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# New Light on Latin in Pre-Conquest Britain

*By* JONATHAN WILLIAMS

It has long been recognized that most legends on the coins of Pre-Conquest Britain are written in Roman script, and that many of these are in Latin as well.[1] Little has been made of this fact by the prehistorians and numismatists who have dealt with this material over the years, with the recent and notable exception of John Creighton. Reasons for this are various. Both Iron Age archaeology and numismatics have drifted away from the historical and the textual, including texts on coins, often leaving the interpretation of the rich repertoire of words and images that appear on the coins at the level of a simple search for the Roman prototypes for what are presumed to be derivative British designs.

Recent developments in the reading of Iron Age British coin-legends have added considerably to our knowledge of Latin in Pre-Conquest Britain, and to the potential of this evidence to contribute to wider debates. The picture that is now emerging is of the nuanced and sophisticated use of Latin, at the very least by those who were engaged with the composition of coin-legends, over quite a wide area of South-Eastern England from the late first century B.C. onwards. The question that then arises, and which this paper seeks to address in the form of a detailed commentary on some individual legends, highlighting different points, followed by a more general discussion, is what the implications of this material are for our understanding of key developments in the culture, politics, and societies of South-Eastern England in the decades before the Roman invasion. I will seek to argue that the implications are really rather significant.

## NEW PLACE-NAMES IN A NEW LANGUAGE: **VERLAMIO** AND **CAMVLODVNO**

These two inscriptions appear on bronze coins made in the names of the British rulers Tasciovanus and Cunobelin respectively (FIG. 1, Nos 1 and 2).[2] They clearly represent the place-names which in Post-Conquest Latin became *Camulodunum* (Colchester) and *Verulamium* or *Verolamium* (St Albans). In shortened forms — VER, VERL, CAM, CAMV, CAMVL — they appear frequently on other issues of these two rulers. They have generally been interpreted as abbreviations of the indigenous Celtic predecessors of their more familiar Latin equivalents. Partly in consequence, the hypothetical 'Celtic' forms *Verlamion* and *Camulodunon*, formed from the addition of a terminal 'n' to the coin-legends, have become current usage to refer to these settlements in the Pre-Conquest period.[3] This is not entirely unreasonable. The linguistic evidence does suggest

1 I am grateful to Jim Adams, Andrew Burnett, Clive Cheesman, J.D. Hill, Arnd Kerkhecker, Juliane Kerkhecker, Paul Sealey, Greg Woolf, and the journal's two anonymous readers for all their help and comments.

2 VERLAMIO: VA 1808 = BM 1745; CAMVLODVNO: VA 1977= BM 1928.

3 See, e.g., Holder 1896–1913, s.v. Camulodunon, Verulamion; Wacher 1974, 202 ('Verlamion'); Haselgrove and Millett 1997 ('Verlamion', 'Camulodunon'); Niblett 2001, 33 concedes that *Verlamion*, which is also used at the new Verulamium Museum, is merely a useful convention to distinguish between Pre- and Post-Conquest phases of the town. While the Latin form *Camulodunum* is fairly well attested, *Verulamium*, now the most commonly used version, only appears at Tac., *Ann.* 14.33. For a list of other variants, all from Greek and Latin literary texts (there are no helpful inscriptions), including *Verolamium* and *Virolanium*, see *RE* s.v. Verolamium, and *RIB* vol. 1, p. 73.

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that Latin place-name endings in *–um* may correspond to previous Celtic forms ending in *–on*. However, it seems probable that both these legends are in fact written in Latin, and further that they display detailed familiarity with the morphology of the Latin noun.[4]

In 1864 Sir John Evans recognized that both legends were in Latin, but he got his grammar slightly wrong. He identified them as locative forms, indicating 'the place where' the coins were minted.[5] But the locative for both words would in fact end in *–i* rather than *–o*. It is perhaps some relief to see such an eminent scholar, who no doubt had his Latin cases drilled into him at school, make a slip of this kind. But the locative has always been a rather elusive beast, and Evans had the right idea even if he got his cases muddled.

Both inscriptions are in fact in the Latin ablative case. There are two possible ways of interpreting them. There is a particular usage of the ablative with place-names which indicates 'the place where from'. Literary parallels show that the ablative can indicate a person's place of origin.[6] Alternatively they could be locatival ablatives, indicating 'the place where' the coins were made. With placenames in the second declension such as these, there is a well-attested tendency among Latin writers to opt for the ablative instead of the locative — so, *Camuloduno* instead of *Camuloduni* — going back at least as far as Cato's *De Agricultura* in the mid-second century B.C.[7] From Roman Britain, there are a number of instances in the Vindolanda Tablets. Adams speculates appositely for our purposes that the displacement of the locative by the ablative might have been particularly marked in the case of exotic place-names from the provinces which had only recently been assimilated by the Latin declension system.[8]

The differences between these two options are not all that great. There is often a degree of ambiguity about locatival forms, and both options entail more or less the same meaning, but on balance the second interpretation, namely that the inscriptions indicate where the coins were produced, seems marginally preferable. Either way, the fact that both these legends are in the Latin ablative strongly suggests that the other principal place-name inscription on British coins, that of *Calleva* on coins of Eppillus written as CALLEV in its fullest version, follows the same pattern.[9]

Parallels or sources for coin-inscriptions in this form are not easy to find — there are none on Gaulish or Roman coins — which is intriguingly suggestive of a considerable degree of inventiveness among the designers of British coins and the composers of their legends. Nor was it common practice for any other kind of Roman product to state its place of origin in this fashion.[10] Among the corpus of Arretine ceramic stamps is one that reads ARETIO, '[made] at Arretium'. Its interest is less as a potential model for our coin-legends than as a salutary warning not to take such inscriptions at face value.[11] For the pots bearing this stamp were in all likelihood not actually made in Arretium. Legends of this kind may have a rather different significance, more connected with establishing the identity, or the brand, of the product than recording its real place of manufacture. Whether or not the coins were actually made in *Ver[u]lamium* or *Camulodunum*,

4 Lambert 2003, 52 on Celtic neuter substantives in *–on*, equivalent to Latin *–um*.

5 J. Evans 1864, 246.

6 Livy 1.20.3: 'Alba oriundum' ('coming from Alba'); 8.22.5: 'Cumis erant oriundi' ('they were from Cumae'). For more detail, see Kühner and Stegmann 1955, 361–78.

7 Cato, *RR* 135.1: *Venafro* rather than *Venafri* but, in an adjoining sentence, two first-declension locatives, *Albae* and *Romae*. I am particularly grateful to Jim Adams for assistance on the locatival ablative.

8 See Adams 1995, at 110: *Londinio* rather than *Londini*. Though see also ibid., 109 for an authentic locative, *Londini*.

9 VA 407 = BM 986.

10 Exceptions include Dressel 20 amphora stamps that name places of origin like Hispalis, Astigi, and Corduba in Baetica: see Funari 1996. I am grateful to Paul Sealey for this information, and for guidance on manufacturers' stamps.

11 See Oxé *et al*. 2000, 112, no. 244.14.

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it was clearly thought by their producers to be an important part of their appearance, and perhaps essential to their proper functioning, that they declare the names of both significant individuals, the kings in whose names they were produced, and significant places with which they were associated. Scholars commenting on these place-name inscriptions have tended to refer to them as mintmarks, like the abbreviated, and peripheral, inscriptions on late Roman coins that identify which mint-city they were made in. But the prominence which these place-names are accorded on these coins — equal to that of the ruler names — implies that they appear for more than merely administrative reasons, and that the places themselves were central to the representation, identification, and location of regal authority.[12]

That these inscriptions are in Latin is also significant. For the places they refer to were, like the language, newcomers on the Late Iron Age scene. There was nothing like the so-called 'territorial *oppida*' of *Verulamium*, *Camulodunum*, and *Calleva* before their appearance in the landscape of South-Eastern England in the late first century B.C. Together they comprise a heterogeneous group of sites which share variously in a range of characteristics including fortified enclosures, élite residence, evidence for ritual and metalworking, and nucleated settlement. Individually and as a set they represent an unprecedented development within Britain, and the coins which provide the earliest evidence for their names cannot date more than a few decades after their foundations.

What we see is the use of a new technology, writing, which itself cannot be shown to predate the late first century B.C. within Britain, used to express the names of a new type of place, all written in a new language.[13] The sole aspects of this package which are in any way indigenous are the names themselves which are clearly British in derivation and form though they may nevertheless be new creations, and the vehicle for the advertisement of all these novelties, the coinage.[14] They also mention a new kind of individual in Late Iron Age society, the king, or *rex*, as they were sometimes called in Latin on their coins. But how should we conceive of the nature of their position and their power?

## THE NATURE OF KINGLY AUTHORITY: **CVNOBELINI**

Tasciovanus and Cunobelin, the rulers whose names appear on the coins just discussed, seem to have held some sort of sway over a large area of South-Eastern England, mostly north of the Thames, in the decades before the Roman invasion. The placenames on their coins link them to *Ver[u]lamium* and *Camulodunum* respectively. Other legends, also in Latin, reveal that Cunobelin either was, or claimed to be, the son of Tasciovanus: e.g., CVNO / TASC F (short for *Tasciovani filius*).[15]

The occurrence of personal names on coins was an important new development of the late first century B.C. The precise chronology is hard to establish, but beginning in the latter part of first century B.C., perhaps with a series of gold coins from South-Central England inscribed

[12] Williams 2002, 147–8.

[13] Williams 2001.

[14] For *Camulodunum*, formed from a commonly occurring divine name written in Latin inscriptions as Camulus and the frequent Celtic placename element *–duno*, meaning 'fort', see Holder 1896–1913, s.v. Camulodunon; Lambert 2003, 37; Delamarre 2003, 154–6. For *Verlamium*, formed from the intensitive prefix element *ver–* and *lama*, meaning 'hand', see Delamarre 2003, 195, 314, who interprets it as meaning 'generous', and adduces a personal name Lamaverus which consists of the same two elements inverted. The lack of previous context for British placenames makes it hard to see how novel these two are, but their associations with divinity and open-handedness are perhaps suggestive of qualities which the rulers in question wished to have ascribed to them.

[15] VA 2053 = BM 1870.

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FIG. 1: 1. Bronze coin of Tasciovanus (BM 1746); 2. Bronze coin of Cunobelin (BM 1928); 3. Gold coin of Cunobelin (BM 1769); 4. Silver coin of Esuprastus (CM 2000.3-1.2); 5. Gold coin attributed to the Iceni inscribed ANTED (BM 3790); 6. Silver coin attributed to the Iceni inscribed AESV (BM 4561); 7. Gold coin attributed to the Corieltavi inscribed VOLISIOS – DVMOC[OVEROS] (BM 3333); 8. Gold coin attributed to the Corieltavi inscribed IISVP-RA[SV] (BM 3269). Scale 2:1.

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COMMIOS, the habit of writing the names of individuals on coins spread throughout the coin-producing regions of Britain, with the exception of the so-called Durotrigan, or South-Western, series which remained unlettered. Reasoning from the evidence of a handful of literary references mentioning some of the same names as those on the coins, the occurrence of the Latin word *rex*

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on some issues, and general likelihood, it is usually assumed that these individuals were kings of some kind.[16] But what was the nature of their authority? How were their positions constituted? None of these questions has clear answers. Perhaps the coin-legends show a way forward.

The recent discovery of a scattered hoard of gold coins of two of these named rulers, Dubnovellaunos and Cunobelin, near Chelmsford in Essex, has allowed the reading of the inscription on the 'biga' staters of Cunobelin, datable to the early decades of the first century A.D., to be confirmed as CVNOBELINI (FIG. 1, No. 3).[17] This is the genitive form of Cunobelin's name in Latin, indicating possession and/or authorship. Interestingly, it would also have been the genitive form of his name in Celtic.[18] The same form appears on two other bronze coin-types in his name, and on at least one silver type. There may be other instances on other types where the legend is not so clearly legible (at least on the specimens in the British Museum collection available to me).[19]

No other British ruler's name appears on coins in the genitive. There is a clutch of examples on Continental Iron Age coins, mostly in Latin but with some in Gaulish.[20] A few Roman moneyers' names appear in the genitive on coins of the Roman Republic, but it is *never* used for the emperor's name on Roman imperial coins.[21] The closest parallels are in fact not to be found on coins, but among the corpus of makers' stamps on tablewares, amphorae, and mortaria of the kinds which were being imported into Britain at around the time that the British coins in question were produced, on which manufacturers' names may be written either in the genitive or the nominative case. No doubt there were also many other kinds of stamped imports in perishable materials which do not survive which followed the same pattern. These, I suggest, provide the most plausible model and source for these genitive name inscriptions on Cunobelin's coins.

There are also strong visual similarities between some inscribed British coin-types and Roman stamps which strengthen the case, in particular the use of tablets or cartouches within which British coin-inscriptions sometimes appear, for which there are no numismatic precedents anywhere, whether in the Iron Age or the Roman series. These striking affinities between Roman manufacturers' stamps and British coin designs may also imply a generic similarity of meaning in the language as well.[22] Makers' names in the genitive presumably mean 'the product of …', rather than 'in the name of …' or 'the property of …'. If this were also the meaning of the genitives on Cunobelin's coins, the implication would be that his relationship to the coinage was being represented as that of author rather than proprietor, of provider rather than owner, a conclusion which might offer interesting commentary on the important question of the nature of Cunobelin's position as *rex*.

This is perhaps a slender basis on which to attempt to assess the character of Cunobelin's kingship, but let us see where the attempt leads us. Whatever the cultural context, it is always tempting to interpret the advent of coin-production as evidence of something like a centralized polity or bureaucratic state, however limited in degree. In the case of Late Iron Age Britain, the coinage, together with the use of the title *rex*, perhaps misleadingly translated as 'king' (who knows how closely its sense in Latin related to any British concepts it was being used to represent?), is often taken to imply the rise of a new political institution, kingship, and of a new

16 Cunobelin, Verica, and Eppillus are all called REX on their coins. See Creighton 2000, 168–70. The name of Tasciovanus is associated with the word RICON on one issue of his gold coins (VA 1780 = BM 1628). Usually interpreted as the British Celtic equivalent of REX, it may simply be an abbreviated personal name. See D.E. Evans 1998, 99–106, esp. 103–4.

17 VA 1910 = BM 1769. For a summary of the hoard, see Bland and Voden Decker 2001, 90–1, no. 178. See also de Jersey and Wickenden 2004 on the numismatic aspects.

18 See Lambert 2003, 51: Celtic 'second declension' genitive singular forms end in *–i*, as in Latin.

19 Bronze: VA 1971 = BM 1921; VA 2089 = BM 1968. Silver: VA 2055 = BM 1871.

20 See Colbert de Beaulieu and Fischer 1998, 527–8 for a list.

21 cf., e.g., *RRC* no. 403: KALENI / CORDI.

22 For more on this point, see Williams 2002.

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kind of political association, the tribal kingdom, within Britain. In the lack of hard information about what kingship was actually like in this period, analogies and suppositions rush in to fill the vacuum. The appeal of imagining a solidly constituted royal office ruling over a bounded realm has often proved too powerful to resist.

However, there is some reason to think that such a vision of kingship may be inappropriate for the circumstances of Late Pre-Conquest Britain, where powerful individuals such as Cunobelin seem only to be late arrivals on the scene. Imagine rather, as J.D. Hill has recently done, a looser, more tentative and experimental version of kingship, in which the newly pre-eminent ruler is only a few steps away from the position of an aristocratic leader enjoying a certain prominence on the conditional sufferance of his peers.[23]

In this sort of scenario, it becomes more appropriate to think of Cunobelin and his ilk as exercising a precarious, continually re-negotiated form of power maintained through means such as alliances, the exaction of tribute, and the redistribution of benefactions of various kinds, including coinage, rather than as medieval-style territorial monarchs minting by inherited regalian right. Furthermore, in an account of Iron Age kingship such as this, the meaning of Cunobelin's name in the genitive on the coins approximates more closely to that of the genitive names in Roman makers' stamps, which I have argued are their likely models: the *rex* as maker and provider, rather than as royal proprietor.

In sum, this is not merely likely to be a more reasonable characterization of what the position of kings *was* like in Iron Age South-Eastern Britain. It is also the more attractive translation of the genitive on the coins of Cunobelin, especially given the Roman ceramic parallels. What is interesting is that this picture of Iron Age sovereignty ends up not dissimilar to the way in which Augustus worked out his own unique position in the Roman world. But then both Roman and British worlds seem to have been travelling away from a pattern of society based on varieties of warrior democracy towards more monarchical forms of governance in the first century B.C.[24] That they ended up in similar places at the end is perhaps not surprising, and it does not necessarily mean that Britons were simply copying Romans.

## PRE-INVASION LATINITY IN BRITAIN: **SVB ESVPRASTO** / **ESICO FECIT**

The legends discussed thus far have revealed a close familiarity with Latin across Southern Britain, at least within certain limited groups. They also give the impression of an active linguistic capacity. The right words in the right forms are chosen to express information about the nature and location of new forms of power important for the local context. Moreover, they are original, not simply copied from Gaulish or Roman coins. A newly re-read coin-legend from East Anglia confirms the sense that the reception of Latin in Pre-Conquest Britain was far more than passive.

New specimens of the silver coin-type formerly attributed to Prasutagus, husband of Boudica, queen of the Iceni, revealed a few years ago that the correct reading of the obverse inscription was in fact SVB ESVPRASTO, rather than SVB RI PRASTO (FIG. 1, No. 4).[25] The reverse legend, ESICO FECIT, remained unchanged. Both legends together mean something like 'Esico made [it] under Esuprastus'.[26]

[23] See Hill forthcoming. For an earlier construction of unstable Iron Age kingship within the prestige-goods model, see Haselgrove 1982.

[24] See Hill and Williams 2006.

[25] VA 780 = BM 4577. See Williams 2000.

[26] Clive Cheesman has suggested to me that Esico may be a hypocoristic form for a longer name. Chadburn 2006 argues on various unconvincing grounds that Esuprastus and Prasutagus are likely to be different names for the same person, while one of *Britannia*'s anonymous referees raises the possibility that Tacitus might simply have got

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The reverse legend is paralleled by ceramic and other kinds of makers' stamps couched in the same form, though on these the verb is often abbreviated to F. The Latin preposition *sub* with a personal name in the ablative usually means 'under the power of', 'subject to' or 'in the time of', and with royal names can mean 'during the reign of'. Any of these might be applicable here, and would identify Esico as Esuprastus' contemporary and probably his social inferior, though whether he was a moneyer, a junior ruler, or some other kind of subordinate remains unclear.

To my knowledge, the use of *sub* together with a personal name is not paralleled anywhere else on either coins or pots, whether Roman or Gaulish. This is an important point, because it is the clearest indication we possess of active knowledge of Latin, as opposed to that of an intelligent copyist adapting formulae taken from imported sources, such as the use of the Latin conventions for filiation which appear on a number of British coin-types — e.g. VERICA COMMI F (Verica, son of Commius) — and which betray knowledge of Roman epigraphic, as well as onomastic, custom.

The inscription as a whole is grammatically the most complex construction to appear on British coins, as it consists of a complete sentence with a finite verb. This singular complexity might be explained by the late date of the coins on which it appears — it is generally thought that they were one of the last indigenous coin-types to be produced in Britain as the obverse bust seems to copy Nero's coin-portrait from the late 50s, and perhaps as much as half a century may separate this issue from the early gold coins of Cunobelin discussed above. Alternatively, rather than separating this issue off from previous coins with simpler inscriptions by the watershed of the Roman invasion, it might be more reasonable to use the evidence it provides for the active knowledge and use of Latin to inform our understanding of the linguistic competence of some of the more straightforward inscriptions on earlier issues.

How widespread the use of Latin was in Pre-Conquest Britain, socially or geographically, remains an open question. The coin legends alone cannot provide a clear answer, because they are not necessarily a straightforward indicator. Before the production of this, the latest and most complex Latin legend in the whole British Iron Age series, all previous inscribed types in northern East Anglia had consisted of traditional design motifs accompanied by abbreviated, one-word reverse legends with a tendency towards Gallo-Latin script (crossed Ds in ANTED and so forth, in the Gallic manner (FIG. 1, No. 5)), in contrast to the Roman-style lettering which was used on Cunobelin's and Verica's coinages in the South. This might simply be taken to mean that East Anglia was, until the invasion, outside the radius of classicizing artistic influence and the spread of Latin. The more complex alternative is that coin-designers in the region had continually been aware of, but had consciously rejected, the use of Latin and associated classicizing motifs until this issue in the late 50s. Two aspects of the comparative coin evidence may add substance to this possibility.

One of the later East Anglian types following the traditional East Anglian pattern bears the reverse legend AESV, which is very likely to be the first element of Esuprastus with the initial

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Esuprastus' name horribly wrong, writing it as Prasutagus by mistake. But, *contra* Chadburn, there is no evidence that Celtic personal names were changeable in this way and, *contra* referee, it's hard to see how we get from Esuprastus to Prasutagus through the normal processes of inter-linguistic mangling of foreign names and scribal error. As Evans 1998 shows, the *pras–* element is not common in Celtic onomastics. Following a suggestion from Marion Archibald drawing on various Indo-European dithematic naming patterns where elements from ancestral names are recombined to form the names of the next generation (so, for a Germanic example, the various names of the children of Hildebrand and Gertrude: sons Gerbrand, Trudbrand, Brandger, and daughters Trudger, Hildtrud, Brandtrud, Brandhild, and Trudhild: see Wilson 1998, 70; or, for a probably Irish example, Barrivendus son of Vendubarus who appears on a post-Roman funerary inscription from Llandawke in Carmarthenshire: see Thomas 1994, 98–9), I remain convinced that Esuprastus and Prasutagus are not the same, but attracted by the notion that they were related.

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long vowel spelt differently (FIG. 1, No. 6).[27] If this is right, what it would show is that coin designs were made for Esuprastus in both traditional and classical styles, a phenomenon that can be paralleled in the silver and bronze coins of Tasciovanus and Cunobelin, where the production of indigenous and Romanizing types seems to have been concurrent for some decades in the late first century B.C. and early first century A.D. Similarly, in the Pre-Conquest coin tradition of the East Midlands and Lincolnshire attributed to the tribe now known as the Corieltavi, there is clear evidence of classicizing influence on the coinage, especially in the form of the obverse inscriptions, within an overall hybrid style combining elements from both traditions (FIG. 1, No. 7).[28] The East Anglian tradition is exceptional in the extent to which it remains faithful to local traditional styles until very late. The evidence of the reception of classicizing motifs in adjacent traditions suggests strongly that this was a conscious expression of preference, rather than the outcome of ignorance.

Secondly, it now seems very likely that gold and silver coins from the neighbouring East Midlands tradition with the inscription ESVPRASV or IISVPRASV also refer to Esuprastus, who is probably the same person (FIG. 1, No. 8).[29] Here then is an instance of two adjoining traditions representing the same name on their coins in contrasting ways: different scripts (Roman vs. Gallo-Latin), different language probably (Latin vs. British), and different decorative styles (Romanizing bust vs. traditional motifs).

This tendency towards local variety on the coins is arguably a reflection of a more general penchant for regional diversity in the cultures of Iron Age Britain, rather than simply the differing degrees to which familiarity with classical culture and Latin had penetrated each area. British coin-designers across the coin-using area were making choices to include, exclude, or recombine classical and indigenous motifs within a changing palette of options that was being expanded through the availability of new decorated Roman imports of various kinds.[30] All of which leads to the conclusion that while the appearance of Latin on a British coin clearly attests to its presence in a particular region, its absence elsewhere says less about the limits of the language's spread than about local preferences.

## CONCLUSION

Together these three cases provide hard evidence for the idea that in various parts of Pre-Conquest Southern Britain some people had quite a complex and informed knowledge of Latin. What do we mean by complex? Certainly more than the mere adaptation of formulae stamped on pots or other imports, and encompassing sufficient active mastery to allow the production of original texts such as SVB ESVPRASTO ESICO FECIT.

This might seem an extraordinarily uncontroversial thing to propose. After all, Britain was next door to the Roman Empire for the best part of a century before the conquest. Yet the implications of this body of evidence have been mostly neglected. John Creighton's recent book *Coins and Power in Late Iron Age Britain* has discussed in detail the socio-political implications of the prestigious use of Latin by newly emergent élites in South-East England. He argues persuasively that Latin speech and writing were adopted by the new kings and dynasties in the region as a way of demarcating themselves from the British-speaking and largely illiterate mass of their subject

[27] VA 775 = BM 4558. See Williams 2000, 281. This common Celtic name element can be written Esu–, Iisu–, Eisu–, or Aesu–. See D.E. Evans 1967, 200–3.

[28] For the new, corrected form of this tribal name (formerly 'Coritani', then 'Corieltauvi'), see Breeze 2002, and Tomlin and Hassall 2003, 382, n. 84.

[29] Williams 2000, esp. 279–80.

[30] Williams 2001, esp. 13.

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populations, in much the same way as was happening at the same time in many other places inside the Empire.[31] His preferred mechanism for the transmission of Latin language and Roman culture to Britain, hostage princes educated in Rome who returned home to take up their thrones in Britain and brought their acquired taste for Roman culture with them, may be implausible for a variety of reasons, not least that it fails to explain the inconsistency and variability of the occurrence and adoption of Roman motifs and material forms on coins and elsewhere.[32] Nevertheless, Creighton's is the only substantial discussion to date of the social significance of Latin in Pre-Conquest Britain. I would want to add three critical elements to it, which arise out of the foregoing discussion. First, a greater sense of the significance of more immediate cross-Channel contacts as a source of knowledge of the new language within Britain.[33] Just as decorated continental products of various kinds must have served as important sources of the new imagery that appears on the coins, so it seems reasonable to suppose that the human contacts which accompanied them supplied the linguistic vector. Britons did not need to go to Rome to pick up some Latin, as there were both native Latin speakers and other Gaulish learners close at hand on the other side of the Channel and no doubt crossing it fairly regularly. Second, I would urge a rethinking of the significance of the ruler- and place-names that appear on the coins for our understanding of political developments in South-Eastern England. We need a fresh approach to the narrative of the political economy of Southern England in this period, a kind of approach which has been out of fashion in recent years since Derek Allen's historical account based on the coins fell from favour.[34] Finally, I would advocate a renewed focus on the implications of the distinctive patterns arising from the evidence for the uses of Latin within Iron Age Britain. Latin seems really only to appear on coins, and only patchily even there: not all British coin-traditions took it up. Where are the Pre-Conquest Latin inscriptions on stone or metal, of the kinds that provide such a rich source for the Roman epigrapher?[35] They are certainly not now extant and, in my view, never existed.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BM = R. Hobbs, *British Iron Age Coins in the British Museum*, London (1996)
RRC = M.H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, 2 vols, Cambridge (1974)
VA = R.D. Van Arsdell, *Celtic Coinage of Britain*, London (1987)

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31 Creighton 2000, ch. 6. Cf. also Gosden 2004, 108–10 on the strategic use of Roman and local forms of material culture by Iron Age kings.
32 See Williams 2005, 73 for discussion.
33 So Gosden 2004, 109: 'South-eastern Britain was as much Gallicised as Romanised in this period'.
34 Williams 2003, 47–8.
35 cf. Williams 2005, 73; for a summary of the non-numismatic evidence for writing in Pre-Conquest Britain, consisting mostly of brief graffiti on pots, see Williams 2002, 148.

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