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Yearning for the Unhistorical: Nietzsche on Triumph and Coronation

Travis Brock Kennedy
Bard College, tk6740@bard.edu

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YEARNING FOR THE UNHISTORICAL
Nietzsche on Triumph and Coronation

Senior Project submitted to

The Division of Social Studies

and

The Division of Languages and Literature

of Bard College

by

Travis Brock Kennedy

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2016

*This work is dedicated to my mother,
whose unfailing love and support have emboldened me to act and strive,
to my professors, whose passions have inspired me to preserve and revere,
and to Nietzsche, whose philosophy reached me in my suffering
and taught me how to seek salvation.*

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INTRODUCTION

“I trust that *youth* has led me aright when it now *compels me to protest at the historical education of modern man* and when I demand that man should above all learn to live and should employ history only in *the service of the life he has learned to live*”

-From the conclusion to Nietzsche’s second *Untimely Meditation*

In this brief section, the sum of the philosophy of history that Nietzsche sets forth in his second *Untimely Meditation* can be understood: history is the experiential domain of youth and must always only be employed in the service of life. An excess of history is a sickness to an individual, a people, or a culture as is the “grey-beard” practice of history as *science*.¹ The aim of an individual, a people, or a culture, to Nietzsche’s mind, is to balance the *historical* and the *unhistorical* in *equal proportion* which, when achieved in a sufficient number of cases, makes possible the arrival of an individual, a people, or a culture at a *suprahistorical vantage point*. The *suprahistorical vantage point* can only be achieved through the balancing of the *monumental*, *antiquarian*, and *critical* modes of history in equal proportion with the “unhistorical atmosphere within which every great historical event has taken place” in the interest of serving the immediate needs of the present in its pursuit of the future.² The attainment of the *suprahistorical vantage point* through this process of balanced historical usage is the wellspring of *life*, the ultimate aspiration of an individual, a people, or a culture and the critical lacking Nietzsche identifies in his own contemporaries.

The traditions of Roman triumph and English coronation balance an unhistorical sense in equal proportion with balanced monumental, antiquarian, and critical historical modes—exemplifying Nietzsche’s ideal use of history in the service of life. The traditions of triumph and coronation are deeply related, the latter tracing its lineage to the former through a

¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59-65.

² Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 64.

two thousand year process of diffusion, from Rome to Byzantium, from Byzantium to Europe, and finally from Europe to the British Isles. The traditions as they were practiced in Ancient Rome and in London in 1953 represent arrivals at Nietzsche's *suprahistorical vantage point*. In the case of the Roman triumph, the disparate elements of the tradition from its roots as a fertility celebration in the archaic past to its retirement with the advent of Christianity act as Nietzsche's "unhistorical airs." These airs can be breathed in by the inheritors of Roman history to offer through their collective force the arrival at a suprahistorical vantage point. In 1953, the British people breathed in this air, and understanding themselves as just such inheritors, used history to declare a triumph of their culture over the Nazi's triumph of will through the deployment of *romanitas* in their coronation ritual. By analyzing the ways that the philosophy of history that Nietzsche sets forth in his second *Untimely Meditation* work within the traditions of Roman triumph and English coronation, we can begin to better understand the way that a balanced historical self-understanding aids us as historic beings in our yearning pursuit of that unhistoric air in which all great deeds are born.

CHAPTER ONE

A FOUNDATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF NIETZSCHEAN IDEAS

History

In the Nietzschean sense, history encompasses not only an understanding of past events but the ability to derive from that understanding modes of existing in the present that serve the future. Historical understanding should be culled through, that which is valuable and life-affirming ought to be preserved and respected. All excesses of historical understanding, anything that is superfluous to informing future action, should be trimmed away to keep the spirit of an individual, people, or culture sprightly enough to embrace a future-looking orientation.³ Nietzsche writes: “History belongs above all to the man of deeds and power, to him who fights a great fight, who needs models, teachers, comforters and cannot find them among his contemporaries.”⁴ History is the domain of the individual, the people, or the culture that has the will and the power to accomplish deeds but cannot find the inspiration to accomplish those deeds among contemporary models, teachers, and comforters.

At the end of his introduction to the *Second Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche propounds a number of theses. Within these theses, he writes:

A historical phenomenon, known clearly and completely resolved into a phenomenon of knowledge, is, for him who has perceived it, dead: for he has recognized in it the delusion, the injustice, the blind passion, and in general the whole earthly and darkening horizon of this phenomenon, and has thereby also understood its power in history. This power has now lost its hold over him insofar as he is a man of knowledge: but perhaps it has not done so insofar as he is a man involved in life.⁵

³ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63, 77.

⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67-68.

⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

The distinction Nietzsche makes here is essential. History as pure knowledge has lost its power over the individual, but *perhaps* it has not done so in the service of life. This is the essence of history's power in Nietzsche's understanding, not as *pure knowledge* but as a tool in the *service of life*. To practice history as science – which is to say to take a dispassionate and academic approach to the facts and figures of history – is to miss what Nietzsche sees as the real potency of historical understanding. History's true potency lies in its ability to serve the needs of the “being who acts and strives” (the *monumental* mode of history), the “being who preserves and reveres” (the *antiquarian* mode of history), and the “being who suffers and seeks deliverance” (the *critical* mode of history).⁶

Modes of History

Nietzsche divides historical understanding into three *modes*: the *monumental*, the *antiquarian*, and the *critical*. The relationship between these three modes is similar to the three branches of the United States government: the executive, legislative, and judicial. Just as the three branches of government coexist as three distinct bodies making up one whole, providing necessary checks and balances to each other's power, so too do the three modes check and moderate the powers of one another. Nietzsche writes:

(The three modes) are the services history is capable of performing for life; every man and every nation requires, in accordance with its goals, energies, and needs, a certain kind of knowledge of the past, now in the form of monumental, now of antiquarian, now of critical history: but it does not require a host of pure thinkers who only look at life, of knowledge-thirsty individuals whom knowledge alone will satisfy and to whom the accumulation of knowledge is itself the goal, but always and only for the ends of life and thus also under the domination and supreme direction of these ends.⁷

⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 77.

Individuals and nations need different proportions of the historical modes at different times in the service of life. In determining what those proportions are, Nietzsche is clear that the first step is to identify the “goals, energies, and needs” and then seek the mode or modes of history that are best suited to the realization of their ends. Again, Nietzsche places the greatest emphasis on the use of history not as *pure knowledge*, not as the accumulation of knowledge as the end goal, but “always only for the ends of life.” The “ends of life” represent the moderating force, or “domination and supreme direction” of the three modes of history.

Of the use of history and the proportion of the three modes employed under a given circumstance, Nietzsche continues, writing:

This is the natural relationship of an age, a culture, a nation with its history – evoked by hunger regulated by the extent of its need, held in bounds by its inherent plastic powers – that knowledge of the past has at all times been desired only in the service of the future and the present and not for the weakening of the present or for depriving a vigorous future of its roots.⁸

The key word in this passage is *hunger*. The “goals, energies, and needs” of an individual, people, or culture create a hunger for a type, or *mode*, of historical understanding. This hunger comes from the needs of the future and the servicing of life, not *vice versa*. To begin with a historic understanding and to allow that understanding to dictate the “goals, energies, and needs” of an individual, people, or culture results in the “weakening of the present (and deprives) a vigorous future of its roots.” This relationship is easily understood when the three modes, and the moderation and proportionality with which they must be employed, are understood in context.

Monumental History

Nietzsche identifies the monumental historian as “a being who acts and strives.”⁹

Monumental history is embodied in the architecture of Washington DC: Greco-Roman temples

⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

built in the new world two millennia after the originals were built in the old world. Capitol Hill and the White House are meant as much to imply power by aesthetic association with the power of ancient Athens and Rome as they are to embody the eighteenth and nineteenth-century reading of ancient ideas of democracy, law, and order. The fresco under the dome of the Capitol Building depicts the apotheosis of George Washington while busts of the founding fathers in the monuments throughout the city and lining the halls of power could be mistaken for busts of Augustus or Socrates by any untrained eye. The pillars and domes, friezes and pediments of Washington DC demonstrate an understanding of history employed by individuals, peoples, and cultures throughout history who have had *deeds to accomplish*. This monumental mode of history does not always come in the form of architecture, but the spirit behind the drive to mimic a colonnade originally erected on the banks of the Tiber thousands of years later on the banks of the Potomac is the spirit of Nietzschean monumentalism.

Just as monumental history was used by the actors and strivers who laid the plans for Washington DC, so too was the monumental spirit employed by the Roman generals who paraded in triumph through the streets of Rome long before the *idea of Rome* acquired its historic patina of respectability and its aptness to be mimicked. When Pompey set out to triumph he meant to evoke the past greatness of Roman history, of the civic leaders going back to Romulus himself who put the glory of Rome on display in this way. So too did Edgar, the great-grandson of Alfred the Great, capture the spirit of monumental history when he went to Bath to be crowned king of all the English in 973. Edgar's coronation, the first in English history, was about the kind of concentration of power Britain had not seen since the Roman era.¹⁰ It was for this reason he chose to have the nobles and vassals of his kingdom come to the place in England that most demonstrated the *romanitas* and *auctoritas* of the country's monumental history. By concentrating

¹⁰ Percy Ernst Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation*, trans. Leopold G. Wickham Legg, MA (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1937), 2-16.

his power through ceremony in this spot, Edgar was demonstrating an affiliation with and an embodiment of past greatness.

As the Roman triumph evolved as a phenomenon, the practice of monumental history within the tradition became as much self-reflexive as it was referential to past greatness before the advent of the tradition—subsequent generals refer to the triumphs of previous generals to share in the monumental history of the tradition.¹¹ Likewise, as the tradition of coronation in England evolved over the past thousand years iterations of the tradition became self-reflexive as much as they continued to reference the same ancient monumental models as Edgar used. It is for this reason Queen Elizabeth II receives a crown that contains the purple velvet cap of maintenance (a symbol of authority in Ancient Rome) while sitting in St. Edward’s Chair (the coronation chair of Edward the Confessor) only after being anointed with holy oil while the anthem *Zadok the Priest and Nathan the Prophet anointed Solomon king* (an explicit reference to the Kingdom of Israel) was said and sung by the peers assembled in Westminster Abbey (the royal chapel, symbol of the successful consolidation of power by the English Monarchy beginning with Edward the Confessor). The practice of monumental history offers “models, teachers, comforters (when they) cannot be found among contemporaries.”¹² This monumental spirit is exemplified by the triumphing Roman generals who paraded through Rome in chariots centuries after chariots had stopped being useful in actual warfare. In turn, this kind of monumentalism is exemplified by Queen Elizabeth’s procession to and from her coronation at Westminster Abbey in a three-hundred-year-old gilded coach drawn by eight horses and surrounded by an entourage of officials mounted on horseback through the asphalt-paved streets of mid-twentieth-century London.

¹¹ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 72-107.

¹² Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.



*Medæval, Ancient Roman, and biblical monumentalism present in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 served to show the queen as a part of the kinds of past greatness being referenced.*¹³

Nietzsche writes: “Of what use, then, is the monumentalistic conception of the past, engagement with the classic and rare of earlier times, to the man of the present? He learns from it

¹³ *Life Magazine Cover* photographer unknown (1953)

that the greatness that once existed was in any event once *possible* and may thus be possible again.”¹⁴ The significance of this passage hinges on the word “engagement.” What differentiates the monumental mode of history from the antiquarian mode is the engagement with the past that comes with monumentalism. The individual, people, or culture using monumental history to serve their ends embodies the past through performance, as in the example of the triumphing Roman general or the English monarch being crowned. Through this act, the reminder is made both to the performer and the observer that “greatness was once possible and may thus be possible again.” Of monumental history, Nietzsche warns:

Monumental history deceives by analogies: with seductive similarities it inspires the courageous to foolhardiness and the inspired to fanaticism; and when we go on to think of this kind of history in the hands and heads of gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels, then we see empires destroyed, princes murdered, wars and revolutions launched and the number of historical ‘effects in themselves’, that is to say, effects without sufficient cause, again augmented.¹⁵

In this warning, the importance of moderation in the practice of the historical modes is made clear. As I will demonstrate in the comparative examples of the monumentalism practiced by the English in the 1953 coronation and by the Nazis in *Triumph des Willens* in chapter three, monumental history has the power to create and to destroy, and the key to its effective practice is moderation.

Antiquarian History

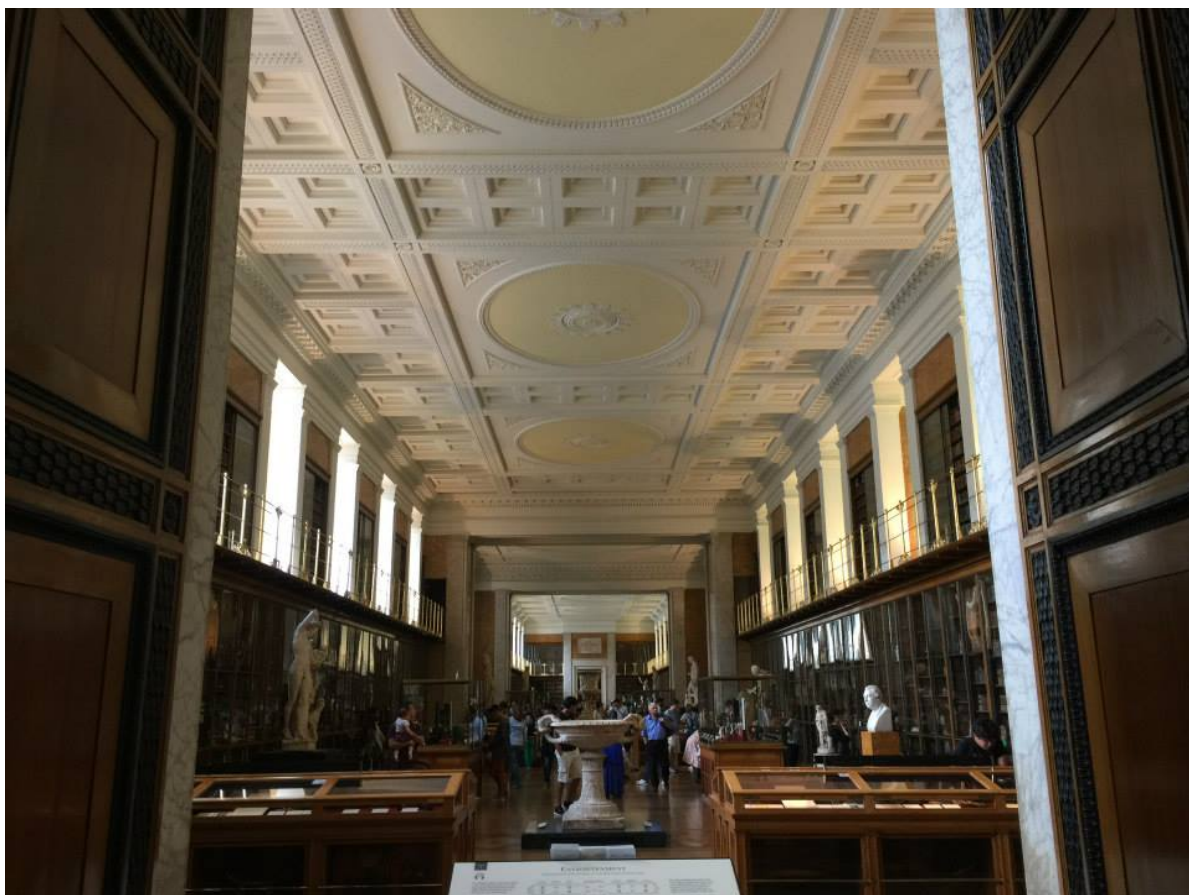
Nietzsche identifies the antiquarian as a “being who preserves and reveres”¹⁶. The essence of the antiquarian mode is the kind of reverence for the past manifest in the great halls of the British Museum; most especially, the *Enlightenment Gallery*, which opened in 2003 to celebrate

¹⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 69.

¹⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 71.

¹⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

the 250th anniversary of the museum¹⁷. The gallery, housed in the halls that once housed the library of King George III, is as much a demonstration of the antiquarian mode of history as it is an educational exhibit about the work of the antiquarians it explores. Greek vases vie for shelf space alongside African tribal masks and shells collected at Panama and Galapagos. The gallery exemplifies the antiquarian mode because it demonstrates the antiquarian preservation and reverence of the past. Broken vases unearthed on Lesbos speak to cultures and paradigms vastly different from both the Georgians who first painstakingly reassembled them or meticulously researched their significance and the twenty-first century visitors who muse on them and those who found it necessary to preserve them.



*The great hall of the Enlightenment Gallery in the British Museum*¹⁸

¹⁷ “The King’s Library” *britishmuseum.org*, last modified January 30, 2009, http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/the_museums_story/kings_library.aspx.

¹⁸ *The Enlightenment Gallery* Photographed by the Author (2015)

Nietzsche writes that “this antiquarian sense of veneration of the past is of the greatest value when it spreads a simple feeling of pleasure and contentment over the modest, rude, even wretched conditions in which man or a nation lives.”¹⁹ The *Enlightenment Gallery* captures this value most perfectly. In one sense, the artifacts on display speak to the simplicity of human lifeways throughout the world. There is a nobility in the simplicity. From the Greeks we have vases, vessels for holding the materials of domestic life—wine, grain, cosmetics, oils, *et cetera*. From the “savage” cultures of Africa or the New World we have simple tribal masks and other totems of the “modest, rude, even wretched conditions in which man or a nation lives.” The ordinary British civilians for whom the museum was opened two and a half centuries ago would have experienced this antiquarian power through the reassurance that their mundane drudgery was noble in that it shared in the “modest, rude, (and) wretched” realities of human existence around the world and throughout time. In another sense, the artifacts represent not only the original cultures they were taken from but more broadly the culture of the British academy of the seventeenth to eighteenth century. The modern visitor experiences “the contentment of the tree in its roots, the happiness of knowing that one is not wholly accidental and arbitrary but grown out of a past as its heir, flower and fruit and that one’s existence is thus excused and, indeed, justified.”²⁰ The visitor to the gallery feels this contentment and happiness, this sense of place, not only as a member of the human race but as the inheritor of this western intellectual tradition of which the artifacts are a part.

¹⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

²⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 74.



*Artifacts in the Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum*²¹

Roman triumph exemplifies the antiquarian mode of history both explicitly and implicitly. Explicitly speaking, an important part of the triumphal procession at Rome was often the use of artifacts. Pompey, for example, is reported to have worn the cloak of Alexander the Great in one of his triumphal marches.²² Great focus, too, was put on the right of a general to parade along the traditional route and with the traditional rites. The senate could grant a general either the minor *triumphus in Monte Albano* (the lesser triumph on the Alban Mount wherein the general is crowned with myrtle) or a proper *Ovatio* (the full ceremony of triumph resulting in the crowning of the general with laurel). If a general was granted only a *triumphus in Monte Albano*, it was

²¹ *Interior Survey I — The Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum* Photographed by the Author (2015)

²² Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 178.



*Greek and Roman Vases in the Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum*²³

commonly recognized that he was not receiving the full honors of a proper triumph. The antiquarian understanding of a full triumph being only an *Ovatio* was powerful enough to make a victorious general less than fully successful in the public eye.²⁴ Implicit manifestations of the antiquarian mode of history in Roman Triumph comes in the form of the ancient historians and writers who address triumph and engage similarly in a fixation on the facts and figures of it. Writers ranging from Eutropius to Appian make painstaking record of the specific variety and quantity of booty and captives that were paraded in different triumphs. These writers also engage

²³ *Detail of Greek and Roman Vases — The Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum* Photographed by the Author (2015)

²⁴ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 62-63.

in lengthy and complex analyses of the cultural and political implications of triumphs throughout Roman history.²⁵

The English coronation, and specifically the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, exemplifies the antiquarian mode of history in much the same way Roman triumph does. There are explicit manifestations of antiquarian history throughout the ceremony. The clothing the queen wears, be it the gown she wears in procession, the simple white garment she wears during the anointing, or the *supertunica* and imperial robe she is dressed in during the ceremony of crowning, all adhere to the antiquarian impulse to preserve and revere. The regalia – the ceremonial swords, sceptres, bracelets, spurs, and crown – have set historical significances that are impressed upon the audience both in the abbey and watching on television.²⁶ The official recording of the coronation, *A Queen is Crowned*, makes constant reference to the historical traditions being carried out in the ritual and makes many references to the interplay between sovereign and subject that is occurring during the ceremony. Implicit assertions of the antiquarian mode are made in the film through shifting attention placed on the land, the ritual, the physical objects of the ceremony, the public reception of the performance, and the philosophical implications of the proceedings. In this sense the public benefits from what Nietzsche identifies as the best mode of antiquarian history: the feeling of rootedness and contentment. The subject outside of the abbey, along the parade route, watches the heir to the throne process to the altar to take part in the ancient ceremony just as his or her forebears have throughout the centuries. In turn, the sovereign embodies the past physically through careful attention to the rituals and traditions of the ceremony as her forebears have done since King Edgar.

²⁵ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 107-117.

²⁶ Snagge, John. "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Parts I-II". Spotify, 18 January 2013. Web. 15 April. 2016.

There is a precipitous moment of excess with the antiquarian mode of history. Nietzsche writes:

...when the historical sense no longer conserves life but mummifies it, [*sic*] then the tree gradually dies unnaturally from the top downwards to the roots – and in the end the roots themselves usually perish too. Antiquarian history itself degenerates from the moment it is no longer animated and inspired by the fresh life of the present.²⁷

The distinction between conservation and mummification is absolutely essential. Consider the case of the Roman triumph: ancient writers are prone to utter hyperbole at times, citing numbers of captives or quantities of booty that are simply logistically impossible.²⁸ The impossible exaggerations of millions of captives being paraded or hundreds upon thousands of cartloads full of gold rolling through the streets of Rome may not reflect the *exact figures* of the procession but they are highly effective in communicating the *experience* of the triumph. It *seemed* like millions of captives. There *must have been* thousands of carts overflowing with gold. Had the ancient writers chosen to mummify their cultural history through a pedantic obsession with exact facts and figures we would have far less ability to understand both the way the triumphant wanted to be seen and the way the public saw the proceedings. The “fresh life of the present” keeps the antiquarian mode from killing the tree of cultural history from the top down by moderating its pedantry and allowing it to speak to the phenomenological realities of existence.

Critical History

At the end of the third section of his second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche writes:

If he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part from the past: he does this by bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it; every past, however,

²⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75.

²⁸ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 167-173.

is worthy of being condemned – for that is the nature of human things: human violence and weakness have always played a mighty role in them.²⁹

In addition to serving the needs of those who act and strive and those who preserve and revere, Nietzsche here identifies the third major function of history: to break up and dissolve. It is important to note that Nietzsche does not use the language of “throwing away” or “forgetting” the past. To Nietzsche’s mind, the critical mode of history involves active scrutiny and indeed *labor* – “break(ing) apart and dissolv(ing)” – in order to achieve its ends. The language of “bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it” emphasizes the active and dialectical engagement with the past that the critical mode necessitates and raises a serious question: *what tribunal?* Surely Nietzsche does not mean academic historians, whom he condemns in no uncertain terms throughout the second *untimely meditation*. It seems unlikely that he means the court of popular opinion given the incredulity with which he treats *mores* throughout his corpus. Surely in the context of the second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche means *the service of life* as the “tribunal” and the standard against which “any past is worthy to be condemned.”

This idea of “condemnation” is striking, as are the conditions Nietzsche identifies for it. “Human violence and weakness” *always* play a mighty role in “human things.” When one considers the tradition of Roman triumph, human violence and weakness often play a central role. Take, for example, Pompey’s antiquarian use of the cloak of Alexander the Great in the monumental display of his triumphal procession.³⁰ Alexander the Great has a place in history because of his celebrated acts (and indeed outbursts) of violence. In turn, Alexander’s vainglorious self-promotion would have run counter to the traditional Roman ideal of yeoman farmers who courageously fight for Rome and return humbly to their bucolic lifestyle upon the successful completion of their campaign. In turn, how often have the notorious and *all-too-human* qualities of

²⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75-76.

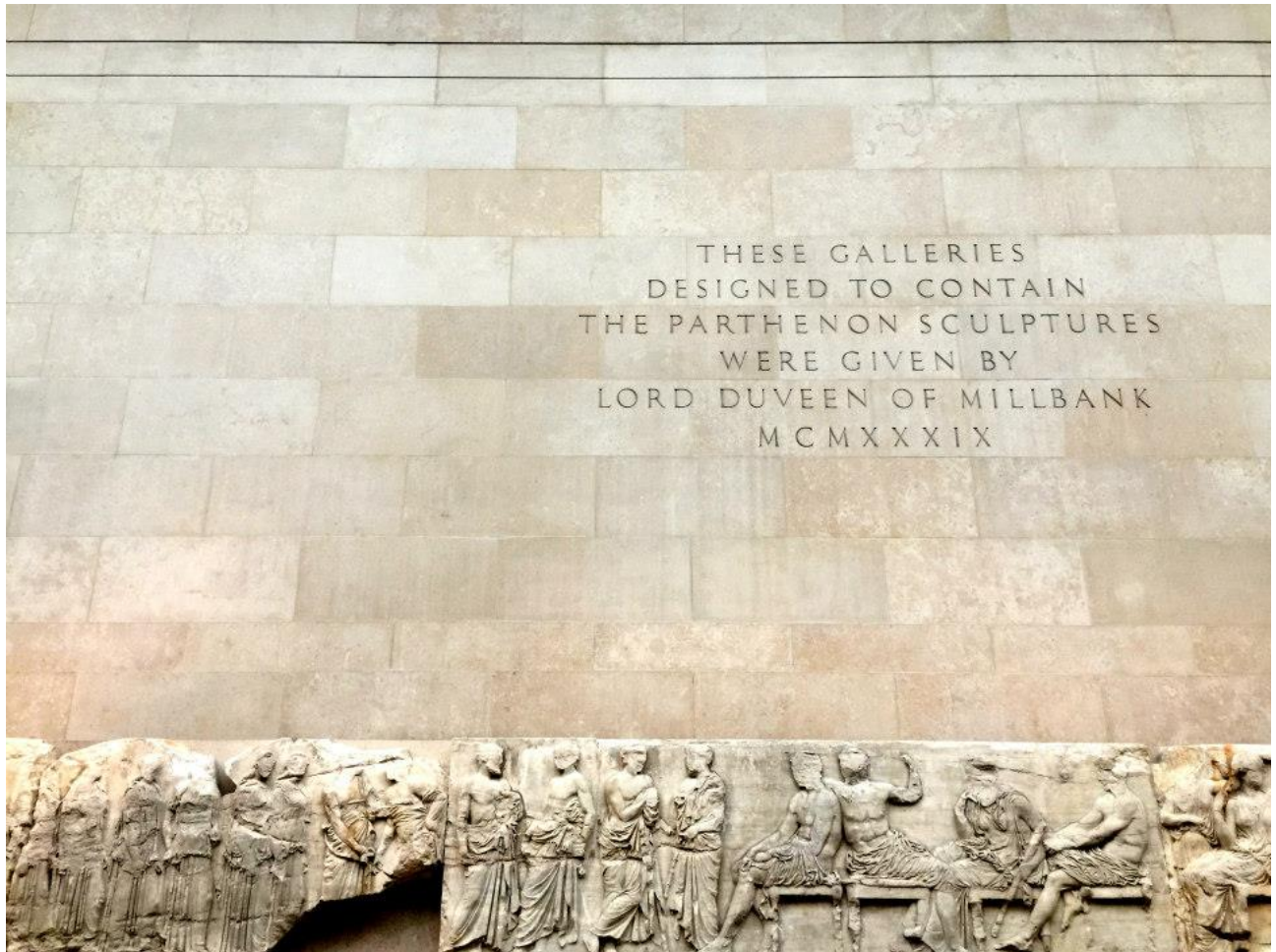
³⁰ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 178.

violence and weakness on the part of English monarchs eclipsed the aspirational purity and virtuous mandates manifest in the coronation liturgy? In the oppositional forces of the monumental and antiquarian historical modes against the critical historical mode, we see clearly the need for moderation amongst the three modes.

The monumental historian is characterized by positive action and striving, the antiquarian historian is characterized by preserving and revering, and the critical historian is characterized by negative action and reinvention. There is an important, underlying tension between the three modes, and in that tension the “checks and balances” dynamic described earlier becomes most abundantly clear. Let us return to the example of the British Museum. While the *Enlightenment Gallery* exemplifies the best of the antiquarian historical mode, elsewhere in the museum the Elgin Marbles exemplify the need for the critical historical mode. Between 1801 and 1805, Lord Elgin (then ambassador to the Ottoman court of the Sultan in Istanbul) acquired the sculptures from the Parthenon. Parliament bought the marbles from Lord Elgin in 1816 and presented them to the museum, where they have been housed since.³¹ The history of these artifacts finding themselves in the British Museum is troubling, and indeed wrought with the kind of human violence and weakness Nietzsche discusses in his description of the critical historical mode. It is an act of violence to march up to one of the most iconic symbols of a foreign culture’s identity and break off the stones that tell the central stories of that culture. It is an act of violence to abscond with those stones and hoard them at your country seat a continent away from their proper home. It is an act of unutterable weakness to then release those stones from your possession only when the government gives you enough money. The history of the Elgin Marbles is infinitely worthy of being brought before the tribunal. How does the act of continuing to keep and display these testaments to the worst excesses of colonialism under the British Empire serve life? The tribunal

³¹ Ian Jenkins, *The Parthenon Sculptures*, (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 2007), 71-84.

must be explicitly clear in its condemnation: the continual possession of these hugely important and symbolic artifacts of Greek culture only serve to undermine the needs of the future until they are returned to their rightful culture. Once returned, they can again be looked to in their monumental significance by those who act and strive and preserved with the reverence of antiquarian care.



*Parthenon Sculptures purchased from Lord Elgin in the British Museum*³²

But if the Elgin Marbles deserve to be condemned, shouldn't all of the artifacts in the *Enlightenment Gallery* be condemned as well? If the Parthenon sculptures should be returned to their culture of origin, what of the countless vases and sculptures from foreign cultures which have

³² *Detail of The Parthenon Sculptures with Inscription — The British Museum Photographed by the Author (2015)*

been put on display to tell the story of the British Enlightenment? The key distinction lies in the *significance* of the artifacts. The Parthenon sculptures are the substance of the building that stands as the most iconic symbol of Athens, both in antiquity and in our present day. Such a theft must be wholly condemned and rectified. To make such a sweepingly critical condemnation of all artifacts would be to call into question the entire field of archæology and indeed the act of digging them up in the first place. In addition to preserving and displaying the essential antiquarian history of British culture, the *Enlightenment Gallery* serves the further purpose of making a compelling historical statement in the critical mode. As one muses over the artifacts in the *Enlightenment Gallery*, one does muse on the ethics of these artifacts being in London. This musing is important. The British Empire *did* exist. Colonialism *did* happen. The practice of history cannot retroactively determine what should and should not have happened and erase the record of everything falling into the latter category. The *Enlightenment Gallery* is as much a lesson in the antiquarian significance of the collection as it is a statement about the fullness of the history of the artifacts contained within it. This is to say, an important part of the history of these artifacts is the very testimony they bear against cultural imperialism. An ancient Greek vase is displayed in an eighteenth century royal library, this is significant and this is critical history in action. Not every condemnation by the tribunal must result in an act of final judgment. Some of the condemnations must be ongoing and actively demonstrative of humanity's violence and weakness. The *Enlightenment Gallery* accomplishes this whether it is trying to or not.



*Foreign Artifacts alongside volumes of English Scholarship in the Enlightenment Gallery*³³

The Unhistorical

At the very outset of his second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche makes the central proposition of his project clear: “This, precisely, is the proposition the reader is invited to meditate upon: *the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal proportion for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture.*”³⁴ Historical understanding, as set forth in the relationship between the three historical modes, must always be complemented in equal measure by a conversely *unhistorical* mode. The unhistorical mode is characterized by forgetting, which is

³³ *Detail of Books and Artifacts — The Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum* Photographed by the Author (2015)

³⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63.

crucially different from the active analysis of the critical historian. Of humanity's necessary forgettingness, Nietzsche writes: "...it is possible to live almost without memory, and to live happily moreover, as the animal demonstrates; but it is altogether impossible to *live* at all without forgetting"³⁵. Nietzsche differentiates between these two notions of living with the absence and presence of italics. Mere life, read "live," is almost entirely possible without memory. As a cow exists grazing in a field, survival is possible (even enviable) without a sense of what has come before. We humans, however, are endowed with a historic sense that can run turbulently rampant with the excesses of the monumental, antiquarian, and critical history. In this sense, it is impossible to "*live*," read "use history for life," without a spirit of forgetting that surpasses the active condemnation of the critical tribunal and encompasses a passive letting-go of excessive memory.

In characteristic fashion, Nietzsche "simplifies" by deferring to profundity when he writes "[*sic*] *there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing, whether this living thing be a man or a people or a culture*"³⁶. This advanced degree of sleeplessness, this "rumination," is the unchecked excess of the three historical modes. For an actor or striver to lose himself or herself in sleepless monumental understanding is to act in a harmful and fatal way. To be so spellbound by a monumental understanding of history that an individual, a people, or a culture loses its sense of itself and its needs in the present day is to cause harm to that living thing, even unto death. Similarly, for such a living thing to lose itself in antiquarian rumination is for an individual, a people, or a culture to harm its understanding of the artifacts it could be presently producing and die by robbing itself of its present vitality. In turn, to drag too much of an individual, people, or culture's history before

³⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 62.

³⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 62.

the tribunal and condemn it is to rob these these living things of the historical understanding they have been endowed with. To do such a harm is to transplant humanity into the cow's grazing field, only without the nutrients of historical understanding these historical creatures will die in their purely unhistorical grazing. The historical (bound by the moderate interplay of the three historical modes) and the unhistorical (characterized by a passive letting-go of the past) must exist in *equal* proportion.

The Suprahistorical Vantage Point

The suprahistorical vantage point is an ideal both identified and ultimately given up on by Nietzsche. He writes: "If, in a sufficient number of cases, one could scent out and retrospectively breathe (the) unhistorical atmosphere within which every great historical event has taken place, he might, as a percipient being, raise himself to a *suprahistorical* vantage point."³⁷ In this passage, Nietzsche presupposes that every great historical event takes place in an unhistorical atmosphere. This presupposition sheds light onto the nature of the proportional relationship between the historical and the unhistorical: inspiration happens in the historical mode so that action can take place in the unhistorical mode. The seemingly Delphic task of one seeking the suprahistorical perspective is to discern what exactly is the defining characteristic of this unhistoric moment that precipitates action, capture it, and breathe it back into history. The historical sense is easier to capture because it is experiential and handed down in monuments and tomes so that succeeding generations can use it. This handing-down of history is so frequently attributed to a desire that inheritors of a historic tradition might use historical knowledge to divine the future. This is the spirit manifest in the adage that we must learn from the past in order to not repeat it.

³⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 64-65.

Such an adage misses Nietzsche's point. The suprahistorical perspective can only be attained when one moves past history and understands the critical moment when the proximate causes of historical understanding precipitate in the spirit of chance and the loss of the "desire to go on living or to take part in history" of the unhistorical moment of action³⁸. Nietzsche himself acknowledges the difficulty of gaining such an understanding when he writes:

...let us leave the suprahistorical men to their nausea and their wisdom: today let us rejoice for once in our unwisdom and, as believers in deeds and progress and as honourers of the process, give ourselves a holiday. Our valuation of the historical may be only an occidental prejudice: but let us at least make progress within this prejudice and not stand still! Let us at least learn better how to employ history for the purpose of *life!*³⁹

Here Nietzsche nods to the complexity ("nausea") and wisdom of the suprahistorical vantage point by drawing the emphasis back to the purpose of his project which is to understand the proper use and application of the historical in its equal proportion to the unhistorical. The point of the *suprahistorical* perspective is to suggest that outside and above the covalent interplay between the historical and unhistorical exists this more elevated perspective – perhaps impossible to attain – that arrests the most potent element of the interplay. Once an appreciation of the proper use of history is gained, then, Nietzsche writes, "...we will gladly acknowledge that the suprahistorical outlook possesses more wisdom than we do, provided we can only be sure that we possess more life: for then our unwisdom will at any rate have more future than their wisdom will." ⁴⁰

³⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 65.

³⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 66.

⁴⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 66.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROMAN TRIUMPH

The Roman Triumph in Context

Roman Triumph popularly connotes the victorious entrance of a returning general into Rome where he then parades through the streets in a glittering display of soldiers and spoils before proceeding up the Capitoline Hill to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The general can be clearly pictured: drawn in a chariot by four horses, his face painted red, a slave behind him whispering “remember that you are mortal” in his ear while holding a laurel wreath steadily over his head. We can imagine the cartloads of booty rolling by as the awe-struck populace roars in cheer. We can almost see the captive conquered rulers and generals trembling as they process towards their certain execution. This popular understanding of the Roman triumph is indeed compelling, bringing together the most striking elements offered up by ancient authors, Renaissance tapestries, and Hollywood movies alike.

Despite its prevailing popularity, however, this understanding of the triumph as a civic celebration of a victorious general in a city-wide display of martial power and religious observance corresponds most strictly only to the tradition as it was practiced during the middle and late republic⁴¹. A slow and surprising evolution resulted in the Triumph at the height of its potency—the triumph of our popular imagination—and a long history followed it as the ceremony conformed to the *mores* and vicissitudes of Roman life into late antiquity. Indeed, just as Rome can be understood in the distinct periods of its kingdom, republic, empire, and fall, so too can the Roman triumph be understood in distinctive forms corresponding to the kingdom and early republic, middle and late republic, and empire, respectively. In turn, Rome itself came to fall and

⁴¹ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 257-269, 287, 291-299.

found its culture passed on to Byzantium in the east. Similarly, the culture and style of the triumph diffused to Byzantium where it lived on after its practice as a Roman tradition came to an end.



*This Baroque depiction of the triumph of Marius depicts many of the central elements of the triumph in its popular connotation: chariot, horses, triumphator, spoils, standards, and captives.*⁴²

⁴² *The Triumph of Marius* Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1729)

Roman historians believed the triumph was, as a military celebration, coeval to the founding of the city. Romulus himself is reported to have triumphed in the *Fasti Triumphales*. Indeed, Plutarch identifies Romulus as having originated the ceremony:

And Romulus, making a vow to Jupiter, if he should conquer, to carry, himself, and dedicate his adversary's armour to his honour, overcame him in combat, and a battle ensuing, routed his army also, and then took his city...Romulus, that he might perform his vow in the most acceptable manner to Jupiter, and withal make the pomp of it delightful to the eye of the city, cut down a tall oak which he saw growing in the camp, which he trimmed to the shape of a trophy, and fastened it to Acron's whole suit of armour disposed in proper form; then he himself, girding his clothes about him, and crowning his head with a laurel garland, his hair gracefully flowing, carried the trophy resting erect upon his right shoulder, and so marched on, singing songs of triumph, and his whole army following, after the citizens all receiving him with acclamations of joy and wonder. The procession of this day was the origin and model of all after triumphs.⁴³

Here we see that at the time of Plutarch's writing (45-120 CE), the tradition and style of the triumph were understood by the Romans to have originated with the founder and first king of the city *specifically* as a reverent celebration of military conquest. The person active in the conquest was the one who triumphed. The spectacle was for the city — “and withal make the pomp of it delightful to the city.”

Modern historians diverge from Plutarch's version of the triumph's history, believing that the tradition actually originated as a solemn procession to a shrine dedicated to Liber-Dionysus on the Capitoline Hill rather than as a strictly military celebration originating with Romulus. The first extant use of the Latin word *triumphus* (in the vocative form *trumphe*) is found in the *Carmen Arvale*, whose lines read: “Help us, Lares! / Marmor, let not plague or ruin attack the multitude! / Be filled, fierce Mars! Leap the threshold! Halt, wild one! / By turns call on all the gods of sowing! / Help us, Marmor! / Triumph! Triumph! Triumph! Triumph! Triumph!”⁴⁴ The

⁴³ Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. John Dryden (New York: The Modern Library, 1932), 35.

⁴⁴ Anonymous “The Carmen Arvale” in *Remains of Old Latin, Volume IV: Archaic Inscriptions*, trans. E. H. Warmington (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 242-243.

Carmen Arvale is explicitly a fertility hymn. It supplicates to the gods for protection, prosperity, and bounty. This is a hymn dedicated to the increase of the Roman race through a fertility that will provide children and the crops to sustain them. To find the earliest known use of the word “triumph” in this context gives credence to Varro’s etymology, which traces the Latin word *triumphus* to the Greek word *thriambos*.⁴⁵ Varro believed *thriambos* was the Greek name of the cult of Dionysus, which came to be assigned to the cult of Liber-Dionysus at Rome. The confluence of Varro’s understanding of the origin of the word “triumph” in the Roman world and our modern identification of the earliest use of that word in the context of a fertility hymn shape our modern understanding of the earliest Roman “triumphs” as a religious observance having both fertility and military significance. On March 17th, Romans celebrated the *Liberalia* with a solemn procession to Liber-Dionysus’ shrine on the Capitoline Hill.⁴⁶ Given the strong identification of the triumph with the Capitoline Hill in its later, strictly military context, the *Liberalia* weaves into the threads of Varro’s etymology and the *Carmen Arvale* to enrich our modern historical understanding of the roots of the Roman triumph as a fertility-oriented religious festival in the archaic past.

This understanding does not necessarily diminish Plutarch’s understanding of the triumph’s history as a strictly military celebration coeval to the founding of the city. What it does do is help the modern world look through the rhetoric of (often) unreliable ancient histories and appreciate the richness of a more anthropological historical understanding of the tradition. The cult of Dionysus was introduced to the Roman world in about the 490’s BCE, the same time that the *Carmen Arvale* is believed to have originated.⁴⁷ We do not know when the triumph

⁴⁵ Marcus Terentius Varro *De Lingua Latina*, trans. Roland G. Kent, Ph.D. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 234-237.

⁴⁶ Publius Ovidius Naso *Fasti*, trans. Anne and Peter Wiseman. (Oxford, The Oxford University Press, 2011), 56-61

⁴⁷ Ernst Badian, “Triumph,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (Fourth Edition)*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 2012), 1509-1510.

transitioned from its practice as a celebration emphasizing fertility into its later, more strictly military form. Aided by our modern historical understanding, what we do know is that the earliest versions of the fertility festival on the Capitoline Hill would not have been called a triumph throughout the period of the Roman Kingdom because the word was not yet imported into Latin from Greek. The kingdom was overthrown in 509 BCE, roughly twenty years before the cult of Dionysus (and with it the Greek *thriambos*) came to Rome. At some point in the Early Republic, the fertility festival on the Capitoline Hill would have become associated with the Latin *triumphus* but it is not until the Middle Republic that the festival can be understood – with any degree of veracity – as a religious festival, named a triumph, wherein a Roman general celebrates a military victory with the iconic procession to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill.

How this transition came about can merely be speculated at. In keeping with the model of the yeoman farmer as the ideal Roman citizen (e.g. Cincinnatus), my belief is that the honor of making the agriculturally-inspired offerings to Liber-Triumphus (Dionysos-Thriambus) might have been bestowed on a victorious general who happened to return to Rome proximate to the March 17th observance of the fertility festival of the *Liberalia*. A precedent set, the honor might then have become a customary reward to a victorious general with the then-outmoded name of *Triumphus* remaining assigned to the tradition through custom. Again, this assessment is purely speculative, and I offer it as a means of bridging the gap between the discernible historic foundations of the triumph and the more verifiable records of triumphs carried out later in Roman history. In the Roman imagination from at least the reign of Augustus onward, the triumph had always been a military celebration and was rooted to the founding of the city.

By the Middle Republic, the Roman triumph was a military celebration with set forms. The triumphal procession entered Rome through the *Porta Triumphalis*. The right to enter through this gate was reserved exclusively for the individual celebrating a triumph, the *triumphator*, and

his parade. The triumphal procession made its way to the Capitoline Hill by a long route, including open spaces throughout the city large enough to accommodate large crowds of spectators. The triumphal procession was comprised first and foremost of the *triumphator* himself in a costume believed to resemble that of the kings in Rome's distant past, Jupiter's attire, or even the cloak of Alexander the Great. The *triumphator* was drawn in a four-horse chariot with any sons of a suitable age. Accounts of the triumph hold that the *triumphator's* face was painted red and a slave stood behind him in the chariot, holding a laurel wreath over his head while whispering "remember that you are mortal" in his ear. The triumphal parade began with *lictors* who preceded the *triumphator*, after whom followed prominent captives – foreign rulers or military leaders – being led to their execution, freed Roman prisoners of war dressed as the *triumphator's* freedmen, cartloads of booty, sacrificial animals, the entire senate, and the whole corpus of Roman magistrates. From about 200 BCE onward, the triumph became more costly and elaborate. Banners, paintings of sieges and battles, models of conquered lands, musicians, and torch-bearers were added to the procession. The *triumphator's* troops shouted insults against the *triumphator*, most likely in a form of religious orthopraxy meant to avert the displeasure or jealousy of the gods.

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The right to triumph was predicated on an affirmative vote by both the senate and the Roman people. The prerequisite for expecting such an affirmative vote was a decisive victory in a declared war against a foreign enemy. The precise letter of the rules pertaining to the right to triumph held that the commander must have fought under his own auspices while holding the office of either *pro consule* or *pro praetore* and that at least five thousand of the enemy must have been killed in the battle.⁴⁹ The historical record suggests that these rules were followed most

⁴⁸ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 1-23.

⁴⁹ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 187-218.

strictly during the Middle Republic and became increasingly open to interpretation as Roman history progressed into the Late Republic. By the Late Republic, the first step towards celebrating a triumph would be for the general to be acclaimed *imperator* by his army followed by a *supplication* decreed by the senate. The last republican triumph was celebrated by Lucius Cornelius Balbus in 19 BCE.⁵⁰ By this time, the right to triumph was a special distinction only awarded by the Emperor Augustus. Under the Roman Empire, the emperor was the sole person permitted to hold *imperium* at Rome. Since a triumphing general retained his *imperium* in the city, the generals themselves could no longer triumph.⁵¹ Beginning with Augustus and continuing until the end of the triumphal tradition, it was the sole right of the emperor to triumph. The men who, as *legati*, won the actual victory were awarded *ornamenta triumphalia* while the emperor was celebrated in the role of *triumphator*.⁵² The triumph continued both at Rome and in Constantinople throughout the Roman Empire, with the last triumph celebrated by Diocletian and Maximian in 303 CE.⁵³ With the advent of Christianity, the triumph, with its ensuant animal sacrifice to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, was verboten. The culture and style of the triumph, having diffused to the east, was maintained in Byzantium after the fall of Rome in 476 CE.

Monumental History The Roman Triumph

If Nietzsche identified the monumental mode of history as belonging to the “being who acts and strives,” then the Roman triumph belongs most obviously to this mode. As Nietzsche writes,

⁵⁰ Ernst Badian, "Triumph," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (Fourth Edition)*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 2012), 1509-1510.

⁵¹ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 187-191.

⁵² Richard Beacham, "The Emperor as Impresario: Producing the Pageantry of Power," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, ed. Karl Galinsky (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 2005), 151-170. Ernst Badian, "Triumph," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (Fourth Edition)*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 2012), 1509-1510.

⁵³ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 301-333. Ernst Badian, "Triumph," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary (Fourth Edition)*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 2012), 1509-1510.

an individual, a people, or a culture “learns from (a monumentalistic engagement with the past) that the greatness that once existed was in any event once *possible* and may thus be possible again.”⁵⁴ The very practice of the triumph embodies this *ethos*. When the *triumphator* entered Rome, victorious, riding in a chariot drawn by four white horses centuries after chariots had been outmoded in warfare, he was making a statement about the continuity of monumental greatness. To perform Roman history by making the triumphal procession in this historic artifact was to announce most explicitly that the kinds of greatness recounted in the *Porta Triumphalis* were once possible, are possible now, and have indeed been actuated in the victories of the *triumphator*.

An even more explicit use of historical monumentalism in the triumph comes in the form of the costume of the *triumphator*. In *The Roman Triumph*, Mary Beard writes:

Pompey himself loomed above the scene, riding high in a chariot “studded with gems.” Parading his identification with Alexander the Great, he was said to have been wearing a cloak that had once belonged to Alexander himself. We are not told how he combined this with the traditional costume of the triumphing general, which included an ornate purple toga and tunic that modern studies have traced back variously to the costume of the early kings of Rome or to the cult image of the god Jupiter himself. In any case, Appian on this occasion chooses to be skeptical (“if anyone can believe that,” he writes), although he does go on to offer an implausibly plausible account of just how Pompey might have got his hands on this heirloom of a king who had died some 250 years earlier: “He apparently found it among the possessions of Mithradates—the people of Cos having got it from Cleopatra.”⁵⁵

This passage demonstrates the degree to which not just the monumental, but also the antiquarian and critical modes of history are present in the Roman triumph. Antiquarianism comes in the form of Appian’s careful analysis of just how Alexander the Great’s two and half century-old cloak could have come into the hands of Pompey. The critical mode is exemplified with Appian’s scathingly incredulous aside: “if anyone can believe that.” What matters most, however, is the fact

⁵⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 69.

⁵⁵ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 13-14.

that Pompey *did* claim to be wearing Alexander's cloak. To wear the traditional purple toga and tunic would be already to employ monumental history in the assertion of a public image of success. To wear the traditional toga and tunic would be for Pompey to insert himself into Rome's own monumental historic tradition, going all the way back to Romulus, and demonstrating his feats as but the freshest manifestation of a continuous Roman greatness. For Pompey to physically step into Alexander the Great's cloak, or at least to purport to have stepped into it, is to make the statement that Rome itself was now in league with the monumental military power of the Greeks.

The historic monumentalism of the Roman triumph is demonstrated not only by the form and practice of the triumph itself, but also by the writings of ancient authors. Specifically, the reports of the captured spoils and booty paraded in procession with the *triumphator* give modern historians a sense of the power of material culture in eliciting a monumental self-understanding on the part of the Romans. In his *Bellum Judaicum*, Josephus recounts the spoils taken from the temple at Jerusalem which Titus displayed during his triumph in 71 CE:

It is impossible adequately to describe the multitude of those spectacles and their magnificence under every conceivable aspect, whether in works of art or diversity of riches or natural rarities; for almost all the objects which men who have ever been blessed by fortune have acquired one by one – the wonderful and precious productions of various nations – by their collective exhibition that day displayed the majesty of the Roman empire.⁵⁶

This passage captures the spirit of Josephus' lengthy description of the unparalleled excess, luxuriance, and wealth of Titus' spoils. The significance of this passage hinges on the binary system Josephus sets up: on the one hand the various nations and on the other the Roman empire. This monumental display of the "precious productions of various nations" served to "display the majesty of the Roman empire." Josephus goes on to describe the "silver and gold and ivory in masses, not as if carried in procession, but flowing, so to speak, like a river; tapestries borne

⁵⁶ Flavius Josephus *The Jewish War, Books IV-VII*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, M.A. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), 234-237.

along, some of the rarest purple, others embroidered by Babylonian art with perfect portraiture; transparent gems, some set in golden crowns, some in other fashions, swept by in such profusion as to correct our erroneous supposition that any of them was rare.” The display of wealth described here was not so much intended as a demonstration to the Roman people of the increase in the Roman economy, but rather to highlight the monumental greatness of Titus in the continuum of the historic greatness of his predecessors. This is a hugely important distinction, because in understanding that Nietzsche assigns the domain of history to an individual, a people, or a culture, the possibility of winning such monumental spoils signals that such greatness continues to be possible for the individual Roman, the Roman people, and the culture of *romanitas* that was then diffusing across the known world. It is this signal of the possible that inspired Josephus to make such a careful account of Titus’ spectacle so that the memory of it might be passed on to posterity. It is for this reason that the spoils of Titus’ victory in the Jewish War were etched so vividly into the monumental Arch of Titus.



*Detail of the Arch of Titus, featuring prominent depictions of the spoils taken during the Jewish War*⁵⁷

The accounts of the spoils paraded by the *triumphator* recounted by Roman historians are in many cases simply too fantastical to be regarded as mere antiquarian facts and figures. When the reported cartloads of captured armor, weapons, and gold transgress the credibility of even the most optimistic conjectures of logistical capability, surely the reported figures must have been intended to impress more than to report bald historic realities. Mary Beard addresses this penchant for the hyperbolic on the part of the Roman historians who recounted the figures of the spoils displayed during Pompey's triumph in *The Roman Triumph*:

...even the least suspicious of readers must by now have felt a few reservations about just how plausible some of the descriptions are. Did the procession really feature such extravagant quantities of precious metals as we read? A statue of Mithradates eight cubits high (that is some three and a half meters) in solid gold? Do the figures for cash acquired, captives on parade, or enemy defeated (more than 12 million, according to the dedication to Minerva that Pliny quotes) make any

⁵⁷ *The Arch of Titus in the Forum Romanum* Sebastian Bergmann (2007)

sense? Has not a good deal of exaggeration, or wishful thinking, crept into these ancient accounts, and so too into our own story of the triumph? After all, Appian himself was skeptical enough to sound a warning note about that unlikely story of Alexander's cloak.⁵⁸

The accounts of Pompey's spoils are indeed spectacular. There are reports of hundreds of cartloads of gold, unutterably exotic *flora* and *fauna* in dizzying profusion, an enormous portrait of Pompey himself executed with pearls, and an impossibly great number of captives. Indeed, so excessive were Pompey's spoils that Pliny the Elder quipped that Pompey's triumph celebrated "the defeat of austerity and the triumph, let's face it, of luxury."⁵⁹ In trying to understand why the figures were so assuredly inflated, Beard posits that such displays were meant to serve the purpose of highlighting the extravagance of Oriental excess and bolster the political popularity of further eastern expeditionary force as much as they were meant purely to impress the crowds and honor the *Triumphator*.⁶⁰ The political intent and pure impressiveness components are indeed important, but Beard identifies something of deep Nietzschean importance in her observation of the symbolic importance of foreign excess: traditional Roman virtues are of the kind of deep austerity Pliny the Elder curmudgeonly laments the defeat of, and imperial Roman virtues have to do with conquest more than comfort. Cincinnatus, that storied Roman citizen who won victory for Rome and then returned to his life as a yeoman farmer encapsulates these two modes—austerity for self and greatness for Rome. The monumental display of such a profusion of foreign luxury serves to crystallize the sense of Roman values by contrast. These spoils are (ostensibly) *for Rome*. These spoils highlight the glory of Rome's *legions* under the superior leadership of their general-turned-*triumphator*.

⁵⁸ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 37.

⁵⁹ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 9.

⁶⁰ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 6-15, 37, 49, 132.

Antiquarian History and The Roman Triumph

While the monumental mode that inspires the writing of histories like Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, the erection of great monuments like the Arch of Titus, and the inflation of the reported figures of the spoils in accounts such as those of Pompey's triumph, it is the antiquarian mode that inspires the painstaking collection of data and materials in the quest to preserve all that is old purely *because it is old*. As was discussed in Chapter 1, Nietzsche identifies the antiquarian as the "being who preserves and reveres."⁶¹ In this sense, Pompey's claim that he donned Alexander the Great's cloak during his triumph takes on both a monumental and an antiquarian aspect. The implication of affiliation with past greatness is what makes the act monumental, the painstaking tracing of the lineage of this article of clothing and the work of people such as Appian to deduce the veracity of such a claim demonstrate the preserving and revering tendency of the antiquarian.

In the same way that Pompey's use of Alexander the Great's cloak straddles two of Nietzsche's historical modes, so too do the *Fasti Triumphales* embody both monumental acting and striving as well as antiquarian preserving and revering. The act of composing this great, monumental list exemplifies Nietzsche's monumentalism while the impulse to painstakingly trace the tradition through the accepted lineage of the city's rulers *ab urbe condita* – from the founding of the city – exemplifies Nietzsche's antiquarianism. In his *Seven Works Against the Pagans*, Orosius, acting very much in the *critical* historical mode (his works are, after all, explicitly *against* his own society's historical religious *ethos*) nonetheless exemplifies Nietzschean antiquarianism in carefully counting the triumphs in Roman history near the end of his seventh book:

Vespasian and Titus, the emperors, entered the city celebrating a magnificent triumph over the Jews. This was a fair sight and one hitherto unknown to all mortals among the three hundred and twenty triumphs which had taken place from the founding of the city until that time, namely, father and son riding in triumphal

⁶¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

chariot, bringing back a most glorious victory over those who had offended the Father and the Son.⁶²

That a Roman on the outs with his own culture should nonetheless make painstaking record of his culture's minutia, recording the instances of a practice ended by the advent of the very religious transition he was advocating for, highlights the power of the antiquarian impulse. Here we see the power of antiquarianism to balance the other two modes, monumental excess is curbed by antiquarian facts and figures while the antiquarianism and monumentalism are put into opposition with the countervailing force of Orosius' critical mode. In Nietzsche's final appraisal of Orosius' practice of the three modes, however, it is likely that he would identify an excess of critical history. Orosius is, after all, excessive in dragging before the tribunal and condemning not only paganism within his own culture, but also the whole of the Jewish people as Christ-killers. Orosius is a writer with the very specific agenda of promoting his new-found religion. Orosius is not a modern, dispassionate, academic historian. Orosius positively demonstrates Nietzsche's antiquarianism while negatively demonstrating Nietzsche's critical mode, thus exemplifying why Nietzsche places such a premium on the proper balancing of the three modes.

Varro embodied the antiquarian mode in his etymological obsession with the finest points of the history of the triumph itself. The Roman people embodied the antiquarian mode in their fastidious attention to the rules and regulations concerning the triumph. The continued use of a chariot after it had long been outmoded in actual warfare, though serving a monumental purpose, undoubtedly demonstrates the antiquarian tendency to stodgily insist that things have always been done a certain way and thus must never be changed. The antiquarian mode, when practiced in excess, prevents the development of a vibrant future by drowning vibrancy in the dust of excessive historical clutter thus mummifying life. How often was a general who had won a truly

⁶² Paulus Orosius, *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 302-303.

triumph-worthy victory denied the honor because he hadn't met one of the long-standing yet minor qualifications to be eligible? Did he defeat the enemy's commander in hand-to-hand combat during the battle? Was he *pro consule* or *pro praetore* when he won the victory? Were five thousand of the enemy killed in the battle? Political agendas rely on an antiquarian's strict adherence to the rules when the bestowing of an honor is counter to its interest. How often was the vibrant future of the Roman people quelled in the dust of antiquarian dictums by either the sincere protestations of the traditionalist or the pretense of traditionalism applied as a thin veneer over political ambition and factious infighting at Rome? The inconsistency of the application of the rules, and the sometimes alarmingly arbitrary assignment of a lesser *ovatio* on the Alban Mount in the annals of Roman history suggest that excesses of Antiquarian zeal were frequently attendant to the triumph throughout its long and winding history as a cultural force.⁶³

Critical History and The Roman Triumph

If Nietzsche understood the critical historical mode as the domain of the “being who suffers and seeks deliverance”⁶⁴, who must possess and employ the strength to “break up and dissolve a piece from the past” by “bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it”⁶⁵, then in analyzing the way the monumental and antiquarian modes operated in the tradition of the Roman Triumph, the function of the critical mode can already begin to be understood. When Appian made his aside about the veracity of the account that Pompey wore Alexander the Great's cloak in his triumph, he was employing the critical mode in the midst of his account of an act of historical monumentalism. In turn, Orosius' *Seven Works Against the Pagans*, saturated with an antiquarian fixation on facts and figures, must ultimately be understood as the

⁶³Marcus Porcius Cato. *Letters*, trans. E. S. Shuckburgh (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909), 20.

⁶⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.

⁶⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75-76.

critical tools for scrupulous, tribunal examination and final condemnation that they were intended for. When Orosius makes the parallel between the father and son who rode in triumph on earth over the people who offended the Father and Son in heaven, he employs the antiquarian mode to further his *critical* project.

Although Orosius' project is problematic, using an excess of critical history to further a political and religious agenda, his writings nonetheless provide a helpful way into understanding how the critical mode can be understood in the context of the Roman triumph: critical, contemporary authorial analysis of the phenomenon. The scope of this analysis in Orosius is shown by a further exploration of his seventh book against the Pagans, where he writes:

Titus, however, pressing the Jews with a heavy and long siege, making use of engines and all kinds of military machines, finally, not without much bloodshed among his own men, broke through the walls of the city. But to capture the inner fortification of the temple, which a large number of priests and chief men enclosed therein were guarding, there was need of a greater force and more time. Yet when he saw that this was reduced within his power, because of the nature and antiquity of the construction, he deliberated a long time as to whether he should set it on fire as a source of incitement to the enemy or whether he should save it as a proof of victory. Since the church of God was flourishing very abundantly throughout the whole world, this, in the judgment of God, was to be removed as something exhausted and empty and as fit for no good to anyone. So Titus, pronounced imperator by the army, set fire to the temple in Jerusalem and destroyed it, which, from the first day of its foundation until the last day of its overthrow, had lasted one thousand one hundred and two years.⁶⁶

In this section, Orosius is employing the critical historical mode in a polyvalent way. Orosius is himself bringing the historical tradition of the temple, central to the history of his new religion, before the proverbial tribunal and finally condemning it through two literary tribunal condemnations: Titus on earth, deliberating a long time, and God in heaven, considering the flourishing of his *new* church before judging his *old* temple “exhausted and empty and as fit for no good to anyone.” Orosius himself, held to Nietzsche's principle of balancing the three *historical*

⁶⁶ Paulus Orosius, *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 302-303.

modes in equal proportion with the *unhistorical*, fails. Orosius' work demonstrates the way that a cursory employment of monumentalism and antiquarianism in the interest of serving a deeper critical agenda represents an abuse of history rather than its proper use. As Nietzsche writes: "every past, however, is worthy of being condemned—for that is the nature of human things: human violence and weakness have always played a mighty role in them."⁶⁷ Had Orosius been more scrupulous and stepped back from his project and balanced his understanding of history with more monumental striving and deeper antiquarian preservation and reverence, perhaps his critical agenda might have become more nuanced and his final condemnation less *total*.

Other ancient writers engage with the triumph in more balanced ways. Both Livy and Cicero employ the critical mode to curtail perceived excesses of monumentalism and distortions of antiquarianism. In book eight of *Ab Urbe Condita*, Livy meditates on the complexity of discerning whether the dictator or consuls triumphed over the Samnites, concluding:

It is not easy to choose between the accounts or the authorities. The records have been vitiated, I think, by funeral eulogies and by lying inscriptions under portraits, every family endeavoring mendaciously to appropriate victories and magistracies to itself—a practice which has certainly wrought confusion in the achievements of individuals and in the public memorials of events. Nor is there extant any writer contemporary with that period, on whose authority we can safely take our stand.⁶⁸

So we see that even in the first century BCE, a certain degree of antiquarian fascination and critical dismissal met with monumental accounts of the Roman triumph. Livy is joined by Cicero in problematizing this monumental excess and antiquarian distortion when in *Brutus* he reflects on the dubiousness of family records, writing: "Yet by these laudatory speeches our history has

⁶⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75-76.

⁶⁸ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita*, trans. B. O. Foster, Ph. D. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 155.

become quite distorted; for much is set down in them which never occurred, false triumphs, too large a number of consulships, false relationships and transitions of patricians to plebeian status.”⁶⁹

While Orosius used the critical mode to further his religio-political agenda and Livy and Cicero engage critically with monumentalism and antiquarianism in the interest of furthering their academic or political projects, Tacitus employs the critical historical mode in order to make a broader social commentary. In Book 39 of his *Agricola*, Tacitus writes:

This series of achievements, though magnified by no boastfulness of language in *Agricola*'s letters, Domitian greeted, as his manner was, with affected pleasure and secret disquiet: in his heart was the consciousness that his recent counterfeit triumph over the Germans was a laughing-stock: he had in fact purchased, in way of trade, persons whose clothes and hair could be adapted to look like that of prisoners. But here was a veritable, a decisive victory, with enemies slain in thousands, widely canvassed and advertised: that was what he dreaded most, that the name of a commoner should be exalted above his prince: it was all in vain that the practice of public speaking and the glamour of the arts of peace had been silenced, if another was to usurp military glory.⁷⁰

Like Livy and Cicero, in this passage Tacitus calls out the political motivation behind the abuse of monumentalism and antiquarianism in the context of the triumph. Tacitus goes so far as to call Domitian's triumph over the Chatti in 83 CE a “counterfeit” and a “laughing stock” because of the use of actors to play the role of captive Germans. Tacitus' employment of the critical mode here is, at first glance, very much in line with the critical work of Livy and Cicero, but a closer work at the context of this passage in the broader work of *Agricola* reveals the depth of Tacitus' use of the critical mode to make a cultural commentary.

At the opening of the *Agricola*, Tacitus meditates on the practice of history, writing:

The ancient custom of transmitting to posterity the actions and manners of famous men has not been neglected even by the present age, incurious though it be about those belonging to it, whenever any exalted and noble degree of virtue has triumphed over that false estimation of merit, and that ill-will to it, by which small

⁶⁹ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Brutus*, trans. G. L. Hendrickson (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1939), 62.

⁷⁰ Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *Germania*, trans. M. Hutton and E. H. Warmington (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1970), 39.

and great states are equally infested. In former times, however, as there was a greater propensity and freer scope for the performance of actions worthy of remembrance, so every person of distinguished abilities was induced through conscious satisfaction in the task alone, without regard to private favor or interest, to record examples of virtue. And many considered it rather as the honest confidence of integrity, than a culpable arrogance, to become their own biographers.

⁷¹

Here, in the very opening lines of the *Agricola*, Tacitus establishes a major theme of his work: the distinction between authentic and false achievement in the face of an aristocracy of power. Unlike Livy, whose critical engagement with abuses of monumental and antiquarian history were meant to serve his unique historical project, and unlike Cicero, whose questioning of monumental and antiquarian excesses pertain to an immediate *political* question, Tacitus' employment of the critical mode is meant to call the whole of his contemporary *Roman culture* into question. This opening meditation on the decline in Roman virtue illuminates the fullness of what Tacitus is doing with his condemnation of Domitian's "counterfeit" triumph—he is using history to support his contempt for a culture run amok. What can the point of a triumph filled with actors and representations rather than captives and spoils possibly be but to enshrine and reinforce the political *establishment* rather than breathe into Roman society the kind of vitality for the future that Nietzsche sees as the *point* of history in practice. In the *Agricola*, Tacitus accomplished the reverse of what Orosius' seventh book against the Pagans did, he employed the critical mode to moderate historic monumentalism and antiquarianism in the interest of serving life, in the interest of attempting to save Roman culture from itself.

The Romans and the Unhistorical

As Nietzsche establishes in his second *Untimely Meditation*, "This, precisely, is the proposition the reader is invited to meditate upon: *the unhistorical and the historical are necessary*

⁷¹ Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *Germania*, trans. M. Hutton and E. H. Warmington (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1970), 1.

in equal proportion for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture.”⁷² The central, fascinating paradox of the Roman triumph is the simultaneous existence of the historical and the unhistorical within it. The triumph itself celebrates an unhistorical moment of action of huge contemporary importance—a decisive victory in a declared war against a foreign enemy. Carnage on the battlefield is perhaps the most unhistorical moment in the human experience, it is about life and death, it is about instinct and action, any moment’s hesitation to ponder the turns of history that brought human societies to this critical moment of conflict is the moment the enemy circumvents your defenses. At the same time, however, this victory – borne out of a wholly unhistorical moment – ushers in the profound confluence of the monumental, antiquarian, and critical historical modes that are always already attendant to the Roman triumph.

In this distinction between the victory as unhistorical and the triumph as historical, the kind of “equal proportion” Nietzsche identifies as necessary for the “health of an individual, of a people and of a culture” is shown. This proportion, however, is present even within these two broad categories. The general, preparing to enter the battlefield, is inspired by the monumental greatness of his forebears to take on the enemy. The prospect of adding his name to the list of *historical* great Romans recorded in a monumental work like the *Fasti Triumphales* compels him, as Nietzsche identifies, to the *unhistorical* action of the battlefield. Similarly, the practice of the triumph at Rome, so tied to history and tradition, is nonetheless open to the unhistorical introduction of innovations and evolutions. A tradition that began as celebration at a minor shrine to Liber-Dionysus with both military and fertility significance became a strictly military celebration resulting in an animal sacrifice to Jupiter Optimus Maximus. First, only generals having met very specific qualifications and having won a popular and a senatorial vote had the right to triumph. By the beginning of the Common Era, only the emperor could triumph. The equal

⁷² Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63.

proportion of the historical and the unhistorical in the contexts of the victory itself, the delineation between the victory and the triumph, and the triumph in practice show the generative capacity of the Roman triumph: it brought new gods, new lands, new peoples, new riches, new ideas, and new self-understanding to the Roman people through the complex balancing of the three *historical* modes in equal proportion with the *unhistorical*.

Roman Triumph and the Suprahistorical Vantage Point

Although no individual Roman, be he a reported triumphing general or an extant Roman author, perceivably achieves a suprahistorical perspective in and of him or her self, the Romans as a people did achieve a suprahistorical vantage point. Nietzsche writes that: “If, in a sufficient number of cases, one could scent out and retrospectively breathe (the) unhistorical atmosphere within which every great historical event has taken place, he might, as a percipient being, raise himself to a *suprahistorical* vantage point.”⁷³ The confluence of artifacts, evidence, and accounts of the Roman triumph that are handed to the modern world from the ancient past emmenate the historical and unhistorical air that a percipient being can breathe in and in doing so raise him or her self to a suprahistorical vantage point. The disparate voices of writers like Varro, Tacitus, Josephus, Pliny, Cicero, Livy, Orosius, and Plutarch come together with the competing agendas of the their contemporary Romans and the ensuing conflicts of account and perspective to offer a profoundly deep insight into the relationship an individual, a people, or a culture has with the *historical* and the *unhistorical*. This insight transcends the context of Rome and it transcends the world of the ancients. This insight speaks to the *human experience*. It forces the individual, the people, and the culture to see within itself the ongoing tension between past and future. This is the tension that an individual, a people, and a culture always finds itself torn between. It is only

⁷³ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 64-65.

through the balancing of the historical and the unhistorical that the kind of *equipoise* necessary to attain the suprahistorical perspective can be achieved.

Was any single Roman able to bring together their own disparate, cultural threads to gain a suprahistorical perspective through triumph? Were the Roman people as a whole ever able to foster a culture of suprahistorical self-understanding through a nuanced engagement with their triumphs? There is no way of knowing. But, as Nietzsche writes: “let us leave the suprahistorical men to their nausea and their wisdom: today let us rejoice for once in our unwisdom and, as believers in deeds and progress and as honourers of the process, give ourselves a holiday. Our valuation of the historical may be only an occidental prejudice: but let us at least make progress within this prejudice and not stand still! Let us at least learn better how to employ history for the purpose of *life!*”⁷⁴ Let us indeed give ourselves a holiday, revelling in the privilege of being able to survey the whole of Roman history and culture, and in doing so enjoy the suprahistorical vantage point that their surviving vestiges of the human experience afford us. Let us celebrate the fact that the means of suprahistorical self-understanding are available to us, and, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, it is possible for a people and a culture to stand in the suprahistorical vantage point and in a moment of profound self-awareness use history to heal the wounds of the past, celebrate a triumph over the incarnation of human evil, and foster a brighter future for the individual, the people, and the culture alike.

⁷⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 66.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ENGLISH CORONATION

The English Coronation in Context

Under the Byzantine Empire, the triumphal culture and style, which had diffused to the east from Rome, evolved alongside and merged into the rite of coronation. Byzantine Christians adopted the Hebrew rite of coronation recounted in the *Torah* as beginning with King Solomon, circa 900 BCE.⁷⁵ In 973 CE, Edgar, the great-grandson of Alfred the Great, was anointed King of all the English. This first English coronation explicitly adopted the form and style of the rite as it was practiced at Constantinople for the Byzantine rulers in a push to revive Roman-style *auctoritas* in England. The coronation in 973 organized and declared a kind of sustainable, consolidated power not seen in the British Isles since the Roman occupation of *Britannia* came to an end circa 410 CE.⁷⁶

In his magisterial work on the English coronation, Roy Strong writes “that a rite of anointing kings with holy oil emerges between the seventh and eighth centuries came directly out of the Christianisation of the barbarian kingdoms. With the final dissolution of the Roman Empire in the West in 476 there evolved in its place the *imperium christianum* presided over by the pope.”⁷⁷ The critical elements here are the consecrated oil and the transition from Roman political empire to Roman religious empire. With the fall of the western half of the Roman empire, *Romanitas* in its full religious and political form continued in Byzantium to the east, but in Europe and the British Isles, the church was the force of Roman culture and consecrated oil was the current of that force. Strong continues, noting: “that spiritual empire was to assume a temporal

⁷⁵ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 9-17.

⁷⁶ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 10-14.

⁷⁷ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 11.

dimension thanks to the Donation of Constantine, a forgery datable to 752-7, a document which purported to declare Pope Sylvester I (314-5) and his successors rulers not only of Italy but of all the provinces which had once made up the Roman Empire in the West. This, in effect, cast the popes into the role of kingmakers, one which they were able to exercise through the introduction of the rite of unction as barbarian kings converted and sought divine sanction for their kingship.”⁷⁸ The seat of authority was still *cisalpine*, and just as had been the case under the Roman Empire, *transalpine* authority came from Rome. The difference between the way authority, *imperium*, was extended from Caesar before the fall and from the Pope after the fall lies in the surprising *magnification* of the extended power under Christian dominion. Beginning with Augustus, the Roman Emperor claimed divine status, however this divinity never extended to his legates in the provinces.⁷⁹ With the advent of unction as the current of Roman authority, Christianised Barbarian kings became “Lords Anointed”— sharing through the consecration with holy oil during their coronation the divine authority of the pope in Rome.

In Constantinople, the ancient Jewish tradition of coronation was revived with the coronation of Leo I in 457 by the patriarch.⁸⁰ Thenceforth, the tradition as practiced in Byzantium evolved to have set forms. The basic elements of coronation as recounted in the *Torah*: consecrated oil, a crown, and acclamation, evolved into a codified, uniquely Christian practice. The coronation ceremony was moved into a church for the coronation of Phocas in 602.⁸¹ In the first half of the seventh century, the coronation began to start with a triumphal procession to the great church of

⁷⁸ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 11.

⁷⁹ John Scheid, "Augustus and Roman Religion: Community, Conservatism, and Innovation," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, ed. Karl Galinsky (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 2005), 175-195.

⁸⁰ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 17.

⁸¹ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 17.

Hagia Sophia, where the rites of all succeeding Byzantine coronations continued until the fall of Constantinople in 1453.⁸² In 800, the joint strivings of the Roman pope to assert his power by following the model of the Byzantine patriarch and Charlemagne seeking to magnify his authority through shared divinity with the pope resulted in the first European coronation. Strong writes: “In 800, therefore, the pope did what had become the norm of the patriarch, crown an emperor, only this time one of the West. The people present all acclaimed Charlemagne as ‘Augustus, crowned by God, Emperor of the Romans.’”⁸³ Rome had its new Augustus in the form of Charlemagne, and just as Augustus assumed divine status, Charlemagne’s *imperium* was magnified through the divinity bestowed upon him through the rite of unction with consecrated oil. Apostolic succession affiliated the pope with divinity through a traced lineage to Jesus, by crossing the Alps and consecrating Charlemagne’s kingship with holy oil, the pope bestowed that connection with divinity to his new Lord Anointed and, in doing so, reasserted Roman authority in erstwhile transalpine Gaul.

In the eighth century, England was hardly yet a single kingdom. Edgar the Peaceful shared with his great-grandfather, Alfred the Great, and his father, King Edmund, the dream of a lasting unification of the English-speaking peoples. To realize this ambition, he looked to the example of Charlemagne and the success of the Holy Roman Empire. St. Dunstan, then-Archbishop of Canterbury, drew upon continental materials to conceive the format and liturgy of England’s first coronation.⁸⁴ In 973, Edgar went to Bath (a city richly symbolic of Roman authority in the province of *Britannia*) to be anointed and crowned with his wife

⁸² Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 17-18. Percy Ernst Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation*, trans. Leopold G. Wickham Legg, MA (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1937), 1-2, 10.

⁸³ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 17.

⁸⁴ Snagge, John. "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Part I". Spotify, 18 January 2013. Web. 15 April. 2016.

Ælfthryth as King and Queen of England. The coronation ceremony that Dunstan organized married together the major components of earlier Anglo-Saxon installation ceremonies (which included the ceremonial placing of a helmet on the king's head, enthronement, investiture with weapons and regalia, the mounting of an ancestral burial mound, and a ceremonial marriage with the earth goddess) with the signature elements of the new Christian coronation services, most especially the use of a crown and consecrated oil.⁸⁵ Edgar's coronation was not so much the ceremonial beginning of his reign, but the culmination of it. He assembled all of the nobility of his kingdom to witness his coronation and acclaim his kingship, the undoubted result of extensive diplomatic maneuvering. After this symbolic coronation, and Edgar's ascension to the divine status of Lord Anointed, other British kings, including the King of Scots and the King of Strathclyde, made their pledges of loyalty.⁸⁶ The consolidation of power was successful and the precedent for the English coronation service was set.

Just as had happened at Constantinople, the English coronation service evolved to have set forms in the centuries following 973. With the advent of time, the coronation in its modern form slowly became codified: a triumphal procession leads from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey where the sovereign is first acclaimed by the nobility, then makes an oath, then proceeds to be consecrated with holy oil, and is thereafter invested with regalia, crowned, enthroned, and given sworn pledges of loyalty by the major political players of the realm.⁸⁷ The broad pattern of Dunstan's first coronation service, though given over to change and revision pursuant to the demands of shifting political realities, has continued largely intact to the present day.⁸⁸ The terms

⁸⁵ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), 22-23.

⁸⁶ Richard Huscroft *The Norman Conquest: A New Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), 75-80.

⁸⁷ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), XXXV-XXVII, 30-33.

⁸⁸ Snagge, John. "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Part I". Spotify, 18 January 2013. Web. 15 April. 2016.

of the oath have been adjusted more than once. The Reformation imposed certain changes. Beginning with the coronation of James I in 1603, the language of the ceremony was changed to English.⁸⁹ Despite these changes, the symbolic importance of the ceremony has been firmly immovable throughout the tradition's thousand-year history. Even Oliver Cromwell understood the importance of the *imperium* bestowed on a ruler through coronation: in 1657, he sat in the St. Edward's Chair (the coronation chair) and was installed as Lord Protector of England.⁹⁰ The same will to share in divinely-sanctioned authority and assert Roman-style *imperium* in England has driven the inheritors of King Edgar's throne to be crowned in his same fashion, and the symbolic power of this ceremony has insured its continuity through a millennium's attendant turmoil, warfare, and sociopolitical evolution.

⁸⁹ Snagge, John. "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Part I". Spotify, 18 January 2013. Web. 15 April. 2016.

⁹⁰ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), XXXV-XXVII, 140, 196.



Prominent elements of the regalia come together with the romanitas of Elizabeth II's imperial robe to form a comprehensive statement about royal and imperial power⁹¹

⁹¹ *The Official Coronation Portrait of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* Cecil Beaton (1953)

It is precisely the prevalence and continuity of the coronation tradition that makes the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953 so richly significant. After the cataclysmic trauma of two world wars, in the face of the advent of modernity, with the falling away of many of England's traditional customs – a landed nobility in serious decline and an empire very much at the conclusion of its *dénouement* – the nation's new sovereign still asserted her ascension to power through coronation. In a modern metropolis in the middle of the twentieth century, Heralds came to Temple Bar at the traditional bounds of the city to proclaim her crowning. On televisions throughout the world, people of all nations watched as the young queen was borne to her throne in a golden chariot, drawn by white horses, through the streets of London just as the Romans had watched their *emperators* proceed through the streets of Rome to the great ceremony on the Capitoline Hill thousands of years before. A decade after the *Blitzkrieg* rained fire on London, a 25-year-old woman from the house of Saxe-Coburg marched up the Nave of a Westminster Abbey still marred by the ashes of the bombing. As she marched, the Oxford scholars in the abbey made the acclamation *Vivat Regina! Vivat Regina Elizabetha! Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!* (Long live the Queen! Long live Queen Elizabeth! (Long) Live! (Long) Live! (Long) Live!) that had echoed down through the centuries since that fateful day at Bath nearly a thousand years before.⁹² The Archbishop of Canterbury presented Elizabeth to her people, going to the four points of the compass on the golden carpet of the coronation stage, each time proclaiming to the nobility “I here present unto you Queen Elizabeth, your undoubted Queen, wherefore all you who have come this day to do your homage and service” after which he asks “Are you willing to do the same?” Each

⁹² The J. Arthur Rank Organisation, *A Queen is Crowned*, Film, Gaumont-Ralee Sound Recording System, 1953. Author's Translation.

time, the nobility exclaim “God save Queen Elizabeth!” in acclamation, just as the nobility at Bath did in 973.⁹³ She made a compact with her people, signing an oath to rule according to law.

Just like Charlemagne and Constantine, just like Solomon himself, she was consecrated with holy oil. So significant was this moment of anointing that the BBC deemed it too sacrosanct to be televised with the rest of the service.⁹⁴ She was invested with regalia: scepters, bracelets, swords, spurs, and orb, all with attendant exhortations. She sat in Edward the Confessor’s coronation chair and was crowned. As in the Roman triumph, the ceremony reached its climax with a sacrifice, here of Holy Communion rather than a sacrificial animal to Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Why did this moment matter? In a world forever changed, in a century when the yoke of history was so enthusiastically abandoned in so many instances and in so many moments across the globe, what purpose could this definitively *untimely* performance of history possibly serve? The bald political impetus for embodying history in this manner may be clear, but such an explanation is hopelessly shallow. By applying Nietzsche’s philosophy of history to the 1953 coronation, the complexity and significance of this historical moment can begin to be properly understood. Elizabeth II’s coronation is a triumph over Germany. In 1953, the British people declare their final victory and the symbolic end of World War II. This is a triumph of culture, of an ancient and religious form of government marching victorious over the momentary rise of a new and terrifying power: the embodiment of human evil in the form of the Nazis.

Monumental History and the English Coronation

The English coronation is, just as was Roman triumph, a practice of primarily monumental history. Just as the Romans drew on their own history to make a monumental statement about the status of Rome through the achievements of the *imperator*, of his continuation within a

⁹³ Percy Ernst Schramm, *A History of the English Coronation*, trans. Leopold G. Wickham Legg, MA (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1937), 1-10.

⁹⁴ Roy Strong *Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy*, (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005), XXXV-XXVII

monumental historical tradition of “beings who act and strive,” so too are the English deeply referential of their own monumental understanding of their history in the coronation. The ceremony of proclaiming the coronation at the traditional boundary of the city and the triumphal procession to Westminster abbey on the coronation day come together to reference the tradition of Roman triumph wherein the *triumphator* enters Rome victorious through the *Porta Triumphalis*. By framing the coronation with these elements of *romanitas*, the English are making a statement about their lineage, through monumental historic self-understanding, to the Romans. Within the coronation, the ceremony of anointing with holy oil is complemented by the choir, who sings “Zadok the Priest and Nathan the Prophet anointed Solomon King.”⁹⁵ These lines from the *Torah* make the statement of continuity with the Kingdom of Israel’s monumental past most explicit. The ceremony of crowning brings with it references to England’s own monumental history: the crowning takes place in St. Edward’s Chair, a reference not only to the monumental history of the English coronation, but to the traditional use of a throne in the older Anglo-Saxon installation ceremonies. The crowning is a monumental nod to the laurel wreath used in the

⁹⁵ The J. Arthur Rank Organisation, *A Queen is Crowned*, Film, Gaumont-Ralee Sound Recording System, 1953. Author’s Translation.



*King Harold in St. Edward's Chair during his coronation as depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry*⁹⁶

Roman triumph, the helmet used in the Anglo-Saxon installation ceremony, and the crown used by Solomon, Charlemagne, and Edgar alike. Once crowned, the new King or Queen ascends a dais to be enthroned. The dais recalls not only the *triumphator's* ascent of the Capitoline Hill but also the Anglo-Saxon king's mounting of the ancestral burial mound to be enthroned. In the English coronation ceremony, the influences of Ancient Rome, Ancient Israel, and England itself come together to send a polyvalent statement of monumental history.

The Monumental Mode in *Triumph des Willens* and *A Queen is Crowned*

The 1953 coronation is, however, unique in its use of monumental history, through the medium of film, to declare the victory of English tradition over Nazi "innovation." As was discussed in reference to the example of the British Museum in chapter one and throughout the tradition of Roman triumph in chapter two, Nietzsche's monumental mode is an extremely useful tool for an individual, a people, or a culture that seeks to accomplish something great. As

⁹⁶ *Detail of Harold's Coronation* Anonymous, Norman (circa 1077)

Nietzsche wrote, the monumental mode assures that “...greatness that once existed was in any event once *possible* and may thus be possible again.”⁹⁷ This is the mode of not only Great Britain in the centuries of their growth and expansion, but the rhetoric of the United States, as well. The architecture of Washington DC and the debates at the Constitutional Convention demonstrate the degree to which the founders of the United States were working within the monumental mode. Washington, Jefferson, and Adams all looked to the examples of the Greeks and Romans with monumental eyes as they sought to create their “more perfect union.” Did not, however, the Nazis also work within this mode? Was not National Socialism in Germany driven by a *monumental* understanding of German history? Romantic historians like Fichte, who put their faith in the depth and innateness of German *Kultur*, drew upon sources like Tacitus’ *Germania* to form a monumental sense of Germany’s past.⁹⁸ Nietzsche warned that “Monumental history deceives by analogies: with seductive similarities it inspires the courageous to foolhardiness and the inspired to fanaticism.”⁹⁹ Monumental history does indeed deceive by analogies, after all, Tacitus never went to *Germania*, and his “ethnography” of the Germanic peoples must be approached with healthy doses of antiquarian pedantry and critical dismissal in order to be a productive tool. There can be no greater examples of the kinds of “gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels” that Nietzsche imagined than the Nazis, and because the Nazis abused the monumental mode, the world bore witness to “empires destroyed, princes murdered, wars and revolutions launched and the number

⁹⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 69.

⁹⁸ Johann Gottlieb Fichte *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. Isaac Nakhimovsky (Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 2013), 15.

⁹⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 71.

of historical ‘effects in themselves’, that is to say, effects without sufficient cause, again augmented.”¹⁰⁰

How, then, do we differentiate between the use of monumental history by the Nazis and the use of monumental history by the British during the 1953 coronation? Comparative analysis of *Triumph des Willens* (Leni Riefenstahl’s propaganda film for Hitler) and *A Queen is Crowned* (the official recording of the 1953 coronation) demonstrates the differences in the employment of monumental history by the Germans and the British and elucidates the message of cultural triumph that Britain was sending through its use of monumental history in 1953. First, the similarities between the two films demonstrate the degree to which both films are working within the monumental mode:



Both films open with a focus on the land. In both England and Germany, the landscape and traditional architecture are emphasized. In *A Queen is Crowned*¹⁰¹, the narrator takes the viewer from the white cliffs of Dover through a tour of England, Scotland, and Ireland, focusing on traditional costume, architecture, and custom. In *Triumph des Willens*¹⁰², soaring music plays over a carefully orchestrated survey of Nuremberg from the sky.

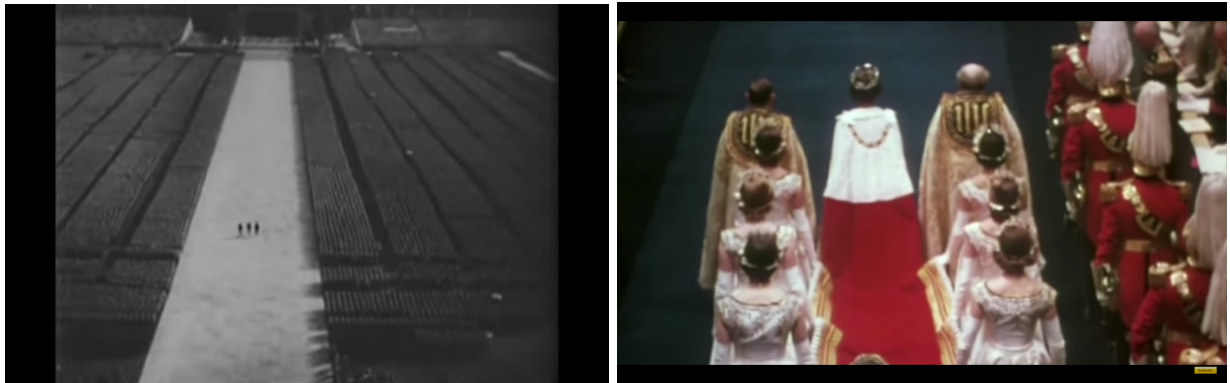
¹⁰⁰ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 71.

¹⁰¹ The J. Arthur Rank Organisation, *A Queen is Crowned*, Film, Gaumont-Ralee Sound Recording System, 1953. Author’s Translation.

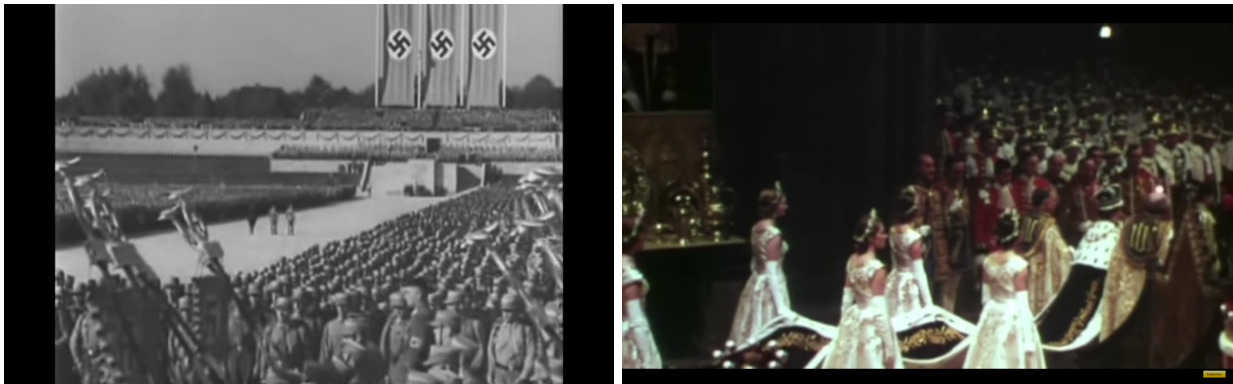
¹⁰² Leni Riefenstahl-Produktion, *Triumph des Willens*, Film, NSDAP Reichspropagandaleitung Hauptabt, 1935.



Both films feature the leader in a parade through the city streets in a version of a triumphal chariot. In both films, a focus on the visibility of the leader is highlighted.



Both films feature a solemn procession suffused with military iconography.



In both films, the leader emerges from a ceremonial procession of solemn memorial as a powerful leader of the present, the recessional march is an assertion of power through the use of history for life.



In both films, the leader's mandate to rule by the people is demonstrated with the performance of a Roman-style ovation. In the case of *Triumph des Willens*, the ovation comes from a stadium filled with young people at a Hitler Youth rally. In *A Queen is Crowned*, the ovation comes in the form of a teeming mass of subjects assembled in front of Buckingham Palace who shout "We want the Queen! We want the Queen" until she presents herself, after which they roar in acclamation and sing "Rule, Britannia! Britannia rule the waves! Britons never ever will be slaves," an anthem rich in Roman monumentalism, referencing not only the Latin name for Great Britain, but also the ancient tradition of citizenship so central to the Roman *ethos*



Both films end with an emphasis on the leader's embodiment of a kind of collective national power and conclude with a focus on the main symbol of their authority.

In Section 329 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche laments the utilitarian approach to existence of his contemporary society, writing:

Leisure and Idleness... “the breathless haste with which they (Americans) work – the distinctive vice of the new world – is already beginning to infect old Europe with its ferocity and is spreading a lack of spirituality like a blanket...The proof of this may be found in the universal demand for *gross obviousness* in all those situations in which human beings wish to be honest with each other for once—in their associations with friends, women, relatives, children, teachers, pupils, leaders, and princes: one no longer has time or energy for ceremonies, for being obliging in an indirect way, for *esperit* in conversation, and for any *otium*.¹⁰³

The power of this section hinges on the words: “in their associations with friends, women, relatives, children, teachers, pupils, leaders, and princes: one no longer has time or energy for

¹⁰³ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Gay Science with a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 329.

ceremonies, for being obliging in an indirect way, for *esperit* in conversation, and for any *otium*.” Here, Nietzsche is addressing the transactional way in which humans relate to one another. Alarming, Nietzsche suggests that the trend towards “gross obviousness” is gaining greater and greater power as time and energy for *ceremonies* wanes. The word “ceremonies” here encompasses a broad spectrum of meanings from the ritualistic pageantry of something like a military parade or a graduation to the ceremony of drinking a cup of tea, of the tradition and style entailed in doing something formally and indirectly. This lack of time and energy affects interactions on the person-to-person level but also seems to be decaying the entire hierarchy of society, blurring relation between laymen and superiors with gross obviousness—be it between pupil and teacher or subject and prince.

Nietzsche’s diagnosis in *The Gay Science* resonates with Germany during the rise of Hitler and is evocative of the accelerated rate of social change that happened throughout the western hemisphere after World War II. Consider the Europe of Nietzsche’s day: technological and economic expansion was rapidly undoing the last remaining vestiges of an ancient and agrarian society. Both in the United States and in Europe, common people were compelled to move to cities to seek access to the economic life of the state. As people from traditional cultures acculturated to urban life, the pattern of tradition and ceremony with which they had engaged with life hitherto either changed or fell by the wayside. In the United States, this rapid shift resulted in social movements like Temperance, which pitted rural, Protestant America against urban centers where immigration and industry were seen as working actively against older American customs and values.¹⁰⁴ In Germany, films like *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* and *Metropolis* echo the fear and lament in Nietzsche’s prognostications. Where, then, does the tremendous emphasis placed on ceremony in both *Triumph des Willens* and *A Queen is Crowned* come from? If both take place

¹⁰⁴ Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*, (New York: Scribner’s, 2011).

subsequent to the continuation of the trend Nietzsche identified in *The Gay Science*, it might stand to reason that the “gross obviousness” and lack of time and energy Nietzsche describes would only be greater in the audiences of the 1930’s and 1950’s. This seems plausible, but the makers of both of these films chose to place their greatest focus on ceremony and a traditional sense of cultural identity rooted deeply in history.

Why would they do this? In the the Germany of the 1930’s and the Great Britain of the 1950’s, society had reached the tipping point. The pace of change had grown too rapid and a despairing sense of the mechanization of human life was growing. A hunger for the historical and a yearning for the unhistorical became acute. This hunger and this yearning gave birth to a craving for the very *esperit* and *otium* manifest in the kinds of ceremonies that Nietzsche laments the loss of. By understanding the nature of the needs of society in this way, it is easy to understand the reason why the makers of these films focused on the ceremonies and traditions that they did. In the *Zwischenkriegzeit* (“between-the-wars time”)¹⁰⁵ the kind of mad rush captured in works like Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* created the desire on the part of society for the slowness of a monumental display of Germanness rooted in a historic understanding of cultural identity. In post-war Britain, in a period of rubble, turmoil, and crippling austerity, society craved the rich and ancient sense of cultural identity evoked in the way the 1953 coronation was portrayed on film.

An analysis of the differences in camera perspectives between *Triumph des Willens* and *A Queen is Crowned* offers perhaps the most compelling explication of the philosophical differences between the two films. The coronation is always filmed from a superhuman perspective. In the shots of the land that open the film and in the shots of the procession to and from Westminster Abbey, the camera is at a height a few feet above the height of an observer standing and looking

¹⁰⁵ Author’s Translation

at the landscape or taking in the ceremony along the parade route. Notably, the perspective is not high enough to have been shot from the upper story of a building or – as in *Triumph des Willens* – from the established perspective of Hitler’s plane. In the abbey itself, throughout the ceremony the camera’s perspective seems either to be coming from high above in the rafters or from the privileged perspective of the Queen herself or one of her family members or ministers. This perspective is most explicit at the end of the film when the vast crowd in front of Buckingham Palace is totally indistinct when viewed from the perspective of the Queen’s balcony.



In the opening procession, the Queen is shot from an angle that would be impossible for a normal person to view the ceremony from—this perspective from the rafters is omniscient and seems to be meant to evoke God’s view of the ceremony.



Two perspectives are offered throughout the film, the first being the “god perspective” demonstrated above, the second being this perspective from about 8-9 feet high. This is the same perspective used to shoot the triumphal procession and the landscape — slightly higher than body height but not yet fully from the perspective of someone a story or two above. This perspective offers the viewer the same omniscient perspective as the “god perspective” but with the greater details available at a closer range.



The “god perspective” offers the viewer access to parts of the ceremony that would have been invisible to the audience in the abbey. The Coronation Chair faces the high altar and is thus turned away from the audience in the nave. This perspective and access gives even greater evidence for

this being the “god perspective” because the rites in this part of the ceremony hold the greatest religious significance and are being performed intentionally towards the altar and not the people.



During the actual crowning, the filmmaker cuts between the two perspectives, coming closer to earth to view the details as the crown is raised and returning to the perspective of God once the crown has been placed on the Queen’s head indicating her ascendance to semi-divine status herself.



When the crowd is looked at through the camera, it is almost always from the perspective of the Queen. Note here at the end of the film how the crowd is looked at from the perspective of the Queen’s balcony—the people are an indistinct mass. No focus is made on individuals or faces as it is in *Triumph des Willens*.

In contrast to the distanced “god perspective” of the coronation, *Triumph des Willens* conveys a message about the popular appeal of Hitler by regularly using the perspective of an observer when positioning the camera and focusing on individual people, making a detailed documentary of their faces and expressions throughout the film. There are notable deviations from this, most particularly in the opening of the film when the viewer looks down on the landscape from the clouds. What makes this different from the “god perspective,” the hallmark of *A Queen is Crowned*, is that the viewer is very quickly notified through a series of crosscuts that one is viewing the land through the eyes of the *Führer*: the film begins with a look at the clouds, then the perspective breaks through the clouds to see the city in escalating detail (building up to formations of soldiers marching), then the viewer sees the plane, then the viewer sees Hitler himself smiling as he is greeted by the rapt crowds. Throughout the rest of the film, the vast majority of the shots are made from human level. Periodically, there is a deviation from this—as in the case of the homage to the wreath during one of the big ceremonies. In this scene the camera does circle around behind the audience and does look down on Hitler’s pilgrimage to the dais. While this is indeed an omniscient perspective, the director allows the viewer to see the camera being mechanically lowered down a tall tower. Being able to see the process returns the film to its populist perspective even while allowing the filmmaker to capture perspectives that are more omniscient. This same revelation of the *modus operandi* of the filmmaking occurs when the shadow of the plane is visible on the shots of the soldiers marching during the opening of the film. Through this artistic transparency, the viewer is given a sense of agency in the viewing experience that is not offered to the viewer of *A Queen is Crowned*.



When *Triumph des Willens* focuses on the crowd, the viewer is presented with the faces of individuals.



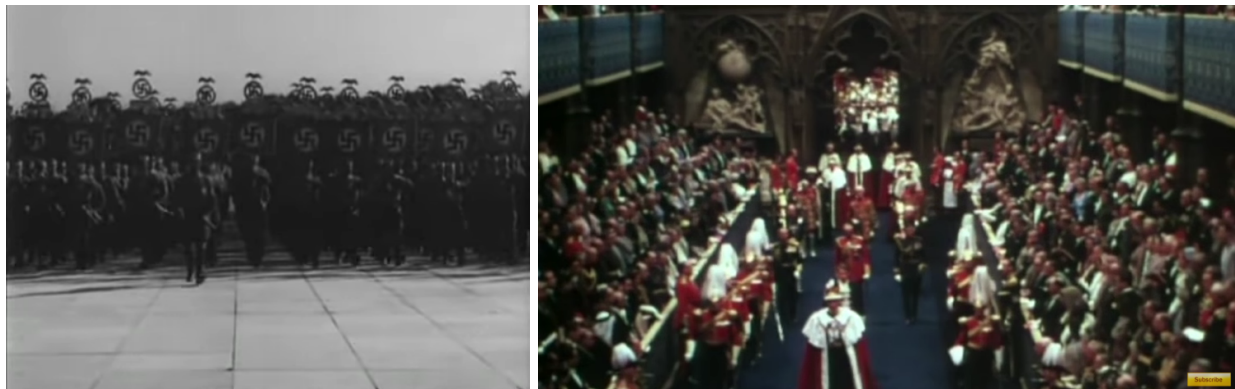
In these scenes, the modus operandi of the filmmaking is revealed—first in the camera that is offering the viewer the “god perspective” and in the shadow of the plane that reveals how the viewer is able to view the city from the “god perspective.”

These subtly divergent methods of conveying cultural identity through the monumental mode speak volumes about the message the two films are trying to convey. In *Triumph des Willens*, a consistently populist perspective is used to convey the popularity of Hitler as *the man*. In *A Queen is Crowned*, the ceremony of regime change is filmed from the omniscient “god perspective” and the viewer is further guided by an omniscient narrative voice. *A Queen is Crowned* uses *romanitas* to legitimize a new regime but is more focused on the ancientness of the

position of the sovereign and is far less invested in demonstrating the popularity of Elizabeth as the woman. From a visual perspective, the queen is shown more to be embodying the monumental history of her role than her unique charisma as a leader.



In *Triumph des Willens*, the leader is close at hand and viewed from an audience member's perspective while in *A Queen is Crowned*, the leader is shot from far away and from an unnaturally elevated perspective. Hitler gives a speech while Elizabeth simply presents herself and allows her position and status to speak for her.



In *Triumph des Willens*, the procession is shot from the perspective of standing right in the way of a uniform movement that will run you over if you don't get out of the way (recalling the shot of the train running over the camera in the opening sequence of *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*), while in *A Queen is Crowned*, the procession marches by while the viewer, aloft, can watch the ceremony of the performance of history roll by unharmed.

Beyond the way these two regimes demonstrate their legitimacy in terms of affiliation with a monumental past through the visual use of *romanitas*, there is a very important difference in the presence and absence of exhortations for the ruler to be held up to specific standards. In *Triumph des Willens*, the overwhelming focus purely on the popular mandate that Hitler should rule is never punctuated by rules or standards by which he should govern. In sharp contrast, the constitutional duties of the monarch are explicated through an elaborately embroidered liturgy during the coronation. Indeed, in Great Britain, the only time the sovereign ever makes a written contract with his or her people occurs during the coronation immediately prior to the ceremonies of anointing and crowning—the very ceremonies that extend divine authority and Roman *auctoritas* to the new King or Queen.¹⁰⁶ In the coronation, the ruler is not legitimate until he or she signs a contract to govern according to law and throughout the legitimizing ritual of crowning, related mandates are made by the Archbishop who performs the rites. By contrast, in *Triumph des Willens*, any exhortation is a version of the much broader statement that Hitler is *himself* Germany.



Even before the ceremony is displayed in *A Queen is Crowned*, the significance, historicity, and responsibility of the sovereign are explicated through the omniscient narrator's ekphrasis of the lectern and crown: "And on the lectern are inscribed these words: 'Attempt great things for God.' In the knowledge of the mystery of human life, this day's ceremony is performed, remembering

¹⁰⁶ Snagge, John. "The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Parts I-II". Spotify, 18 January 2013. Web. 15 April. 2016.

that in each moment of time is the imprint of eternity. In this wisdom in times precedent, a long line of kings and queens have been anointed here at Westminster, the church built by Edward the Confessor—saint and king. And they have been crowned with St. Edward’s crown, in which the gemmed and golden arches carry the golden globe and the cross with drops of pearl over the purple velvet cap of maintenance.” The Cap of Maintenance is a direct reference to Imperial Rome.

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Before making the compact with her people, Elizabeth goes through the rite of Recognition, wherein she goes to the north, east, south, and west corners of the dais, each time stopping and the Bishop announcing/asking the audience “I here present unto you Queen Elizabeth, your undoubted queen, wherefore all you who are come this day to do your homage and service—are you willing to do the same?” The audience enthusiastically calls back “God save Queen Elizabeth!” This is the medæval equivalent of an election, and although clearly there is no democracy at work in this rite there is still the implied option of the audience to shout “no!” No such option is given in *Triumph des Willens*.

¹⁰⁷ Paul Zanker *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 132-147.



Once the rite of Recognition is complete, the Queen makes a compact with her people. The Archbishop asks the Queen: “Madame, is your Majesty willing to take the oath?” Elizabeth responds “I am willing.” The Archbishop continues: “Do you solemnly promise and swear to govern the peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Pakistan, and of your possessions and territories to any of them belonging or pertaining according to their respective laws and customs?” Elizabeth responds “I solemnly promise so to do.” The Archbishop continues: “Will you to your power cause law and justice in mercy to be executed in all of your judgments?” Elizabeth responds: “I will.” The Archbishop continues: “Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant, Reformed Religion established by law? Will you preserve and maintain inviolable the settlement of the Church of England and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof as established in England and will you preserve unto the bishops and clergy of England all such rights and privileges as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them?” Elizabeth responds “All this I promise to do.”



Elizabeth then kneels before the altar, kisses a parchment copy of the oath, and signs it, saying “The things which I have here before promised I will perform and keep so help me God.” This is the most speaking she does in the entire coronation ceremony. She then returns to the Chair of Estate and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland comes to her, kneels, and presents her with a copy of the Bible. He exhorts to her, saying: “Our gracious Queen, to keep your majesty ever mindful of the law and the Gospel of God as the rule for the whole life and government of Christian princes, we present you with this book—the most valuable thing which the world affords. Here is wisdom, this is the royal law, these are the lively oracles of God.” In this part of the ceremony we move past the signing of the legal contract and move into the exhortation to rule according to community values.



In the first part of the coronation ritual, Elizabeth is disrobed and clothed in a plain white dress. For the first time she sits in the coronation chair and the omniscient narrator speaks, saying: “This is the moment of the anointing, the hallowing, a moment so old history can scarcely go deep enough to contain it...the Queen anointed, blessed, and consecrated.” As the narrator says this and the viewer watches Elizabeth sit for the first time in Edward the Confessor’s throne, the coronation anthem is sung “Zadok the Priest and Nathan the Prophet anointed solomon King and all the people rejoiced, saying ‘God save the King! Long live the King! May the King live forever!’” The omniscient narrator continues, saying “And as poetry and music speak deep meanings and little sound so now thoughts of virtue and history are lived in moments of short ceremony.” In this moment the new ruler is not so much Elizabeth the person but a manifestation of a monumental, ancient pattern of government that goes back to the Kingdom of Israel—she is being set forth as the inheritor of this tradition and the embodiment of the codified set of values and standards that go along with this: greatness was once possible and is thus possible again. Again, unlike in

Triumph des Willens, here the more significant focus is on the position of sovereign, not the individual being crowned.



Elizabeth is then presented with the Sword of Justice and the Archbishop exhorts: “Receive this kingly sword brought now from the altar of God and delivered unto you by the hands of the bishops and servants of God, though unworthy. With this sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans” Elizabeth then rises from the coronation chair and goes and offers the sword at the altar.



Elizabeth then returns to the Coronation Chair and is presented with the Bracelets of Sincerity and Wisdom. The Archbishop exhorts: “Receive the Bracelets of Sincerity and Wisdom, both as tokens of the Lord’s protection embracing you on every side and as symbols and pledges of the bond that unites you with your peoples to the end that you may be strengthened in all of your works and defended against all enemies—bodily and ghostly.” Here we see the beginning of the process wherein the sovereign is physically clothed with her obligations and expectations in much

the same way the *triumphator* was physically clothed in symbols of monumental history (such as Alexander the Great's cloak) before triumphing.



The process continues with Elizabeth being dressed in the Imperial Robe, during the ritual of enrobing the Archbishop exclaims “Receive this Imperial Robe. The Lord your God endue you with knowledge and wisdom, with majesty, and with power from on high. The Lord clothe you with the Robe of Righteousness and with the Garments of Salvation.” Here is an even more extreme manifestation of the process of physically clothing the leader with her expectations and duties. Elizabeth is wearing not just a symbol of authority but the poetic expressions of the lofty virtues—righteousness and salvation.



Elizabeth then ceremonially receives the remainder of the regalia. First she is given the orb, as the Archbishop exhorts: “Receive this orb set under the cross and remember that the whole world is subject to the power and empire of Christ our redeemer.” In this part of the ceremony a signal is given to a power that transcends her own: godly power. No mention of such divine *imperium* is made in *Triumph des Willens*. She then receives the Royal Sceptre, the Archbishop exclaiming “Receive the Royal Sceptre, the ensign of Kingly Power and Justice.” Next she received the Rod of Equity and Mercy, the Archbishop exhorting as he bestows it to her “Receive the Rod of Equity and Mercy—be so merciful that you be not too remiss, so execute justice that you forget not mercy, punish the wicked, protect and cherish the just.” Herein lie the final exhortations of the expectations of the sovereign before the crown itself is placed on Elizabeth’s head.



The Archbishop then places the crown on the Queen's head and exclaims "God crown you with a crown of glory and righteousness, that having a right faith and manifold proofs of good works you may attain an everlasting kingdom by the gift of Him whose kingdom endureth forever."



Once crowned, the Queen goes to the dais to be enthroned. In this moment, theologically, the sovereign ascends to the position of a demigod. Thus, she is ritualistically lifted into the throne by the clergy. The omniscient narrator says: “And the Queen goes in procession to be enthroned. Be strong and of a good courage, stand firm and hold fast from hence forth the seat and state of royal and imperial dignity which is this day delivered unto you. In the name and by the authority of Almighty God may wisdom and knowledge be the stability of your times and the fear of the Lord your treasure.” The ceremony is here complete, the new leader is put into power with an extensive host of expectations and exhortations set forth before the people. The ceremony in Westminster Abbey concludes with the sacrifice of Holy Communion then a triumphal procession back to Buckingham Palace, where the newly-crowned Queen presents herself for an ovation from her people.

In sharp contrast to this extensive religious liturgy establishing in detail the legally-binding expectations and conditions of the Queen’s right to rule, in *Triumph des Willens* no formal expectations of Hitler are established. Hitler is the *Führer* and his right to rule is supported

with no further explanation than his existence. This aspect of *Triumph des Willens* is most powerfully demonstrated in the final scene when the speaker exclaims “The Party is Hitler! But Hitler is Germany as Germany is Hitler! Hitler, *Sieg Heil!*”



Although the similarities in the use of the monumental mode in *Triumph des Willens* and *A Queen is Crowned* are indeed compelling, the subtle differences between the two films offer the clearest insight into the use of monumentalism by the English in 1953 to formulate a frame-by-frame response to *Triumph des Willens* and in doing so allow English tradition and culture to triumph over Nazi despotism. *Triumph des Willens* uses the perspective of an onlooker to evoke a message of overwhelming popular support for a new kind of leader who ostensibly captures the spirit of the people, who are rapt in his presence. In *A Queen is Crowned* a more omniscient “god perspective” is used to evoke a message of deep tradition and religious duty that serves to establish a new manifestation of an ancient kind of leadership.



A Queen is Crowned begins with the same focus on the landscape that ‘Triumph des Willens’ begins with, and frame-by-frame analysis of the two films beginning with the opening scene does suggest that the filmmakers in 1953 were referencing and responding to Riefenstahl’s propaganda film. The first of a number of even more overt references to World War II begins at the end of the triumphal procession to Westminster Abbey, when the camera begins to look inside the abbey and the omniscient narrator references the Battle of Britain and the *Blitzkrieg*, saying: “...those 63 squadrons who fought the Battle of Britain, their badges all recorded here in the colors of the glass against the sky they defended.”



At the midway point of *A Queen is Crowned*, the coronation ceremony is complete and the triumph of culture begins in earnest. Elizabeth emerges in her full royal regalia, wearing a purple velvet robe trimmed in a gold laurel garland. She carries in one hand the Royal Sceptre and bears in the other hand the Orb symbolizing Christian dominion over the globe. The triumphant iconography of this moment is overwhelming, and marks Elizabeth's emergence into, as the narrator puts it, "the London that awaits to receive her."



An international assemblage of troops, representing all branches of the British Military, is then focused on through a series of pans and shots. In the same way that the triumphantor's troops marched with him during his triumphal procession, representatives from all branches of the Queen's military are represented in the triumphal march back to Buckingham Palace. In the triumphal procession to Westminster Abbey, the focus is on the Queen, the Royal Family, and the crowds along the parade route. It is only after the coronation is over that this lengthy filmic focus on armed troops is made. In thinking of this moment as a triumph of culture, then, it would seem that the ritual of regime change is the precipitating cause of the triumph. Winning the war from a

purely military standpoint did not result in this triumph. Installing a new sovereign according to the ancient custom and having on the throne a young Queen are the moment when British culture defeats the culture of Nazism. The filmmakers of 'A Queen is Crowned' draw on the monumentalism in the ceremony and seek out the iconography of a Roman triumph in the military parade that comprises the second half of the film to make this statement.



The triumphal procession back to Buckingham palace begins with the Queen Mother, a living symbol of Britain's endurance during World War II. The public roars in applause as she appears and enters her chariot. Shots of her exiting the Abbey and entering the coach are interspersed with shots of the marching soldiers—a cogent assertion of military and cultural dominance.

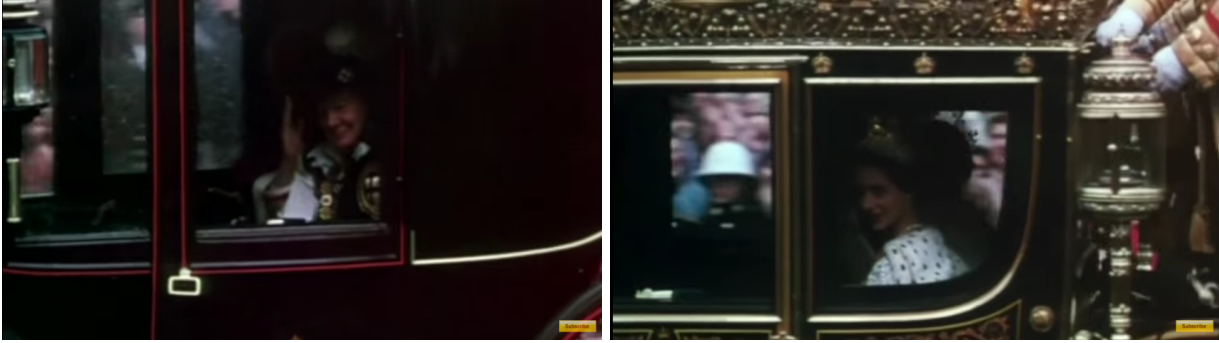


Shots alternate between different branches of the British Military. The shots build up to the Royal Navy, the omniscient narrator declares them to be “still guardians of those ocean waves secured by Drake and Nelson.” The military music breaks into the Grenadier march and the camera pans to the British Grenadiers, Britain’s most elite military force, marching in procession to their march, whose lines read “Some talk of Alexander, and some of Hercules / Of Hector and Lysander, and such great names as these. / But of all the world's great heroes, there's none that can compare / With a tow, row, row, row, row, row, to the British Grenadiers. / Those heroes of antiquity ne'er saw a cannon ball, / Or knew the force of powder to slay their foes withal. / But our brave boys do know it, and banish all their fears, /With a tow, row, row, row, row, row, for the British Grenadiers.” Here, the viewer is presented with an explicit exertion of modern military power suffused with monumental allusions to Britain’s lineage with Ancient military powers.



Immediately following the triumphal march of the Grenadiers, the omniscient narrator announces “Their Highnesses, the Colonial Rulers.” The camera pans over the open coaches of the foreign rulers of the commonwealth nations who came to London to pledge their loyalty during the coronation. This moment recalls and references the display of captured foreign rulers being carried off to execution in a Roman triumph. Instead of being sacrificed in ‘A Queen is Crowned,’ this portrayal of foreign rulers serves to demonstrate the scope of British *imperium* and (falsely) asserts that the Empire is alive and well. Just as in Ancient Rome, in 1953 the exotic stirs the excitement of the crowd—The Queen of Tonga (upper left) was one of the most popular figures in the public’s reception of the coronation.”¹⁰⁸

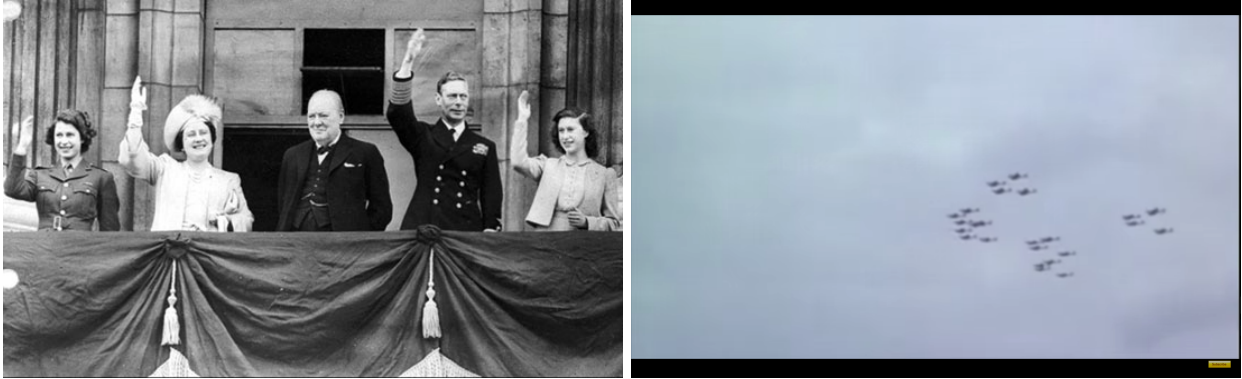
¹⁰⁸ The J. Arthur Rank Organisation, *A Queen is Crowned*, Film, Gaumont-Ralee Sound Recording System, 1953. Author’s Translation.



In the same way that a Roman triumph would have featured the imperator's family, the entire senate, and the whole corpus of Roman magistrates, the triumph of culture that comprises the second half of 'A Queen is Crowned' features the major leaders of the British government in parade back to Buckingham Palace. Winston Churchill, bearing with his presence rich wartime significance (left) and Princess Margaret, bearing with her the promise of heirs to the throne (right) are subjects of special focus in the film.



The triumphal procession, the "triumph of culture," concludes at Buckingham Palace. The new Queen presents herself on the balcony and the crowd of subjects below roars its ovation.



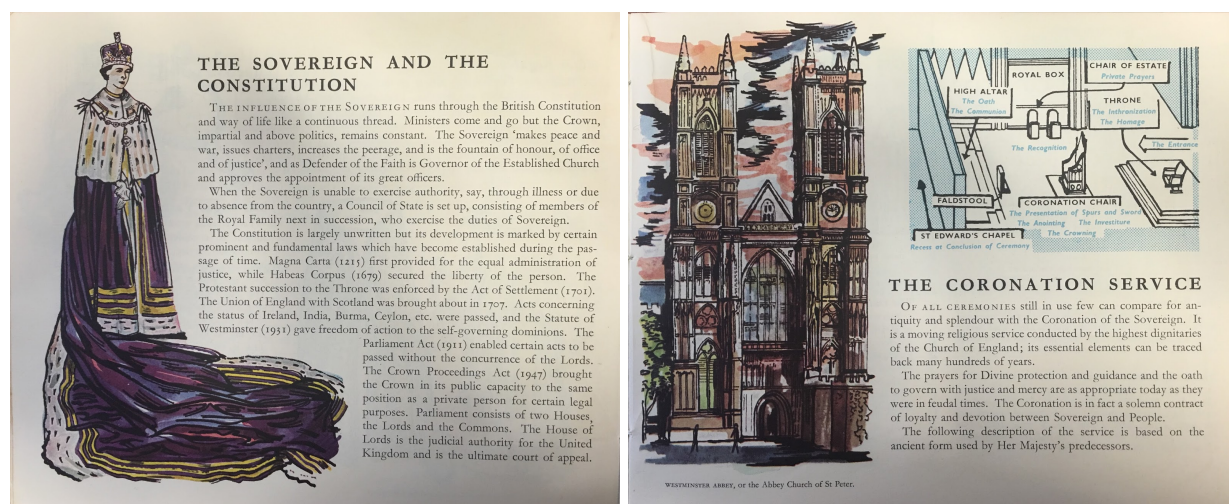
The balcony of Buckingham Palace has a symbolic significance from World War II (pictured upper left the Royal Family celebrates the military victory ending World War II), the prominent focus on the ovation happening on this balcony followed by a demonstration of British airborne military power. This closely paired imagery works together to make a clear declaration of triumphal victory.



The film concludes with a final reference to British airborne military might and monumental history – ER – *Elizabeth Regina* (Queen Elizabeth in Latin) is spelled out with fighter planes.

Antiquarian and Critical History in the 1953 Coronation

The English coronation is an act of monumental history, but what makes the English usage of the monumental mode in 1953 different from the use of monumentalism by the Nazis is the degree to which the British balance their monumental understanding of history with the antiquarian and critical modes. *A Queen is Crowned* is, like the passages from ancient authors used to analyze Roman triumph, a cultural artifact. The film does not convey the totality of contemporary thought on the coronation any more than Orosius, Livy, or Josephus capture the totality of Roman thought on the tradition of triumph. What *A Queen is Crowned* offers is an official representation of the coronation as the British political establishment wished it to be seen. The presence, explicit and implicit, of the antiquarian preserving and revering and critical suffering and deliverance-seeking in the film are deeply significant.

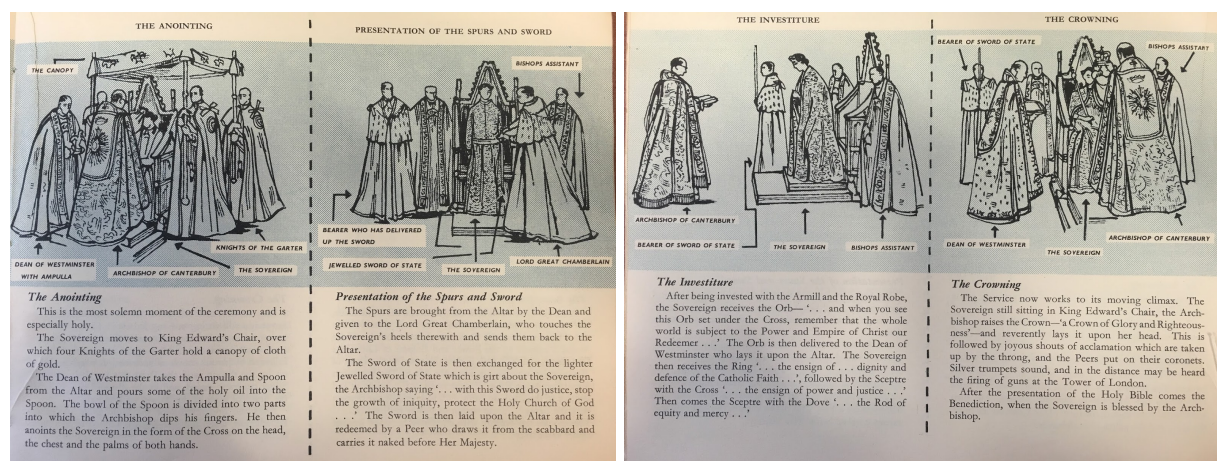


Inexpensive guidebooks outlining the history and practice of the coronation appeared in mass markets around the globe from 1952-1953. These pages from 'The Book of the Coronation' give a brief description of the sovereign's constitutional powers and then proceed into an outline of the coronation service. The presence of these cultural artifacts speak to the public's antiquarian fascination with the coronation service in 1953¹⁰⁹

In the film, the antiquarian mode is exemplified most explicitly when the narrator makes a survey of the inside of the Abbey. The omniscient voice admires the banners high up in the Henry

¹⁰⁹ Francis Hunt and Alan Lindsay *The Book of the Coronation*, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1953).

VII chapel, explaining what the figures of chivalry mean, in doing so preserving that knowledge for future generations. The voice moves its focus to the communion vessels and coronation regalia, noting their significance with reverence. The ceremony itself embodies the antiquarian mode. St. Edward's Chair is a badly battered, damaged, and dilapidated piece of furniture that houses the Stone of Scone...the rock that Joseph was alleged to have rested his head on when he saw his vision of angels ascending and descending from heaven. Why else would a ceremony that is all about style and sumptuousness accommodate such a relic as the center of attention other than an antiquarian insistence on the following of tradition. What place could a dubious religious artifact like the Stone of Scone have in a post-enlightenment government ceremony other than as an embodiment of Antiquarian preserving and revering?



Further along in *The Book of the Coronation*, the major parts of the coronation ritual are unpacked, their significance laid out in antiquarian detail.¹¹⁰

The very existence of *A Queen is Crowned* is evidence of the critical mode at work. A century earlier, it would have been unthinkable for public eyes to gaze upon the privileged event happening inside Westminster Abbey. Not only was the ceremony itself sacred, but the mystique of the monarchy was one of its most powerful defenses. With the advent of technology, the practice of privacy was brought before the tribunal and condemned. Even the Archbishop of

¹¹⁰ Francis Hunt and Alan Lindsay *The Book of the Coronation*, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1953).

Canterbury couldn't stop the newsreel cameras from recording parts of Elizabeth's father's coronation in the 1930's. By the time the coronation in 1953 came, there was no stopping the televising of the ceremony and the making of a feature-length film of the coronation day's events. Indeed, if we are to follow the strong parallels between *Triumph des Willens* and *A Queen is Crowned* to the conclusion that the official recording of Elizabeth II's coronation was a declaration of the triumph of British culture over Nazism, then the critical mode was not only inevitable but invited by the British establishment as a tool to be used in national promotion. Fighter jets flying overhead signal another critical element—juxtaposing themselves against the ancient regalia and creaking gilded coaches. However, just as the antiquarian streak of using such things is balanced with the critical introduction of bracingly modern technology, so too is the critical streak of modern technology moderated by the intense spirit of historical monumentalism embodied by the totality of the day's proceedings.

Triumph des Willens is a cultural artifact indicative of the Nazis overwhelming abuse of history. The film, just like the Nazi movement, subscribes to an unquestioned monumental understanding of German history. At no point is the monumental rhetoric of *Triumph des Willens* balanced or complemented by an antiquarian interest in facts and figures. In the same way, the Nazi ideology, rooted in a romanticized understanding of the German past, was never problematized by a serious antiquarian look at the ancient sources that formed the basis of their self-understanding. Hitler rides in a plane and a car in *Triumph des Willens*, the tradition of carriage-riding was brought before the tribunal and condemned. When he speaks, he screams into a microphone—another casualty of the critical tribunal. But was something essential lost in the way the German people related to their “prince?” Is not the ceremony, otium, and esperit that Nietzsche laments the loss of in *The Gay Science* glaringly absent in the way Hitler conducts himself in *Triumph des Willens*? Yes, ceremonies are the central focus of the film, but unlike in *A*

Queen is Crowned, in *Triumph des Willens* the ceremonies are stripped of all of their cherished “dilapidated furniture” – both literally and metaphorically. The loss of such tradition, rooted in antiquarian preservation and reverence, leads to the unchecked excesses of the monumental and critical modes. In the case of the Nazis, the abuse resulting from this imbalance had profound, atrocious, and lasting consequences.

Coronation and the Unhistorical

If the proposition that Nietzsche invited his readers to meditate on was that “*the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal proportion for the health of an individual, of a people and of a culture,*”, then, as with the Roman triumph, the English coronation offers the example of a cultural practice that achieves the kind of balance that Nietzsche discusses.¹¹¹ A coronation is always a generative moment in the life of English culture. “The old king is dead, long live the king” is the mantra of the tradition. Close on the heels of the passing away of an old regime comes the moment of installing the leader of the future through the use of history in the service of life. The death of George VI in 1952 marked the end of a political establishment that had sustained Great Britain through the most dangerous and world-changing wars in global history. Just as cultural commentators observed upon the death of Winston Churchill in 1965, the loss of George VI brought out the wounds and weight of a recent, traumatic cultural history.¹¹² The moment of death is the moment of history, but the ascension of the heir is the moment of *unhistorical action*.

When Elizabeth II was crowned a year after her father’s death, the historical and the unhistorical came together in equal proportion for Elizabeth the person, the English as a people, and the West as a culture. The ceremony used history not only to foster a new regime that would

¹¹¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63.

¹¹² The British Broadcasting Company, “The Two Winstons” in *A History of Britain* (Series 3), Film, 2002.

serve the future, but to make the statement that the sufferings of the past were finally over. History was used in 1953 to stage a symbolic triumph over the culture of dictatorship and despotism under the guise of newness and personality. The ancient customs, artifacts, and ceremonies were rolled out in 1953 to serve the unhistorical need for closure. The historical pageant was staged as much to bring about this closure as it was performed as a warning to the rising Soviet Union that the western hemisphere was healthy and facing the future with the *auctoritas* of the Roman world in the twentieth century in the same way that Charlemagne made the same statement when the pope crossed the alps to extend to him divine authority and the historically-rooted legitimization of traditional Roman *imperium*.

In ancient Rome, the most symbolically important element of the imperial regalia was the Cap of Liberty.¹¹³ It fixates in the reverse of a coin celebrating the assassination of Julius Caesar. It represents Rome's emergence from the tyranny of the era of the kingdom and Roman civilization's arrival at democracy. The gemmed and golden arches of Elizabeth II's crown house the purple velvet cap of *maintenance*. This difference seems at first troubling. Why do the English privilege the virtue of maintenance over the more egalitarian and more *Roman* virtue of liberty? The purple velvet cap of maintenance captures the spirit of the balance of the historical and the unhistorical in the 1953 coronation. The traditional values, with their attendant ceremonies, *otium*, and *esperit*, have emerged victorious after a new and dangerous force threatened to wipe them all out completely. *Maintenance*, as a virtue, captures the spirit of the British who in 1953 dusted the ashes off the the crown, sceptres, and imperial robes and boldly used history in the service of building a better future, of fulfilling the wish sighed by the omniscient narrator during the ceremony of enthronement that wisdom and knowledge would come to be the stability of the new Queen's times, and in this unhistorical moment, use history to heal old wounds.

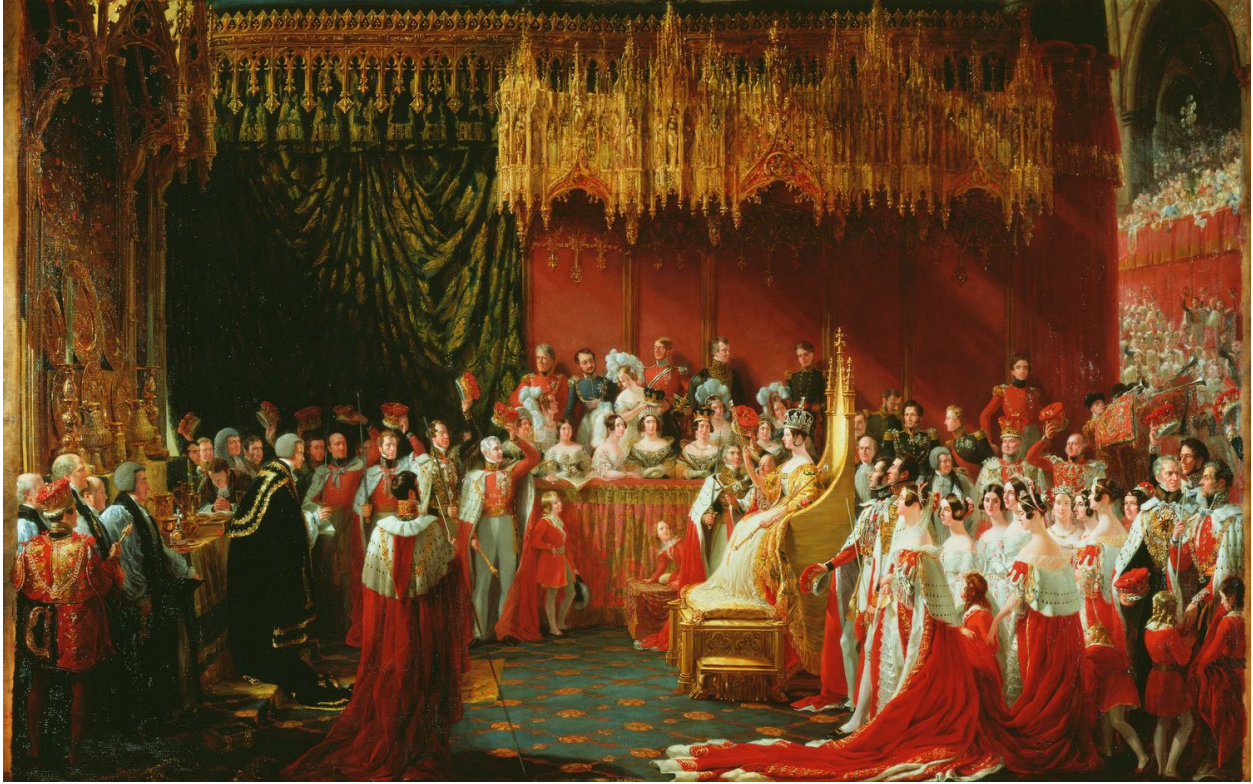
¹¹³ Paul Zanker *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 132-147.

1953: A Suprahistorical Coronation

Not every English coronation has balanced the unhistorical and historical in such a significant way. Indeed, not every coronation marked the beginning of a new era full of hope. Many coronations represented the continuation of an old, corrupted regime. At certain moments, bright hopes were fostered through the balancing of the unhistorical and the historical in the interest of serving the future. A cherished legend holds that when Elizabeth I was told she had succeeded to the throne, she was sitting under an ancient oak tree at Hatfield House. The tradition holds that the first words out of her mouth, in Latin, were “*a Dominum factum est istud et hoc mirabile in oculis nostris* — This is the Lord’s doing and it is *marvelous* in our eyes.”¹¹⁴ The moment was indeed marvelous, Elizabeth escaped the wreckage of a treacherous court and an unfathomably dysfunctional family to preside over a true golden era—the Age of Elizabeth, the final shunning of the Dark Ages, and the irreversible arrival of both the Renaissance and the Reformation in England. When the monarchy was restored after Cromwell’s reign of terror, the people rejoiced and saw in their new king the embodiment of traditional English virtues, of English history, employed to move the nation into a brighter future. Queen Victoria’s coronation captured the popular imagination, her public image of purity, youth, and vigour standing in startling contrast to the hopelessly impure, aged, and decrepit dynasty of the Georgian kings.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Author’s Translation

¹¹⁵ The British Broadcasting Company, “Victoria and her Sisters” in *A History of Britain* (Series 3), Film, 2002.



This 1838 painting of the coronation of Queen Victoria demonstrates Victoria's youth and purity by the contrast of her resplendence and whiteness in contrast to the surrounding crimson¹¹⁶

These moments represent a balancing of the unhistorical and the historical, but they do not represent truly *suprahistorical* moments of insight. Again, Nietzsche writes that “If, in a sufficient number of cases, one could scent out and retrospectively breathe (the) unhistorical atmosphere within which every great historical event has taken place, he might, as a percipient being, raise himself to a *suprahistorical* vantage point.”¹¹⁷ In the whole of English history, the English people achieved the kind of *suprahistorical* vantage point only twice. In 973, when Edgar breathed in the ancient weight of Roman history, craved true *imperium* for his kingdom, and declared England the inheritor of *romanitas* by having himself anointed and crowned, he captured the *suprahistorical* spirit. Edgar breathed in the unhistorical moment for which he had spent a

¹¹⁶ *The Coronation of Queen Victoria, 28 June 1838* Sir George Hayter (1838)

¹¹⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1997), 64-65.

lifetime preparing and stood firmly in the suprahistorical vantage point, imagined his nation's place in the monumental tradition, revered with antiquarian passion his culture's past, but brought before the tribunal the vestiges of barbarism that separated his kingdom from true, lasting, consolidated, Roman-style power. In 1953, the English breathed in the air of the brave new world they found themselves in, choked on the unhistorical rubble, came with trepidation to the uncertainty of a political transition and used this sense of the unhistorical to stand in the *suprahistorical* vantage point, understanding that their unprecedented times were precisely the kind of moment that all great historical events spring forth from. In the 1953 coronation, history was not only used to serve life in the interest of fostering a brighter future. The critical act was the use of history, through the medium of film, to ride in triumph over civilization's defeated enemy. The 1953 coronation draws on a 1000-year English tradition and a deeper 2500-year old Roman tradition to declare the survival and future growth of western civilization in the form of English culture. Nietzsche may have sighed and written off the suprahistorical beings, leaving them to their nausea and wisdom, but the beauty of what happened on that fateful day in the summer of 1953 is that the act of honouring the process and the prejudiced progress that Nietzsche does rejoice in was able to coexist for a brilliant moment in time with Suprahistorical wisdom. Occasionally—and only occasionally—the many elements of Nietzsche's philosophy come together in a spectacle that is positively contagious in the simultaneous wisdom and unwisdom of its optimism.

CONCLUSION

Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!
Triumph! Triumph! Triumph!

In this work, I have explored the philosophy of history that Nietzsche sets forth in his second *Untimely Meditation*, analyzing the way that the monumental, antiquarian, and critical modes couple with the unhistorical to lead to a *suprahistorical* vantage point in the related historical traditions of the Roman triumph and the English coronation. I have argued that the collective elements of the Roman triumph come together to offer the inheritors of Roman history the kind of *suprahistorical vantage point* that Nietzsche identifies as the loftiest outcome of the practice of history in the service of life. Through comparative analysis of the tradition of the English coronation as it was portrayed in *A Queen is Crowned* against the propagandistic message of *Triumph des Willens*, I have demonstrated the degree to which the British political establishment operated within the *suprahistorical vantage point* to declare, through the use of history, a triumph of culture over the Nazi's triumph of will.

One glaring fact remains unaddressed: Nietzsche himself provides no concrete examples of what he would see as an ideal practice of history—in the second *Untimely Meditation* or elsewhere in his extant writings. A plausible counterargument to my thesis that triumph and coronation achieve the balance of the unhistorical and the historical and in doing so represent arrivals at *suprahistorical* vantage points might center upon Nietzsche's radio silence. Are we to assume that Nietzsche would endorse triumph or coronation? Would he see in these traditions the kind of rich interconnectedness that I have identified in this work? Would he agree with my appraisal of the ways that the monumental, antiquarian, and critical modes operate within triumph and coronation that has been propounded in defense of the thesis that both traditions lead to a form of super-historicity?

In defense of my thesis, I would assert in no uncertain terms that this work is not intended as an endorsement of the Romans and their triumphs nor is it a celebration of the British Empire, Christianity, or the tradition of the English coronation. Through the many fascinating elements of the Roman triumph, the tradition must always already be understood as an unabashed celebration of murder, conquest, and imperialism. The British Empire subjugated much of the world's population while the track record of Christendom can be most easily read as a violent and oppressive blight on human civilization. The coronation service that prides itself on its representation of both of these forces, though beautiful, must be handled with the utmost caution lest it fall into the hands of gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels. The Roman triumph and the English coronation are human things, in which, as Nietzsche wrote: "human violence and weakness have always played a mighty role."

Rather than as an endorsements of these traditions, I have written about the Roman triumph and the English coronation because they represent insightful microcosms of Nietzsche's philosophy of history at work. By analyzing the ways that the philosophy of history that Nietzsche sets forth in his second *Untimely Meditation* work within the traditions of Roman triumph and English coronation, we can begin to better understand the way that a balanced historical self-understanding aids us as historic beings in our yearning pursuit of that unhistoric air in which all great deeds are born. The Romans practiced history in the manner Nietzsche describes long before he meditated, and it can be assumed that no one in the British political establishment was using *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* as a guidebook when the 1953 coronation was planned. This lack of direct application speaks to how deeply Nietzsche's philosophy reflects our human, *all too human*, tendencies. By understanding the two traditions in their collective three thousand year continuum, we can begin to understand the unconscious, universal, human need that is represented in their manifestation. We humans, we historic beings,

yearn for the unhistoric future. When we triumph and when we crown, we see in that moment the eternally-recurrent process of bearing with us the weight of the past as we venture forward into those unhistoric moments ever unfolding before us. May our historical sense be ever balanced, and may that weight of history that we carry be shouldered always and only in the service of life.

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