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 **Claudian's Britain and Empire, 395–402 c.E .**

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ARTICLE

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CLAUDIAN'S BRITAIN AND EMPIRE, 395–402 C.E.

DAVID R. CARLSON



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1. BRITISH EXOTICISM

CIRCA 1840, DIGGING FOR RAILYARD-CONSTRUCTION in the northerly British city of York unearthed a pair of silver-gilt plaques embossed with Greek lettering carrying dedications to Ocean and Tethys from Scribonius Demetrius, who is probably to be identified with the Demetrius of Cilician Tarsus, an interlocutor of Plutarch (ca. 46–120 C.E.), whom the priest of Delphi characterises as having traveled so far as this end of Earth late in the first century C.E., when *Eboracum* was the most northerly of the Roman *coloniae*: Ὠκεανῶν καὶ Τηθύϊ Δημητρί[ος] (“To Ocean and Tethys, Demetrius [dedicates this]”).¹ The inscription on Demetrius' offering matches the monument put by Alexander at the Indus-mouth, when the great Macedonian had reached the endpoint of his campaigning there, at the opposite geographic extreme, where Earth, too, ends in Ocean; Plutarch attested, with others, that at that place, Alexander “performed rich sacrifices. He threw many large cups of gold into the sea following the libations which he poured from them. He erected altars to Tethys

¹62b Burn (Burn 1969, 48) = *RIB* 663 (Collingwood and Wright 1995, 222–23). The references are to Plut., *De def. or.* 2 and 18 (*Mor.* 410a and 419e); see Ogilvie 1967, 112–15, and Marcaccini 1999, esp. 254–56.



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