



In Pomp Ride Forth

Selected Themes in the Persistence of the Wheeled Vehicle as High Political and Ideological Symbol in Western Europe

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Abstract. – Throughout Western European history, wheeled vehicles have been prominently included in religious and political (especially kingly) ceremony and iconography to encode aristocratic authority and ideals and to connect society with cosmological powers. Four contexts of ceremonial vehicle usage are interpreted as they have appeared and reappeared over the millennia: 1) their relationship with cosmological realms and the concept of travel between human society and otherworldly domains; 2) the ritual identification of wheeled vehicles themselves as sacred objects; 3) their significance in political-ideological processions featuring the well-being of humankind; 4) their usefulness as instruments expressing concepts of spirit/motion and matter/stasis, especially as these involve skilled crafting and aesthetics. [*Europe, chariots, coaches, pageant cars, symbols of royalty, ceremonies of state, liminality, aesthetics and transformation*]

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The Persian army of Darius III on the march to engage Alexander the Great must have been an awe-inspiring sight. Quintus Curtius Rufus’ vivid account portrays an extensive moveable microcosm that, at its heart, included several ceremonial wheeled vehicles: “A chariot consecrated to Jupiter, drawn by white horses,” ten carts “amply decorated with relief carvings in gold and silver,” and “the royal chariot on which rode the king himself towering above all others. Both sides of the chariot were embossed with gold and silver representations of

the gods; the yoke was studded with flashing gems” and bore several golden images (Heckel and Yardley 2004: 56f.). In the Near East, Mediterranean region, and Europe, ceremonial wheeled vehicles have long evoked cosmological entities and processes, qualitative virtues and ideals, and the roles and nature of aristocracy, especially royalty, and have been utilized in ceremonial and ritual activities that express and manipulate these elements in the service of the polity, its gods, and its rulership. For thousands of years such vehicles, generally perceived as cosmologically relevant “other-worldly” conveyances, have constituted key political-ideological symbols encoding high authority and its underlying ideological legitimacy and the related acquisition of beneficial “things” from distant or “outside” realms. Employing historical and anthropological perspectives,¹ this interpretive essay discusses some of the ways they have done so, setting the scene, however, with a brief overview of

1 Broadly speaking, this study reflects the influence of such classic works as Hocart (1970), L’Orange (1982), Kantorowicz (1957), Tanner (1993), and continues my interests in aristocracy, highly skilled crafting, and the qualities accorded temporal/spatial distance (Helms 1988, 1993, 1998). It also partakes of the current interest (see overview by Vellinga 2007: 760–763) in the expression of intangible values and relationships through materialization. It should be emphasized that the focus is limited to vehicles used in politically relevant ceremonial contexts, not on aristocratic travel in general, and that the essay focuses on concepts more than on descriptive details.

the general concept of “aristocracy” as it applies broadly to traditional centralized polities and hierarchically organized nonindustrial societies.

Aristocracy

Though specifics vary widely across cultures, on a fundamental level aristocrats, as a “type” of being, have long been perceived as a natural and just component of an ordered social, political, and ideological system in which they embody inherent qualities (ideals, values) of highest human worth. They are deemed to be suprahuman, enjoying closer existential associations with sacrality and, especially, with original sources and processes of cosmological creativity (primordial origins, new beginnings) and the tangible and intangible products of that creativity. The ultimate or absolute expression of these qualities defines pure eternal divinity and the aristocracy ideally strives for, though falls short of (except, perhaps, for apotheosized “divine” rulers), that high mark, generally standing instead in a middle ground between ordinary, fully earthly humanity and the spiritual powers inhabiting the most rarefied cosmological realms. This is to say that aristocrats constitute a form or category of liminal being that can serve as a bridge connecting the general population with the spiritual “beyond.” In consequence they are further charged with harnessing the essential blessings and other forms of beneficial “treasure” available from the power-filled cosmos and “transporting” these into human society, which depends on this association and its energizing “products” for its physical and existential well-being (Helms 1998: 95–144, 168–173). Those select aristocrats who are most distinguished qualitatively, most socially visible, and most politically powerful – kings, emperors, highest ecclesiastical authorities – are thought to embody and activate these characteristics to the fullest or most effective extent.

Aristocrats characteristically employ an exceptionally rich array of cultural symbols to tangibly delineate and manifest their anomalous existential and political-ideological status (Turner 1969: 95).² As cosmologically liminal personages who rightfully interact with temporal/spatial distance, aristocrats also are frequently engaged in liminal acts (literal, ritual, or metaphorical) of travel, cross-

ing and recrossing thresholds, moving back and forth between the immediate sociopolitical community and the spatially distant (cosmographically foreign), the more elevated (“higher” or spiritual), and/or the temporally distant (myth, history, the afterlife) eras or realms that lie Outside. It follows, then, that high aristocrats require specific forms of inter-realm transport which, in turn, become one of the defining cultural symbols that set the aristocracy in general and sovereigns in particular qualitatively apart from ordinary society. Thus the anthropological record abounds in references to distinctive modes of aristocratic conveyances which can include various types of aquatic vehicles, imposing riding animals (most notably elephants and horses), various forms of animal- or human-borne litters, palanquins, or carrying chairs, and diverse types of wheeled vehicles.

By extension, the physical forms and modes of presentation of these conveyances in and of themselves readily come to connote (by ways and means to be explored below) the distinctive cosmological liminality, the combining of the material and the spiritual into a single tangible form and function, that defines aristocracy and especially high rulership. Indeed, wheeled conveyances (turning specifically to the focus of this study) can be accorded even higher valuation as cosmological vehicles, for they may be identified as the transport of the gods themselves.³ Darius III in his glittering chariot, therefore, is publically exhibiting (by this and other means) the extension or expansion of the spiritual side of his liminality by presenting himself, and thus his office and his authority, as literally cosmic, his official vehicle constituting transport both to and of the gods for an emperor who is himself defined as quasi-divine.

Before proceeding further, a few words concerning terminology also are in order. As scholars have lamented and dictionaries evidence at length, there is a considerable confusion of names for wheeled vehicles in most European languages (Jope 1956: 539f.) such that “erroneous conclusions have frequently been drawn by not attending carefully to terms, which in the lapse of time frequently change their signification” (Markland 1824: 449–454). The problem is essentially twofold: on the one hand, a great diversity of terms and inconsistency of applications, on the other, a perhaps too persistent and too broad use of the

2 These can include elaborate personal raiment and adornment, exceptional architectural constructions, and acquisition of rare and exotic foreign items and the finest aesthetic creations of skilled artisans (Helms 1998: 169f.).

3 L’Orange (1982: 48–50); Zimmerli (1979: 127f.). As Mackintosh puts it with respect to archaic Greece, the gods “naturally emulated the highest level of society and travelled by chariot” (1995: 2).

generic label “chariot” (cf. Jones-Bley 2006: 189). I have sought a pragmatic middle ground with the general term “wheeled vehicle,” restricting more specific labels for particular areas of discussion that benefit from greater terminological precision. In addition, my overall approach to this extensive topic is broadly chronological and somewhat narrative in form, though generally not of a detailed, descriptive nature, favoring instead overall interpretations and broad perspectives. Therefore, I move rather freely among substantive time and place examples, using them both anecdotally to illustrate larger points and as foundational data. Organizationally, the elements I discuss derive from broad themes which first appear in prehistory and antiquity (Part One) and then tend to reappear one way or another, usually with some degree of modification, in later eras (Parts Two and Three) as, for several millennia, political-ideological wheeled vehicles, especially those used in religious or political ceremonial contexts, consistently encode “that which surpasses” the ordinary and the mundane to connect with higher powers and processes and bring these into contact with society. That encoding, though conveying the same fundamental points over the centuries, becomes either richer or more uniquely focused in symbolism and perspective as eras build on prior eras.

Part One: Prehistory and Antiquity

Diverse and widely distributed archaeological data from an extensive area of Eurasia and the Near East dating from at least the third millennium B.C. on, and soon augmented by textual evidence, allow the inference that, in prehistory, status- and ritual-related wheeled vehicles were associated with the wider cosmos, and especially with the relationship of the ruler with that wider world, in at least four major and interrelated political-ideological contexts.⁴ First, they were related to specific cosmological realms (the celestial, the telluric and aquatic, the netherworld) and their life-enhancing processes, most notably the sun and storm/rain,⁵ and to the concept of travel between human society and these otherworldly domains. Second, cosmically-imbued vehicles themselves were ritually identified as sacred objects containing inherent cosmological

potency (e.g., *numen*).⁶ Third, such vehicles were featured ceremonially in several varieties of public political-religious processions (epiphanal, protective, renewal) that explicitly related kings and deities with cosmic themes of life (and death), victory and its spoils, and regeneration (fertility) affecting the well-being of humankind.⁷ Wheeled vehicles were employed in all these capacities because they embody a fourth context, the concept of, and capacity for, movement and movement, in turn, signals the presence of an energizing “divine” force. In the “organic” cosmological formulations characteristic of pre- or nonindustrial societies, in which all aspects of the universe are believed to be imbued with and interrelated by a basic vitalizing force, this vehicular potential is indicative of life, “spirit,” activity itself as well as the related concept of temporality (e.g., Sissa and Detienne 2000: 3–5, 14, 43, 46, 125).

Connecting with the Cosmos

Connections with cosmological realms and processes are implied in virtually all political-ideological vehicular contexts and, therefore, will be a recurring theme. Indeed, it is an immense subject that I will introduce here by simply acknowledging, without much discussion at this point, two particular topics from antiquity: the ancient associations with concepts of time and with the crossing of cosmological boundaries or, better said, thresholds (which also evoke a condition of liminality). With respect to time, suffice to mention the well-known antique imagery of the daily travel of the warming sun’s horse-drawn wheeled vehicle and, to a lesser degree, of the moon’s oxcart as signifying durational time as well as demarcating and symbolizing the annual seasonal cycle. In addition, it is noteworthy that the wheeled vehicle also could be used as diagnostic symbol for the temporal past, as when Homer, to create a sense of “epic distance” for his listeners, incorporated (as narrative device) the use of the war chariot in the Heroic age, since the vehicle was not so used in his own day (Morris 1986). The crossing of cosmological boundaries or thresholds is indicated in European prehistory by hoards of horse fittings and wagon

4 Piggott (1992: 19–58 passim); Harding (2000: 164–169); Pare (1989); Jones-Bley (2006); Moorey (1986).

5 Kristiansen and Larsson (2005: 294f., 297 n. 13); Cumont (1903: 2f., 10); Bram (1987: 136, 137, 138); Graves (1960: 154f. [sec. 42.a]), among others.

6 *Numen* was the Roman term for the essence of sacral power, the quality of the divine as evidenced by effects (Wagenvoort 1976: 73–85).

7 Wheeled vehicles also were featured in war and the hunt, both cosmologically significant activities, but these uses are not included in this study.

components that have been found at the edges of bogs, ponds, and marshes, seemingly sacred depositions at midway points or portals to subterranean waters (Pare 1989), as well as by the abundant evidence of aristocratic wagon-graves and chariot burials which clearly signal middle passages across an existential threshold. Different forms of cosmic vehicular “midway” positions and processes are found in lore. For example, not only was the sky that was traversed by the ancient chariot-riding sun or light gods (e.g., Mithra, Shamash) positioned between a lower, chthonic, and human realm and a higher ethereal sphere of more distant gods (Cumont 1903: 127), but it was essential that the sun’s chariot itself also keep to a moderating middle course, neither too high above nor too close to earth, not too far north or south.⁸ A similar cosmological middle zone can be emphasized in the symbolism of liminal apotheosis. The Hebrew prophet Elijah’s final passage from earth to heaven by a chariot and horses of fire has been vividly depicted for many centuries with iconography showing Elijah standing or seated in a wheeled vehicle (one of his standard iconographic symbols, to which we shall return) positioned midway between heaven above and earth below.⁹

That ceremonial wheeled vehicles were also identified in antiquity as inherently sacred or supernaturally potent objects themselves is suggested by Egyptian and Assyrian warfare where the royal vehicle served as both moveable throne and temple, carrying not only the king but also the standards of the gods (see Fig. 1). More explicitly, “in Egypt, the king’s chariot was considered ‘a divine being; its constituent parts were considered to be animate, and their praises were sung in hymns’. Assyrian pictures show sacrifices being made before the standard-chariot.”¹⁰ Far to the north, a passage from a much later pre-Christian Irish text describes how the supernatural quality inherent in the ritual vehicle could legitimize kingship, for the chariot and its horses would resist efforts by the wrong man to mount and drive, but the proper, designated

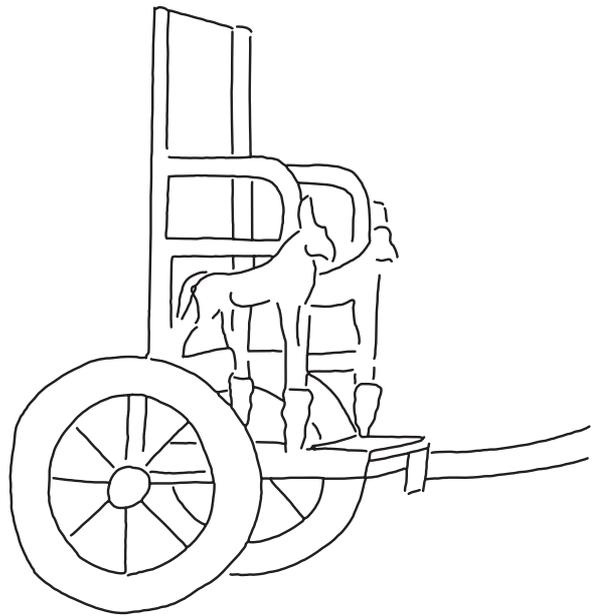


Fig. 1: Assyrian throne-chariot (simplified and adapted from L’Orange 1982: 49).

ruler could successfully do so, the axle screeching loudly so all could hear.¹¹ Cosmological wheeled vehicles also ritually delineated sacral spaces and locales and processional routes. Among the tribes of northern Germany and Jutland, a sacred vehicle carrying a representation of Nerthus, goddess of fertility, was drawn from place to place (Tacitus, in Bauschatz 1982: 62) much as, many centuries later in Sweden, the high god, Frey, was borne in a sacred wagon in annual processions around the farms to bring good fortune and prosperity (Davidson 1988: 116f., 119). Indeed, the ritual conveyances themselves were constructed as a type of enclosed sacred space delineated and bounded by the walls or rails of the vehicle body which separated the world outside the conveyance from a cosmologically distinct world within it where, on ritual occasions, a representation of a deity, a suprahuman king, or a different kind of Outside-related “treasure” (see below) was contained (Bauschatz 1982: 63, 137f., 140; Davidson 1988: 23). Such a bound-

⁸ Graves (1960: 156 [sec. 42.d]); Ovid (2001: 28f. [Bk. 2, lines 134–139]). The chariot-riding Olympic gods of Greece similarly inhabited a lofty mountaintop high in the sky, between the earth (of which the mountain was a part) and the higher celestial heavens.

⁹ 2 Kings 2.11; Sirach 48.9; cf. Vermaseren (1963: 104f.); Cumont (1949: 292). To this day, in some parts of Europe, Elijah’s rumbling chariot is a thunder and rainmaker. See 1 Kings 17–19; Todd (1992); see note 11. All Bible references are from Coogan (2001).

¹⁰ Keel (1978: 238); Stone (1993: 105f.); note also Fig. 1. Jones-Bley (2006: 186) considers sacrificial libations to the chariot in the Rig Veda.

¹¹ Draak (1959: 654f.). An Irish king’s power and prestige, that is, his energetics, were manifested in general by the great noise made by his vehicle’s rumbling wheels (Leighton 1972: 171). A noisy, rumbling wagon also could signify or produce rain, as in the Balkans and elsewhere (Graves 1960: 222, sec. 68.1); Gelling and Davidson (1969: 143, 166); Black and Green (1992: 52). See note 9 above. Vehicles were also ritually sacrificed in Rhodes to revitalize the sun (Bram 1987: 138).

ed vehicular space became, in effect, a cosmological *omphalos*, its potent “cargo” constituting an *axis mundi* connecting with other worlds so that the ritual vehicle essentially “cosmologized” places it visited and blessed the routes it traversed with the beneficence of the supernatural.

An early association of cosmological vehicles with blessings and well-being also brings to mind ancient Greek myths, describing winter solstice rites in which (as Graves reconstitutes the proceedings) the king pretended to die at sunset of the day before, a royal princely surrogate, serving as *interrex* for one day, cohabited with the queen and rode in the royal sun chariot with her and then was killed in a prearranged chariot crash that destroyed both surrogate and vehicle, after which the king emerged (was reborn) from the tomb in which he had hidden and resumed his reign (Graves 1960: 232, sec. 71.1; 400, sec. 109.3; 157, sec. 42.2). Both this ritual and the Irish example above clearly relate ritual chariots with the legitimate rulership that supported the prosperity of the realm. They make the point that such vehicles can be successfully driven, that is kept under controlled motion, only by legitimate authority figures, metaphorically signifying the orderly functioning and life-affirming qualities of the cosmic/political system when under the proper direction of legally and morally appropriate leadership. Conversely, destroyed, immoveable, or improperly managed vehicles indicate the absence of legitimate authority or an inappropriate exercise of power as evidenced by a discordant system and a misuse, loss, or absence of vital energy (cf. the myth of Phaethon; Graves 1960: 156, sec. 42.d).

Ritual Procession – the Roman Triumph and *Adventus*

The wider cosmological properties and more specific political-ideological import of ritual wheeled vehicles were given their greatest public expression in antiquity in great processions of state that succinctly highlighted the qualities defining the authority and nature of kingship and the gods. These processions (which also provide more detailed and cohesive material for scholarly studies) also presented wheeled vehicles in two distinctive capacities of essentially equal qualitative significance that defined the structure of the processions as presenting not one (as scholars have generally appreciated) but two basic focal points, an organizational “dual focus” that would structure formal public processions and state cortèges throughout succeeding periods

of European history. One of the vehicular formats featured a wheeled conveyance as the appropriate “display” transport and symbol for a focal suprahuman individual – an earthly representation or tangible manifestation of a deity, a high political or religious figure, a king or a conquering hero. The other, equally as important, featured one or more wheeled vehicles as conveyances for some form of qualitative “treasure” derived from a cosmologically foreign or Outside locale and considered beneficial to the state. In short, the dual focus structure was composed of a “triumphator’s car” and a train of “treasure cars,” respectively.

The well-documented Roman triumph of the Republican period and the later imperial *adventus* readily illustrate these points.¹² A triumph celebrated a general who had defeated a foreign enemy in a just (ritually declared) war and who now returned to Rome, laden with spoils, to offer his victory and its fruits to the supreme deity.¹³ Procedurally, the procession moved from a marshalling site outside the city through a gateway, arch, or temporary breach in the city wall, that is to say across a threshold, and along a circuitous processional way to the capital where the conqueror, entering the space of another threshold – the temple of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus – presented the laurels of his achievement to the greater glory of the god via its statue in the temple *cella*. Organizationally, following initial magistrates and senators the first vehicular focal point appeared; a series of carts and wagons, the treasure cars, that could number in the dozens, even hundreds, displaying glittering spoils of victory – rich arms and armour, artistic treasures, gold and silver, paintings or models of conquered cities and landscapes – acquired from the barbaric (non-Roman) world outside. Following sacrificial animals and chief captives, the second vehicular focal point appeared: the triumphant conqueror himself, resplendently garbed in godlike raiments and carrying the regalia of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, standing with iconic dignity¹⁴ amid bil-

12 See also the Mesopotamian Akitu festival (Versnel 1970: 220–235; Kuhrt 1987: 20–40; Frankfort 1948: 313–333), the lavish Grand Procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (Rice 1983), the Roman games (Versnel 1970: 258–262, 269f., 290f., 300; Abaecherli 1935–36).

13 The considerable literature includes Versnel (1970); Payne (1962); Scullard (1981); Miller (2001).

14 “The traditional marks of the triumphator – his chariot, his godlike stature” (Miller 2001: 102f.). For more complete descriptions see, for example, the triumph of Aemilius Paulus over Perseus, King of Macedon, in 167 B.C. or that of Pompey the Great in 61 B.C. (Payne 1962: 107f.; Scullard 1981: 216f.).

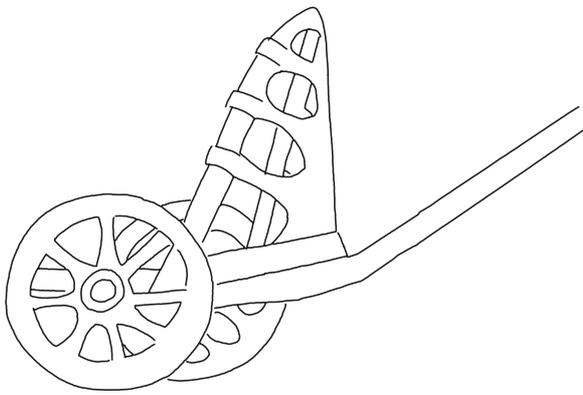


Fig. 2: Model of a Roman *quadriga* (adapted from Jope 1956: 541).

lowing incense in the “sacred space” of a magnificently adorned *quadriga* (see Fig. 2).¹⁵

The triumph can be understood as a political-ideological ritual that conjoined beneficial qualities or potencies of two fundamental dimensions of the cosmos. Spiritually powerful tangible resources from the disorganized, unruly “wilderness” outside Rome, as the “horizontal” or cosmographic axis of the Roman universe was defined, were acquired, “tamed,” and brought safely into the *urbs* for its renewal and reinvigoration by a glorious hero elevated (in his vehicle as well as in his achievement) above mundane earthly humanity as a liminal, godlike (though still mortal) personage now related by his accomplishment and by his gift to Iuppiter to the still higher sacred or spiritual “vertical” cosmological realm of the true gods, who made victories possible and from whom all blessing of life were ultimately derived. Several ritual elements produced this outcome. Although enemy spoils, especially armour, were believed to be redolent with dangerous spiritual power and ordinarily would not be touched or brought into the community, they were now rendered safe by the general’s greater spiritual potency (proven by his victory, Versnel 1970: 309) and by the formal passage of the procession across the threshold (the city gate) that separated the “wilderness” without from the orderly city within and neutralized the dangerous foreign elements (Wagenvoort 1976: 168, see also 154–164; Versnel 1970: 42, 162, 379, 385). This latter procedure essentially identified the triumph as an entrance ceremony, a liminal ritual of passage,

¹⁵ Basically a two-wheeled, light-framed vehicle, drawn by four horses and composed of a platform with side and front railings, coverings, or panels but with the back open for easy access.

and highlighted the threshold as a liminal setting¹⁶ where cosmological domains met and where their boundaries were safely crossed by the triumphator who, arriving like an epiphanized mediating deity, brought good fortune, the ultimate “treasure,” to the city (Versnel 1970: 163, 300–303, 371, 397).

However, the triumph overall actually involved two thresholds, one at the city’s entry gate and the other at the Capitoline temple of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus where the potency encapsulated in success was transferred to the realm of the god. It is noteworthy that, at both locations, the most honorable and most symbolic form of transport was the wheeled vehicles of the gods. The deitylike triumphator’s *quadriga* traversed the “horizontal” threshold at the city gate (or arch) while at the Capitoline temple the “vertical” threshold and the spiritual celestial route therefrom were permanently marked by a (empty) *quadriga* positioned atop the temple pediment, tangible transport of Iuppiter connecting earth and human society with the heavens.¹⁷ Given the fundamental tenet in traditional societies that all dimensions and directions of the cosmological Outside or Beyond are mutually interrelated as parts of a single spiritualized universe (Helms 1988, 1993), the triumphal interrelating of the two liminal thresholds ultimately can be understood as a ritual of cosmological housekeeping that assisted in the maintenance not just of earthly Roman society but also of a properly functioning universe by effecting a rejuvenating act of cosmological transformation. That is to say, the complete journey or passage (indicated by the combined use or presence of the two *quadrigas*) from the cosmographic “wilderness” to the sublime, sacred heights of the gods signified the ritual transformation, via the success of victory, of “untapped,” potentially harmful, spiritual energies from the wilderness, actualized as its tangible “treasure,” into “refined” life-affirming energies of the heavens, actualized in the gifting of victory to the divine realm that provided numerous human blessings (including more treasure-yielding victories that kept the process going), in effect helping to sustain or enhance the positive energy of the cosmos by the conversion of

¹⁶ Versnel (1970: 163, 389); Miller (2001: 37); see also Helms (1988: 28–31). As cosmological contact points, thresholds have long been supernaturally charged liminal locales. See Trumbull (1896); van Gennepe (1960: 19–22, 24–25).

¹⁷ According to legend, when the temple *quadriga* was first being crafted the original clay model swelled and broke the mold in the kiln. Augurers, interpreting this omen, declared that the people who possessed the chariot would enjoy happiness and power (Dumézil 1970/1: 308f.).

a “lower” form of its qualitative properties into a “higher” form.¹⁸

Since the Roman Republican triumph was eventually assimilated into the imperial *adventus* in late antiquity, it is not surprising that the same basic structural format appears in the latter, though processional procedures, political-ideological intent, and ritual cosmological structuring received notably different modes of presentation and/or emphases. In the *adventus*, the victorious general was replaced by the deified emperor, a living god personally consubstantial with the sun, not the ancient solar signifier of time, giver of light and warmth, and regulator of the seasons (Sol Oriens, the rising sun; Kantorowicz 1963: 120–125) but the unconquerable Sol Invictus, eternally victorious over the powers of the dark.¹⁹ However, the procession that welcomed and honored the emperor as epiphany deity when he arrived to visit a city received and extolled him primarily as a beneficent savior and lord who could grant petitions and provide public benefits ranging from better weather to political and material advantages for the community.²⁰ Consequently, the imperial retinue constituted one of the focal units of the welcoming procession. A separate segment of leading civil authorities and priests accompanied by statues of all the city’s deities constituted the other processional focal unit. It met and joined with the imperial party outside the city walls, the whole then proceeding through the city gate into the community as a dual-focused procession in which the benefit-bearing imperial deity rode seated in a gilded and bejeweled throne-chariot and (images of) the community’s gods, the town’s own protective outside-related “treasure,” were conveyed as if a train of “treasure cars.”²¹ At

the conclusion of his visit, the imperial cavalcade exited the city the way it had come, through the gate, en route perhaps to another town (see the depictions on the Arch of Galerius at Thessalonica; Kantorowicz 1944: 215, Fig. 21).

The visual imagery of the emperor seated in his glittering throne-chariot contrasts with that of the triumphator standing proudly in his well-crafted *quadriga* in that the dynamic activity and personal achievement of the victorious general are set against the passivity and remoteness²² of the suprahuman holder of a high office obtained by birthright as inherent privilege; a contrast simply and succinctly implied by the use of the throne-chariot as opposed to the *quadriga* as ceremonial vehicle. Regardless of type of conveyance, however, the *adventus*, like the triumph, required two vehicular crossings of a cosmologically liminal threshold as the emperor first arrived at and then departed from the scene. In seeming contrast with the triumph, both of these imperial passages involved movement along the cosmographic or “horizontal” cosmological axis as the emperor come in from the “wilderness” and seemingly returned to it through the same gate. Yet it appears that by means of wheeled vehicle symbolism the “horizontal” wilderness could also be affiliated with (in a sense transformed into) “vertical” cosmological processes by virtue of the threshold passage of a chariot-riding “celestial” ruler. A pair of reliefs on the Arch of Constantine in Rome that depict the emperor departing from Milan and arriving at Rome, respectively, includes a large tondo presenting a celestially related event above each of the two cortège scenes; that above the departure depicts the setting moon descending into the sea in her *biga* (two-wheeled vehicle drawn by two animals) and that above the arrival shows the rising sun ascending from the sea in his *quadriga* (MacCormack 1981: Plates 12 and 13).²³

18 This qualitative duality and its transformation will be paralleled in the properties inherent in the structure of the wheeled vehicle itself and in the procedures for the crafting of the conveyance, both of which are discussed below.

19 Both Sol and the emperor now came to be depicted iconographically (as on coins) as riding in *quadrigas* (Dumézil 1970: 504–508; Turcan 2000: 134f., 137, 142; Halsberghe 1972).

20 MacCormack (1972: 723, 726–729; 1981: 6, 93); Weinstock (1971: 287–291, 330); see also Kantorowicz (1944).

21 The processional train of gods, or of the insignia of their attributes (*exuviae*), was a feature of other dual-focus ritual processions of antiquity, too, including the Mesopotamian Akitu and the Roman games (Abaecherli 1935–36; Versnel 1970: 258–300 passim). A comparable train of living, chariot-riding personifications of ancestors participated in aristocratic and imperial funerals, which also included a funeral pyre that sometimes had a gilded *quadriga* on its summit to convey the soul of the deceased to its final heavenly *adventus*. See, among others, Turcan and Tommasi (2005); Strong (1915); MacCormack (1981); Scullard (1981: 218f.); Price (1987).

Spirit and Matter

The triumph and the *adventus* present ceremonial wheeled vehicles in highly positive, suprahuman and deistic, celestial or sacral political-ideological contexts. However, the overall symbolic significance of such vehicles carries an equally important subhuman “earthly,” or “base” component, too,

22 “... a supernatural majesty of jeweled and gilded artifact ...” (Elsner 1998: 34).

23 Panegyrics also sometimes referred to the godlike speed with which the emperor seemed able to travel en route to his arrival, as if in the chariot of Sol or Luna (MacCormack 1972: 727f.; 1981: 55–57, 63).

readily introduced by the Greek myth of Erichthonius, a brief tale of misadventure and imbalance in the natural order of things and, perhaps, of how the warped results of that impropriety could be concealed by a vehicle. Erichthonius was the son of Hephaestus, the smith-god, who, clumsily attempting to rape Athena in his forge, missed the mark such that his semen fell to the ground and accidentally fertilized Mother Earth, who gave birth to him. Being of the earth and having been improperly (unnaturally or “basely”) conceived, Erichthonius was born with deformed hindquarters shaped like a serpent’s tail. He was rejected by Earth but raised by Athena, eventually became king of Athens, and was credited with the introduction of the *quadriga* to society (Graves 1960: 97f., sec. 25). It has been said that Erichthonius introduced the chariot because its body or box would conceal his deformed, inferior, “earthly” lower body (Ovid 1970: 114, referencing Pausanias without further citation) even as, we may note, the vehicle would also elevate and reveal his superior kingly nature, that is, his head and upper body. Lévi-Strauss noted a widespread cross-cultural theme in traditional myth whereby men born solely from the earth either cannot walk or do so clumsily (1979: 190f.).

This *subhuman* inability to walk properly is the direct opposite of, yet structurally complementary to, the standard mythic presentation of *suprahuman* deities and kings as traveling without the use of their feet by riding in vehicles, such as chariots, that elevate them above the earth (Wagenvoort 1976: 178f.; cf. Frazer 1913: 4, n. 1). In his physical nature and his kingship, Erichthonius combines the subhuman with the suprahuman, seeming to reconcile the contrast or contradiction²⁴ by the *quadriga* that may (especially if solidly paneled on side and front) conceal the earthly and display the regal. This imagery further suggests that the vehicle itself encodes a fundamental qualitative contrast as, in fact, its basic form of construction directly does. The wheeled vehicle in general is composed of axle(s) and wheels on the one hand and a body – a bounded platform or more boxlike container – on the other. The axles and wheels contain the inherent potential for movement and (following classical and medieval metaphysics) thereby can be interpreted as imbued with or referencing energy and dynamics and related themes of creation and life, light, the spiritual and the celestial, perfection, superiority, qualitative fulfillment, the presence of

power and Being.²⁵ The body of the vehicle, in contrast, is inherently inert and stationary, signifying immobility and, therefore, the absence of life, darkness, base (proximate) matter, “worldly” things, imperfection, inferiority, absence of qualitative fulfillment, powerlessness and non- or incomplete Being (Moevs 2005: 6, 37–49, 50–51). The vehicle body (regardless of its size) is also less ethereal, more “solid” or corporeal, so to speak, in that it is entirely dedicated to containing substantive loads or material burdens, while the wheels are dedicated to more abstract, intangible, or immaterial concepts of motion and energy.²⁶

These contrastive qualities allow the conveyance to be manipulated in various ways both iconographically and in actual use to convey political and ideological messages concerning power, authority, and related existential concerns of spirit and matter. For example, if the intent is to emphasize spiritual (and related) attributes or contexts, the point may be made in art by “dematerializing” the chariot body and depicting it as unrealistically small relative to wheels (and horses) or even as absent altogether.²⁷ The same goal can be achieved by applying fine ornamentation or decoration to the basic raw (earthly) materials (such as iron, wood) from which both body and axles/wheels are built to override, transform, or “perfect” material attributes into qualitatively “higher” ones, as royal vehicles of state almost always do (see discussion of skilled crafting below). This is also to say that “earth” may deliberately be invoked in order that it may be deliberately balanced or surpassed by the “celestial”; that the combination of movement and stasis, the spiritual and the material are necessary to highlight relationships and complementarities required of these fundamental domains if the cosmos is to function properly.

This combination also identifies the ceremonial wheeled vehicle that contains them both and that can encode the mystery of matter energized by spirit so dramatically (e.g., the recognition of a true king by chariot movement; the rain-producing rumble of chariot wheels [see note 11]; ritual death by chariot crash) as itself an inherently liminal cosmological and ritual object ideal for expressing such interrelationships in public settings. Combinations of multiple ceremonial vehicles can also suggest

24 Also the similarity, for both are other and neither is truly an ordinary human who walks properly balanced on two feet and leaves footprints.

25 Plotinus in Mathew (1963: 18); Moevs (2005: 6); Proclus (1933: 242).

26 “The spirit of the living creatures [cherubim] was in the wheels” (Ezekiel 1.21, re Yahwah’s throne-chariot).

27 E.g., L’Orange (1982: 127); MacCormack (1981: Plate 30); Strong 1915: Plate XI).

such a complementarity. In the triumph and *adventus* the treasure cars can be understood as burden-bearing carriers loaded with substantive, earthly or material (though still power-filled) manifestations of “wealth” (war booty; tangible images of deities) while the ornamented *quadriga* or gilded throne-chariot presents the suprahuman being who, like his aesthetically enhanced conveyance, has qualitatively superseded his earthliness to appear in otherworldly glory and light (see discussion of aesthetics and display below).

Part Two: Christendom and the Renaissance

Since the transformation of matter by spirit is a fundamental tenet of Christianity, wheeled vehicles might be expected to play a significant role in Christian symbolism and iconography as these developed in late antiquity and during the Middle Ages. At first glance, however, prospects do not appear encouraging. In general theology, unlike Olympus the peace and harmony of the Christian heaven are not disturbed by rumbling chariot wheels. Iconographically, neither God the Father nor the Holy Spirit was referenced by such vehicles. Only God the Son, as anthropomorphic hypostatic Christ, at times appears in the solar *quadriga* as heavenly “Sol Iustitiae” (conflated with Helios).²⁸ The majestic God/Christ as Pantocrator also is occasionally, though not commonly, presented as a cosmic charioteer by early Christian authors (Wrzėsniewski 1973: 83, 89). Yet in one very important respect Christian theology held great potential for vehicle symbolism.

The transcendental nature of Christian theology placed the Creator far from his creation, opening a great spiritual gap and cosmological interspace between sinful earthly humanity and its distant God and necessitating means for mediating that divide (Proclus 1933: 294). Wheeled vehicle symbolism and iconography notably appear in theological contexts involving that intermediate liminal zone and the related issue of traversing it, which is to say that Christianity emphasized the ideological significance of the wheeled vehicle as a distinctly liminal (midway) cosmological conveyance.

28 Kantorowicz (1963: 135–140, 144f.); Wrzėsniewski (1973); Tanner (1993: 231f.).

Vehicles and Liminality in the Christian Cosmos

This point is highlighted in early Christian imagery of Christ’s ascension and in the symbolism underlying the sacrament of baptism. Imagery of the ascension frequently paralleled that used to represent the ascension of Elijah (who became a “type” for Christ),²⁹ both featuring fiery steeds pulling a vehicle carrying Christ/Elijah,³⁰ although medieval churchmen were careful to make a distinction between the prophet’s limited rise to the sky (or, in the later Middle Ages, to the earthly paradise) and Christ’s further ascension to heaven (Schapiro 1943: 140; cf. Koch 1959: Figs. 3 and 6, 554, 557). Vehicle imagery from Elijah (and also Ezekiel), along with the concept of the solar chariot and various Neoplatonic ideas regarding the cosmic chariot, then further informed fourth-century church fathers’ exegeses and debates regarding baptism and the related issue of the journey of the soul between earth and the celestial.³¹

Some images of Christ’s ascension depict the vehicle reduced only to its wheels (MacCormack 1981: 137; L’Orange 1982: 125–129), indicative of the spiritual elements informing that liminal journey. However, this visual reduction also points toward the gradual “disintegration” of Christological chariot imagery, succinctly explained by Pope Gregory the Great who distinguished Elijah’s need of a wheeled conveyance in order to ascend from Christ’s ability to be borne up entirely by his own power (Schapiro 1943: 138 and passim). Yet church tradition did not easily forget the Christianized solar charioteer, as perhaps is witnessed in the delightful miniature, in the 12th-century “Hortus deliciarum” of Herrad, Abbess of Hohenbourg, of a robed figure with royal corona and nimbus labeled “Sol” seated in a box cart being drawn heavenward by two pairs of “*equis solis*” (see Fig. 3;

29 It was also influenced by depictions of Roman imperial apotheosis (see note 21) and by God’s chariot as portrayed in Ezekiel’s vision (Daniėlou 1958: 135f., n. 16; see also Kantorowicz 1963: 144). Elijah’s vehicle was often assimilated with that of Helios / “Sol Iustitiae”; note the close spelling of the two names in Greek, Ηλιος (Elias) and Ηλιος (Helios) (Daniėlou 1958: 137).

30 E.g., Grabar (1968: 35, 117, Figs. 89, 281, 282); Vermaseren (1963: 105f.); MacCormack (1981: 124f., Plates 30, 31); Elsner (1998: 227, Fig. 152).

31 Baptism was metaphorically described at times as “a vehicle of the heavens” and “Vehicle to God,” using “vehicle” (Οχημα) in the “earthly” sense of the mortal human body as corporeal carrier or “clothing” supporting, protecting, and conveying the soul (Daniėlou 1958). For relevant Neoplatonic ideas see Rosán (1949: 174–177, n. 14, 195–198); Proclus (1933).

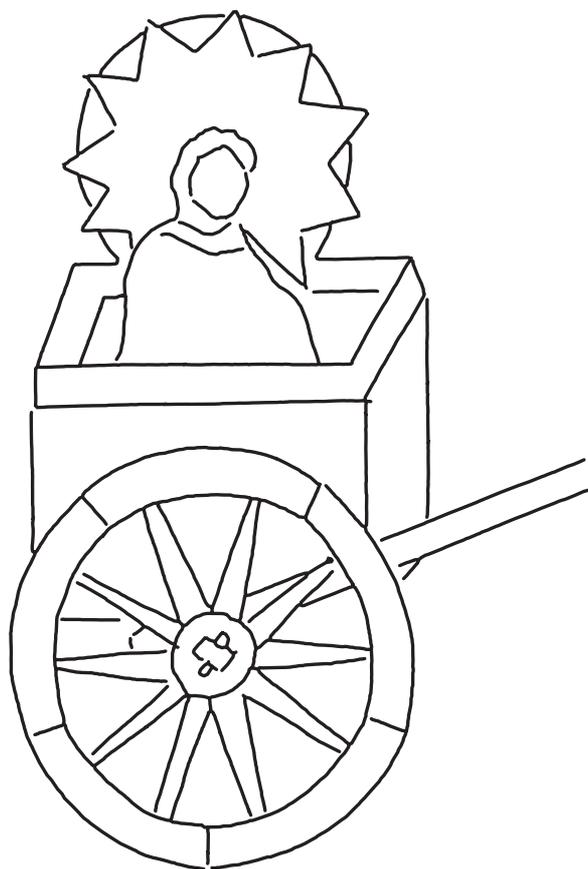


Fig. 3: Sol in a box cart (simplified and adapted from the “*Hortus deliciarum*,” Leighton 1972: 114).

Leighton 1972: 114). In fact, this form of vehicular imagery continued to be employed to depict holy men or prophets as situated in the liminal interspace between ordinary people and the divine, showing them seated in vehicles that seem to levitate above the earth. Elijah appears in this vein when he is portrayed in a wheeled box cart (but without horses) pointed heavenward and with (only) his head and shoulders visible above the sides of the cart (Koch 1959: 550f., 554–557, Figs. 3 and 6). St. Francis is similarly encountered, head and shoulders, in a flaming aerial (but also horseless) box cart (L’Orange 1982: 129, 131, Fig. 94; Cook 1999: 49–52).³² This open display of upper body, paired with vehicular concealment of lower body, seems to evidence again not only functional reality but also a qualitative contrast between the “higher” or spiritual portion of the occupant’s hu-

32 See also the real-life account of a well-traveled sixth-century Welsh monk, a holy man and *peregrini*, who refused to be parted from his personal cart throughout his travels by land and sea (Cunliffe 2001: 475f.). St. Columba thought vehicular transport scandalous for an ordinary cleric though he rode in wagons himself (Leighton 1972: 84).

manity and his “lower” or earthly portion with emphasis accorded, appropriately, to the spiritual side of the holy man’s being. It also illustrates once again a relationship between the vehicle body and the “base” or material nature of strictly earthly things (cf. Ullman 1965: 14, 101, regarding superior *anima* and inferior *corpus*).

This basic existential contrast is also clearly implied in the 12th-century allegorical poem by Alan of Lille, the “*Anticlaudian*,” which concerns the creation of the perfect man, earthly in body and heavenly in soul. The poem includes a description of the construction, by the Seven Liberal Arts (as sisters), of a vehicle for the lengthy trip through the liminal interspace to God, who will bestow the soul, and then back to earth (Tanner 1993: 45f.; Lille 1973: 32).³³ The poet recounts in great detail the crafting of the vehicle’s motion (i.e., spirit) components – its pole, axles, wheels – but makes no mention of the body except to say that a seat was installed, in effect “dematerializing” the vehicle by literary omission. And thinking of literature and the “materiality” of vehicle bodies, we may consider Dante’s description of the destruction of the chariot body in the *Divine Comedy/Purgatory*, when that vehicle is immobilized (i.e., deprived of its spiritual portion) by being tied to the Tree in the Garden of Eden and then attacked and broken by harmful “earthly” forces (representing history, heretics, Satan), one of which (the second eagle attack) reprimands the chariot (as metaphor for the institutional church) for being a worldly and materialistic “treasure wagon”.³⁴

The spiritual interspace between earth and heaven was also mediated by formal religious processions honoring saints’ relics and the Eucharist, tangible signifiers of liminal beings that had already bridged that distance. Precious relics could be joyously transported in decorated wheeled vehicles,³⁵ while the Eucharist was publicly displayed

33 Sheridan notes that the motif of the “celestial car” was a common metaphor of the 12th century (Lille 1973: 32).

34 Dante (2000b: 317f.; 2000a: 319–321, esp. lines 124–127). Some scholars interpret the chariot as liminal transport for the journey of Dante’s soul heavenward and back (Dronke 1981: 131–133); others as metaphor for the Church (Musa in Dante 2000b: 290, 292, 296; see cantos 29–32).

35 Elsner (1998: 231); MacCormack (1972: 748); Kantorowicz (1944: 212, n. 28); Coulton (1969: 17). The mystical power inherent in ceremonial wheeled vehicles is also evidenced in the 12th-century Waltham Chronicle account of the miraculous discovery of a wonder-working crucifix and other holy items in a field and their initial translation by oxcart to a local church. The local lord decreed that some should be taken on to a more distant destination and suggested several places but the cart stood immobile, in spite of the oxen’s

on the feast of Corpus Christi (from mid-13th century on) in a procession directly patterned on a dual focus Roman triumph (Payne 1962: 223f.). The sacrament “enthroned” in the monstrance (Tanner 1993: 214f.) carried by an archbishop or on a magnificently adorned triumphal cart under a canopy (Christ as triumphator over darkness and as cosmic ruler) constituted one focal point and a train of wheeled pageant cars as “treasure wagons” carrying “spiritual wealth” in the form of staged presentations of saints and biblical personages and events constituted the other.³⁶

Although religious processions could involve wheeled vehicles, until the latter Middle Ages (see below) political (royal) cortèges did not. The imperial *adventus* disappeared in Western Europe in the 5th century (part of the general collapse of Roman administration) and, while medieval rulers frequently travelled, their formal entrances into towns or monasteries were effected on horseback.³⁷ Initially this omission seems rather curious. The medieval Christian ruler was recognized as a distinctive type of being, a “mixed person” (*persona mixta*) or “twin-natured being,” who (like the bishop and the monk) blended spiritual favour (by investiture) and mortal characteristics in one person.³⁸ Consequently, he was very much a liminal being and mediator. Yet, while wheeled vehicles enhanced Christian liminality and political (and ecclesiastical) processions could be glittering affairs, royal figures avoided ceremonial vehicles, perhaps for several, not unrelated reasons: use of a wheeled vehicle seems to have carried a strong taint of imperial hubris and avoidance of such a vehicle allowed the monarch to more closely imitate Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a very different type of transport.³⁹ The dangers of hubris were

efforts, until Waltham was proposed, when it moved quite easily (*The Waltham Chronicle* 1994: 3, 9–17).

36 Very (1962: 25–37); Payne (1962: 213, 224), cf. Withington (1963/1: 14, n. 1, 16).

37 The notable exception was the use of oxcarts by Merovingian kings. Given that the official movement of a consecrated king along a route through the dangerous cosmographic “wilderness” can still be interpreted as a means of controlling and taming its mystical powers (e.g., Gurevich 1985: 74; Geertz 1977: 153) and remembering the interpretation of the ceremonial wheeled vehicle as enclosed sacred space, the Merovingian king in his oxcart may be identified as a moveable omphalos in a sacred wagon, suggestive of the ritual vehicles of much earlier eras (Piggott 1992: 33–35, 139).

38 Bonne (1990: 60); Kantorowicz (1957: 43f., 88); Ullman (1965: 74–87).

39 Kantorowicz (1944: 216f.). The anointed and coronated king, while he ruled, was a “type” or “figure,” i.e., a living image on earth and in earthly time, of the hypostatic Christ (Kantorowicz 1957: 47–49, 61f., 87–89).

graphically illustrated by admonishing satire associated with the legendary Alexander the Great’s attempted ascent to the sky in a throne-chariot or symbolically comparable vehicle to view his domain, often depicted in medieval church artistry as a thoroughly illicit or botched event because of inappropriate pride.⁴⁰ The admirable example provided by Christ on his donkey was succinctly encouraged by St. Bonaventure: “our Lord Christ, in order to destroy Pride first of all among men, did not wish to come haughty and proud in a chariot and with a caparisoned horse, but humble and meek upon Palm Sunday mounted upon a contemptible donkey” (quoted in Kipling 1998: 185; see also Kantorowicz 1944: 210).

Time Future, Time Past in the Later Middle Ages / Renaissance

Pride might be subdued, but Fame could be another matter. Fame involves consideration of time, especially the change in the nature of time when the traditional Augustinian concept of created earthly time or *tempus* – the time that (like all God-created things) was finite and would end in death or final worldly apocalypse and be superceded by sacred, celestial Eternity – was challenged and then paralleled by the reemergent Aristotelian concept of uncreated time or “eon” – time (and the earthly world) as infinitely continuous, indicative of endless duration (as the world itself was now considered permanent) and, therefore, symbolic of ongoing life rather than of death. Such a positive, ever-flowing view of time on this earth, in turn, gave new meaning and intensity to the quest for worldly fame, even immortality, through human remembrance, a different kind of “eternal” life that could be obtained and expressed within living human society and need not wait for heaven (Kantorowicz 1957: 257–284).

Tempus had long been associated with the imagery of wheeled vehicles as conveyances for the sun and the moon and the seasons, all portrayed as substantive “things” to be carried from setting to setting. “Eon” came to be associated with vehicular imagery in the context of Fame, also perceived as a qualitative “thing” – the “substance” or “weight” of one’s accomplishment – and as an “entity” that coopted or harnessed continuous time for its own

40 Cary (1956: 134f., 258); MacCormack (1981: 333, n. 221).

Depictions of the Sassanian king, Khusro II, on his moveable throne and throne-chariot provided another Western medieval *exemplum* of overweening pride (L’Orange 1982: 18–24, 37–48).

use, indeed, for its very existence. In the later Middle Ages, Fame was widely depicted in art and iconography as a personified figure riding either in a triumphal chariot as worldly conqueror of time or in a treasure wagon as conquered time itself (i.e., time acquired as a valuable cosmological resource, as treasure from the cosmographical Outside once had been).

The relative merit of striving for or achieving earthly fame was immortalized in Petrarch's hugely influential poem, "I Trionfi," which describes a qualitatively graded (from least to most spiritual) series of existential conditions presented in the metaphor of the antique Roman triumph wherein each successively triumphs over its lesser. Thus, earthly Love (passion) conquers even the most famous mortals but Chastity triumphs over Love, Death over Chastity, Fame over Death, but then Time triumphs over Fame and, ultimately for Petrarch, Eternity over Time (Petarca 1962). In the poem, the first triumphator, Love – and only Love, is presented as riding on a vehicle.⁴¹ However, in later renderings of the poem by diverse artists, when the entire series was frequently presented in highly decorative visual media and public pageantry, it became convention to accord each of the powers as a personified figure in a triumphal vehicle, the entire sequence depicting a veritable train of attribute-bearing treasure wagons or triumphal throne-chariots, depending on style of depiction.⁴²

Late medieval/Renaissance public pageantry, notably civic processions, reflected in their political ideology an interest in both the future and the past. Time future was evoked in the growing emphasis on fostering the enduring fame of the territorial nation-state, not just as governing authority but as a quasi-religious mystical or sacred entity existing in perpetuity, served by and embodied in the crown personified, ultimately, in the absolute monarch. Time past was evoked in the reconstruction, enhanced and transformed into late medieval/Renaissance terms, of the classical Roman triumph and imperial *adventus* as staging for the official royal (also ecclesiastical) entry.⁴³

In one basic respect the royal entry of the 14th–17th centuries is not pertinent to this essay, for the entering monarch (or other ruling authority) typically still did not use a wheeled vehicle but continued to ride triumphantly as an equestrian figure.⁴⁴ However, the procession retained the treasure wagon (though with thematic changes) and the crossing of the liminal threshold that bridged cosmological realms was highly developed. Like its antique archetypes, the event was composed structurally of two segments: the retinue of the arriving monarch and an assemblage of town officials who greeted the king outside the city walls, the two then combining into a single cortège to proceed into the community.⁴⁵ The main point of interest for this essay lies in the inclusion of wheeled floats or pageant cars (often referred to as "chariots") that sometimes, though not always, accompanied the procession as equivalents of the classical "treasure cars." Some, on occasion, carried actual spoils of war or other tangible cosmographical "wealth" of kingly conquest (e.g., Mitchell 1986: 94–97, 103) but most were essentially decorated platforms for allegorical and metaphorical *tableaux vivants* presented either as stationary stages along the route or carried on trains of wagons as part of the procession itself. The *tableaux* presented themes pertinent to royal glory, kingly quality and worth, and political-cum-cosmological order (e.g., Tillyard 1963: 7, 17, 108–111). For example, they might equate the king's deeds and virtues with those of great suprahuman heroes, imperial rulers, or other leaders of the antique or early Christian past or present personifications of worthy characters from the Bible or from classical myth or representations of honored family ancestors, all of whose

41 In light of the association in this essay of a portion of wheeled vehicle symbolism with base Earth and the absence of Spirit and Life, it is interesting that Love for Petrarch is highly negative, the least spiritual and most intensely "earthly" of all the attributes, portrayed as destructive of self in many ways and thus, from a strictly Christian point of view, appropriately depicted in a vehicle associated with the darkness of paganism (Petarca 1962: 5–34).

42 Panofsky (1969: 60); Yates (1975: 112); Marle (1931–32/2: 111–113); Eisenbichler and Iannucci (1990); Sticca (1990: 57).

43 Scholarly studies of the late medieval/Renaissance entry abound. Basic works include Bryant (1986); Giesey (1985); Perret (2001); Kipling (1998); Mitchell (1986); Graham (1986); Smuts (1989); Wisch and Munshower (1990).

44 The image of the "chariot" signifying "triumph" was, however, a frequent symbol in the panegyric literature and various visual arts associated with such events (Schneider 1913: 97–99). See also discussion below. Several 14–15th-century Italian entries, in more thorough reconstructions of the classical triumph, did provide a triumphator's throne-chariot for the entering lord (e.g., Hersey 1973: 14f. and Figures) but several kings also refused the honor (Burckhardt 1937: 217f.) and the practice did not become established. Note, however, the entry of Mary Tudor into London in 1553 (Thrupp 1969: 28f.) and the discussion by Strong of certain of Elizabeth I's "triumphal" conveyances (1977: 17–19, 36, 46f.).

45 The late medieval royal entry, a highly ritualized, richly symbolized and dramatized public spectacle of state, honored a monarch when he first entered his capitol city or a major town on the occasion of his coronation or when a visiting monarch entered a foreign capital.

exceptional qualities were to provide *exempla* for the king (see note 45). The *tableaux* also could include personifications of attributes of patron saints, the cardinal virtues,⁴⁶ and other qualitative ideals, such as Honor, Fame, Immortality, etc. to which contemporary kings, as still imperfect monarchs, should actively aspire for the good of their realms and the fame and glory of their names.

In the context of this essay, these *tableaux* personifications of larger-than-life predecessors and of moral and ideological principles, being indicative of the otherness contained in past eras and in the ideal, appear as a kind of otherworldly “sacra” or ideological treasure conveyed upon ceremonial vehicles-cum-treasure cars. As such they may be compared with vehicular processions of statues of the gods in various antique dual-focus processions (see note 21). Like the gods, this “wealth” of ancestral figures and ideals carried in “cosmologized” treasure vehicles⁴⁷ evoked associations with dimensions and conditions of “distance”; the distance of times past and of high moral and spiritual virtues that should inform the monarch who labored to possess all elevating and positive qualities as he strove to become the “Perfect Prince” (Born 1928; Strong 1972: 90, 92).

Visual representations of all these characterizations were also presented on the multiple triumphal arches temporarily erected at various points along the processional route, the ultimate hallmark of the late medieval/Renaissance entry. The king, himself a qualitative epiphanal “treasure” arriving from outside the town, and any moveable platform “treasure” cars evidencing the wealth of positive attributes associated with him passed through these arches as they had passed through the initial city gate. Indeed, the arches were so numerous that the entry overall has been described as a “festival of gates” (Schneider 1913: 95, Fig. on p. 105). Since the arch, as a kind of “gate,” traditionally carried the symbolism of the threshold, the liminal place of epiphany where the mystical (or the godly) tangibly appeared (note 16), the presence of multiple arches connoting multiple thresholds essentially defined

the entire entry route, from town gate to central cathedral or town hall, as a single, more or less continuous (being repeated over and over) liminal threshold with emphasis, via the equally liminal sacra of pageant car *tableaux*, whether mobile or stationary, (and also via images on the arches), on the exceptional qualities that, by defining the superior character of the ruler, epiphanally “revealed” him or “brought him into being” qualitatively for the community.⁴⁸

The antique triumph also influenced the public royal funeral procession, a distinctly liminal “liturgy of state” evoking time future and the enduring nature of the state. Once again the procession was structured with a dual focus that involved ceremonial wheeled vehicles. One segment of the duality featured a lifelike effigy of the deceased monarch, dressed in full regalia and displaying “the fullness of royal dignity” to the hilt,⁴⁹ carried either on a shoulder litter or on some form of “royal chariot” (Strong 1977: 14f.; see also Nichols 1828/2: 494, 498; 1828/4: 1038, 1046). The second segment featured a wagon (hearse) with or without the encoffined remains of the deceased.⁵⁰ The “living” effigy, heralded as an entering triumphator, signified a kind of “interregnum” (the heir not yet having been crowned) that emphasized the undying majesty and earthly continuity of kingship.⁵¹ The hearse, in the structural position of the “treasure car,” was an official vehicle of state, displaying appropriate state insignia (e.g., Giesey 1960: 12). The glorious effigy and the car of state together displayed the undiminished and ongoing viability of the Crown and the sovereign state, respectively.⁵²

46 Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance, the standards for judging proper kingly conduct (Kipling 1990: 125, n. 254).

47 In concert with the ongoing theme of the “earthly” vs. “spiritual” nature of ceremonial vehicles, the following comment by Withington is of interest: “what may be called the *body* of pageantry is the cars – but a procession of cars is only a corpse. The allegory or symbolism or history which the living characters [or inanimate figures] bring may be called the *soul* of pageantry . . . the real pageant has both body and soul” (1963/1: xvii; emphasis in original).

48 See Hurlbut (2001: 158–163) regarding the late medieval entry in the context of Victor Turner’s model of liminality and rites of passage.

49 Giesey (1960: 14). French and English royal funerals offer good examples.

50 Giesey (1960, see especially Figs. 3–5 for excellent schematic diagrams of French funeral processions); Kantorowicz (1957: 423); San Juan (1997).

51 Giesey (1960: 14, 26, 112, 117; 1990: 39); Kantorowicz (1957: 430f.). Effigies were discontinued in mid-17th century when, in absolute monarchies, the heir became king the instant the predecessor ceased to breathe.

52 For an earlier form of state car see the *carroccio* of the medieval Italian city-states, a large, rectangular platform wagon drawn by oxen that served as a political-ideological sacred wagon, the most precious symbol and visual representation of the community. It continues, in modern form, as highlight of the semiannual Sienna *palio* (Payne 1962: 217f., 225f.; Trexler 1980: 4, n. 10, 5; Kantorowicz 1957: 438, 448–450; Dundes and Falassi 1975: 9, 108, 242).

Triumph in Art and Literature

Themes of triumph and treasure were also encoded in various visual arts other than public spectacles (tapestry, painting, stained glass, engraving, sculpture) but with major iconographical emphasis now on the “chariot,” i.e., the throne-chariot or the *biga* or *quadriga*. Indeed, the absence of the royal throne-chariot from actual public entries seems to be redeemed and compensated for by the readiness with which other visual arts display a focal “triumphator” in an elaborate vehicle being heralded in a glorious “triumph.” In addition, this art often seems to conflate the theme of the treasure wagon with that of the triumphator’s chariot by presenting an “ideological treasure,” that is, a personified Virtue or Ideal or other spiritual or religious quality or concept (Hope, Peace, Divine Love, etc.) as the chariot-riding triumphator, in effect saying that “ideological treasure triumphs” (e.g., Liedtke 1984: Figs. 77–79, 180; Marle 1931–2: 111–152).

Both sacred and secular (royal) artistic expressions used this iconography. In sacred art, the predominant theme was the “Church triumphant” based upon chapters one and two of Savonarola’s “Triumphus crucis” (1661; Wisch 1990: 99, n. 67; Poorter 1978/1: 198 f.). In this unillustrated text, the wounded incarnate Christ with crown of thorns is described as seated, accompanied by the Virgin, on a triumphal throne-chariot surrounded by New Testament and church figures, while Old Testament personages precede it and converted pagans follow (Miller 2001: 56 f.; Panofsky 1969: 59), an image suggesting overall the chariot, with its Man of Sorrows, as a redeemed and sacred space or setting at a focal and/or mediating (and thus also midway or liminal) point in church and human history. Savonarola’s literary imagery inspired numerous visual depictions (e.g., Liedtke 1984: Figs. 80, 149, 151), most notably Titian’s woodcut (part of his “Il Trionfo della Fede” series) where the chariot presents an elevated sacred space containing, as triumphator, the eternal cosmic Christ in Majesty with heroes of the Old Law preceding and apostles, martyrs and other church figures following. Titian’s chariot again demarcates a central place or liminal position, though this time between “the eras before and after Grace,” where existential or “temporal” eras meet at a divine source (Panofsky 1969: 59).⁵³

⁵³ Sacred art also enthrones Mary/Eve in triumphal vehicles. A particularly striking example is found in the stained glass windows at St. Vincent in Rouen that present a series of three throne-chariot-centered scenes featuring Adam and Eve, the serpent, and the Virgin (regenerate Eve), respectively (Mâle 1986: 267–269).

Other vehicle-informed manifestations of the triumphant Christ, along with the Eucharist and the sun, appear iconographically as emblems of royalty. They are found most notably among the Hapsburgs and especially Philip II, whose personal emblem featured Apollo (now associated with Christian virtues) riding on his *quadriga*, indicative of the solar identity that Philip (and European absolute rulers thereafter) would adopt.⁵⁴

Renaissance and early modern (17th century) monarchs also were often formally depicted in portraiture as riding triumphantly in various vehicles. Indeed, “chariots” were one among a cluster of “dignified or dignity-bestowing properties” (also including orbs, scepters, swords, thunderbolts, etc.) that officially encoded and presented the regal quality of kingship to viewers (Burke 1992: 33, 87). Though not a formal part of the literal actuality of kingship, elaborate wheeled vehicles still informed the imagery that helped to idealize and “eternalize” the monarch. As such, Renaissance portrayal of the royal triumphator in art, though often very dramatic, not only displays unreal and anachronistic “chariot” imagery (e.g., Homer, above) but also can only present the glorified monarch in arrested or immobilized ideal activity. In a sense, however, the more indeterminate (so to speak) and distanced tone of this idealized vehicular context is not inappropriate as metaphor for the Renaissance-era sovereign, who (not unlike his medieval predecessors) had to reconcile elements of a mixed ruling persona as well as conflicting concepts of temporal legitimation. He embodied imperial authority yet was restrained by law; was a Christian king and defender of the faith, yet often stood in uneasy alliance with the church and especially the papacy. Yet again, he was a legitimate monarch who ruled by virtue of royal blood and an ancestry that claimed ennobling linkages (correspondances) with antique deities and heroes, whose glory he rightfully emulated.⁵⁵ In other words, the Renaissance ruler recognized absolute Christian eternity and conditions of its preliminary earthly *tempus* (the organized church, the pope, the sacraments), yet was also enmeshed in the “Eon” of continuous earthly history, the heroic classical era of

⁵⁴ Basic Hapsburg imperial solar iconography is nicely encapsulated in a depiction, made for Philip IV, showing a personification of Hapsburg piety riding high on a throne-chariot in a triumphant (with arches) Corpus Christi procession with the solar monsternance shining in the heavens (Tanner 1993: 247, see also 223–248); Von Barghahn (1985: 117–123, Figs. 1071, 1072, 1074); Parker (1999: 190 f.); Blockmans (1999: 239).

⁵⁵ Tanner (1993); Knecht (1994: 90 f.); Yates (1975: 38 f.).

the past moving seamlessly into the infinite future of the undying state. The first temporal condition subordinated the Crown to the furtherance of its earthly Christian duties and to ultimate soteriological goals; the second elevated the sovereign to a higher imperial supremacy for the further glorification and fame of the state. The dual monarchical perspective and its two legitimizing temporal formats are nicely summarized in a woodcut (by Georg Pencz, 1531) showing a kneeling Charles V submissively kissing the foot of the enthroned and elaborately canopied pope, who presents him with the crown, while the sky above has opened to reveal a second depiction of Charles as “Jupiter” riding regally and self-assuredly in a throne-chariot (with an attendant kneeling before him), head turned to look the viewer squarely in the eye (Burke 1999: 424; this dual perspective had deep roots in the early Middle Age [Riché 1993: 122f.]).

Part Three: Early Modern and Modern Europe

Chariots had a place in art but, in the opinion of some conservative 16th- and 17th-century observers, the rapidly growing popularity of wheeled vehicles as fashionable social conveyances by able-bodied aristocratic men and women was demoralizing and ill-advised.⁵⁶ The vehicles in question were four-wheeled carriages with canopy-like roofs attached to paneled and ornamented boxlike bodies by corner and side poles and with leather or fabric side curtains that could be pulled back or rolled up and let down as desired (Figs. 4 and 5). Gradually the suspension coach was added to the social scene, too (Fig. 6).⁵⁷

Wheeled Vehicles and Early Modern Statecraft

In royal circles, carriages and coaches initially provided informal pleasure rides and secure quarters for private, off-the-record conversations.⁵⁸ They also were useful as official vehicles of state for cer-

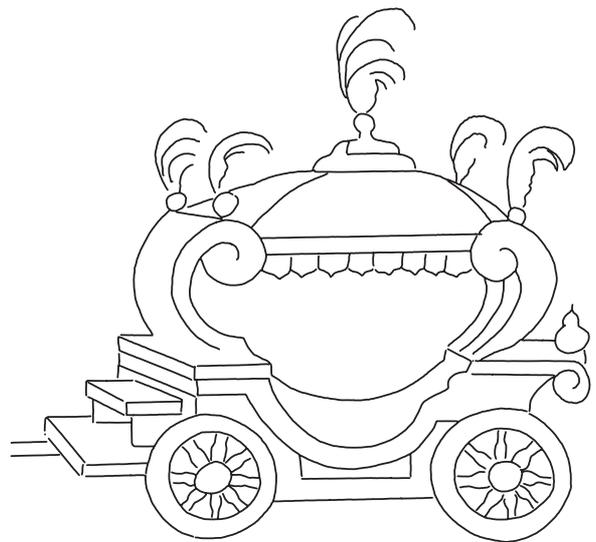


Fig. 4: Late 16th-century engraving of open-sided and canopied carriage for Queen Elizabeth I (simplified and adapted from Markland 1824: Fig. 5; see also p. 462, n. f).

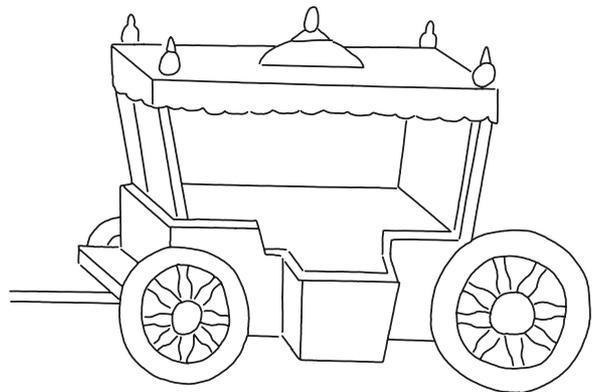


Fig. 5: Open-sided carriage with canopy used by ladies of the court of Elizabeth I (simplified and adapted from Markland 1824: Fig. 6; see also p. 462, n. f).

56 Typical comments can be found in Thrupp (1969: 37); Markland (1824: 464, n. n and m, 465, 469f.); Piggott (1992: 126, 148); Hume (1928: 130f.).

57 A “suspension” coach had the body hung upon the undercarriage and the roof built in as part of the overall frame (Fig. 6). For descriptions of coaches and carriages see Piggott (1992: 140, 149f.); Thrupp (1969: 30f.; 34–41); Markland (1824: 465–468); Singer (1956: 545, 547f.); Boyer (1959: 363–365).

58 Examples appear in Nichols (1828); Nadal (1960); Cloulas (1999: 58f.); Strage (1976: 148).

tain outside geopolitical affairs, notably the transport and reception of foreign brides, the formal receiving of foreign ambassadors, and gift-giving with foreign rulers. The suspension coach as royal gift appears by 1457, when King Ladislaus of Hungary presented the queen of France with one, creating quite a stir (Boyer 1959: 364). In later decades, Henri III of France had an “exceeding marvelous princely coche” made for Elizabeth I, while Elizabeth, in turn, sent an elaborate specimen to Tsar Boris Godunov (for these and other examples see Piggott 1992: 151, 155–158; Nichols 1828/2: 607). The association of a wheeled status vehicle with the “triumph” of marriage is ancient (Keel 1978: 283; Connor 1987: 42). In the European Early Modern era, it may appear (travel conditions permitting)

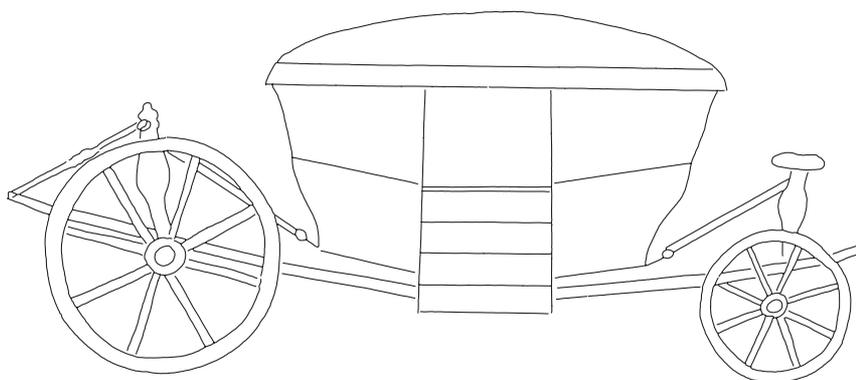


Fig. 6: Mid-17th-century Parisian suspension coach (simplified and adapted from Thrupp 1969: Plate 14).

when, after a proxy marriage, a royal bride was transported from her own court and country to that of her royal husband⁵⁹ and/or when she was formally conveyed to the cathedral for the ceremony or officially welcomed by entry cortège at her new home city. In the process not only did both bride and transport cross liminal thresholds (geopolitical borders) but the bride's coach of state also triumphantly conveyed (and itself represented) a valuable resource, the hope for the future of the state in the person of the anticipated mother of an heir, the royal bride as Outside-derived "treasure" whose fertility now constituted a form of state wealth.⁶⁰

Foreign ambassadors, who, like foreign brides, traveled across territorial boundaries as persons of state officially representing the legitimacy, dignity, and grandeur of a foreign power, used coaches as formal symbols of their government in official ceremonial capacities.⁶¹ State coaches were particularly on display in the elaborate entry cortège and public spectacle that preceded the official presentation of credentials at court.⁶² Several points stand out overall. General ambassadorial use seems to have required ostentatious display of a quantity of vehicles to signal proper qualitative status. Thus, for example, the French embassy attending the accession of James I brought 30 coaches with them, while the Venetian embassy honored the visit of Pope Clement VIII to Ferrara with a cortège of 100 ve-

hicles (Piggott 1992: 153; Mitchell 1990: 122. See further discussion below).⁶³ It is also noteworthy that ambassadorial state coaches, like royal state coaches, could be accorded positions in their own right in formal cortèges even if unoccupied, as could occur, for example, if the ambassador were honored on the occasion with the use of a horse sent by the monarch from the royal stables.⁶⁴ In these circumstances the organization of the ambassadorial cortège clearly exhibits the familiar dual focus; on the one hand, the ambassador as entering surrogate head of his government and, on the other, the coach itself as tangible symbol and representation of that state (a variation of the treasure car theme).⁶⁵

The use of coaches of state in cosmographically "horizontal" foreign affairs was paralleled by wheeled vehicle symbolism in iconography pertinent to the (also other-oriented) "vertical" or elevating dimension of 17th–18th-century political ideology which declared the monarch to have surpassed the "ideal" classical archetype informing the striving Renaissance ruler to become, in his own physical being (not just in official royal *persona*), the complete and perfect embodiment of all ideals in their fullest state. Consequently, he himself was now divine (though not transcendental) and was recognized by God as such. Appropriately enough for a perfect "little God" (see James I, quoted in Strong 1972: 89), these monarchs (following the lead of Philip II) emphasized celestial,

59 In prior centuries wheeled vehicles were routinely used for travel by aristocratic women as well as by higher clergy, the elderly, and the ill (Piggott 1992: 69, 123f.; Leighton 1972: 65–69, 87f., 172f., 178; Verdon 2003: 183, 186; Boyer 1959: 361).

60 Loftis (1979: 183f.); Bernier (1984: 53f.); Kleinman (1985: 22–25); Thrupp (1969: 36, 56–59); Bergeron (1971: 67f.); Pardoe (1848/1: 154).

61 Elegant state coaches could also be provided for them as a courtesy by host monarchs (Loftis 1979: 145f.; Nichols 1828/4: 668, 813 and passim; Sherwood 1977: 54).

62 Tizón (1978: 46); Woodbridge (1940: 96); Wolf (1968: 282).

63 For other examples see Loftis (1979: 160f.); Nichols (1828/2: 34; 1828/3: 494, 584, 590); Bergeron (1971: 117f.); Thrupp (1969: 58f.). Woodbridge (1940: 173f.) describes a dissenting voice.

64 See the detailed description by Lady Ann Fanshawe of the official entry into Madrid of her husband, Sir Richard, as English ambassador to the court of Philip IV (Loftis 1979: 163f.).

65 The receiving government could also include its own empty state or royal coach as part of the "treasure car" segment. See reference in note 64.

specifically solar/Christological imagery with the solar chariot (among other solar symbolism) appearing prominently in political-ideological art as allegorical symbol of kingly dignity and potency.⁶⁶

Not surprisingly, the Renaissance-style royal entry, with its emphasis on perfecting the monarch, markedly declined as the now already perfect king also became increasingly remote and elevated above (distanced from) the public.⁶⁷ Those public royal “arrivals” that did occur, however, provide interesting perspectives on ceremonial vehicle use and symbolism. For one thing, arriving monarchs still strongly preferred to appear with great majesty and personal splendor on horseback, while presenting their formal “office” via an accompanying state vehicle.⁶⁸ On those occasions when monarchs rode in coaches in formal cortège they not infrequently were accompanied by members (especially female) of the royal family or other high officials, which somewhat reduced their own regal impact.⁶⁹ Use of the coach in public civic cortège also seems to soften the structural dual focus to some extent, as is nicely illustrated by the popular 18th-century Lord Mayor’s Show in London (which replaced the royal entry as public spectacle [Bergeron 1971; Withington 1963/2]) in which the incoming Lord Mayor, in his coach, headed the cortège, followed by the outgoing Lord Mayor in his vehicle and then the aldermen in their respective coaches positioned in line according to seniority (Withington 1963/2: 67, 86, 90, ill. opp. 94). This arrangement, in effect, created a single, hierarchically arranged train of coaches in which the “triumphal car” of the new Lord Mayor merged, as a form or “type” of vehicle, with the “treasure cars” (those bearing the outgoing Lord Mayor and the aldermen) as one among the many.

66 Burke (1992); Tanner (1993: chap. 12); Kantorowicz (1963: 163–165, 169f., 174); Strong (1973: 52).

67 Bryant (1986: 23, 216, 218); Shergold (1967: 139); Bergeron (1971: chap. 2 and 3); Smuts (1989); Stone (1967: chap. 8); Withington (1963/1); Giesey (1985: 58–62).

68 An excellent example is afforded by the coronation entry, in 1676, of the Polish monarch, John III Sobieski, who rode into Prague on a dapple-gray horse under a canopy while a gilded “king’s chariot” bearing his majesty’s “character,” John III, carried six golden crowns and one of laurel (John III [Sobieski] 1676: 5f.).

69 In like fashion, when Oliver Cromwell entered London to great acclaim in 1651 at the end of the civil wars, he chose to ride “as privately as he could in a coach than openly on horseback” to present an image of humility and downplay monarchical form (Knoppers 2000: 57f.). For examples of early modern royal arrivals see Nichols (1828/4: 806–830; 1828/3: 261–263); Hatton (1977: 255, Fig. 273); Bryant (1986: 218f., Fig. 49).

Indeed, an often lengthy train of carriages and coaches was perhaps the most distinctive feature of Early Modern civic cortèges. Spectators observed the uninterrupted passage of dozens of vehicles carrying the monarch (or other high personage), state officials, and other members of the aristocracy, all to varying degree hidden from full view within their conveyances (see below), though the identity of the focal figure would likely be distinguishable by the elaborate decoration of the side panels of his vehicle, by an image of a crown of state fastened on the roof, or (for monarchs) by use of a gilded “solar” coach. Nonetheless, the overall effect suggests an ensemble presentation in which the focal vehicle (and its occupants) were merged within a larger vehicular whole composed of multiple more or less identical units. Consequently, a structural vehicular dual focus seems to dissolve into a more single-minded emphasis upon the lengthiness of the train of aristocratic coaches that may encode both qualitative and quantitative significance as vehicles of state. Qualitatively, these trains still constitute “treasure cars” in that their contents (the status and nature of the august occupants) represent the high qualitative “worth” inherent in the traditional concept of what aristocracy signifies. In a quantitative sense, the sheer number of coaches and the sheer repetition of these basically-like units as they passed endlessly, as it were, before a viewer’s gaze, can be understood as underscoring the constant, persistent presence, as well as the distinctive quantitative nature,⁷⁰ of the early modern bureaucratic state and effecting formal (public) representation of the state as a fundamentally corporate entity, a body of men, not just a single, triumphant ruler. Perhaps the train of coaches should be thought of overall as encoding a quantity of qualitative forms or inherent quality enhanced by numbers. Stated in more dualistic terms, the monarch and/or the royal coach may be understood as conveying the qualitative note while the train of aristocratic coaches carries the corporate and quantitative message, the two now merged into a single, seamless state/monarchical enterprise.

Enclosure, Display and Skilled Crafting

The physical form of the early modern roofed carriage and similarly enclosed coach brings to the fore issues concerning the visibility of the occu-

70 Statistical references now replacing qualitative classical allegorical ones as the state’s defining characteristic (Burke 1992: 131).

pant, the role of aesthetics, and the crafting of the conveyance, all of which carry significant political-ideological implications.⁷¹ Let us begin with visibility. The enclosing roof, curtained or framed upper side openings, and solid lower side panels of the carriage or coach meant that the occupant seated within was partially obscured from view, his or her presence reduced to head and upper torso (not unlike medieval figures in box carts mentioned above). In fact, the coach or carriage itself was far easier to see, for it had a considerable bulk and substance of its own. Consequently, any political-ideological signification associated with the vehicle per se would be highly prominent and, in addition, would be transferred to its occupant as much as, or even more than, the reverse: that is to say, a gilded state coach identified the royal occupant not only as himself solar but also as encased within a larger solar-related whole. Even if the vehicle appeared in cortège unoccupied, its golden message remained undimmed. Indeed, any formal vehicle carrying appropriate insignia of state automatically associated the occupant with the polity somewhat at the expense of the personal magnificence of the now partially obscured official who, enclosed within its roofed, framed, and paneled “mystical” space, could appear very much to be encompassed in a more “distant,” other world.

Monarchs and other high officials seem to have been keenly aware of their reduced personal appearance when riding in enclosed coaches and carriages and, on occasion, acted to redress the situation.⁷² When Catherine de’ Medici arrived in France as a royal bride in 1533 she brought with her an enclosed carriage, a vehicle new to France, but “she herself, the better to be seen by the people who lined the roadside, rode mounted on a great roan caparisoned in scarlet and gold brocade . . .” (Strage 1976: 4f.). So did English Lord Admiral Howard (and his entourage) while visiting Spain in 1605. When caught by a storm at the onset of his entry, the Admiral refused to take shelter in a coach

and remained on his horse: “He would not balk the people of the sight, he said,” and everyone’s elaborate and costly finery got ruined in the rain (Hume 1928: 4f.). Elizabeth I, who fully appreciated the political value of magnetic personal display, when approaching the town of Warwick on progress in 1572, ordered her enclosed traveling coach driven through the mud to where the reception committee awaited on their knees and then dramatically flung open the door to reveal herself “that all her subjects might behold her, which most gladly they desired” (Cole 1999: 123). James I would have understood. While visiting York, he declined the offer of a coach as transport to Sunday services, preferring to walk instead: “I will have no coach, for the people are desirous to see a king and so they shall” (Nichols 1828/1: 79f.). If, however, a vehicle was unavoidable, one could try to sit next to an open side with curtains drawn well up so that people might see, which is what French King Henri IV did on a day in May, 1710, thereby facilitating his assassination by a dagger thrust through the open space.⁷³ Perhaps the best (and safest) vehicular visibility was afforded by a “glass” coach of state such as was reserved for George I upon his arrival in England. The king and the Prince of Wales swayed from side to side in their “moving showcase” from Greenwich to St. James Palace and it was possible for cheering subjects “to observe them with some exactitude” (Quennell 1940: 21f.).⁷⁴ Indeed, a glass coach could frame “the upper half of any . . . splendidly attired torso to perfection” (Huggett 1979: 16).

The display value of the coach and carriage also involved transforming the considerable body of the vehicle, its “earthly” materiality, by skilled artistry so that it became an aesthetic object, which is to say that the longstanding qualitative tension between “spirit”/motion and “matter”/stasis as encoded in vehicular wheels and body, respectively, was firmly resolved in favor of the former as the entire unit became an aesthetic statement of a higher purpose; the “base matter” of the liminal cosmological vehicle redeemed and, so to speak, “perfected,” by artistry. In fact, now “it was the *body* of the chariot that proclaimed its aristocratic connection and afforded opportunity for that display so dear to the hearts of the courtiers . . .” (Boyer 1959: 361; em-

71 See Thrupp (1969: 56–63) for descriptions of 16–18th-century state coaches; Vickers (2005) for state coaches of 19–20th-century Great Britain.

72 Theatrical public display has always been of major concern for high officials of church and state. In antiquity, where the victorious general stood on the elevated platform of a *quadriga* or the emperor sat iconically on a raised throne-chariot, the low and more or less open sides of these vehicles facilitated the visibility of the occupant (Keel 1978: 238; Helbig 1903: 167f.; MacCormack 1972: 736). During the Middle Ages, full visibility and elevation were also readily accomplished on horseback, though the royal canopy could at times obscure (Bryant 1986: 58, 57, n. 23).

73 Thrupp (1969: 39f., Fig. 15); Péréfixe (1899: 391); see also Pardoe (1848/1: 280, 251).

74 A glass coach has glass panels for the upper sides and a door fitted with sliding glasses. They seem to have appeared after 1650 (Thrupp 1969: 41f.; Vickers 2005: 37).

phasia in original).⁷⁵ Vehicles of state in particular had great potential to convey a sense of the potency and superordinate status of legitimate authority by means of the power of aesthetics as created by the exceptionally skilled crafting involved in their manufacture.

Rulers traditionally commissioned works of art by the finest craftsmen available for, in nonindustrial societies (including traditional Europe), the skilled artisan's uncanny ability to transform raw materials into aesthetically exceptional objects (also meaning objects that convey moral goodness) was typically seen as an extension of the creative powers of the divine. The artisan's supernatural potency and godly connections in turn were appropriated by rulers for their further glorification and to enhance their own highly skilled expertise in the nuanced art of government.⁷⁶ Skilled crafting also represented the nature of the ordered cosmos and the earthly mirror of that cosmic harmony.⁷⁷ In medieval, Renaissance and Early modern Europe, the combining of diverse arts and crafts in public civic festivals (including entries) and court spectacles highlighted the uniting of the arts in terrestrial manifestations of the cosmic harmony that could be recreated in the orderliness of sociopolitical living under the authority of legitimate government. Artisans, therefore, labored in genuine belief in the importance of their skills for the good of the state.⁷⁸

The application of skilled artistry to serve a higher ideological cause or effect greater political good could be addressed to a single object as well as to an entire spectacle. Alan of Lille's poem, the "Anticlaudian" (mentioned above) emphasizes two basic processes by which the Seven Liberal Arts built and decorated especially the undercarriage (wheels, pole, axles) of a cosmic chariot. First came the transformational creation, the "coming into being," of the chariot as defects were removed from rough, inert, base metal and wood and they were tempered and refashioned (clothed with shape) and as wheels were prepared from various stones and metal (Lille 1973: 83, 94f.). Second, the sisters

perfected the form by artistic ornamentation that bespangled the pole with the beauty of gems and clothed the dark, primeval wood with the light of silver. Painting and engraving further warmed and enhanced the cold metal of the axles. Ultimately every flaw was removed and the chariot stood revealed in its final, gleaming aesthetic beauty (Lille 1973: 96, 102f., 120).⁷⁹

In real life as well as in poetry the manufacture of ceremonial "chariots" not only inevitably evidenced extremely high artistic talents but also involved a variety of raw materials and combined numerous artisanal skills, making these vehicles ultimate expressions and high symbols of the participation of the arts and crafts in the service of political ideology. It has long been so. Piggott emphasized that the two-wheeled chariot from antiquity was "a piece of sophisticated craftsmanship" in which numerous types of wood, leather, metal, paint and other colorings were manipulated by a skilled constructional staff of joiners, wheelwrights, metalworkers, and other artists (1992: 44–46). In like fashion, Thrupp describes the embossed and chased work in metal, the rich carvings, drapery, and cushions of the processional throne-chariots of the Roman empire, noting that woodworkers, wheelwrights, smiths, carvers, painters, chasers, embossers, embroiderers, trimmers would all have been employed in their manufacture (1969: 16). A millennium later, when roofed carriages and enclosed coaches became conveyances of choice for aristocracy and the often exquisitely beautiful state coach constituted a major processional symbol of the state, construction and ornamentation utilizing a wide range of raw materials and the skills of diverse craftsmen became even more in evidence since the larger body and undercarriage of the vehicle (especially that of the enclosed suspension coach) rendered it an excellent "canvas" for high aesthetic display of political-ideological themes (e.g., Boyer 1959: 361).⁸⁰ The 18th-century English Gold State Coach, still in use today and perhaps the epitome of the art, still awes and overwhelms with its extensive and dazzling display of gilt, detailed relief work, and elaborate statuary, richly painted (by Florentine

75 The longstanding motion vs. stasis contrast still had some validity. A satirical verse written after the death of Cromwell decries his "illicit" ambition to be a king by describing him as a "triumphant chariot without wheels" (Knoppers 2000: 183).

76 Helms (1993; 2006: 452f.); Ostrem (2007); see also Gell (1992: 43f., 46, 52).

77 Consider the Classical and Judaic-Christian imagery of the supreme deity as craftsman (*Deus artifex, summe artifex*) of an ordered and "geometrized" universe (Helms 2006: 452f.; Ostrem 2007).

78 Schneider (1913: 86); Withington (1963/1); Strong (1973); Yates (1975: 164f.).

79 Compare Ovid's description of the construction of the sun's chariot by Vulcan (Ovid 2001: 28 [Bk. 2, lines 106–109]).

80 See the reconstructed description of the coach sent by Elizabeth I to the Tsar of Russia (Piggott 1992: 156f.) and the memoirs of Lady Fanshawe (Loftis 1979: 164). Masson provides extensive detail concerning the construction of the coach commissioned by Pope Alexander VII for Christina of Sweden (1966: 244f., 246) and Thrupp discusses the ornamentation and decoration of state coaches (1969: 56–59, 68f.).

artist, Giovanni Battista Cipriani) side panels, and elegant upholstery (Vickers 2005: 29–31).⁸¹

The English Gold State Coach is a good reminder that two additional features of vehicular skilled crafting require special note: the raw materials utilized in the creative transformation were often considered precious and inherently potent in their own right (Clark 1986: 3, 82, 87) and famous artists were often commissioned for the select decorations that perfected the work. The use of potent raw materials can be readily illustrated by Heurgon's comments concerning the exceptional significance accorded the metals, bronze and iron, employed in Etruscan ceremonial chariots in that bronze carried a sacred connotation (it was widely used in ritual implements) while iron was "the precious metal in those days" (Heurgon 1961: 124f.). Similarly, in the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine worlds, gold and ivory, the traditional materials (along with silver and bronze) of imperial and cult statues and other ritual constructions, were used to enrich ceremonial vehicles of the triumph, *adventus*, and other types of processions.⁸² Indeed, since gilding has been so commonly used for ceremonial (especially royal) vehicles from antiquity on, it is appropriate to reiterate that the "holy ore" of the Middle Ages (Nelson 1987: 154) has long been the royal metal as well as the sun's metal (Bram 1987: 134) because, like the sun that reappears unchanged each morning, gold never dies (never tarnishes) but remains everbright (immortal). Its gleam (like that of all polished stones and metals, evidencing a brilliance and luminosity that signaled the presence of cosmological "light") was accorded the highest mystical/spiritual value in the pre-Enlightenment world (Leddy 1997: 263f.; Eco 1986: 43–51), a quality that continued to be reflected in the gilded state coaches used during the Early modern and into the modern eras.

The role played by famous artists is amply attested to from the Renaissance on.⁸³ By way of example, we may note the triumphal chariot for Pope Leo X created by Pontormo, famed pageant car

artist for Florentine triumphs (Payne 1962: 220, 240) and the large pageant car commissioned from Filippino Lippi for the visit of French king, Charles VIII, to Florence (Mitchell 1986: 65). Bernini was involved in designing decorative portions of the silver coach presented to Christina of Sweden by Pope Alexander VII (Masson 1966: 245, 260, n. 41), Rubens painted the panels of the gold and crystal parade coach used by Austrian Hapsburgs well into the 19th century for the formal entries of royal brides (Harding 1937: 63), and 18th-century French carriages were often adorned with scenes painted by such artists as Boucher and Van Loo (Bernier 1984: 229; see also the English Gold State Coach described above).⁸⁴

Gilded Coaches and Tradition

The political-ideological impact of ceremonial wheeled vehicles of state has faced new challenges in the 19th–21st centuries as railways and automobiles have added new dimensions of wheeled transport and as both the reality and the imagery of monarchy changed after World War I. Before that cataclysmic turning point, however, public ceremonies of state, such as royal weddings, formal arrivals, coronations, and jubilees, continued to be marked by traditional horse-drawn gilded coaches and other elaborate state carriages that carried authenticating links with past practices.⁸⁵ "Tradition" has also become an especially important attribute for those few "relic monarchies" that have continued to survive in 20th- and 21st-century Europe. These are, in many ways, mere shadows of the former monarchical condition, not only because real royal authority is essentially a thing of the past but also because the long-standing organic cosmological concepts that had largely defined the traditional political-ideological roles and "nature" of aristocracy have been largely replaced with more impersonal, mechanistic, and materialistic interpretations that have no need for the traditional forms of liminal suprahumans to effect personal interrealm cosmic connections and no place for kingly quasi deities and that eschew traditional manifestations

81 The skilled production of highly decorated wheeled vehicles was well evidenced in the popular or folk tradition of Sicily during the 18th to early 20th centuries (Capito 1925; Buttitta 1961). Although the vehicle was used for utilitarian purposes, it was a stunning work of art that, "on Sundays, or on the feast of the patron saint of the district, [would] be raised to the honor of a vehicle of state, in which the family of the driver will be seen sitting in all their glory" (Capito 1925: 56).

82 Abaecherli (1935–36: 1f.); Payne (1962: 16, 23); Elsner (1998: 34, 202, 116).

83 Boyer (1959: 361); Strong (1973: 16f.); Graham (1986: 238).

84 The statuary and painted side panels of state coaches often depict classical motifs and historical and mythological references and allegories (e.g., Huggett 1979: 17) such that they can be thought of as replacing and continuing the presentation of edifying classical and historical themes on Renaissance pageant cars.

85 For examples see Kürenberg (1955: 48f., 228, 262f.); Bierman (1988: 135f.); Harding (1937: 62f.); Sencourt (1932: 98–100, 282–284); Hibbert (1973: 211).

of the attendant themes of liminal cosmological “travel” and related rituals of epiphanal arrivals and threshold crossings and the like. In consequence, monarchy not only has been brought down and firmly anchored to earth but also is now thoroughly “humanized” or “domesticated” (e.g., Kaufmann 1975; Burke 1992: 202f.).

Nonetheless, resilient symbols of royalty and the presence of anointed monarchs still contribute in some polities to the “master fictions” that always are needed to support social and ideological order and focus the political center (Geertz 1977: 171). In these nations, therefore, official public ceremony can continue to include kings or queens, royal regalia, and royal state coaches. Their appearance does not merely signify nostalgia for times past but enhances a very contemporary sense of national pride and community and helps to meet the perpetual human need to associate with something or someone larger than ordinary life who connotes care and protection and the bringing of good things for the realm. In addition (and somewhat reconfiguring the temporal emphasis on future fame that informed the earlier version of “Eon”-influenced state spectacle), the ritual informing these modern public state occasions emphasizes a positive sense of continuity with a suitable historical past by a consciously created “invention of tradition”.⁸⁶ Speaking of the modern British monarch, Cannadine notes that grand ceremonial displays of state utilizing anachronistic modes of transport, such as gilded coaches, generate a sense of mystery and grand pageantry for state events. “If, for example, the queen [Elizabeth II] had travelled to St. Paul’s Cathedral in a limousine [instead of the 18th-century Gold State Coach] for her Jubilee Thanksgiving Service, much of the splendour of the occasion would have been lost” (Cannadine 1983: 156). And with grand pageantry bearing a touch of the past can come reassurance. “While people can see the gloved hand waving from the golden coach, they feel assured that all is well with the nation, whatever its true state” (D. C. Cooper, quoted in Cannadine 1983: 158).

⁸⁶ Cannadine (1983). “Inventing” elements of past tradition one way or another has a very long history in European monarchical political ideology (Morris 1986; Tanner 1993; see also Bradley 1987). In contemporary terms, it may be understood, at least in part, as a technique for accessing a temporal dimension in a universe no longer defined in the “organic” terms that once allowed qualitative “correspondences” with temporal/spatial distances but that must be accessed nonetheless for political-ideological goals.

Elizabeth waving from the golden coach also invites further reflection upon specific vehicular themes from earlier eras.⁸⁷ Has the queen become so personally obscured within the confines of the coach that she has been reduced ceremonially to simply a gloved hand? Is she or the highly visible, magnificently evocative, and aesthetically stunning “solar” conveyance the political-ideological center of the cortège? Certainly the visibility of coach occupants continues to be of concern to masters of ceremony, for the English Gold State Coach now has fluorescent lighting installed within (as do royal Rolls-Royces, too), giving Elizabeth as modern triumphator a better chance to compete with her resplendent vehicle for display (Vickers 2005: 33, 39). From yet another perspective, does the iconic figure of Elizabeth seated in the royal coach also constitute a modern version of a pageant or treasure car in which she theatrically appears as a personification of the concept (Ideal) of “Monarch as the Virtue of Tradition”? Whatever the interpretation, it is clear that the gleaming liminal coach and the anointed monarch “enthroned” within its enclosed “mystical” space (Vickers 2005: 34) lose their anachronism, at least for the duration of the processional event, and are reconnected, in a manner functionally positive and ideologically significant for the 20th–21st centuries, with their ancient roles as conveyors and displayers par excellence of political *cultus*. As key symbols of the mystique of the nation, they evidence to great effect that, on select occasions, a European monarch can still “in pomp ride forth; for pomp becomes the great, and Majesty derives a grace from State” (Alexander Pope, quoted in Geertz 1980: 121).

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⁸⁷ Elizabeth’s waving hand also obviously suggests the ancient belief, surviving into medieval Christian times, of the outstretching of the royal right hand as supernaturally potent gesture of omnipotence and salvation; the cosmocrator’s sign that is also the gesture of chariot-riding “Sol Invictus” combined with that of the emperor on the triumphal throne-chariot and of Christ Pantocrator (L’Orange 1982: 139–141, 147, 153, 165–170).

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