

# The Emperor Gallienus and the Senators

## *Tradition, Change, and Perception*

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If there are any Roman emperors who broke with traditions, Gallienus is certainly one of them. He ruled from 253 to 268, until 260 together with his father Valerian, and then on his own. He lived in a time of serious military crises, which may have forced him to opt for new military and administrative solutions.<sup>1</sup>

Ever since the years of the emperors Philip the Arab (244–249) and Decius (249–251), Gothic bands and their allies plundered Dacia, Moesia Inferior and Thrace, and in 252 the Persian Empire renewed its war against the Romans. 249 and 253 were years of civil war between emperors and usurpers, which came at the cost of many Roman casualties. In the Balkans, looting bands may have reached Greece. Barbarian attacks on northern Asia Minor started about 254–255, and went on well beyond Gallienus' reign. From about 254 Alamanni were steadily infiltrating into the Agri Decumates (now southwestern Germany), and in 256 a series of Germanic invasions across the river Rhine started, with devastating consequences for Gallic prosperity.<sup>2</sup> In 259–260 the situation came to a climax: Elb-Germanic bands invaded Italy, coming through Switzerland and Raetia; plundering Franks went through Gaul and Spain and even reached North Africa; the Persians defeated the emperor Valerian, took him prisoner, and plundered the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire; and

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- 1 By crisis I understand an escalation of problems into an insoluble, complex, many-sided malfunctioning of the existing system, which inevitably must result in changes in administration, power relations, and social structures, and could threaten the continuity of life styles. One may speak of an empire-wide crisis when problems in different regions influence or determine one another, and cannot be solved by only regional efforts.
  - 2 In quite a few articles published in M. Auer and Chr. Hinker, eds., *Roman Settlements and the "Crisis" of the 3rd Century AD* (Wiesbaden 2021), the authors show that material traces demonstrate that at least in northwestern regions of the Roman empire radical changes in ways of inhabitation took place, which suggest that in the third century, and especially in its second half, the continuity of former lifestyles was threatened. See the articles by Simone Benguerel (31–45), Ralph Grüssinger and Alice Willmitzer (pp. 59–69), Ingrid Mader and Sabine Jäger-Wersonig (81–91), Patrick Marko (93–105), Antonin Nüsslein (107–122), and Ursula Schachinger, Raimund Kastler, and Felix Lang (133–167). Something similar happened at Athens, after the Herulian invasion of 267 CE. See the article by Sarah Beal (17–30).

in the Balkan provinces of the Empire barbarian warrior groups even seem to have settled.<sup>3</sup> The invasions and subsequently Valerian's downfall caused many usurpations, in west and east.

Gallienus, the other Augustus, had not participated in the Persian campaign, and now became sole emperor. He had to accept that his ally in the East, Odaenathus of Palmyra, who had successfully fought Persians and usurpers in the years 260–262, became too powerful, and that in the west the usurper Postumus founded a parallel Empire that would last until 274. The remainder of Gallienus' reign was characterized by continuing invasions and ongoing civil wars.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere I suggested that Rome's enemies could be so successful because they were opposed by Roman forces that had been weakened by preceding wars, internal conflicts, and the plague.<sup>5</sup> They had probably not yet been replenished by new recruits.

How did the emperor Gallienus manage to survive? Undoubtedly by personal prowess, clever tactics, popularity among his soldiers, and the support of

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3 Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 34.3: “Nam cum pellere Gothos cuperet (*i.e.* the emperor Claudius II), quos diurnitas nimis validos ac prope incolas effecerat. ...” On the situation in those regions from the times of Decius to the reign of Aurelian see L. de Blois, *Invasions, Deportations, and Repopulation. Mobility and Migration in Thrace, Moesia Inferior, and Dacia in the Third Quarter of the Third Century AD*, in: E. Lo Cascio and L.E. Tacoma, eds., *The Impact of Mobility and Migration in the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Twelfth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Rome, June 17–19, 2015)*, (Leiden/Boston 2017), 43–54. Already early in this period of crisis, under Decius, Philippopolis was destroyed and depopulated. Nicopolis ad Istrum, which had been a thriving town in Moesia Inferior, lost its extramural houses through fire. There are more traces of devastations. The town was besieged on at least two occasions. The south gate was blocked and the defensive ditch was extended. Recovery did not take place until the closing years of the century when the frontier was restored. See A.G. Poulter, *Nicopolis ad Istrum. A Late Roman and Early Byzantine City. The Finds and the Biological Remains* (Oxford 2007), 9–11. The situation in Thrace and Moesia Inferior may not have become as bad as in the fifth century, though. In that age towns changed into fortresses because of the semi-permanent violence and unsafety, and a steep demographic decline was unmistakable. Such things did not yet happen in the third century but the situation was not entirely dissimilar. See A.G. Poulter, ‘Economic Collapse in the Countryside and the Consequent Transformation of City into Fortress in Late Antiquity’, in: L. de Blois and J. Rich, eds., *The Transformation of Economic Life under the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Second Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Nottingham, July 4–7, 2001)*, (Amsterdam 2002), 244–59; *idem* in N. Christie, ed., *Landscapes of Change. Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot/Burlington VT 2004), 223–53, esp. 242–7.

4 On this period of crisis in the Roman empire see L. de Blois, *Image and Reality of Roman Imperial Power in the Third Century AD. The Impact of War* (London/New York 2019), 65–86.

5 See De Blois 2019, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 78; L. de Blois, ‘The Emperor Gallienus and the Senate. Administrative and Military Reform in the Roman Empire of the Mid-Third Century AD’, in: W. Eck, F. Santangelo and K. Vössing, eds., *Emperor, Army, and Society. Studies in Roman Imperial History for Anthony R. Birley* (Bonn 2022), 289–90.

able generals and officers.<sup>6</sup> But he also implemented fairly radical military and administrative emergency measures that enabled him to survive the crisis but ran counter to Roman military and administrative traditions.

In their appointment policies almost all emperors who had reigned before Gallienus had followed the precedents set by the emperor Augustus. Senators who were active in the emperor's service had acted as *tribuni militum latiaclavii* and *legati legionis*, which gave them at least some military experience and liaisons with long-serving officers, such as centurios, *primipili* and *praefecti*. They had also been appointed governors of all but a few provinces. As provincial governors they had had the support of a small staff, which mainly consisted of military who had been seconded from nearby armies, friends and helpers who had traveled with them to their provinces, and provincial notables who served one Roman governor after the other. The latter were important. They would know where to get money and supplies. The most high-status senators, the patricians, however, were allowed to follow shorter career-paths, particularly between the praetorship and the consulate.<sup>7</sup> Their activities were more concentrated on Italy and the imperial court in Rome.

Early in his reign, during his joint reign with his father Valerian, when he was fighting the Goths and other invaders in the Balkans, Gallienus created a mobile army consisting of cavalry, detachments from several legions, auxiliary units, and *numeri* from allied tribes, which enabled him to run down spread-out bands of invaders.<sup>8</sup> This was a wise measure because continuous plundering over a long span of time would diminish the productivity of the

6 See *HA Gall.* 15.1: "Occiso igitur Gallieno seditio ingens militum fuit, cum spe praedae ac publicae vastationis imperatorem sibi utilem, necessarium, fortem, efficacem ad invidiam faciendam dicerent raptum (Now after Gallienus was slain, there was a great mutiny among the soldiers, for, hoping for booty and public plunder, they maintained, in order to arouse hatred, that they had been robbed of an emperor who had been useful and indispensable to them, courageous and competent)". A positive note but not without criticism. The soldiers need the emperor because he gives them hope to rob and depredate!

7 P.M.M. Leunissen, *Konsuln und Konsulare in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander (180–235 n.Chr.)*. *Prosopographische Untersuchungen zur senatorischen Elite im römischen Kaiserreich* (Amsterdam 1989), 34–41; N. Hächler, *Kontinuität und Wandel des Senatorenstandes im Zeitalter der Soldatenkaiser* (Leiden/ Boston 2019), 114–18.

8 On Gallienus' new army, consisting of cavalry and infantry detachments, see H.-G. Simon, 'Die Reform der Reiterei unter Kaiser Gallien', in: W. Eck, H. Galsterer and H. Wolff, eds., *Studien zur antiken Sozialgeschichte. Festschrift F. Vittinghoff* (Vienna/Cologne 1980), 435–51; J.B. Campbell, 'Change and Continuity', in: *Cambridge Ancient History*<sup>2</sup> XII (Cambridge 2005), 115f.; P. Cosme, *L'armée romaine, VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.–V<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C.* (Paris 2009), 212–15; M. Geiger, *Gallienus*, Frankfurt am Main 2013, 322–8; De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 73–4; idem 2022, op. cit. (n. 5), 290–91. Such a combination of *vexillationes* and *equites* operated in southern Gaul under Claudius II, just after Gallienus' sole reign. It was commanded by Placidianus. See *ILS* 569 = *CIL* XII 2228.

regions concerned. In the Balkans enduring plundering would hit the direct hinterland of a large army, the one situated at the Lower Danube, which could only lead to starvation and rebellion among the afflicted soldiery. It was not possible to import *all* necessary food and commodities from far away provinces. Existing infrastructure, a lack of sufficient means of transportation, and insecurity underway would not allow it, and some surplus-growing regions, such as Egypt, were in trouble themselves.<sup>9</sup>

This military reform enabled Gallienus to reap military successes. Supported by his mobile army he successfully fought invading bands, first in the Balkans and subsequently, from about 256, in Gaul, for example at the Rhine border.<sup>10</sup> In 259 Gallienus gained an important victory over Germanic invaders in northern Italy, near Milan. With the emperor and his army having disappeared to Italy, however, bands of Franks came over the Rhine, which resulted in Postumus usurping imperial power at Cologne. In 261, when Gallienus himself was fighting Postumus, his general Aureolus defeated usurpers coming from the east of the Empire, the Macriani, at Mursa in Pannonia Inferior.<sup>11</sup> Aureolus was one of Gallienus' best generals and had created the new mobile army together with the emperor.<sup>12</sup> During his sole reign, the emperor used his new army to oppose marauding bands in the Balkans, Greece, and parts of northern and western Asia Minor.<sup>13</sup> Using North Italy as his base, he also continued fighting Postumus.<sup>14</sup> In 267 he won a battle near Milan over Aureolus, who either had gone over to Postumus or had started a rebellion of his own.<sup>15</sup>

Another military reform that went against Roman tradition concerned the officer corps. From 260 onwards, no more senatorial *tribuni militum lativestralii* and *legati legionis* were appointed.<sup>16</sup> The military tribunate became the

9 On turmoil in Egypt see De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 144–5.

10 Zos., 1.30.2f.

11 See A. Goltz and U. Hartmann, 'Valerianus und Gallienus', in: Johne, K.-P., U. Hartmann and Th. Gerhardt, eds., *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser. Krise und Transformation des Römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr. (235–284)*, I–II, (Berlin 2008), 261.

12 De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 74. On this able general see Goltz and Hartmann 2008, op. cit. (n. 11), 261–3; 278; 288f. Zosimus, 1.40.1, calls him commander of the cavalry, and in Zonaras, 12.25, he is described as commander of all the cavalry and very powerful, which indicates his strong position within Gallienus' new army.

13 See De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 82–6.

14 De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 79–86 *passim*.

15 On Aureolus' rebellion and downfall see Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 33.17–20.

16 On Gallienus' changing appointment policies see B. Malcus, 'Notes sur la révolution du système administrative romain au troisième siècle', *Opuscula Romana* 7 (1969), 213–7; M. Christol, 'Les réformes de Gallien et la carrière sénatoriale', in: S. Panciera, ed., *Epigrafiya e ordine senatorio* (Rome 1982), 143–66; I. Piso, *An der Nordgrenze des römischen Reiches*.

exclusive domain of *equites*, some of whom were members of the local gentry but others were career soldiers. Legions were from now on commanded by equestrian *praefecti legionis*, and *vexillationes* by equally equestrian *praepositi*. In this way, Gallienus improved the military quality of his officer corps. Senators had been suitable for administering military camps during the era of the *Pax Romana*, but did not have the practical military and logistical training that was required in wartime situations. Equestrian officers, on the contrary, had been trained in a series of military middle cadre functions. By this radical change in appointment policies, Gallienus broke with a tradition of ages. During the Republic, senators had contributed greatly to Roman warfare in responsible positions. However, under the Principate, and especially during the third century, even before 260, not all senators had done so. N. Hächler has made clear that patrician senators seldom fulfilled military functions such as the military tribunate and the command of a legion.<sup>17</sup>

Yet another original, untraditional measure that Gallienus took, regarded his relations with the military cadre of his new army. He began to give the title *protector* to his most important officers, the centurions, and higher cadre of his mobile army, which suggested a personal relationship.<sup>18</sup> The emperor himself was the protector of the entire Empire, and they were his.<sup>19</sup> Gallienus took some untraditional administrative emergency measures too. In most provinces the emperor appointed equestrian governors (*praesides*). From

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*Ausgewählte Studien (1972–2003)*, (Stuttgart 2005), 396–98; P. Eich, *Zur Metamorphose des politischen Systems in der römischen Kaiserzeit. Die Entstehung einer 'personalen Bürokratie' im langen dritten Jahrhundert* (Berlin 2005), 341–56; P. Cosme, 'À propos de l'édit de Gallien', in: O.J. Hekster, G. de Kleijn and D. Slootjes, eds., *Crises in the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Seventh Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 20–24 June 2006* (Leiden/Boston 2007), 97–109; Idem 2009, op. cit. (n. 8), 234–8; Geiger 2013, op. cit. (n. 8), 336–41; W. Eck, 'Die Neuorganisation der Provinzen und Italiens unter Diokletian', in: W. Eck and S. Puliatti, eds., *Diocleziano e la frontiera giuridica dell'impero* (Pavia 2018), 117–31; Hächler 2019, op. cit. (n. 7), 21–126, esp. 124–6; De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 190–6; idem 2022, op. cit. (n. 5).

17 Hächler 2019, op. cit. (n. 7), 114.

18 Until then *protector* had not been a regular title. On these *protectores* see M. Christol, 'La carrière de Traianus Mucianus et l'origine des *protectores*', *Chiron* 7 (1977), 394–408; Cosme 2009, op. cit. (n. 8), 234; I.A.M. Mennen, *Power and Status in the Roman Empire, AD 193–284* (Leiden/Boston 2011), 227–31.

19 See *CIL* XIV 5334 (Ostia, Gallienus' sole reign, about 262): "Invicto Gallieno exsuperantisimo Augusto, protectori imperii Romani omniumque salutis ... universi cives Ostienses decennii voti compotes. (To the unconquerable emperor Gallienus, surpassing all others, protector of the Roman empire and of the welfare of all. ... all citizens of Ostia, at the occasion of good wishes at the ten-years jubilee)".

the period of Septimius Severus onwards, every now and then experienced equestrian *praesides* had been appointed provincial governors instead of less experienced senators. These equestrian governors received the title *agens vice praesidis*, although not all of them were stand-ins for deceased or departed senatorial governors. After 260 most provinces were governed by *equites* who were called *virī perfectissimi agentes vice praesidis* or just *praesides*. Asia, Africa, and Achaëa were the only provinces, which continued to be ruled by senators.<sup>20</sup> By implementing this change, Gallienus again broke with Roman tradition, making an end to the long-standing senatorial involvement in the majority of Roman provinces. That Asia and Africa were excluded from Gallienus' reforms is because the governorships of Asia and Africa belonged to the top of a senatorial career. Leaving these to the senate undoubtedly meant to please the most important and high-status senators, who had the means and connections to start rebellions. But why Achaëa? This is likely to be sought in the fact that Gallienus was an admirer of Greek *paideia*. In 264, in between a lot of fighting, Gallienus found time to go to Athens, become an *archon* there, and have himself initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries.<sup>21</sup> Gallienus and his wife Salonina also, along with some senators, belonged to the coterie that venerated the Platonic philosopher Plotinus, who in those times resided in Rome.<sup>22</sup> Appointing civilized senators to the proconsulship of Achaëa may have been a gesture to leading Greek and philhellenic circles. An indication is given by Philostratus', where the author argues that men who are appointed to be governors of provinces should be in sympathy with the provincial population.<sup>23</sup> A proconsul of

20 Eck 2018, op. cit. (n. 16), 117–31. See also Hächler 2019, op. cit. (n. 7), 118–24.

21 *HA Gall.* 11.3–6: “Cum tamen sibi milites dignum principem quaerent, Gallienus apud Athenas archon erat, id est summus magistratus, vanitate illa, qua et civis adscribi desiderabat et sacris omnibus interesse. Quod neque Hadrianus in summa felicitate neque Antoninus in adulta fecerat pace, cum tanto studio Graecarum docti sint litterarum ut raro aliquibus doctissimis magnorum arbitrio cesserint virorum. Areopagitarum praeterea cupiebat ingeri numero contempta prope re publica. (Just, however, when the soldiers were looking for a worthy prince, Gallienus was holding the office of archon – chief magistrate, that is – at Athens, showing that same vanity which also made him desire to be enrolled among its citizens and even take part in all its sacred rites – which not even Hadrian had done at the height of his prosperity or Antoninus during a long-established peace, and these emperors, too, were schooled by so much study of Greek letters that in the judgement of great men they were scarcely inferior to the most learned scholars. He desired, furthermore, to be included among the members of the Areopagus, almost as though he despised public affairs)”. See L. de Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus* (Leiden 1976), 146; Goltz and Hartmann 2008, op. cit. (n. 11), 272.

22 See Porph., *Plot.*, 7. 29–46.

23 *Vita Apollonii* 5.36.

Achaëa, reputedly the most Hellenic of all Greek-speaking provinces, should know Greek, which senators of those days invariably did.

After 260 the procuratorial system gradually disappeared. From now on most governors were *praesides* who combined the judicial tasks of former governors with the duties of former procurators. In their areas they could, with the help of experienced *caesariani* and military men, more effectively seize remaining stores of food and other commodities, and more efficiently control local governments. Military men, called *duces*, *praefecti*, *praepositi*, or *correctores* commanded the armed forces at different levels of command, although governors were not formally excluded from doing this. Military and political powers were not systematically divided from one another.<sup>24</sup>

Gallienus took far-reaching measures to ensure the levying of food and commodities, which his armies were needing. Armies could not rely completely on supplies coming from far away. This would have taken too much time and probably also too much cargo space, and it would have been risky as well. Banditry had never gone away but was now becoming endemic and widespread again. In times of widespread warfare, such as the third quarter of the third century, bands of brigands attracted deserters, fugitives, impoverished farmers, and even remaining invaders who had left their units.<sup>25</sup>

So armed forces also needed provisioning from nearby communities or imperial storehouses, which were situated in the neighborhood. To organize the levying of taxes, food, and commodities in difficult regions the emperors needed personnel that was well-acquainted with the areas where they were employed. Such personnel was at hand on the imperial domains, which were by now almost omnipresent in the Empire. These men were called *caesariani*, and were imperial freedmen as well as freeborn administrators.<sup>26</sup> Together with traditional personnel of the governors and military men, who had been seconded from military camps to become members of the governor's staff, the 'emperor's men' began to constitute a kind of personal bureaucracy of the governors.<sup>27</sup> This personal bureaucracy was better equipped to extort money

24 See De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 190–6.

25 Banditry could even escalate to warfare, especially after a prolonged period of war. This happened in Gaul and the adjacent Danube provinces at the end of the second century and in Italy under Septimius Severus. See Th. Grünewald, *Räuber, Rebellen, Rivalen, Rächer* (Stuttgart 1999), 157–95; O.J. Hekster, *Commodus: An Emperor at the Crossroads* (Amsterdam 2002), 45 n. 32, and 65–7. The emperor Probus had to wage a war against bandits in Isauria. See De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 92.

26 See De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 155–59 (imperial domains) and 205.

27 See Eich 2005, op. cit. (n. 16), 350–70. The term 'personal bureaucracy' was borrowed from his work.

and commodities from impoverished landed proprietors and their farmers than old-style governors had been who had just had a small staff of assistants and soldiers, and had been more dependent on the cooperation of town-councils, which knew where to get commodities and food. Many *caesariani* may have been equally well-informed about this.

As to the senatorial reaction to Gallienus' innovations, we are unfortunately lacking in contemporary literary sources. Extant fragments of the Athenian author Dexippus, who must have died just before the end of the 270s, do not give us a clue. In the *Caesares* written by Aurelius Victor, in the later fourth century, there is some information on opinions about Gallienus at the end of the emperor's life in 268. In *Caesares*, the author tells us that the senate, having heard of Gallienus' demise, decreed that his relatives and followers should be cast down the Gemonian stairs. He also mentions that a high fiscal functionary, called *patronus fisci*, got his eyes put out, and that an enraged populace of Rome cursed the deceased emperor.<sup>28</sup> Senators as well as members of the lower populace may have hated Gallienus and his fiscal functionaries because they had had to contribute heavily to the emperor's war efforts. More than ever before Italy (and Rome) must have been taxed to supply the armed forces that resisted invaders and usurpers.<sup>29</sup> Northern Italy had had to sustain sizeable armies, and often enough the imperial court as well, and had endured actual fighting in 259–260 and 267–268, and the remainder of Italy had become its logical logistical hinterland.

However, we do not hear anything about opposition against Gallienus' administrative measures. On the contrary, the same Aurelius Victor reproaches the senators of Gallienus' times for their meek and cowardly behavior. The author tells us that they acquiesced in their loss of power, as long as they could enjoy their riches and good life undisturbed.<sup>30</sup> He may have had a point; many senators may have been glad that their careers now began to be like patrician ones. They lost risky functions in the armies and provinces but gained an ever stronger position in Rome and Italy.<sup>31</sup> Some high-status senators had to serve as the emperor's deputies for legal matters, *iudices vice Caesaris*. Other senators became *iuridici* in Italy. During the third century, senators more often than before acted as *curatores rei publicae*, especially in Italy, which gave them the opportunity to strengthen their ties with Italian local elites. In the city of Rome the senate became more important because many emperors hardly visited the city as they had to fight enemies in other parts of the Empire.

28 Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 33.31.

29 See De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 150f.

30 Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 37.5–7.

31 See De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 196–8. See also Hächler 2019, op. cit. (n. 7), 124–25.



Later on, in the second half of the fourth century, Gallienus was indeed censured in the works of senatorial historiographers. The author of the *Historia Augusta*, a work probably written at the end of the fourth century, writes: "Such was the life of Gallienus, which I have briefly described in writing, who, born for his belly and his pleasures, wasted his days and nights in wine and debauchery and caused the world to be laid waste by pretenders about twenty in number, so that even women ruled better than he".<sup>32</sup> The author subsequently, in chapters 16 and 17, describes Gallienus' pitiable skills in growing plants and flowers, and his extravagant clothes and jewelry. Nonetheless, in the preceding chapter this writer tells us that Gallienus was popular among his soldiers, who called him a *necessarius, fortis et efficax imperator*.<sup>33</sup> The *Historia Augusta* also mentions the emperor's literary skills, his wit, and his love for Greek culture, but adds that in those times such pastimes were superfluous and unnecessary. In Aurelius Victor's *Caesares*, Gallienus is portrayed as a lazy impostor who falsely tells the people that everything is peaceful and all right.<sup>34</sup> In *Breviarium*, Eutropius says that Gallienus was good in the first part of his reign, at ease in the following period, and debauched and lazy during the last years of his rule.<sup>35</sup>

Senators may have started to hate the emperor in the later fourth century, when it became clear what ousting senators from the armed forces had done to their power within the Roman system. Nonetheless, it remains odd that reactions to Gallienus' radical breaks with tradition were not more vehement, at least as vehement as the reactions to his fiscal policy. A solution may be that the emperor successfully made his reforms palatable for important senators, the people who would have left the biggest mark on historiographical writing. As noted above, two governorships that remained in the hands of senators were the proconsulships of Africa and Asia, which belonged to the very top

32 *HA Gall.* 16.1: "haec vita Gallieni fuit, breviter a me litteris intimata, qui natus abdomini et voluptatibus dies ac noctes vino et stupris perdidit, orbem terrarum viginti prope per tyrannos vastari fecit, ita ut etiam mulieres illo melius imperarent".

33 *HA Gall.* 15.1.

34 *Aur. Vict., Caes.* 33.15

35 *Eutr.*, 9.8. The *Historia Augusta* was probably written by one author, probably a senator at Rome, between 395 and 399 CE. See C. Bertrand-Dagenbach, *Alexandre Sévère et l'histoire Auguste* (Brussels 1990), 7. S. Aurelius Victor, a senator who became *praefectus urbi* at Rome in 389, c.361 CE wrote his *Liber de Caesaribus*, which contained short biographies of Roman emperors from Augustus to Constantius II. On his life and career see PLRE I 960, nr 13; K.-P. John, Th. Gerhardt and U. Hartmann, eds., *Deleto paene imperio Romano. Transformationsprozesse des römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert und ihre Rezeption in der Neuzeit* (Stuttgart 2006), 126. Eutropius wrote between 369 and 371 CE his *Breviarium ab urbe condita* when he was a *magister memoriae*, and he dedicated the work to the emperor Valens. On these authors see also De Blois 2019, op. cit. (n. 4), 33 notes 122–124.

of a traditional senatorial, or even patrician career. Similarly, the urban prefecture and a second consulship (eventually together with the emperor) also remained restricted to the highest senators. Besides, by this time few patricians still served with the military, as they were rarely appointed as military tribune or legionary legate. In other words, the careers of the most important senators remained unaltered.<sup>36</sup> Apparently Gallienus did not want to completely estrange himself from the nucleus of the senate, and there was practically no risk in leaving Asia and Africa to the senators, for these provinces had only small if any Roman garrisons. In this way, he could appease the nucleus of the senate, the group which resided in Rome, had much property in Italy, and was important in governing the main logistical hinterland of the emperor's army in the Po Valley. So he broke with administrative traditions but did so in a clever way, respecting the interests of the high-status inner circle of the senate.

Was Gallienus motivated by the need of the time, or did he care less about traditions anyway? To answer this question, we have to look at other aspects of his reign, specifically at his imperial representation, and his monetary policy. In his monetary policy, Gallienus recklessly favored the military, undoubtedly to keep their loyalty. More so than his predecessors, he decentralized the imperial mint and consistently founded mints in the vicinity of important military sectors. He also donated large gold and silver *multipla* to favored military personnel.<sup>37</sup> Gallienus' monetary policy is not entirely untraditional, though; his third-century predecessors on the throne also reacted to financial and military pressures by reducing weights and silver contents of *denarii* and *antoninani*.<sup>38</sup>

In his imperial representation on coins Gallienus focused mainly on victory slogans and images, and on divine associations. This was not new. Gallienus did so, however, in a more intense and extravagant way, in some cases breaking with existing traditions. To begin with, Gallienus had portrayed himself as being protected by a range of gods who all became his *comites* and *conservatores*.<sup>39</sup> Those deities appeared on coin types struck during both his joint and sole reigns. During the emperor's joint reign with his father,

36 Mennen 2011, op. Cit. (n. 18), 51; Hächler 2019, op. Cit. (n. 7), 118. Cf. Leunissen 1989, op. cit. (n. 7), 34–41.

37 E. Manders, *Coining Images of Power: Patterns in the Representation of Roman Emperors on Imperial Coinage, AD 193–284* (Leiden/Boston 2012), 270.

38 See R. Bland, 'From Gordian III to the Gallic Empire', in: W.E. Metcalf, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage* (Oxford 2012), 514–521.

39 On Gallienus' ideology and imperial representation, especially on coins, see De Blois 1976, op. cit. (n. 21), 120–174; Manders 2012, op. cit. (n. 37), 269–297, and Geiger 2013, op. cit. (n. 8), 200–247.

Valerian, both Jupiter and Apollo assumed the function of *conservator*. These gods appear on the majority of the coins struck for Gallienus during the dual reign with the title *conservator*.<sup>40</sup> Other deities represented on Gallienus' coins during the joint reign with his father were Mars (nine types), Sol (five types), and four female deities, Diana, Vesta, Juno, and Venus. During Gallienus' sole reign more deities were added: Neptune, Minerva, Liber Pater, Aesculapius, Serapis, Hercules, Mercury, Janus, and Vulcanus each appeared on the coins issued in the period 260–268. Apparently, the emperor wished to represent a good part of the existing pantheon on his coins as his helpers, in order to strengthen his position amidst the many troubles of his times.<sup>41</sup> Many of the *conservator*-coins were part of the 'animal series', a series of coins on which gods were represented by animals.<sup>42</sup>

Gallienus also identified himself with certain deities. He presented himself as an almost superhuman being with divine traits, attributes, and qualities.<sup>43</sup> As we read: *Invicto imperatori pio felici Gallieno Augusto, dis animo voltuque compari* ("to the unconquerable pious and divinely favored emperor Gallienus who is like the gods in his mind and countenance").<sup>44</sup> In competition with Postumus, Gallienus presented himself as a hero and savior such as Hercules, on a few bronze coins he posed as *genius populi Romani*, and on some *aurei* he even identified himself with the goddess Demeter/Ceres.<sup>45</sup> These gold coins carried the legend *Gallienae Augustae* and showed the emperor with traits and attributes of Ceres on the obverse and the legends *Victoria Augusti* or *Ubique Pax* on the reverse.<sup>46</sup> If anything, this was original and untraditional.

40 See Manders 2012, op. cit. (n. 37), 283 with note 66, referring to *RIC V Gallienus* 76, 77 143, 189, 215–8, and 440 (Jupiter), from Gallienus' joint reign, and *RIC V Gallienus* 125–7, 129, 205, 206, 251, 261–3, 374, 416, and 425 (Apollo), equally from Gallienus' joint reign.

41 See Manders 2012, op. cit. (n. 37), 286f.

42 See De Blois 1976, op. cit. (n. 21), 160–4; Manders 2012, op. Cit. (n. 37), 287–91. R. Göbl, *Die Münzprägung der Kaiser Valerianus I./ Gallienus/ Saloninus (253/268), Regalianus (260) und Macrianus/ Quietus (260/262)* (Vienna 2000), 94 says: "Diese Emission ist wohl die bekannteste des Gallienus. Die Reverse bringen ein ganzes Pantheon von Schutzgöttern des Kaisers mit zugeordneten Tieren aus Zoo und Fabel: Diana führt, gefolgt von Apollo".

43 See De Blois 1976, op. cit. (n. 21), 170–73; Geiger 2013, op. cit. (n. 8), 248–55.

44 *ILS* 550.

45 See De Blois 1976, op. cit. (n. 21), 149–59; idem, "Traditional Virtues and New Spiritual Qualities in Third-century Views of Empire, Emperorship, and Practical Politics," *Mnemosyne* 47, 2 (1994), 174.

46 *RIC V Gallienus* 74 (*aureus*); Göbl 2000, op. cit. (n. 42), 92; Geiger 2013, op. cit. (n. 8), 226 and 259f. In his article in *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies (GRBS)* 40.3, (1999),

To interpret this remarkable coin type rightly, one should consider its numismatic context. On a gold medallion from the mint of Rome the same legend *Ubique Pax*, with a Victory in a biga galloping left (reverse), was combined with an obverse carrying the legend *Conservatori Orbis*, with an image of Gallienus crowned with reeds, not so different from the image on the *Gallienae Augustae*-obverse.<sup>47</sup> This suggests that on the latter coin type the goddess of cereals is portrayed as typically Gallienic, characteristic of this emperor's reign and with a promise of all-encompassing peace and abundance. On the gold medallion Gallienus is propagated as the *conservator* of the Empire, which fits in well with Gallienic representation. The *Gallienae Augustae*-coins may indicate that the emperor identified himself in an androgynous way with genderless divinity, but may as well – or at the same time – point to the combination of victory, omnipresent peace, and an abundance of food through the emperor's special relation with Ceres. Again, this is untraditional and even extravagant, but not a total break with existing imperial propaganda.

In conclusion, Gallienus implemented some radical military and administrative reforms, thus breaking with traditional administrative policies. He did so to cope with overwhelming problems, not because he wished to break with existing traditions altogether. He left intact the top of the traditional career of the most important senators, the patricians, the inner circle of the senate in Rome. In his imperial representation and his monetary as well as religious policies, this emperor did indeed some extravagant things, yet without breaking through the limits of the existing system. Gallienus had no problem in seeking boundaries, without being a revolutionary on the throne. Late in the fourth century his policies were perceived in a negative way. Senatorial historiographers then began to see what Gallienus' reforms had done with the power of senators within the administrative system.

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233–39, MacCoull suggests that this *Gallienae Augustae* coin legend points at an identification of the emperor with Allat, an important deity at Palmyra. On pp. 235f. he approvingly quotes my monograph about Gallienus (De Blois 1976, op. cit. (n. 21), 157) but on that page I suggest that Gallienus may have identified himself on one of his coins with Minerva. In Palmyrene contexts Minerva or Athena regularly denote Allat; Minerva is the *interpretatio Romana* of Allat, not Ceres.

47 *RIC V* Gallienus (joint reign) 15.