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**Tacitus' *Carmen Solutum*: The *Histories* and Lucan's *Bellum Civile***

In this paper, I focus on resilient similarities between Lucan's *Bellum Civile* and Tacitus' *Histories*, to show that the historian uses this epic to support his interpretation of historical events and explore the socio-historical similarities between the civil wars of 49 BC and AD 69. Building on a handful of studies discussing the influence of Lucan on Tacitus [e.g. Borgo 1977, O' Gorman 1995], I argue that Tacitus' echoes of Lucan correspond to three narrative goals. First, Tacitus' uncommonly sympathetic view of the Roman *plebs* during the civil war echoes the stylistic means by which Lucan presents the devastating impact of Caesar's war on Italian civilians. Second, the *orationes rectae* that various imperial contenders deliver in the *Histories* resemble Pompey's and Caesar's exhortations, suggesting Tacitus' awareness that deceitful rhetoric is a diachronic staple of civil war politics. Third, Tacitus' asides on his task of recording and interpreting history correctly, evoke Lucan's authorial anxieties about his double role as a poet and a historian of civil war. This intertextual discussion of Lucan and Tacitus contributes to the discussion begun in antiquity regarding the interaction between history and epic [*Historia etenim proxima poetis et quodammodo carmen solutum*, Quint. *Inst.* 10.27-36], and Lucan's role in this debate [*Lucanus videtur historiam composuisse, non poema*, Servius on *Aen.* 1.382].

Tacitus' portrayal of the urban poor in Rome [*Hist.* 1.50, 1.89, 2.55, 3.68] is uncommonly sympathetic, especially when compared to his aristocratic bias in the *Annals*. In the scene of Galba's assassination at the Roman forum [*Hist.* 1.40-1], the crowds become speechless: *neque populi aut plebis ulla vox* [*Hist.* 1.40.1]. This appears as a critique of their cowardly acquiescence during the coup, but can be qualified differently upon comparison with Lucan. In a similar instance, the poet explains the silence of civilians at Ariminium not as political apathy, but as fearful anguish at the sight of Caesar's army: *non ausus timuisse palam; vox nulla dolori/ credita* [*BC* 1.258-9]. Since Galba's murder and Caesar's invasion of Ariminium are the first openly violent acts of the respective civil wars, these two passages are also structural equivalents. Similarly, Tacitus' portrayal of the crowds as spectators of the civil war [e.g. *spectator populus*, *Hist.* 3.83.1] implies a condemnation of their mores. However, a closer look indicates that Tacitus is using the motif of spectacle much like Lucan, who often stresses spectatorship as a sign of helplessness [*neque enim tibi turba verenda est/ spectatrix scelerum*, *BC* 3.128-9; see also Leigh 1997, 234-91]. Furthermore, various speeches in the two works exhibit interesting parallels. While exhorting his praetorians to battle, emperor Otho calls them *Romana vere iuventus* [*Hist.* 1.84.3] as opposed to Vitellius' enemy legions whom he dismisses as barbarian [*Germani*, *ibid.*]. Pompey extends a similar address to his soldiers [*vere Romana manus*, *BC* 2.532], and claims political correctness for the "Roman" side, as if waging a foreign war [*patriae vindicis*, *BC* 2.540]. By identifying the continuity in the rhetorical trappings of civil war leaders, Tacitus prepares his reader against such fallacious communication in the future. Finally, the grand opening of the *Histories* and Tacitus' query into the causes of the war [*opus adgredior opimum casibus*, *Hist.* 1.2.1; *ratio causaeque* 1.4.1], recalls Lucan's proemium [*causas rerum /immensumque aperitur*

*opus*, BC 1.67-8] and thus colors Tacitus' introduction with Lucan's perception of the war as punishment for Rome's hybriatic greatness. Similarly, Tacitus' understanding of divine agency in AD 69 [*non esse curae deis securitatem nostram, esse ultionem*, *Hist.* 1.3.2] echoes one of Lucan's rare theological reflections [*si libertatis superis tam cura placeret/ quam vindicta placet*, BC 4.808-9] aligning the two authors in a common perception of civil war as an inveterate fatality in Roman history.

The exploration of Tacitus' verbal and thematic loans from Lucan enables us to appreciate simultaneously Tacitus as a dramatic story teller and Lucan as a *bona fide* historian of civil wars [Lintott 1971, Fantham 1985]. That Tacitus would use Lucan to fuel his historical imagination suggests the conceptual, historical, and moral stability of the civil war discourse in Roman literature, a continuity that transcends modern genre definitions and expectations about the scientific integrity of history writing.