**Classical Ethnography and the World(s) of the Rigante**

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His beard was red gold in the dying sunlight. He was wearing a winged helm of bright silver, a breastplate embossed with the Fawn in Brambles crest of his House, and the famous patchwork cloak. At his side was the legendary Seidh sword, with its hilt of gold. He rode into the Circle and sat his stallion staring at the men. They seemed to be tense, almost frightened by his presence.

These are the words of a Rigante child, upon seeing his king, a hero to his subjects, and the most fearsome warrior of the land in David Gemmell’s *Sword in the Storm* (1999: 12). Connavar, the king, called Demonblade, is riding to his doom, fully aware that those waiting for him are planning his death. There is a certain sense of familiarity here, with moments from ‘Celtic’ mythology, and in the image that is being created. A noble warrior, a king and lord, facing his enemies in combat, fearless and undaunted. The strong focus on nature, the presence of a magical blade, and the backdrop of a stone circle tell the reader in the opening pages that this is a Celtic world.[[1]](#endnote-1) Figures recognizable as the Dagda, the Morrígan and the Túatha Dé Danann from Irish medieval literature can be found in David Gemmell’s *Sword in the Storm*.[[2]](#endnote-2) So too can deliberate allusions to heroes of Celtic myth, most notably Cú Chulainn. At first reading, the book and its characters belong firmly to the expected mythological backdrop of Irish literature and folk-lore. Alistair Sims provides an excellent examination of the connection between Connovar and the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (‘The Cattle Raid of Cooley’) (see Sims 2018: 21-35).[[3]](#endnote-3) This is however only one layer in the worldbuilding that Gemmell has undertaken, and when we move beyond the familiar fantasy tropes of Celtic myth and legend, we see a rather different world. The names of the tribes of this land bear remarkable similarity to Roman writings of Gaul and Britannia. The physiology and appearance of these tribes reflects Roman images of barbarians (e.g. Gemmell 1999: 159-70, 285-287, 300; Tacitus 1970: 17). The political structure and the levels of aristocratic power belong not to Celtic myth; but instead classical ethnography, and how barbarians were understood by Roman and Greek writers. It will be argued in this chapter that the Celtic identity of the Rigante world comes not from the actual Celtic peoples of antiquity, but their image given in ancient writings by classical authors. The world of the Rigante that Gemmell creates does not belong to familiar Celtic myths, but instead represents the ancient world of Rome, and its own interaction with Barbarian Europe. In so doing, Gemmell reinforces the Romanised perspective of Celtic history, which itself repeated the ideas found in ancient Greek texts. Although there are clear and powerful allusions to Celtic myth and heroic tales here, as Sims argues in this volume, the world of the Rigante is fundamentally a Roman construct. Classical ethnography presents a fixed and immutable image of the barbarian world. Although later classical writers had direct experience with peoples beyond Rome's borders, they sought to place them into a received literary tradition, harking back to Herodotus and the Greek world of the fifth century BC. Even Tacitus, who gives us Calgacus, and the battle of the Graupian mountains, and Caesar who writes of his own conquests in Gaul and Britannia, categorise the non-Roman peoples into pre-existing patterns of ethnographic thought. In *Sword in the Storm* David Gemmell presents a heroic world deeply enmeshed in classical history. Here there are peoples whose culture, society and heroism echo the words found in the Roman writings. Here too there is a fixed boundary between Celtic and Roman, shaped heavily by ethnographic perspectives, and drawing upon real moments of interaction (Gemmell 1999: 268-273 & 285-287). In this chapter the debt to the classical material will be explored, showing how strongly the world of the Rigante belongs to the Roman discourse on otherness and self-identity. First, we shall investigate how barbarians were written about by Greek and Roman authors, beginning with Herodotus and Thucydides, before looking at Caesar and Tacitus. Second, we shall look at how Romans depicted the Celtic tribes within their artificial understanding of barbarian identity. Third, this shall be applied to the world of the Rigante that Gemmell creates, by focussing on the political landscape and the character of Connavar.

**Classical Ethnography: Greek and Roman**

Philip Freeman asks an important question concerning ancient sources and Celtic identity: ‘[c]an we trust these classical sources to give us a true picture of the ancient Celts?’ (Freeman 2000: 22). This question casts a large shadow over the study of ancient writings, and can govern the methods of interpretation and value of the available evidence. There is an immediate temptation to either dismiss the ancient writings out of hand, as speculative efforts, or trust them too much and follow them too closely as genuine windows into the Celtic world. We either ‘believe everything they say or […] believe nothing’ (Freeman 2000: 22). The reality governing ancient Greek and Roman ethnographic studies is rather more complex and nuanced. While ethnographic studies are often found in ancient historical works, rather than in items specifically focussed solely upon ethnography, they can serve a variety of different purposes, and can be found in other forms of writing as well. Carol Dougherty for instance has viewed Homer’s *Odyssey* as an ethnographic study (2001: 3-16), and recent writings have applied ethnographic ideas on for instance Greek *polis* histories (Thomas 2019: 39-51; Tober, 2017: 460-84), or widen the parameters of study beyond the established ‘set-texts’ (Almagor and Skinner 2013; Bonfante 2011; Derks and Roymans 2009; Woolf 2011). Skinner observes that ethnographic ideas can be found even in the Greek archaic period, and that ethnographic study ‘found order and expression via a complex array of structures incorporating everything from epithets and stereotypes to amulets and the images stamped on coins’ (Skinner 2012: 255). In recognising these complexities, we can view the classical writings on others as forming a crucial component not just in describing different peoples, but by its very nature creating a sense of embryonic identity. The crucial connection lies not only with identity politics, but rather the historical method, and the creation of complex narratives in the ancient material. While physical artefacts, and poetic works, undoubtedly present ethnographical perspectives, the most familiar examples are found as digressions within wider historical works (e.g. Ford 2020: 29-39). These can help create the sense of otherness, and in one sense tell us as much about the writer themselves (their preconceptions), and the literary form itself. When approaching classical ethnography we must draw upon the ancient historians, and recognise how and why they provide these moments of digression, and the wider objectives they can serve (see Woolf 2011; Maas 2012: 60-91; Dench 2005). They are bound by tradition, and yet that does not devalue their usefulness, it simply means, as Freeman tells us, that we ‘must be careful not to treat all the classical sources on the Celts equally’ and that we must consider the ‘background, motives, and sources of each author’ (2000: 28).

The Greek world was a divided one. Although the various *poleis* shared cultural connections, religious practices and spoke the same language, they were often deeply divided and found themselves in conflict with their neighbours. The *poleis* were ‘involved in an unrelenting cycle of high-stakes poker games’ where they sought ‘*proteion* (first place) in a wider narrative of rank, and that rank was formed by a quest for prestige and honour’ (Smart 2020a: 256). Christian Meier writes of the Greek world as a ‘unified whole’, recognising the shared social practices, architectural style and pursuit of excellence in all things: ‘[f]rom the Crimea to Africa, from Marseilles to Cyprus, the Greeks were one people’ (1999: 115, 116). This shared identity only ever manifested itself when placed in opposition to other peoples. The sense of Hellenism could only overcome the many different rivalries and quarrels of the *poleis* when forced, by war, to see up close a non-Greek enemy. While scholars have rightly challenged a simplistic teleological narrative of identity, it is difficult to ignore the changes wrought upon Greece by the Persian Wars.[[4]](#endnote-4) In part because of the joint efforts made to defend Hellas from their enemies, we begin to see a much greater recognition of some kind of shared identity, Panhellenism. This built not just on facile acknowledgment of similarities between *poleis* (which could still be, and often were, divided by constitutional variances), but instead on the gulf that separated their world, their way of life, and that of the barbarians. The Persians gave the Greeks an opportunity to see their world anew, and to reform pre-existing stereotypes and attitudes. Initially, the separation had been focussed on linguistic grounds, those who spoke Greek and those who did not, The word itself in Greek is meant to imply nonsense sounds, for instance *barbarophonoi* in the *Iliad* (Isaac 2014: 117-137). The success in the Persian wars, against the odds, embellished this, creating a sense of political and military superiority over the Persians, and branding them as a hostile people. This elevated wider Greek culture, at the expense of the barbarian world. It is here that we find the indication that to be Greek is ‘good’ and a part of laudable civilised landscape, and to be a barbarian is to be lesser, weaker and inferior. This was grounded further in a celebration of Greek freedom and law.

Herodotus and Thucydides are the two most important Greek historians, and they allow us a window into contemporary attitudes towards ethnography and thoughts on barbarians. Herodotus writes of the Persian Wars, while Thucydides, his younger contemporary, focussed on the Great Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta.[[5]](#endnote-5) Both writers include crucial insights into how the Greek world imagined and understood the barbarians beyond their lands. Herodotus makes a determined effort to write about not just Greeks, but the barbarians as well. Although regarded as the ‘father of history’ in one sense he is a travelling ethnographer, depicting for his audience the many peoples and lands he has visited. He provides impressionist sketches, fast moving vignettes, that suggest and reinforce the difference between the Greek world and the barbarian. He is not naturally dismissive of, or derogatory towards the Persians, but in reality each of his discussions provide reflections of the Greek world. This has been very well explored by Hartog (1988). Scholars have tended to see impartiality or neutrality in his depiction of Greek and barbarian, and certainly later Greek writers thought he was too kind to the barbarians. He recounts one episode that demonstrates cultural difference, but also the ignorance of the barbarian king Darius, who asks first the Greeks and then the Indians what it would cost to perform each others’ burial rights at 3.38 (burning or eating the dead, respectively). The sense of freedom and divine justice emerge quite strongly (Herodotus 1972: 8.142-144, 7.139), when the Athenians, for instance, react so strongly at the Persian messenger (and the doubting Spartans), when the Spartans refuse to bow upon the floor before Xerxes (*proskynesis*). It is the same two Spartans, willing to die for their *polis*, who when speaking to Hydarnes, a Persian satrap, say that he understands only slavery, and not freedom, and that he cannot know whether it ‘tastes sweet or bitter’, and it is the Spartan Pausanius who refuses to imitate the brutal violence that the Persian meted out upon the body of Leonidas after victory at Plataea (7.135.6, 9.78-9). Finally, even though Herodotus is providing depictions of the *erga* (great deeds) of both Greek and barbarian, he makes it clear that the barbarian world can be, and should be, placed into the pattern of Greek thought and in particular Greek myth. There are moments in his ethnographic surveys and historical recollections that demonstrate how the world of the barbarian can be absorbed by the great Greek concept of the past. When the leaders of Argos are considering whether to fight alongside the Spartans against Persia, Xerxes sends them a letter suggesting a shared heritage (Herodotus 1972: 7. 150-152). When he recounts the origins of Scythia, Herodotus gives the audience two competing narratives (before he offers his own historical interpretation), first the Scythian perspective, and then the Greek. What is so arresting here is that in both it is the Greek mythological framework that provides the foundational narrative, for the Scythians it is Targitaus, the son of Zeus that is their progenitor; for the Greeks it is Heracles (Herodotus 1972: 4.5-4.8). Kostas Vlassopoulos has noted instances of shared morality between the Greek and barbarian worlds (2013: 200). It is worth recognising however, that this is still favourable towards the Greek sensibility and moral compass; and, if anything, suggests some surprise that it can be found beyond Hellas.

Thucydides is reacting in part against the style of history that Herodotus pursued, and his focus is the great conflict between leading Greek powers of their age: Athens and Sparta. Nonetheless he speaks of barbarians throughout his work, most often presenting them in a derogatory and dismissive manner. He recognises that in the time of Homer there was no distinction between Greek and barbarian but his narrative very quickly presents a sense of alterity and polarity (e.g. Thucydides 1972: 1.3). He suggests that there are similarities between the archaic (read less civilised) way of life and how barbarians still behaved. This of course carries with it a pejorative and prejudiced preconception (Thucydides 1972: 1.6). When he writes of the Eurytanians, he notes that of all the local (non-Greek) dialects it is the most incomprehensible, they live in unfortified villages and they ‘are said to eat raw flesh’ (Thucydides 1972: 3.94). Each of these is a sharp opposite of Greek norms, and carries a strong sense of cultural superiority. Later, he singles out the Thracians for their bloodlust, because they slaughtered not just the enemy soldiers, but women, children, and any living creature that could be found, including the beasts of burden: ‘[t]hese Thracians are as bloodthirsty as any other barbarian race’ (Thucydides 1972: 7.29). They may in fact be the most murderous of all barbarians; but they are just an example of a wider foreign body that behave in ways that undermine Greek *nomos*, and elevate the Greek way of life. Thucydides builds upon the perspective found in Herodotus of polarity and difference; but also, because of the nature of the war that is his focus, the dissonance and erosion of societal norms. A reading of Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* can allow for an awareness of the barbarisation of Greek society; this was a conflict where Athenians and Spartans began to ignore the norms of Greek warfare, and act in a manner the writer expects of Thracians and other barbarians. The ethnographic attitude of the Greeks created a homogeneous unity through seeing the perceived abject differences to be found in barbarian culture. Moreover, they interpreted the world beyond their borders through the lens of their own myth and history, and with Thucydides a focus ever more on the depravity and violence of the barbarian peoples. This was the backdrop against which Roman writers were working; and it is from the Greek concept of historical writing and ethnographic observation that the Romans viewed their own barbarians.

It can be difficult to think of Rome without the barbarians, so integral did they become in shaping ancient attitudes of political dominance and rule. In one sense the relationship of Rome and the barbarian world beyond determined its political survival, and its ultimate demise. For Rome to shine so bright in the writings of ancient authors and nineteenth century historians, there needed to be a counterweight, a darkness; and this was of course to be found in the barbarian world. The core essence of Roman ethnographic writing is the difference between themselves and their sometime allies and often enemies. Time and again the Latin writings provide a nuanced interpretation of Roman identities, but in so doing create an image of the outside world that is stark, simple, and grey. They induce homogeneity in peoples where there was none, and they interpret this world through the expected prism of classical ethnography, namely who and what the Greek writers before them had written. Thomas Burns surmises: ‘[a]ncient ethnographers, like ancient historians, employed a dichotomy between civilized and uncivilized, urban civilization and barbarians, as a basic tool in their analyses’ (2003: 3). This dichotomy was simplistic, and designed to reveal the greater complexity and nuance of Roman civilization. It played against the rhetorical backdrop of the conquered and conqueror; but it was a crucial part of Roman political authority. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the Romans are entrusted with *imperium sine fine*, an empire without end. This in turn was built upon the command to rule, to bring order, and to ‘battle down the proud’ (Virgil 2008: 6).

Caesar provides one of the most extensive depictions of a barbarian world gradually taken under the Roman banner. One of the great self-promoters of the dying years of Roman Republic government, Caesar recorded his own account of his victories in Gaul; and thus gives us the most complete Roman perspective on the world of barbarian Europe (see for instance Krebs 2017). In his *Germania*, Tacitus refers to Caesar as ‘the greatest of authorities’ on Gaul (1970: 28), and Suetonius also speaks of *De Bello Gallico’s* great acclaim (56). Andrew Riggsby notes that ‘[t]he role of a propagandistic text like the *De Bello Gallico* […] is, then, not so much to legitimate particular campaigns as to reinforce the worldview in which their legitimacy will be taken for granted’ (2006: 45). The image of barbarians in Caesar’s writing presents the favoured juxtaposition of Roman and non-Roman seen so often in historical and ethnographic writings. It contains familiar tropes that echo both his own immediate literary environment, and the deeper historical backdrop. Johnstone writes that ‘both the barbarian other and the Roman self are subject to the author’s power of (re)presentation’ (2017: 81). Moreover, ‘[t]he Gauls and the Germans become integral parts of his own image and his own world view’ (Smart 2019).

Caesar’s image of the barbarians begins with a falsehood that adds rhetorical flavour to his piece and weight to the many great victories that he and his forces pursue: he speaks of Gaul as one, divided between three peoples (see e.g. Riggsby 2017). This, it becomes almost immediately clear, is an artificial sense of unity, not realised until much later in his conquests, under the leadership of Vercingetorix (1982: 1.1). In the opening lines he also presents a familiar Roman moral reading: ‘[t]he Belgae are the bravest of the three peoples, being farthest removed from the highly developed civilization of the Roman Province, least often visited by merchants with enervating luxuries for sale, and nearest to the Germans across the Rhine, with whom they are continually at war’ (1982: 1.1). The barbarians can be both primitive and pure, but behind it all is Caesar’s awareness of Rome’s absolute dominance and mastery. In all interactions with non-Romans, Caesar operates from a position of strength and dominance, victor and arbiter, commander and conqueror (Burns 2003: 116).[[6]](#endnote-6) In book 2, Caesar demonstrates the superiority of the Roman military machine, and the gulf between the Gauls and the Romans. The Belgae, regarded as great warriors and intimidating fighters, are defeated through their own inability to match Roman discipline. They break camp just before midnight ‘amid great uproar and confusion, without any proper order of discipline’ (1982: 2.11). Expecting a trick, Caesar waits until his scouts tell him that it is a genuine flight, and then he dispatches his forces; the rear-guard fight with courage, while the rest of the Belgae flee to their death: ‘[t]hus our troops were able, without any risk, to kill as many of them as there was time to kill’. After this bloody deed is done, the Roman soldiers ‘returned to camp in accordance with their orders’ (1982:2.11). This is a celebration of some gallantry shown on the part of the barbarian forces, but serves as mirror on Roman strength and order.

Caesar paints an image of varying shades of barbarian identity and leans heavily on pre-existing genre expectations. In freeing a Roman captive (Valerius Procillus), Caesar learns that his German captors had chanced fate in deciding whether he should be burned to death or executed at a later date (1982: 1.53). This violent undertone marries uncomfortably with a barbarian focus on freedom. The battle that sees Caesar rescue his friend also allows him to witness the wives of those enemy warriors ‘who as the men marched to battle stretched out their hands and implored them with tears not to let them be enslaved by the Romans’ (1982: 1.51). Much later, in a moment of *oratio recta*,Critognatus delivers a powerful rhetorical performance that Caesar believes should be documented ‘for its unparalleled cruelty and wickedness’ (1982: 7.77). Here the barbarian speaker discussed Rome as envious, keen to enslave them all, and that ‘this is how they have always treated conquered enemies’ (1982: 7.77). The focus on freedom is a point of separation; but even here in a speech that Caesar derides as malicious, in reality it just stressed the dominance of Rome. For Caesar, then, the barbarians are enemies *and* friends, lesser figures who exist both in the reality he sees around him, and the imagined literary world of ethnographic treatise.

Tacitus is one of the most significant Roman historians, and one who had an interest in people beyond the Roman world. In both the *Germania* and the *Agricola* he paints an image of the non-Roman world. He also celebrates the fraught nobility and primitive virtues that he witnessed in these lands. The *Germania* is unique as the only surviving Latin piece devoted to a single non-Roman body of people (see Thomas 2010). Victoria Pagán has shown that there are elements in the Germania that reflect the ‘more latent concerns about the erosion of Roman identity’ (2017: 81). The *Germania* tells us just as much about Rome as the barbarians Tacitus is writing about: ‘[t]he identity of the Other […] is developed through a carefully crafted series of antitheses with the Romans’ (Pagán 2017: 82). Tacitus identifies their gods as Roman; Mercury is the god they worship above all others, with human sacrifice. Hercules and Mars feature too, and the Egyptian cult of Isis is seen in one tribe. The origins of the Germans are speculated to belong to the travels both of Hercules and Odysseus. Tacitus places his discussions of these people within a pre-existing framework of classical repertoire and understanding. Their land is unforgiving and hard, which in turn breeds warriors of skill, and inspires a purity that he admires greatly (Tacitus 1970: 9). This, of course, is an attack upon the vices that he sees crippling the Roman world of his own day; the audience are expected to recognise the moral failings around them (e.g. Tacitus 1970: 18-20). This is not however an idyll or utopia. Some of the peoples he describes are ‘savage and disgustingly poor’, and he is unafraid of criticising their customs and way of life (Tacitus 1970: 46). Tacitus also reinforces the sense of homogeneity in the world beyond Rome: ‘their physical characteristics, in so far as one can generalize about such a population, are always the same’ (Tacitus 1970: 4). The people thus tend to have ‘fierce-looking blue eyes, reddish hair, and big frames’, and ‘[t]hey are less able to endure toil or fatiguing tasks and cannot bear thirst or heat, though their climate has inured then to cold spells and the poverty of their soil to hunger’ (Tacitus 1970: 4). Although providing an important window into the lands of the Germans, this is not an eyewitness account. Instead, it is based on pre-existing writings, rather than travel, and echoes the models found in the earlier Latin and Greek writings. It reinforces the sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’; a dichotomous relationship that ignores the realities of ancient inter-state relationships. Although the best of Roman historians; Tacitus is still unable to break away from the pre-existing models of ethnographic thought.

Both Tacitus and Caesar, therefore, are representing the derivative nature of Roman ethnographic discourse within historical writing. Tacitus uses Caesar, as Caesar uses earlier pieces (see e.g. Shuttleworth Kraus 2017: 282-288). There are similarities in language, most tellingly in their opening lines (*Germania omnis*/*Gallia est omnis divisa*), but also in how they frame the peoples beyond the Roman world. Tacitus is rather more subtle and gifted a writer, using barbarians as a way to attack the excesses of imperial rule, but both draw upon a standard toolkit of ancient ethnography. They are seeking to create an ‘other’, in opposition to their own world and their own people. Herodotus separated people between *ethnē* and *genē* (people and tribes), and this was grounded in specific geography (see Geary 2002: 43-49; Rood 2007). In the Latin writings they use *populus* and *gentes*, placing people within specific spatial constructs. Ethnographic digression became an established component in wider historical writings; when those writings discussed non-Roman peoples. Sallust, the great historian of the first century BC, interrupts the narrative of *The Jugurthine War* to provide ‘a brief exposition of the geography of Africa and some mention of those peoples with whom we have fought wars or made alliances’ (2010: 17.1). Both Tacitus and Caesar pause in their narratives to digress upon the geography and culture of peoples: Caesar at 6.3 & 6.4 and Tacitus at 10-13 of his *Agricola*. All three make use of speeches or the words of Roman enemies, which of course may be nothing more than the imaginings of the Romans rather than reflecting any genuine barbarian voice.[[7]](#endnote-7)

Patrick Geary has shown that even later Roman writers who had dealings with, and personal knowledge of, the barbarian groupings still used the same language and ideas of their Greek and Latin forebears. He discusses Ammianus Marcellinus, Procopius, and Priscus, who ‘sensed the contradictions between the received tradition and their own personal experiences with the barbarian peoples’, and yet ‘could not free themselves from the assumptions of classical ethnography’ (Geary 2002: 56, 57). They simplified and homogenised, writing for an audience that expected certain tropes and descriptions. The weight of intellectual tradition thus restricts the nature of classical ethnography.

**The Celts in the Roman Histories**

The Celtic tribes loomed large in the weight of Roman historical memory, well before Caesar’s conquests. Around 390 BC a vast army marched upon Rome. These warriors were filled with rage, on the quest for vengeance, and destroyed all who stood before them (see Livy 1967: 5.37). They smashed aside the Roman forces arrayed beside the Allia, sending the Romans fleeing for their lives. They reached the city by night-fall, their voice and songs like the cry of wolves in the hunt (Livy 1967: 5.39). The population still in the city retreated to the Capitol, to give their lives before the barbarian onslaught. Some of the more august senators and nobility returned to their homes, to die as models of Roman virtue. Livy tells us that those Romans watching from the relative safety of the citadel ‘could hardly believe their eyes or ears as they looked down on the barbaric foe roaming in hordes through the familiar streets’ (5.42). This became a defining moment, a crucial foundation stone upon which the Romans would develop their sense of historical identity. The sack of the city by barbarian forces created an image in Roman minds of the Gauls, and through them the Celtic tribes, as the most fearsome of barbarians: ‘[t]he Romans of the Republic carried with them the memory of the Gallic sack of the city in the fourth century BC, and their own near demise at the hands of their enemies’ (Smart 2020b: 314).

There is an issue here regarding historical definitions of people. The modern terminology of Celt and Celtic comes from the Latin *Celti* and through that the Greek *Keltoi* (Sims-Williams 1998: 21-29; Fimi 2017: 7-15). Ancient writers referred to various peoples we might consider part of a shared Celtic culture as *Galli*, *Galatai* and *Celtiberi*. The division between *Celti* and *Germani* can appear both vast and negligible, with the two belonging simply to a wider barbarian world separate from Rome. Dimitra Fimi has noted that ‘[t]here is no evidence that the people for whom the classical authors used these terms ever called themselves ‘Celts’ or even saw themselves as one people or ethnic group’ (2017: 9). Sims-Williams writes that the actual Latin and Greek words reflect ‘a map of the distribution of classical terms’ rather than the self-perception of those discussed (1998: 25). This chapter will use ‘Celtic tribes’ and will be sensitive to the distinctions between them.

Caesar and Tacitus provide detailed depictions of the Celtic tribes. If we focus on Tacitus’ *Agricola* we are given a stirring examination of barbarous nobility, freedom and the costs of opposing Rome. Tacitus provides speculative origins for the Britons based on their physical characteristics. Those Caledonians to the north, because of their red hair and large build, must be German, and those he calls the Silures because of their hair style and skin colour (and that they live opposite Spain) must in turn mean that they are Spanish in origin. Finally, those he is most familiar with (in the south), he argues are very similar (if not the same) to those tribes found in Gaul. This image is unimaginative, descriptive, and erroneous. However, very quickly, it becomes clear that the Celts of Britain are superior to others; the most noble of the barbarians. Although their language is similar to the Gauls, with similar courage in facing adversity, in the *Agricola* it is the Britons who ‘show more spirit’ (Tacitus 1970: 11). For they are still willing to make war, and they have not become enervated by luxury and peace. Of the Gauls Tacitus writes that ‘their valour perished with their freedom’ (Tacitus 1970: 11). Militarily they are strong and courageous. They are in the main infantry forces, although certain aristocrats fight from chariots. They are divided, lacking in unified leadership, and as willing to fight against one another as they are the invading Romans (Tacitus 1970: 12). His depiction of the landscape laments the rain and mists, but there is no harsh winter that we find in his depiction of Germania. The Britons appear then both more noble than their Celtic kin on the continent; and yet less fearsome than the German tribes beyond the Rhine. These are figures Tacitus is comfortable describing, albeit in part erroneously, and a people he celebrates for their virtues and their failings. He recognises in them willingness to submit to certain governmental pressures (e.g. military service and payment of tribute), but will not countenance any form of abuse: ‘they are broken in to obedience, but not as yet slavery’ (Tacitus 1970: 13). In his discussion of the Boudicca revolt, he paints an image of Roman excess, and Celtic unwillingness to bow to yet further injustices. In an odd *oratio recta* from an unnamed Briton, the speaker compares his people with the Germans who successfully beat back the Romans: ‘[s]uch thoughts prompted the Germans to throw off the yoke; and they have only a river, not the Ocean, to shield them’ (Tacitus 1970: 15). This is a heavily Romanised rhetorical speech that serves to invite comparisons between Rome and the ‘other’; rather than speaking to true Celtic anger at the attack upon Boudicca and her daughters. Tacitus’ father-in-law restores order, brings law and justice, and pushes the Celts further north, deep into Caledonia. The tribes of the north coalesce around one of the leaders, Calgacus, a man of great courage and conviction (Tacitus 1970: 29). He delivers a stirring speech to the assembled warriors (Tacitus imagines they are 30,000 strong). He speaks of the ‘dawn of liberty’, and refers to all those around them as the ‘last of the free’. The Romans are avaricious, greedy and violent, ‘they make a desert and call it peace’ (Tacitus 1970: 30).[[8]](#endnote-8) The strength of the Roman army is found in the weakness of their enemies, not the strength of their military machine. Those who now follow them will rise up against them, if the warriors are victorious against Agricola’s forces: ‘The [enslaved/allied] Britons will recognise our cause as their own; the Gauls will remember their lost liberty; the rest of the Germans will desert them’ (Tacitus 1970: 32). Again in direct speech a now named leader refers to other elements of the Barbarian world as though he belongs to a wide sea of non-Roman peoples. Before battle commences Agricola addresses his troops, and challenges the claims of Calgacus. These are just robbers stealing forth in the night, runaways and cowards. All the courageous Britons have fought and lost, and these fight from fear; not for freedom. The battle goes as expected. These brave warriors fall to the ranks of the legionaries, and their allies, and Agricola is victorious once more: ‘[a]n awful silence reigned on every hand: the hills were deserted, houses smoking in the distance, and our scouts did not meet a soul’ (Tacitus 1970: 38). This victory is absolute in the eyes of Tacitus, and Agricola’s earlier plans of ‘social betterment’; bath, temple, public squares, liberal arts, arcades and banquets can continue. The Britons believed this to be a form of civilization, but it was ‘only a feature of their enslavement’ (Tacitus 1970: 21). This is a study of freedom, power and in part reflecting upon the tyranny of Domitian. It is a study of freedom and virtue, seen through two interconnected worlds.

In his *commentarii*, Caesar writes of the Gauls and their way of life (see Haywood 2014: 62-72). He establishes the strong internal rivalry within tribes and families, and implies a rudimentary client relationship (e.g. 1982: 6.11). His arrival upset the balance of power, previously between the Aedui and Sequani, with the Sequani ascendant because of German allies. Beyond this political image, Caesar writes that there are only two classes worth discussing: the druids and the knights. This simplified dichotomy no doubt conceals a much greater social complexity than is visible here; but both are important aspects of the Celtic world according to Caesar. The druids do not appear to oppose him in any great way, but instead perform the integral tasks of social life throughout the many tribes. They are religious leaders, judges, and what they decide has lasting impact throughout the Celtic world: ‘[a]ny individual or tribe failing to accept their award is banned from taking part in sacrifice – the heaviest punishment that can be inflicted upon a Gaul’ (1982: 6.11). They are thus poisoned individuals, shunned by all, fearing that any conversation or interaction will spread the polluted miasma. It is the Druids that perform the human sacrifices. The Gauls have ‘regular state sacrifices’ and some groups ‘have colossal images of wickerwork, the limbs of which they fill with living men; they are then set on fire, and the victims burnt to death’ (1982: 6.16; see also Webster 1999). Caesar then places their pantheon of gods into the familiar Roman religious construct (Mercury, Mars, Jupiter etc.), but notes that they believe themselves descended from Father Dis, a spirit of darkness, and therefore they ordered their lives by night and not day. The interaction of fathers and sons appears strict, as does the threat of capital and corporal punishment. The knights are aristocrats, suggesting perhaps a more nuanced and oligarchic network of power, and Crumley has observed that ‘individual and collective wealth was distributed both extensively and intensively across the landscape, and individuals […] could exercise considerable power in the absence of the control of the chief *oppidum’* (1995: 28).

In the main body of his narrative Caesar also gives us more information, noting the importance of *oppida*, fortified settlements that dominated the lived Celtic environment (see Dietler: 1998). In one of his two forays to Britain he remarks of the shared Celtic cultural traits. It has a significant population, with ‘the ground thickly studded with homesteads, closely resembling those of Gaul, and the cattle very numerous’ (1982: 5.12). The people live on milk and meat, and dress in animal skins. Every Celtic Briton, according to Caesar, dye their bodies blue, and the men leave only their upper lip unshaven (1982: 5.14 & 4.33). There is a grudging admiration for the enemy cavalry and charioteers, and the Britons appear similar to (if somewhat more exotic than) their counterparts across the water. Caesar also presents differences within Gaul: the Nervii appear moderate and determined, whereas the Helvetii are slippery and suspicious (1982: 2.17 & 1.1-3). Caesar develops the most comprehensive depiction of the Celtic world; but of course we must remember that this is his Roman, classically controlled image of the people he sees.

**The Romanized Rigante**

The world of the Rigante exists on two levels. The first, and most obvious, is in the romanticised realm of Celtic myth, explored by Sims in this volume (e.g. through the creation of complex characters and heroic individuals). The names, the magic, and the focus on nature are deliberate echoes of an imagined Irish, Welsh and Scottish tradition. The otherworldly nature of spirits and deities, the sense of harmony and peace with the land and the enduring heroic culture can be found in nineteenth century versions of the Irish *Táin Bó Cuailnge* and the Welsh *Mabinogion*. Dimitra Fimi has exposed how fragile the relationship can be between this romanticised image and the mediaeval manuscripts, and the Rigante can be certainly viewed through this lens (Fimi 2017: 7-8, 10-11). However, beyond this first level of world-creation, the Rigante rests on foundations formed not in medieval myth or nineteenth century Romanticism but rather classical ethnography. This world is built from the ground up along the plans of Caesar and Tacitus. The Keltoi of *Sword in the Storm* and *Midnight Falcon*, may appear deeply mythological, but are historical creations, drawn from ancient writings. They reflect not only classical perspectives on the ancient Celts, but also Roman and Greek attitudes towards barbarians.

First and foremost, the world of the Keltoi reflects the simplified dichotomy that existed within classical writings: the complexity of Rome and Greece in contrast to the homogeneous simplicity beyond its borders. Throughout *Sword in the Storm* Gemmell paints an image of a barbarian world that is unified alongside cultural and ethnic similarities. This is a world of many tribes, but who all recognise a shared bond: ‘[l]ike all the Keltoi race, the Rigante were a passionate and volatile people, and there were often fights among them’ (Gemmell 1999: 145). This becomes a recurring theme throughout the narrative. When Connavar wishes to provide a captive to the Stone general Jasaray, the Gath he is fighting alongside refuses, because the ‘man is Keltoi’and although he is not of his tribe, there is a shared bond between them (Gemmell 1999: 276). Carac, the king of the Perdii has aspirations for his people ‘to be pre-eminent among the Keltoi’ (Gemmell 1999: 285), still reinforcing that cultural and ethnic unity. Connavar upon his return to the lands of his people warns would-be robbers that he does not wish to ‘spill more Keltoi blood’ (Gemmell 1999: 308), while his stepfather Ruathain attempts to resolve a bloodfeud through the gift of cattle ‘[a] gesture of respect and in keeping with the traditions of the Keltoi’ (Gemmell 1999: 300; Tacitus 1970: 21). When faced by the possibility of collusion between the Pannone and warriors from beyond the sea, Connavar maintains that they are still Keltoi, and may be in need of aid (Gemmell 1999: 451). This characterisation of a shared Celtic tradition and identity is born not in Celtic mythology, history or archaeology; but rather the ancient writings of Caesar and Tacitus (Fimi 2017: 7-15).

The lived world of the Rigante, the settlements, the cultural traits, the way they dress and the way they fight, come from classical interpreters. The small village of Three Streams, paying homage and loyalty to the Laird of Old Oaks, fits into the pattern of governance seen in both Caesar and Tacitus. Old Oakes is an *oppidum*, a hilltop fort that provides the sense of leadership in the Rigante world (Gemmell 1999: 159-70; 1982: 7.16-20). The Perdii paint themselves in red ochre before war; in Caesar the Britons paint themselves blue instead (1982: 5.15, 4.33). The feuding and the internal conflicts of the Fisher Laird, and Connavar’s rivalry with Fiallach and Govannan, are built upon ancient perspectives of barbarian culture (1982: 6.11; Tacitus 1970: 21; Gemmell 1999: 300 & 323). Valanus laments Keltoi battle tactics: ‘[t]hey attack in vast numbers, expecting to overwhelm us. It is the only way they know how to fight. There is no real organisation, no officers, no clearly defined command structure. Their battle plan is always the same: there is the enemy go charge them and see what happens’ (Gemmell 1999: 273). Banouin, a former Stone general (once teacher to Jasaray), and now a travelling merchant, provides a similar image: ‘[l]ike all the tribespeople I have met, here and beyond the water, you fight largely without armour. You fall upon the enemy in great numbers and each battle breaks down into a thousand skirmishes between heroes’ (Gemmell 1999: 141-142). In his *Agricola* Tacitus tells us that the Roman soldiers ‘obedient to orders, rode round from the front of the battle and fell upon the enemy in the rear. The open plain now presented a grim, awe-inspiring spectacle […] On the British side, each man now behaved according to his character. Whole groups, though they had weapons in their hands, fled before inferior numbers; elsewhere unarmed men deliberately charged to face certain death’ (Tacitus 1970: 13, see also *Germania*: 6). The Perdii forces are an avalanche of human activity, the perfect example of the Celtic war machine in Roman eyes. Furthermore, king Carac fights from upon a chariot, as the classical writings tell us was the norm for the Celtic aristocracy (Gemmell 1999: 285; Caesar 1982: 4.24; Tacitus 1970: 36).

In questions of religion and law, the druids of the Rigante are the living embodiments of those found in Caesar. Although there is no human sacrifice here (instead that belongs to execution devoid of religious formula), it is the druid and the local lord that mete out punishment and justice. In one scene Brother Solstice questions a man accused of rape and murder. He does so through an ability to see the emotions and souls of those he talks to, and is the only figure who can ascertain the truth of the man’s words (Gemmell 1999: 159-166; 327-328). This whole display reinforces Caesar’s description of the druids as those who ‘act as judges in practically all disputes’ (1982: 6.13). In another example of legal practice, the guilty party’s legs were bound together, hands tied, and he was cast into the bog: ‘[t]he murky waters had swiftly closed over his head, his body floating down to join the other murders in the silt below’ (Gemmell 1999: 328). This of course provides an interpretation of archaeological finds (e.g. Cashel Man, Lindow Man, Old Croghan Man etc.), but still places them within the parameters of classical ethnography: ‘[t]hey think the gods prefer the execution of men taken in the act of theft or brigandage, or guilty of some offence’ (Caesar 1982: 6.16).

The empire of Stone and the world of the Keltoi are presented as opposites, reinforcing the ideas of classical ethnography. The Gath leader Ostaran is presented as the opposite of the imperial general Valanus in the bathhouse, unaccustomed to the luxuries of civilisation (Gemmell 1999: 232-236). This is delivered through the perspective of the Stone general, and reflects Roman writings and concerns. Earlier, the Stone merchant and former general Banouin in a moment of introspection recognises his strong feelings for the Keltoi: ‘[h]e loved these mountains with a passion he had not believed possible […] He admired them and the shrewd simplicity of their lives. He thought of his own people, and it was if a chill wind blew across his skin’ (Gemmell 1999: 52). Banouin is one of the more sympathetic interpreters of Keltoi culture, but he cannot see beyond those inherited prejudices of civilized and barbarian. While he may provide a bridge between these two worlds, he nonetheless remains a product of the ancient past. He is a mentor to Connavar and teaches him the language and ways of Stone. In one sense he is almost a Tacitus and Caesar figure himself, providing a classical ethnographic treatise upon the Rigante. At the Feast of Beltine, ‘Banouin watched the scene with both affection and envy. The closeness of the Rigante, their easy tactility, their obvious enjoyment in each other’s company was good to see, yet it was a joy he could not share’, for he ‘was a solitary man, not given to any form of tribalism’ (Gemmell 1999: 171; see also 140-143). He remains the ‘foreigner’, and if war does reach the Rigante he tells Connovar that he will head west, to ‘fabulous lands, rich and fertile’ (Gemmell 1999: 142). He knows, just as Tacitus does, the terrible cost of defeat for those barbarians who fight against the legions: ‘Across the water Banouin had witnessed the aftermath of a great battle, the bodies of thousands of young Keltoi tribesmen – men like Ruathain and Connavar – being dragged to a great burial pit. Thousands more had been captured and sold into slavery’ (Gemmell 1999: 52; Tacitus 1970: 38; Tacitus 2008: 14.37). He provides a meeting point between Rigante and Stone; but is the embodiment of Republican virtue, an idealised Roman, like Tacitus’ Agricola, whose ‘mind was full of abstracts: honour, nobility, courage, conscience’ (Gemmell 1999: 265; see also Balmaceda 2017).

This separation manifests in another way as well: the simplified idealisation of a ‘pure’ barbarian world, a familiar tenet of the ancient writings. In a discussion between the laird and the druid, both turn to think on the nature of the Rigante, in contrast to those of Stone. The laird says that he had always believed his people special, and better than the foreigners, but he now questions that conviction. Brother Solstice’s response is pure Tacitus: ‘I have travelled as far as Stone. Everywhere there are criminals and outlaws, killers, rapists, and seducers. Everywhere. In the large cities crimes against people take place almost hourly […] we live in relative harmony with our neighbours’ (Gemmell 1999: 328; see also Lavan 2011). When pressed further the druid responds again ‘[m]aggots will always enter some fruit – even on the finest tree’ (Gemmell 1999: 329). After the defeat of the Perdii, Connavar finds himself empty, vengeance sated, ‘thinking of the green hills of the Rigante, the towering snow peaks of Caer Druagh, and the gentle pace of life in Three Streams’ (Gemmell 1999: 292). This also echoes the romanticised image of the nineteenth century where Fimi has shown ‘Wales and Scotland in particular were admired for their wild landscapes and the wistful echoes of their ‘lost’ cultures’ (Fimi 2017: 11).

The character of Connavar is the guiding force of *Sword in the Storm*. In one sense he appears a mirror of Cú Chulainn, a great warrior without compare, fraught in love and life, but a hero like no other. There is a deliberate effort to match aspects of the narrative to the legends of Ireland’s most famed mythic warrior. The battle against the bear, that so defines the young Connavar, finds sharp parallel with an episode in the life of Cú Chulainn (Gemmell 1999: 103-111). So too both suffer from terrible fits of rage of anger; Connavar after the death of his friend and mentor Banouin, and also after his infidelity and the death of his wife Tae, and Cú Chulainn outside Emain Macha and in the fight with his son (Gemmell 1999: 223-224, 429-432). Although this rage can be viewed as *ríastrad*, as Sims argues in this volume, it also can be seen as a representation of barbarian characters seen in the ancient writings. The relationship with the Morrígan although different, is a crucial part of both characters’ journeys. Likewise, both must take care lest they break their *gessi* (sing. *geis*) for Connavar the killing of a dog; for Cú Chulainn the eating of dog meat. Gemmell modifies the term slightly to ‘*geasa*’ (pl. ‘*geasas*’), but the meaning is the same, that of a prohibited act (Williams 2016: 23; Charles-Edwards 1999). Williams explores this through *fír flathemon,* ‘a just equilibrium in which the ruler’s righteousness is reflected in the success of his reign’ (Williams 2016: 23; see Gemmell 1999: 178).

In truth however, this is only one possible comparison, and just one part of the patchwork cloak that informs and shapes the Rigante leader. The character of Connavar, although no doubt inspired and guided by Cú Chulainn, very firmly belongs to the Roman concept of a virtuous barbarian leader. He is part Vercingetorix and part Calgacus (but more successful than either): a product of both Caesar and Tacitus. Vercingetorix’s rebellion against Rome has entered the canon of French history, much as Boudicca’s revolt has in Britain (Bianchini 1994; Gillespie 2018). The presentation by Caesar of this Gallic leader is deployed of course to demonstrate his own, and thus Rome’s, superiority over the barbarians. However, he still creates a noble military figure. The leader of the Rigante owes much to Caesar’s Vercingetorix: ‘a very powerful young Arvernian’ who challenged the people ‘to take up arms for the freedom of Gaul’ (1982: 7.4). Declared king soon after, Caesar tells us he ‘secured the support of the Senones, Parisii, Cardurci, Turoni, Aulerci, Lemovices, Andes, Pictones, and all the other tribes of the west coast’ (1982: 7.4). Vercingetorix focussed on military preparedness, the manufacture of arms and weapons, and paid ‘particular attention to the cavalry’ (1982: 7.4). Facing defeat at Caesar’s hand, Vercingetorix then urges a continuation of war by any means, attacking supply lines and destroying Gallic food stores to deny the enemy (1982; 7.14). He speaks with conviction and authority, and wins over the Gauls whenever his plans are opposed (e.g. 1982: 7.20). In some ways he appears to mirror Roman attitudes towards warfare, and his victories resemble Caesar’s own, and speak to some degree of Romanisation (Rawlings 1998). His rebellion fails, outmanoeuvred by Roman military skill, and an inability to command absolute respect from the patchwork quilt of alliances he assembles. Connavar too creates an uneasy set of alliances between different peoples, and makes determined effort to present cultural homogeneity between the ‘Keltoi’ people (thus reinforcing the Roman view of the Celtic world). Moreover, the tactics that he sets out to fight against Rome are taken from Vercingetorix: arms, cavalry, and supply lines. In serving the army of Stone, the young Connavar on his quest for vengeance sees the strength of imperial armies, and their inherent weakness. In creating a professional army, the general Jasaray required maintenance of supply lines.[[9]](#endnote-9) Moreover, upon his return to the lands of the Rigante, Connavar orders the smiths to begin work on iron shirts, asks his brother, Braefar, to solve the issue of saddle and stirrups, and finally creates through the introduction of new horse lines the Iron-Wolves, who will take the fight to the forces he knows will invade. At a base level then, Connavar is Vercingetorix, Caesar’s great opponent. However, he is also Tacitus’ Calgacus. In contrast to the greater characterisation and military skill of Vercingetorix, the Calgacus of the *Agricola* is a shining light of barbarian virtue, who speaks only of freedom and liberty. He is rather one-dimensional, a leader we know little about, used by Tacitus to rethink Roman imperial governance, as well providing a useful counterpoint to the speech of Agricola that follows. Tacitus also makes clear that these Britons, in his description rather than the *oratio recta* of the Roman general, are likewise pure and bold: ‘[t]he Britons were, in fact, undaunted by the loss of the previous battle, and were ready either for revenge or enslavement’ (Tacitus 1970: 29). Calgacus becomes then a physical representation of 30,000 Caledonian warriors fighting for freedom. Connavar in one sense embodies this as well. He is, as are all Gemmell’s heroes, wonderfully realised and deeply flawed, but he is also more than anything the figure of resistance to Stone and any enemy of the Keltoi people. He is the voice of Calgacus amongst the Rigante, and his willingness to speak the truth as he sees it, allows Connavar to be regarded as the most noble and virtuous barbarian leader, as used by Tacitus.

The final historical character we should consider is not a Celt at all, but a German: Arminius, victor of the Teutoberg Forest, as Pagán notes, a ‘Cheruscan freedom fighter’ (2017: 82). This comparison echoes the lack of distinction seen in ancient Greek writings between the Celts and Germans, and the parallel between him and Connavar is perhaps the closest of the three (see Sims-Williams 1998; Chapman 1992). Arminius served the armies of Rome (as Connavar served Stone), and he learnt how to expose Roman military weakness in war.[[10]](#endnote-10) A Roman citizen, a noble with equestrian rank, fluent in Latin and seemingly loyal to the Empire, Arminius led the armies of Varus into the forests and then destroyed them. So great was his victory that Goldsworthy surmises: ‘the effort to conquer Germany was never renewed’ (2016: 202). Tacitus writes of him in his *Annals* as a noble barbarian figure, but also one disturbingly close to, and part of, the Roman world: ‘If you prefer your fatherland, your ancestors, your ancient ways to overlords and to new colonies, follow as your leader Arminius to glory and freedom rather than Segestes to ignominious slavery’ (cited in Pagán, 2017: 99). Tacitus writes a eulogy of the barbarian leader:

 Arminius, roused by the fact that the Romans were retreating and King Maroboduus was driven out, held sway heedless of popular liberty. He attacked with force of arms, fought with mixed success and fell by the treachery of his kinsmen. He was without a doubt the liberator of Germania and one who fought not against the emergence of the Roman people, as had other kings and generals, but against the empire at its greatest. In battle his fortunes may have varied, but in war he was never conquered. He lived 37 tears, for 12 he held power, and he is still commemorated in song among barbarian tribes. He is wholly unknown to Greek historians, who admire only their own, and not duly celebrated by Romans since we extol the past and are uninterested in recent times. (cited in Pagán, 2017: 140-141)

The battle of the Teutoberg forest entered into the historical consciousness of Rome and became a principal example of the dangers facing the Empire. The Roman general Varus is mirrored strongly in Gemmell’s Valanus. In the epilogue the Stone general makes the terrible mistake of responding to the Morrígan. Asked what he desires, he responds with ‘fame’, which of course can be both negative and positive (Gemmell 1999: 477-8). Fame he would have, but just as in Rome, where the loss of the three legions was known as the *clades Variana* (Varian disaster), so too would Valanus enter the lived memory of both Stone and the Rigante. In creating Valanus as an enemy of Connovar, we see Arminius too.

The character of Connavar reinforces the Romanised focus of Gemmell’s Rigante world. He is undoubtedly a Cú Chulainn figure; but in the same breath he is also a noble barbarian opponent as understood by Roman writers and classical authors. His fight against Stone in one sense then is already lost; for in Gemmell’s creation, Stone and Rome have already won. The opponent they face is the opponent that Rome always faced; a noble barbarian figure who epitomised virtues that they could admire from a distance. This is an imagined barbarian world, created by placing the Celts into a pre-existing framework of understanding, that stressed Roman superiority and dominance. There are then two Celtic worlds visible in *Sword in the Storm*, the medieval and the ancient.

**Conclusion**

The world of the Rigante, which owes so much to the Celtic past and Celtic peoples, in reality is a mirror not on the Celtic tribes themselves, but how the Romans saw them. This should not, in any way, belittle the excellent and compelling images that Gemmell creates throughout *Sword in the Storm*. Instead, he too is a victim of Rome, much like Connavar and his people are victims of Stone. The world he creates for them is not the Celtic past he was aiming for, but the image found in classical ethnography, most tellingly a hybrid of Caesar and Tacitus. The final thought must be that much like those ancient authors who were prisoners of their own ethnographic historical tradition, modern fantasy literature is still not fully able to break those bonds of classical learning.

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1. By the ‘Seidh’ Gemmell is alluding to the *síd* from Irish mythology, the sense of otherworldly power, visible within the lived landscape. See Williams 2016: 30-71. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The Morrígan (Morrigu) and the Dagda (Thagda) play a crucial role throughout Gemmell’s *Rigante* series. Williams describes the Morrígan as ‘a gruesome war-goddess, shapeshifting between woman and crow, eel and wolf’ and the Dagda as the ‘good god’ (2016:xiii; 10). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Sims notes both the wider literary influences and the importance of classical learning in shaping some of David Gemmell’s ideas. This is achieved through a study of direct references in Gemmell’s writings, as well as recorded interviews the author gave. See also the essay by Sims in this volume: “Heroic Biographies Of Cú Chulainn And Connavar In The Rigante Series”. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Skinner’s final chapter is particularly useful here, and as he writes: “It has been argued both that there was a significant quantity of ethnographic activity prior to the Persian Wars and that the information thus generated was actively employed in discourses of identity and difference” (2012: 242). See also Hall (1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. The scholarship on both Herodotus and Thucydides is vast. A useful starting point for Herodotus is Dewald and Marincola (2006). For Thucydides see Tsakmakis and Rengakos (2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. In writing of those barbarians who do surrender a particular formula is used time and again: ‘*traditis in deditionem accepit*’. This reinforced Roman notions of power and authority, and the integration of barbarians into the Roman world. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Sallust, 2010: 4.69 (Letter of Mithridates); Caesar, 1982: 7.77 & Tacitus 1970: 30.5. On this as a wider area of study see Adler (2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. This speech by Calgacus can be compared to other speeches by barbarian leaders in Roman historiography. A good example is the speech by Mithridates in Trogus’ work. See Smart 2020c. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Sims has argued that the character of Jasaray is an interpretation of Julius Caesar (using Suetonius and Caesar’s own writings). See Sims (2018). One aspect I had not considered was Gemmell’s familiarity with Vegetius’s much lauded and long lasting *De Re Militari*. Sims pinpoints the moment shortly before Connavar meets Jasaray (Gemmell 1999: 259) where a line is used as a teaching tool and plot device. I am grateful to Alistair Sims for sharing this with me. On the long historical importance of Vegetius see Allmand 2011: 1-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Goldworthy (2016*:* 201-206) is a useful starting point. See also Wolters (2008), especially chapters 4 and 5; Winkler (2015), in particular pp. 25-54 and the excellent comparison with Tolkien’s work by Makins (2016: 199-240). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)