Tacitus’s *Annales* opens: “From the beginning kings held the city of Rome.”¹ If indeed, as both Livy and the Fasti would have it, Romulus and his regal successors also celebrated the earliest triumphs,² then they did so presumably on their own merits and by their own sovereign proclamation, needing no further sanction from anyone else. But under the Republic the situation grew far more complex, as command of Roman armies, and hence the opportunity to become the focus of a victory celebration, passed from the kings to the consuls and *dictatores*, later joined also by promagistrates and eventually praetors too.³ How then was it determined who deserved to triumph? The answer to this question turns out to be as subtle and multilayered as the Republican constitution itself.

For each recorded triumph, the Fasti Triumphales include the following: the name of the *triumphator* (including patronyms and cognomen); the office that he held at the time; a Roman numeral, where appropriate, to mark a second triumph (or third, or fourth, etc.) by the same individual; the name of the enemy over whom he celebrated his victory (marked by *de* plus the ablative case); and the year (from the founding of the city), the month, and the date when the triumph took place. Although a special

². For the earliest entries in the Fasti, see Degrassi 1947, 64–65, 534–35. Livy describes Romulus’s procession to the Capitoline with the spoils of his victory at 1.10.5 but does not call it a triumph. The word *triumphus* first appears at 1.38.3, for a celebration by Tarquinius Priscus over the Sabines.
³. Q. Pubilius Philo became the first proconsul to celebrate a triumph, in 326, during the Samnite Wars (8.26.7 and Degrassi 1947, 70–71, 541), but no praetor triumphed until L. Furius Purpureo in 200 (31.49.2–3, with the Fasti not extant). Both these men clearly set important precedents.
note will also indicate an ovatio or naval triumph as opposed to the far more regular full type, the Fasti tend to efface distinctions between one triumph and another. If controversy erupted over a general’s triumph request at the time, it fades into silence here as long as the results came out in his favor, and triumph bids merely assayed only to be rejected or discarded for whatever reason leave no trace whatsoever. Conspicuously absent as well is any mention of the governing body or bodies involved. Entries in the Fasti therefore reveal almost nothing about the decision-making process leading up to any given award, and offer only indirect hints about the criteria that may have been used to distinguish valid claims from invalid ones.

Nor do the authors generally cited to corroborate or refute details from the early Fasti—Livy’s First Decade mainly, supplemented by excerpts from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the elder Pliny, Valerius Maximus, Eutropius, the anonymous Liber de Viris Illustribus, and others—offer very much help. At one point Livy expresses surprise at the failure of his sources to explain why a particular triumph was not granted or even requested, suggesting that he may have looked for such information as a matter of course. Given the pitiful state of the sources, though, triumphs (as opposed to triumph debates) dominate the available picture from the start of the Republic until the mid-third century at the earliest. With the loss of Livy’s Second Decade, we do not have the full benefit of his account until the Hannibalic War. Triumphal rules and procedures from the early period must therefore be reconstructed, if not entirely from scratch, then all too often on the basis of late, highly unreliable evidence.

Laying criteria aside for the moment, we are on somewhat firmer ground

4. i.e., ovans or navalem [sc. triumphum] egit. The spolia opima awarded to Marcellus in 222 also receive conspicuous mention, although the first such, said to have been taken in the field by Romulus himself, do not appear. In the notorious case of A. Cornelius Cossus in 428, the stone is sadly missing. See Degrassi 1947, as follows: 64–65, 534 (Romulus); 538 (Cossus); 78–79, 551 (Marcellus).

5. Most of the triumph notices in Livy’s First Decade simply state (Fasti-like) that X triumphed over Y: 2.7.4, 2.10.1, 2.16.9, 2.20.13; 4.10.7, 5.23.4, 5.49.7, 6.4.1, 6.16.5, 6.29.8; 7.11.9 (cf. 7.11.11), 7.15.8, 7.27.8, 9.15.10, 9.16.11, 9.45.22, 9.44.14, 9.45.18 (an anonymous celebration); 10.1.9, 10.3.13, 10.37.13, 10.49.13. Here and there, Livy mentions a senatorial decree: 2.47.10, 3.29.4, 3.70.14; 4.53.11, 8.12.10, 8.16.11; 9.40.20, 9.45.22, 10.37.6. Sometimes he uses a passive verb with no stated agent (3.10.4, 4.43.2, 5.31.4, 7.11.9, 8.13.9, 8.26.7, 10.36.19) or occasionally a formula more in keeping with the dual-sovereignty model of the SPQR (4.20.1, 6.42.8, 7.11.9; and cf. 10.46.2).

6. 3.70.14: “triumphum nec ipsos postulasse nec delatum iis ab senatu accipio, nec traditur causa sperti aut non sperati honoris” (“I have not learned either that they themselves sought a triumph or that it was granted to them by the senate, and the reason for the honor being turned down or not hoped for is not recorded”).
with the question of who awarded triumphs. Here two important observations suggest themselves: first, the senate seems to have emerged as the chief arbiter of triumphi spes under the Republic from a very early date; but second, an imperator who met with intractable opposition in the curia might rescue his triumph bid, under the right circumstances, by recourse to the popular assembly or even to his own imperium by itself. All three elements from Polybius’s famous excursus (6.11–18) on the nature of the Republican government as an example of what Aristotle had termed the “mixed constitution”—the senate representing oligarchy (τὸ στρατοκρατικόν), the Roman people representing democracy (τὸ δημοκρατικόν), and the magistrates, whose powers of imperium and auspicio derived from the sole rule of kings (τὸ μοναρχικόν καὶ βασιλικόν)—were known to play a decisive part on occasion. Triumphal ritual uniquely brought the whole SPQR together, highlighting the paradigmatic entry of the commander into the urbs with the good fortune that his victory brought to all its inhabitants. Triumph debates likewise reveal an intricate pattern of interactions between the different elements of Roman society and government. It would be well, following the Polybian schema, to examine the roles of the senate, the people, and the magistrates of Rome in determining who should triumph and who should not.

**SENATUS: THE SENATE**

Among the various checks and balances within the governing structure of the res publica, Polybius singles out the power of the senate both to award triumphs and to allocate public funds to pay for them. A commander came before his aristocratic peers first and foremost to narrate his res gestae and


8. Itgenshorst 2005, 189–218, points to certain prevailing tensions between the triumphator on the one hand and his soldiers, the people, and the senate on the other. The individual’s quest for self-aggrandizement repeatedly runs up against the patrum auctoritas jealously guarding the right to triumph. Often stymied by their peers, aristocrats go out of their way to show themselves as successful commanders, and in their bid to retain their dignitas and a measure of independence from the tyranny of the senate, they emphasize their family lineage and make victory count for much more than triumphs. I believe that fairly sums up her argument. The problem is that most of the would-be triumphatores were themselves senators and the sons, grandsons, nephews, brothers, etc., of senators, which means that their personal and family interests were not as radically distinct from those of the senate as Itgenshorst suggests. A more complex and nuanced model is called for that takes both the competition between members of the aristocracy and their solidarity into account. Cf., e.g., Hökseskamp 1995.

9. Polyb. 6.15.7–8.
make his formal triumph request. The process is well known and often described in the scholarly literature. A would-be triumphator met with the senate outside the pomerium—often in the Temple of Bellona or of Apollo Medicus nearby—because it was taboo (nefas) for anyone endowed with imperium militiae to cross the sacred boundary. The patres would weigh his claim, and if they agreed, the triumph would go forward. Technically every triumphator may have required the consent of the people as well, but regardless of how dual approval from the senate and people together may have been obtained in practice, the fact that the patres generally dominated

10. For a good example of the standard formulaic language, see 31.47.7: “senatum in aede Bellonae habuit expositisque rebus gestis ut triumphanti sibi in urbem inuehi liceret petit” (“he held a meeting of the senate in the Temple of Bellona, and having narrated his accomplishments he asked for permission to enter the city in triumph”).

11. Gell. 15.27 writes: “centuriata comitia intra pomerium fieri nefas esse, quia exercitum extra urbem imperari oporteat, intra urbem imperari ius non sit” (“it is taboo [lit. ‘unspeakable’] for a meeting of the centuriate assembly to be held inside the pomerium, since command over an army must be exercised outside the city limits, [and] there is no right for command to be exercised within the city limits”). A similar prohibition, as early as the XII Tables, governed the burial of the dead: Cic. Leg. 2.23.38, Dio 45.7.1 (cf. 53.2.4), Eutr. 8.5. On meeting places of the Roman senate, see Bonnefond-Coudry 1989, 25–198, with a careful discussion of the ideological reasons for holding triumph debates outside the pomerium at 137–60. On the archaeology of the temples of Bellona and Apollo Medicus in relation to the topography of the triumph, see Coarelli 1988, 395–99. Also note the clearly labeled plan in Künzl 1988, 33. Certain generals from the Late Republic waited outside the city literally for years in hopes of being allowed to celebrate the signal honor: L. Licinius Lucullus, Q. Caecilius Metellus Creticus, Q. Marcius Rex, and C. Pomptinus. Cf. Brennan 1996, 329.

12. Promagistrates apparently needed a special dispensation in order to triumph, because their original term of office had technically expired. Livy mentions a relatio ad populum for this purpose on two occasions: for the ovatio of M. Claudius Marcellus in 211 (26.21.5) and for the triumphs of L. Aemilius Paullus, Cn. Octavius, and L. Anicius Gallus in 167 (45.35.4). See Mommsen 1887, 1.132 and nn. More problematic for lack of evidence is the supposed extension of this practice to all triumphatores, including those currently in their year of office. Versnel 1970, 192, argues as follows: “The crossing of the pomerium forms the pivot around which all juridical usages connected with the triumph revolve. Within this pomerium only the imperium domi was operative. On the day of the triumph, however, the triumphator had, with the people’s consent, the imperium militiae. This fact seems to me to be the central one, which requires an explanation.” Farther down on the same page (in n. 3), he cites Mommsen as above, and then adds, “it is also possible, and in my view more probable, that the normal magistrate, too, needed the people’s permission to retain his full military imperium in the city.” Brennan 1996, 316, follows Versnel’s lead, also citing Mommsen. If this model holds, we have to assume that Livy has compressed his description of the process more often than not, omitting reference to the popular vote in every instance but the two exceptional cases listed above. He certainly demonstrates elsewhere an inconsistency in the length at which he spells out such procedural details: Linderski 1993, 56–59, convincingly traces a similar phenomenon with regard to the haruspices. Also note the ever-present link between imperium and auspicium: Brennan 2004, 42, calls the Porta Triumphalis “a hole in augural space,” because a commander “who properly entered through it was entitled to retain his military auspices in the city for a single day so as to make a formal procession to the Temple of Jupiter.”
the proceedings is still beyond doubt. Every attested triumph debate began in the senate even if it did not end there, and all but one in Livy 21–45 take place entirely within the ranks of the curia.13 Nevertheless the patrum auctoritas did not stand alone: both the Roman people at large, as those who bestowed imperium, and the magistrates themselves, as those who bore it, maintained a vital role in triumphal negotiations across the centuries; and because in practice the mos maiorum left room for strategic political realignments as events called for, either one or the other of two additional branches in the power triangle could on occasion go so far as to authorize a triumph on its own, without senatorial consent.

13. The one glaring exception to the rule that triumph debates took place in the senate is the controversy over honors for L. Aemilius Paullus in 167 (45.35–39), where the senate voted overwhelmingly in the commander’s favor and heated arguments broke out only in a later motion before the people. See chapter XX below.

14. A single late source (Zonar. 7.19.5) reports finding evidence (lēgetai, “it is said”) that none of the so-called tribuni consulares who led Roman armies into battle during the late fifth and early fourth centuries ever triumphed, although “many of [them] often won victories.” Livy never raises the possibility of triumphs for these officials, and Zonaras’s cryptic statement leaves a fair bit of room for interpretation, as we shall see in chapter 2 below.

15. J. S. Richardson 1975, 58, refers to the “somewhat doubtful early cases.”

16. Livy’s heavily dramatized account of the decemviri has been called into question many times, if not dismissed as an outright fabrication. For a balanced treatment, with a helpful summary of previous scholarship, see Ungern-Sternberg 1986. Perhaps the episode of the triumph debate, by itself, need not be tarred with the same brush as other elements of the story—Mitchell 1990, 193, guardedly refers to it—but the whole thing must remain dubious at best, even though Livy clearly regarded it as the first item in a series and a significant precedent. He even has one would-be triumphantor, many years later, cite it as an exemplum to justify his claim amid opposition (10.37.10).
grudgingly voted a joint public thank-offering (supplicatio) for the consuls in honor of their impressive victories over the Aequi and the Sabines, only to deny them both the right to triumph, at which point a defiant tribune brought up a motion before the people (rogatio populi). Despite vigorous opposition from the senators this measure passed, and both consuls triumphed on the strength of the popular vote (3.63.8–11). Livy for his part emphatically focuses attention on the prerogatives of the various governing bodies in Rome at the time, through the mouthpiece of the indignant senators: “never before had the issue of a triumph been argued before the people; the evaluation and judgment concerning this honor had always belonged to the senate. . . . The state would finally be freed, and the laws made just, only if each ordo retained its own rights and privileges” (3.63.9–10). Enough questions have been raised about Livy’s narrative throughout the period of the decemviri to render this episode decidedly suspect, and strong words like “never” and “always” (from the senators’ complaint, cited just above) give pause in a context where the fledgling Republic has barely existed for fifty years. By the same token, the fact that it apparently took another century or more for history to repeat itself lends a measure of credence to the irregularity supposedly decried by the patres.

The next alleged episode came in 356, when C. Marcius Rutilus, notably the first plebeian to serve as dictator, threatened the status quo one step further by naming a fellow plebeian, C. Plautius, as his second in command (magister equitum, “master of the horse”). According to Livy’s brief account, the outraged senate tried to keep Rutilus from going to war on Rome’s behalf, but the populus indulgently gave him everything he wanted, up to and including a triumph at the end of his term. Without further elaboration about the triumph debate as such, except to tell us that among other things Rutilus could boast that he had seized control of the enemy camp and taken a number of prisoners, Livy just states that he triumphed “without the authority of the senate by order of the people” (“sine auctoritate patrum populi iussu,” 7.17.6–9).

The third affair revolves around C. Flaminius, one of the most controversial and enigmatic figures in late third-century Rome. His notoriety began as tribune of the people in 232, when he introduced a measure

17. Cf. Dion. Hal. 11.49.5 and 50.1. Also see Degrassi 1947, 66–67, 538. Signs of friction between the senate and people had apparently already manifested themselves over the supplicatio in honor of the consuls’ victories (3.63.5).
18. 3.63.9–10: “nunquam ante de triumpho per populum actum; semper aestimationem arbitriumque eius honoris penes senatum fuise . . . ita demum liberam civitatem fore, ita aequatas leges, si sua quisque iura ordo, suam maiestatem teneat.”
19. See also Degrassi 1947, 68–69, 540; Hölkeskamp 1987, 89.
to distribute farmland in Picenum to Roman citizens. Cato the Elder reports that this proposal was eventually carried out, but at the time it ignited such explosive feelings among the senators that Flaminius was labeled forever after as a dangerous rabble-rouser. It also made him appear forcibly to later historians, from Polybius onward, as a precursor to the Gracchi, thereby permanently distorting any view that we might once have glimpsed of his actual goals and accomplishments. Although he went on to be elected consul twice and even censor—giving his name to both the Via Flaminia and the Circus Flaminius—he was hounded by allegations of one scandal after another throughout the rest of his long career. He died in the battle of Trasimene, in 217. From even this brief biography, there emerges a mixture of deeds and personality traits that ancient authors found alternately praiseworthy or dubious, or at times oddly both at once. The literary tradition is ambivalent to say the least.

As consul in 223, Flaminius and his colleague, P. Furius Philus, led the first Roman army across the Po to score an important victory over the Insubres in Gaul. Meanwhile, at least according to one late and markedly hostile tradition, trouble was brewing at home. Plutarch and Zonaras tell us that on the eve of the decisive battle, the fathers in Rome issued a dispatch citing some alleged irregularity with the auspices and the propitiation of omens and ordering Flaminius and Furius to relinquish their command and return at once. The consuls waited to open the summonses until after they had already engaged and defeated the enemy. On one level, this undeniably risky political strategy appears to have worked: although the Periocha

20. Relevant sources listed by Broughton 1951, 225. See also Develin 1976.


22. According to Valerius Maximus, Flaminius’s agrarian bill angered some senators so much that Flaminius was labeled forever after as a dangerous rabble-rouser. It also made him appear forcibly to later historians, from Polybius onward, as a precursor to the Gracchi, thereby permanently distorting any view that we might once have glimpsed of his actual goals and accomplishments. Although he went on to be elected consul twice and even censor—giving his name to both the Via Flaminia and the Circus Flaminius—he was hounded by allegations of one scandal after another throughout the rest of his long career. He died in the battle of Trasimene, in 217 (22.6). From even this brief biography, there emerges a mixture of deeds and personality traits that ancient authors found alternately praiseworthy or dubious, or at times oddly both at once. The literary tradition is ambivalent to say the least.

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for Livy’s lost Book 20 describes only the victory in Gaul and nothing of its aftermath,27 we know from elsewhere that both men celebrated triumphs. Not only do the Fasti attest this,28 but some years later, during the post-Cannae crisis in 216, Livy reports that the dictator M. Iunius Pera equipped some of his emergency troops with a cache of Gallic weapons that had been carried in Flaminius’s triumph (23.14.3–4). Furthermore, Livy intimates that Flaminius, elected consul again in 217, felt eager to set off for his province as quickly as possible, recalling all his earlier struggles with the senate, including the triumph debate (21.63.2). There is a sad irony in Flaminius’s desire to set out so quickly, given what befell him at the end of his journey.

Thus extant Livy tells us only that Flaminius’s triumph bid met with opposition in the senate, which was eventually overcome, but Plutarch implies and Zonaras actually states that both consuls in 223 owed their victory celebrations to a vote from the people.29 It stands to reason therefore that Flaminius and Furius must have triumphed by a political procedure similar to that outlined above for the two earlier incidents. Plutarch goes on to add another twist to the story, suggesting that the senate may have retaliated against the consuls for having marched off into battle despite their recall notices, by later forcing them to lay down their office before the end of the year.30 Whether the account of this supposed fallout is true or not, it serves to illustrate both the intense animosity felt by members of the senate toward defiant magistrates and the crossover between specifically triumphal politics and politics in general. Having incurred the wrath of the senate, Flaminius and Furius tried to evade the consequences by taking their cause to the people instead. In the process they may have gained the right to triumph, but then lost the elected office that had opened the whole opportunity for them in the first place.31 Unless other similar incidents have simply vanished altogether from the historical record, no one ever triumphed again solely by a vote of the people.

Still, even long after, the popular assembly retained an important stake in triumphal negotiations. In 167 L. Aemilius Paullus, consul from the year before and victor at Pydna (44.33–46) over Perseus of Macedon—the last successor to the throne of Alexander the Great—sailed up the Tiber

27. Per. 20: “exercitibus Romanis tune primum trans Padum ductis Galli Insubres aliquot proelis fusi in deditionem venerunt” (“Roman armies were led across the Po then for the first time, and the Gauls called Insubres, being routed in several battles, came under submission”).
29. Plut. Marc. 4.3; Zonar. 8.20.
30. Eckstein 1987, 16, writes that Flaminius and Furius had “crossed the limit of magisterial behavior acceptable to the patres.”
31. But see Brennan 1996, 334 n. 52, for an innocent explanation that is far from implausible.
to Rome in an enormous royal barge heavily laden with spoils (45.35.3). A few days behind him came two other commanders who had aided in the campaign against the king and his allies: Cn. Octavius, propraetor in charge of the fleet, had captured Perseus alive at Samothrace and brought him bodily into Paullus’s custody (45.5–6), while L. Anicius Gallus, also a propraetor, had led a successful campaign against the Illyrians and their king Genthius (44.21.4–10, 44.30–32.15, 45.3.1–2). The senate voted full triumphs to all three men, without any trace of controversy or dispute in Livy’s account, and then arranged for a motion to be put before the assembly granting each of them imperium on the day of the triumph, as required for promagistrates (45.35.4). So far, so good. But then Paullus’s troops, apparently upset at having received a smaller share than they had expected from the extravagant royal plunder of Macedon, decided to use the popular vote as a venue to air their grievances.\[33\] Led by Ser. Sulpicius Galba, one of the military tribunes, they aimed their attack not at Octavius or Anicius, but only at the supreme commander, whom they held responsible for their supposed ill treatment (45.35.5–6).

Galba deliberately prolonged his harangue until sundown, so that the measure could not come to a vote until the following morning (45.36.2–5). At first light disgruntled soldiers thronged the Capitol, and with them in the front ranks of voters, the early returns went against Paullus. The naysayers might even have prevailed, Livy tells us, had not a group of civic leaders (principes civitatis) dramatically intervened at a critical moment to rescue Paullus’s imperiled triumph bid. These high-ranking aristocrats stormed up the hill through the crowd in righteous indignation and pressured the tribunes in charge of the assembly to interrupt the proceedings, nullify any results from the voting so far, and start the whole process over again, having first given one of their number, the former consul and magister equitum M. Servilius, a chance to speak in defense of the would-be triumphator (45.36.6–10). Servilius hailed Paullus’s achievements and his service to Rome at length, pointing out just how scandalous it would be for a commander’s own troops to deprive him of a triumph after he had led them to so great a victory, especially when the war had previously dragged on for so long to no avail. Moreover, they were charging him not with any gross misconduct, but rather with upholding traditional Roman military discipline too strictly. Who could properly fault an imperator for that? Servilius’s speech, as Livy presents it (45.37–39), gives ample testimony to the importance of triumphs in mediating between the senate, magistrates, and people on the one hand, and the civic gods on the other.

32. On the battle of Pydna see also Polyb. 29.14–18. Broughton 1951, 427 and 433–34, lists other sources for the campaign.
At the climax of his speech, Servilius apparently wanted to make a bold gesture that would assert his *auctoritas* by offering tangible proof of devotion to the *res publica*. Lifting his toga to display an array of battle scars—all in front, of course—he accidentally uncovered rather more of his aged anatomy than he had intended. Nervous laughter erupted at that. It was an extremely awkward moment, and potentially disastrous for Paullus’s triumph bid, but Servilius did not lose his cool. Instead, he brilliantly turned even the audience’s ridicule to his own advantage, proclaiming loudly over the jeers of the crowd that, far from causing him any embarrassment as it stood revealed, the swelling in his groin actually made him proud, because it bore witness to many hard years in the saddle as a loyal soldier of the *spqr* (45.39.16–19). All the ugly marks on his body, both those that he had meant to show off and those that a sense of decorum would normally have kept hidden, together became a text that he masterfully decoded—like a living veristic portrait-statue—to reveal a quality of character that he knew everyone present would instantly recognize and admire.  

Not only did Servilius vindicate himself thereby, but the patent disloyalty of Paullus’s troops to commander and country stood out all the more starkly in contrast. This clinched the argument.

Livy’s narrative of the final vote has disappeared into one of many lacunae in the single damaged manuscript that preserves Books 41–45, but of the eventual outcome there can be no doubt: with the full consent of both senate and people, Paullus celebrated a magnificent triumph, richly adorned with booty from the royal palace at Pella and crowned with the piteous spectacle of the Macedonian king Philip himself, led as a prisoner in chains (45.40). And whether the soldiers’ complaints had any basis or not, a vast amount of wealth did eventually find its way into the treasury.

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34. On the power of veristic sculpture to convey moral character (*auctoritas, gravitas, dignitas,* etc.) “warts and all,” see especially Nodelman 1975; also Richter 1955, and more recently Tanner 2000.

without a popular vote. Livy says that when the patres turned down his triumph request, Postumius proudly invoked his imperium as consul and walked out. Tribunes declared allegiances on either side. Later called upon by one of them to plead his cause before the Roman people, the commander brought attention to the powerful exempla from 449 and 356, duly naming Horatius, Valerius, and Rutilus (10.37.6–10). He nevertheless stopped short of putting the matter of his own triumph to a vote in the assembly, because he knew that certain hostile tribunes (“chattels of the nobiles”) would block the measure. Instead he proclaimed that he would always rely on the “will and favor of the people in agreement with him,” and the next day simply went ahead with his triumph in open defiance of all opposition. Even the combined forces of the senate and seven of the ten tribunes proved powerless to halt a public celebration in progress, after the consul had set things in motion. Postumius’s own three loyal tribunes stood nearby, ready to block any action by their colleagues (10.37.12).

As far as we know Postumius’s self-appointed full triumph had no precedent, and afterward the status quo in triumphal negotiations between the senate, magistrates, and people of Rome swiftly and powerfully reasserted itself. Triumph debates uniformly took place in the senate again, and in lieu of marching up to the Capitol without so much as a by-your-leave, as Postumius had done, the alternative triumph on the Alban mount (in monte Albano)—celebrated first in 231 and then three more times in the period 211–172—seems to have emerged for a while as the preferred recourse

36. The Fasti list triumphs in 294 for both Postumius and his colleague, M. Atilius Regulus (see Degrassi 1947, 72–73, 544), whereas Livy, after recounting first a victory by Atilius over the Samnites and then a raid with heavy Roman casualties, says that the triumph was denied because of excessive losses (10.36.19). Postumius supposedly remembered this incident when his own triumph came before the senate (10.37.7), but Livy later reports (at 10.37.15–14) that Claudius Quadrigarius and Fabius Pictor attributed different actions and outcomes to one or both consuls. To make matters worse, a fragment of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (17[18].5.3) places Postumius’s contested triumph not in 294 but three years later, in 291, when neither Livy nor the Fasti are extant to confirm or deny the report. Surely the same individual could not have celebrated two such triumphs, especially within such a short interval. On this score Degrassi 1947, 544, expresses doubt, but understandably opts to withhold judgment.

37. 10.37.11: “adiciebat se quoque laturum fuisse ad populum, ni sciret mancipia nobilium, tribunos plebis, legem impedituros; voluntatem sibi ac favorem consentientis populi pro omnibus iussis esse ac futura” (“He added that he too would have put a motion before the people, if he did not know that the chattels of the nobiles, the tribunes of the plebs, would block the law; for him the will and favor of the people in agreement with him were and always would be as good as all [sc. other] demands”).

38. Badian 1988, 459, comments wryly that this is “one of Livy’s sedate little ironies, easily missed by those who merely check their references in his text. For it soon turns out that Postumius, a Patrician noble, himself ‘owns’ three tribunes whose support ensures his doubtfully legal triumph! Livy should be allowed his little joke.”
of commanders who could not win adequate support among the *patres*. A recent study has traced the history of the Alban triumph in some detail, arguing that C. Papirius Maso, consul in 231, introduced the practice as a deliberative “act of protest against the arbitrary and uncertain process of receiving permission to triumph from the Senate.” The *patres* apparently refused him because his dubious victory over the Corsi had resulted in a considerable loss of Roman life. So instead he went to the Alban Mount, site of the annual *feriae Latinae*, to celebrate his triumph. He could do this on his own authority because the place lay outside the city; he would not have to cross the *pomerium*. He also scheduled his celebration to mark the anniversary of the first triumph by one of his ancestors nearly a century before, thereby manipulating both space and time with equal proficiency to enhance his public image.

Note the interplay between center and periphery: as an alternative to the full triumph, the ceremony *in monte Albano* inevitably lacked the same prestige, not only because the commander who triumphed there did not have official sanction (or public funding) for what he was doing, but also because the whole thing took place far from the Capitol, the locus of power, where Jupiter reigned supreme over his people. After refusing Papirius the honor of a triumph, the senate went on to deny him permission to build a temple within the city limits, thus reiterating their earlier vote, in effect, and therefore censuring his decision to hold a private celebration against their will, and also forever banishing even the memory of his *res gestae* to a place outside the *pomerium*, away from the public eye. Plainly grasping the import of the further slight to his *dignitas*, Papirius designed

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39. Brennan 1996, 320; cf. Develin 1978, 437. For the notice in the Fasti that Papirius was the first to triumph *in monte Albano*, see Degrassi 1947, 78–79, 449.


41. Livy marks triumphs *in monte Albano* as taking place “iure imperii consularis” (“by right of consular imperium”) at 33.23.3 and “sine publica auctoritate” (“without the authority of the people”) at 42.21.7. Ancient writers never describe the ritual performed *in monte Albano* in much detail, but it presumably mirrored the full triumph as closely as possible, differing in location only, as the notices in the Fasti would seem to indicate. Versnel 1970, 165–66, 279–82, and others have wanted to see the Alban ritual as a primitive form of the Roman ceremony, but this remains a matter of speculation, and the unmistakable perceived novelty of Papirius’s celebration seems to argue against it. Cf. J. S. Richardson 1975, 55.

42. On these various significant connections, see Brennan 1996, 322 and nn.

43. Livy’s remarks at 33.23.8 concerning the third triumph *in monte Albano* would have been true a *fortiori* the first time: “is triumphus ut loco et fama rerum gestarum et quod sumptum non ergotatum ex aerario omnes sciebant inhonorator fuit, ita signis carpentisque et spoliis ferme aequabat” (“Although everyone knew that this triumph was less prestigious in its location and the reputation of the accomplishments and because the cost was not paid for out of the treasury, nonetheless it was practically equal in [the number of] statues and two-wheeled carts and spoils”). On Gallic *carpenta* as a regular feature of triumphs, see Östenberg 2003, 30–36.
a countermeasure: in later years he always wore the myrtle crown of the ovatio while attending civic games, a defiantly pointed reminder of what he felt the ungrateful establishment owed him. Yet although the open division between commander and senate over the issue of a triumph seems to have provoked some lingering ill will during Papirius’s lifetime, his name still made it into the Fasti—albeit with a special notice of the variance from general practice—and set a useful, if somewhat limited, precedent.

Two decades passed, and then in 211 the senate granted only an ovatio and not a triumph to M. Claudius Marcellus, conqueror of Syracuse, on the grounds (previously unheard of, or at least unattested) that he had not brought back his army (26.21.1–12). That this was more a calculated political maneuver than the formulation of a new general rule will emerge from the discussion of the deportatio provision below in chapter 4. Here the incident deserves note for two other reasons. First, when Marcellus’s res gestae proved too controversial to gain unanimous approval yet too impressive to ignore, the patres revived an ancient ritual (the ovatio), which no one had celebrated for at least eighty and probably more like a hundred and fifty years, as a means of rewarding success that would still fall short of a full triumph. Second, when he found himself snubbed by his peers in this way, Marcellus followed Papirius’s example to boost his public image and simultaneously register a complaint with the senate. He swallowed his pride and duly held the ovatio, but having triumphed in monte Albanò first (26.21.6). As far as we know, no one else under the Republic—either before or after—ever staged two such ceremonies to mark a single victory. It has been suggested that Marcellus’s “acceptance of the ovatio shows that he thought the Alban triumph was not enough in itself.” But the argument would work just as well, if not better, the other way around: Marcellus held his triumph on the Alban Mount because he thought the ovatio inadequate. He had already demonstrated a flair for attention-getting victory

44. Cf. Brennan 1996, 322–23 and nn.: “This ostentatious gesture—surely a protest measure—must have irritated many in the senatorial establishment.” On the pointed symbolism of the myrtle crown, and Papirius’s decision to wear it, see Gell. 5.6, Val. Max. 3.6.5, Pliny NH 15.126, Cic. Nat. D. 3.20.5. One should note that no ovatio had been celebrated in Rome for over a century before Papirius, and that the ceremony was not revived as a political compromise until M. Claudius Marcellus in 211. Only an antiquarian, or a high-minded Roman aristocrat, would have a long enough memory of past civic honors to catch the reference.

45. Cf. J. S. Richardson 1975, 54. The last well-attested ovatio before Marcellus marked the victory of consul M. Fabius Ambustus over the Hernici in 360. See Degrassi 19147, 540; and 7.11.9. M’. Curius Dentatus may have celebrated one over the Lucani in 290 or 289, but the sole reference is a dubious notice in De Ver. Ill. 33.4. See Brennan 1994; Degrassi 1947, 545.

46. See also Degrassi 1947, 551.

47. Brennan 1996, 324.

48. See J. S. Richardson 1975, 55; Develin 1978, 432. The implication that Marcellus might have refused the ovatio seems out of place, given the evident astonishment with which
celebrations with his dedication of the *spolia opima* in 222, which earned him the single longest entry in the extant portions of the Fasti.

The next incident did not take place until fifteen years after Marcellus. In 197, the consuls Q. Minucius Rufus and C. Cornelius Cethegus had both been allotted Italy as their province (32.28.3–9). Their combined strategy worked to secure a major victory for Cethegus against the Insubres and Cenomani (32.30.5–13), and successes for Minucius as well against the Ligure (32.29.5–30.4, 32.31.1–5). The senate voted a four-day *supplicatio* in honor of them both (32.31.6). But on their return, despite a concerted effort, their hopes of celebrating a joint triumph were thwarted by opposition from a pair of tribunes, who mounted such a vigorous and sustained protest to Minucius’s bid, on a number of different grounds, that he finally had no option left except to abandon his request and save face with a triumph *in Monte Albano*, while his colleague celebrated a full triumph with the overwhelming consent of the *patres* (33.22–23). The intensity and rancor of the debate suggest not only that Minucius’s *res gestae* could not command enough attention to win him so much as an *ovatio*, no matter how hard he might press his claim (he was plainly no Marcellus), but also that his resolve to triumph alongside Cethegus, no matter what the cost, almost matched that of his opponents to stop him. Livy says that in electing the Alban ceremony Minucius claimed to be following “the example of many illustrious men” (32.23.3), although we know of only two (Papirius and Marcellus) before him. Of course, the greater a notional precedent he could invoke on his own behalf in the moment of backing down, the more he could legitimize his cause and cushion the disgrace of rejection.

After this the Alban triumph fell into obscurity again for another quarter-century, until C. Cicereius, praetor and former scribe, found recourse to it in 173. Following his defeat of the rebellious Corsi, Cicereius exacted from them by way of *praedia* some two hundred thousand pounds of bees-

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Livy writes of consul M. Fabius Vibulanus in 480 (2.47.10–11), the one commander ever said to have turned down civic honors granted by the senate. It should be added that Vibulanus acted out of *pietas* and grief, not indignation, both his colleague and his brother having died in the battle that brought him his victory.


50. Brennan 1996, 325–26, claims somewhat unconvincingly on the grounds that twenty-five years elapsed before the next such celebration that Minucius’s Alban triumph “may have somewhat devalued the institution . . . for future commanders.” It is a question of degree, but the interval seems roughly comparable to the prior twenty years between Papirius and Marcellus. The triumph *in Monte Albano* never carried enough prestige to make it anything more than a rare occurrence.

51. 33.23.3: “*in Monte Albano se triumphaturum et iure imperii consularis et multorum clarorum virorum exemplo dixit*” (“He said that he would triumph on the Alban mount both by right of his consular *imperium* and by the example of many illustrious men”).

Triumphal decision making and the SPQR

wax, a prized local export (42.7.1). His request for a triumph must have sounded very presumptuous, for the senate turned him down flat, as one scholar has put it, “in part because of his social status” and also “thinking he would just go quietly away.” After an apparent interval during which he must have sought an avenue for converting the wax into ready cash to pay for the ceremony—it probably found its way into candles for the upcoming Saturnalia, or perhaps into tablets indulgently purchased by his former colleagues in the collegium of scribes—Cicereius took advantage of what had by now become accepted mos and triumphed in monte Albano instead (42.21.7). Do three previous incidents constitute the minimum critical mass required to establish a series of ad-hoc compromises as the authentic mos maiorum? That remains an open question, but by all accounts Cicereius was the last to invoke this particular custom. He may have effectively put an end to the whole thing by creating just the sort of exemplum indignum that status-conscious Roman aristocrats in future generations would hardly deign to follow. So the triumph in monte Albano faded into obscurity, just as it had come to light for a brief time, through the vagaries of élite competition.

The Fasti Triumphales are missing for 154–130, and without Livy to help fill in the gaps, it is hard to develop a picture of triumph debates after 167—until the Late Republic, that is, when “triumph debate” could sadly become a historian’s euphemism for civil war. Nevertheless, one reasonably well-attested incident from the second half of the second century demonstrates that the hunt for civic honors continued unabated whenever the opportunity arose. It did not matter that the triumph in monte Albano had ceased to be a viable option after Cicereius, because, as L. Postumius Megellus had amply demonstrated as early as 293, there was never any real constitutional barrier against a full triumph on a magistrate’s own authority. Nothing short of violence, if that, could hinder a lawful holder of imperium from celebrating a victory as he liked, provided only that he showed enough audacity or even just raw determination.

The sources show a decided ambivalence about the conduct of the commander in question. Ap. Claudius Pulcher, consul in 143, seems to have lost as many men as he killed of the enemy in a narrow defeat of the Gallic

53. Brennan 1996, 336 n. 76, cites a parallel at 40.34.12, where the Corsicans paid half that amount of wax (a mere 100,000 lbs.) to praetor M. Pinarius Rusca. Also cf. Diod. 5.13.4.
55. Brennan 1996, 336–37 nn. 75, 76, and 80. Pliny NH 21.84 suggests that Corsican wax may also have had medicinal properties.
56. See Degrassi 1947, 538.
57. This pace Brennan 1996, 328–29, who points to a marked downturn in triumphs in the late second century, perhaps because of lingering embarrassment over Cicereius and his beeswax.
Salassi. On his return, he asked the senate for public funds to pay for a triumph, as if the honor itself had already been awarded. The *patres* evidently refused him the money, because although the relevant chunk of the Fasti is missing, later authors attest that Claudius ultimately paid for the triumph himself, without approval from either the senate or the people. His daughter, a Vestal Virgin and therefore inviolate, rode in the triumphal chariot alongside him. While this memorable family tableau may have won Claudius a certain notoriety, as witnessed by allegations in one source of a rapacious and arrogant desire to triumph at all costs, later generations hailed the young woman’s *pietas* for having thrown herself between her father and his assailant, a tribune, who tried to drag him bodily from the car. To be sure, any brief scandal that may have arisen over the triumph did not put an end to Claudius’s illustrious political career. He went on to serve as censor in 136 and later as *princeps senatus*. Father-in-law to Ti. Gracchus, he also played a leading role on the famous land commission.

Both halves of a paradox now stand clearly revealed. On the one hand, inasmuch as the senate and people exercised control over the right to triumph, they did so only on the strength of custom and tradition. Their authority rested de facto and not de iure. The triumphs of Postumius and Claudius, separated by a span of exactly a hundred and fifty years, make plain a simple truth that the celebrations in between held in *monte Albano* actually help to conceal, namely that no one and nothing could technically

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58. It is in connection with Claudius’s exploits against the Salassi that Valerius Maximus 2.8.1 mentions a law requiring a minimum of 5,000 enemy casualties in a battle to justify the award of a triumph.

59. Dio fr. 74 Boissevain.

60. Oros. 5.4.7 says that Claudius paid for the triumph with his own money (“usus privatis sumptibus,” “using his private expenditures”), whereas Suet. *Tib.* 2.4 states that the celebration took place “iniussu populi” (“without the vote of the people”).

61. Dio Cass. fr. 74 Boissevain says that Claudius’s decision to attack the Salassi stemmed from overwhelming ambition and jealousy toward his colleague, M. Claudius Metellus. For a more positive rendition, see Cic. *Cael.* 34 and Val. Max. 5.4.6. Further references in Broughton 1951, 471.


63. On the presence of both pro- and anti-Claudian strands in the ancient tradition, see Wiseman 1979, 101–3. J. S. Richardson 1975, 58, singles out this incident as a “startling demonstration” of the “comparative impotence of the senate to stop a determined man from triumphing.” Cf. also Brennan 1996, 319; Mitchell 1990, 107 n. 150.
stop a commander from staging his own triumph, even a full triumph on the Capitol, if he chose, though in the event he might rely on some form of symbolic shield (viz. Postumius’s tribunes and Claudius’s Vestal Virgin) to ward off opposition. Like the triumphal ritual itself, the unanswerable autonomy of one who holds imperium harks back to the legendary kings of Rome. But if custom and tradition did not exert the same binding constraints as formal rules might have done, they nevertheless counted for a very great deal. In practice, the overbearing self-will of individuals led to only two out of the many, many triumphs that took place on the Capitol over the centuries, demonstrating that under the Republic, as opposed to the monarchy, a would-be triumphator was certainly expected—and indeed perhaps all but legally required—to ask for permission first. Hence the standard formula for a triumph request in Livy’s narrative (e.g., at 31.47.7): “that he might be allowed to enter the city in triumph” (“ut triumphanti sibi in urbem invehi liceret”).

SUMMARY
How then did one go about obtaining the desired permission? Whenever the sources allude to the act of requesting a triumph as distinct from merely celebrating one, the procedure described invariably begins, and usually ends, with a meeting of the senate. Only a handful of victorious generals from the early years of the Republic are ever said to have turned to the assembly for redress after finding their triumph hopes rejected by the body of their peers, and no one, as far as we know, ever went straight to the people without at least putting in a perfunctory appearance before the patres first. Moreover, in the many triumph debates that Livy records in some detail from the Hannibalic War onward, the assembly fades deep into the background. With the exception of the Paullus controversy, as already noted, such episodes are staged entirely before the senators.

Even if the consistency of this behavior turned out to be a deeply embedded narrative pattern in later authors and not an accurate representation of standard practice under the Republic, it would still attest to a pervasive assumption on Livy’s part about the way things worked in the past. Technically, at least, no one could triumph without the consent of the people, because the ritual demanded it. This accounts for the dual formulas in some of the early notices: proper triumphs took place with official sanction from the whole SPQR. All the same, there eventually came a time when the assembly as a body no longer became directly embroiled, or at most only rarely, in the contentious process of determining who should triumph and who should not. Either popular approval amounted to little more than the proverbial rubber stamp once the senate had reached a
decision, with the result that many assembly votes often left no trace in the historical record,\textsuperscript{64} or else the tribunes of the people effectively spoke for the \textit{populus Romanus} at large whenever all of them gave their consent to a motion before the \textit{patres}. In the latter case the absence, or even just the timely withdrawal, of a tribunician veto could be taken in lieu of a popular vote.\textsuperscript{65} Tribunes obviously played an enormously important role in negotiations between the various parties involved, alternately appearing as mediators and as agents provocateurs within the political machinery.\textsuperscript{66}

Far from occurring in a vacuum, this prevailing trend in triumph debates coincides with the emergence, by the late third century, “of the senate as the principal organ of government, and of the nobility as the controlling element within the senate.”\textsuperscript{67} The conquest and reorganization of Italy on the one hand, and heightened contact with the Hellenistic kingdoms of the Greek East on the other, both played key roles in helping to establish the Roman élite as an élite, with their base of power in the \textit{curia}.\textsuperscript{68} In certain arenas, most notably that of legislation, popular sovereignty remained very real, and one need look only to the Late Republic for evidence of serious, even violent challenges to the \textit{patrum auctoritas} from that quarter.\textsuperscript{69} Still, the conduct of triumph debates always led to the senate floor: in order for his bid to succeed, a would-be \textit{triumphator} had no choice but to begin by striving to impress his aristocratic peers first and foremost.

\textsuperscript{64} Linderski 1993, 56–59, has traced a similar pattern in Livy’s treatment of procedural details regarding the haruspices: various key facts tucked away in isolated passages, with the full picture accessible only through a patchwork of many instances taken together. Once again there is a striking parallel between historiography and visual art. Cf. Kuttner 2004, 311: “Roman artists had evolved graphically sophisticated visual codes for intensely detailed narratives . . . [such as] expressionistic abbreviation, enlargement, compositional repetition, and stylistic eclecticism from scene to scene.”

\textsuperscript{65} Thus Mitchell 1996, 193.


\textsuperscript{68} On the political developments that helped to shape the emerging aristocratic ideology, see Hölkeskamp 1987, especially 114–203; also Hölkeskamp 1993, with well-placed emphasis on the conquest of Italy as a watershed event. Fears 1981, 773–78, meanwhile traces the deliberate importation into Rome of explicitly Hellenistic concepts of victory and conquest during the same period. Heightened contact with the kingdoms of the East brought profound changes in the way Roman aristocrats understood their place in the world. Naturally triumphs and triumph debates reflect the transformation.

\textsuperscript{69} The provocative work of Millar (1984, 1986, and 1998) has sparked a lively scholarly debate about the role of the democratic element in the constitution of the Roman Republic as well as both the nature and degree of senatorial control over civic affairs. Millar has doggedly championed the case for popular sovereignty, but North 1990b, 285, sounds an important
rate casuistry” surrounding Roman triumphal criteria was hammered out mainly by aristocrats in arguments among themselves.\footnote{Versnel 1970, 164, as cited above. Cf. North 1990b, 286: “we are prisoners of the image of constitutional stability propounded by Polybius and Cicero . . . [which] might be said to represent the political ideal of the governing classes: to fix the business of the Republic through deals and arrangements among themselves, without reference to the views of less important citizens.”

71. On the battle of Sentinum as a turning point, see Cornell 1995, 359–63. Note that Livy attributes Postumius’s decision to cross over with his army into Etruria to the fact that the Samnite theater held little promise of an opportunity to show his skill (10.37.1).}

EPILOGUE

Before turning now at length to the subject of criteria, one final observation is in order about the phenomenon of triumphs sine auctoritate patrum populi iussu. Perhaps the single most significant shared feature of the episodes that fall under this heading is their uncanny timing: although separated by many years, even centuries, they all coincide with moments of political unease in Rome. On the three occasions when sources tell us that the popular assembly went over the heads of the patres to award a triumph, we also hear that something else, outside the immediate sphere of the triumph debate itself, had already upset the tricky balance of power between the senate, magistrates, and the people of Rome. In 449, it was an uproar over the decreviri and the codification of laws; in 356, the appointment of the first plebeian dictator; in 223, the question of land reform and Roman settlements in the ager Gallicus Picenus. From the same perspective, it is probably no accident that the unprecedented display of consular bravado by L. Postumius Megellus in 294 occurred when it did, so soon after the climax of the brutal First Samnite War. The achievements of Q. Fabius Maximus Rullianus at Sentinum—not to mention the acclaimed devotio of his colleague, P. Decius Mus, in imitation of his father—must have eclipsed all other claims to fame for some time to come.\footnote{Cautionary note: “The popular will of the Roman people found expression in the context, and only in the context, of divisions within the oligarchy.” Among others see also Brennan 2004; Harris 1990; Hölkeskamp 2000 and 2004a; Lintott 1999, especially 40–64, 121–28, 199–207; Morstein-Marx 2004; Mouritsen 2001; North 1990a, 1990b, and 2006; Williamson 1990; and Yakobson 2006 (all with reference to previous scholarship).}

As to Ap. Claudius Pulcher in 143, we need point only to his intimate connection with the Gracchi, although the real explosion there admittedly came a decade after his triumph.

Several possible explanations suggest themselves for this apparent link between triumphs populi iussu and tales of other disruptions in the three-way balance between the senate, magistrates, and people of Rome. If it
is not just a coincidence—and we cannot rule out that possibility altogether—then it might reflect a systematic bias in the literary sources, whose authors have either consciously or unconsciously projected their own contemporary values and assumptions onto the past and, worse, painted an anachronistic view of the social and political structures of archaic Rome. Someone who viewed the patres as heroic defenders and guardians of the mos maiorum, especially against threats from below within the social hierarchy, would have trouble believing that they could ever have allowed a popularis rabble-rouser to triumph. If a hypothetical early annalist with such a bias found evidence that certain men identified as populares had indeed triumphed, therefore, he would conclude that the brazen assembly must have overstepped traditional boundaries on those occasions and usurped the senate’s lawful rights, and he would write his history accordingly.

From there, even if his works themselves may have since disappeared, through later writers like Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus among others, his biased version of events found its way into and soon became an established part of the literary tradition. Fabrications of this nature are certainly well enough attested to make the scenario plausible.

But there is another possibility, no less compelling. By this account, the senate from an early date took charge of distributing civic honors within the overarching framework of the mos maiorum, and most of the time the magistrates and people acquiesced. Yet senatorial supremacy did not go unchallenged. Custom and tradition, as opposed to strict, legalistic rules, governed day-to-day interactions between the various elements of the mixed constitution in Rome. Therefore Valerius and Horatius, Rutilus, and Flaminius were all able—in moments of friction—to capitalize on their intense popular support, and thus to overrule the patres, precisely because no rigid structures existed to prevent their doing so. An enterprising and ambitious commander like Postumius, or Claudius, could even seize matters entirely into his own hands, defying both the senate and the assembly at once.

As mentioned earlier, triumphal spectacle and triumphal politics go closely together. Since triumphs as civic ritual brought the various ordines together to celebrate the good fortune that victory bestowed on the state as a whole, they served as a powerful expression of unity and harmony within Roman society. For whatever differences the Romans might have among

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72. Of course, in the same vein, anyone who openly defied the senate, or even questioned the judgment of the patres, would ipso facto have gained a reputation as a troublesome popularis. See Develin 1979b.

73. See Ungern-Sternberg 1986. The argument of Mitchell 1990 similarly rests on a pessimistic view of the degree to which Roman authors accurately understood the distant past, even apart from how they chose to portray it.
themselves, the dramatic spectacle of a non-Roman enemy in defeat—with their own army on the winning side, of course—immediately gave them all something in common, stirring a shared visceral pride in the community to which they collectively belonged.\(^74\) Conversely, triumph debates exposed the underlying social and political tensions both between different groups and within them, and thereby became flash points for other pressing concerns that affected the balance of power. Incidents of extreme dissension over triumphs, to the point where the senate and people could no longer work in tandem to mark important Roman victories, were in fact relatively rare. This bespeaks the general stability of the Republic; that they happened at all, however, reflects a latent indeterminacy in the order of things. Therein may even lie the seeds of ruin, because of the lingering threat that aristocratic competition might someday spin out of control, as of course it eventually (some might even say inevitably) did. This interpretation not only fits the limited evidence for the earliest triumph debates discussed here so far: as we shall see, it has intriguing implications for the later ones as well.

\(^{74}\) Thus Östenberg 2003, 8: “the triumph had what many other civic parades lack—a pronounced other, whose presence served as an antipode of normative community and reinforced sense of oneness among all Roman participants, processional partakers and spectators alike.”