

BOOK REVIEW

Spectacle in the Roman World. By Hazel DODGE. Classical World Series. London and New York: Bristol Classical Press/Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. Pp. 96. Paperback, £12.99/\$19.95. ISBN 978-1-8539-9696-2.

Hazel Dodge, the Louis Claude Purser Senior Lecturer in Classical Archaeology at Trinity College, Dublin, has published extensively on topics related to the ancient city and building technology in the Roman Empire. In this small but highly informative book, she presents a concise overview of spectacles in the Roman world from the later Republic through the first two centuries of the Imperial age. There are seven chapters, each averaging between 10–15 pages in length, that include information on various types of entertainments and the structures where they were presented. Dodge illustrates her key points by presenting recent archaeological discoveries and modern perspectives on Roman entertainment, and, while her primary focus is the city of Rome, she also includes evidence from both the eastern and western Empire.

In Chapter 1, which serves as the general introduction, Dodge sets forth the types of evidence for various Roman spectacles, highlighting new discoveries of entertainment structures (like the amphitheater in Sofia, Bulgaria, found in 2006) and ancient sources like Martial's *Epigrams*, and other evidence including gladiator tombstones and floor mosaics. Chapters 2 through 5 focus on the types of spectacles, such as the circus and chariot racing (2); gladiators and gladiatorial displays (3); animal hunts (4); and *naumachiae* and aquatic displays (5). In Chapter 6 Dodge considers the fragmentary nature of the evidence for spectacles in late antiquity, noting that, while we know a considerable amount about chariot-racing, a full complement of events continued to take place in Rome into the 4th century CE, with the last chariot races held in the Circus Maximus in the mid 6th century. Chapter 7, which serves as the conclusion, is concerned with the ancient context for spectacles in Roman society and our perceptions of them today. Dodge reminds the reader that, regardless of the nature of these public entertainments, they all were meant to enhance the political authority of the person paying for them and reinforced the Romans' social and gender hierarchy. In the Appendix there are definitions of entertainment building-types, the types of

events associated with them, as well as well-preserved examples and plans. “Further Reading” consists of a list of secondary sources, most of them in English and dated from the 1980s to the present, that are organized according to headings that parallel the titles of the book’s chapters.

Dodge’s expertise in the field of Roman spectacles is evident throughout the text in her insightful interpretations of the literary and archaeological evidence and in her recognition that there is still much to be learned about the topic. In Chapter 5, for example, she acknowledges that there is no consensus regarding the flooding of the Colosseum and points out that the necessary water-source has yet to be found. And in Chapter 3, on gladiators and gladiatorial displays, she points out that the 20 or so different costumes worn by gladiators had their origins in the battle-gear worn by Rome’s early enemies (including Samnites and Thracians), underscoring the professional fighters’ popularity as exemplars of *virtus*. Dodge also discusses the 1993 discovery of a gladiators’ necropolis near the stadium at Ephesus, where the remains of 68 gladiators revealed that the deceased had received relatively good medical care and consumed a diet high in carbohydrates.

The stated objective of the Classical World Series is to explore the culture and achievements of the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome by publishing affordable books designed for advanced high school and introductory level university students. Dodge makes an important contribution to this Series by writing on a topic of particular interest to all students of Roman civilization: public spectacles. She strikes a good balance between art, archaeology, social history, and literary sources by discussing the buildings where these events took place, the identity of the people who were involved with them, and the Romans’ comments about them. Dodge obviously took great care in selecting a manageable number of black and white illustrations for the text, to include plans and photos of specific entertainment structures, as well as mosaics, coins, graffiti, and reliefs. Additionally, the ancient authors she discusses cover a wide scope, ranging from Pliny the Elder and Suetonius to Tertullian and Augustine. In presenting the evidence for spectacles in this fashion, Dodge provides students with an important perspective on the multidisciplinary nature of scholarship in Roman studies. This book will surely inspire them to pursue further study in the field.

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