CENTER AND PERIPHERY IN TACITUS'S *HISTORIES*

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Geography often turns out to be a state of mind rather than a collection of empirically verifiable facts.[1] Indeed, creative geography can have profound effects in human history, as, for instance, when the Romans imagined that Hannibal had crossed the river Ebro in attacking Saguntum and thus provided themselves with a *casus belli* that was to leave them masters of the Mediterranean world.[2]

But in those days, there were no Mercator projections of the world with their chauvinistic viewpoint from the north down, privileging a Europe placed in the center[3] between Asia and America—as the term is commonly

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1 This paper was originally delivered at the Pacific Rim Latin Literature Conference held at Buffalo, New York, a mere two years after its meeting in Rome. I would like to express my thanks for comments on my work on Tacitus's *Histories* from the participants at both of these events, which, in themselves, testify to the virtues of fuzzy geography. I would also like to dedicate this paper to the memory of Judy Ginsburg, whose recent passing has robbed Tacitean studies of a fine scholar and friend.

2 For the problem of the exclusion of Saguntum (actually south of the Ebro) from the treaty made around 225 B.C. dividing Spain between Roman and Carthaginian spheres of influence by setting the Ebro as the frontier, see Walbank on Polybius 2.13.7 and 1967.631. Appian *Hisp.* 7 clearly puts Saguntum between the river and the Pyrenees in the Roman zone. Silius Italicus leaves the geography unclear, but the depiction on the shield of Hannibal of the Ebro being crossed by the Punic hero while the siege of Saguntum is underway (*Pun.* 2.449–52) suggests that he has already broken the treaty. Livy, often criticized for his inaccuracies, has Hannibal cross the river only after the capture of Saguntum (21.16.5).

3 Harley 2001.6–67 and 238 n. 74, which cites evidence for "the entrenched scientism among map makers which still gives credibility to the mathematically constructed map while ignoring the possibility of the social and political effects of its imagery."

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used in the United States, a constant cause of annoyance for southern neighbors who feel they are being ignored by the Norte Americanos.[4] As an Antipodean, I should resent the implication that I live in a topsy-turvy world that was the fantasy of the ancients.[5] But the Romans appear far too practical to be carried away by bird's-eye (or, nowadays, satellite-mapped) depictions of the world. If we compare the original map of the London underground (overlaid on the street plan of the city) with Beck's famous schematic depiction,[6] it is clear that the sequence of stations is more important than the physical distance between points, which will vary in temporal terms according to the time of day and the corresponding speed of the subway trains. A journey at rush hour may take considerably longer, with more stops at stations, than one at off-peak times. From the classical world, the Peutinger Table[7] follows exactly this same principle of offering a list of way-stations, not an accurate geographical depiction. While the Table's exact relationship to its classical predecessors is unclear, the recent publication of sections of a first-century B.C. papyrus that preserves geographical writings by Artemidorus of Ephesus and an incomplete road map of Spain, indicating rivers and the stations on the routes, confirms that this was the regular method of mapping in antiquity (Gallazzi and Kramer 1998). A shield fragment from Dura-Europas

4 Within the United States itself, the chauvinistic attitudes of New Yorkers are splendidly parodied by Saul Steinberg's "View of the World from 9th Avenue" (1975). Here, the streets of Manhattan are clearly detailed, while, in the distance, the rest of the country and the world is sketchily depicted in the background. The map first appeared as a cover of the *New Yorker* in 1976.

5 Plutarch *Mor.* 924a offers the perfect parody: "Don't the antipodeans live clinging on to the earth, like worms or lizards turning everything upside down?" Less offensively, Poseidonius fr. 401: "There are antipodeans, and what is down to us is up to them." Compare the Australian synonym for their country's name (with its Eurocentric bias), "Down Under," whose reversal of cultural norms is parodied in the song of the same name by Men at Work.

6 Garland 1994. The development of the Tube maps, from superimposing the lines on a surface geographical plan in 1905 to the circuit diagram revolution of Harry Beck in 1933 and later, can conveniently be found at http://clives.members.easyspace.com/tube/tube.html. For the geographical errors that can arise from the Beck diagram, see, for instance, Bryson 1995.54.

7 For a discussion of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, see Dilke 1998.113–20 and figs. 22–23. A twelfth- or early thirteenth-century A.D. copy of a fourth-century roadmap, it incorporates earlier material (so it lists Pompeii and Herculaneum, insignificant spots after A.D. 79). As Klaus Geus observes (2002.177), Dilke's book title is a misnomer, given that, at best, the ancients produced only route-maps. Nicolet 1991.70–72 is more ready to allow for greater *cartographic* (i.e., two-dimensional, rather than linear) awareness in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds.

published in 1925, showing the stopping points on a circumnavigation the Black Sea, follows this same method (Dilke 1998.120–22 and fig. 24).

As Kai Brødersen has indicated in a recent article on ancient maps (2001), we should be careful about retrojecting a modern sense of geography onto the ancient world. For instance, there was no reason for a Roman to attempt a detailed mapping of the Mediterranean and its environs such as appears on modern maps. The travel distances that are added to modern cartography[8] were implicit in ancient route-maps.[9] Of course, the danger found in modern mapping of major and minor routes—that points not on the major highways might be regarded as the equivalent of the Bates Motel—would also have shown up in the ancient world. Mountains and forests and even fertile valleys off the main routes would be ignored.[10] Once off the beaten track, Quinctilius Varus really had no idea where he was, and was at the mercy of locals who did know the paths through the German forests.

Numerous possibilities for further research are suggested by such nuanced considerations of the ancient views of geography. For instance, Brødersen discusses a mosaic from Ammaedara (inland Tunisia) that was published in 1999 as a route-map of the eastern Mediterranean (Bejaoui 1997 [1999]) and shows that it is almost certainly a depiction of sites in the area associated with Aphrodite. It is not a travel map, as we know it, but a mythological guide to the *navigium Veneris* (Brødersen 2001.143–45). This is a loss to cartography, but the existence of such depictions may be valuable in explaining apparently geographically disordered events in literature (for instance, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), if we imagine that a poet had a similar

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8 Cf. Luttwak 1976, map 2.2 (pp. 82–83). However, the impression given in Luttwak's book that the Romans could make rational military decisions based on extensive geographical knowledge has been exposed as mistaken by (among others) Mattern 1999.1–66. In figures 2, 4, and 5, Mattern is probably still crediting too much cartographical skill to the ancients by offering modern impressions of ancient maps. Fig. 3, the *mappa mundi,* is from a fourteenth-century manuscript now in Paris, though its schematic form (a circle divided in a T pattern into Asia, Europe, and Africa) is more likely to correspond to actual forms of ancient mapping.

9 Salway 2001. Salway (27) emphasizes the purely practical nature of the itineraries: "There are no geographical details or indications of compass direction. Each itinerary restricts itself to describing the stages along a given route, so that generally junctions with other routes or side routes do not warrant mention."

10 Bertrand 1997 notes the lack of mention of maps in Caesar's *Gallic Wars* and shows that the Romans either had to rely on itineraries (Vegetius *Epit. rei militaris* 3.6) or a general sense of orientation (e.g., Vell. Pat. 2.109.3, where Maroboduus's kingdom has "Germany on the left and in front, Pannonia on the right, and Noricum behind").

visual source in mind. Variations in the narration of events may simply indicate a different route through an itinerary of stories.

In this paper, I will be concentrating on another classical literary genre: history. I will be taking as my subject the use of geography and "geographical" detail in Tacitus's *Histories*, which, as it survives, describes events of A.D. 69 and 70, the year of the four emperors and the conclusion to the Batavian and Jewish rebellions in the following year. Famously, Tacitus's account begins with the general dissemination of what had previously been secret knowledge entrusted to a very few—that an emperor could be created somewhere other than at Rome (1.4.2: "evolgato imperii arcano, posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri"). This discovery may seem to threaten the very structure of the annalistic pattern for Roman historical writing, which regularly begins with the inauguration of magistrates at Rome and other civic arrangements before moving to the events of the campaigning year outside the city.[11] That method of exposition expresses a control of affairs radiating out from Rome. In the case of the *Histories*, it would appear that Tacitus had the pleasure of both having and eating his cake. *Histories* 1 begins with Galba's reign in Rome (1.1–50), only moving on to external events after his overthrow by Otho. But it is also clearly suggested that events elsewhere have brought on the military coup in the capital.[12] However this is read, it is clear that Tacitus's revelation of inside information really still conforms to a Roman dualistic mindset, expressed, for instance, in Livy as *domi belli*, "in the city or on campaign."[13] What is not in the city is within the sphere of military action. Rather than endangering the Romano-centric view of the world, the events of the civil wars may begin at Cologne or Alexandria, but, by focusing the struggle on the capture of Rome, they only confirm the city's pre-eminence. It is hardly coincidental that the capture of Rome by Antonius Primus's forces amid slaughter and revels makes a fitting climax to Book 3.

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11 Ginsburg 1981.29, taking Livy's most usual practice as the annalistic model. Livy's actual usage, which is much more nuanced, has been carefully examined by Rich 1997.

12 *Hist.* 1.12.2: "maturavit ea res consilium Galbae iam pridem de adoptione secum et cum proximis agitantis" ("the event hurried along Galba's plan of adopting a successor, which he had been considering privately and with his closest aides for some time now").

13 Livy 2.50.11, 3.24.11; varied in 9.26.21: *res domi belloque gestae* ("domestic and military accomplishments"). The milder variant, *domi forisque* ("at home or abroad"), occurs six times also in the early books (Packard 1968), *domi militiaeque gesta* ("civic and military accomplishments") throughout Livy's work.

And where, for that matter, is that fictional space that Tacitus has so emphasized, *alibi*? It is tempting to locate it at the periphery, particularly on the Rhine frontier where Vitellius is chosen as imperial candidate by the troops in early January. But that space is also a temporal space. While events in the *Histories* begin with the oath of allegiance sworn by the troops on January 1, the news that the armies of Upper Germany have rejected the reign of Galba, an event that sets in train the choosing of Piso as Galba's successor and the coup d'état of the disappointed Otho, does not arrive in Rome till sometime later.[14] That the German troops have chosen as their candidate their new commander, Aulus Vitellius, is not revealed at Rome until after the Praetorian putsch that overthrows Galba on January 15 (*Hist.* 1.50.1; in fact, the German armies had declared for Vitellius on January 2 and 3: *Hist.* 1.57.1). News from Rome is also to be dated by action: the Vitellian commander Valens has only progressed south through Gaul as far as the territory of the Leuci when Galba's death and Otho's ascension to the throne are announced (*Hist.* 1.64.1).[15] Rather than by calendar and clock, time is measured along a line of place names. Events are not perceived as occurring simultaneously in two different places—a form of narrative that perhaps owes much to modern high-speed communication—but have their effects in distant locations only after a considerable delay, when affairs have already advanced at the site of the original news. So the account of the Batavian rebellion begins with events up to the time of the battle of Cremona (4.11–30), then continues with the struggle to win the legions to the Flavian side, and concludes with the restoration of Vitellius's images in the army camps and towns of Belgica (4.31–37)—after the death of the emperor at Rome (37.2: *cum iam Vitellius occidisset*). It is only in 4.54 that some time parity appears to be restored with events in Rome (that is, with events of A.D. 70, which has commenced in the narrative at 4.38 with an account of urban

14 Galba's adoption of Piso was first publicly announced to the troops on January 10 (1.18.1). But this was preceded by an imperial council to choose his successor (1.14) and the summoning of Piso to learn his fortune (1.15–17), presumably the day before. The rapidity of the despatch of such urgent news from the frontier is discussed by Chilver 1979 on *Hist.* 1.12.1.

15 Tacitus avoids giving exact dates, but January 28 seems a reasonable guess (Chilver 1979 on 1.63.1, following Köster 1927). When Tacitus's account is fixed in Rome, he can be frustratingly vague—for instance, events in Otho's reign are introduced by *interim* (1.71.1), *per idem tempus* (1.73), *interim* (1.74.1), etc. (Murison 1991.1701). There are only twelve precise dates in the first three books of the *Histories*: Sage 1990.887.

affairs in that year), after the news of Vitellius's death, recounted already at the end of Book 3, becomes common knowledge in Gaul and Germany.

But if the temporal can be expressed as geographical (what one might call the "By the time I get to Phoenix" effect), so the geographical can also be ethical. This is strikingly represented at a meeting of the senate after the death of Vitellius[16] when Eprius Marcellus warns Helvidius Priscus not to push his luck with the new emperor Vespasian. For "just as the worst type of emperor wants unbounded power (*sine fine dominationem*), so even the most outstanding ones support a limit being set on freedom of speech" (*modum libertatis placere*, *Hist.* 4.8.4).[17] The Roman empire, then, is portrayed not as having fixed geographical frontiers (whatever modern maps may indicate),[18] but as having boundaries set by the limits of freedom. But that limit of freedom is, it should be noted, the furthermost geographical extent of *non*-Roman *libertas*, as Tacitus's description of the Germans and the Britons reveals.[19] Power and order are achieved at the expense of others, be they senators or barbarians. The difference between great and vile rulers is in knowing how far to push one's *imperium*.

This is, of course, rather different from the depiction of a Roman empire with the countries around the Mediterranean colored in, a geographer's prefiguring of the British and French empires (marked in red and blue).[20] The presumed boundaries that are shown on most maps of Roman North Africa and Syria-Palestine, in particular,[21] display the same concern for

16 For the dating (after December 21 but before January 9), Chilver and Townend 1985 on *Hist.* 4.3.11.

17 Sometimes scholars question whether Tacitus could possibly put an argument he would agree with into the mouth of the vile Eprius in debate with the Stoic saint Helvidius Priscus. Rather, Eprius is the realist and can use loaded political terms to his own advantage: Jens 1956.345–46, Martin 1981.94.

18 For the flexibility of Roman borders, see Mattern 1999.109–22, which offers a good summary of earlier attacks on Luttwak's theory of frontier strategy (e.g., Isaac 1992 and Whittaker 1994).

19 For Britain: Calgacus's speech (*Agricola* 30–32) contrasting the *libertas* of the unconquered tribes with the *servitus* of the defeated. For Germany: *Germania* 11 (the difficulties of achieving order when all act independently), 20 (slave and free children raised together until age and courage show who is truly free), 24 (even their slaves perform only some of the tasks of slaves at Rome).

20 For such distortions, see Harley 2001, especially 51–82 ("Maps, Knowledge, and Power").

21 The *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (2000) is more careful to avoid displaying limits to claimed areas of political "control" in Africa and the East, since they will certainly vary according to the time of year in semi-desert conditions and are disputable in terms of actual influence compared to imperial claims. Still Map 100 (the

straight lines on maps that ignore topographical and cultural reality as do the artificial boundaries set for colonial Africa. This is hardly surprising: through much of the English- and French-speaking areas of the world, classics has been associated with a colonial heritage. The Duke of Wellington's aphorism that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton should remind us how an upper-class education in classics underpins western imperialism. But there is no reason to retroject this mindset holus-bolus onto the ancient world. Tacitus describes his military subject matter in his introduction as "three outbreaks of civil wars (*trina bella civilia*) and, even more often, frontier conflicts or generally a confused conglomerate" (*plura externa ac plerumque permixta*) (*Hist.* 1.2.1). These distinctions are not based on geography,[22] but on cultural loyalties, on whether one identifies oneself as a *civis Romanus* or not. And what is Romanness? When the German legions refuse the oath of loyalty to Galba, they are concerned in case they seem to have lost due respect for orders ("ne reverentiam imperii exuere viderentur"—note the ambiguity of *imperii*). So they swear an oath that calls upon those names that had been erased long ago, those of the senate and the Roman people (*Hist.* 1.55.4: "senatus populique Romani *obliterata iam nomina* sacramento advocabant"). Vitellius and his entourage immediately recognize this oath for what it is, a meaningless act (*Hist.* 1.56.2: *id sacramentum inane visum*). In the subsequent rush by all to salute Vitellius, it is made clear that the legions of Upper Germany were never supporting the *res publica* and that senate and populace were simply pretexts (*Hist.* 1.57.1: "speciosis senatus populique Romani nominibus relictis"). There may be a return to the republic, but it is the republic of Marius and Sulla, of Caesar and Pompey, of the civil wars that led to the rise of Augustus. It is the republic of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* and Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, so clearly

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Roman Empire under Trajan) fixes boundaries too clearly in Europe at the Rhine and Danube (with a swathe of Dacia added) when individual maps show that forward positions of the Roman army might be considerably in advance of the river systems used to supply them.

22 Elsewhere in Tacitus, geography can be read as the source of ambiguity, as in the description of Britain in the *Agricola*: an island in the Ocean, beyond the normal continental boundaries of Roman rule, semi-detached or semi-attached and so open to deeds of old-style *virtus*: Clarke 2001. See, too, O'Gorman 1993. But these readings of the marginal look to a definition of Romanness that is, by contrast, being questioned in the world of civil war in the extant books of the *Histories.*

echoed in Tacitus's introduction to the struggle between Otho and Vitellius in *Histories* 1.50, a world ruled by *cupido potentiae*.[23]

If Romanness is to be simply defined by loyalty to a commander, be it Vitellius or Vespasian, then it will be a concept that is highly flexible, dependent on the whims of the troops. This is most clearly portrayed in the behavior of Rome's allies the Batavi, the inhabitants of the Rhine island between Roman Gaul and Germany.[24] Originally a branch of the German Chatti, who had themselves been expelled in civil conflict, the Batavi provide military services for Rome, but are alone among peoples in the empire in being exempt from tribute (4.12.2). This liminal status colors their depiction throughout the *Histories*. Almost from their first appearance, they are trouble. A brawl between them and the legionaries in the territory of the Lingones almost ends up in a pitched battle between the two groups of supporters of Vitellius (*prope in proelium exarsere*), and Fabius Valens has to make an example of a few to remind them of his—or Roman—power and command (*Hist.* 1.64.2: "animadversione paucorum oblitos iam Batavos imperii admonuisset").[25] A further clash with the regular army at Augusta Taurinorum after the Vitellian victory in Italy (*Hist.* 2.66) and a reprisal attack on the Batavian auxiliaries guarding Vitellius at Ticinum by the legionaries (*Hist.* 2.68) leads the new emperor to send the Batavi back to Germany, "as destiny readied the beginning of a war that was both internal and external" (*Hist.* 2.69.1: "principium interno simul externoque bello parantibus fatis"). Under the command of Julius Civilis, the Batavi proceed to attack the Roman troops on the German frontier, annihilate two legions in

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23 Cf. *Histories* 2.38 and Syme 1958.98. O'Gorman 1995 offers many perceptive comments on the use of the civil war theme in the *Histories*, including the portrayal of the Batavian rebellion as a *bellum permixtum.* I would slightly disagree with her view that Tacitus adopts a Lucanian view of a "boundless" civil war (122)—civil war, as I hope this paper shows, requires boundaries in order to transgress them.

24 Hose 1998 offers an excellent depiction of the *barbarian* elements of Civilis and the Batavi and rightly places this in the context of Tacitus's views on Roman *imperium*. But he downplays the Roman aspects of the participants. For instance, the comparison of Civilis to Sertorius and Hannibal (*Hist.* 4.13.2), discussed on 300–301, does indeed show Civilis as an enemy of Rome, but the comparison with Sertorius, a Roman *hostis* of Rome, indicates that *Julius* Civilis is no mere barbarian opponent.

25 Ash 1999.39 comments: "Such a tendency to fight one another rather than the enemy is a trait more familiar in barbarians than in a Roman army, where regular recruits and foreign auxiliaries were supposed to fight side by side"; she gives examples of barbarian dissension on 181 n. 8. That this occurs *inside* the normal military stations of the Batavi shows the effect of the civil war in moving disorder within the empire.

their winter quarters at Vetera ("Old Camp," 4.60), and force the Sixteenth Legion at Novaesium to change its allegiance to the empire of the Gauls (*pro imperio Galliarum*, 4.59.2). The Roman troops are now the agents of a foreign power, while the Batavi, by changing the flow of the Rhine to a mere trickle on the northern side (5.19.2), have almost become part of Germany geographically. Not that rivers are necessarily separators: Lugdunum and Vienna in Gaul are portrayed as separated by the Rhone, which acts to unite them in their hatred of one another (1.65.1: "uno amne discretis conexum odium"). But as the *Histories* end in the middle of Book 5, the pendulum has swung back and Roman power is restored on the Rhine frontier: Civilis is offering his surrender and justifying his actions as independent military efforts on behalf of Vespasian no different from those of the commanders of Syria, Moesia, or Pannonia (5.26.3). The Roman *imperium,* it would seem, is being literally defined as the place where Roman orders are followed. In a time of civil war, this is clearly a site of contestation.

To reiterate a point already made, given that this is the *Roman* empire, Rome is the central point of reference. Tacitus begins his account by describing the situation in A.D. 69: the position taken by the city (*qualis status urbis*), the mental state of the armies (*quae mens exercituum*), and, finally, the body language of the provinces (*quis habitus provinciarum*) (1.4.1).[26] In between government and governed, it is the armies that have the power to act. And they do in Otho's Praetorian coup. When the guards rush into the forum, one must be reminded that these are Roman soldiers, acting as if they were overthrowing a Vologaeses or a Pacorus, turning what would be a triumphal event in far-off lands into an attack on populace, senators, and the emperor himself.[27] No attention is paid to the sanctity of the temples and

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26 For a discussion of work on this section, see Chilver and Townend 1985 on 4.1. As far as I am aware, the parallel with Cicero *Leg.* 3.41, who points out that a senator must have clear knowledge of the resources and legal position of the various parts of the empire, has not been noted (on the Cicero passage, see Nicolet 1996.5, who concludes [18] that the Romans possessed a "financial and economic geography" of their empire). Tacitus is offering the equivalent of an official balance sheet of the empire so that future actions will not be taken in ignorance of custom and assets—an ironic introduction to a narrative that begins with civil war.

27 Morgan 1994 argues for the spectacle as a *circus* since the object of the race will be for Otho's horsemen to burst in and get to the emperor first (so Suet. *Galb.* 19.2). While the viewpoint of the *prospectus* is almost certainly that of the populace gazing down on the forum (so, too, they are the active force behind the *impulsus* moving Galba around; cf. *OLD* sv *prospectus* 2b, esp. Cic. *Dom.* 116: "in Palatio pulcherrimo prospectu porticum . . . concupierat"), the slaughter of one of the participants is hardly the normal aim of a race.

the Capitol looming above (1.40.2)—a prefiguration of the destruction of that same Capitol at the conclusion of the civil wars (3.71–72) that will begin with the death of Galba. Similarly, after the death of Otho, the German troops of Vitellius also appear in the center of Rome looking like wild creatures from some other part of the world: "tergis ferarum et ingentibus telis horrentes" (2.88.3: "bristling with huge spears and the hides of wild animals").[28] Elsewhere they are disdained for their rough appearance and even more unkempt speech (*truces corpore, horridi sermone*, 2.74.2—hardly idealized Roman gentlemen). Once upon a time they had endured terms of service that were harsh and unrewarding, mirroring the climate and geography and stern discipline of the German frontier ("infructuosa et aspera militia . . . ingenio loci caelique et severitate disciplinae," 1.51.2). Now that discipline has collapsed in the civil wars and they are exposed to the lures of the city,[29] not to mention the unhealthy swamps of the Vatican and the baneful effects of the river (the Tiber, not their native Rhine), Vitellius's men become thoroughly demoralized even before setting out to meet the new threat from Antonius Primus and the Pannonian legions (2.93.1). The periphery is now in the center and the center is no longer a refuge from danger but itself a source of peril. It is as though the famous *New Yorker* depiction of the United States as Manhattan island and the rest has been adjusted to add the prairies and deserts, great plains and mountains to the New York street grid (see note 4 above).

But to regard the *Histories* as Rome-oriented in the way that at least the early books of Livy's history are centered on Roma is to ignore the complexity of the Roman empire at the beginning of the Flavian period. While Tacitus might contrast capital and frontier, he also needs to be able to envisage wider geographical spaces and how they are traversed. If we take Mr. Beck's London Underground map as an analogy, I would suggest that Rome is on a very significant Italian branch line, but that the rest of the empire can be regarded as consisting of a single loop. This is, in fact, very

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Rather, this is closer to a *munus* in the amphitheatre, which can involve all forms of slaughter from gladiatorial displays to fatal charades (which Galba's death more closely resembles).

28 Ash 1999.44–45 notes the historiographic parallel with the Gauls entering Rome after their victory at the Allia (Livy 5.41.4), their foreignness emphasized by their unfamiliarity with the geography of the city (5.44.5). Cf. *Hist.* 2.93.1 of the Vitellians wandering around the city (*tota urbe vagus*); they are outsiders and also display a lack of military discipline.

29 Ash 1999.46 for this *topos* (cf. Silius Italicus *Pun.* 11.410–31 on the deleterious effects of Capua on Hannibal's army).

much like the Peutinger Table. For instance, the introductory second chapter of the *Histories* contrasts the prosperity of the East with the tribulations of the West in this period. Still the geographical—but not chronological—depiction of these events moves from Illyria to Gaul, Britain, the Danube (the Suebi and Sarmatians), Dacia, and, finally, the Syrian frontier. This is similar to the tour of the military forces in the provinces in 1.8–11: Spain, Gaul, Germany, Britain, Illyricum, Syria, Judaea, Egypt, and Africa.[30] Even Otho, listing Galba's victims to the Praetorians, follows a similar pattern (Spain, Gaul, Germany, Africa; before turning to those killed in Italy and Rome: 1.37). Compare, too, the summary of the changed military position in favor of the Flavians after the battle of Cremona and, capping their good fortune, the arrest of Valens ("capto Valente cuncta ad victores opes conversa," 3.44). This survey begins with Spain and Britain (3.44–45), moves on to Germany and the Danube frontier with Dacia (3.46), and concludes with a minor uprising on the Pontic coast (3.47–48) whose ending is announced to Vespasian in Egypt while he is preparing an invasion of Africa (*eodem latere sitam*, 3.48).[31] It would even be possible to complete a loop from Africa to Spain, as is shown by the suppression of Lucceius Albinus in Africa Tingitana by the troops of the governor of Spain (2.58–59). When the senate bestows all the traditional imperial powers on Vespasian shortly after the death of Vitellius (4.3.3: December 69), the civil wars are regarded as concluded. Tacitus notes how they began in Gaul and Spain, then involved Germany and Illyricum next. But after the conflict had traversed (*lustraverant*—note the suggestion of a ceremonial purification of the army: *OLD* sv *lustro* 1) Egypt, Judaea, and Syria, it had come to an end, as if the world had undergone a ceremonial purification ("velut expiato terrrarum orbe cepisse finem videbatur," 4.3.3). The conclusion is tendentious, relegating the troubles on the Rhine frontier to *externa bella* parallel to the Jewish War, but it concludes a religious and ethical journey in Roman history.

This travel map approach cannot be accidental, and such a circumnavigation around the Mediterranean makes good sense as intellectual

30 Martin 1981.70 notes how Tacitus begins with Spain, the site of Galba's proclamation as emperor, and how then "his course follows roughly a clockwise spiral." I would rather see this as a loop around the Mediterranean (Spain, Gaul, Germany, Britain, Illyricum, Syria, Judaea, Africa, Mauretania), followed by two branch lines, one north along the Danube (Raetia, Noricum, Thrace), the other down through Italy.

31 Salway 2001.40 notes the unusual *counter-clockwise* direction of the Antonine Itineraries and the ruptures between sections of the routes that he attributes to their origin as compilations of regional itineraries designed for the use of the occasional traveler (58–60).

history. What is notable is that the inland sea itself forms no part of this itinerary. Tacitus's remarks on the Mediterranean are few. In 1.2.2, he depicts the stormy times he will be describing, with the sea covered with exiles and the rocks dripping with blood ("plenum exiliis mare, infecti caedibus scopuli"). But this partially literal description is immediately contrasted with the metaphorical storm in Rome itself: *atrocius in urbe saevitum* (1.2.3). When Decumus Picarius, the procurator of Corsica, decides on an unseasonable transference of allegiance to the Vitellian cause, the inhabitants consider their position on an island about to be faced with the Othonian fleet. Under those conditions, Germany and the forces of the legions are impossibly far away (*longe Germaniam viresque legionum*, 2.16.2), even if they are by aerial distance close to North Italy. Hence Picarius is quickly eliminated. The sea may also hide: news from the West is brought to the East on the Etesian winds, but the movements of Vespasian's forces are cloaked from Rome (2.98.2). Senators may sail to Vespasian, risking the winter weather (4.51.1, 4.80.2: Antonius Primus), but they cannot return before these winds abate (4.81.1). The Mediterranean is thus no highway through the Roman empire but almost an obstacle in its center, the equivalent of a mountain chain to be surmounted. Militarily, it is insignificant. The fleet at Ravenna joins the Flavian side early in the conflict and cannot be used to threaten the East (2.100.3). In the previous conflict between Otho and Vitellius, the naval forces from Misenum had merely conducted piratical raids against Liguria and Provence (2.12–15). To use the analogy of mountains again, the Mediterranean can be seen as the home of plunderers, threatening the civilization of the lowlands, not so much Mare Nostrum as the Corrupting Sea so recently described by Nicholas Purcell and Peregrine Hordern (2000).

For Plato, mankind lived about the Mediterranean like frogs around a pond (*Phaedo* 109b). But he was a Greek, and Greek colonization was confined to the edges of the Mediterranean. Rome, however, began as a power in Italy, and this landlubber's attitude persisted. Geography was defined by roads and the stations along them. Civilization could also be measured in terms of distances to be traveled from the center of rule. These are easy deductions. But Tacitus, as is his wont, imbues distance with ethical values, bringing into question center and periphery, the cultured and the brutish, constructing out of a list of events a didactic account of the dangers of warfare unleashed within the body politic.

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