Carpento certe: Conveying Gender in Roman Transportation

This article analyzes the prominent role played by a particular vehicle, the matronly carriage (carpentum), in the construction of Roman gender. Its focus is on the conveyance’s two most significant appearances in literary representation. First, I examine the various accounts of the vehicle’s best-known and most dramatic tableau, Tullia’s use of a carpentum to drive over her dead father king Servius Tullius’ body, arguing that the conveyance functions to articulate the cultural anxiety surrounding the passage from daughter to wife. I suggest that the story of Tullia’s carpentum, as a quasi-mythic exemplum of “feminine transportation,” looms as a dangerous threat in need of accommodation. Next, I examine the story of the Roman matrons’ demonstration in favor of the repeal of the lex Oppia, which had prohibited, among other things, their right to ride in carpenta. I argue that the accounts of Livy and others seek to offer a solution to the challenge posed by the physically protesting women by redefining their vehicular mobility as state-authorized, and as directly tied to their reproductive function. Thus, while Latin literature often articulates urban traffic as a familiarly frustrating system of obstacles, my analysis uncovers a contrasting Roman discourse, one that identifies traffic with the fertility of the city and its ability to reproduce Roman citizens.

In his third satire, Juvenal has his friend Umbricius mouth a lengthy tirade on the crushing burdens of urban life, before departing for good from the ancient world’s biggest metropolis. Umbricius can barely move in Rome’s overpopulated, congested streets, so he’s moving on, away, out to the still countryside. Eundum est is one of his final phrases in the poem, as he climbs aboard his carriage (raeda) piled with a household’s worth of stuff in the closing lines: “Time to go.” The hub of Umbricius’ ecstatic catalogue of grievances is his vivid portrait of a Roman traffic

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jam, a back-up so lengthy that it actually takes shape before sun-up, in the middle of
the night, interrupting the sleep of all but the most wealthy and insulated:

nam quae meritoria somnum
admittunt? magnis opibus dormitur in urbe.
inde caput morbi. raedarum transitus arto
uicorum in flexu et stantis conuicia mandrae
eripient somnum Druso uitusique marinis.
si uocat officium, turba cedente uehetur
diues et ingenti curret super ora Liburna
atque obiter leget aut scribet uel dormiet intus;
namque facit somnum clausa lectica fenestra.
ante tamen ueniet: nobis properantibus obstat
unda prior, magno populus premit agmine lumbos
qui sequitur; ferit hic cubito, ferit assere duro
alter, at hic tignum capiti incutit, ille metretam.
ingua crura luto, planta uox undique magna
calcor, et in digito clauus mihi militis haeret.

scinduntur tunicae sartae modo, longa coruscat
serraco ueniente abies, atque altera pinum
plaustra uehunt; nutant alte populoque minantur.
nam si procubuit qui saxa Ligustica portat
axis et euersum fudit super agmina montem,
quid superest de corporibus? quis membra, quis ossa
inuenit? obtritum uolgi perit omne cadauer
more animae.

Which apartments let you rest, anyway? It takes a lot of money to get to sleep
in Rome. That’s the source of the malady: the Infernal City, the Big Grapple
(inde caput morbi). The constant traffic of carriages in the narrow twisting
streets, and the swearing of the driver when his herd stops, would wake up
even Claudius, or seals! If duty calls, the crowd gives way as the rich man
is carried on through, flying along in his giant litter (Liburnian galley), read-
ning or writing all the way, or sleeping inside—you know how a litter with its
window closed lets you nap. And yet he’ll arrive first. But as I try to hurry
along, the wave ahead of me blocks my path and the massed ranks of people
behind crush my kidneys; one fellow hits me with his elbow; another with a
hard litter pole; this guy bangs my head with a beam, that guy with a cask of
wine. My legs are thick with mud. Before long I’m trampled by huge feet
from every side and a soldier’s hobnail sticks in my toe. . . . Tunics just
mended are torn. A long fir log looms as its wagon steers closer and another
cart hauls a whole pine trunk: they sway threateningly, high above the
crowds. What if the axle that’s bearing boulders from Liguria collapses and
dumps an overturned mountain onto the lines of people—what will be left of the bodies? Who will be able to find any limbs, or bones? Each corpse, smashed indiscriminately, will disappear, just like its soul.1

In this passage, Juvenal surrounds Umbricius on all sides with such a fantastic pile-up of obstacles that the entire clog seems expressly designed to hold him up, alone, especially—and really no one else. If mobility is a vital ingredient to identity—and precisely how one walked or rode or drove mattered to Romans—then being prevented from advancing is symbolic death.2 The hysterically mock-epic scenario of the collapsing timber and stone loads seems at first glance to have merely a generic thrust. The somber gravity of set-piece Tree-Felling is well worn in epic narrative, so one take-away must be that satire is the rear-end (or rear-ending) of epic, the place where all the once-lofty timber of Homer and Virgil ends up: on trucks on the backed-up off-ramp. That Juvenal has in fact recycled some Aeneid tree material here—metric scrap-metal for his satirical junkyard—is certainly corroborating.3 But surely a weightier point is being made, about the potentially terrifying claustrophobia induced by a traffic jam, and the loss of agency thereby carried out by it. Amidst the tightly packed conglomeration of mass immobility, how can one properly be said to have limbs—bodies—souls?

Juvenal’s conception of urban traffic as an unintended system of blockage—the breakdown of mobility—while intricately expressed, is nevertheless relatively familiar. It is a well-known locus for “the urban experience” in antiquity and portrays an attitude reminiscent of modern ideas of gridlock-induced road rage. What is less often reflected upon is the conspicuous absence of any female participants in this mass standstill, an absence, moreover, that is by no means unusual in Roman literature. The following discussion attempts to remedy that significant omission and to recover a contrasting discourse of Roman traffic, by focusing on several prominent scenes involving Roman women and transportation.

What do Roman women drive? Or rather, do they drive—or ride—at all? Except for some brief glimpses of litter-bound ladies and a handful of goddess-piloted chariots, Latin literature scarcely imagines women at the reins, or even brought along for the ride. The better known examples stand out precisely because their authors have made them stand out: Ovid and Propertius certainly play Corinna and Cynthia plying the reins themselves (ipsae) for shock value.4 But, exceptional adynata aside, Roman

1. 3.234–61. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
3. Courtney 1980: 188, sees Aen. 6.262–29 looming behind these lines. Braund 1996: 218 adds Aen. 6.179–82 and 11.135–38 to the heap (see also Braund 1989: 35 with n.24 for a fuller picture of the whole scene’s mock-epic-ness). Plaustrum and serracum are the lowliest of vehicles. On the latter, Quintilian (8.3.21), in a section arguing in favor of the occasional lowering of register, quotes with approval Cicero’s disparaging cum tibi tota cognatio serraco audehatur (when all your relatives are carried on a serracum,” in Pis. Fr. 16 Nisbet). In a characteristic demonstration of the ethics of diction—the unclean thing being made to stain its word’s image—the rhetorical instructor terms serracum a sordidum nomen.
women’s apparent immobility in literary texts has to be striking, especially given that Roman women no doubt did actually circulate in vehicles on Roman roads. Modern accounts have stressed the relative independence and freedom of (affluent) Roman women, in dramatic contrast to, say, fifth-century Athenian society, in which wives and daughters were supposedly locked away at home.5

As a way of coming to terms with how female vehicular mobility is articulated in Roman culture, it will be worthwhile to dwell on several of the instances in which riding women are not passed over in awkward silence: the centerpiece of this article will be the one conveyance that, our texts continually remind us, was explicitly granted for use by women. It is striking that Roman culture constantly holds vehicular transport at arm’s length—seemingly anxious about both the excessive power it can accord drivers and the softening vulnerability it brings about in its passengers. If male passengers are already so easily lambasted for getting too comfortable while on the road—thus transforming transit from a space to pass through into a place to dwell in—then the carpentum, the female vehicle par excellence, effects even greater discomfort in the eyes of Roman viewers. For, as we shall see, women in carpenta are either too dominant and threatening: too unlike women; or too soft and luxurious: too much themselves. Or else, often, they are somehow both of these things at once.

The carpentum was a two-wheeled horse- or mule-drawn carriage, thought by Romans to be one of their most ancient vehicles.6 Apparently Celtic in origin (as its etymology suggests), it possessed a special status as the vehicle granted for use by matrons in the city during the republic, as well as by certain female members of the imperial family during the principate. The carpentum is ancient and sanctioned, repeatedly located in official contexts, and frequently represented on coinage. Thus it is a state-sponsored product, specially built for looking at, like the triumphal chariot, but which women can never really drive with innocence. A paradoxical vehicle, then, the carpentum officially licenses women to drive while simultaneously facilitating their reckless misbehavior. This privilege apparently accessible only to prominent Roman women, so our texts have it, is almost never not abused dramatically. This is, according to Roman literature, the irresolvable dilemma posed by the idea of mobile women.7

5. Note, however, that Athens seems to have been particularly extreme among Greeks in the restrictions it imposed on women. Compare, for example, Nausicaa’s use of her father’s ἄπηνη in Odyssey 6 (not to mention Medea’s of hers in Argonautica 3), which still must have stood out as marked. Goddesses do not appear to have been limited in their use of chariots.

6. For general accounts, see Daremberg-Saglio, “carpentum” (E. Saglio), Cagiano de Azevedo 1938: 7–19, and Pisani Sartorio 1988: 51–54. Pagnotta 1977–8 is a more detailed historical survey of the literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence. While the focus here will be only on carpenta, it is part of a wider ongoing project to map and analyze the entire Roman vehicular lexicon.

7. The carpentum appears as the vehicle of choice for women represented as especially powerful or dominant. Livy’s Lucumo (soon to be Tarquinus Priscus) rides alongside his wife Tanaquil in the carpentum used by the two to move to Rome (1.34). When an eagle snatches Lucumo’s hat, flies off, and puts it back on his head, it is Tanaquil who interprets the omen (and goes on to play an active role in the installation of two Roman kings). Compare later portraits of powerful women in carpenta...
1. TULLIA’S TRIUMPH

“And she’ll have fun fun fun till her daddy takes the T-Bird away.”

There is one particular carpentum, that of King Servius Tullius’ daughter Tullia, which overtakes the others as the single most infamous and spectacular and, I suggest, should be read as paradigmatic of the vehicle’s role in articulating gender. Indeed, with the possible exception of several triumphal chariots, Tullia’s carpentum might be said to have a unique position as the most famous individual vehicle in Roman culture, and was “real” enough to have an actual street named after its fateful career. In short, the one-off nature of Tullia’s carpentum is central to its outstanding infamy: it could only have happened once. Moreover, the event’s singular notoriety gives it a special function. Tullia’s carriage is (repeatedly) presented as an originary, negative exemplum, one which constructs a normalizing portrait of a cultural world by enacting a transgression of its bounds. The vehicle’s association with an exceptional incident, one that took place once in the earliest days of Roman culture, has a profound effect on its role in other contexts. In this section, I will examine the various representations of Tullia’s carpentum ride in order to gain a fuller understanding of the vehicle’s associations.

Livy’s account is the most detailed and vivid, and will serve as the starting point for my discussion of the story’s various re-tellings. King Servius, after

in Suetonius (Cal. 15.1, Cl. 11.2, 17.3) and Tacitus (Ann. 12.42). The effeminizing potential of the carpentum for male passengers is suggested by Propertius 4.8.23, Lucan 9.587–90, and Juvenal 8.146–82 (and even 9.130–33). Apparently distinct and separate from the matronly associations examined here is Livy’s use of carpentum to describe what appears to be a Gallic wagon, a heavy-duty and larger version of the Roman plaustrum (Livy 10.30.5, 31.21.17, 32.30.12, 33.23.4, 33.37.11, etc.; cf. Florus epit. 1.18.27, 3.2.5 etc.), though its recurring appearance within the context of Livy’s accounts of triumphal processions (so, both a mobile spoils of war and a vessel for conveying and displaying spoils of war) probably rubs off on Cato’s portrait of the “triumphing” women who support the repeal of the lex Oppia (see part two).

8. The Beach Boys, “Fun, Fun, Fun” (Capitol, 1964). The chorus later becomes, “And we’ll have fun fun fun now that daddy took the T-Bird away,” because she will now have to ride in the male speaker’s own T-Bird.

9. Tullia’s carpentum should be distinguished from “fictional” conveyances (the implied lectica of Catullus 10 or Trimalchio’s very explicit one) or the “generic” vehicles of divinities (Cybele’s lion-drawn chariot in Lucretius 2.600–609 or Ericthonius’ chariot in Virgil’s Georgics 3.114–15). This is not to say that “fictional” vehicles are not “real” or “historical”—Gaius Cinna may very well have had a lectica—or that “historical” vehicles cannot be literary, only that Tullia’s carpentum seems to have taken shape as a cultural paradigm not primarily or solely through literary texts. Livy’s own oratio obliqua qualifications, together with the reported existence of an alley known as the Vicus Sceleratus, confirm that the status of Tullia’s carpentum was not strictly literary.

10. This distinguishes it from streets re-named (often temporarily) after the triumphal procession. The iterative nature of the triumphus lessens the exceptionality of such named streets.

11. For a stimulating discussion of Livy’s representation of the rise of Tarquinius Superbus as a form of tragic drama, see Feldherr 1998: 187–93, who touches briefly on the carpentum’s role in the story.
being flung down the steps of the curia by Tarquin, is murdered as he attempts to stagger home:

Creditur, quia non abhorret a cetero scelere, admonitu Tulliae id factum. carpento certe, id quod satis constat, in forum inucta, nec reuerita coetum uiorum, euocatui uiorum e curia regemque prima appellauit. a quo facessere iussa ex tanto tumultu cum se domum recuperet peruenissetque ad summum Cyprium uicum, ubi Dianium nuper fuit, flectenti carpentum dextra in Vrbium cliuum ut in collem Esquiliarum eueheretur, restitit pauidus atque inhibuit frenos is qui iumenta agebat iacentemque dominae Seruium truci-datum ostendit. foedum inhumanumque inde traditur scelus monumento-que locus est—Sceleratum uicum uocant—quo amens, agitantibus furiis sororis ac uiri, Tullia per patris corpus carpentum egisse fertur, partemque sanguinis ac caedis paternae cruento ueheculo, contaminata ipsa respersa-que, tulisse ad penates suos uirique sui, quibus iratis malo regni principio similes propediem exitus sequerentur.

It is believed, since it is not inconsistent with the rest of her wickedness, that the deed was done at Tullia’s urging. But it was certainly in a carpentum—about this there is sufficient agreement—that she rode into the forum and,undaunted in the presence of the crowd of men, summoned her husband from the curia and was the first to call him king. He commanded her to depart from such mayhem. Returning home, she had reached the top of the Vicus Cyprius, where the temple of Diana recently stood, and was having her driver turn the carpentum to the right, onto the Clivus Urbius so that she could go to the Esquiline Hill, when the driver stopped, terrified, and pulling the reins, pointed out to his mistress the slaughtered Servius, lying in the road. Then, according to tradition, a foul and inhuman crime took place, and the place is a memorial to it—they call it Wicked Alley—where Tullia, insane and driven by the furies of her sister and husband, is said to have driven her carpentum over her father’s body. She herself, stained and spattered, bore on the gory vehicle part of her slaughtered father’s blood to her own and her husband’s household gods. As a result of their anger, the evil start to this reign was soon enough followed by a similar end.12

Livy’s articulation of the episode meshes nicely with his broader trend of imagining the rise and fall of the Roman monarchy as a special reflex of Greek tragedy.13

12. AUC 1.48.5–7.
13. Scholars have attempted to tease out what substrate was already there for Livy to embellish upon, and comparison with Dionysius of Halicarnassus (4.28ff.) reveals that some tragic details were indeed special Livian touches. For example, Livy follows what he terms “the majority of sources” (pluribus...auctoribus. 1.46.4) in designating Lucius Tarquinius as the son, and not the grandson, of Tarquinius Priscus. The choice renders Tarquin the Younger’s takeover more personally motivated and pressing. At the same time, it is worth noting that the Tullia legend was already well known to Romans as a tragedy performed onstage: Accius and others had written praetextae on Tarquin. On this
Within the historian’s narrative of the kings, Tullia’s story stands out as perhaps “hyper”-tragic given that vehicles frequently have a tragic quality already built into them in Roman and Greek contexts: put simply, the best-known ancient stories about vehicles tend to end very badly. Thus, Livy’s use of marked tragic ingredients on top of inherently tragic vehicular content can be read more broadly as evidence of an attempt by a culture to act out linguistically and narratively its most deep-seated concerns.

Although Livy does not explicitly comment on the intrinsically tragic associations of conveyances themselves, he does offer an almost programmatic statement of his “tragic” narration of Tullia when introducing the tale earlier: *tulit enim et Romana regia sceleris tragici exemplum, ut taedio regum maturior ueniret libertas ultimumque regnum esset quod scelere partum foret* (“For the Roman royal court too [sc. alongside legendary Greek ones] provided an exemplum of a crime fit for tragedy, such that the loathing of kings would cause freedom to arrive more promptly, and the final rule of a king would be one born of crime,” 1.46.3). Scelus will be the watchword in his version: it gives the narrative a thematic continuity (Tullia’s actions represent a “tragic” transgression, which will inevitably be punished) and anticipates the coming etiology of the *uicus sceleratus*, “the alley where an exemplary scelus was committed.” The sentence is interesting in itself as an apparently self-reflexive announcement of a particular (“tragic”) technique of narration in historiography, but it is also noteworthy that here Livy has actually marked out the association between vehicles and tragedy in his nutshell account of Tullia’s instigation of her husband in the previous sentence: *et ipse iuuenis [sc. Tarquinius] ardentis animi et domi uxore Tullia inquietum animum stimulante* (1.46.2). What is almost a dead metaphor has been activated by marked diction. The tragic arc of the narrative, in Livy’s expression of it, is thus vividly presented by Tullia’s “goading on” of destructive forces (human and vehicular). Similarly, *tulit* (46.3) is here emphatic, and must highlight the central roles played both by Servius’ daughter and by an extraordinary act of transportation in the story that will follow, as if the two were etymologically connected: “For it was *Tullia’s actions* by which the Roman royal family delivered a tragic bad example, hastening the arrival of...”
freedom. “TULLia-ing helped bring about the monarchy’s downfall...” (tulit enim et Romana regia sceleris tragici exemplum. ..). It is surely no accident that Livy reuses this grimly comic etymology again in section 48: Tullia per patris corpus carpentum egisse fertur, partemque sanguinis ac caedis paternae cruento uehiculo, contaminata ipsa respersaque, tulisse ad penates suos uirique sui. In the historian’s tragic imaginary, Tullia’s brutal (self-)conveyance not only introduces an example of terrible behavior (tulit, 46.3) that causes the republic to arrive more promptly, but also carries with it (48) a stain of guilt that will not go away until the royal family is driven out.

The story’s well-established moral structure is attested also by the approach of Valerius Maximus, who patterns his brief version of the Tullia story in a similar way, employing a combination of sign-posted exemplarity and topographical aetiology. His account likewise culminates in a link between Tullia’s scelus and the infamous uicus:

unde autem potius quam a Tullia ordiar, quia tempore uetustissimum, conscientia nefarium, uoce monstri simile exemplum est? cum carpento uehere-tur et is, qui iumenta agebat, succussis frenis constitisset, repentinae morae causam requisiuit, et ut comperit corpus patris Seruii Tulli occisi ibi iacere, supra id duci uehiculum iussit, quo celerius in complexum interfectoris eius Tarquinii ueniret. qua tam impia tamque probrosa festinatione non solum se aeterna infamia, sed etiam ipsum uicum cognomine sceleris conmaculauit. Indeed where better to begin than with Tullia, since she stands as an exemplum, most ancient in history, vile in conscience, and like a monster in utterance? When she was riding in a carpentum, the mule-driver pulled back his reins and came to a stop. She demanded the reason for the sudden delay and, upon learning that the body of her slain father Servius Tullius lay there, ordered the vehicle to be driven over it, so that she might more quickly enter the embrace of his killer Tarquin. With this irreverent and shameful haste, she stained not only herself with everlasting infamy, but also the alley itself with the name of the wicked act.

17. Even the metaphor of transportation underlying the usually unmarked fertur, “is said,” here likewise becomes activated: Tullia’s act of being conveyed is what leads to her story being “passed on.” An echo of the common middle meaning of fertur, “move swiftly,” “rush,” becomes similarly difficult to rule out as a connotative effect. On Livy’s suggestive etymology of Tullia, compare that of Festus (note 37).

18. Note also how the play on patris corpus. .. partem sanguinis ac caedis paternae reflects the idea: she bears along with her this “silver” of her “sire” as an emblem of guilt. That this stain must be removed from the community is implicit in Livy’s brief account of her flight amidst Tarquin’s overthrow: inter hunc tumultum Tullia domo profugit exsecrantibus quacumque incedebat innocentiabus parentum farius uiris mulieribusque (1.59.13). This purificatory exile is, moreover, dramatically (and rather poignantly) spatialized: she now goes “on foot” (incedebat), a permanent pedestrian.

19. Tullia comes first in his chapter on “terrible words and wicked deeds,” after a short preface: nunc, quatenus uitae humanae cum bona tum etiam mala substitutis exemplorum imaginibus persequinur, dicta improba et facta scelerata referantur (“be conveyed”).
In his rushed telling, Valerius conveys the reckless speed of Tullia’s ride. By a sort of narrative elision, she drives over her father’s body “in order more quickly” (quo celerius) to embrace his killer Tarquin. Her “so irreverent and disgraceful haste” (qua tam impia tamque probrosa festinatione) is identified as the real cause of her eternal infamy, and the origin of the name of the alley. When her driver screeches to a halt, her impatience and desire for velocity is thematized in the phrase repentinae morae.20 The Tullia story, Valerius thus re-emphasizes, belongs to a broader category of tragic “road incident” narratives, as the proximity of the site of her collision to a cult associated with Hippolytus-Virbius attests.21 The double meaning in conmaculauit—she is both literally and figuratively stained with the blood of her father—confirms the tragic terms of Tullia’s scelus in Valerius.

This concretization of Tullia’s tragedy also takes place in “Wicked Alley,” the significance of which is accentuated by a contrasted doubling of the speaking name, uicus sceleratus, with another, uicus Cyprius, originally, “Good Alley.” Varro’s concise version of the episode likewise frames and represents it in spatial terms, between “good” and “bad” places in the city:

Vicus Cyprius a cypro, quod ibi Sabini cientes additi consederunt, qui a bono omine id appellarent: nam cyprum Sabine bonum, prope hunc Vicus Sceleratus, dictus a Tullia Tarquini Superbi uxore, quod ibi cum iaceret pater occisus, supra eum carpentum mulio ut inigeret iussit.22

The Vicus Cyprius [“Good Alley”] is from cyprum, because it was there that the Sabines who were added as citizens settled, and they named it after the good omen: for cyprum means “good” in Sabine. Near this is the Vicus sceleratus [“Wicked Alley”], named after Tullia, the wife of Tarquin the Proud, because when her father was lying there struck down, she ordered the mule-driver to drive the carpentum over him.22

Tullia’s devious turn from “good street” to “bad street” is thus reinforced and highlighted by the topography of the city, and by antiquarian accounts of that topography.23

20. Mary Jaeger insightfully suggests that the driver’s presence and reaction also function as a “moral foil” to Tullia and her conduct.
21. The cult of Diana Nemorensis at Aricia (where a street called the cliusus Virbi led uphill to the temple) was associated with the worship of Virbius, an Italian god identified with the resurrected Hippolytus (cf. Serv. ad Aen. 7.761: sed Diana Hippolytum, reuocatum ab inferis, in Aricia nymphae commendavit Egeriae et eum Virbium quasi bis uirum iussit uocari). Diana’s cult at Aricia apparently inspired a similar worship on the Virbius cliusus (cf., ubi Dianium nuper fuit), a process that was helped by the similarly sounding names (Virbius probably has a separate, Etruscan origin). It has been suggested that the similarity of the two mythical stories—Hippolytus undone by ἅρμα/ἵπποι, Servius Tullius splattered by carpentum—helped provide a location for Tullia’s hit and run. On the Clivus Virbi, cf. Juvenal 4.116 with Persius 6.56, and Martial 2.19 and 12.32.10.
22. L.L. 5.159. Ogilvie 1970, on Livy 48.6, treats the Sabine origin as genuine. We might also detect in this (Sabine author’s) pithy account an implicit contrast between (Roman stereotypes of) good old-fashioned Sabine morality and Etruscan wickedness.
23. Cf. Bayet 1971. Varro’s omen is clearly important in establishing the terms of the polarity, given that Tullia’s carriage ride acts as a malum omen for the forthcoming reign of Tarquin.
Thus far, we have seen how the “bad example” of Tullia’s carpentum ride is articulated in terms of the familiar mechanisms of historiography. Next, I want to look at two additional aspects of the story’s representation that indirectly characterize the carpentum and, by implication, the nature of “feminine transportation,” as constructed by this seminal account of it. Firstly, certain structural side-effects result from the placement of the Tullia story within the traditional, sequential narration of the regal period. Since the basic narrative function of Tullia’s activities is to put an end to Servius’ reign and to inaugurate Tarquin’s, her entire role and story automatically read as a kind of interruption. This fact likewise predetermines the nature of her carpentum ride itself, which—once again, in essential narrative terms—serves to intrude into her father’s (life) story. It goes without saying that there are other ways Livy (or Roman cultural memory) could have ended Servius’ reign without forsaking the “tragic” and “vehicular” ingredients (he himself could have had a fatal chariot accident). Similarly, there are other possible ways that Tullia could have been depicted as employing a carpentum that (at best) would not involve corpse-desecration, or (at worst) would not be functionally equivalent to patricide.

The result is that, even if Tullia is the primary actor throughout the narrative, the overarching, sympathetic perspective in Livy’s text is that of poor old Servius. For, underlying the entire episode is the simple assumption that, whatever the circumstances, surely no one deserves to be run over by a carriage, whether alive or dead, whether or not by one’s daughter. Even if Tullia controls the action, Servius, as sympathetic and innocent victim of vehicular cruelty, becomes a poignant hero. So, while it is obvious that, as a conventional narrative of the Roman kings, Livy’s account of the “Tullia” story privileges the perspective of Servius, this is in spite of the overarching function of Book 1 to celebrate the downfall of the monarchy and the coming of the republic. Indeed, Livy concludes his account of the elderly king’s life with the suggestion that he had actually hoped to give up the throne, “if an in-house crime had not interrupted his plans to liberate his country” (ni scelus intestinum liberandae patriae consilia agitanti interuenisset, 48.9). Tullia’s coup—concretized as a reckless carriage ride—is thus all the more catastrophic in that

24. When we are granted some access to how Tullia views her situation, for example in her speech rousing her husband (1.47.3–5), as impressive and commanding as her rhetoric may be, the effect is nonetheless to distance us from her perverse ambition. Certainly the drama of the episode partly results from the unsettling disjuncture between Tullia’s powerful, manly activity and the horrifying results of her exertions. Her speech does contain moments of subtle slippage: Roman readers may perhaps be tempted, for a moment, to forget that the speaker is a daughter, one who is hell bent on having her own father brutally murdered, and not a courageous man, a Brutus figure.

25. Or perhaps, for scelus intestinum, “an inside(s) job.” Livy’s summary coda is worth quoting in full: Ser. Tullius regnauit annos quattuor et quadraginta ita ut bono etiam moderatoque succedanti regi difficilis aemulatio esset. ceterum id quoque ad gloriam accessit quod cum illo simul iusta ac legitema regna occiderunt. id ipsum tam mite ac tam moderatum imperium tamen, quia unius esset. deponere eum in animo habuisse quidam auctores sunt. ni scelus intestinum liberandae patriae consilia agitanti interuenisset (48.8–9). It is hard not to detect in this recap a reference to Augustus (cf. Suet. Aug. 28.1).
it results in the felling of a quasi-founding father of the Roman republic—even though, that is, she has just engaged in what is perhaps the most ideologically patriotic of Roman activities: to kill a king.26

Secondly, in addition to the narrative effects that render Tullia’s activities—and a woman’s ride in a carpentum—as a dangerous intrusion into the workings of the state (even a monarchical one), there is the question of Tullia’s characterization. How does the portrayal of this carriage’s star passenger herself affect our understanding of this exemplum of feminine transportation? Varro once again helps with interpretation, in a fragmentary comment: *inter duas filias regum quid mutet inter Antigonam et Tulliam est animaduertere* (“what a difference there is between two kings’ daughters is to be seen in Antigone and Tullia”).27 The precise context from which Varro’s remark comes is unknown, but note that Tullia’s role is encapsulated in the word *filia*. Just as Antigone had become paradigmatic for *impietas*, as an undevoted daughter,28 she is identified not as overbearing, power-hungry wife, or cruel sororicide, or daring co-regicide, but as powerful father’s daughter and, by implication, as patricide. Just as the *currus* frequently turns up to contest or reaffirm power relations between fathers and sons, so, I suggest, one major function of the *carpentum* is to articulate the relationship between Roman fathers and daughters. This, it appears, is what the Tullia episode is about.

There is moreover the implicit suggestion that Tullia’s role as wife poses a terrible threat to her identity as daughter. Or, put another way, although Livy develops Tullia’s role as overambitious, even uncontrollable, wife, her transgression as daughter is the actual focus of the story, and not her tyrannical behavior as wife. We might even say that, troublingly, she is an excessively bad daughter because she is an excessively good wife, to the extent that she will stop at nothing to help

26. It is also possible to see the violence of political upheaval—the bloody turmoil of the first century BCE, here reimagined by Livy as one of several prototypical civil clashes of the regal period—as displaced from its public, masculine context onto the private sphere of one semi-deranged daughter. Civil war is thus re-articulated as the fear of every Roman patriarch that his daughter will somehow uproot and destroy his patrimony by means of a usurping son-in-law. While Augustus’ family-focused moral legislation, which cast a particularly paranoid and outraged light upon the evils of a non-reproducing nobility, was passed after the completion of Livy’s first pentad (between 27 and 25 BCE; the *leges Iuliae* are dated to the early teens BCE), we can see them both as voicing a similar anxiety. After all, the Tullia narrative goes, the decadence targeted by the *leges Iuliae* is not fundamentally different from descendants trampling on the memory of their begetters. See below on possible “Augustan” resonances in Livy’s account of the repeal of the *lex Oppia*.

27. Quoted by Aulus Gellius, in a section devoted to the word *mutare* (*N. A.* 18.12.9). Antigone’s devotion to her father and the honor she pays to her brother’s body (for which she dies) stand in contrast to Tullia’s plotting her sister’s murder and her desecration of her father’s corpse. In point of familial *pietas*, Varro seems to suggest, Tullia is a kind of anti-Antigone.

28. Antigone’s *pietas* is exemplified by her accompaniment of Oedipus and burial of Polynices. Hyginus (*Fabulae* 254–55) lists her first in his group of those women *quae piissimae fuerunt*. Tullia, by contrast, comes last in his list of those *quae impiae fuerunt* (*Tullia Romanorum super parentis corpus currum* [sic] duxit, unde Vicus Sceleratus dictus est).
further her husband’s ambitions. While she is certainly labeled as *uxor* and *mulier* in the narrative, these identifications function instead as a backdrop against which to accentuate her outrageous role as *filia*, the most crucial in the story. In Brutus’ (reported) invective against King Tarquin, her part in the tragedy of the royal household is summed up succinctly: *indigna Ser. Tulli regis memorata caedes et inuecta corpori patris nefando vehiculo filia*, “he recalled the intolerable slaughter of King Servius and how his daughter rode over her father’s body in an impious vehicle.” The proximity of the words *patris* and *filia* serves as an interpretative guide for how, at least at the most immediate level, we are to understand the story of Tullia. Significantly, she is not named as Tarquin’s wife in Brutus’ harangue. In its function as moralizing *exemplum*, it is Tullia’s transgressive behavior as *filia* that forms the kernel and point of the story, with the introductory narrative of her role as dominant wife acting almost as a secondary substrate of tragic *enargeia*.

It is important to note how Tullia’s rather fixed moral role—as negative *exemplum*, as prototypical image of the *filia impia*—is structured spatially by her own movements via *carpentum*. In concrete terms, this vehicle facilitates her movement between the two male-dominated spaces with which she is associated. For it is significant that her carriage strikes her father precisely when, in Livy’s ambiguous phrasing, “she was on her way home” (*cum se domum reciperet*, 48.6). Servius himself has just been described in almost identical terms only several lines earlier (*cum . . . domum se reciperet*, 48.4). The ambiguity of the second *domum* is of course significant: “whose home” is exactly the point at issue. In the second instance, *domum* must mean Servius’ house (that is, not the one previously occupied by her and Tarquin), which she is hurrying to seize possession of now in order to establish Tarquin’s claim to the kingship.

29. That is, according to Livy’s complex backstory, after she has dispatched her first, unambitious husband (also Tarquin), together with his too meek wife (also Tullia). Tullia’s role as “bad daughter” (and Tarquin’s as “bad gener”), is highlighted by the existence of her silent double, the other Tullia: *his duobus [Tarquinibus] . . . duae Tulliae regis filiae nupserant, et ipsae longe dispares moribus* (46.5). Thus her behavior throughout the narrative becomes marked by this preliminary contrast as even more deranged and out of the ordinary. Compare to these Doppelgänger also the striking double in the *uicus Cyprius* (48.6), which Tullia travels immediately before encountering her father on the *uicus sceleratus*.

30. She is in fact first introduced as Tarquin’s overbearing wife: *et ipse [sc. Tarquinius] iuuenis ardentis animi et domi uxore Tullia inquietum animum stimulante* (1.46.2).

31. 1.59.10. Also noted by Hallett 1984: 115.

32. For an important account of Livy’s use of space in his account of the Sabine women see Jaeger 1997: 30–56.

33. In terms of the spatial aspects of the story, I read Livy, and the other accounts, as primarily investigating Tullia’s movements between the two households with which she is associated (her father’s and her husband’s). There is, especially in Livy’s representation of Tullia’s public appearance and salutation of her husband, a preliminary exploration of the *carpentum’s* role as a conduit between the private and public realms. That role is taken up directly by Livy in his account of the *lex Oppia*.

34. Thus Ogilvie 1970, who describes Livy as “over-compressed.” An interpolation is of course possible. Maurizio Bettini *per litteras* suggests instead that it is one and the same house to which Tullia (and Servius) was hurrying; that is, she and Tarquin lived in her father’s house, following the Roman custom of patrilocality. In any case, *domus* is repeatedly associated with Tullia in the episode: first, when
The repeated clause *cum se domum reciperet* thus envisions a kind of desperate race for occupancy: a half-dead (*prope exsanguis*), lone Servius limping his way back to his palace vs. a spirited (*ferox*) Tullia flying over hills in her *carpentum*. For such a competition to take place at all would of course have seemed shocking and outrageous to Romans. But implicit in this suggested dash for property is the notion that Servius deserves a seat in a carriage as an elderly—and now badly injured—man.

It is tempting to interpret the invocation of *domus* at this narrative juncture, however pointed it may seem, as mainly a feature of Livian tragic style, a way of heightening the drama. And yet the word serves as something of an emblem of the Tullia story as recounted in nutshell form by other authors, even in the curtest of snippets. Compare, for example, Paulus-Festus’ entry on the *Sceleratus Vicus*:

**Sceleratus Vicus** Romae appellatur, quod cum Tarquinius Superbus inter-
**Wicked Alley** in Rome is so named, because when Tarquin the Proud brought about the slaying of king Servius, his father-in-law, Servius’ daughter rode over his body lying [dead?] in a *carpentum*, hastening into the possession of her father’s house.35

While Tarquin now seems to become the driving force behind the coup in this account (*interficiendum curasset*), the rhetorical point of the brief entry is obviously Tullia’s transgressive act. But, interestingly, it is the phrase *properans in possessio-

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36. The phrase is partially preserved in the *codex Farnesianus* of Festus (and reconstructed by Lindsay) and is perhaps a survival from Verrius Flaccus’ original *de Verborum Significatu*.
37. Livy had already hit upon this pointed parechosis of *corpore* and *carpentum* (something like the opposite of Lysias’ *nōμα nōσγος*, from the context of his terrifying encounter with Peison, one of the Thirty, 12.11), suggestive of a gory mess: “carcass” is swallowed, subsumed by “carriage.” Or perhaps an etymology from *carpere* is suggested: *carpentum* as *carpens*, “car” as “carver” (cf.
memorable as it is, as much as it may seem to be the legend’s “punchline”—Tullia’s *carpentum* functions symbolically as an encapsulation of patriarchal worry about losing a household to one’s daughter and her husband.

Ovid’s version of the Tullia story in the *Fasti* (6.585–610), though on the whole quite differently motivated, nevertheless reaffirms this underlying concern in several central lines:

> ipse sub Esquiliis, ubi erat sua regia, caeusita concidit in dura sanguinulentus humo.
> filia carpento patrios initura penates
> ibat per medias alta feroxque uias.

Servius himself, at the base of the Esquiline, where his palace stood, fell slaughtered, bleeding on the hard ground. His daughter, on her way to her father’s home in a *carpentum*, went right down the streets, high and bold.38

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38. *Fasti* 6.601–604. It is noteworthy that, while he re-uses (and pointedly tweaks) traditional elements of the story, Ovid avoids an explicit description of the actual collision, instead dramatizing the driver’s pause and Tullia’s angry command through direct speech: *corpus ut expeit, lacrimis auriga profusis / restitit. hunc tali corripit illa sono: / certa fides facti: dictus Sceleratus ab illa / uicus, et aeterna res ea pressa nota (605–10). The driver’s (‘charioteer’s’) shock is turned into overwhelming grief (*lacrimis...profusis*)—grief which should have been Tullia’s—and Tullia’s *lack of pietas* is emphasized by her scorn of the driver’s (“will you go on, or are you waiting to find out what you’ll get in return for your pietas—trouble?”). Strangely reluctant (like the wheels of the *carpentum* themselves) to go through with a narration of the actual impact, Ovid instead displaces the (well-worn) details of the physical violence itself onto other aspects of the narration: Tullia *attacks*chides the driver with her words (*corripere* often appears in contexts of vehicular violence); she tells him to drive the unwilling wheels “right over his face”; the *res* (“deed,” or “story”? ) is inscribed (literally, “pressed,” as if by the wheels) with a permanent mark. I read Ovid’s elision of the actual act of driving as a self-conscious nod towards a slightly ambiguous detail of the Tullia story: whether it is the driver or Tullia herself who actually drives the *carpentum* over Servius’ body. The implication here is that the *auriga* obeys her command, but it is worth noting Livy’s *Tullia per patris corpus carpento egressa fertur* and Florus’ *Tullia...supra cruentum patrem uecta carpento consternatos equos exeget* (1.1.188), which both suggest that she has seized the reins (even if, in the former account, she is in turn “driven” by the avenging spirits of her murdered sister and husband). Note that in Florus’ articulation, the *horses* are terrified by Tullia’s driving. Later, Livy says simply, “rode” (*inuenta corpori patris nefandoque vehiculo filia, 1.59.10), as does Festus (*corpus eius iacentis filia carpento superfusa sit*). Varro (*ut inigeret iussit*) and Valerius Maximus (*duc...iussit*) both carefully state that she ordered the *carpentum* to be driven over his body. We might also see Ovid’s dramatized elision of the “moment of impact” as a way of highlighting the ultimate irrecoverability of the genuine *aition* in this particular—or any—aetiology: the testimonies of story and place are the only traces that exist.

Several marked similarities to Ovid’s version stand out in the account of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 4.39.3–5), mostly notably his dramatization in direct speech of Tullia’s confrontation of the driver. Yet Dionysius makes her abuse of the driver not only verbal but physical when he has her throw a footstool at him: *πυνθανομένης δ' ἐκθύνης [sc. that the driver stopped the carriage because it was blocked by Servius’ body], τι παθον οὐκ ἄγει τὸ ξύδος οὐχ ὃρξες, εἶπεν, ὃ Τυλλία, τὸν πατέρα σου νικρόν*.
Once again, the collocation of *filia* and *patrios* is significant. The line has been arranged such that a *carpentum* literally comes between Tullia and her father, just as he has come between her and his house: the vehicle thus facilitates her arrival at her destination. The pronoun *ipse* is here primarily resumptive and emphatic, but also has the connotation of “master,” which is especially prominent in contexts involving vehicles, as a means of drawing attention to the question of who is actually in control.39 This coloring of *ipse* is strengthened by the assertion that the palace belongs to *him* (ubi erat *sua* regia). Ovid has moreover revisited several of Livy’s images. Tullia is now hurrying towards, and into, her father’s *penates* (*patrios initura penates*), just as in Livy’s version, “on the gory vehicle she carried to *her own* and *her husband’s* *penates* part of her murdered father’s blood” (*parteraque sanguinis ac caedis paternae crucento vehiculo... tulisse ad penates suos uirique sui*, 48.7). *Ad suos uirique sui* here is predicative: “to the house that was now to be hers and her husband’s.” In both versions, she crushes her father to take up occupancy of his house.

Thus far I have limited my discussion of the association of *carpentum* with father-daughter conflict to the various articulations of the story of Tullia and Servius, even though I have suggested that this association might inhere in other contexts involving the vehicle. As it happens, the very earliest extant appearance of the word comes from

39. In his earlier account of the Megalensia, Ovid employs similar language to depict the procession of Cybele: *ipsa sedens molli comitum ceruice feretur* / *urbis per medias exululata uias* (*F.* 4.185–86). The image of an individual female, whether royal or divine, making her (elevated) way through the middle of the streets is meant to be arresting. *Ipsa* here likewise connotes the Magna Mater’s status as “mistress,” a marker of authority conspicuously absent from Ovid’s treatment of Tullia. In that case it is instead father Servius’ cruelly deprived authority (*ipse*) that receives emphasis. This is not to say that, in Ovid’s portrait, Cybele’s power is unproblematic (rather, that Tullia’s is more problematic, more of a usurpation); he appears to have redeployed Propertius’ disturbing portrait of Cynthia driving her effeminate boyfriend’s *carpenta, herself apparently holding the reins* (*spectaculum ipsa sedens primo temone pependit, / ausa per impuros frena mouere iocos*, 4.8.21–22).
another situation involving a royal father and daughter. Livius Andronicus uses the word in a fragment of his translation of Homer’s *Odyssey*, from Nausicaa’s speech to Odysseus in book 6:

\[
\text{ibi manens sedeto donicum uidebis} \\
\text{me carpento uehentem domum uenisse}
\]

Sit waiting there until you see
I have come home, riding in the *carpentum*\(^{40}\)

As Sander Goldberg has pointed out, the two extant lines of Livius represent a recasting not of two (6.295–96, as earlier commentators had it), but of five lines of the *Odyssey*:

\[
\text{ένθα καθεξόμενος μεῖναι χρόνον, εἰς δὲ κεν ἡμεῖς} \\
\text{άντων ἐλθόμεν καὶ ἱκώμεθα δώματα πατρός.} \\
\text{αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν ἡμέας ἐλπὶ ποτὶ δόματ᾽ ἀφύθαι,} \\
\text{καὶ τότε Φαῖήκων ἵμεν ἐς πόλιν ἴδ᾽ ἔρεσθαι} \\
\text{δώματα πατρός ἐμοῦ μεγαλῆτορος Ἀλκινοίου.}
\]

6.295–99\(^{41}\)

The important point here is Livius’ choice of Roman vehicle to represent Nausicaa’s ἀπήνη (6.57, 69, 73, 88, 90, 252) or ἀμαξά (6.37, 260).\(^{42}\) Goldberg suggests that the more expected word would be *plaustrum*, the humble cart or wagon, and goes on to argue that Livius has elevated Homer’s more homely details in order to achieve “a kind of epic dignity,” prophetic of subsequent Latin approaches to recasting Homer, such as the *Aeneid*.\(^{43}\) It is true that *carpenta* usually carry passengers of stature, rather than, say, dirty laundry. But as recurring epithets emphasize, Alcinous’ vehicle was quite elegant.\(^{44}\) And since the rest of the scene does not survive, it is difficult to know how Livius would have recast those “humble” details.

\(^{40}\) Fragment 15. The sound effects of the passage are of course elaborate and impressive, mainly in the parallelism between the corresponding halves of each Saturnian. The sound pattern *manens sedeto* recurs in *carpento uehentem*, just as *domum uenieisse* echoes *donicum uidebis*, in an arrangement that seems nearly iconic. The intricate repeated sequence emphasizes that these two actions (Odysseus’ *staying put* and Nausicaa’s *riding home*) while similar in their temporal aspect (they are to happen *simultaneously*), are spatially discrete (they are to happen *separately*): the two really must be, her instructions assert, in different places at the same time (“Not a wedding outing!”). The quasi-rhyming sequence *carpento uehentem* also lends a certain (stately? bumpy?) weight to the image of Nausicaa’s ride.

\(^{41}\) Goldberg 1995: 71–72. He argues that *uidebis* is thus a translation of ἐλπη, and thus means, not “see,” but “think,” a meaning that is well-attested in Plautus and early Latin.

\(^{42}\) 6.69–70: ‘... ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁμαξώ ἐφοτίλεσθαι ἁπήνη / ἐφηλὴν εἰδύκκλον, ὕπερτερή ἄρα ἐρωτίσθαν.’ 252–53: εἴματ’ ἀρα πτέρυσα τίθεν καλῆς ἐπ᾽ ἁπήνης, / ἐσεβέν δ᾽ ἡμώνους κρατερόνυμα, ἐν δ᾽ ἐβη αὐτή.

\(^{43}\) Goldberg 1995: 72.

\(^{44}\) Nausicaa describes the ἁπήνη as ὑψηλὴν εἰδύκκλον (“elevated, with good wheels,” 57–58) and her father quotes, and expands upon, her wording (in the same *sedes*): ἁπήνην / ὑψηλὴν εἰδύκκλον, ὕπερτερή ἄρα ἐρωτίσθαν (“elevated, with good wheels, fitted with an upper body,” 69–70), as if to demonstrate his superior expertise (“You’ll need the one with the bodywork already fitted to the chassis, to carry the...
What is important to recognize here is that Livius’ choice of carpentum as Nausicaa’s vehicle arose also from the kinds of associations this conveyance had in Roman culture. For, while the Livius fragment does not specify Nausicca’s domus as her father’s, the Homeric passage does, and does so quite emphatically (δώματα πατρός, 296; and again δώματα πατρός ἐμοῦ μεγαλήτορος Ἀλκινόοιο, 299). These phrases should remind us of Ovid’s patrios ... penates and Festus’ domus paternae, both involving another fraught carpentum trip. But the context of Odyssey 6 is of course highly relevant as well. Much of the plot and drama of the episode revolves around the fact that Nausicaa, a maiden on the verge of marriage, has been given special permission to leave her father’s house in a special vehicle, one which serves as a potential vector into another man’s household.45 Athena, after all, had framed her laundry instructions in these terms (disguised as Nausicaa’s friend, the daughter of Dymas):

“Nausicaa, how is it that your mother bore such a careless daughter as you? The shining clothes are lying uncared for, though your wedding is close at hand, when you yourself should wear beautiful clothes, and provide some for those who attend you (σοὶ δὲ γάμος σχεδόν ἐστιν, ἵνα χρή καλὰ μὲν αὐτήν / ἐννυσθαι, τὰ δὲ τοῖς παρασχέσαι οἶ κέ σ’ ἀγωνται). . . I too will accompany you as a helper, so that you can get it ready most quickly, since you won’t remain unmarried for long (ἐπεὶ οὖ τοι ἐπὶ δὴν παρθένος ἔσσεσαι). For already the best men of the Phaeacians in this area are courting you (Ἡ ἔρι γάρ σε μνώνται ἀριστῆς κατὰ δήμον), and this is your own stock too.”

25–28, 32–35

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45 In the context of another potentially awkward extra-domestic excursion, Medea’s rendezvous with Jason at Argonautica 3.828–1155, Apollonius makes his heroine’s ride an ἀπήνῃ too, but the Homeric prototype is given a few upgrades. Homer’s εὐκοκλός and ἐδόροχος (“well-heeled”) become εὐπτρόχος (889), “well-running,” or “swift,” and in a line emphasizing Medea’s mobility the cart is described as “swift” (ἐκ δὲ θοραξ φιότερο ἰδὼς ἐπεβῆσατʼ ἀπήνῃς, 869). Her active agency is further accentuated by a “demonstrative of vehicular driving” (αὐτή δ’ ἴν’ ἐξεκτει καὶ εὑσποίτον ἰμάθηλην / δεξιτερῆ, 871–2; cf., later, on her return trip, αὐτομάτως δὲ πόδισε θοῦς ἐπεβησατʼ ἀπήνης, / καὶ ἱ’ ἐτέρη μὲν χορέ λαβ’ ἑνία, τῇ δ’ ἔρ’ ἰμάθηλην / διαδύσθει, δύομεν ἐλαυνόμενον, 1152–54). Also, even though Apollonius’ recasting of the Odyssey makes clear that an ἀπήνη is no ἀρῆμα, by likening Medea’s cart to Artemis’ chariot (together with the above speed enhancements), the Hellenistic poet has made his maiden’s vehiculation a bit more masculine.

46 Nausicca herself broaches the subject of impending marriage later, when she approaches her father to ask for the family wagon (57–65). But she modestly shifts attention away from herself to her five brothers, three of whom are unmarried (οἱ δὲ ὅποιοντες, τρεῖς δ’ ἴνθ’ θαλαβοντες): their clothes must be washed before their upcoming weddings.
own wedding, Nausicaa’s ἀπήνη outing actually functions as a prefiguration of it. This, the metaphorical significance of her departure from her father’s palace in a special vehicle is what informs Livius Andronicus’ choice of carpentum. Moreover, in light of the pervasiveness of the theme of Nausicaa’s marriageability and departure from her father’s palace (both actual, for washing, and future, for marriage), it is tempting to see the lack of any paternal marker (paterna, patris, patria) to reflect Homer’s marked wording (δόματα πατρός, 296; and δόματα πατρὸς ἐμοῦ μεγάλητορος Αλκινόοιο, 299) as in itself significant, as if to highlight the fact (or the concern) that Nausicaa’s ride in the carpentum might very well have her end up in another man’s house. Livius’ carpentum interprets the Odyssean narrative by means of a very specific Roman cultural symbol. He has not simply opted for a stately carriage that befits a king’s daughter (instead of a “lowly” cart, plaustrum), but one which arises out of and summons up a discourse of women’s privileged movement between (royal) households and between roles as daughters and wives.

To sum up thus far, my reading of the prominent role played by the carpentum in Livy and others’ versions of the story of Tullia suggests that, as a Roman cultural narrative, “feminine transportation” represents, and helps to structure discursively, the potentially hazardous passage from the role of Roman daughter to that of Roman wife. This has emerged from careful tracing of the recurrence of certain marked stylistic and formal effects, as well as of similar thematic markers, in the numerous re-articulations of the episode—perhaps most notably in the versions that are much terser than Livy’s, and function almost as “glosses” to the cultural story that Tullia’s cruel carriage ride reflects. Given that this cautionary tale about the dangers of women in vehicles is inextricable from its position within the (doomed) story of the Roman monarchy, it is not surprising that the consistent concern underlying these various retellings has to do with transgressions that originate within, or mainly have to do with, an individual family (primarily through a violation of that familial virtue, pietas). In the next section, I will examine another, revised version of the Roman cultural narrative of “feminine transportation,” once again as structured through literary representations of the carpentum. By contrast, this one, I argue, attempts a solution to the problematic presented by the idea of Roman women in vehicles within the civic community.

2. MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE: THE REPEAL OF THE LEX OPPIA

“Allowing women to drive would ‘provoke a surge in prostitution, pornography, homosexuality, and divorce’. . .within 10 years of the ban being lifted. . .there would be ‘no more virgins.’”

47. From a report “On Women Driving Cars,” written by Dr. Kamal Subhi (management consultant and retired professor at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran) in collaboration with the scholars of the Majlis al-Ifta’ al-A’ala (Saudi Arabia’s highest religious council), as rendered by The Telegraph (“Allowing women drivers in Saudi Arabia will be ‘end of virginity,’” Dec. 02, 2011).
If, as we have seen, the carpentum thus stands in for, or helps to structure, the significant passage from the roles of daughter to wife, it also contributes towards patterning Roman conceptions of domestic and public space, and women’s movement between them. Alongside the story of Tullia, the other famous narrative in which the carpentum plays a prominent role is that surrounding the repeal of the lex Oppia. The Tullia story had staged its carpentum drama—in structural terms, as an exemplum—as a foundational moment, even if that moment was rather loosely defined, belonging as it did to the legendary period of the Roman kings. Origins will again be central to the articulation of this new role, but this time, by contrast, our story is concerned with “feminine transportation” as a public system or process. The difference is that, while the story of Tullia portrays women’s mobility as in essence a dangerous threat that cannot be accommodated—note that Tullia is driven into exile as a roving pedestrian—here a “solution” to the threat posed by mobile women is offered.

So, our new question becomes: how did Roman women, as a group, come to possess the officially-sanctioned right to ride in carpenta in the first place? Or, more specifically, how did Roman culture choose to represent its decision in the distant past to grant matrons the privilege of wheel-bound mobility? The few surviving stories that touch upon this conferral concur in asserting that the privilege was, in essence, a reward for outstanding behavior. Although there is some disagreement as to what precisely the matrons were being rewarded for, it is important to observe that access to the carpentum was conceived of in terms of an exchange. It need hardly be mentioned that no equivalent strictures existed that dealt with men’s right to ride in wheeled vehicles. Even if access to the lectica or currus could be hotly contested and severely limited, there was nevertheless no accompanying belief that, prior to a particular decision of the senate, men as a group simply were not allowed to ride in conveyances. Instead, Roman men are assumed to have ridden in chariots, carriages, wagons (and, sometimes, litters) since time immemorial. Roman women, by contrast, did not.48

The origins of this state-sponsored privilege are complex, but most ancient accounts agree that the senate granted it to matrons in return for their assistance in bailing out the state while in straitened circumstances.49 The Roman dictator Camillus had made a vow to the god Apollo if he should be allowed to defeat the city of Veii. When this took place in 396 BCE, he could not summon the necessary funds to fulfill his part of the bargain. The women stepped in, collected their

48. This is of course directly contradicted by the story of Tullia, as well as by Livy’s portrait of the arrival of Lucumo (soon to be L. Tarquinius Priscus) and Tanaquil in Rome in a carpentum (1.34.8). Both images of powerful wives riding in carpenta in public are placed in Rome’s earliest days, during the regal period (late seventh century BCE for Tanaquil; 534 BCE for Tullia), long before they were supposedly granted the privilege. The associations of both women with Etruscan intrusion is no doubt significant.

49. Cf. Livy 5.50.7.
gold jewelry, and donated it to the senate, which promptly rewarded them with the right to ride in carpenta. Livy narrates the events:

cuius cum copia non esset, matronae coetibus ad eam rem consultandam habitis communi decreto pollicitae tribunis militum aurum et omnia ornamenta sua in aerarium detulerunt. grata ea res ut quae maxime senatui unquam fuit; honoremque ob eam munificientiam ferunt matronis habitum ut pilento ad sacra ludosque, carpentis festo profestoque uterentur.

Since there was not a sufficient amount, the matrons, after holding meetings to discuss this matter, by common agreement promised their gold to the tribunes, and dedicated all of their jewelry to the treasury. The senate could not be more grateful for this; they say that in return for this munificence an honor was conferred upon the matrons, that they use the pilentum to go to festivals and games, and the carpentum on festal and ordinary days.50

The resulting gold was used to make a bowl that was dedicated to Apollo at Delphi, the vow thus fulfilled. We are led to believe that then, nearly two centuries later (215 BCE), in the midst of the Second Punic War, sumptuary legislation (lex Oppia) was passed that strictly limited women’s possession and display of wealth: under the terms of the law, their privilege of riding in carriages within the city was taken away.

Livy’s account of the repeal of the lex Oppia offers the fullest articulation of the terms and stakes involved in officially (re-)licensing women to ride through the city. Soon after the conclusion of the second Macedonian War (with the defeat of Philip V at Cynoscephalae in 197 BCE), the tribunes M. Fundanius and L. Valerius propose to the assembly that the lex Oppia be repealed. The year is 195. The law, passed during the Second Punic War (215 BCE, or possibly 213), had prohibited women from possessing more than a half-ounce of gold (ne qua mulier plus

50. 5.25.8–9. Cf. also Festus 283.25–28 L: Pilentis et carpentis per Vrhem uhei matronis concessum est, quod cum aurum non reperiretur; ex uoto, quod Camillus uouerat Apollini Delphico, contulerunt. The pilentum is a more formal and elaborate version of the carpentum, but is elusive because poorly attested. Best known is Virgil’s famous image on the shield of Aeneas of the “chaste mothers” riding in soft pilenta through the city: castae ducabantia sacra per urbm / pilentis matres in mollibus (8.665–66). Fordyce ad loc. translates ducabant sacra as “formed religious processions,” an extension of the use in expressions such as pompam ducere and funus ducere. Servius compares it to the contemporary basterna, and says it was in ancient times (tunc) blue (veneti coloris), as opposed to red (russati) now. The commentator has several concerned notes about the meaning of mollibus, and interprets it as either pensilibus, “hanging” (comparing Pallas’ bier, molle feretrum, Aen. 11.64 and the swings for Bacchus, oscilla...mollia, G.2.389) or molliter stratis (softly upholstered). His note on Aen. 11.478 is illuminating: SUBVEHITVR proprae: matronae enim pilentis uwebantur ad templum p港gentes, at ”pilentis matres in mollibus.” Virgil’s picture is a reimagining of the Trojan women’s appeal to Athena in Iliad 6, but with proper Roman carriages grafted in: nec non ad templum summamque ad Palladis arcas / suhehtiar magna matrum regina catervia / dona ferens (11.477–79). Horace includes it in his parade of vehicles he faults playwrights for dragging onstage in order to amaze their audiences (mox trahitur manibus regum fortuna retoritis, / esseda festinant, pilenta, petorrita, naues, Ep. 2.1.191–92). The pilentum must then be something more lavish and august than the carpentum, used especially for religious procession, and something vaguely approaching a women’s currus triumpha-
semunciam auri haberet, 34.1.3), wearing “multi-colored” (probably, “dyed”) clothing (neu uestimento uersicolo ueretur), and riding in a yoked vehicle within a mile of the city or a town, except for religious festivals (neu iuncto uehiculo in urbe oppidoue aut propius inde mille passus nisi sacrorum publicorum causa ueretur).\(^51\)

Whether it was passed as a wartime curb on private expenditure, or as a worried assertion of male privilege, Livy suggests (here and elsewhere in his narrative) that its passage may have been impulsive (in medio ardore Punici belli, 3), or at the very least, that the specific emergency that had prompted it had now passed.\(^52\) In any case, it is clear that the women found the ban particularly oppressive, and that the senate was divided.

Livy begins book 34 by insisting on the relative unimportance of the episode (in the context of the weighty Macedonian and Punic Wars), but then ironically proceeds to devote considerable space (chapters 1–9) to it. Livy’s account contains two lengthy speeches, that of Cato the Censor (against the repeal), and the tribune Lucius Valerius (for), following a brief description of the civic crisis the proposal to abrogate the law precipitated. What might have been a minor, straightforward matter (res parua dictu, 34.1.1) that happened to “crop up” or “intervene” (intercessit, 1) in the midst of (real, actual, serious) concerns about huge wars, both barely concluded and still looming (inter bellorum magnorum aut uixdum finitorum aut imminentium curas), was something which “went so far as to become” (excesserit) a major conflict as a result of the zeal involved (studiis in magnum certamen).\(^53\) The contrast between intercessit and excesserit highlights the extent to which the episode represents a paradoxical transgression of normal categories and expectations. It is an affair that goes where it should not, in two senses: it both “interrupts” more pressing concerns and “transgresses” appropriate limits. Continuing with the metaphor of egregious motion, Livy has many notable men “stepping forward” to speak for and against abrogation (ad suadendum dissuadendumque multi nobiles prodibant, 4). The movement escalates, and soon a crowd convenes on the Capitol.\(^54\) But even more aberrant is the participation of the matrons, who throng the city in support of the law’s repeal:

matronae nulla nec auctoritate nec uerecundia nec imperio uiorum contineri limine poterant, omnes uias urbis aditusque in forum obsidebant, uiros descendentes ad forum orantes ut florente re publica, crescente in dies priuata omnium fortuna, matronis quoque pristinum ornatum reddi

\(^51\) Versicolor is usually taken to refer primarily to purple-trimmed garments. The law thus could represent an assertion, during a time of crisis, of the privileges of certain males (curule magistrates and priests, but also freeborn boys) to wear the purple-striped toga praetexta. This aspect of the measure may also have had specific patriotic/xenophobic motivations, given the powerful associations of “Tyrian purple” and the Phoenician origins of Carthage.

\(^52\) A CA editor offers the plausible suggestion of a wartime shortage of draught animals.

\(^53\) I read the subjunctive excesserit as part of a relative clause of result, the perfect tense of the subjunctive stressing completion.

\(^54\) Capitolium turbæ hominum fauentium adversantiumque legi complebatur.
The matrons could not be kept inside their homes by either official influence, modesty, or their husband’s commands, but occupied all the city streets and entrances to the forum, imploring the men as they entered the forum that, as the state was flourishing and the private fortune of all was growing day by day, they allow the women too to have their former decorations restored. This concourse of women grew daily; for they were even arriving from the towns and rural villages. Soon they even dared to accost and beg the consuls, praetors, and other magistrates.55

Several thematically important details stand out in this description.56 It is first of all significant that the matrons cannot “be contained” within their thresholds (contineri limine) by any of three very abstract entities: auctoritas (something between “authority” and “influence” or “persuasion”), verecundia (their own sense of modesty or shame), or imperium uirorum (“their husbands’ orders”). All represent aspects of ideal Roman male behavior, temporarily incapacitated. Auctoritas, in the sense of using one’s influence and political power to sway individuals and events (and so structure the world), often has forensic or deliberative application, and here seems to refer mainly to the senate and magistrates (as opposed to the women’s husbands in general). The opposition between the Roman (male) political establishment and the physically protesting wives and mothers is thus established. Formalized speech has become momentarily powerless over the movement of actual bodies. Verecundia, though certainly an ideal quality of Roman virtus, here refers to the women’s (lack of a) sense of shame, and is reminiscent of Livy’s similar characterization of Tullia when he describes her immodest appearance in public before the curia (nec reuerita coetum uirorum).57 In both cases, a proper attitude of deference has temporarily evaporated. But, unlike Tullia’s transgression, the matrons’ defiance of a socially determined “knowledge of one’s place” (here based on gender) also potentially threatens the efficacy of verecundia as a structuring device for hierarchies among men—perhaps a more dangerous prospect for Livy and his readers. The final item in this list of failed defenses—a kind of last resort—is the imperium uirorum, which in context must signify something between “their husbands’ authority (over them and their household)” and, more literally (from imperare), “their husbands’ orders.” Livy thus focalizes the three successive metaphorical spaces that the matrons have transgressed—political, social, and domestic—before moving on to describe the details of their physical trespass.

55. 34.1.5–6.
57. While verecundia is by no means only a feminine virtue in Roman culture—Roman men can possess (or lack) verecundia—purported lapses of it among women seem to have been the object of greater collective anxiety. Cf. Kaster 2005: 13–27 (25–26 on women’s verecundia).
Next, it is important, as Livy emphasizes here and throughout the narrative, that the women have unilaterally moved their bodies through the space of the city in order to directly influence the outcome of the debate: in this sense they are enacting a version of what the Oppian Law had prohibited them from doing in the first place—moving through the city openly, even spectacularly. By a form of direct action, they are in a sense challenging the senators to stop their own movement through the city. This direct action, despite Livy’s interest in and focus on the content of the senators’ speeches, will have to linger as a dangerous threat to Roman political culture. This is not to say that political activity among Roman men did not involve considerable physical movement—both actual (e.g., *ambire*, “going around,” i.e., “canvassing” for votes) and metaphorical (e.g., *pedibus ire* or *in sententiam ire*, “vote for”), not to mention quasi-legendary “secessions.” It is only that a striking feature of Livy’s account here is his emphasis on the women’s physical movement, a phenomenon which he clearly contrasts with the activity of the senators. Their role in the narrative is mainly played by the two representative speeches.

Employing a deliberately paradoxical image, Livy envisions the women “laying siege to” the city from within, by blocking its vital arteries. They occupy not only “all the city streets,” but also, more specifically, the entrances to the forum (*omnes uias urbis aditusque in forum obsidebant*). The notion of (contested) authoritative speech, glimpsed already in the failure of *auctoritas*, recurs in the indirectly reported and, in comparison to the subsequent speeches of Cato and Lucius Valerius, short-winded pleading of the women. Their “oratio” takes up a mere two lines of text (*uiros descendentes ad forum orantes ut florente re publica, crescente in dies privata omnium fortuna, matronis quoque pristinum ornatum reddi paterentur*).58

The well-worn phrase, *descendentes ad forum*, used to describe the husbands, rather fussily revises the women’s more literally physical approach (*aditusque in forum obsidebant*; compare Tullia’s exceptional *carpentum* ride in forum to hail her husband king).59 The matrons are attempting to occupy a space that does not belong to them, a process that takes place by their concrete movement into it (or, technically, towards its entrances).

For the men, by contrast, the *forum*, as the center of legal and political activity, is presented as a more abstract, conceptual realm—a location that they make for. The forum, as a place, really takes shape through *speeches*, and this is one way that Livy’s narrative seeks to master the audacious challenge offered by the protesting matrons: the subsequent speeches (in *oratio directa*) offer a powerful rejoinder to the women’s attempt to use their physical, bodily presence to influence the outcome.60 It is telling that in his speech Cato apes Livy’s earlier phrasing when he describes the embarrassment he experienced while having to make his way through the midst of the “troop” of women into the forum: *equidem non sine rubore*

58. In contrast to the over 10 OCT pages devoted to the speeches of Cato and Lucius Valerius.
59. Livy 1.48.5.
60. Livy’s description of Cato as *minime exorabilem* (1.7) reads nearly as a dismissive joke on the women’s ad-lib “oratio”: their unauthorized pleas won’t work on *this* consul.
quodam paulo ante per medium agmen mulierum in forum perueni (2.8). The physical presence of the women causes Cato (temporarily) to acknowledge the physical movement required for him to enter the space of political speech. But he then immediately goes on to announce the reply he would have given to the women at that moment, had he not been restrained by respect: in essence, what he “reenacts” is a severe rebuke for moving around in public (see below). Livy’s deliberate choice to write Cato’s impromptu, informal reply into his formalized, official reply is itself a defense of the power of institutionalized speech to respond to the chaotic danger represented by moving, speaking women.

Indeed, the first of the two speeches restaged by Livy’s ventriloquism, that of the intractable Cato (minime exorabilem...consulem, 1.7), begins by addressing the physical appeal made by the matres. This is first implicit in the nod Cato makes to the terms in which Livy had conceptualized the women’s transgression (si in sua quisque nostrum matre familiae, Quirites, ius et maiestatem uiri retinere instituisset, minus cum uniueris feminis negotii haberemus, 2.1): if each husband had resolved to hold onto (retinere) his husbandly authority (ius et maiestatem uiri ~ imperium uiri), we would have been able to contain the women in their homes (contineri limine, 1.5), and would be relatively free of this “business with the women.” It then becomes explicit in Cato’s description of the women’s protest as essentially a violent assault on male libertas: nunc domi uicta libertas nostra impotentia muliebri hic quoque in foro obteritur et calcatur, et quia singulas non continuimus universas horremus (2.2). The men’s freedom, having been conquered at home, is being trampled and trod on by the women’s lack of self-restraint (impotentia). The theme of “containment” recurs in singulas non continuimus. Cato’s vivid image, of womanly impotentia conquering and oppressing masculine libertas (almost as if in a triumphal pompa), takes its cue from Livy’s own framing description of the woman’s demonstration as a “siege” or “occupation” (omnes uias urbis aditusque in forum obsidebant, 1.5). The military imagery continues when Cato recounts the self-control he felt when passing

61. A single fragment of Cato’s de Vestitu et Vehiculis survives (Malcovati 93): nam perniurium siet, cum mihi ob eos mores, quos prius habui, honos detur, ubi datus est, tum uti eos mutem atque alii modi sim. Cato must be speaking about himself analogously. At issue here is most likely the women’s honos of riding in carpenta (as a reward for good mores in subsidizing the state treasury), which, he believes, they no longer deserve (because they have changed their mores and are different).
62. A slight paradox in the juxtaposition feminis negotii conveys Cato’s outrage: the women are out of place in the midst of the business of the city.
63. It is of course deliberately paradoxical that “powerlessness” could have the capability to overpower.
64. McDonald’s sustinere non potuimus for continuimus (Hertz) would instead connote “reining in” horses (cf. date frenos, 13; also, obturitur et calcatur) and may be a better reading.
65. Obteritur et calcatur, as uicta, may simply refer to “actual” conquest (as opposed to symbolic conquest in triumph), but the two-step process involved, domi uicta and then in foro obturitur et calcatur, seems to mirror ironically two components of Roman conquest: victory (abroad) and symbolic reenactment (at home, in town). As Briscoe (1981) notes, Livy may also be referencing Cato’s famous maxim (reported by Plutarch Cat. Mai. 8.4): πάντες ἄνθρωποι τῶν γυναίκων ἄρχουσιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντων ἄνθρωπων, ἡμῶν δ’ αἱ γυνάκες.
through the ranks of women, mentioned above. His own modesty held him back from chiding them directly—an outburst which he expresses in his speech instead:

\begin{quote}

qui hic mos est in publicum procurrendi et obsidendi uias et uiros alienos appellandii? istud ipsum suos quaque domi rogare non potuistis? an blandiores in publico quam in priuato et alienis quam uestris estis? quamquam ne domi quidem uos, si sui iuris finibus matronas contineret pudor, quae leges hic rogarentur abrogarenturue, curare decuit.
\end{quote}

What behavior is this, running out into public and blockading the streets and accosting other women’s husbands? Was each of you incapable of making just this appeal to your own husbands, at home? Or are you more captivating in public than in private, and to other women’s husbands than to your own? Even so, not even at home—if modesty kept matrons within the limits of what is acceptable for them to do—would it be appropriate for you to worry about what laws are to be proposed or repealed.66

The asymmetry is marked: Cato’s modesty prevents him from addressing the women on his approach to the forum, while their own shame fails to stop them from overstepping the limits of their homes and entering the forum. Thematized here, and throughout Cato’s speech, is the opposition between suus/alienus and priuatus/publicus, and it is clear in Cato’s vision of Roman social space that, while men are allowed to pass between these realms, women are not. So, by this schema, the matronae should of course not concern themselves with legislation (in private, let alone in public). Pointed reference to this detail is made in the repetition of rogare (of the women beseeching men in public) and rogarentur abrogarenturue (of laws), the thrust of which depends on the shift in sense. At the very least (although he makes clear his disapproval of even this), the women should have appealed to their own husbands concerning this issue, instead of actually attempting to bring about the repeal of the law in a public setting. But by highlighting this similarity (here, seemingly innocuously, as a stylistic flourish), Cato has in fact drawn attention to the significant danger the women’s protest represents. After all, what becomes of senatorial and tribunal authority if the matrons’ makeshift “rogatio” can trump official, authorized rogatio or abrogatio, as it in fact does? He makes this point explicit several lines later: quid enim nunc aliud per uias et compita faciunt quam rogationem tribunorum plebi suadent, quam legem abrogandum censent? (2.12) That is, according to Cato’s outraged argumentation, the matres are coopting access to political deliberation by occupying public space—the latter a preemptive enactment of what the appeal would bring about (or rather, restore): greater movement and participation in the public sphere. A striking connection between transport and political power (or, at least, engagement or participation) has been established by this implicit link.

66. 2.9–10.
But it is important to remember that Cato’s speech ostensibly treats all three “decorations” covered by the *lex Oppia*, and not simply transit. In addition to the privilege of riding in *carpenta* and *pilenta*, it concerns the possession of large amounts of gold and the wearing of colored garments. So while our focus here is obviously on the first of the three, we must be careful to distinguish among them when analyzing Cato’s speech. There is no doubt that the speech as a whole is not simply about *carpenta*: some sections deal explicitly with gold and purple. Cato’s agitation in part results from what he sees as the uncurbed growth of *luxuria*, which, though it must include *carpentum* use, gets articulated primarily through *aurum* and *purpura*. It is the dramatic visibility, the fact that the women are thought to be showing them off, that so incenses Cato, even more than the fact that they possess such luxury items at all, or in more significant quantities than in the time of *maiores nostri*. Section 4, for example, deals largely with the growth of *luxuria* at Rome brought about by imperial expansion and exposure to foreign wealth, concluding with a dramatic peak of impassioned *prosopopoeia*.67 Cato mouths wealthy women’s indignation at being prohibited from displaying their wealth in public (and being seen doing so). “*Cur non insignis auro et purpura conspicior?*” “Why am I not noticed, outstanding in gold and purple?”68 But it is clear from the section that Cato’s critique of ostentatious *luxuria* is by no means confined to women’s showy display of prestige goods. Rather, they appear to be the most visible symbol of his moralizing tirade, a sort of weather vane indicating the prevailing direction of Roman morality in general, among men as well.69

Nevertheless, since scholarly discussions of Cato’s speech have focused on gold and purple, it is important to highlight here the ways in which women’s mobility is portrayed as problematic. First, transportation is the only component of the *lex Oppia* that allegedly went back to an officially granted privilege, which was then taken away once again. Gold and purple, by contrast, had no history of special conferral. The notion that women’s mobility is properly state-sanctioned...
is thus given extra emphasis in the construction of this layered legend. The emphasis on exchange also probably links transportation to marriage by association—but, once again, marriage that is subjected to some level of state oversight.

Secondly, on the formal level, the figural language Livy’s Cato resorts to underlines the significance of vehicular power as a central metaphor. Some of Cato’s most striking and feverish images concerning the women’s free-wheeling behavior come from driving vehicles.

Date frenos impotenti naturae et indomito animali et sperate ipsas modum licentiae facturas; nisi uos facietis, minimum hoc eorum est, quae iniquo animo feminæ sibi aut moribus aut legibus inuincta patiuntur.

Give free rein to their unbridled nature and to this uncontrollable animal and hope that they themselves will put a limit on their license; unless you do it, this is the least of the things imposed upon women by custom and law to which they submit while feeling they are unjust.  

What may seem merely a metaphor—women as drayage animals or beasts of burden—is a disturbing revelation of Cato’s implicit logic. Woman cannot be allowed to drive, or be in charge of, yoked vehicles when they themselves have no more self-control than the animals themselves. They, like unruly horses or mules, must be “reined in,” and the only option for the senate is to have the women submit (patiuntur) to what has been “yoked” to them (inuincta) by law and custom. Otherwise, it will be as if the horses have been handed the reins.  

What pretext—proper even to mention—is being given for this sedition of the women? ‘That we glitter with gold and purple,’ one says, ‘that we ride in carpenta on festal and ordinary days, and ride through the city as if in triumph over the conquered and repealed law and over your votes that we

70. 2.13–14.

71. Cato’s haec consternatio muliebris (34.2.6) and quod matronæ consternatae procuercerint (34.3.6) both suggest horses running wild (cf. 37.42.1 of consternatio). Note the suggestive use of the same verb in Florus’ brief account of Tullia. nec abhorrebat [sc. uiri Tarquinii] moribus uxor Tullia, quae ut uirum regem salutaret, supra cruentum patrem uecta carpento consternatos equos exeget (1.1.188). 34.3.2 (si carpere singula et extorquere et exaequari et extremum uiris patiemini, tolerabiles uobis eas fore credits?), a sentence with an exceptionally high level of sound play: is there a playful figura etymologica of carpentum from carpere? The aphoristic answer (extemplo simul pares esse coeperint, superiors erunt) suggests the resulting physical elevation of the women, as if in a triumphal quadrigae. It is perhaps significant that in the mini-biography of Cato in de Viris Illustribus (47.6), his role in opposing the women is articulated through a spatial metaphor: matronis ornamenta erepta Oppia lege repetentibus restitit (“he stood in the way of the matrons demanding back” or almost, “going after”).
have taken and snatched away; that there be no limit to our spending, and to our luxury."  

In his run-up to this spirited mime performance, Cato’s mention of the women’s seditio, while obviously referring to the secessions of the plebs (probably ironically), invokes also the literal meaning of seditio, “a going apart” or “aside”: the women have quite literally “moved away” from their accustomed place. Once again, Cato’s language reminds us, this has been brought about by a preemptive movement through the city. The women’s intent through this insurrection is to win a kind of triumph over the vanquished law and over the conquered votes of the senators: their subsequent carriage rides will then be sort of pompa triumphalis through the city. What could be more preposterous—and dangerous—than allowing women (i.e., “draught animals”) to lead a triumph over men?

How does Lucius Valerius’ reply (34.5–7), in favor of the law’s repeal, take up this theme? With respect to Cato’s description of the women’s activity as an “insurrection,” he replies:

cœtum et seditionem et interdum secessionem muliebrem appellavit, quod matronae in publico uos rogassent ut legem in se latam per bellum temporibus duris in pace et florenti ac beata re publica abrogaretis.

He called this gathering of women a sedition and at times a secession, because the matrons had asked you (rogassent) in public to repeal (abrogaretis) in a time of peace, when the state is flourishing and wealthy, a law that was passed against them in a difficult period of war.  

Careful to name the women’s demonstration a “gathering” (coetus)—that is, a coming together of women, rather than a departure of women from the men—he insists that Cato has overemphasized the novelty of what the matronae are doing: “For what new thing have the matrons done anyway, by coming forth in great numbers in public in a case that pertains to them? Have they never before now appeared in public?” (nam quid tandem noui matronae fecerunt, quod frequenter in causa ad se pertinentem in publicum processerunt? numquam ante hoc tempus in publico apparuerunt? 5.7, processunt perhaps invoking the proper use of carriages as originally granted). He then proceeds to list moments when the Roman women have affected events by mass demonstration. Two examples are significant, because they are parallel to the origin of the women’s privilege of the carpentum. Valerius mentions the ransom of the city of Rome from the Gauls; it was the women who contributed their gold to pay the ransom.  

72. 3.8–9.
73. 5.5.
74. iam urbe capta a Gallis aurum quo redempa urbs est nonne matronae consensu omnium in publicum contulerunt (5.9). Livy treats the story in 5.50, where he recounts that the matrons were rewarded with having funeral orations delivered for them as for men. Alternatively, Diodorus Siculus (14.116.9) identifies this as the reason for the matrons being granted the privilege of riding in carriages (or rather, ἄρματα, “chariots”): λέγοντι δέ τινες καὶ διότι τὸν χρυσὸν κόσμον αἱ γυναῖκες εἰς τὴν κοινὴν
Roman widows supplied money to the state treasury. In essence, Valerius asserts the value and importance of state-sanctioned feminine mobility.

But let us return finally to Livy’s *oratio obliqua* of the women. What the *matronae* plead is interesting, and, as it happens, essential for an understanding of two competing conceptualizations of Roman traffic, and will serve to conclude this discussion. Unlike Juvenal’s vision of urban traffic as breakdown, Livy’s matrons ultimately offer a vision of traffic flow as intrinsically tied to the flourishing of Rome. It is significant that they claim that their right to mobility is now, once again, in a time of relative peace, warranted—now that the commonwealth is flourishing (*florente re publica*), and that the private prosperity of all is growing day by day (*crescente in dies priuata omnium fortuna*). Implicit in this configuration is the equation of movement, the flow of people and goods—traffic—with prosperity and growth. If, they suggest, the growth and fertility of the Roman state was temporarily blocked by the ravages of the Second Punic War, it was not inappropriate that their movement between parts of the city, between Roman households, as wives and mothers, should also be interrupted. But now that Rome has begun reproducing itself again, so the matrons should resume mobility: traffic figured as fertility.

What may seem merely a turn of phrase in Livy becomes explicit narrative content in another version of the story, Ovid’s simultaneously grim and glib version in his *Fasti*. Instead of just preemptively resuming their temporarily obstructed mobility, as in Livy, Ovid’s matrons actually refuse to reproduce future Romans, by voluntarily aborting their unborn children:

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nam prius Ausonias matres carpenta uhebant
(hae quoque ab Euandi dicta parente reor);
mox honor eripitur, matronaque destinat omnis
ingratos nulla prole nouare uiros,
neue dare partus, ictu temeraria caeco
uiscuribus crescents excubietat onus.
corripiuisse patres ausas immitia nuptas,
Ius tamen exemptum restituisse ferunt.
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For in ancient times Italian mothers rode in carriages (carpenta), which I suspect were also named after Evander’s parent [Carmentis]. Later their honor was snatched away, and every matron vowed not to propagate the line of their ungrateful husbands by giving birth to any offspring; and to avoid bearing children, she rashly by a secret thrust expelled the growing (crescens) burden from her womb. They say the senate rebuked the wives for daring such cruelty, but restored the right that was stripped away.78

The poet’s motivations are different from those of Livy’s senate-focused historiography, and Ovid has certainly seized on this version (also attested in Plutarch), at least in part, for shock value. And, while he portrays the women’s abortion in rather savage terms (note the harshness of *ictu temeraria caeeco* / *uisceribus crescens excutiebat omus*), his depiction of the senators’ actions is suggestively violent as well (*honor eripitur; corripuisse*).79 Significant, though, is Ovid’s highlighting of an etymological connection between *carpenta* and *Carmenta*, a goddess of childbirth cultivated by Roman mothers. Even if it is a “creative” etymology that Ovid suggests playfully, Plutarch appears to signal awareness of it in his version of the story.80 In any case, the aural likeness of the two words may have been such that, to Roman ears, *carpenta* could not possibly *not* be linked to maternity, in some fundamental way, even if Ovid was the first (or only) one to articulate the connection explicitly. His explication of the meaning of *carpenta*, “tongue-in-cheek” or not, reinforces formally the

78. 1.619–26. The story explains the origin of the *Carmentalia*:

binaque nunc pariter Tegaeae sacra parenti
pro pueros fieri urginibusque iubent.
sortea non illi fas est inferre sacello,
ne violent puros examinata focos.

79. For a sensitive account of Ovid’s subtle activation of the metaphorical violence embedded in *eripitur* and *corripuisse*, see Green’s (2004) comments, 285 and ad loc.

80. Plutarch cites this alternate version as part of his “answer” to *Roman Question* 56 (‘Διὰ τί τὸ τῆς Καρμέντης ἱερὸν ἕξ ἄρρητος δοκοῦσιν οἱ μητέραι ἱδρύσασθαι καὶ νῦν κάρμινα τώρα σβήνονται; “Why are the matrons supposed to have founded the temple of Carmenta originally, and why do they especially revere it now?”). While Plutarch explicitly reports only two conflicting etymologies (*Carmenta* < *carmina* and *carmina* < *Carmenta* < *carenς mente*), I read him as signaling awareness of Ovid’s etymology of *carpenta* from *Carmenta* in the first section of his answer (278b-c):

λέγεται γάρ τις λόγος ὡς ἕκολοθήσαν ὑπὸ τῆς βουλῆς αἱ γυναικὲς όψησαν χρήσαντα ξεκότος·
συνέθεντο οὖν ἄλλαξαν μὴ καθόκοσθαι μήδε τάκτειν ἀπόμεναν τοὺς ἄνδρας, δόθης ὥς μετέγνυσαν καὶ συνεχώρησαν κούτας·
γενομένων δὲ παϊῶν εὐπαινόσης καὶ πολυτεκνοῦσιν τὸ τῆς Καρμέντης ἱερὸν ἱδρύσαστο. τὴν δὲ Καρμένταν ὃι μὲν Ἐυάνδρῳ μητέρα λέγουσιν οὔδεν ἔλλοιν εἰς Ἰταλίαν ὅνομαζομένην Θήμην, ὡς δ’ ἔνοιο, Νικοστράτην ἐμμέτροις δὲ χρησιμοῦς ἄδικοις ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀπαντὸν Καρμένταν ἄναμμενοις τὰ γάρ ἐπὶ ‘κάρμινα’ καλοῦσαν, διὲ δὲ Μοῖραν ηγουσίαν τὴν Καρμένταν εἶναι καὶ διὰ τοῦτο θέουν αὐτὴ τὰς μητέρας. ἔστι δὲ τοῦ ὀνόματος τὸ ἐτώμον ἑστηρμενεν νοῦ· διὰ τὰς θεοφόρησις, δόθην τὰ τά κάρμινα τῇ Καρμέντῃ τούνομα παράσηκεν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον αὐτ’ ἔκεινης ἐκλήθη διὰ τὸ τοὺς χρησιμοῦς ἐν ἔπειται καὶ μέτρος ἐνθουσίωσιν ἢδεν.

Rose 1924: 195 suggests Verrius Flaccus as a source for Ovid’s and Plutarch’s version.
identification of feminine transport with reproduction that his narrative of the lex Oppia story makes explicit—more explicit, that is, than Livy’s account.

Ovid’s narrative representation of the lex Oppia story, reinforced by his own etymological emphasis, attests to the power of this particular discourse: growth and prosperity are directly linked to the movement of vehicles, here quite literally specified as essential to human fertility. Far from the crushing, deadening blockage we saw in Juvenal’s portrait of urban gridlock, and instead of the dangerous filial impietas represented by a daughter’s movement into a new household, the official function of traffic via carpenta, these texts assert, is to license and facilitate the city’s capacity to reproduce Roman citizens. One of the central functions, then, of Livy’s narrative of the repeal of the lex Oppia, and its re-authorization of women’s access to the carpentum, is to attempt to replace one vision of transport with, and by means of, another. In place of a dangerous, chaotic array of stop-and-go movements, forever slightly beyond the reach and control of authorized, powerful speech, the episode substitutes a system of instrumental transportation that defines women’s mobility as identical with the reproduction of Rome and its citizens. But since Livy’s account can never quite accommodate the realities of physical movement, and since the darkly playful ambiguity of Ovid’s account must surely subvert this as a viable solution, the challenge posed by Tullia’s triumphant ride still lingers as an indelible association for the carpentum, and as a dangerous symbol of female mobility in Roman culture.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY