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CHAPTER 28

ANIMALS AND TRIUMPHS

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Introduction

The Roman triumph was a highly spectacular event. Setting out from the Campus Martius, the procession entered the city, filled the streets and crossed theatres and circuses on its way to the Roman Forum and the final climb up the Capitoline hill. Masses of people watched the show, some crowded at porticoes and on roofs, others seated at the Circus or on temporarily erected benches. The triumph was a huge feast that celebrated Rome and her victories. It was an inclusive ritual that strengthened the sense of community by bringing together the Romans who walked with laurel crowns in the procession and the spectators, who, also wreathed with laurel, participated by watching, reading, commenting, and discussing the people and objects that paraded by (Östenberg, 2009).

The triumph was an influential spectacle and also a momentous political event. To hold a triumph provided the successful general and his family with great glory, and Rome's leading men fought intensely not only on the foreign battlefield but also on the senate floor to achieve a *triumphus* (Pelikan Pittenger, 2008). Further, the Roman triumph was a religious celebration in which the Roman community and her general paid homage to their gods in gratitude for their support in war. As was customary for a religious feast in antiquity, the triumph consisted of a procession, a sacrifice, and, later on, victory games. All these parts involved a large number of animals. Wild beast shows are discussed in Chapter 26 in this volume, and the following analysis will focus on the *triumphus* proper, in particular on its procession.

The triumphal procession could in many ways be interpreted as role-playing, in which the Roman participants and those conquered were clearly distinguished from each other. In this way, spectators could easily read the parade that passed by, recognizing whom to cheer as 'us' and whom to understand as 'them'. The animals too were either Roman or foreign. Roman horses drew the chariot of the *triumphator*, Roman draught animals pulled wagons with spoils and prisoners, and Roman bulls and oxen were led as sacrificial animals. Foreign animals, on the other hand, horses and elephants captured

on the battlefield, were led as prisoners in the parade. Most interesting are the elephants. They were introduced into Rome as captive foreign beasts in the early third-century BC processions, but were later tamed and taken up as representatives of the Roman side, even to be used as escorts of the *triumphator*.

Roman Animals

The *triumphator* rode in a car driven by four horses, a *quadriga*. This was a distinct mark of honour, as is seen from the fact that the general awarded with the smaller triumph, the *ovatio*, instead rode on horseback (Servius, *Commentary on Aeneid* 4.543). Livy provides a telling example, as he describes the celebration held for the Punic victories in 207 BC. Here, the *triumphator* M. Livius Salinator, who had held the auspices on the day of battle, entered the city in a *quadriga*, followed by C. Claudius Nero on horseback, as he had won an *ovatio* for the same victory (Livy, 28.9.9–16; cf. Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, 4.1.9).

Several sources tell that in the early fourth century BC, Camillus triumphed in a *quadriga* drawn by white horses (Livy, 5.23.5–6, 5.28.1; Plutarch, *Life of Camillus* 7.1–2; Dognini, 2002). The white horses were divine markers, and for his hubris, Camillus was fined or expelled (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 14.117.6; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 52.13.3). The historicity of the event has been questioned, however (Weinstock, 1971: 68–75). With the late Republic, we are on firmer ground. In 46 BC, the senate allowed Caesar to triumph escorted by seventy-two lictors and drawn by four white horses (Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 43.14.3), suggesting that the white horses, as the mass of lictors, was at the time a display that was out of the ordinary. In contrast, in Augustan times, the notion of white horses as drawers of the triumphal chariot prevailed (Ovid, *Art of Love* 1.214, *Letters from Pontus* 2.8.50, *Fasti* 6.723–4; Propertius, *Elegies* 4.1.32). For example, Tibullus sings of how his patron, Messalla Corvinus, rides an ivory chariot, drawn by four white horses (*Elegies* 1.7.7–8). Very probably, these poetic descriptions reflect a triumphal procedure, in which white horses had now become commonplace.

The horses were crowned with laurel, to mark them as Roman participants who rejoice in victory (Ovid, *Tristia* 4.2.22). Ovid calls the horses 'triumphing' (*Letters from Pontus* 2.8.39–40) and contrasts them to the representation of the conquered Germania, who is carried as a slave ahead. Ovid also depicts the horses as stopping at times, frightened by the sounds of cheering people (Ovid, *Tristia* 4.2.53–4), thus providing a glimpse of the vivid event. Also, on many reliefs that show excerpts from Roman triumphs, the horses bring life and motion into the scenes. Take, for example, the famous *triumphator* relief from the passageway of the Arch of Titus (Fig. 28.1). Here, the four horses fill the central part of the scene (Pfanner, 1983: 47, tables 45, 46.1, 47.1). The stallions walk with coordinated movements, their outer forelegs lifted in a parallel row. But the upper parts of the horses are more individually depicted, and each head is portrayed with its own

FIGURE 28.1 Passage relief from Arch of Titus in Rome: Titus in the triumphal *quadriga*.

characteristics and singularly rendered bridles (Pfanner, 1983: 48, Ill. 29). The heads do not appear in a single line, but each horse strives forward at a different position, providing the viewer with variation in angles and depth. The overall impression is of a dynamic scene that includes both organized and strong movement, a notion strengthened by the female personification, who walks just in front of the *quadriga*. This is Roma, or Virtus, an embodiment of the city. She holds the horses distinctly by their reins and, while glancing back to control the stallions, she takes a resolute step forwards to lead the *triumphator* into Rome.

The liveliness of the horses appears in strong contrast to the *triumphator*, who is depicted standing motionless in his chariot, elevated above the rest of the pageant. In fact, I believe this to be an important visual function of the stallions—to represent the movement of the procession while allowing for the general to be shown in static dignity. He does not even drive the chariot, as his hands are fully occupied with holding a sceptre in his left hand (fragments can be seen) and what was very probably a branch of laurel in the right. The relief shows the reins as running from the horses back to the chariot. However, on the Arch of Titus, as on most other Imperial triumphal representations, the *triumphator* does not hold the reins, which instead hang on the ridge of the chariot, probably to be fastened on the inside. The relief hence presents an illusion of a steering general in a vehicle that is actually led by Roma, as here, or by a slave, as on one of the Boscoreale cups (Fig. 28.2). This phenomenon has a parallel in the written texts, which at several times describe the *triumphator* as being led into Rome, in the passive sense

FIGURE 28.2 Silver cup from Boscoreale. Triumph of Tiberius: a slave pulls the four horses forwards. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Photo from: Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', *Monuments Eugène Piot 5* (1899), plate XXXIV.1.

(*invectus, invehitur*). Hence, the horses, in representations as in the ancient city space, filled a double role: a practical role, physically drawing the general's chariot, and a symbolic one, having him shown in statuesque lofty majesty, clearly led while also sensed as conducting the parade.

Besides the horses drawing the chariot of the general, the triumph was packed with Roman animals performing the less glamorous task of pulling along carts with prisoners and spoils. Literary sources tell very little of these draught beasts, but, as an exception, Plutarch writes that in Lucullus's triumph of 63 BC there were 107 mules who bore around 2,700,000 silver coins, eight mules who carried golden couches and fifty-six who transported silver ingots (Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus* 37.4). Here, the animals gave visual effect to the mass of spoils that Lucullus brought into the city. Numbers were important to quantify success, and the herd of mules marked Rome's vast richness and conquests on the streets of the city as in the later accounts.

Draught animals appear on some reliefs that depict triumphal processions. As one example, an Imperial terracotta plaque (Fig. 28.3) shows two smaller rather robust horses pulling a cart with two male bearded prisoners (La Rocca and Tortorella, 2008: 129). A carter draws the horses forwards by their reins, while a soldier and an equestrian official walk beside the wagon and pull chains that are attached to the captives' throats and feet (Gabelmann, 1981: 455–7). The double holding of reins forms a visual parallel: the carter who holds the horses at an even pace and the soldiers who control the prisoners in their chained grip.

Roman animals were also employed as sacrificial victims. The triumph was Rome's most prestigious feast, and the animals presented were bulls and oxen, intended for sacrifice to Jupiter on the Capitoline hill (Servius, *Commentary on Aeneid* 4.543). The literary sources offer rather sparse evidence about these animals, but some texts describe the oxen as being white (Ovid, *Tristia* 4.2.5–6; Appian, *Punic Wars* 66). In describing Aemilius Paullus's

FIGURE 28.3 Terracotta (so-called Campana) plaque with triumphal scene. Two chained barbarian prisoners seated on a cart drawn by two horses. British Museum; London.

triumph of 167 BC, Plutarch writes that there were 120 oxen present, suggesting that the number of sacrificial animals was an important mark of piety and prestige (Plutarch, *Life of Aemilius Paullus* 33.2; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 31.8.9). Plutarch tells that the victims went just behind the trumpeters, at the head of the procession, and also that their horns were gilded and that they were decked with garlands and fillets.

The victims would have been bred specifically for the triumphal event. Plutarch calls them stall-fed, and Horace describes them as untouched by the yoke (*Epodes* 9.22). Horace surprisingly uses the female form (*boves intactae*), which opens up the possibility that cows could have been included among the cattle sacrificed (cf. Diodorus Siculus, who writes of *boes leukai*, which could mean both cows and cattle in general, *Library of History* 31.8.9). All white and shimmering with gold, the victims must have made a spectacular impression. As they walked at the front of the parade, they would have marked the procession as an event dedicated to the gods and also formed a visual prelude to the *triumphator*, who rode further back, he too accompanied by white animals, the horses, and dressed in glimmering gold. Plutarch states that young male attendants led the sacrificial oxen and that boys followed with gold and silver vessels for libation. Reliefs also depict each animal attended by a group of sacrificers, one person leading the victim, others carrying vessels and the axe. The bulls (reliefs show mostly bulls) are decked with garlanded fillets, and between their horns, they carry the *fastigium* in imitation of a temple's pediment. On the silver cup from Boscoreale depicting Tiberius's triumph, the bull preceding the *triumphator* carries a *fastigium* that displays an image of an eagle seated on a globe (Fig. 28.4). The same image—eagle on globe—reappears on the temple's gable further to the right on the same relief, clearly connecting triumph, sacrifice, and bull with Jupiter and his shrine (Fig. 28.5).

FIGURE 28.4 Silver cup from Boscoreale. Triumph of Tiberius: bull led to sacrifice. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Photo from: Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', *Monuments Eugène Piot* 5 (1899), plate XXXV.2.

FIGURE 28.5 Silver cup from Boscoreale. Triumph of Tiberius: sacrifice in front of temple of Jupiter. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Photo from: Héron de Villefosse, 'Le Trésor de Boscoreale', *Monuments Eugène Piot* 5 (1899), plate XXXVI.2.

The Boscoreale cup includes a double representation of bulls, one led in parade, one being sacrificed, which testifies to Tiberius's fulfilling of his vows. It is a curious fact that, in contrast to their rare mention in the literary sources, sacrificial animals appear frequently on a number of reliefs representing triumphal processions. This goes not least for the longer friezes on the Arch of Titus (though fragmentary) and the Arch of Trajan in Benevento (Pfanner, 1983: 82–90). By repeating the sacrificial group of animals and attendants all around these monuments, the friezes underline the religious character of the triumphal procession, which seems to move in an endless never-interrupted file towards the gods on the Capitol. The friezes signal the piety of the Roman people and their general, who with the continuous support of their gods have conquered the world.

Foreign Animals

According to the Augustan History (*Historia Augusta*), a late Roman collection of biographies of Roman emperors, some grand processions arranged in the third century AD included large numbers of exotic animals. Gordian III prepared a Persian triumph with thirty-two elephants, ten elks, ten tigers, sixty tame lions, thirty tame leopards, ten hyenas, six hippopotamuses, one rhinoceros, ten wild lions, ten giraffes, twenty wild asses, and forty wild horses (*Augustan History, The Three Gordians* 33.1–2). Gordian died before the triumph was held, and Philip the Arab inherited the animals and put them on stage in his secular games in AD 248. Some twenty-five years later, the emperor Aurelian triumphed over Zenobia, and the parade saw tigers, giraffes, and elks, together with twenty elephants, and 200 tamed beasts of all kinds from Libya and Palestine (*Augustan History, Aurelian* 33.4).

Quite surprisingly, before the *Augustan History*, only one ancient text suggests the presence of exotic animals in triumphal processions. Josephus writes of Vespasian and Titus's Jewish triumph held in AD 71: 'Beasts of many species were led along, all decked out with appropriate adornments. The numerous attendants, who led each group, were dressed in garments of purple and gold…' (*The Jewish War* 7.136–7). Josephus's text reveals that the animals were of many kinds, and that they were grouped, probably according to species. This is also how the *Augustan History* describes the beasts. Here, the precise figures indicate that tigers, lion, elks, and giraffes were displayed not in an unordered mass, but each kind separately. In fact, when describing Aurelian's triumph, the biographer specifically states that the animals were shown in order, *per ordinem*. By leading foreign animals in ordered files, the triumphs displayed the Roman control of the world's faunal life.

Josephus's account does not suggest that the Jewish triumph would have been unique in parading rows of exotic animals. Rather, it is likely that such animal displays were common in Roman triumphs. Certainly, the Hellenistic lavish royal processions included a variety of exotic animals (Rice, 1983: 83–99; Coleman, 1996: 58–68), and the Roman processions were not unaffected by these spectacles. Also, from early times, Romans had taken domestic cattle as captives and led them in triumphs. For example,

Florus states that before 275 BC, Roman victory processions had commonly included sheep of the Vulsci (*pecora Vulscorum*) and *greges Sabinorum,* Sabine flocks (*Epitome of Roman History* 1.13.27). Thus, long before foreign beasts were introduced, Rome was used to witnessing files of animals being led in her streets in triumph.

When did Rome start to lead exotic animals in her parades? When M. Fulvius Nobilior arranged the first recorded game hunt in 186 BC, he included lions and *pantherae* (possibly leopards; Livy, 39.22.1–3). Perhaps, some of these beasts had also been led in his triumph. After all, triumphs and *ludi* were closely linked, and in Fulvius Nobilior's case we know that the booty displayed in the triumph was also used to pay for the shows (Livy, 39.5.7–11). The problem is that we know only vaguely how much time passed between the triumph and the *ludi*; Livy tells that Nobilior triumphed in December 187 BC and that his games were held sometime during the next year. To lead animals in the parade, the triumph and games would have had to be very close in time, as the costs for feeding animals while awaiting the *ludi* quickly reached high sums. For this reason, Rome always kept a short time span between the beasts' arrival and their participation at the games (Kyle, 1998: 187). Hence, although Pompey might well have led exotic animals in his triumph of 61 BC, it is not probable the they were the same ones later used at the opening of his theatre complex in 55 BC (in which elephants, lions, leopards, a Gallic lynx, a rhinoceros, and Ethiopian monkeys are attested, e.g., Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 7.1.3; Pliny, *Natural History* 8.7.20–2, 8.28.70–29.71).

In contrast, Caesar and Octavian's triumphal celebrations were closely followed by games with animal shows. In 46 BC, Caesar celebrated his triumphs and the inauguration of his Forum and the temple of Venus with spectacular games (Pliny, *Natural History* 8.7.22, 8.70.182; Plutarch, *Life of Caesar* 55.2; Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.102; Suetonius, *Life of Caesar* 39; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 43.22.2–23.6). And, in 29 BC, Octavian held his games, which also opened the *aedes divi Iulii*, on 18 August, only a few days after his threefold triumph celebrated on 13–15 August (Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 51.22.4–9). Both Caesar and Octavian used captives from the triumphs in their games, and very probably, the beasts that appeared in the games had also walked the processional line. After all, both celebrations showed large Eastern displays from Alexandria, a city famed for its zoological collections and rich in trade with exotic animals. It was probably from Alexandria that Caesar had obtained the giraffe that Pliny and Dio Cassius claim was seen for the first time in Rome at the games (Pliny, *Natural History* 8.27.69; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 43.23.1–2). Octavian instead showed the hippopotamus and the rhinoceros, both rather novel sights in Rome, at his games, and these too probably came from Alexandria. Very probably, Caesar and Octavian had the exotic beasts led or carried in their triumphal parades before taking them into the arena.

Many exotic animals shown in triumphs in Rome had been collected in foreign conquered countries. Some had also been presented as gifts from lands and kings who wished to express their loyalty. Exotic animals constituted a traditional gift and tribute in the eastern Mediterranean (Bodson, 1998: 71–5). The practice continued in Roman times, and Augustus is known to have received tigers, elephants, and snakes as gifts from Indian embassies (Strabo, 15.1.73; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History* 2.34.62–3; Dio

Cassius, *Roman History* 54.9.8). By displaying beasts that had been taken and presented as gifts, Roman triumphs could show off a world of peoples and animals now both conquered and loyal.

From Foreign to Roman: The Elephant

Besides the early display of cattle and sheep, and the later exhibition of rows of exotic animals, sources confirm the triumphal display of two kinds of animals: horses (only mentioned by Livy, 36.40.11–12, and Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 31.8.12) and elephants. Elephants are without any comparison the species to have left the largest imprint in the Latin and Greek texts, and the following discussion will focus on their processional display.

Foreign Fearful Beasts

When King Pyrrhus landed on Italian soil in 280 BC, he brought with him a force of 25,000 men and twenty elephants (Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* 15.1). Italy had never before seen such beasts, and the elephants aroused substantial attention (Pliny, *Natural History* 8.6.16). The city of Tarentum minted coins with images of Indian elephants (Scullard, 1974: 103 and pl. XIVa) and cruder elephant depictions, probably referring to Pyrrhus's beasts, appear on issues of *aes signatum* from central Italy in the first half of the third century BC (Fig. 28.6). Pyrrhus's elephants caused the Roman army much trouble, and

FIGURE 28.6 *Aes signatum* from the first half of the third century BC depicting an elephant. British Museum.

it was only at the battle of Beneventum in 275 BC that the consul M'. Curius Dentatus managed to turn things around, driving the elephants back onto Pyrrhus's own lines. Dentatus returned to Rome and celebrated a triumph, of which Florus writes: 'nothing that the Roman people saw pleased them more than those beasts (*beluae*) whom they had feared, carrying their towers and following the victorious horses with heads bowed low not wholly unconscious that they were prisoners' (*Epitome of Roman History* 1.13.26–8).

Seneca and Pliny the Elder affirm that Dentatus's triumph was the first to show elephants in Rome (Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life* 13.3; Pliny, *Natural History* 8.6.16). Pliny expressly states that 'Italy saw elephants for the first time in the war against king Pyrrhus and called them Lucanian oxen because they were seen in Lucania in 280 BC; but Rome first saw them in a triumph five years later'. At another place in the *Natural History* (7.139), Pliny credits L. Caecilius Metellus with having introduced elephants in a triumph in 250 BC, probably meaning that he was the first to do so during the first Punic war (*ex primo Punico bello*). In fact, in the later Roman tradition, Dentatus and Metellus were both famed for their early elephant displays: Dentatus for having been the first to show the beasts in Rome, Metellus for having paraded such a large number. According to Seneca, Metellus led as many as 120 captured elephants in his triumph (*On the Shortness of Life* 13.8), and the beasts quite clearly made a spectacular impression. Varro even places a historical event 'in the year that Metellus showed a great number of elephants in his triumph' (Pliny, *Natural History* 18.4.17). The tradition of Metellus's deed was also much promoted by his family, who from the middle of the second century BC to the end of the Republic issued coins that carried the image of an elephant to commemorate the great achievement of their ancestor (Scullard, 1974: 152, pl. XXIV, a–c, n. 90).

In particular, Metellus received much praise for shipping the herd on huge rafts filled with earth and bushes across the strait of Messina. Zonaras (*Extracts of History* 8.14) points out that the enterprise was so smooth that the elephants never sensed that they were crossing the sea. Metellus and his extraordinary retinue must have attracted quite some attention all along their route. In fact, it seems that this spectacle itself, the very transfer of elephants to Rome, and their subsequent appearance in the triumph, was the sole reason for transporting the beasts at all. Once the triumph was over, Rome did not know what to do with the elephants. It was decided that the beasts should not be kept nor be presented as gifts to foreign kings, and as a result, they ended up in the Circus (Pliny, *Natural History* 8.6.17). According to Pliny, there were two different later traditions, according to which the elephants were either killed by javelins or simply driven around the Circus in order to increase the contempt for them.

The abundant descriptions in the ancient literature of the triumphs of Dentatus and Metellus and the elephant depictions on coins testify to the emotional first imprint that these animals made on the Roman spectators. Certainly, the feelings were caused by the awe that the earliest military confrontations induced on the Roman side. Florus stresses that the elephants shown by Dentatus had been much feared even by the inhabitants of Rome (*Epitome of Roman History* 1.13.28), who before the triumph had never seen

the animals, but merely heard frightening stories about them. Polybius also describes the joy and relief that Metellus's capturing of the fearful Punic beasts caused in Rome (*Histories* 1.40.15–41.2; cf. 1.39.12–13).

To the Roman soldiers in the field, the elephants were no less than attacking fortresses, carrying towers and warriors on their backs and having tusks that were at times armed with sharp iron or even with spears. Florus maintains that Dentatus paraded the elephants 'with their turrets', *cum turribus suis*. Thus they appeared in Rome as in battle. But the elephants were much more than inanimate war machines. To the Romans, still not used to their looks and behaviour, they appeared as wild and forceful monsters (*ferae, beluae, monstra*). Florus describes how the Roman horses were terrified by their massive ugliness, their smell, and their trumpeting (*Epitome of Roman History* 1.13.8). In fact, to strike terror into enemy soldiers and horses was one of the main functions of war elephants; they often carried war paint, and they were occasionally even intoxicated with rations of wine before battle to increase their fury.

By capturing the elephants and leading them as prisoners in her triumphs, Rome manifestly displayed that she had tamed the ferocious beasts. Florus writes that the elephants in Dentatus's triumph walked with their heads bowed, a pose that not only signalled lost powers and captivity to the spectators but also marked that the beasts themselves were conscious of and accepted their submission to Rome. In fact, to lower one's head was also a fitting gesture for the human prisoners who were forced to walk in the Roman triumphs; in this way they bowed physically as well as symbolically to the power of Rome.

After Dentatus and Metellus, elephants next appear in the smaller triumph (*ovatio*) held by Marcellus in 211 BC after his conquest of Syracuse. Livy describes the military spoils, art, and rich goods from the conquered Greek city, and adds: *Punicae quoque victoriae signum octo ducti elephanti*, 'as a mark that the Carthaginians had been defeated as well, eight elephants were led in the procession' (Livy, 26.21.7–10).

Ten years later, Scipio Africanus concluded the Second Punic War by his victory at Zama. In the triumph that followed, elephants walked in the procession (Appian, *Punic Wars* 66). After Scipio's triumph, we hear of no more captured elephants led as prisoners in any triumph until the third century AD, when they appear as one of many kinds of exotic animals. Elephants ceased to be used on the battlefield at around the time of Caesar, and the beasts exhibited in the late Roman processions had not been captured in battle, but had probably been collected at the end of the war or presented as gifts. Rather than denoting a particularly fierce enemy defeated in combat, the elephants here, together with the other species, transmitted an image of the worldwide fauna now embraced by the Roman Empire.

Although, up to the time of Caesar, elephants continued to be captured from enemy forces on the battlefield, after 201 BC, no sources describe them being led as prisoners in a triumph. On some occasions, their display might simply not have left any traces in our texts, but at others, it seems clear that Rome chose not to parade the captured beasts. For example, elephants formed an important part of Antiochus's army against the Roman forces both in Aetolia and above all at Magnesia in 190 BC, where the Roman

general Scipio Asiaticus managed to capture fifteen beasts (Livy, 37.44.1; Appian, *Syrian Wars* 36). In the treaty of Apamea that followed, Antiochus was forced to hand over his remaining elephants and to promise not to possess any in the future (Polybius, *Histories* 21.42.12–13; Livy, 38.38.8). Still, there are no traces of elephants in Scipio's triumph after Magnesia, nor in Manlius Vulso's procession that followed the treaty of Apamea. Scipio instead paraded 1,231 ivory tusks (Livy, 37.59.3–6), and Vulso chose to present Antiochus's elephants as a gift to King Eumenes of Pergamon (Livy, 38.39.5).

There were probably a number of motives involved in the choice made by these generals not to display elephants in their triumphs. From the beginning of the second century BC, the Romans themselves occasionally employed elephants in war, a circumstance that might have lessened the desire to present them as captive foreign beasts in their processions. Also, to ship large beasts to Rome did involve considerable logistical undertakings and expense. It might simply not have seemed worth the effort to transport the beasts all the way to Rome just to show them to an audience who were by now rather used to elephant displays. Instead, by parading a large number of ivory tusks, Scipio could exhibit new and extraordinary riches while also alluding to his defeat of Antiochus's elephants without having to go through the trouble of shipping the beasts back home. Further, Scipio Asiaticus and Manlius Vulso were both victorious in the East, and it might be that elephants at this time had become symbolically linked to Rome's Punic victories. Livy writes that Marcellus showed elephants as 'a mark that the Carthaginians had been defeated'. In fact, Roman warfare in the first and second Punic wars had been much focused on how to fight the unfamiliar beasts. The battle at Zama meant the breaking of their spell; Scipio managed to control their behaviour in battle and the beasts were handed over to Rome. After Zama, the texts reveal quite little concern with encountering elephants on the battlefield. The animals were no longer *ferae*; their powers were mastered and they were ready to fight for Rome as well. The spectators, who had earlier waited with eagerness to see foreign elephants walk humbled in the triumphs, now had other expectations and other fears. Very probably, then, the triumph of Scipio Africanus in 201 BC, by staging complete mastery over the elephants also put an end to their display as feared beasts.

Turning Roman

Elephants again appear in two late Republican triumphal performances: Pompey's first triumph, held over Africa sometime between 81 and 79 BC, and Caesar's fourfold triumph in 46 BC celebrating his victories in Gaul, Egypt, Pontus, and Africa. On these occasions, the role of the elephants had changed: they were no longer led as captives but accompanied the Roman victor.

In Pompey's triumph, the elephants form part of a well-known and rather amusing story. Not yet a senator and performing his first triumph, Pompey tried to enter Rome in a chariot drawn by four elephants (Pliny, *Natural History* 8.2.4; Plutarch, *Life of Pompey* 14.4–5; Hölscher, 2005). However, the *porta triumphalis* was too narrow for this grand

entry, and although Pompey tried twice, he finally gave up and changed to the traditional horses. Some thirty-five years later, in 46 BC, elephants appeared in Caesar's processions. There are two versions of the role they played in these spectacles. According to Suetonius, forty elephants carrying torches flanked Caesar as he climbed the Capitol in his Gallic triumph (Suetonius, *Life of Caesar* 37.2). Dio Cassius also includes elephants carrying torches, but in this version, they conducted Caesar home together with all the people after the dinner held on the last day's triumph (Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 43.22.1–2).

Pompey's elephants appeared in his triumph over Africa. If we are to trust Dio Cassius, Caesar's elephants showed up on the last day of the four triumphs held in 46 BC when, also, the victory in Africa was celebrated. In consequence, scholars have stressed the symbolic meaning of the elephants as denoting the conquest of Africa (Matz, 1952: 30; Voisin, 1983: 32–3). However, in the case of Caesar, Suetonius, in contrast to Dio, claims that the elephants appeared in the Gallic parade. And, even if Dio is correct, it is far from certain that the elephants were meant to evoke the African celebration in particular. In many ways, Caesar combined his four triumphs of 46 BC into one manifestation rather than four separate celebrations (Östenberg, 2009: 287), and the dinner in question could well have concluded the entire fourfold performance rather than the specific African parade. More importantly, in contrast to the beasts displayed by Dentatus, Metellus, Marcellus, and Scipio Africanus, the elephants described as taking part in Pompey and Caesar's triumphs were not captives, but employed to escort the *triumphator* himself. They were not staged as submissive prisoners of Rome drawn in triumph, but they now, as it seemed willingly, rendered service to the victorious Roman leader.

In fact, Roman generals had used elephants as escorts and symbols of victory for quite some time. In 120 BC, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus celebrated his success by riding through Gaul on an elephant's back followed by his soldiers in a kind of victory procession (Suetonius, *Nero* 2.1–2; Florus, *Epitome of Roman History* 1.37.5). Rome's Gallic enemies had used no elephants in this war, and Africa had not been involved. The animal in question must have fought on the Roman side, after which it was taken up as a victory escort by Ahenobarbus.

Thus, although there might well have been a certain symbolic link between the elephants and the African triumphs of Pompey and Caesar, it seems more reasonable to stress the function of these animals as escorts of the triumphing generals. Such an interpretation is further strengthened by the obvious references in Pompey and Caesar's triumphs to both Alexander and to Dionysus and his triumphant return from India on an elephant's back. Describing Pompey's African triumph, Pliny writes, 'At Rome they [the elephants] were first used in harness to draw the chariot of Pompey the Great in his African triumph, as they are recorded to have been used before when Father Liber went in triumph after his conquest of India' (Pliny, *Natural History* 8.2.4). The idea of the triumphant Dionysus developed in the Hellenistic age, and was inspired by Alexander's campaign in India. Alexander collected a substantial herd of elephants, which accompanied him on his way back from the East in celebration of his Indian tour. In the grand procession that Ptolemy Philadelphus held in Alexandria sometime around 275 BC,

Dionysus and Alexander were represented riding on and drawn by elephants respectively (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 5.200d, 5.202a–b).

The idea of the elephants as escorts and symbols of victorious gods and semi-divine rulers was taken up and developed in Rome, and it is in this context that the animals at Pompey and Caesar's triumphs should be read. Already in 125 BC, a coin of one Caecilius Metellus showed Jupiter in an elephant *biga* (Crawford, 1974: 292–3, no. 269.1), and Augustus was depicted in triumphal dress on coins issued in 17 BC, standing in a chariot drawn by two elephants (Fig. 28.7). In commemoration of his successful achievements during the civil wars, L. Cornificius, a friend of Octavian, even used to ride about on an elephant whenever he dined out (Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 49.7.6). From early Imperial times, elephants were customarily employed to draw the images of deceased emperors and their family members in the Circus processions (Scullard, 1974: 255–7). This use of elephants reveals that they were linked to earthly victories, and also to life, light, and the victory over death (Matz, 1952). Dionysus's triumphant return from India on an elephant's back was a frequent motif on Roman sarcophagi, and elephants were often used for candelabra in Roman art (Matz, 1952: 33–6). Caesar's use of the elephants as torch-bearers in his triumph might be seen in this context, and he was clearly also inspired by Eastern precedents.

FIGURE 28.7 Reverse of *aureus*, minted in Spain in 17 BC. Augustus in elephant *biga* on a triumphal arch. British Museum.

Antiochus VI is known to have employed torch-bearing elephants emphasizing his divine nature as a victorious ruler (Matz, 1952: 34; Toynbee, 1973: 47).

The elephants that appeared at Pompey and Caesar's triumphs were very far from being the *monstra, ferae*, and *beluae* of the triumphs of Dentatus and Metellus. To be able to carry torches in a procession they had to be well trained, and Caesar's animals may have been raised and drilled in Italy rather than captured in Africa. In fact, during his stay in Africa, Caesar actually sent for elephants from Italy (Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 43.4.1). Elephants were now trained for ceremonies rather than for war, a change nicely reflected in an epigram by Philip of Thessaloniki:

> No longer does the mighty-tusked elephant, with tower on back and ready to fight phalanxes, charge unchecked into battle; but in fear he has yielded his thick neck to the yoke, and draws the chariot of divine Caesar. The wild beast knows the delight of peace; throwing off the gear of war, he conducts instead the father of good order.
>
> (*Anthologia Palatina* 9.285, translation based on Scullard, 1974: 257)

In these verses, Philip depicts an elephant *biga* that carried the image of the Divine Augustus at a Circus procession organized by Tiberius or Caligula. Certainly, they also fit perfectly to describe the changing role of the beasts in the triumphal procession, from captured fearful monsters of foreign armies to tamed escorts of the Roman victor.

Suggested Reading

A classic discussion (although somewhat dated) of the triumph and its origins is by Versnel (1970). In more recent years, scholars have written anew about the triumph, focusing less on origins and more on contemporary functions and meanings. For critical discussions of the sources, see Itgenshorst (2005) and Beard (2007). For Augustus and the triumph, consult the articles collected in Krasser, Pausch, and Petrovic (2008). The exhibition catalogue edited by La Rocca and Tortorella (2008) includes some pieces of general interest, and also many useful illustrations. Captured animals displayed in triumphs are discussed in some depth by Östenberg (2009: 168–84). The classic book on elephants in the ancient world is Scullard (1974). No particular work focuses on the Roman animals shown in triumphs, but discussions of horses, draught animals, and sacrificial oxen can be found in publications of reliefs that include such representations (e.g., Pfanner, 1983; Kuttner, 1995). For Pompey's elephants, see particularly the stimulating article by Hölscher (2005) on the late Republican use of the animals as part of a politics of provocation.

References

Beard, M. (2007), *The Roman Triumph*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
Bodson, L. (1998), 'Ancient Greek views on the Exotic Animal', *Arctos* 32, 61–85.