused on the ferocity of the Gauls is that their accounts were not written on the middle ground. These ethnographies formed part of narratives of conflicts in northern Italy. It is these narratives that elongate the moral distance between

Gauls or Celts and their victims, partly because their authors have chosen to barbarize the Celts to emphasize the threat they posed to Romans, conversely presented as civilized, partly because conflict heightened the sense of difference.⁶³ It was war, and its narration, that deterred Polybios and Cato from integrating *their* Gauls into the common mythic landscape inhabited by Herakles and the refugees from the Trojan War, a landscape with which both were very familiar.⁶⁴

The production of all these varieties of Celts offered subsequent writers many options. There is no simple line of development that may be followed. Representations of Gauls as ferocious, unpredictable and generally lacking in Roman virtues of discipline and dependability can also be documented in Latin prose of the late republic.⁶⁵ Those representations too presumably served the political and compositional needs of the larger projects of which they formed part. The solidification of a sense of Roman identity based on stability, urbanity and rationality made anti-types like the Celts ‘good to think with’, useful symbols, that is, of everything that the Romans claimed not to be themselves. Conversely, that stereotyping also made it difficult for Romans to think about actual northern populations in more mundane terms, or to recognize the many things they shared with their southern neighbours. It has plausibly been suggested that throughout history the Celts’ reputation as unpredictable, labile and contradictory has in part reflected the distance between their normative categories and the presuppositions of those who observed, described and attempted to control them. The familiar was edited out of ethnography because it failed to distinguish them. The construction of more disciplinary ethics of behaviour in the metropolitan centre created the need for an anti-typical Other. The oppositional character that Celts came to embody made this an attractive identity in modern times for various groups who for other reasons felt marginalized by the rational-legal world of European nation states, and contributed to romantic idealisms of different kinds. Greek and Roman Celts would then be the very earliest avatars of this cumulative pattern of representation.⁶⁶

Be this as it may, something new does seem to be emerging in stories like the romances of Alesia created in the decades following Caesar’s siege. Here is Parthenios’ version, written only a little later

It is also said of Herakles that when he was bringing the cattle of Geryon from Erythea, his wanderings through the land of the Celts brought him to the court of Bretannus. This king had a daughter called Celtine. She fell in love with Herakles and hid the cattle, refusing to surrender them unless he first had intercourse with her. (2) Herakles was in a hurry to get his cattle back, but he was even more struck by the girl’s beauty, and so he did have intercourse with her. When the time came around, a child was born to them, Celtus, from whom the Celts take their name.⁶⁷

The name *Bretannos* and the interest in the etymology of Celts belongs entirely to the last century BCE but the story of the princess who seduced Herakles by hiding his beasts reworks the story that Herodotos attributed to Greeks living in Pontus about the ancestry of the Scyths.⁶⁸ Appropriately enough, given other components of their respective stereotyping, the ancestress of the Scyths hid Herakles' mares, while that of the Celts hid cattle.

The Archaeology of Spain

I am going to leave Herakles for a while with his princess of Keltike, while I consider another set of barbarian tales, these too created on the middle ground. The geographer Strabo gives this account of the researches conducted by Asklepiades of Myrleia who taught *grammatike* in the Spanish interior, presumably in the early last century BCE.

After this city comes Abdera: this too is a Phoenician foundation. Above these places, in the mountains, can be seen the city of Odysseia with its temple to Athena as Poseidonios relates and also Artemidoros and Asklepiades of Myrleia, a man who taught *grammatika* in Turdetania, and wrote a description [*periegesis*] of the peoples of that region. He says that in the temple of Athena are displayed memorials [*hypomnemata*] of the wanderings of Odysseus, shields and the prows of vessels. And in Callaicia settled some of those who campaigned with Teucer: there were two cities there, the one called Hellenes, the other Amphiloichi, for when Amphiloichus had died his followers wandered into the interior. It is said that some of the followers of Herakles, and also some people from Messene settled in Iberia, and that a portion of Cantabria was occupied by Laconians, according to him and also others. Here too is the city named Opsicella, said to have been founded by Ocelas, who crossed over into Italy with Antenor and his children.⁶⁹

Strabo's great compilation was organized not as a universal history, like the *Bibliotheke* of Diodoros, nor as a *Historia Naturalis* like that of Pliny, but as a *Geographia*. But if we disregard for a moment the differences in the grand design, the family resemblance is obvious. All three works were written for the most part in Rome, where the libraries first of aristocrats like Lucullus and Piso, and then of the emperors, made the production of great compilations possible.⁷⁰ Strabo's work was conducted during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, and this passage makes clear how much was already available by that time in those libraries, when he set about collecting barbarian tales for the books that covered the West.⁷¹ Three authorities are cited by name here, each professing to write on the basis of autopsy, or at least on the basis of enquiries made on or near the spot. Unusually we know a little about each one. Artemidoros of Ephesos, who was probably the earliest, had visited

Punic Gades and asked questions of the local merchants there. Perhaps he had also consulted the priests at the temple of Melqart.⁷² Most of his references to Spain concern maritime sites, of which a map of his may recently have come to light.⁷³ Poseidonios had also visited Spain, probably in the nineties BCE. Again a coastal periplus seems most likely. Asklepiades is the hardest to date but is usually considered a contemporary of Poseidonios: the Suda has him teaching in Rome at the time of Pompey.⁷⁴ A native of Myrleia in Bithynia, he was a grammarian, wrote commentaries on Homer and a book *On Orthography*. He alone had lived and worked among the peoples of the Guadalquivir valley, perhaps even learned some of their languages in the course of teaching them Greek. All three will have had access to local informants who probably included Greek and Italian traders and settlers and locals of Phoenician origin.⁷⁵ Quite possibly there were also Phoenician ethnographic speculations to be sought out, and maybe even Punic texts. Our visitors will also have encountered various Iberian peoples. Most likely their enquiries were conducted in Greek, perhaps also in Latin. Greek was the *lingua franca* across the Mediterranean but according to Strabo the Turdetanoi, who had an alphabet of their own, spoke Latin. Probably some knew more than the languages: it would not be at all surprising if education in *grammatike*, especially from a scholar like Asklepiades, involved the study of Homer.

We are not, in other words, dealing with the ethnographic myth of visitors arriving in a world hitherto unknown, to recover the local knowledge of isolated primitives as expressed in their own language. Rather this is an example of what James Clifford has called ‘the Squanto effect’, after the Patuxet Indian who met the Pilgrim Fathers when they arrived in the New World in 1620 and greeted them in English acquired during his own earlier visit to Europe, and helped them survive their first winter by acting as a mediator with the local population.⁷⁶ There are always Squantos, argues Clifford, and their role as translators and go-betweens is an essential part of cross-cultural encounters, one concealed by narratives of bold explorations of the unknown, or the heroic austerity of the participant-observer methods advocated by an earlier generation of anthropologists. If we ask who guided Artemidoros, Poseidonios and Asklepiades up into the mountains to the city of Odysseia (assuming they made the journey themselves and did not just take their guide’s word for it) and who showed them the shields and *rostra* in the temple of a divinity explained to be Athena, our only possible answer is that it was local experts. Maybe those experts had learned about Odysseus in conversation with Greek or Roman visitors. Maybe they had read or listened to the *Odyssey* themselves. Either way the crucial conversations took place on the middle ground, in this case a barely governed Roman province taken from the Carthaginians and then largely left to its own devices. The stories are hybrids in the sense that the elements – Odysseus and Athene, a temple in the mountain – had been contributed by different parties. Even if we were to

suppose the interpretative procedures employed to be wholly Greek in origin, there is no reason to think the etymological and syncretistic moves were all made by the visitors. After a while, local informants always know the kinds of answers for which visitors are looking. When Diodoros visited Egypt, the priests in Egypt recounted long lists of eminent Greeks who had consulted them seeking wisdom: the list began with Orpheus and Musaeus and included Homer, Lycurgus, Solon, Plato and Pythagoras.⁷⁷ Turdetania was hardly in the same league, but it was not *terra incognita* either.

What Strabo's authorities brought back from Spain were foundation stories couched in the Greek style. These materials were easily accommodated into the schematic master narratives such as the Herakles myth, the wanderings of Odysseus, the stories of the scattering of other Greek and Trojan refugees after the fall of Troy, and the mythology of the Spartan Mediterranean.⁷⁸ They were equally amenable to incorporation into universal histories, scientific geographies or other miscellanies. Strabo, who never says he had visited Spain himself, had no direct access to these stories, and although Asklepiades' history sounds as if it was based on his own researches on the middle ground, it is not impossible that both Poseidonios and Artemidoros made use of written accounts as well as what they discovered on their travels. Yet behind all these accounts we can infer conversations in which locals played a part in shaping the tales. Asklepiades may indeed have been gathering traditions, just as he seems to have said he was, rather than inventing them.

Establishing the authorship of Roman Spain's new past would be so much easier if we had Asklepiades' original monograph. But not only do we read him and his colleagues through Strabo's editorializing, but Strabo had his own interests too. The density of prior ethnography in Iberia provided Strabo with a wonderful case study through which to reflect on the methodology of ethnography, not least because so much of what he read of it consisted of earlier polemics. From the opening of the book we have Artemidoros correcting Ephoros and Eratosthenes, and Poseidonios challenging Artemidoros' statements. Artemidoros was clearly on the look-out for traces of Herakles and other heroes. Strabo's own standing as an ethnographer required him to join these arguments. But for Strabo, the real prize of Spanish ethnography was the chance to vindicate Homer. One long discussion⁷⁹ offers a quasi-allegorical notion of Homeric geography, equating Tartessos with Tartaris and locating the inspiration for the wandering rocks in both the Straits of Messina and those of Gibraltar. Homer, suggests Strabo, loosely fictionalized information supplied to him by Phoenicians, about their own explorations and about the historical expeditions of Herakles and Odysseus, and the wanderings of Aeneas, Antenor and the rest. What he had learned of the wealth of Spain led Homer to set the Elysian Fields in the west. Strabo knew, however, that this interpretation was controversial. After the account

of the researches of Asklepiades of Myrleia, Strabo returns to Homeric geography, praising the work of Krates of Mallos that had made the poet the basis for scientific theorization (*epistemonikas hypotheseis*) and mounting an attack (probably aimed at Eratosthenes) on those who rejected Homer's authority and credulously believed Pytheas' accounts. Unlike the story of Alesia, the mythic history of Spain was being built quite slowly.

Native Wisdom?

Diodoros on Alesia and Strabo on Spain offer vivid glimpses of a process that was occurring much more widely. Sallust attributes part of his complex and bewildering ethnography of the peoples of north Africa to local testimony. It is on the basis of what the Africans say that he finds the ancestors of their various tribes in Persians, Armenians and Medes left over from Hercules' army. He also claims to base part of his account on Punic books written by King Hiempsal, translated for him by the locals.⁸⁰ What are we to believe? That we have access to the oral testimony of the indigenous inhabitants? That Sallust transmits Punic scholarship, and if so was it recent conjecture or ancient tradition? Who did the translation? Or are we reading a Roman interpretation of landscapes and peoples that were otherwise incomprehensible? What I have been suggesting is that ethnographic knowledge emerges not from one of these sources, but from an interplay among them. Making connections between Medes and Mauretians – however bizarre such connections seem – on the basis of ethnonyms and the myth of Herakles' western expeditions, and moreover the expedition of a Herakles who died in the West, depended on combining information derived from different traditions. Where could they be put in contact if not on the middle ground?

One reason to believe this is so is suggested by the question of interest, *cui bono*? Who gained most from these elaborate compositions? This is the old problem of syncretism. Those who compiled great histories or geographies or other kinds of compendia were, at best, secondary beneficiaries. Strabo was able to make use of barbarian tales to advance his own views about the authority of Homer; about how to do geography; about the essential secondarity of the West and its dependence on a series of civilizing encounters, from Homeric explorations to Roman conquest; and to present himself as the latest and most judicious in a series of editorial presences. But this was not what the stories were made for. Their first tellings offered locals a place in a wider world of which they had only just become sensible.⁸¹ By connecting local knowledge to one or another master narrative, barbarian tales anchored a little of what remained important to more powerful and enduring authorities. Seen from the native point of view, barbarian tales were exercises in cultural conservation, in the translation of cultural facts into a medium

where their truth would be recognized. Conversely, for visitors from the wider Mediterranean world, the incorporation of local places, names, heroes and legends into the Great Tradition reassured them that the investigation of the West confirmed and reinforced existing truths, rather than challenged them. The conquest of Spain confirmed the authority of Homer, rather than revealing how little he knew. The early modern analogues are obvious.⁸² Telling stories on the middle ground was a process of gift exchange, one that created relationships of value to both sides, and in the process created new valuables, new cultural goods that might immediately be appropriated by others and put to new ends.

The convergence of provincial and metropolitan interests in these new histories of the West is beautifully illustrated by one final example, that offered by the last two books of Pompeius Trogus' *Historiae Philippicae*. From the outset this work seems to advertise its hybridity, a Universal History, but in Latin not Greek, yet with a name that alludes to histories of Hellenistic kings. The title does not disappoint, for the centre of gravity is firmly Eastern, and yet when the author reveals himself, towards the very end of his work, we find a definitely western identity⁸³

At the end of the book [thus the epitomator] Trogus relates that his ancestors derived in origin from the Vocontii; his grandfather Pompeius Trogus was given citizenship by Gnaeus Pompey in the Sertorian War; his uncle led cavalry divisions under the same Pompey in the war against Mithridates; and his father served under Gaius Caesar as a secretary and an envoy and was entrusted with his signet ring.⁸⁴

Trogus himself seems to have written in Rome, and to have completed his work during the reign of Augustus. Like Strabo of Amaseia, Timagenes of Alexandria and many others he was a reflective product of a Mediterranean drawn together and torn apart first by Roman conquest and then by Roman civil war.⁸⁵ Compilation, in so far as it involved excavating a connected whole out of all the discrepant experiences of those moved about by violence and upheaval, was an immensely topical project, and presumably also a personal one.⁸⁶ His work survives only in the epitome of Justin, but originally it was probably composed on the same scale as Diodoros' *Bibliothēke* or Strabo's *Geography* as it consisted of forty-four books and covered the entire period from the empire of the Assyrians and Persians to the Augustan conquest of Spain. Roughly the first quarter dealt with Greek history up to Alexander's conquest of Persia. The remainder followed the various Hellenistic kingdoms, with occasional detours to Carthage, Parthia and other surrounding areas. Romans appeared in the first forty-two books only when at war with other powers.

The final book offered an account of Spain, culminating in what may have been quite a short account of the period of Carthaginian and Roman rule in

the peninsula. Assuming the epitome has not distorted the proportions, a large part of this book was concerned with the geography of the peninsula, its fertility derived from its favourable location, and its great natural resources not only of agricultural products, but also of metals, of flax, of horses and even of fish. The inhabitants are prototypes of Tacitus' Germans, sturdy and abstinent, preferring war to peace, and uncorrupted by bathing before the arrival of the Romans. Along with natural wonders, the book also included the same sort of genealogies that Strabo found in his sources. One story recounts the wanderings of Teucer between the fall of Troy and his foundation of the Gallician nation and the Amphiloichi. Another group of stories, centred around Tartessos, evoke the Titans and the Curetes as background to an account of how a local king, Gagoris, made several attempts at exposing his daughter's illegitimate son. On each occasion the boy was suckled by different wild animals until, after being raised in the wild, he was recognized as heir to the throne and as king gave the people their laws and taught them agriculture. Trogus comments that the story would be implausible if similar ones were not told of the founders of Rome and of Cyrus the Persian. The myth-history of Spain concludes with a lengthy account of Geryon and Hercules. No sources are specified in the epitome, but it is specified that the three groups of tales relate to three different parts of the Spanish peninsula. Their overlap with Strabo is small. Trogus and Strabo were close contemporaries. We might almost imagine them bumping into each other in the same sections of the Palatine libraries or the *atrium libertatis* as each searched for the same rare copy of Asklepiades' *Iberika*. Yet their selections were evidently different. Who knows how many other Spanish tales were never excerpted and are now lost?

Trogus' personal interest emerges most strongly in the penultimate book of the *Historiae Philippicae*. It begins with a proem to the effect that after a long detour on Parthian and Eastern history, Trogus returns home to deal with the beginnings of the city of Rome, thinking that he would be an ungrateful citizen if, after narrating the history of every people, he was silent only about his homeland. This chapter certainly summarized a longer programmatic statement, and since Book 43 concludes with Trogus' autobiographical notice it is reasonable to read the whole as largely concerned with his self-representation, or what is sometimes called 'autoethnography'.⁸⁷ Yet it is a deliberately misleading introduction to the contents. The first part of the book is indeed wholly taken up with Roman antiquities, with the reign of Saturn over the Aborigines, with the legends of Faunus and Evander, of Hercules and Aeneas and the latter's marriage to Lavinia, the war with the Rutuli and the foundation of Lavinium and Alba Longa. *En route* Trogus discusses the origins of the quintessentially Roman festivals of the Saturnalia and the Lupercalia. The second chapter of the epitome is concerned with the story of Romulus and Remus, the third with the foundation of the city, the

rape of the Sabine women and the conquest of Italy. So far, so conventional. But at this point, the narrative develops in a more surprising way. During the reign of King Tarquin, a Phocaean fleet suddenly appears, sailing up the Tiber to make an alliance with the Romans before going on to found Marseilles. A long account of the origins of the foundation of Marseilles follows. The Phocaeans' naval pre-eminence had led them to an exploration of the West. Having identified the site of the future Marseilles they sailed up the Rhône to make an alliance with the Segobrigian chief Nannus at just the moment when the latter was about to hold a competition for the hand of his daughter Gyptis. Unsurprisingly, she chose Protis, one of the Greek captains, who received with her hand the land on which to build Marseilles. There followed a war with the jealous Ligurians, but the eventual sequel was the civilizing of the Gauls, the spread of viticulture and oleiculture and the founding of cities. The epitome then provides a long account of conspiracy between the Ligurians and Nannus' successor, but the bravery of a Gaulish woman revealed the plot to her Greek lover and the Massiliots repelled the attack. The last chapter of the epitome relates the rise of the city, its alliances with Spaniards and Romans and its salvation once again, this time through a divine intervention by Minerva which persuades a native prince to make an eternal alliance with the Greeks. The final Massiliot tale has an embassy returning from Delphi hearing of the sack of Rome by the Gauls, and the city collecting gold and silver to recompense Rome. The story ends with honours paid to the Massiliots and an equal alliance with Rome, and the book concludes with the autobiographical notice I cited above.

It would be marvellous to have the full version of this book to see in detail exactly how Trogus wove together the origins of Rome, Marseilles and the early history of Gaul. Many of the motifs are easy to parallel, of course, in foundation literature: the Greek prince and the native princess, the legitimizing grant made by the old king, the need to found a city in violence are all familiar tropes.⁸⁸ But the juxtaposition of the myths of Rome and Marseilles invites us to find specific parallels, such as Protis and Gyptis recapitulating the story of Aeneas and Lavinia, with the Ligures playing the role of the Rutuli. There is no warning in the proem that we will have anything but Roman antiquities, so the Massiliot archaeology seems to brusquely interrupt that of Rome, almost as if Trogus was not sure which *patria* really mattered most . . . or at least relished the effect of surprise. Then there are the synchronisms. Marseilles is evidently founded around the same time as the Roman republic. Quite possibly the final story connecting Marseilles, Delphi, the Gauls and Rome was worked up into one of those stories that connected the Gallic raid on the sanctuary of Apollo with their attack on Rome and the treasures of Toulouse.

Trogus evidently concluded this tour de force by inscribing himself into the deliberately tangled web of myths he set at the end of the Roman conquest of

the world and of his own world history. The effort he put into signing off in this way makes very clear who had the most to gain from all this story-telling. Even if his family had graduated from supplying barbarian allies and aides-de-camp to rival Roman warlords to producing a scholar capable of combing the accumulated mass of Greek ethnography in the imperial libraries, Trogius presented himself as neither wholly metropolitan nor wholly provincial. He and his stories alike were hybrids, created on the middle ground where war and ethnography had opened up new provinces of the imagination.