

Carausius and His Brothers: The Construction and Deconstruction of an Imperial Image in the Late Third Century AD

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the public image of the emperor Carausius, a Roman army officer who claimed authority over Britain and parts of Gaul between 286 and 293, in opposition to Diocletian and his Tetrarchic colleagues. Carausius' coinage celebrated his fleet, his naval prowess, and his divine support from Neptune and Oceanus. These designs were created as part of a strategy to refashion Carausius' humble background as a sailor into a statement of imperial suitability. However, Carausius' claims were undermined by the orators who delivered speeches in praise of his Tetrarchic rivals, Maximian and Constantius, in the years 289, 291, and 297. Their panegyrics subverted Carausius' naval experience and claim to control the Ocean, instead portraying him as a pirate, brigand, and threat to the people of Gaul. After the reconquest of Britain, the medallions and monuments of the Tetrarchic regime commemorated their own naval success and control over the Ocean, suppressing the claims of Carausius. The propaganda campaign against Carausius was driven by the fact that he was an emperor of undistinguished origin, who had risen up through the ranks of the army, just like the Tetrarchs themselves. The emperors wished to distance themselves from their former colleague in order to discourage further rebellion from within the officer corps.

Keywords: Carausius, Tetrarchs, Roman emperors, Roman panegyric, Roman imperial imagery.

INTRODUCTION

The emperor Diocletian, who seized the purple in November 284 and ruled until his voluntary retirement in May 305, has a claim to be the most successful emperor of Rome's tumultuous third century.¹ He is probably best

¹ All dates are AD unless otherwise noted. The translations from the *Panegyrici Latini* are those of Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994), slightly adapted in some cases. The abbreviations

remembered today as the creator of the so-called First Tetrarchy, the imperial college of two Augusti and two Caesars which governed the empire between 293–305. The Tetrarchs were immortalised in porphyry statuary portraying them as a strong, united military brotherhood. Yet Diocletian's success was by no means inevitable, and at the start of his reign, he could have easily suffered the same fate as many other short-lived third-century emperors.² First, he had to defeat a legitimate Augustus, Carinus, which he did not accomplish until 285.³ He was then faced by a revolt in Gaul led by a group of disaffected rebels known as the Bagaudae.⁴ To aid him in suppressing this insurrection, Diocletian appointed his army colleague Maximian as Caesar in mid-285, elevating him to the rank of Augustus soon after.⁵ However, the Bagaudae proved to be the least of the two emperors' problems. In 286, M. Aurelius Maus(aeus) Carausius, an officer under Maximian's command, staged an insurrection, claiming authority over parts of northern Gaul and Britain.⁶ The precise extent of the Gallic territories he claimed is uncertain, but they included the coastal port of Gesoriacum (modern-day Boulogne).⁷ In March 293, Diocletian and Maximian appointed two junior colleagues to share their power, the Caesars Constantius and Galerius.⁸ Constantius was assigned the responsibility of driving Carausius from Gaul, which he did in summer 293, after which Carausius was murdered by one of his officials, Allectus.⁹ Britain remained under the control of Allectus until 296, when it was recaptured by Constantius.¹⁰

This conflict between imperial rivals was not waged by senatorial aristocrats, as had been the case in previous centuries, but by soldiers who had risen through the army ranks to claim the purple. The Tetrarchs were men

for standard collections and reference works are those of *OCD*⁴, with the addition of *CPR* = *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*.

² Rees (2002) 27–30.

³ Barnes (1982) 50.

⁴ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.17; Eutr. 9.20; Zonar. 12.31. *Pan. Lat.* 10(2).4.3 refers to them as farmers, ploughmen, and shepherds.

⁵ *Pan. Lat.* 10(2).3.1, 4.2–4; Barnes (1982) 57; Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994) 46–48.

⁶ For the date of Carausius' revolt, which most historians acknowledge took place in 286, see Barnes (1982) 10–11; Casey (1994) 42–43; Williams (2004) 8. His full name is still uncertain: the *nomen* Maus(aeus) occurs on one milestone from north England (*RIB* 2291). See Birley (2005) 377–78 for discussion of other possible ways of completing the abbreviated *nomen* Maus(-).

⁷ The extent of Carausius' Gallic territory is debated as it depends on the interpretation of coin finds (Casey [1977a]; cf. Nixon and Saylor Rodgers [1994] 118–19). However, his control over Gesoriacum until 293 is well-attested (Casey [1994] 106–13).

⁸ Barnes (1982) 4.

⁹ Allectus was almost certainly the *rationalis summae rei* of Carausius (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.41; Casey [1994] 127–29). Cf. Birley (2005) 375 for the argument that he may have been a praetorian prefect.

¹⁰ Casey (1994) 43–45.

of humble birth from the Danubian region who owed their elevation to their military career.¹¹ Their rival Carausius, from Menapia in Gallia Belgica, was also of undistinguished origin. He had begun life as a helmsman or pilot before entering the Roman army.¹² These officers were able to lay claim to the purple as a result of the extensive changes which had taken place in the hierarchy of the Roman army and administration over the course of the third century, particularly during the reign of Gallienus (260–268).¹³ Gallienus promoted officers from his field army to serve as expeditionary military commanders in place of senators, who henceforth ceased to command troops in battle.¹⁴ Members of this new military elite were soon in a position to challenge for the throne itself. Two of the most successful were Aurelian (270–275) and Probus (276–282), men from the Danubian provinces who entered the Roman army and obtained officer commands in the 260s and 270s, setting the precedent for Diocletian and his colleagues.¹⁵ These officers did not have to be from Rome, or even move to the city of Rome, to claim legitimacy as emperors.¹⁶ Their ascent to the purple represented the most significant change in the nature of the Roman imperial office since the Principate of Augustus.

Since they could not rely on senatorial status as a qualification for the imperial office, these soldier emperors created alternative narratives about their background and career to justify their claim to rule the Roman Empire.¹⁷ Emperors could formulate and articulate such narratives in their own public speeches, pronouncements, and letters, as well as through panegyrics delivered in their honour by prominent orators. These orators were often briefed by the imperial administration, but they were given creative license to praise the emperor in the most effective way possible.¹⁸ The emperor's image could also be articulated through imperial statuary, artworks, building inscriptions, and coinage. Coinage produced at imperial mints was a particularly important medium, since it had the potential to circulate widely throughout the empire. The emperor did not personally design each and every coin type, but his coinage was regarded as embodying the

¹¹ Barnes (1982) 30–38 collects the literary and documentary evidence.

¹² Eutr. 9.21–22; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.20.

¹³ See now Davenport (2019) 485–552 for a complete account of these changes.

¹⁴ Christol (1977) and (1982); Heil (2008); Davenport (2019) 533–49. These commanders obtained equestrian rank during their army career (Davenport [2012] 107–8; [2019] 513–14).

¹⁵ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.26–28 is the *locus classicus*. For discussion of the Danubian origins of the emperors, see Syme (1971) 208–12, 222–25.

¹⁶ See the acute remarks of Flaig (1997) 23–24, 27, on changing patterns of usurpation in the third century. For the absence of military men from Rome in the late third century, see Davenport (2015) 278–81.

¹⁷ As in Davenport (2016), the term 'soldier emperor' is here used to describe a serving member of the Roman army who became emperor, as distinct from an emperor of senatorial background who campaigned extensively, such as Trajan or Septimius Severus.

¹⁸ MacCormack (1981) 1–14; Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994) 26–31.

public image he wished to present to the world.¹⁹ In her seminal work *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, Sabine MacCormack explored the rich connections between panegyric, ceremonial, and the various forms of artistic representation which articulated the imperial image in the age of the Tetrarchs and beyond.²⁰ She drew attention to the importance of these communicative performances and medial representations in creating a ‘sacred tale’ which could provide a humbly-born soldier emperor with a narrative of divine legitimacy for his rule.²¹ For example, the descent of Diocletian and Maximian from Jupiter and Hercules was articulated in panegyrics, coinage, and other works of art. Two panegyrics delivered in Maximian’s honour in Trier in 289 and 291 developed this narrative further by integrating the emperor’s Pannonian origin into his story, revealing to his Gallic audiences how a man born on the frontiers was better qualified than senators to rule the Roman Empire.²²

This paper will focus on the emperor Carausius, whose usurpation during the years 286–293 challenged the authority of Diocletian and his colleagues. It is divided into three parts. In part one, I will argue that Carausius’ regime used his background as a sailor, together with claims to divine support from Neptune and Oceanus, to create his own ‘sacred tale’ analogous to that communicated about Maximian. This message was particularly designed to resonate with the troops who supported Carausius’ usurpation. In the second part, I will discuss how panegyrics delivered in honour of Maximian and Constantius at Trier in the years 289–297 undermined Carausius’ claim to the purple. The speakers subverted Carausius’ naval experience and claim to control the Ocean, portraying him as a pirate, brigand, and threat to the people of Gaul. In part three, I will explore how the Tetrarchic regime commemorated the naval victory in Britain in medallions and monuments, which represented the final repudiation of Carausius’ claims. This analysis shows how the rise and rivalry of soldier emperors introduced a new dynamic into the politics of imperial representation. Their background could be used to create a narrative or ‘sacred tale’ that portrayed them as the best candidate for the purple, but it could also provide the very basis for discrediting them as emperors.

I. THE SAILOR EMPEROR

The accounts of Carausius’ life and career in Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and the Tetrarchic panegyrics enable us to draw a consistent, if not entirely

¹⁹ For discussion of this point, see Ando (2000) 215–28; Noreña (2011) 191–92; Hekster (2015) 30–32.

²⁰ MacCormack (1981). See also Mayer (2002) 5–6, who envisages these works as part of a wider ‘panegyric milieu’.

²¹ MacCormack (1981) 169–71.

²² Davenport (2016), a companion piece to the present article.

fulsome, picture of his background.²³ He was a man of undistinguished birth from Menapia, the coastal region of Gallia Belgica adjoining the North Sea.²⁴ Aurelius Victor writes that Carausius ‘was regarded as an expert in the art of sailing, because he had earned a living in this manner during his youth’ (*gubernandi, quo officio adolescentiam mercede exercuerat, gnarus habebatur*). This means that he was probably a helmsman (*gubernator*) serving on merchant vessels, before entering the Roman army, perhaps initially in the same capacity.²⁵ In 285, Carausius is attested serving under Maximian in his campaign against the Bagaudae. The chronology suggests that he was probably born c. 240–245.²⁶ This would place the first stage of Carausius’ military career in the 260s and early 270s, when Belgica was part of the so-called Gallic Empire under the control of Postumus and his successors.²⁷ Carausius may have been able to obtain a post in the *militiae equestres* after rising up through the ranks.²⁸ Equestrian officers attested during this period were natives of Gaul or Germany, showing how the Gallic Empire drew its officer corps from the region.²⁹ Carausius probably followed a similar career prior to 285. Carausius’ service in the Bagaudae campaign led Maximian to promote him to a senior naval command, giving him a commission to combat the piratical activities of the Franks and the Saxons, who were raiding the Gallic coastline.³⁰ Carausius was specifically charged with ‘preparing the fleet’ (*parandae classis*) for this purpose, which suggests that the *classis*

²³ The accounts of Aurelius Victor and Eutropius derive from the now-lost historical work known as the *Kaisergeschichte* (Casey [1994] 47; Birley [2005] 373).

²⁴ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.20 (Menapian); *Pan. Lat.* 6(7).5.3 (Batavian). His humble birth is also mentioned by Eutr. 9.21 and Oros. 7.25.3 (though Orosius relied on Eutropius, as noted by Shiel [1977] 20).

²⁵ For *gubernatores* in the Roman navy, see *CIL* 10.3431–3437, *CIL* 11.88 = *ILS* 2829. Birley (2005) 371 draws attention to a *cohors I Menapiorum nautarum* attested in the second century.

²⁶ Casey (1994) 49 tabulates the careers of officers who became emperors in this period, which suggests that they held their most senior commands in their 40s–50s.

²⁷ See Drinkwater (1987) for a full account of this empire.

²⁸ In the late third century, equestrian rank became a reward for being appointed to an officer command, rather than a precondition for it (Davenport [2019] 509–20, 533–46). The epigraphic evidence from Britain is particularly rich for this period. Several legionary veterans serving in British legions in the third century had been promoted to equestrian officer rank: *RIB* 1896 (dated 235/8), *RIB* 989 = *ILS* 4721 (c.220s–240s), *RIB* 988 (undated), *RIB* 966 = *ILS* 4724a (undated).

²⁹ Birley (1980) 69 draws attention to the fact that three tribunes of the *cohors I Aelia Dacorum* at Birdoswald under the Gallic Empire came from the north-western provinces (*RIB* 1882, Marcus Gallicus, dated 260/9; *RIB* 1886, Prob(ius) Augendus, dated 260/9; *RIB* 1885, Pomp[on]ius D[eside]rat[us], dated 270/3). For example, the *cognomen* Desideratus occurs in Lugdunensis (*CIL* 13.2985) and Germania Inferior (*CIL* 13.8352). Flavius Ammausius, prefect of the *ala Sebostiana* in Britain under Postumus (*RIB* 605, dated 262/6), bears a *cognomen* that is only elsewhere attested in Germania Inferior (*CIL* 13.7831, 8639), and which shares the –ausius ending with Carausius’ own name (Birley [2005] 378).

³⁰ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.20 calls them Germans, but Eutr. 9.21 offers the more specific Franks and Saxons.

Britannica had either been disbanded or needed reinforcing for the campaign.³¹ His precise title is nowhere recorded: it could have been *praefectus classis*, or possibly *praepositus* or *dux*, titles carried by other third-century expeditionary commanders.³² Carausius' expeditionary force would have numbered approximately 9,000 men, since it included vexillations from no fewer than nine legions, drawn from Britain and the Rhine and Danube frontiers.³³ Although Carausius successfully captured many of the Franks and Saxons, he reportedly did not hand over all the booty he had seized to Maximian, as a result of which the emperor ordered his execution. This prompted Carausius to stage a revolt and claim the purple for himself.³⁴

Carausius therefore emerges from our sources as a man of low birth who achieved social mobility through his military career, just like many other senior officers in the late third century, not to mention emperors, such as Diocletian and Maximian themselves.³⁵ The accounts of the lives of these soldier emperors in the ancient sources share striking similarities. They relate how an emperor was known for his humble birth, a specific vocation or trade he undertook before entering the army, and his martial ability. For example, according to Zonaras, Gallienus' general and later imperial rival Aureolus began his life as a humble shepherd in Dacia, before joining the army, and his skill as a soldier saw him appointed commander of Gallienus' cavalry.³⁶ In addition to Aureolus, three legitimate emperors—Maximinus, Galerius, and Maximinus Daza—were said to have been shepherds or herdsmen before embarking on a military career.³⁷ The Gallic usurper M. Aurelius Marius was remembered as an ironworker who became a soldier.³⁸ As Ronald Syme remarked in his discussion of Maximinus' career, these stories conform to the traditional narrative pattern of a young man of humble origin, who is 'destined for great things'.³⁹ In the hands of a skilled orator, such a humble background could be turned into a statement of imperial suitability. For example, the panegyrics of the emperor Maximian delivered in 289 and 291 exploited the traditional view of rural men as hardy warriors to help explain why the son of Pannonian labourers

³¹ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.20; the fleet is also mentioned in *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).12.1. For the status of the *classis Britannica*, see Shiel (1977) 7, 15–16.

³² For discussion of the different possibilities, see Casey (1994) 101–3; Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994) 127; Birley (2005) 371–72.

³³ Shiel (1977) 189–91; Casey (1994) 92–98; Birley (2005) 372.

³⁴ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.20; Eutr. 9.21.

³⁵ Casey (1994) 49–50; Birley (2005) 371; Davenport (2019) 591–94.

³⁶ Zonar. 12.24. For Aureolus' brief usurpation, see Zos. 1.40–41; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 33.17–20.

³⁷ Maximinus: Zonar. 12.15; Hdn. 6.8.1, 7.1.2; *Hist. Aug. Max.* 2.1. I do not give him his traditional, but inaccurate, appellation 'Thrax'. Galerius: Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.25; *Epit.* 40.1. Maximinus Daza: Lactan. *De mort. pers.* 19.6; *Epit.* 40.18.

³⁸ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 33.9; Eutr. 9.9.

³⁹ Syme (1971) 185.

was a suitable emperor.⁴⁰ Although no panegyrics for Carausius survive today, I would argue that the designs on the emperor's coinage suggest that his humble origin as a helmsman was reconfigured by his regime into a 'sacred tale' which justified his claim to the purple.

The originality of many of Carausius' coin types has long been noted by scholars.⁴¹ The theme of the Saturnian 'Golden Age', which figured prominently in Augustan poetry, especially the works of Virgil, appears on Carausius' coinage in a sophisticated and allusive manner. This is shown by two legends which feature on his issues: RSR on a series of *denarii*, two *aurei*, and a bronze medallion, and I.N.P.C.D.A. on one bronze medallion.⁴² Guy de la Bédoyère has conclusively demonstrated that these initials should be expanded to form a line from Virgil's *Eclogues*: *redeunt Saturnia regna, iam noua progenies caelo demittitur alto* ('the kingdom of Saturn returns, and now a new generation is sent down from lofty heaven').⁴³ There are several RSR reverse coin types bearing the legend EXPECTATE VENI ('Come, long-expected one'), showing the province of Britannia joining hands with Carausius.⁴⁴ The legend is an adaptation of a line from the *Aeneid*, where it refers to the ghost of Hector; here it is transformed to refer to Carausius' coming as emperor in Britain.⁴⁵ The coinage promoted Carausius as a genuinely Roman emperor, rather than the ruler of a separatist government. One of the RSR *aurei* features a reverse type of Romulus and Remus suckling on the teats of the she-wolf, accompanied by the legend ROMANO(RVM) RENOVA(TORI) ('to the restorer of the Romans').⁴⁶ The legend itself is unique to Carausius' coinage, and no comparable reverse slogan had been seen since the reigns of Galba and Vespasian, demonstrating its originality.⁴⁷

The RSR issue of silver *denarii* and *aurei* was minted in the early years of Carausius' reign, probably in 286 or 287.⁴⁸ The *denarii* were struck at a much

⁴⁰ Davenport (2016) 387.

⁴¹ For example, see Webb (1907) 68; Shiel (1977) 188; Casey (1994) 58–65; Birley (2005) 373–77.

⁴² *RIC* V.2 Carausius 533–35, 538, 540–41, 543–62, 564, 566–85, 588–92, 595–612, 615–20, 625–26, 635. See Casey (1994) 76–78; Williams (2004) 37–39 (*denarii*); Moorhead (2014) 225 (*aurei*); De la Bédoyère (1998) 81–82 (medallions).

⁴³ De la Bédoyère (1998) 81–83; Verg. *Ecl.* 4.6–7.

⁴⁴ *RIC* V.2 Carausius 554–58.

⁴⁵ De la Bédoyère (1998) 79–80; Verg. *Aen.* 2.283.

⁴⁶ *RIC* V.2 Carausius 534 = Moorhead (2014) no. 11. See *RIC* 1² Galba 25–29 (ROMA RENASCENS), *RIC* II Vespasian 109–110 (ROMA RESVRGES). The image itself was of course not new, having appeared on the coins of emperors such as Domitian (*RIC* II Domitian 961), Hadrian (*RIC* II Hadrian 192), and Philip (*RIC* IV.3 Philip 15). The reverse design would feature on a range of other coins minted by Carausius (*RIC* V.2 Carausius 382, 571–77, 612, 615, 968, 974–75).

⁴⁷ Webb (1907) 272.

⁴⁸ This is agreed by scholars, such as Casey (1994) 76–78; Lyne (2003) 155–56; Williams (2004) 34–39. Carausius had three mints at the beginning of his reign, in London,

higher standard than previous third-century silver coinage, with a purity of silver which had not been seen since the Julio-Claudian period. This suggests that they were intended to be donatives to pay the troops (perhaps even in one single issue), the rationale being that the soldiers would maintain their allegiance to Carausius' cause because of the value of his coinage.⁴⁹ Significant care was also taken in the production of the RSR issues, as the quality of Carausius' portrait image and other designs on these early issues reveals that the moneyers were skilled and accomplished workers.⁵⁰ The presence of the *redeunt Saturnia regna* allusion on these coins indicates that the Virgilian motif was decided upon soon after the usurpation itself, and was designed by the regime to be a central part of Carausius' claim to the imperial purple. De la Bédoyère has suggested that the theme was promoted in panegyrics delivered in honour of the emperor, a conclusion that is made very plausible by the close thematic connections between panegyric, coinage, and art identified by MacCormack and subsequent scholars.⁵¹ Bronze medallions, such as that which featured I.N.P.C.D.A., were frequently issued as New Year's gifts or to the troops at victory celebrations.⁵² Carausius evidently wanted to promote the idea of new Roman Golden Age dawning under his rule to the soldiers and officers who defected with him from Maximian's army.⁵³

In light of the programmatic qualities of Carausius' coinage, the issues alluding to his seafaring prowess and command over the Ocean deserve special attention. He minted *denarii* and *antoniniani* with reverse types depicting galleys manned with rowers, accompanied by the legends FELICITAS ('good fortune, success') and LAETITIA ('joy, gladness').⁵⁴ Reverse types with FELICITAS and a galley had appeared on Roman imperial coins from Hadrian's reign onwards.⁵⁵ The iconography evoked the traditional 'ship of state' metaphor prominent in Greek and Roman thought, in

Rouen, and an unknown location, called the 'C mint': the RSR issue was produced at all three mints (Lyne [2003] 155).

⁴⁹ Casey (1994) 76; De la Bédoyère (1998) 87; Lyne (2003) 156. The coins were probably intended to be valued and noticed in comparison with the base radiates that had circulated in Britain and Gaul in recent times.

⁵⁰ Casey (1977b) 220–24.

⁵¹ De la Bédoyère (1998) 83–84.

⁵² On New Year's gifts, see Clay (1976). For their association with the celebration of victories, see McCormick (1986) 27–28.

⁵³ A similar message can be found on an early issue with the legend AVRORA ('Dawn') on the reverse (Lyne [2008] 259).

⁵⁴ FELICITAS: *RIC* V.2 Carausius 221, 560–61, 606–7, 635–36, 779. LAETITIA: *RIC* V.2 Carausius 264–65, 648–49.

⁵⁵ Casey (1977b) 222; Richard (1979); Richard (2006) 247–49. For the meaning of the word, see *OLD* s.v. *felicitas* 1–2, and the ideological significance of the personification, see *LIMC* VIII.1: 585–91, s.v. *Felicitas*; Noreña (2011) 166–72.

which good government was assured by a sound hand at the tiller.⁵⁶ However, the presence of the legend RSR on the FELICITAS coins associated this traditional message with the coming of Carausius and his golden age. *Laetitia*, which was closely connected with *felicitas*, represented happiness with connotations of fertility, fruitfulness, and abundance.⁵⁷ On imperial coins, the personified *Laetitia* was commonly depicted with a rudder and globe, which articulated the idea that the provisioning of the empire was connected with good government.⁵⁸ Therefore, *laetitia* and *felicitas* were benefits which flowed to the inhabitants of the empire as a result of the peace secured by the emperor. Two of the LAETITIA coin types minted as *antoniniani* feature the legend OPA in the exergue.⁵⁹ This should be expanded as OP(S) A(VGVSTI) ('the power of the emperor').⁶⁰ Since *Ops* was the name of the biggest ship in the Roman fleet at Misenum, this may well be a reference to one of Carausius' ships.⁶¹ A second, named Carausian ship appears on a unique *antoninianus* with a reverse showing a galley with an eagle perched on the stern, accompanied by the slogan PACATRIX AVG(VSTI) ('the Emperor's Pacifier'). C. H. V. Sutherland has suggested that *Pacatrix* was the name of Carausius' flagship.⁶² On this interpretation, the coin's obverse legend, VIRTUS CARAVSI, connects the emperor's valour with the *Pacatrix* and his command over the seas.⁶³ These coin issues therefore refer directly to Carausius' fleet, which he had successfully commanded first as an officer under Maximian, then subsequently as emperor.

Carausius' domination of the sea was connected with the personified *Laetitia* on two unique coins, which have only recently been published. The first is an *antoninianus*, with a reverse showing the personification of *Laetitia* holding a wreath and anchor, and the legend LAETIT(IA)

⁵⁶ For the iconography of Roman coinage, see Richard (2006) 250–53. For the origins in Greek political thought, see Brock (2013) 53–67.

⁵⁷ *OLD* s.v. *laetitia* 1–2; Noreña (2011) 171–72.

⁵⁸ *LIMC* VI. 1: 182–84, s.v. *Laetitia*.

⁵⁹ *RIC* V.2 Carausius 648; Lyne (2003) 158 no. 13.

⁶⁰ A similar idea can be found on a unique *aureus* featuring the legend OPES IVI AVG and an *antoninianus* with the legend OPES AVG. See Shiel (1973).

⁶¹ Lyne (2003) 158; *CIL* 6.3163, *CIL* 10.3376 = *ILS* 2849, *CIL* 14.232 = *ILS* 2385.

⁶² Sutherland (1937) 308–9, followed by Shiel (1977) 195; Birley (2005) 383–84. Names of Roman ships were often triumphalistic or named after gods, such as *Victoria* (*CIL* 11.37, 11.59, 11.65), *Triumphus* (*AE* 1980, 486), *Pax* (*CIL* 11.103), *Quadriga* (*CIL* 9.43), *Hercules* (*CIL* 11.340), and *Minerva* (*AE* 1962, 217; *CIL* 11.72).

⁶³ Woods (2012) has recently suggested that the interpretation of the coin should take into account the letters CANC in the exergue. This, he argued, should be reconstructed as the name of the ship, CANC(ER), or 'Crab', noting the association between crabs and depictions of the maritime god Oceanus (on whom see further below). A Carausian radiate registered by the Portable Antiquities Scheme has a reverse legend L(A)ETITIA AVG with the image of 'a galley with crab claws at bows' (YORYM-46F4E4). These little details show the care which went into carving the ships on Carausius' coinage.

AVG(VSTI) ('the fruitfulness of the emperor'). The obverse features a bust of Carausius with his fingers pressed against the end of a tiller. As Malcolm Lyne has argued, this was probably a reference to his personal seafaring capabilities.⁶⁴ The second coin is a *denarius*, featuring a bust of Carausius on the obverse and a bust of Oceanus, the divine embodiment of the sea that encircles the earth, on the reverse. The reverse legend is LAE(TITIA) CARAVSI AVG(VSTI) ('the fruitfulness of the emperor Carausius').⁶⁵ Oceanus is depicted in profile with crab claws emerging from his head and holding a trident, in keeping with contemporary depictions from Gaul and Britain.⁶⁶ The god Oceanus had only previously featured on issues of Hadrian and Septimius Severus, where he was shown lying down.⁶⁷ Therefore, this was an entirely original coin design. The novel juxtaposition of the bust of Carausius on the obverse with Oceanus on the reverse has the effect of casting them as allies, or even implying that, in the words of J. H. C. Williams, 'the emperor's power, both in extent and nature, resembles that of the god'.⁶⁸ The association of Carausius with Oceanus is suggestive of a strong connection between *laetitia*, fertility and fruitfulness, and the command of sea, which was the source of Carausius' power as emperor and made him a serious challenger to the emperor Maximian.⁶⁹ The message is that the emperor's control of maritime affairs extended not only over the English Channel, but also over the entire Ocean. Moreover, the equation of Carausius with the god Oceanus introduced a connection between the emperor and the divine which played an important part in reshaping the soldier emperor's background into a 'sacred tale'.

Carausius' coinage included the sea god Neptune as one of his divine *comites* ('companions'). Although Roman generals and emperors had always claimed divine support,⁷⁰ the appearance of deities as *comites* on coins was a largely a recent development. *Comites* featured on the coinage of Gallienus, Aurelian, and Probus, and on the issues of the emperors who ruled in Gaul, such as Postumus, Victorinus, and Tetricus.⁷¹ This use of *comes* carried connotations of personal divine protection for the emperor, similar to the term *conseruator* ('preserver, saviour') but 'at a more intimate level', as A. D. Nock has argued.⁷² Neptune first appeared as an imperial

⁶⁴ Lyne (2003) 150.

⁶⁵ Williams (1999). The coin is now in the British Museum (1998,0401.1).

⁶⁶ Williams (1999) 311.

⁶⁷ *LIMC* VIII.1: 906–15, s.v. *Oceanus*; *RIC* II Hadrian 75a–c; *RIC* IV.1 Septimius Severus 229.

⁶⁸ Williams (1999) 312.

⁶⁹ Williams (1999) 312–13.

⁷⁰ Hekster (2015) 239–56.

⁷¹ Nock (1947) 102, 104, 107–8 (noting one early precursor under Commodus); Hekster (2015) 256–61.

⁷² Nock (1947) 105–16 (quotation from p. 116).

conseruator on the coins of Gallienus and as a *comes* on a type of Postumus.⁷³ This marked a change from Neptune's appearance on coin types earlier in the third century, when he was associated with imperial sea crossings to Britain, such as the expedition of Septimius Severus.⁷⁴ Carausius minted coins honouring Neptune as CONSER(VATOR) AVG(VSTI) ('preserver of the emperor') and COMES AVGVSTI ('companion of the emperor'), with a further type featuring the legend NEPTVNO REDVCI ('to Neptune the returner').⁷⁵ Neptune is the only god depicted as the emperor's *conseruator* in the series of high-grade RSR *denarii* issued soon after Carausius' acclamation. These coins show Neptune recumbent with an anchor and a trident.⁷⁶ This reverse image was an entirely new design prepared by Carausius' moneyers.⁷⁷ It is clear, therefore, that Neptune's support and protection were intended to play a key role in the emperor's public image from an early stage.⁷⁸

Carausius' coinage shows that his regime took steps to refashion his background as a sailor and a naval commander into a statement of imperial suitability. The divine support from Neptune and Oceanus—the latter portrayed as the emperor's ally—configured his rise to power into a 'sacred tale', similar to that told about Maximian, the Pannonian soldier turned emperor. The iconographic programme of the coinage may have been influenced by that of the Gallic emperors, who ruled much of the western empire between 260–74, when Carausius was beginning his career in the Roman army. The ubiquity of divine *comites* on the coinage of these Gallic rulers is no coincidence, as Olivier Hekster has pointed out. Emperors whose authority was contested or challenged needed to demonstrate their legitimacy more than those whose position was secure.⁷⁹ The emperor Postumus minted coins depicting Hercules on the reverse accompanied by the legend HERC(VLI) / HERCVLI DEVSONIENSI and HERC(VLI) MAGVSANO.⁸⁰ Magusanus was a god of the Lower Rhine region, who was linked with Hercules in the Roman imperial period. The epithet *Deusoniensis*

⁷³ Manders (2012) 286–90, 322; *RIC* V.1 Gallienus 244–46 (NEPTVNO CONS AVG), Postumus 30 (NEPT COMITI).

⁷⁴ For sea crossings to Britain, see Rowan (2012) 107–9; *RIC* IV.1 Septimius Severus 228, 234, 241, 244.

⁷⁵ *RIC* V.2 Carausius 8, 213–14, 552–53, 709, 764–65 (CONSER / CONSERVAT AVG), 446, 746 (COMES AVG), 472 (NEPTVNO REDVCI).

⁷⁶ *RIC* V.2 Carausius 552–53.

⁷⁷ For the unique image of Neptune on these coins, see Evans (1861).

⁷⁸ A relevant unique coin type of Carausius has been recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, which shows Jupiter on the reverse holding a thunderbolt and a trident (FASAM-3A2380).

⁷⁹ Hekster (2015) 258–59.

⁸⁰ *RIC* V.2 Postumus 20–22, 64–66, 98–99, 130–34, 137, 200–2, 247, 343 (DEVSONIENSI), 68, 139 (MAGVSANO). For Hercules on Postumus' coinage, see Christol (2014).

specifically referred to the cult site of Hercules Magusanus at Deuso(ne).⁸¹ Hercules Magusanus was, in the words of Nico Roymans, ‘the pre-eminent symbol of the Lower Rhine warrior ideology’, and he was particularly popular with soldiers.⁸² One HERCVLI DEVSONIENSI *aureus* featured a bust of Postumus on the obverse and Hercules on the reverse, emphasising their equivalence and alliance in the same way as the *denarius* showing Carausius and Oceanus.⁸³ The references to the local cult of Hercules therefore explicitly portrayed Postumus as the champion and protector of the Rhine frontier.⁸⁴ This was an original way of presenting the imperial claims of Postumus, who was himself of Gallic origin, thus connecting his background with his position as emperor.⁸⁵ Carausius’ issues echoed and extended the visual language developed under the Gallic Empire; this may have been facilitated by continuity among the moneyers who worked in the region’s mints throughout the late third century.⁸⁶ The coinage promoted the story of Carausius as a successful seafarer turned emperor, under whose command of the Ocean the Golden Age would return.

II. PIRATES, BRIGANDS, AND THE BATTLE FOR THE OCEAN

Two speeches delivered in honour of the emperor Maximian in Trier in 289 and 291 (*Pan. Lat.* 10[2] and 11[3]) provide us with an indication of the contemporary response to Carausius’ imperial claims in continental Europe. A third panegyric, for the Caesar Constantius, was delivered in Trier in 297 in celebration of the reconquest of Britain (*Pan. Lat.* 8[5]). The usurpation of Carausius was of particular concern to the Gallic audiences who listened to these speeches, especially the orations of 289 and 291, delivered when his power was at its height. To the Gauls, Carausius was no ephemeral pretender far removed from Trier, but an emperor whose regime threatened peace in the region. He had defected with the imperial fleet and legionary detachments from the Rhine frontier, leaving Gaul exposed.⁸⁷ In this section, I will explore how the Gallic panegyrists undermined Carausius’ claim to mastery over the Ocean. They drew upon techniques of invective employed

⁸¹ Roymans (1996) 90–94. See also Grandvallet (2007) 342–43; Hekster and Manders (2006) 141.

⁸² Roymans (1996) 90.

⁸³ *RIC* V.2 Postumus 22.

⁸⁴ Hekster (2015) 258, 260. For the uniqueness of the cult of Hercules in Gaul, see Lucian’s *Heracles* 1–6.

⁸⁵ Gallic origin is suggested (Drinkwater [1987] 125–26; Birley [2005] 360).

⁸⁶ For the influence of the coins of the Gallic emperors on the issues of Carausius, see Webb (1907) 68.

⁸⁷ Casey (1994) 92–93; Rees (2002) 34.

during the civil wars of the late Republic in order to portray him as a threat to the Roman Empire.⁸⁸ The panegyrist deployed these rhetorical strategies to fit the contemporary situation, denigrating Carausius' seafaring background and his naval prowess as a way of countering the narrative which his regime had created to justify his claim to the purple.

The first panegyrist, who delivered the speech on the occasion of Rome's birthday in 289, artfully integrated the conflict with Carausius into his larger discussion of Maximian's Herculean ancestry.⁸⁹ He juxtaposed Hercules' western exploits in his tenth labour with Maximian's own war against 'a much more frightful monster' (*prodigium multo taetrius*), who was none other than Carausius.⁹⁰ The orator had good news to report in this conflict, since Maximian's forces had captured most of Carausius' territory in Gaul itself, driving his forces back to the Channel coast.⁹¹ He triumphantly proclaimed that Maximian's troops had 'already reached the Ocean in victory' (*ad Oceanum peruenere uictoria*), and outlined their prospective invasion of Britain:⁹²

In what frame of mind is that pirate now, when he can see your armies on the point of penetrating that channel (which has been the only reason his death has been delayed until now) and, forgetting their ships, pursuing the receding sea where it gives way before them? What island more remote, what other Ocean, can he hope for now?

Pan. Lat. 10(2).12.1–2⁹³

The first important theme of this passage is the demonisation of Carausius as 'that pirate' (*ille pirata*).⁹⁴ The description of a rival as a pirate had a long history in Roman rhetoric, and recalled the abuse levelled by Cicero against Verres and Octavian against his rival Sextus Pompeius in the first century BC.⁹⁵ There was a strong association between the pirate and the tyrant in Roman thought, as both functioned as stock villains in declamatory training exercises.⁹⁶ The use of this trope was a particularly appropriate choice to

⁸⁸ For the panegyrics' debt to republican models, see Lassandro (1981) 239–42; (2000) 33–4; Stella de Trizio (2009) 20. For the education of these orators, see Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994) 16–19.

⁸⁹ Rees (2002) 48–52.

⁹⁰ *Pan. Lat.* 10(2).2.1; Rees (2002) 43–44; Stella de Trizio (2009) 65–66.

⁹¹ Casey (1994) 89–92

⁹² *Pan. Lat.* 10(2).11.7.

⁹³ *quid nunc animi habet ille pirata, cum fretum illud quo solo mortem suam hucusque remoratus est paene exercitus uestros uideat ingressos, oblitosque nauium refugum mare secutos esse qua cederet? quam nunc insulam remotiorem, quem alium sibi optet Oceanum?*

⁹⁴ Carausius would be described as a pirate in panegyrics delivered in 291 and 297 as well (*Pan. Lat.* 11(3).7.2; 8(5).6.1, 7.3, 12.1–2).

⁹⁵ On Cicero, see Lassandro (1981) 241; (2000) 34; Stella de Trizio (2009) 20–22, 115. For Sextus Pompeius and Octavian, see Welch (2012) 262–68, 298–99.

⁹⁶ Dunkle (1971) 13–14.

criticise Carausius, as it turned his humble origin as a seafarer from Menapia against him. Since piracy was a real concern along the coast of Gaul at this time, the invective was calculated to have contemporary relevance to the Gallic audience, who were understandably afraid of raiding.⁹⁷ The orator of 289 therefore used this rhetorical technique to paint Carausius not only as an enemy of the emperors, but of the entire population of Gaul.

The second theme of the above passage is that Carausius will soon lose his control over the Ocean. Carausius' public image, as articulated through his coinage, amplified his seafaring background by claiming he was supported by the gods Neptune and Oceanus. The panegyrist of 289 instead ascribed such divine assistance to Maximian. He declared that an act of divine providence had enabled the emperor's fleet to launch into the Ocean:

But behold! Suddenly when it was needful to launch the war craft, for you (*tibi*) Earth put forth its copious springs; for you (*tibi*) Jupiter poured forth rains in abundance; for you (*tibi*) Ocean overflowed all the riverbanks.

Pan. Lat. 10(2).12.6⁹⁸

The striking anaphora of *tibi* emphasised the concerted efforts of the gods to support Maximian, demonstrating his supremacy over Carausius.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the conflict over the Ocean was skilfully integrated into the climactic moment of the speech, in which the orator imagined the residents of Rome flocking to the temple of Hercules Victor:

For this name [Victor] was once given to that god by the man who defeated pirates in a merchant vessel, and heard, from Hercules himself, during his sleep, that he had won the victory with his help. So it is, O most sacred Emperor, that for many centuries it has been among the duties of your divinity to overcome pirates.

Pan. Lat. 10(2).13.5¹⁰⁰

The connection between Hercules' own Oceanic exploits and Maximian's present situation would have been patent to the audience in Trier, making the conflict with Carausius a part of the emperor's divine destiny.¹⁰¹ The theme of Hercules' victories at sea also appears on an *aureus* of Diocletian minted in Gaul in 289–91. The reverse image shows Hercules

⁹⁷ For piracy in Gaul at this time, see de Souza (1999) 225–28.

⁹⁸ *ecce autem subito, cum iam deduci liburnas oporteret, tibi uberes fontes Terra submisit, tibi largos imbres Iuppiter fudit, tibi totis fluminum alveis Oceanus redundavit.* (I have slightly modified the Nixon and Saylor Rodgers translation).

⁹⁹ Lassandro (1981) 240; Stella da Trizio (2009) 118.

¹⁰⁰ *hoc enim quondam illi deo cognomen adscripsit is qui, cum piratas oneraria naue uicisset, ab ipso audiuit Hercule per quietem illius ope uictoria contigisse. adeo, sacratissime imperator, multis iam saeculis inter officia est numinis tui superare piratas.* The orator alluded here to the republican general Octavius Herrenus, who defeated pirates with the divine assistance of Hercules (Nixon and Saylor Rodgers [1994] 75; Rees [2002] 49–50).

¹⁰¹ Rees (2002) 50; Stella de Trizio (2009) 122–23.

defeating Antaeus, the son of the sea god Neptune, accompanied by the legend *VIRTUS AVGG(VSTORVM)* ('the valour of the emperors').¹⁰² Since Hercules was Maximian's assigned divinity, there was undoubtedly a contemporaneous issue in his name as well. The reverse design was based on an earlier type of Postumus, but its revival at this time at a temporary mint, established to coin money to pay Maximian's troops in Gaul, shows that it had a programmatic purpose, urging the troops to defeat their current naval enemy, Carausius.¹⁰³ The themes and language of coinage and panegyric were closely connected, and they show how the regime of Diocletian and Maximian and its supporters deconstructed the claims of their former officer Carausius.

As it turned out, Maximian's naval campaign failed, and by 291, Carausius had re-established control over parts of northern Gaul, with his territory including the coastal port of Gesoriacum (modern-day Boulogne).¹⁰⁴ This posed a problem to the orator who delivered a speech in honour of Maximian that year on the occasion of the emperor's birthday. Carausius was all but absent from the speech, apart from an oblique reference to pirates in alliance with the Franks, which tactfully ignored the fact that Maximian also depended upon Frankish forces.¹⁰⁵ The orator concluded the speech by hoping for a naval victory and new prowls for the Rostra in the *forum Romanum*.¹⁰⁶ In 293, the Caesar Constantius successfully drove Carausius' troops from Gesoriacum and the continent altogether. Then, after Carausius himself had been deposed in a coup by his official Allectus sometime in 293, Constantius' forces invaded and recaptured Britain in 296.¹⁰⁷ Sometime between 293 and 296, a gold medallion was struck in honour of Maximian at Ticinum in Italy which celebrated one or more of these successes.¹⁰⁸ The obverse shows Maximian as *Herculius*, wearing the hero's lion-skin headdress. On the reverse, Maximian is depicted standing in heroic nudity and being crowned by the personification of Virtus, as he extends his hand to a recumbent Oceanus who lies beneath him. The exact date of the medallion eludes us: it could have been created in 293 in celebration of Carausius' defeat in Gaul, in 296 after the reconquest of Britain, or at any point in between. But its significance is clear: Maximian, not Carausius, was now the emperor in alliance with the Ocean.

¹⁰² Bastien (1980) 78 no. 4. For the date, see Lorient (1981) 91–92.

¹⁰³ Bastien (1980) 79–84; Casey (1994) 108–9.

¹⁰⁴ Casey (1977a) 290–92; Casey (1994) 106 dates the acquisition of Gallic territory to the end of 290 or early 291.

¹⁰⁵ *Pan. Lat.* 11(3).7.2; Drinkwater (2007) 184.

¹⁰⁶ *Pan. Lat.* 11(3).19.4–6.

¹⁰⁷ For these events, see Casey (1994) 106–14, 127–39.

¹⁰⁸ Gnecci (1912) Vol. 1, 13 no. 7. The date comes from the medallion's reference to Maximian's fourth consulship in 293. He would hold his fifth in 297.

In the speech delivered in honour of Constantius' victory at Trier in 297, the orator delivered a rousing summation of the claims against Carausius.¹⁰⁹ He described Carausius as a pirate, as in the earlier panegyrics, and on one occasion even as a 'pirate chief' (*archipirata*), as a way of demeaning his naval prowess.¹¹⁰ Carausius' seizure of the fleet and troops from the continent was characterised as a 'nefarious act of brigandage' (*nefario latrocinio*) and the orator spoke of his usurpation stemming 'from that most miserable act of banditry' (*ex indignissimo latrocinio*).¹¹¹ The Latin word *latrocinium* ('robbery with violence', 'brigandage') is derived from the noun *latro* ('robber', 'brigand').¹¹² The denigration of political opponents as brigands can be traced back to the late Republic, when it figured prominently in the speeches of Cicero.¹¹³ In the *Philippics*, Cicero demonised Antony as a *latro* and *archipirata*, among a host of other derogatory terms.¹¹⁴ The concept of the robber as the polar opposite of the legitimate king remained a key aspect of political discourse throughout the Roman imperial period.¹¹⁵ Despite the traditional nature of the theme, the characterisation of Carausius as a brigand was apposite, and probably designed to resonate with the Gallic audience, given their recent experiences with the Bagaudae.¹¹⁶ The panegyrist thus adapted the time-honoured technique of denigrating a naval opponent as a pirate and brigand in order to portray Carausius as an outcast from society, rather than as a man who had once been a distinguished officer in the Roman army, like the Tetrarchs themselves.¹¹⁷ The orator could not give credence to the notion that there were viable imperial contenders within the ranks of the Roman army.

The orator also countered Carausius' claims that he was supported by the Ocean. In his account of the capture of Gesoriacum, the panegyrist described how the Ocean's waves crashed on the shore all along the coastline

¹⁰⁹ For the date, see Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994) 104–5; Rees (2002) 101–2.

¹¹⁰ *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).7.3, 12.1–2.

¹¹¹ *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).12.1 (I have modified Nixon and Saylor Rodgers' translation here).

¹¹² OLD s.v. *latro* 2, *latrocinium* 1.

¹¹³ Lassandro (1981) 239–42; Grünewald (2004) 73–76. For the motif in Cicero, see Habinek (1998) 69–87.

¹¹⁴ For Cicero's characterisation of Antony, see Dunkle (1971) 13–14; Stevenson (2008) 98–102 (who lists all the derogatory terms). For its use in the panegyrics, see Lassandro (1981) 239; Stella de Trizio (2009) 20.

¹¹⁵ MacMullen (1963).

¹¹⁶ See Lassandro (2000) 42–45 for the reception of the Bagaudae among the Gallic aristocracy.

¹¹⁷ The panegyrist also criticised Carausius' successor, Allectus, in some detail, calling him Carausius' 'henchman' (*satelles*), the 'standard-bearer of that criminal faction' (*signifer nefariae factionis*) and the 'brigands' standard-bearer' (*uexillarius latrocinii*) (*Pan. Lat.* 8 (5).12.2, 15.5, 16.4). The present article does not concentrate on the claims about Allectus since his origin and career before becoming emperor are unknown to us, apart from the fact that he was a *rationalis*. Moreover, his coinage is much less original than Carausius' issues (Burnett [1984]), so it is difficult to trace a political programme.

of Gaul, except at Carausius' stronghold, where it 'was either inferior in power to Your Majesty or milder on account of the honour due to you' (*aut potentia uestrae maiestatis inferior aut pro debito uobis honoris clementior*).¹¹⁸ Just as the panegyrist of 289 had told Maximian that Jupiter, Earth, and the Ocean had worked together 'for you' (*tibi*), so this orator declaimed to Constantius that the Ocean had deferred 'to you' (*uobis*), allowing him to seize control of Gesoriacum. The speech of 297 was unique in including some surprising admissions about the excellent seafaring abilities of Carausius' army. His men were contrasted with Constantius' forces who, despite their valour, were 'novices in the art of seafaring' (*in re maritima nouis*).¹¹⁹ When Constantius' fleet, which he intended to use to launch an invasion of Britain, was destroyed in a storm, the orator stated that Carausius' forces boasted that 'the inclemency of the sea, which had delayed your victory by some necessity of fate, was really terror inspired by themselves' (*illam inclementiam maris, quae uictoriam uestram fatali quadam necessitate distulerat, pro sui terrore*).¹²⁰ Such acknowledgements of Carausian propaganda are entirely missing from the speeches of 289 and 291. But this admission could safely be made in 297 after the reconquest of Britain. It enabled the orator to create a picture of Carausius and his troops as worthy adversaries, thus magnifying the greatness of Constantius' own achievement in conquering the Ocean against such natural seafarers.¹²¹

All three panegyrists who spoke at Trier did not hesitate to criticise the background of Carausius, even though the origins and careers of Diocletian, Maximian, and the other Tetrarchs were very similar, and accusations could be, and were, made about their own barbarity.¹²² In these Gallic speeches, however, the Danubian origin of the Tetrarchs was praised as a fundamental qualification for the purple. Maximian's native Pannonia was envisaged as a far-off land which raised hardy military emperors who came to protect Gaul and its people.¹²³ By contrast, the Menapian homeland of Carausius was in close proximity to Trier, and its inhabitants could be easily assimilated to Germanic tribes which threatened Gaul. This association was given greater plausibility by the fact that Carausius benefited from the support of the Franks. The panegyrics thus confirmed

¹¹⁸ *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).6.4. The idea was used subsequently by the panegyrist of 310, who referred to Constantius' achievements in praise of his son Constantine (*Pan. Lat.* 6(7).5.1–4).

¹¹⁹ *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).12.1.

¹²⁰ *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).12.2. The reference is not to Maximian's earlier failure (Nixon and Saylor Rodgers [1994] 130 n. 40).

¹²¹ Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994) 130 n. 45.

¹²² This is a major theme of Lactantius' *De Mortibus Persecutorum* (Corcoran [2004] 67–68). For prejudice against officers who rose from the ranks in this period, see Davenport (2019) 591–94.

¹²³ *Pan. Lat.* 11(3).3.9; Davenport (2016) 385–89.

and reinforced local prejudices in a triumphalist manner, encouraging the Gallic audience at Trier to think of themselves as Romans in contrast to their northern neighbours.¹²⁴ It is unlikely that the speeches would have been composed to directly answer every individual detail on Carausius' coinage, but they certainly responded to the main messages promoted by his regime. For example, the same claims about Carausius' qualifications for imperial rule could have featured in letters which he sent to Diocletian and Maximian. Carausius evidently made diplomatic overtures to the emperors in an attempt to seek formal recognition as part of the imperial college. This is suggested by a famous Carausian coin type which featured jugate busts of Diocletian, Maximian, and Carausius with the obverse legend *CARAVSIVS ET FRATRES SVI* ('Carausius and his brothers').¹²⁵ Moreover, the speakers probably knew key facts such as Carausius' humble background, his army position under Maximian, and his seizure of the imperial fleet through their connections at court. Indeed, the panegyrist of 297 was a former imperial official.¹²⁶ He probably obtained specific facts about imperial movements and campaigns from his contacts, as shown by his detailed account of the recapture of Gesoriacum.¹²⁷

Therefore, the panegyrics of 289, 291, and 297 deployed traditional strategies of Roman invective which were calculated to undermine Carausius' naval supremacy and to appeal to the concerns of their audience at Trier. By casting Carausius as an outsider, the speakers suppressed his connections with Maximian and the fact that both men had emerged from the ranks of the Roman army.¹²⁸ The contrasting images and themes of Carausian coinage and the Gallic panegyrics reveal the fragility of the imperial claims made by soldiers who rose from the ranks in the late third century. On the one hand, these soldier emperors could promote their place of birth and army career as a qualification for imperial suitability, but such a background could all too easily be used as the basis for criticism and invective. In the Republic, accusations of piracy, brigandage, and barbarian origin had been directed by senators against fellow senators. But now these charges were levelled against soldiers who really were men of lowly origin, which gave greater impact to the invective.

¹²⁴ For the Gallic orators using their speeches to display *Romanitas*, see Rees (2010) 139, 145, 147. See *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).5.4 on the importance of events close to Trier for the audience.

¹²⁵ *RIC* V.2 Carausius, Diocletian and Maximian 1; Casey (1994) 110–11. Cf. *Eutr.* 9.22, who states that a peace treaty was actually concluded.

¹²⁶ *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).1.4, 2.1

¹²⁷ For orators seeking out information to include in panegyrics, see Ando (2000) 126–28. On the difficulties in ascertaining the extent to which the panegyrists were briefed, see Nixon (1983) 91–93.

¹²⁸ The panegyrists were in general reluctant to give the impression that the emperors had rivals within the officer corps (Davenport [2016] 394–95).

III. COMMEMORATING VICTORY

Constantius' reconquest of Britain was commemorated on 5-*aurei* and 10-*aurei* gold medallions minted at Trier in 297. The most famous of these is the 10-*aurei* 'Arras medallion', which is named after the hoard in which it was found in 1922. The obverse features a portrait of Constantius, while the reverse depicts Constantius on horseback, approaching Britannia, who is kneeling, her hands outstretched to the Caesar, before the walls of Londinium. This reverse image is accompanied by the legend REDDITOR LVCIS AETERNAE ('the restorer of eternal light').¹²⁹ This slogan was probably inspired by panegyric discourse at the time, given that light is used as a motif of Britain's restoration in the speech of 297.¹³⁰ In one of the most striking sentences in the panegyric, the orator stated the provincials 'were free at last, at last Romans, at last restored to life by the true light of empire' (*tandem liberi tandemque Romani, tandem uera imperii luce recreati*).¹³¹ The commemorative series of medallions also included two 5-*aurei* pieces, both of which feature Constantius on the obverse, one portrait showing him with Hercules' lion-skin, the other depicting him laureate.¹³² The reverse image is identical on both: Constantius is crowned by winged victory, as he extends his hand to raise up a kneeling Britannia. These medallions depict a coherent narrative of the recapture of Britain: on the 10-*aurei* medallion Constantius greets the suppliant Britannia, and on the 5-*aurei* pieces he raises her up, back into the bosom of the Roman Empire. The image of an emperor lifting a prostrate region up by the hands, symbolically incorporating it into the empire, is familiar from earlier imperial imagery, such as Hadrian's provincial coin series.¹³³ As MacCormack points out in her detailed discussion of these medallions, one crucial difference between the Tetrarchic and the Hadrianic images of restoration is that Constantius is shown armed.¹³⁴ This gives the medallions a harder edge, demonstrating that the restoration of Britain was only possible through the accomplishments of a skilled imperial warrior.

Who were the recipients of these medallions? In the course of the third century, it had become common to reward faithful Roman officers with gold medallions, worth multiple *aurei*, in commemoration of significant campaigns or imperial milestones such as accessions or consulships.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ *RIC* VI Trier 34; Bastien and Metzger (1977) no. 218.

¹³⁰ On the parallel, see, *inter alia*, MacCormack (1981) 29; Casey (1994) 142–43; Nixon and Saylor Rodgers (1994) 140 n. 71; Rees (2002) 114.

¹³¹ *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).19.2. Cf. Weiser (2006) 219, who argues that the kneeling figure is actually the personification of the defeated Londinium.

¹³² *RIC* VI Trier 32–33; Weiser (2006) 217–18.

¹³³ Casey (1994) 141. For the Hadrianic precedents, see Smith (1988) 75–76; Ando (2000) 283–84, 293–94.

¹³⁴ MacCormack (1981) 30.

¹³⁵ Casey (2000) 445–48; Abdy (2006) 55.

With the turnover of emperors in this period being more frequent than was comfortable, such medallions became a way to win leading generals over to the new emperor's side. The contents of the Arras hoard indicate that the owners were the recipients of major donatives issued between the years 285 and 310. They were therefore high-ranking military officers.¹³⁶ The events commemorated on the medallions and coins suggest that much of the owners' careers were spent serving in the armies of Constantius and his son Constantine.¹³⁷ Roger Tomlin has argued, on the basis of names inscribed on a ring and etched onto one of the medallions, that the hoard was the property of two generations of soldiers: the father, Valerianus, and his son, Vitalianus, who was a *protector* in the army.¹³⁸ It is therefore probable that it was Valerianus who participated in the reconquest of Britain as a junior officer, and it was he who received both the 10- and 5-*aurei* gold medallions discussed above.¹³⁹ The production of these medallions at the Trier mint is significant, as it indicates they were designed to be awarded to officers at the ceremonies associated with Constantius' victory, perhaps even after the triumph itself.¹⁴⁰ It may also be no coincidence that the only issue of Tetrarchic coins with the reverse legend VIRTVS ILLVRICI ('the valour of Illyricum') were *aurei* also produced at Trier in 296.¹⁴¹ The accompanying image depicts an emperor riding on horseback with his spear above a galley in reference to the recovery of Britain. This VIRTVS ILLVRICI type was minted in the name of all four Tetrarchs. There were no other comparable issues of this type elsewhere in the empire, suggesting that they were created to form part of Constantius' victory donative at the triumph in Trier. These coins celebrated the military valour of the Illyrian emperors and their success over a Menapian rebel. Such issues encouraged the recipients to rejoice in the restoration of Britain with their army comrades, cementing their bonds of brotherhood and service to the Tetrarchs.¹⁴² This would have sent a stern message to any other generals who harboured imperial ambitions like Carausius: advancement into the imperial college was not open to those officers who tried to gain admission by rebellion. Any such revolts would be quashed.

¹³⁶ Bastien and Metzger (1977) 214–15.

¹³⁷ Casey (2000) 450.

¹³⁸ Tomlin (2006) 60–63. The graffito on the medallion reads *Vitaliani protictoris* ('belonging to Vitalianus, a *protector*').

¹³⁹ The distribution of the medallions suggests that he received much more in 303 than in 297 (Abdy [2006] 54).

¹⁴⁰ Casey (2000) 451; Abdy (2006) 56.

¹⁴¹ *RIC VI Trier* 87a–d, 88–89. For the deployment of the VIRTVS ILLVRICI slogan and similar legends earlier in the third century, see Davenport (2016) 389.

¹⁴² Kolb (2001) 193.

All four Tetrarchs assumed the title of *Britannicus Maximus* in celebration of the recapture of Britain.¹⁴³ It is particularly revealing that this victory was commemorated as a naval success, just as the panegyrist of 291 had foreseen.¹⁴⁴ As part of the Tetrarchic remodelling of the *forum Romanum*, the western Rostra was crowned with columns and statues of the four emperors and Jupiter. Gregor Kalas has demonstrated that the northern extension to the Rostra, which used to be thought fifth-century in date, is certainly pre-Constantinian. He argued that it should be associated with the Tetrarchic rebuilding project.¹⁴⁵ Since the original republican Rostra was named after the prows (*rostra*) seized from the ships of the Latin League after the Battle of Antium in 338 BC, the most likely justification for an extension under the Tetrarchs can be found in the British campaign, which was portrayed as a battle for control of the Ocean. A similar celebration of the Tetrarchs' suzerainty over the Ocean can be found on the Arch of Galerius at Thessaloniki, which was erected to celebrate Galerius' Persian victories in 298/299. Panel 21, on the north face of the south pier (B) of the arch, depicts all four of the emperors, showing the Augusti Diocletian and Maximian enthroned on heaven and earth respectively, and the Caesars Constantius and Galerius standing beside them.¹⁴⁶ The emperors extend their arms outwards to kneeling personifications of Britain and Syria (or Mesopotamia). At the far ends of the panel lie the recumbent figures of Oceanus, the sea, and Tellus, the land, emphasising Tetrarchic rule over the entire world.¹⁴⁷ These victory monuments celebrate the maritime supremacy of the Tetrarchs in the context of world domination, representing the final repudiation of Carausius' claims to the purple.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined how the regime of Carausius reconfigured his seafaring background and naval prowess into a statement of imperial suitability. Carausius' officials drew on his background as an accomplished helmsman and naval commander to promote his control over the Ocean: the coinage they created featured references to the emperor's fleet and its flagship and to the divine support provided by Neptune and Oceanus.

¹⁴³ Barnes (1982) 254–55. The title is first attested in 298 in a census edict from Egypt (*CPR* 23.20) and then in 301 on the copies of the Prices Edict and Currency Edict from Aphrodisias (Roueché [1989] nos. 230–31). An early inscription from Ostia, dated to 285, styles Diocletian *Britannicus Maximus*, but this probably gives him the titles of his western predecessor Carinus (*CIL* 14.128; Birley 2005: 368). I am grateful to one of the anonymous referees for their advice on this point.

¹⁴⁴ *Pan. Lat.* 11(3).19.4–5.

¹⁴⁵ Kalas (2015) 31–33.

¹⁴⁶ For the relationship between this image and the language of panegyrics, see MacCormack (1981) 128–29, 176–77.

¹⁴⁷ Pond Rothman (1977) 81.

This process fashioned the rise of a soldier emperor into a ‘sacred tale’, comparable to stories told in contemporary panegyrics about the rise of his rival Maximian. Carausius’ success at challenging the authority of Maximian and in shaping a coherent public image for himself demonstrates the vulnerability of Diocletian and Maximian to rivals from within their own army. When Gallic orators delivered panegyrics in honour of Maximian and Constantius in 289, 291, and 297, they passed over Carausius’ service in the army and instead demonised him as a pirate and brigand. The orators drew upon traditional techniques of invective which had been used centuries before during the conflicts of the late Republic, but adeptly repurposed them so that they would have contemporary resonance. The denigration of Carausius as a pirate did not simply recycle a standard insult, but pointedly undermined the emperor’s own background as a sailor. It also capitalised on the prejudices of the Gallic audiences, who wanted to be protected from piracy and raiding. After the reconquest of Britain, the victory was celebrated on medallions and gold coins issued as donatives to officers who had served in Constantius’ campaign. These donatives were designed to reinforce the bonds between Constantius and his soldiers, thus discouraging any further rivals from emerging within the army. The Tetrarchs celebrated their naval success by extending the Rostra in the *forum Romanum* and depicting their suzerainty over the Ocean on the Arch of Galerius.

This examination of the construction and deconstruction of Carausius’ public image assists us in understanding the political dynamics of the late third century. Carausius wanted to claim equality with Diocletian and Maximian, as demonstrated by the fact that he minted *antoniniani* with the obverse legend CARAVSIVS ET FRATRES SVI. The audience for these coins is hardly likely to have been the emperors themselves. Instead, they were aimed at portraying Carausius as a legitimate emperor to his soldiers and to the people who lived in Britain and Gaul. The language of the legend can be explained by the fact that soldiers in the Roman army frequently referred to their comrades as brothers.¹⁴⁸ In styling himself the ‘brother’ of Maximian and Diocletian, Carausius was not only seeking membership of the imperial college, but he was also identifying himself as part of the wider military brotherhood from which all three emperors emerged. But Diocletian and his colleagues could brook no rivals. The rhetoric and imagery of the Gallic panegyrics and the later Tetrarchic monuments undermined Carausius’ message completely, denying that these emperors had ever faced rebellion within their own ranks. This demonstrates the workings of political discourse and invective in the age of the soldier emperors. Their military background could be used to promote their claims to the purple, but it could also provide an easy target for criticism and denigration. The dismantling of Carausius’ public image demonstrates that no one was more aware of these possibilities than the soldier emperors themselves.

¹⁴⁸ Hope (2003) 86–87, 94.

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