

THE LURE OF THE ARENA  
*Social Psychology and the Crowd at the Roman Games*

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bears and “sea calves,” i.e., seals). He ends his account by wishing he could have dressed better, so that he could have taken a more forward seat, and with it, a better view of the godlike Nero (7.79–84). Corydon therefore implies that he could have disguised himself by his dress to sneak into the better seats – precisely the situation the authorities sought to police in the lower *maeniana* and with which the Roman satirists had such fun. Corydon’s experience encapsulates much of what we have seen above about the seating arrangements in Roman amphitheaters: spectators were segregated on various criteria into peer groups, which clustered in certain parts of the *cavea*; there were rules as to who precisely got to sit where; and the crowd looked at itself as well as the events on the sand, as the spectators were mutually visible to each other. It is now time to investigate the workings of crowd dynamics at the Roman arena against this physical and sociopolitical backdrop.

## CHAPTER 4

*Crowd dynamics at arena spectacles*

Monday’s rioter was Tuesday’s voter. Tuesday’s voter was Thursday’s theatregoer. Not necessarily with the same friends and loyalties in each context.

N. Horsfall, *The Culture of the Roman Plebs* (2003)<sup>1</sup>

The known facts about crowd demographics and the seating arrangements in the amphitheater carry important psychological ramifications. The arena crowd was not an amorphous mass, but was marshaled into distinct subgroups. The fact of strictly segregated seating by social categories in the *cavea* meant that spectators sat with people to whom they were connected in some way. Colleagues in particular professions and crafts sat together in assigned seats, for instance, as did fellow townsmen, or ex-brothers-in-arms, and so on. Thus the vast majority of the crowd was seated amongst groups of peers, many of whom must have known each other already. At the Flavian Amphitheater at Puteoli, amidst the vaulted substructures that supported the seating, special chambers were bricked off from the maze of corridors and entrances. Some of them were chapels (*sacella*) for religious observances, but others, apparently, were hospitality suites reserved for guilds (*collegia*). One, for instance, is associated with the *scabillarii*, the cantonet players for theatrical performances.<sup>2</sup> It cannot be ruled out that these musicians were part of the arena spectacle itself, in which case, this space was reserved for performers (on the role of music at the games, see below, chapter 6, pp. 225–6). The same cannot be said, however, of a *schola org[an]iophantorum*] (“chamber of the initiatory priests of Dionysus”), who are mentioned in an inscription not found *in situ* but can be plausibly associated with another chamber in the substructures.<sup>3</sup> Other vaulted amphitheaters have not left physical evidence of reception rooms, but such

<sup>1</sup> N. Horsfall, *The Culture of the Roman Plebs* (London, 2003), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Maiuri, *Anfiteatro Flavio Puteolano*, 47; Bomgardner, *Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*, 77–80; Welch, *Roman Amphitheatre*, 221–5. For the relevant inscription, see *AE* 1956.137.

<sup>3</sup> *AE* 1956.138, with Maiuri, *Anfiteatro Flavio Puteolano*, 46–8 and 53–5.

suites could have been set up easily enough, even temporarily, by means of ropes, wooden screens, or curtains. It is hardly implausible to imagine groups of fellow workers and friends gathering in (rented?) chambers for refreshments before the games or during intervals. This scenario suggests one way groups of people known to each other enjoyed their day at the games; in all likelihood, they would sit in the stands together as well.<sup>4</sup>

Even among the unsegregated masses in the tiers of the third *maenianum*, a strong psychological, as well as social, cohesion was likely in effect. Although apparently undifferentiated in their specific seat allocations, here too people of the same social class were grouped together in a single region of the *cavea*.<sup>5</sup> No doubt many spectators in this section also came to the games in smaller groups, even if not formally categorized and seated as such. Alypius watched from this region of the Colosseum with his friends, and later led others there too (August. *Conf.* 6.13 = T.3) and, it seems, the rustic Corydon did not go to Nero's *venatio* alone: "we came to our seats" (*Ecl.* 7.26: *venimus ad sedes*), he comments, and found himself with an older stranger sitting to his left (*Ecl.* 7.39–40: *senior, lateri qui forte sinistro / iunctus erat*) – the seat on his right, it is inferred, was occupied by someone he knew.

The social psychology of crowd dynamics suggests that the presence and mutual visibility of subgroups in a crowd strengthens the social identities of both the crowd and the subgroups within it, increases sensations of solidarity that stem from those identities, and amplifies the expression of identities that lends crowd members feelings of empowerment. The history of modern English football stadiums and crowd behavior there offers dramatic evidence for these propositions. Traditionally, spectators watched soccer matches in an undifferentiated mass, standing in terraces. As crowd size grew and rivalries intensified, in the 1960s the authorities sought to curb growing hooliganism first by confining rival fans to separate terraces, then by fencing the terraces off from each other, and finally by locking the spectators into the fenced-off "pens" to keep them apart. The effect, however, was the opposite of that desired. Fans – now corralled together in dense packs, bodies pushing and swaying in unison – displayed greater ingroup solidarity and a consequent intensification of outgroup

<sup>4</sup> The largest proportion of seat inscriptions from the stadium and theater at Aphrodisias, for instance, refers to groups or associations, both formal (e.g., ephebes, or people from specified cities or members of professions) and informal (e.g., the *philopoi*, "weapons' fans"); See also Roueché, *Performers and Partisans*, 79–80 and 119–28.

<sup>5</sup> Welch (*Roman Amphitheatre*, 159) makes the reasonable suggestion that plebeian spectators had seating regions set aside for them according to tribal or *collegia* membership. If so, the third *maenianum* may also have been partitioned into group-specific zones.

hostility, which took the form of abusive chants during games and off-site violence against rival fans, since on-site violence was now so hard to perpetrate. A new tack was therefore taken in the 1990s, when the "pens" and standing terraces were abandoned in favor of individual, numbered seats with arms that bodily separated individual fans from each other, and which required a paper ticket to occupy. Violence decreased.<sup>6</sup> The point to note is not the fluctuation of rates of violence specifically, but the wider fact that spectator segregation in stadia carries demonstrable consequences for group solidarity (i.e., social identity), for the feelings that underlie it, and for outward behavior – in this case, violent behavior.

#### SPECTATOR EXPECTATIONS, BEHAVIORS, AND VOCALIZATIONS

We saw in the introduction that the ancient literary evidence as to how the arena crowd behaved is tarnished by the snobbish attitudes of the Roman elite when recounting the behavior of its social inferiors, as well as by the rhetorical commonplaces so readily resorted to by ancient authors. Despite these caveats, the data remain instructive and contain much useful information. Cassiodorus (*Var.* 1.27.5) simply asks "who looks for dignified behavior at spectacles?" (*mores autem graves in spectaculis quis requirat?*), while Tertullian (*Spect.* 21.2–22 = T.29) goes deeper and draws a sharp contrast between the way people behaved in normal life and the way they behaved in the arena, circus, or theater. Conduct reckoned intolerable when displayed by others in a daily context was condoned in the stands. They would shield their daughters from coarse language, but then expose them to it and use it themselves in the *cavea*. They would avert their eyes from the corpse of one who had died naturally, but relish the sight of arena victims ripped and lacerated. They would attempt to break up a fight on the street, but applaud far more violent combats in the arena. They would approve of punishment for murder, but then encourage a gladiator to commit murder. Tertullian frames these remarks in a typically rhetorical manner, as a set of antithetical juxtapositions infused with moral opprobrium. His is a specific and judgmental view of the crowd experience that stresses lack of restraint and baseness of behavior as the salient results of going to the games. The same observations could be made about Seneca's description of a lunchtime visit to the arena (*Ep.* 7.2–5 = T.20), Salvian's

<sup>6</sup> See Armstrong, *Football Hooligans*, 105–38; Buford, *Thugs*, 161–74; E. Dunning et al., *The Roots of Football Hooliganism: A Historical and Sociological Study* (London, 1988), 132–83, esp. 164–9; F. Frostick and P. Marsh, *Football Hooliganism* (Cullompton, 2005), esp. 10–24 and 172–3.

comments about merry spectators enjoying victims fed to beasts (*Gub. Dei* 6.10 = T.18), or Augustine's passage about his friend Alypius' debut at the Colosseum (*August. Conf.* 6.13 = T.3). All of these texts reflect a dominant discourse that emphasizes the themes of intemperance, loss of individual identity, and atavistic vileness.<sup>7</sup> On the surface, then, the ancient portrayal of arena crowds is essentially Le Bonian in character.

But if we dig a little deeper, more can be said. These authors make it quite clear that people behaved differently in the arena, circus, or theater than they did in their everyday environments. Indeed Tertullian and Augustine chart not only changes in behavior, but also shifts in attitude, as their subjects' very thinking is transformed in the crowd. In light of the social identity model of crowd dynamics, these details may be taken to reflect not loss of control or the submergence of individual minds into a collective, but the adaptation of people's social identities and categorizations to the crowd context. The result was a realignment of the spectators' priorities and, just as noteworthy, a vehement expression of crowd-based social identities in ways the ancient authors regard as a descent into vulgarity and barbarism.<sup>8</sup> But the authors' judgments are less significant than their reporting the identity shift and its enthusiastic expression.

Crowd actions and vocalizations echo the social identities brought to the fore by context, identities which are themselves grounded in shared social understandings. Thus, more revealing than moral judgments about crowd behavior are notices about what the spectators actually did and said. The patchwork of surviving evidence, however, makes determining the full scope of social identity content a more difficult, if not an impossible proposition: Roman spectators cannot be polled or interviewed about what they were thinking or feeling as they watched. However, broad suggestions can be made on the basis of the cultural analyses offered by prior studies (see chapter 1, pp. 17–22) combined with direct evidence for what the crowd did and said, much of it drawn from the direct experience of the ancient writers themselves. Like any crowd, arena spectators' social identities would have comprised several elements, drawn from the expectations they brought with them to their seats, shaped by the nature of the events they had come to witness, and influenced by the sharp distinction the physical environment drew between the watchers in the stands and the watched on the sand. It is also likely that the spectators' psychological reactions tracked the different

phases of the complex spectacle taking place before them. Thus, their views of the performers and of themselves would be partially fixed, derived as they were from their life experiences and understandings, and partially malleable, as they reacted to changing conditions in the specific spectacle they had come to watch.

We have already charted some of the most relevant features of the Roman social environment that likely shaped the crowd's identities (see chapter 1, pp. 22–38), and many life experiences were common to all parts of the empire over many centuries, such as prevalent slavery, high average mortality, hierarchical social thought, and militarism in state ideology. But some outlooks, such as callous fatalism or the disparagement of pity, were less likely to be so universal and firmly rooted, as they varied over time and space, or even by individual, while the particular elements of spectacles would also vary from case to case. In this way, the social identities of Roman arena crowds should not be conceived as monolithic and homogeneous across time and space, but instead imagined as a dynamic kaleidoscope of attitudes, outlooks, and reactions fashioned from a combination of shared experience and immediate stimuli.

The details of crowd demographics also mattered a great deal. The social identities and understandings of, say, an all-male crowd at an amphitheater attached to a military base are not likely to have been the same as those of the Colosseum crowd at Rome, and both of these would diverge from the identities prevalent among, say, spectators in the Greek East, who brought their own cultural baggage to the shows. Regional and cultural differences like these among arena spectators would have had a powerful formative impact on the content of their social identities, and not just at *munera*.<sup>9</sup> This variety needs to be borne in mind in what follows, where only a composite picture can be constructed from scattered snapshots drawn from divergent contexts.

The hunt probably opened the proceedings at many spectacles. The first thing to note is that not all the beasts sent into the arena were slaughtered, and this was no disappointment to the spectators. Martial was so dumbfounded by a display of lions that had been trained to frolic with hares that he devoted eight poems to the marvel. The poet was no less amazed

<sup>7</sup> See also the passages assembled and discussed by Wistrand, *Entertainment and Violence*, esp. 14–29.

<sup>8</sup> Such judgments find echo in external observers' reactions to the behavior of modern rioters; see, e.g., Reicher, "Battle of Westminster."

<sup>9</sup> For instance, twenty-eight amphitheaters are known from the Rhine–Danube frontier, many of them attached to legionary bases (e.g., Vetera, Cologne, Moguntiacum, Vindonissa, Carnuntum etc.); see Futrell, *Blood in the Arena*, 53–76, esp. 58–66 (Britain and the Rhine–Danube frontier). See also P. Le Roux, "L'amphithéâtre et le soldat sous l'empire romain," in Domergue et al. (eds.), *Spectacula*, 203–16. On the Greek East, see Carter, "Gladiators and Monomachoi"; Mann, "Gladiators in the Greek East"; Robert, *Gladiateurs*, esp. 239–66.

by an elephant, who had formerly been pitted against a bull, kneeling before the emperor in apparent submission.<sup>10</sup> The Domitianic poet Statius devotes one of his *Silvae* (2.5) to a tamed lion, whose death was mourned by the people as if it had been a famous gladiator. The behavior of animals, whether they were slaughtered or not, was a matter of general interest, and in itself constituted one lure of the hunt. Pliny (*HN* 8.20 = T.14) comments that the arched flightpaths of shields hurled in the air by a dying elephant specifically delighted the crowd (*voluptati spectantibus erant*), as the sight reminded them of juggling. Symmachus (*Ep.* 4.12.2) reports that the mere running about of leopards amused the crowd at games he staged for his son. This sort of detail highlights the complexity of the spectators' mental orientation to what they were watching and demonstrates that a lot more than raw bloodlust drew people to watch.

While the *venationes* were not necessarily all about blood and death, it cannot be denied that these were amply on display. Competitions between beasts, or between human and beast, shared some of the attractions of the headline event, when gladiators took to the sand. Like the main bouts, outcomes in the hunts were not certain. While the animals were at a distinct disadvantage, there was a very real possibility (as in bull-fighting today) that a huntsman could go down to some fast or unexpected move on the part of a beast.<sup>11</sup> Despite their lesser status as fighters, skill, agility, and dexterity were required of *bestiarii* and *venatores*, and this was appreciated by the crowd. Fronto, for instance, reports that M. Aurelius, as heir-apparent, would free and enfranchise arena huntsmen on the crowd's insistence.<sup>12</sup> As

<sup>10</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 1.6, 1.14, 1.22, 1.44, 1.48, 1.51, 1.60, 1.104.12–22 (lions and hares) and *Spect.* 20, 22 (elephant). See also Mart. *Ep.* 1.104.9–10 for a dancing elephant. Roman crowds were amazed by unexpected sights, such as tightrope-walking elephants (Suet. *Galba* 6.1, *Nero* 12.2; cf. Aelian, *NA* 2.11), trickster dogs (Plut. *Mor.* 973E), or sunbathing crocodiles (Strabo 17.814–5).

<sup>11</sup> The Hunting Baths at Leptis Magna show arena hunting scenes in which two of the human performers have come to grief – one is being chewed on by a big cat; see J. B. Ward-Perkins and J. M. C. Toynbee, "The Hunting Baths at Leptis Magna," *Archaeologia* 93 (1949), 165–95, esp. 181. Note also a relief from Apri in Asia Minor showing a *venatio* in which one shielded huntsman is being tossed by a bear, another by a bull; see Robert, *Gladiateurs*, 90–1 (no. 27) and plate 24. In a gladiatorial relief from Pompeii (see Jacobelli, *Gladiators at Pompeii*, 95–7 [fig. 77]), a bear is shown chewing a *bestiarius* right out of the gate, while two colleagues raise their arms in alarm or despair.

<sup>12</sup> Fronto *Ad M. Caes.* 1.9.2. The *bestiarius* Carpophorus was celebrated in Flavian Rome and is compared by Martial to Meleager, Hercules, and other legendary hunters; see Mart. *Spect.* 17, 26(?), 32 with Coleman, *Liber Spectaculorum*, ad loc., and Mart. *Ep.* 5.65. An advertisement for games staged at Pompeii promises "Ellios and a hunt" (*Ellios [et] ven(atio) erit*) where Ellios was apparently a famed huntsman; *CIL* 4.1179 = *ILS* 5143 = Sabbatini Tumolesi, *Gladiatorium Paria*, 36–7 [no. 10]). See also Pliny *HN* 8.20 = T.14 for the *magnum miraculum* of an elephant felled by a single javelin to the head, or the implicit admiration of Commodus' hunting prowess at Dio 72(73).10.3, 72(73).18.1–19.1 and Hdn. 1.15.1–6. Note also Dio 72(73).14.1 for a rival hunter, a nobleman named Julius Alexander, who brought down a lion with a javelin thrown from horseback;

with gladiators, the crowd could demand the release of an animal performer it favored, presumably because it had put up a good fight or evaded capture in some impressive manner; they did so by waving their togas or scraps of material, such as napkins or handkerchiefs (Mart. *Ep.* 13.99, 13.100). The hunt offered to the eye exotic, fast-moving, and exciting images. And wagers could be laid. People in other eras have derived pleasure both from merely viewing wild or tamed animals (in circuses and zoos) and from bloodsports involving animals, and the *venatio* combined both attractions. The staging of hunts as stand-alone spectacles tells us that they had their own unique attractions and, probably, their own dedicated fans.<sup>13</sup> Given all this, we may defer further consideration of a major part of the crowd's mental state during the hunt until we turn our attention to sports spectatorship (see below, chapter 6), but we can conclude on the foregoing alone that the spectators' mental orientation to this phase of the spectacle was complex and fluid.

Evidence for what the crowd did or said as the hunts progressed is sparse. Most authors merely report what transpired on the sand, what animals were put on display and in what quantity, or note unusual happenings.<sup>14</sup> That the people expected a good showing, from animal and human performer alike, is well established. M. Caelius Rufus' increasingly frantic pleas to Cicero, as governor of Cilicia, to deliver panthers for a hunt he planned to stage at Rome are well known.<sup>15</sup> A letter of Pliny's (*Ep.* 6.34) illuminates Caelius' concerns. Pliny writes in consolation to a friend, a local magnate in Verona, whose African felines failed to appear on the appointed day. No doubt, the participation of the panthers had been widely advertised in advance, and their absence was a source of terrific and very public embarrassment for the games' sponsor, as can be deduced from the tone of Pliny's letter, which seeks to assure his friend that his efforts at pleasing the people had not gone unappreciated. In Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, a fictional sponsor of games at Plataea saw his expensive troupe of bears reduced to almost nothing by pestilence, their bodies scavenged by the town's paupers

in response, Commodus had Alexander killed. The lesser status of *bestiarii* (and *venatores*) is suggested by their under-representation in arena-related epitaphs, graffiti, and other monuments; see Ville, *Gladiature*, 334–43. Of the 302 documents and monuments assembled by L. Robert, only five certainly commemorate *bestiarii*; Robert, *Gladiateurs*, 87–90 (no. 25), 90–2 (no. 27), 107 (no. 47a), 130 (no. 77), and 234–5 (no. 298). *Bestiarius* appears to have been a term of abuse used in arguments; see Goetz (ed.), *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*, vol. III, 643 §24.

<sup>13</sup> Severus deplored a senator who publicly contested at Ostia with a prostitute dressed as a leopard; Dio 75(76).8.2. The chap evidently liked his beast hunts.

<sup>14</sup> Typical would be such notices as, e.g., *RG* 22.3; Dio 53.27.6, 55.10.8, 66.25.1, 68.15.1, 72(73).18.1–2, 72(73).19.1; *HA Ant. Pius* 10.9; Strabo 18.1.44; Suet. *Titus* 7.3.

<sup>15</sup> *Cic. Att.* 6.1.21; *Cic. Fam.* 8.2.2, 8.4.5, 8.6.5, 8.8.10, 8.9.3; cf. *HA Prob.* 19.1–7.



To the left of the boy is the following inscription, recording the herald's address to the crowd:

*per curionem / dictum: "domi/ni mei ut / Telegeni(i) / pro leopardo / meritum habbeant vestri / favoris, donalte eis denarios / quingentos.*

Spoken through a herald: "My lords, in order that the Telegenii have your favor's reward for each leopard killed, give them 500 *denarii*."

The crowd is addressed as *domini*, "lords." Claudius addressed arena crowds in the same way (Suet. *Claud.* 21.5 = T.22), and Cicero puts both *dominus* and *populus* on the same plane when stating whom the gladiator seeks to please (Cic. *Tusc.* 2.41 = T.5). The pandering is of course unctuous, but the use of the term is also highly significant. Here, in this time and place, the spectators imagined themselves lords for a day, and were addressed as such. This was their place, where they were the "masters."<sup>21</sup> This is why Juvenal (3.36–7) mocks those *arrivistes* who can now afford to give games but must obey the orders of the masses. In the Magerius mosaic, the herald goes on to urge the "lords" to pay the hunting company of the Telegenii a certain amount. But the spectators, of course, would pay the Telegenii nothing whatsoever. Payment would come, rather, from the *munerarius*, Magerius. Yet the crowd is addressed as if they determine how much the huntsmen are to be paid, as if the crowd had control over the event's sponsor, or as if the two – crowd and sponsor – were a single unit. (We shall see below other ways in which the crowd and *editor* were assimilated.) And this is not an isolated incident: the people regularly demanded payment for winners (Juv. 7.243). The symbols on the four moneybags show that Magerius doubled the amount requested and paid 1,000 *denarii* to each of the huntsmen, thereby demonstrating his civic-minded generosity. To the right of the tray-bearer the text continues:

*adclamatum est:*

*"exemplo tuo munus sic discant / futuri! audiant / praeteriti! unde / tale? quando tale? / exemplo quaestorum munus edes! / de re tua munus edes! / (i)sta dies!"*

<sup>21</sup> This is the essential meaning of *dominus*: someone at the head of the household, with rights of control over things; this meaning covers just under eight columns of the entry for *dominus* in *TLL* 5.1911–35 (they are 1913.30–1919.77). It could also be used as a form of address in polite company (Sen. *Ep.* 3.1), but that is too anodyne a usage for this context; this meaning garners just over one column in *TLL* 5.1925.3–1926.26 (although Suet. *Claud.* 21.5 is cited under this rubric). Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 2.41 for weakened gladiators asking of the *domini* (here designating the crowd?) what their wishes are. The suggestion (Lane Fox, *Classical World*, 637 n. 52) that *domini* in the Magerius mosaic is addressed only to the rich members of the audience appears unlikely, as it suggests that the spectacle had yet to be paid for; see Bomgardner, "Magerius Mosaic," 16–18. On the meaning and usage of *dominus*, see E. Dickey, *Latin Forms of Address: From Plautus to Apuleius* (Oxford, 2002), 77–99.

*Magerius dolmat.*

*"Hoc est habere! hoc est posse! / hoc est ia(m)! nox est; / ia(m) munere tuo / saccis missos."*

They shouted out:

"By your example let future generations (of sponsors/office-holders?) learn that a *munus* is staged like this! Let past generations (of sponsors/office-holders?) hear about it! Where did such a show come from? When has one like this been staged? As an example for the quaestors, you will put on a spectacle! You will put it on at your own expense! This is your day!"

Magerius gives (the money).

"This is what it is to be rich! This is what it is to have power! – This is it alright! It is night. They have been sent away from your *munus* with their sacks (of money)!"<sup>22</sup>

The sociopolitical meaning of the chants is clear enough: the appreciation of the *editor* and the enhancement of his status within the community by public mass acclamation. What is particularly interesting in terms of content is the focus of the crowd on the sponsor of the games, which is likely due primarily to the mosaic's function as a commemoration of the *editor*'s immense personal outlays in funding spectacles. Yet this very circumstance also gives good reason to believe that some effort was made to recall the actual content of the acclamations on the day, at least those acclamations directed at the sponsor. The inscriptions are therefore likely to relay if not the actual acclamations on Magerius' big day, then at least the sorts of things crowds habitually chanted at sponsors during hunts. What we see happening in the chants is, first, the assimilation of crowd and sponsor in the herald's address, and then the crowd rejoicing in Magerius' capacity to put on games and his generosity in doing so. Magerius is at once acknowledged as the leading man who had enabled this day to come to pass and as the embodiment of the crowd's sense of empowerment. The

<sup>22</sup> The translation of this pair of texts is not without difficulty. For instance, does the *ut*-clause of the lefthand inscription express purpose or cause? If the *futuri* of the righthand acclamation is rendered as "future people/generations" or "posterity," then how is *praeteriti* to be translated? "Past (dead) people/generations" or "the past" does not make much sense, hence the suggestion that past and future "sponsors" or "office-holders" are meant. Such benefactors will envy or follow the example of Magerius, as the framing text suggests. Another issue is who the quaestors are: those of the local community, or those in Rome (I tend to favor the former). The final phrase might also be rendered "By your leave they've been sent away with their sacks (of money)." For variant translations (slightly abridged, but with the main sense as above), see Bomgardner, "Magerius Mosaic," 17; Lane Fox, *Classical World*, 637 n. 52; Futrell, *Roman Games*, 49–51; Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 16–17.

spectators are focused as much on themselves and their relationship to the spectacle's organizer as they are on what is happening on the sand below. The spectacle, in fact, is seen to be a vehicle that told the spectators important things about themselves.<sup>23</sup> We can expect their social identities to have been molded accordingly.

From all of this, a variety of attractions can be postulated for the *venationes*. The general appeal of seeing animals would play a basic part in luring people to watch.<sup>24</sup> The pleasures of watching competitive bloodsports involving animals (with the possibility of betting), pleasures by no means restricted to the Romans, also generated interest. All of this would engender excitement and anticipation. The cultural symbolism of the hunts, in which animal threats or competitors were neutralized under controlled conditions, resonated in an agricultural society like ancient Rome and likely fed into the crowd's social identity for this phase of the *munera*. We may imagine that identity revolving around an "us-versus-them" attitude toward animals deemed to be dangers to humans or rivals for food resources. A shared sense of Roman power over nature also played a role. The spectators would not experience such meanings consciously, of course, but rather as a set of feelings generated by the mental processes of crowd dynamics: satisfaction and relief, wonder and amazement, a general sense of solidarity as humans and Romans categorized over and against the beasts and (largely non-Roman) huntsmen. The latter sensations were strengthened by the intracrowd content of the social identity, which had to do with the spectators' relationship not only to those on the sand, but also to each other and to the games' sponsor. Central to this facet of the experience would be a feeling of shared empowerment and validation, where the *munerarius* had provided an occasion for the crowd, the *domini*, to feel themselves in complete control. The social identities and categorizations of the Roman arena crowd, just for the hunting phase of the spectacles, thus emerge as multifaceted, complex, and dynamic. When hunts were staged as part of a larger conglomerate spectacle, this complexity and dynamism was extended accordingly.

<sup>23</sup> As, indeed, has been recognized in several studies surveyed in chapter 1. The Roman populace employed acclamations in all sorts of public contexts (e.g., triumphs, religious festivals, imperial departures and arrivals, at theaters, circuses, as well as the arena), so that many of these chants were likely traditional and formulaic. The conventions of Roman acclamation are studied in detail by G. S. Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore, 1999), esp. 99–164; C. Roueché, "Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias," *JRS* 74 (1984), 181–99, esp. 188–90 on the structure of acclamations.

<sup>24</sup> Note, for instance, the books of Pliny's *HN* devoted to animals and their behavior (8–11), as well as Aelian's *De Natura Animalium*. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure*, 302–6; J. M. C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (London, 1973; reprint Baltimore, 1986), *passim*.

The execution phase of arena spectacles cannot have been anything other than viscerally brutal. This was sheer murder, the disposal of what was considered human garbage. While Seneca was repelled by what he saw during the lunchtime break (*Ep.* 7.2–5 = T.20), he records various comments the people shouted out as the butchery proceeded: they demanded various types of action (see below, chapter 5, pp. 182–3). Seneca adds a further noteworthy detail, often overlooked: all of this happened when the arena was practically empty.<sup>25</sup> Pure butchery, apparently, was not to everyone's taste (for more on this, see chapter 5, p. 158). Seneca tells the story, of course, to emphasize the theme announced at the start of the passage: that being in a crowd is harmful. Despite his essentially Le Bonian analysis – joining a crowd inevitably entails an insensible descent into barbarism – Seneca's account reveals something of the spectators' mental state. During executions, their ability to direct the course of action on the sand would have strengthened an already formidable sense of empowerment, indeed the ultimate sense of empowerment, over life and death itself. This was one of the clearest manifestations of the crowd as *domini*, lords of the arena. The crowd merely called out its wishes to see them enacted. Corroboration is offered by the Christian martyrologies, which contain numerous notices of the crowd's utterances. As with Seneca's anecdote, it is irrelevant whether the phrases were or were not actually shouted out by a specific crowd on any given day. Rather, the martyrologies report the sorts of actions and expressions their Roman readers would associate (probably from personal experience) with the execution phase of a spectacle.<sup>26</sup>

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was executed in the mid-second century. Polycarp was a well-known figure in the community, so as he entered the amphitheater a huge shout went up. There followed an exchange with the governor, who tried to persuade Polycarp to recant and worship the emperor, to have regard for his age (he was eighty-six at the time), and to declare "Away with the atheists," by which the governor meant Christians. Polycarp instead invoked that very phrase against the spectators while shaking his fist at them. The governor then invited him to try to move the mob with his rhetoric, but he declined – they were not worthy to

<sup>25</sup> See below, ch. 5, n. 86.

<sup>26</sup> For the value of the martyrologies as historical evidence, see G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge, 1995), 23–39; D. Potter, "Martyrdom as Spectacle," in R. Scodel (ed.), *Theater and Society in the Classical World* (Ann Arbor, 1993), esp. 56–8. For a recent teasing out of their meaning, see Edwards, *Death*, 207–20. Note also the survey of visual representations of Christian martyrs, J. W. Salomonson, *Voluptatem Spectandi Non Perdat Sed Mutet: Observations sur l'Iconographie du martyre en Afrique Romaine* (Amsterdam, 1979), esp. 42–50, and the recent analysis of martyrdom as an act of communication in A. Carfora, *I cristiani al leone: I martiri cristiani nel contesto mediatico dei giochi gladiatorii. Oi Christianoi 10* (Trapani, 2009).



hear his defense. The governor announced through a herald that Polycarp had confessed to being a Christian, and the whole mob – identified by the martyrologist as pagans and Jews – shouted out that Polycarp was the “schoolmaster of Asia – the father of Christians – the destroyer of our gods – the one who teaches the masses not to sacrifice or do reverence.” The stress on the *entire* crowd shouting out these phrases allows us to imagine them chanted in unison. The spectators then demanded that a lion be produced and set on Polycarp. Since the animal shows were over, this was not allowed, so they demanded he be burned alive. The mob then collected wood from various sources, such as workshops and baths, raised a pyre, and saw Polycarp burn.<sup>27</sup> The crowd is here shown not only to make cruel demands in the manner that so horrified Seneca, but to participate actively in the execution to a remarkable degree: they physically left their seats in the arena, hunted about in the neighborhood for firewood, and then returned to contribute to Polycarp’s pyre. In this case, then, the mob were not just participatory witnesses to the enactment of justice (as they saw it), but active agents in its implementation. The spectators had become a lynch mob.<sup>28</sup> The inverse was also possible. At Lugdunum (Lyons) in AD 177, the pagan populace turned on the Christians in their midst. This was a pogrom, where Christians were rooted out, dragged through the streets, beaten and cursed, and hauled before officials for sentencing.<sup>29</sup> Some were killed in the forum, others strangled in prison, and others executed during gladiatorial games staged specially for the occasion. A small group of the condemned perished in the arena under a variety of tortures demanded by the mob (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.38). The same crowd called for the production of the Christian Attalus, who was spared on this occasion because he was a Roman citizen (ibid. 5.1.43–4). After the emperor had reached a decision in his case, Attalus was returned to the arena for burning in a brazen seat. As he burned, he castigated the crowd as cannibals and refused to name his god when the spectators demanded that he do so (ibid. 5.1.52). When Blandina and the boy Ponticus were brought into the arena on the last day of the spectacle, the crowd grew angry at their refusal to honor the pagan

<sup>27</sup> *Pass. Polyc.* 9–16 (= Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 8–15; quote at *Pass. Polyc.* 12.2 = Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 10–11). See also L. L. Thompson, “The Martyrdom of Polycarp: Death in the Roman Games,” *Jrel* 82 (2002), 27–52.

<sup>28</sup> Popular justice in the Roman empire was not above summary execution at the hands of a mob; see, e.g., Apul. *Met.* 2.27–9, 7.12–13; Diod. Sic. 37.12; Hor. *Sat.* 1. 2. 41–6. See also Fagan, “Violence in Roman Social Relations.”

<sup>29</sup> The whole affair was recorded in a letter Eusebius purports to reproduce; see Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 5.1–2.8 (= Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 62–85); note esp. ibid. 5.1.7, and 5.1.31. For discussion, see Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 248–51.

idols and at their habit of insulting their executioners, and this rendered the crowd pitiless, according to the letter cited in Eusebius (ibid. 5.1.53). The crowd’s anger extended to the corpses, which were denied burial as a way (the pagans reasoned) of frustrating resurrection. Interestingly, Eusebius notes a variety of attitudes toward the corpses on the part of the pagans, from rage to mockery to a puzzled empathy (ibid. 5.1.59–60). The special circumstances at Lugdunum meant that these arena executions were part of a wider pattern of ongoing mob violence, frequently quite direct, aimed at Christians. Here a lynch mob had become an arena crowd.

In other arena martyrdoms, the spectators retained their more habitual, less active role and limited their participation to vocal expression. They questioned the martyr Carpus (or Pamphilus, in the Latin version) as to why he was smiling at being nailed down to be burned alive and then questioned the very justice of Agathonike’s execution.<sup>30</sup> The crowd objected to the nakedness of Perpetua and Felicitas in the arena, but was also enraged by the singing, praying, and contempt of authority expressed by Perpetua, Felicitas, and other Christians in Carthage. They demanded them scourged by gladiators. As noted above (p. 128) the crowd shouted “Well washed!” at Saturus as he suffered at the teeth and claws of a leopard. His unconscious body was then set to one side to have its throat cut, but the crowd insisted that he be brought back into the middle of the arena so they could see the deed done.<sup>31</sup> Apuleius describes how his hero-turned-donkey Lucius was condemned to couple with a murderess in the arena. The crowd roared its appreciation when he appeared in the *pompa*, and was then entertained by innocuous preliminaries – dancers, followed by actors dressed as gods re-enacting the Judgment of Paris on a mountain stage-set. This complete, the crowd demanded the woman and the donkey, but Lucius escaped as the staff were busy getting ready for the show (Apul. *Met.* 10.29–35 = T.2). The inconsistency evident in these crowd interventions – sometimes cruel, sometimes lenient – is enough in itself to reveal the psychological complexity of the spectators’ view of what was transpiring before their eyes.

Of the three phases of the *munus*, the midday executions boast the greatest volume of ancient evidence for crowd vocalizations, presumably because this was the phase into which the spectators had the greatest sustained input, and also because the martyrologies provide so much information

<sup>30</sup> *Pass. Carp. Pap. et Agathon.* 138–47 and 143–6.5 (= Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 26–9 and 32–7). See also below, ch. 7, pp. 254–7.

<sup>31</sup> *Pass. Perp. et Felic.* 21.1–10 (= Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 128–31).

about crowd behavior. The content of spectator vocalizations is dominated by demands for particular victims to be produced or specific torments to be applied to them. On rare occasions, such as with Agathonike, the crowd voiced disapproval of the proceedings (see below, chapter 5, pp. 179–82). In terms of social identity content, the prevalent elements appear to have been a tremendous sense of empowerment coupled with the conviction that those suffering on the sand were getting what they deserved (a matter investigated more closely in the next chapter). The basic outlook was therefore similar to that which underlay taking enjoyment in the hunts: threats, now in human form, were being neutralized. But the capacity of the crowd to shape the action directly would also lend them a godlike sensation of power over life and death. They could demand that a particular prisoner be brought out, and then insist on the method of killing to be applied to him or her. And as the prisoners perished, they could be mocked or otherwise derided.<sup>32</sup>

We must not conceive of these attitudes as universally held and uniformly expressed by all crowd members, as the varied reactions of onlookers to the treatment of Christian corpses at Lugdunum reminds us. What was taking place on the sand might also cause divisions of opinion within the crowd. One of the freedmen in Petronius (*Sat.* 45.7 = T.12) forecasts how the spectators will argue when a certain Glyco has his domestic accountant (*dispensator*) thrown to the beasts in the forthcoming games. The accountant had committed adultery with the mistress of the house to merit this fate, and the freedman foresees arguments in the stands between jealous husbands and loverboys. The scenario is comedic, but it plays off reality and reveals that the crowd's psychological cohesion was not absolute and did not affect everyone equally. It seems unrealistic to imagine that absolutely everyone in the crowd, for instance, objected to Agathonike's execution or Perpetua's nakedness. In a strong echo of what we have seen for execution crowds in other times and places (see chapter 2, pp. 73–4), the nature of the crime, the identity of the criminal, the validity of the conviction, and the appropriateness of the punishment all played a role in shaping spectator behavior. Kathleen Coleman proposes that the attractions of arena executions were an amalgam of desires and expectations to

<sup>32</sup> That crowd mockery of the dying was a common occurrence is not obvious. Most of the primary evidence comes from the martyrologies, and they have an axe to grind with arena spectators. Perhaps, also, the peculiar "crimes" and demeanor of Christian victims – their strange beliefs, apparent know-it-all arrogance in denying the state deities, rumored cannibalism, air of superiority in the face of torments, etc. – invited commentary in a way that would not apply to the execution of, say, a common murderer who displayed the expected terror as s/he perished.

see justice done, the inherent attraction of horrible sights, the thrill of the unexpected when people were exposed to beasts,<sup>33</sup> a morbid fascination with death, and a relief from boredom. The spectators came to the arena with a series of expectations as to what would transpire and how it would play out. Performers and victims had their roles to play, and the crowd anticipated seeing those roles fulfilled. When they were not, disgruntlement could ensue.<sup>34</sup> Appreciation of crowd dynamics, however, allows us to see how this disgruntlement played out psychologically (and we will review another likely psychological factor in chapter 7). By denying the power of the crowd to terrify or cow them, the actions and demeanor of recalcitrant *noxii* (execution victims) challenged a core element of the crowd's social identity, i.e., their role as *domini* whose wishes were made real merely by being uttered. The challenge, naturally, made the spectators angry and vengeful.

Evidence for crowd behavior and expressions during the gladiatorial phase of a spectacle is limited. In Augustine's passage on Alypius (*Conf.* 6.13 = T.3), the crowd issues a unified roar when a gladiator falls. This was presumably standard practice, as it is among modern sports spectators when there is a score or a good chance is missed. When a wound was inflicted, the cry "He's got one!" (*hoc habet!*) went up. If the fighters were hesitant or timid, the crowd would shout "Get stuck in!" (*adhibete!*). Spectators even shouted out tips to the combatants.<sup>35</sup> They would stand and gesticulate as the fights played out, urging on their favorites and stretching out their left hands (which were normally kept inside the toga on formal occasions). As gold coins were counted out to victors, the crowd would count along.<sup>36</sup> As with the other phases of the spectacle, spectators would call for particular gladiators to be brought out.<sup>37</sup> The real moment of truth, however, was when a gladiator was defeated and appealed to the *editor/munerarius* by raising a finger and looking toward the tribunal.<sup>38</sup> While the decision was being made, the crowd shouted its opinion and gesticulated dramatically. The centrality of this moment of decision for arena

<sup>33</sup> For instance, an attempt to affix the martyr Saturus to a boar failed when the animal instead gored the gladiator tying Saturus down; *Pass. Perp. et Felic.* 19.5 (= Musurillo, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 126–7).

<sup>34</sup> Coleman, "Fatal Charades," 57–9; Potter, "Martyrdom as Spectacle," 63–71.

<sup>35</sup> For crowd vocalizations and tips, see, e.g., Aug. *Conf.* 6.13 = T.3; Tert. *ad Mart.* 1.2; Fronto *Ad M. Caes.* 1.8.2; Prudent. *C. Symm.* 2.1096–113 = T.16; Don. *ad Ter. Andr.* 1.1.56, *Ov. Ars Am.* 1.165–6. Prudent. *Psychom.* 53, Ter. *Andr.* 83, Virg. *Aen.* 12.296 (*hoc habet!*); Petron. *Sat.* 45.12 (*adhibete!*).

<sup>36</sup> On crowd behavior during bouts, see below, ch. 6, pp. 209–27. See Juv. 7.243 (on gold paid to the winners).

<sup>37</sup> Mart. *Spect.* 23; Suet. *Cal.* 30.2, *Dom.* 4.1. <sup>38</sup> For sources, see below, ch. 6, n. 78.

games is reflected in its prevalence among mosaic depictions of gladiatorial combat.<sup>39</sup>

A Late Imperial mosaic from Rome, now in Madrid, has two named gladiators fighting in two registers, to be read from bottom to top. In the lower register, the two gladiators (named Habilis and Maternus) approach each other, weapons poised, under the watchful eyes of two officials. In the upper register, Habilis is shown in the act of killing the fallen Maternus, who lies in a pool of blood on the sand. Inscriptions accompany the action. In the lower register we are informed that "Symmachius put the fighters to the sword" (*quibus pugnantis Symmachius ferrum misit*). This may be something the crowd called out, or it may simply be disembodied narration. Since both gladiators are named, Symmachius can only be the *editor*, an inference confirmed by the texts in the upper register. Here, as in the Magerius mosaic, the name of the *munerarius* appears in the vocative "Symmachius!" with the added acclamation "Happy chap!" (*Symmachi! Homo felix!*). These are crowd acclamations. The simple statement "I kill [him]" (*neco*) appears, and the crowd cries "We see these deeds!" (*Haec videmus!*).<sup>40</sup> Here the *editor* is credited with killing the fallen fighters (cf. Juv. 3.36<sup>-7</sup>; Petron. *Sat.* 45.11), even though he kills nobody directly. He *does*, however, make the decision on an appeal and, in that sense, he can say "I kill [him]." The crowd then validates his decision, which the spectators had no doubt influenced by expressing their judgments as the *editor* weighed his options – "We see these deeds." At such moments, spectator and sponsor were again psychologically assimilated under the umbrella of the crowd's social identities and in their expression of them; the two parties were in close agreement, jointly determining what happened below. Sponsor and crowd are connected in mutual validation. The crowd praises Symmachius' staging of the games; he stands out as the centerpiece of the great day, and this fact is understandably celebrated in the mosaic Symmachius commissioned to commemorate it. Graffiti acclamations painted on walls at Pompeii honor the Pompeian magnate Cn. Alleius Nigidius Maius, who gave many games at Pompeii over his long local career, which stretched from the 40s AD to the death of the city in AD 79. The graffiti are likely to reflect the sorts of things shouted out by the crowd in the amphitheater on the days of Alleius' games: "Good luck to Alleius Maius,

<sup>39</sup> See Brown, "Death as Decoration," esp. 202–7; Ville, *Gladiature*, 410–24.

<sup>40</sup> For the mosaic (of the late third or early fourth centuries AD), see M. E. Blake, "Mosaics of the Late Empire in Rome and Vicinity," *MAAR* 17 (1940), 81–130, esp. 112–13. For the relevant inscriptions, see *CIL* 6.10205 = 6.33979 = *ILS* 5140 = *EAOR* 1.114.

prince of the games-givers!"<sup>41</sup> The acclamations recorded in these texts are simple when compared to some of those in the Magerius mosaic (see above), where rather more complex statements appear, despite the packaging of some elements as discrete phrases (*unde tale? quando tale? . . . ista dies . . . hoc est habere*, etc.).<sup>42</sup> A whiff of implausibility may hang about the longer and more complicated phrases (*exemplo tuo munus sic discant futuri! . . . exemplo quaestorum munus edes!*). Yet as long as they were formulaic and rhythmic, complex chants could (and can) be taken up by a lot of people. Romans were accustomed to learning by rhythmic chanting from childhood.<sup>43</sup> In the theater and amphitheater, the crowd could also be instructed: organized cheerleaders and clagues were a longstanding feature of spectacles.<sup>44</sup> (In the Late Imperial and Byzantine periods crowd acclamations, now staged in all sorts of contexts but especially in the theater and hippodrome, were organized by professional clagues and became essential components in the elevation of emperors. Popular acclamations were even recorded and reported to absent rulers.<sup>45</sup>) Dio, an eyewitness to the events he describes, tells how the senators (and crowd?) at spectacles in which the emperor Commodus appeared in AD 192 were required to chant "You are lord and you are first, of all men most fortunate. You win and win you will; from time everlasting, Amazonian, you win." Dio expressly says the spectators were told what to chant on these occasions and also notes the people habitually chanted rhythmic phrases in praise of Commodus in

<sup>41</sup> *CIL* 4.1179b–c, 4.7790 = Sabbatini Tumolesi, *Gladiatorum Paria*, 43 (no. 16), *Cn(aeo) Alleio Maio | principi munerarior[um] | feliciter*. On this magnate, see Franklin, "Cn. Alleius Nigidius Maius and the Amphitheatre"; Sabbatini Tumolesi, *Gladiatorum Paria*, 32–44. Comparable acclamations are sometimes appended to advertisements; see, e.g., *ibid.*, 47–8 (nos. 18–19).

<sup>42</sup> Compare the simple slogan, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians," rapidly taken up and chanted for two hours during the riot there against Paul; see *Acts* 19:27.

<sup>43</sup> See Aug. *Conf.* 1.13.22; Ov. *Fast.* 3.535–6 (in the theater specifically); Pliny *Pan.* 73.1–2 (spontaneous chants for Trajan). See also Horsfall, *Culture*, 11–19 and 39–42 (on widespread memorization through chanting and theater songs/chants learned in advance).

<sup>44</sup> Clagues are attested from the first century BC onward; see, e.g., Cic. *Sest.* 115; Dio 61.20.3, 76(77).2.2, 77(78).10.4; Plaut. *Am.* 65–85; Plut. *Pomp.* 48.7; Tac. *Ann.* 1.16.4, 14.15.8–9, 16.4.4–5.1; Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 7.30.9. Philo (*Flacc.* 34) records the organization and practice of chants in the gymnasium of first-century AD Alexandria, a practice brought to Rome by Nero (Suet. *Nero* 20.3; cf. Dio 63.10.1, 63.20.5). Dio records, sometimes from personal observation, chants in the Circus in AD 193 (73[74].4.1–3) and 196 (75[76].4.1–6). See further Horsfall, *Culture*, 31–42; Potter, "Performance, Power, and Justice," 142–4; P. J. J. Vanderbroeck, *Popular Leadership and Collective Behavior in the Late Roman Republic (ca. 80–50 BC)* (Amsterdam, 1987), 61–2, 143–4.

<sup>45</sup> J. H. W. G. Liebescheutz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1972), 211–16; Liebescheutz, *Decline and Fall*, 208–10; C. Rouché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (London, 1989), 116–32. On the reporting of acclamations to emperors, see *CTh.* 1.16.6, 8.5.32 and various *loci* cited by Rouché, "Acclamations," 181–8.

the theaters and amphitheatres, which they twisted into mockery after his assassination.<sup>46</sup>

Many chants were probably formulaic and familiar from a young age. Given the sparsity of the evidence, it is impossible to say whether portions of the Magerius or Symmachius acclamations were standard material routinely addressed to *munerarii* in their locales, if not further afield. Acclamation formulae likely varied by region, perhaps even by city. Paid claque were used to orchestrate acclamations, in which case they may have been practiced in advance, at least by a section of the crowd. Some political demands or grievances aired to emperors at the games in Rome were of a complex nature, so singing the praises of a local magnate is not likely to have been beyond the capabilities of arena spectators.<sup>47</sup>

Political demands and popular commentary occurred at all sorts of spectacles. At the arena, they do not appear to have been tethered to any particular phase of the events but were just a product of the boisterous crowd who came out to watch. Previous work has stressed the political importance of these demands and comments, since they often took the form of airing grievances at state officials who were present. Because of this, the games have been described as a sort of Roman "parliament," where chants and acclamations mediated relations between rulers and ruled that reflected the symbolic relationship between the giver of the games and his public.<sup>48</sup> The psychological effects of such behavior are no less important than its political and symbolic significance, and with this in mind we turn to the content of the arena crowd's social identities.

#### SOCIAL IDENTITY CONTENT

From the evidence for the chants and vocalizations and spectator behaviors at the arena, as well as from the hypotheses about the cultural meaning(s) of the games surveyed in chapter 1, it is possible to sketch the contours of

<sup>46</sup> Dio 72(73).20.2 (senators) and 73(74).2.3 (people). The senatorial acclamations recorded for Claudius II (HA *Claud.* 4.2-4) are all relatively straightforward: "Claudius Augustus, deliver us from the Palmyrenes" (repeated five times) or "Claudius Augustus, you are brother, father, friend, good senator and truly emperor" (repeated eighty times).

<sup>47</sup> See Bollinger, *Theatralis Licentia*, 50-71.

<sup>48</sup> For a comprehensive assembly of the evidence and a thoroughgoing political analysis of it, see *ibid.*, 24-73; Cameron, *Circus Factions*, 157-229; A. Lewin, *Assemblée popolari e lotta politica nella città dell'impero romana* (Florence, 1995), esp. 108-12. See also Clavel-Lévêque, *L'empire en jeux*, 153-61; Edmondson, "Dynamic Arenas"; Flaig, *Ritualisierte Politik*, 232-60, esp. 237-42; Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 14-20 (16 for the statement "the amphitheatre was their parliament"); Potter, "Performance, Power and Justice." For the relationship between the public and *editor*, see Brown, "Death as Decoration." See also Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations*.

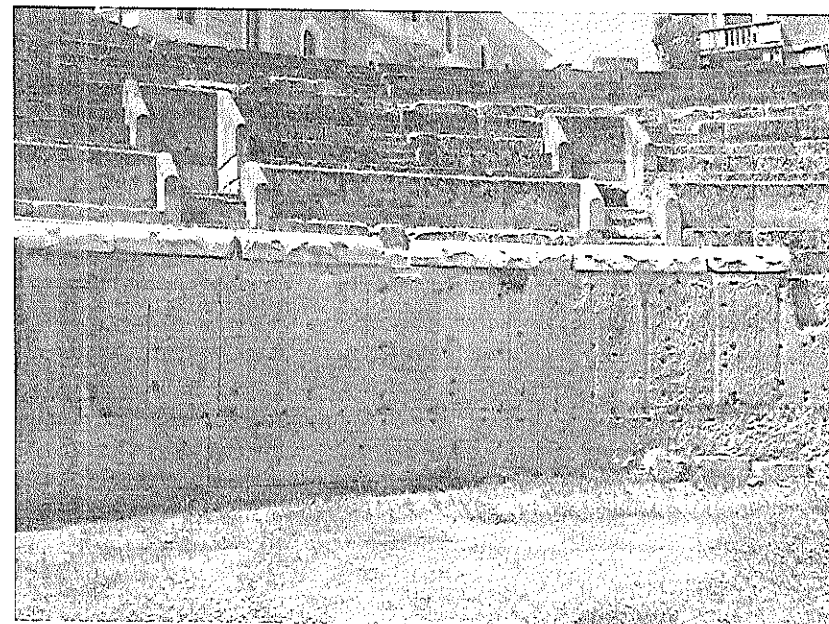


Figure 10 Podium wall of amphitheater at Lecce in Apulia, topped with reliefs of animal hunts

the crowd's social identity content, but only in the broadest strokes; the caveats outlined above (p. 125) about regional, demographic, and diachronic variation should always be kept in mind.

The most obvious and overt component of the crowd's social identity was surely the ingroup-outgroup distinction and its role in promoting ingroup cohesion among the spectators. The distinction between spectator and performer was powerfully reinforced by the physical setting, where the high podium wall separated the two groups (Figs. 3, 4, 10); by the social and moral degradation of all arena performers relative to the spectators (see the next chapter); and by the fact that only one side was in any danger of getting hurt or killed. No matter what the status differentiation was within the Roman arena crowd, these circumstances applied to all of them equally and, just as equally, they did not apply to the performers down on the arena floor. The spectators did not have to work hard at making social categorizations, since the arena context made them so evident. The sense of "us-and-them" is thus the most basic and pervasive element of the arena spectators' psychology. The ingroup-outgroup distinction has

been demonstrated by social psychology as one of the most profoundly influential in human social relations, and it was sustained throughout all phases of the spectacle. Its effect would have been to lend the spectators an overarching sense of psychological cohesion, even if they were socially disparate and sat in segregated subgroups. Indeed, the subdivision of the spectators into peer groups was, if anything, more likely to facilitate the crowd's expression of its ingroup identities rather than to hinder it. The end result of all this would be to inculcate a powerful sense of connectedness and belonging among the spectators.

The symbolism of the arena's seating arrangements, a topic which has already been explored by other scholars, may have further buttressed ingroup cohesion. At spectacles, the Roman social order was made manifest, as each group occupied its proper place in the *cavea* relative to its superiors and inferiors. But no less significantly, that entire social order was visibly and powerfully categorized relative to the threatening and deviant forces paraded across the arena floor.<sup>49</sup> The symbolism of this "community-made-manifest" context, particularly given the presence of well-defined outgroupers occupying a separate physical space below, would have been experienced as feelings of validation in the stands.

Crowds are often at their most cohesive and vocal when they are focused on a leader (a fact recognized by the likes of Hitler).<sup>50</sup> So a further cohering force at the arena was the attention the crowd paid to the *editor*, particularly at crucial moments in the spectacle: at the opening procession (*pompa*), as events were introduced, when certain actions were demanded by the crowd, when defeated gladiators appealed, and when victors were crowned and paid. At these moments, the crowd's identity would be channeled through the games' sponsor, as spectator and *munerarius* were virtually assimilated. It seems from the evidence reviewed above that the *editor* would seek to stress this assimilation by, for instance, addressing the crowd as *domini* (the *editor* would himself be a wealthy *dominus*) or agreeing with, and then enacting, the spectators' judgments about fallen gladiators. The crowd would express its appreciation, and it was precisely for such moments of adulation and oneness with the community that the rich and prominent paid for games out of their own pockets, and why some later

<sup>49</sup> That the crowd's wider identity was (at least in part) defined as "the Roman order" vs. the criminal/deviant on the sand is argued by, among others, Coleman, "Fatal Charades," 44–9; Edmondson, "Dynamic Arenas," 83; Gunderson, "Ideology," 133–6; J. Maurin, "Les Barbares aux arènes," *Kiema* 9 (1984), 102–11; Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 68–91.

<sup>50</sup> See Canetti, *Crowds and Power*. On Hitler, see I. Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (New York, 1999), 156 and 652 n. 12.

memorialized them in mosaics, reliefs, or other monuments. That said, the unity of sponsor and community was occasional and momentary as the games progressed: the *editor*, it will be recalled, sat apart in his box and also accepted popular acclamations that stressed his social preeminence within the group.

This final detail reminds us, even at the risk of repetition, that we need to be careful in this line of analysis and recognize that the ingroup cohesion charted here was not uniform and untextured. Events on the sand, developments in the wider social or political context, mishaps with the performers or the equipment, or other twists of fortune could cause the spectators to make demands unrelated to the spectacle, to criticize or even curse the *editor*, or to argue among themselves. But at the arena, these occasions appear to have been brief and relatively rare – had they been common, fewer magnates would have risked giving games in the first place. They also appear to have had little impact on the overall spectacle; we do not hear, for instance, of arena games that ground to a halt or were abandoned due to crowd disgruntlement.<sup>51</sup> We may safely imagine that a sustained ingroup cohesion was a prominent element in the crowd's social identity, even if it was occasionally fractured by circumstance.

Ingroup cohesion, and the nature of the spectacle being watched – controlled hunts and the struggles of outgroupers for survival – suggest another element in the spectators' social identity: a sense of privilege and priority generating feelings of empowerment. That arena spectators could directly intervene in the course of executions and enjoyed input into the outcomes of gladiatorial bouts that went to appeal were direct expressions of their power, as they got to experience an almost god-like control over life and death. People like feeling superior to others, and the Roman arena was one place where Romans of all stripes, who expended much energy establishing priority among themselves in other contexts, could feel better about themselves as a group, in comparison to those they had come to see.<sup>52</sup> The presence of the underclasses among the spectators adds another dimension to this psychological scenario. These were the people holding some of the weaker hands Roman society dealt to its members. Even though they did not number among the destitute or rank with the slave population, they lived in cramped apartments amidst discomfort and squalor, enjoyed

<sup>51</sup> Contrast this with the disruption or abandonment of executions in more recent times when the spectators (for whatever reason) turned against the event; see above, ch. 2 n. 34 and below, ch. 5, pp. 175–6.

<sup>52</sup> A point well made by Coleman ("Fatal Charades," 57–9) about amphitheater executions, but surely no less applicable to any phase of the conglomerate arena spectacle.

no recognition on the grand stage of imperial grandeur, lived and died in almost complete obscurity, and had to put up with the high-handed condescension of their social superiors. These were the people Seneca advised Nero to leave "to make up the numbers."<sup>53</sup> But at the arena they were the *domini*, and, perhaps more importantly, their right to wield power was publicly acknowledged in a fashion usually denied to them in other contexts.<sup>54</sup> Juvenal mocks the *nouveaux riches* who give games and "when the mob gives the order with turned thumbs, kill to popular acclaim."<sup>55</sup> In this formulation, it is the crowd who gives the orders and the *editor* who does the crowd's bidding – the very essence of being a *dominus*. Seneca asks: "Why do the people grow so unjustly angry at gladiators that they think themselves harmed because the men don't go to their deaths willingly? They reckon they've been disparaged, and in their expressions, gestures, and agitation turn from being a spectator to being an adversary."<sup>56</sup> This strange reaction becomes understandable if we conceive of the spectators feeling that their authority was being challenged, and along with it their sense of empowerment, a core element in their social identity. Even worse, outgroupers were the source of the challenge.

The spectators naturally brought with them to their seats a variety of social identities derived from the wider societal context, and at the arena, in addition to a strong ingroup identification within the crowd as a whole, they found some of those identities reinforced by their segregated disposition in the amphitheater's *maeniana* and *cunei*. That fault lines could open up between these localized identities and that of the wider crowd in the *cavea* seems plausible. Yet the very purpose of attending the games played a role in papering over differences: to celebrate qualities held dear by the community as a whole and to see agreed-upon outgroupers pay the penalty they deserved. As sociocultural analyses of the arena have already established, the gladiatorial games reinforced the imperial order

<sup>53</sup> Sen. *Clem.* 1.5.7. On the living conditions of Roman commoners, see, e.g., Scobie, "Slums, Sanitation, and Mortality"; Z. Yavetz, "The Living Conditions of the Urban Plebs in Republican Rome," *Latomus* 17 (1958), 500–17 (= R. Seager, *The Crisis of the Roman Republic* [Cambridge, 1969], 162–79).

<sup>54</sup> One is reminded here of the famous phrase of Juvenal's (10.77–81; cf. Fronto *Princ. Hist.* 17) that the people of Rome, formerly masters of kings and granters of *imperium* to magistrates, were now reduced to obsessing about bread and circuses. From the psychological standpoint just reviewed, participation in, say, a Republican electoral assembly and attending the games may have been analogous (but not identical) experiences. Exploring this possibility, however, lies beyond the scope of the current work.

<sup>55</sup> Juv. 3.36–7: *munera nunc edunt, et verso pollice vulgus / cum iubet, occidunt populariter* (emphasis in translation added).

<sup>56</sup> Sen. *Dial.* 3.2.4: *gladiatoribus quare populus irascitur et tam inique, ut iniuriam putet, quod non libenter pereunt? contemni se iudicat et vultu, gestu, ardore a spectatore in adversarium vertitur*. See also above, n. 21.

(especially in the hunts and executions) and (in the gladiator pairings) put into practice essential elements of the Roman male value system: martial skill and endurance, contempt for death and injury, establishing priority in trials of strength, and earning public approval through displays of *virtus*. In gladiatorial bouts the complex social mechanisms by which these values played out under normal conditions were reduced to a particularly raw and basic form and, even more intriguingly, they were seen to operate in those otherwise deemed below social consideration. That the origins of the performers often lay abroad (as captured rebels, bandits, fugitive slaves, professional performers from the provinces, etc.) would only strengthen these intracrowd impressions and feelings.<sup>57</sup> In this way, arena games might be likened to a morality play, where the spectators, through watching outsiders, were told important things about themselves as members of the Roman community. Attendance made them feel valued and connected, their system of beliefs validated and celebrated.<sup>58</sup>

The symbolic and cultural meaning(s) of arena games were thus not experienced as active cognitions but as feelings, impressions, and emotions that addressed themselves to such core human needs as connectedness, validation, belonging, and empowerment. Social identities at the arena were channeled on to the arena floor and subgroup identities within the crowd adapted to these conditions. The self-categorization of small-group members was therefore balanced by a social categorization over against others in the crowd (according to various criteria – recall Corydon's looking down enviously on the privileged seats of the white-clad tribunes and *equites*), but more importantly, by the overarching contrast between the spectators and the unfortunates on the sand below. The issue of prejudice is treated more fully in the following chapter, but its contribution to the crowd's sense of power and superiority should be noted here in passing.

The fluidity of social identities would also mean that individual spectators would switch seamlessly between them as the spectacle progressed. Sharing a section of seats with a group of one's peers, identities might remain confined to the subgroup during intervals, breaks, pauses, or lulls but would morph and adapt in response to specific actions taking place in the spectacle. On occasions, chants or acclamations from the whole

<sup>57</sup> On the foreign origins of many gladiators and other arena performers, see Ville, *Gladiature*, 264–7; Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 113–14.

<sup>58</sup> I do not, however, think that the games were a *necessary* means of achieving this – there were other venues and occasions where "Roman-ness" was loudly celebrated as well – and, as such, I question the opinion of those who would locate the games near the center of Roman culture; see below, conclusion.

crowd would generate different psychological responses, perhaps diverting attention briefly to the sponsor's box or to some section of the crowd or to a move made by a performer. The phases of the spectacle would emphasize different aspects of the spectators' suite of identities and cause them to make new categorizations, depending on what was happening and to whom. Unfortunately, we do not have the data to trace these identity shifts in any detail. It can be imagined, however, that moments such as the suspense-filled pause while a decision was reached on life or death would focus the crowd's attention intensely. Spectators would move frequently between their subgroup social identities and the wider crowd's versions of it, as the phases of the spectacle fashioned the psychological environment.

Chanting added to the sense of cohesion. Chants probably came and went, as they were taken up by a part of the crowd or by all of it, as the case may be. In chants, whether organized or spontaneous, a crowd expresses its social identity, particularly when the chants are coincident with the categorization of outgroups: derogatory songs against rival fans, for instance.<sup>59</sup> Chanting reinforces the liberating sense of free expression that courses through a crowd's membership. Unified chants would have greatly increased the crowd's sense of ingroup cohesion, solidarity, and empowerment, especially when they saw their demands not only met but exceeded, as with Magerius' doubling the fee to the hunting company employed in his show.<sup>60</sup> The enclosed, elliptical shape of the arena, particularly when the roof awnings (*vela*) were erected, would have amplified chants emanating from even a part of the crowd and projected it across the auditorium to the spectators sitting opposite.<sup>61</sup> Between acclamations, routine catchphrases elicited by happenings on the sand, crowd demands, or spontaneous reactions to the particulars of a spectacle, we must imagine the arena crowd in a constant state of vocalization, not just cheering and clapping randomly but issuing bursts of organized chanting, aimed at both the performers and the games' sponsor. Bands provided musical cues and rhythmic support for the longer and more complex chants. The din would have been deafening.

The harsh life experiences and attitudes of the spectators (see chapter 1, pp. 22–38) as well as the mostly negative feelings they harbored toward the arena's lowly victims (see chapter 5, pp. 174–82) also played a role

<sup>59</sup> Horsfall (*Culture*, 67–8) notes the unifying effect of attending theater and amphitheater events with a large crowd.

<sup>60</sup> Of course chanting, when directed at subgroups within a crowd, can divide the crowd against itself, as we shall see shortly.

<sup>61</sup> See Golvin, *L'amphithéâtre romain*, 342.

in shaping the crowd's social identity. Such were the raw materials from which the arena crowd's norms were fashioned and, it can be suggested, they made them more willing to accept brute violence as entertainment. If in our supposedly egalitarian age with its Universal Declaration of Human Rights, violence has proven to be an enormously popular form of entertainment, how much easier it must have been to accept it in Rome's hierarchical society, where one's worth was a function of birth, group membership, and legally defined status and where raw pity (*misericordia*) was the preserve of women (at least in the opinion of some). The spectators came to the arena without any illusions about what they were about to see, and once arrayed in their segregated seats, group processes and crowd dynamics came into play. A sense of purpose was instilled by the occasion, and the processes of social categorization and the free expression of social identities, all intensified by the presence of mutually visible acquaintances, would generate sensations of liberation and empowerment. From the outside, it would all look so wild and unrestrained. Indeed, the prospect of succumbing to intense emotions constitutes one of the chief objections against going to spectacles aired by elite pagan and Christian writers alike.<sup>62</sup> But arena games were not wild and woolly occasions where people went to lose control. Far from it. The social identity content of arena crowds, as broadly reconstructable from an admittedly patchy body of evidence, instead reveals that they were meaningful and exciting experiences where people went to connect with peers and with the wider community, to have their worldview validated, and to feel what it was like to have power. They did not consciously think of these things as they went along to the arena, of course. The processes of crowd dynamics supplied the means by which it could all be experienced as a suite of dynamic, shifting emotions and sensations felt en masse. And that prospect was quite its own lure.

#### THEATER AND AMPHITHEATER

It should be clear by now why Flaig's bold assertion, cited at the opening of chapter 3, that crowd psychology is not applicable to Roman arena events is doubly mistaken. First, it assumes the outdated Le Bonian model of crowd dynamics, which posited anonymity (and all that flows from it) as the key to understanding crowd dynamics. The more recent social-identity model

<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., Sen. *Ep.* 7.2 = T.20; Tert. *Spect.* 21 = T.29; Joh. Chrys. *Contra Lud. et Theat.* = PG 56.263–70 and 64.511–16; [Joh. Chrys.] *De Circ.* = PG 59.567–70, *In Abr. et contra theat.* = PG 58.541–54; Lact. *Div. Inst.* 6.20. Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 128–64; Wistrand, *Violence and Entertainment*, *passim*.

sees feelings of purposefulness and belonging as key to understanding crowd behavior. As such, the latter is the diametric opposite of the former. Arena spectators may not have been crowds in the Le Bonian sense, but crowds they most certainly were.

Second, ranked seating and mutual visibility in and of themselves did not guarantee orderly spectators, as Flaig assumes. Spectators at theater events (and possibly the circus, at least in the case of the higher social echelons) were also seated by status, yet they could readily fall to rioting, whereas spectators at the arena appear to have been peaceable, if not quite passive. The details need to be probed a little to resolve the apparent paradox of why spectators at the most violent of Roman spectacles were themselves the least violent of spectator crowds. In the ancient sources, blame for theater tumults uniformly falls on actors and, in particular, a class of entertainers called *pantomimi*, whose act involved a form of dance accompanied by music.<sup>63</sup> We get few clues as to what sparked these fights in the theater but, in those instances where details are provided, the performers and their supporters (*factiones*, *fautores*) are expressly implicated, even if the contours of the partisans' allegiance remain obscure to us.<sup>64</sup> A fable of Phaedrus about a buffoon and a rustic who compete in making pig noises before a theater audience simply assumes that theatergoers were inherently prone to sharp partisanship; in this case, they prefer the imitation of the buffoon, whom they favor, over that of the rustic, who had concealed a real pig in his clothes! Phaedrus comments on the audience for the rustic's

<sup>63</sup> See Luc. *Salt.*; Balsdon, *Life and Leisure*, 274–9 (on pantomimes) and 179–88 (on actors). Dio (61.8.1) explicitly connects disorderly behavior with the theater and circus, but makes no mention of the amphitheater. See also R. C. Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome* (New Haven, 1999), 141–6.

<sup>64</sup> Blame: Dio 57.14.10, 57.21.3, 61.8.2–3; Suet. *Tib.* 37.2 (actors); Suet. *Nero* 16.2, 26.2; Tac. *Ann.* 1.54.2, 1.77.2, 4.14.3, 13.25.4, 14.21.4; Lib. *Or.* 41.2–7; Joh. Chrys. *Hom. in Matt.* 37.6 = PG 57.425–8, *Hom. de Stat.* 17.2 = PG 49.176; Soc. *Hist. eccl.* 7.13 (*pantomimi* and *histriones*). Percennius, a ringleader in the Pannonian mutiny in AD 14, got his start in agitation as a claque for pantomimes (Tac. *Ann.* 1.16.4). Culpable partisans: Suet. *Tib.* 37.2 (*capita factionum*), *Nero* 16.2 (*pantomimorum factiones*), Tac. *Ann.* 1.77.4 (*lascivia fautorum*), 13.25.4 and 13.28.1 (*fautores histrionum*). Claques and pantomimes, however, were not inherently troublesome; see Suet. *Nero* 20.3; Pliny *Ep.* 7.24.7. For fuller treatments, see E. J. Jory, “The Early Pantomime Riots,” in A. Moffatt (ed.), *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine, and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning* (Canberra, 1984), 57–66 (Jory suspects something in the performance aroused spectator passions); W. J. Slater, “Pantomime Riots,” *CA* 13 (1994), 120–44 (who sees wider sociopolitical forces at work behind the riots). Note also R. Lim, “The Roman Pantomime Riot of A.D. 509,” in J.-M. Carrié and R. Lizzi Testa (eds.), “Humana Sapit” *Études d'Antiquité Tardive offertes à Lellia Cracco Ruggini* (Turnhout, 2002), 35–42 (where court politics and circus factions are prominently implicated in this riot). Lucian (*Salt.* 83–4) comments on the ability of pantomimes to stir the emotions of their audiences profoundly and mentions rivalries among performers and their supporters: the cocktail of emotion and partisanship could prove explosive on occasion. Libanius claims (*Or.* 64.119) that “Dance . . . does no harm and never will”; the problems stemmed from the partisans.

performance: “There was an even bigger crowd. Their minds were already gripped by partisanship, and you should know that they were there to mock, not to watch.”<sup>65</sup> Factions of partisans are also deeply implicated in disturbances at chariot races in the circus.<sup>66</sup> Pliny (*HN* 29.9) notes that actors (*histriones*, a category that includes pantomimes) and chariot racers were followed about by huge retinues in public, which attests a deep bond between fan and performer.

Comparable evidence for popular devotion to individual gladiators or particular types of gladiator exists, but it is sparse when compared to that for stage performers and charioteers. Gladiatorial partisans appear to have been less committed and fanatical (and less numerous?) than those associated with the theater and circus.<sup>67</sup> This relatively low level of arena fan fanaticism may go a long way to explaining why the gladiatorial crowds were so peaceable. But in addition to intense partisanship, a further destabilizing factor in theatrical events was the capacity of actors to interact with the audience (rather than vice versa), as well as the possibility of the shows to be politicized by comments on or allusions to current affairs, whether in word or gesture. This is probably why the authorities often held the performers themselves accountable as active participants in the deprivations of their supporters.<sup>68</sup> And these were not isolated incidents. Theaters were felt to be naturally tumultuous and noisy places, to the extent that when a Late Imperial governor was received in Antioch's theater in total silence, he turned white with fright (Lib. *Or.* 33.12). Trouble at the theater was so predictable that a cohort of guards was put on duty during performances in Rome.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Phaed. 5.5: *fit turba maior. iam favor mentes tenet / et derisuros, non spectatuos, scias.*

<sup>66</sup> Isidore of Pelusium (*Ep.* 5.185 = PG 78.1433–7) expressly identifies circus factions and supporters of pantomimes as a source of civic disturbances; see also Joh. Chrys. *Hom. de Stat.* 15.4 = PG 49.159. However, by this date (the early fifth century) the activities of partisan associations appear to have spanned several types of spectacle; see Roueché, *Performers and Partisans*, 44–60.

<sup>67</sup> On circus factions, see above, ch. 3, n. 34. For more on gladiatorial partisans, see below, ch. 6, pp. 219–21.

<sup>68</sup> Tacitus comments that “a rivalrous competition of the actors” (*Ann.* 1.54.2: *discordia et certamine histrionum*) caused disturbances in AD 14. Tiberius judged the performers the source of problems (Tac. *Ann.* 4.14.3), as does Tacitus in an editorial comment (*Ann.* 14.21.4). For politically scurrilous theater performances, sometimes resulting in the banishment of the offending performers, see, e.g., Cic. *Fam.* 12.18.2; Dio 60(61).29.3; Sen. *Dial.* 4.11.3; Suet. *Aug.* 68, *Tib.* 45, *Cal.* 27.4, *Nero* 39.3, *Galba* 13; HA *Verus* 8.4, *Comm.* 3.4, *Maximini* 9.3–5; Tac. *Ann.* 4.14.4. On the two-way interaction between stage performers and the audiences, see Balsdon, *Life and Leisure*, 276; Champlin, *Nero*, 94–6; R. W. Reynolds, “Criticism of Individuals in Roman Popular Comedy,” *CQ* 37 (1943), 37–45.

<sup>69</sup> For tumultuous theatergoers and guards at performances, see, e.g., Dio 61.8.3; Lib. *Or.* 19.14; Luc. *Salt.* 5; Tac. *Ann.* 1.16.3, 1.77.1–4, 4.14.3, 6.13.1, 11.13.1, 13.24.1, 13.25.4, 13.28.1, 14.24, 25; Tert. *Nat.* 1.17.



In contrast to the extensive record of disorder at theaters, the only recorded disturbance at an arena event is the Pompeii riot of AD 59. How do we explain this disparity? Since the seating conditions were the same in both situations, they cannot have been the essential difference. Partisanship was also a feature of both contexts, although much attenuated in the case of gladiators. The really major dissimilarity lay in the divergent nature of the spectacles themselves, so the answer is likely to lie in the crowd's psychological reaction to the different contexts they confronted in the theater and the arena. The point is reinforced by the fact that no disturbances at gladiatorial games are on record, even when they were held in adapted theaters, as they regularly were in the Greek East.<sup>70</sup> It was not the seating or the setting that mattered, as asserted by Flaig, nor even the demographics of the audience (overlap in attendance from event to event must have been substantial, given the reserved seating and the connections needed for the lower orders to secure seats). Rather, the nature of the spectacle and the spectators' mental orientation to it were the key.

In the amphitheater, the crowd was intensely focused on violence being done to and by deviants, criminals, and social outcasts. This focus powerfully reinforced their self-categorization as the ingroup (the spectators) against the outgroup (the victims and performers). The salience of subgroup membership among arena spectators frequently yielded to a more all-embracing self-categorization elicited by what was happening to outgroups, right there, in front of everyone's eyes. That the spectators, barring some outrage, were not going to suffer any violence strengthened the crowd's self-categorization and sense of connectedness. Their interaction with what was going on, by shouting, making demands, or even directing the action on the sand was overwhelmingly unidirectional (from the stands to the sands), added to the power of the situation, and underlined which party was in charge. Divided into their status groups, the spectators were united, first and foremost, in *not* being one of the unfortunates on the arena floor. Safe in their seats, they were constantly invited to compare themselves and their situation by watching the suffering of outgroups.

Naturally, there would have been lulls and distractions during which subgroups within the crowd did their own thing; people came and went; perhaps also occasional tensions and localized rivalries would emerge between

<sup>70</sup> This observation undermines the assertion that "amphitheater crowds might take fire not only with city rivalries but with their enthusiasms for some star or team of gladiatorial combat, chariot racing, or dramatic dances and plays"; see R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 1966), 170; this view conflates quite different phenomena. On the use of theaters for gladiatorial shows, see above, ch. 3, n. 99.

groups of spectators as this or that favored fighter made an appearance. The arena crowd, like any other, was not wholly consistent in its behavior, nor should it be imagined as such. It has been cogently argued, using a Foucaultian and anthropological perspective, that the ranked seating rendered arenas socially divisive places.<sup>71</sup> While the psychological analysis offered here may seem to differ sharply from this view, the social-identity model of crowd dynamics can accommodate spasms of divisiveness that interrupted the overall psychological cohesion. What matters, rather, are sustained patterns of categorization as they relate to the situational salience of group membership. In the arena setting, the most consistently salient ingroup was the spectatorship as a whole, categorized against the victim-outgroups below. If, during the games, groups in the crowd temporarily categorized themselves in opposition to other spectators (over support for specific gladiators or styles of armature, for instance), that fact does not lessen the tendency of the context to direct the spectators' attention toward the universally acknowledged outgroups struggling on the sand.

Finally, the very nature of gladiatorial bouts – short in duration, with a frequent rotation of performers – limited the extent to which partisans could direct antipathy against rival supporters in the crowd. Individual bouts cannot have lasted much more than fifteen or twenty minutes, after which new fighters would appear.<sup>72</sup> Even a phenomenally popular gladiator would be in action for only a few minutes, and so the likelihood of his supporters becoming volatile enough to cause trouble was much diminished. The frequent changing of gladiatorial pairs likewise reduced how long the different types of gladiators were exposed to the crowd, and the necessary breaks between fights gave tempers a chance to cool. Individuals or groups of individuals scattered throughout the crowd might cheer vociferously for their champion(s) or favorite style of combatant, but the performers would only be on the sand for a few minutes at a time and, possibly, only a few times a year.<sup>73</sup> In some spectacles, favorites would not

<sup>71</sup> E.g., Clavel-Lévêque, *L'empire en jeux*, 153–61; Edmondson, "Dynamic Arenas," 98–111; Potter, "Spectacle."

<sup>72</sup> M. Junkelmann, "Familia Gladiatoria: Heroes of the Amphitheatre," in E. Köhne and C. Ewigleben (eds.), *Gladiators and Caesars: The Power of Spectacle in Ancient Rome* (Berkeley, 2000), 31–74, esp. 40. Mark Twain observed students in a German corps (a traditional form of fraternity) duelling with swords in the nineteenth century and noted that their contests lasted up to twenty or thirty minutes, which included brief breaks. These contests were not nearly as intense or as demanding as a gladiatorial pairing, and yet the students were worn out by their exertions; see M. Twain, *A Tramp Abroad*, 2 vols. (Hartford, 1880), vol. 1, 34–40 (ch. 5).

<sup>73</sup> On the frequency of gladiatorial displays, with reference to earlier work, see S. L. Tuck, "Scheduling Spectacle: Factors Contributing to the Dates of Pompeian Munera," *CJ* 104 (2008), 123–43. Tuck concludes that arena games were much more frequent than many prior scholars have imagined (at

appear at all. All of this makes for a very different relationship between spectacle and spectator than that pertaining in the circus and the theater, where fierce partisanship was sustained by the relative uniformity of the spectacle, the block seating of partisans (at least in the Late Empire), and the prolonged exposure of the crowd to their chariot driver or actor heroes.

Theater performances seriously blurred the ingroup/outgroup categorizations between stage and auditorium. Like gladiators, stage performers mostly stemmed from the lower orders and were certainly scorned by the elite and legally stigmatized with “lack of good repute” (*infamia*), but they were not the utter outcasts who made up the ranks of the arena’s performers, executioners, and victims. To fight on the sand as a professional gladiator (that is, for money), a citizen was required to abjure his status by taking an oath that cast him among the pariahs; no such requirement was demanded for stage performers.<sup>74</sup> Lucian, in praising the art of pantomime,

least at Pompeii, where the evidence from epigraphic advertisements is fullest). For a contrasting view, see Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 47 and 56. Of course the frequency of *munera* may have little or no bearing on how often a specific fighter was called on to perform.

<sup>74</sup> Gladiators swore to submit to be “burned, bound, flogged and killed by the sword”; see Hor. *Sat.* 2.7.58–9; Juv. 11.5–8; Petron. *Sat.* 117.5; Sen. *Ep.* 37.1. In the Republic, amateur actors in Atellan farces were citizens of sufficient standing to be eligible for the military draft (Val. Max. 2.4.4; cf. Macrob. *Sat.* 3.14.6–8). Livy (7.2.12) implies that other actors may also have held citizenship, but belonged to the militarily exempt lowest class. By the early Principate, however, citizen-actors earned the stigma of *infamia* (*Dig.* 3.2.2.5), and bars were put on actors marrying into senatorial families and on senators performing on stage (*Dig.* 23.2.44pr; Dio 54.2.5). This did not stop members of the elite from performing, however (Dio 53.32.3, 55.10.11, 62.20.4–5; Tac. *Ann.* 15.65, 16.21.1). The key factor was whether one was paid or not (*Dig.* 3.1.1.6). On stage performers in general, see H. Leppin, *Histrionen: Untersuchungen zur sozialen Stellung von Bühnenkünstlern im Westen des Römischen Reiches zur Zeit der Republik und des Principats* (Bonn, 1992), esp. 36–44 (social status), 71–83 (the legalities), and 189–313 (a catalog of all known performers; where status can be determined, the figures are: 24 slaves, 41 freedmen, 5 possible *peregrini*, 11 freeborn, 4 citizens). See also C. Hugoniot et al. (eds.), *Le statut de l'acteur dans l'Antiquité grecque et romaine* (Tours, 2004). On attitudes toward arena performers and executioners, see below, ch. 7, pp. 245–73. H. N. Parker (“The Observed of All Observers: Spectacle, Applause, and Cultural Poetics in the Roman Theater Audience,” in Bergmann and Kondoleon [eds.], *Art of Ancient Spectacle*, 163–79) argues (at 164–6) that arena and theater performers were all “outcasts” who were equally degraded by exposing their bodies for the entertainment of others. In this view he has considerable support (cf. also A. Duncan, *Performance and Identity in the Classical World* [Cambridge, 2006], 124–59). While *infamia* may be a consistent legal concept, laws do not encompass the whole of social reality. Prostitutes, gladiators, and other performers were all degraded, yes, but not to the same degree, as Seneca (*Q. Nat.* 7.31.3) and Juvenal (8.198–9) imply and the gladiatorial oath suggests; see also *Dig.* 3.1.4.1 for categories of performers judged not to incur *infamia*. Famed actors could enjoy close social connections with prominent people, including members of the imperial household, even as they practiced their trade (e.g., C. Maecenas Bathyllus and C. Julius Pylades under Augustus, or Apelles and Mnester under Caligula and Claudius; Leppin, *Histrionen*, 217–19 [Bathyllus], 284–5 [Pylades], and 261–2 [Mnester]; see also HA *Verus* 8.7, 10–11 with an honorific inscription of AD 199 at *CIL* 14.4254 = *ILS* 5191). The reverse is also true: in AD 15 senators had to be barred by decree of the senate from visiting the houses of pantomimes, and *equites* from taking part in their processions (Tac. *Ann.* 1.77.4). Analogous evidence for close gladiator–patron social interaction is rare; indeed, Cicero (*Cat.* 2.9) includes

says that the performance elicited self-recognition in the spectator so that “each recognizes his own traits, or rather sees in the dancer, as in a mirror, his very self, with his customary feelings and actions.”<sup>75</sup> That is to say, psychological lines of distinction between performer and spectator were as clouded in the theater as they were clear in the arena. Unlike most gladiators (who wore helmets) actors could interact vocally with the crowd, and pantomimes could stir their emotions and whip them up into an excited state with music, movement, and gesture.<sup>76</sup> In this situation, rivalries between performers and their supporters in the audience, stoked by actors from the stage and by claquees in the seats, combined to divide the audience against itself. Combined with the blurred actor–partisan distinctions, the fanatical following adhering to mimes and actors would have impeded the more inclusive self-categorization that characterized arena crowds, so that localized social identities within the crowd remained more salient at theater events than they did at *munera*.

Unlike gladiatorial bouts, theater events featured only a handful of performers who occupied the stage for several hours.<sup>77</sup> Supporters were therefore exposed to their idols and rivals for sustained periods of time. The possible infusion of political commentary into this already volatile situation added fuel to the fire. The role of theatrical performers in fomenting divisions within their audience reversed the situation in the arena, where

gladiators as among Catiline’s close friends (*intimi*) precisely to emphasize the man’s depravity; cf. Dio 59.5.2 (on Caligula’s gladiator friends). Indeed, Cicero (*Rosc. Am.* 17) uses “gladiator” as a synonym for “scoundrel.” Gladiators are attested as bodyguards (e.g., Cic. *Att.* 4.4a.2, 4.8.2; Suet. *Cal.* 55.4; Tac. *Ann.* 13.25.3) or business investments (e.g., Caes. *B. Civ.* 1.14.4–5). They are not usually numbered among the intimates of the great and powerful (and dissolute), the way mimes, actors, and other entertainers are. The exception is women of quality who are imagined as sully themselves with gladiators (e.g., Juv. 6.67–113; HA *Marc.* 19.7), but in general the gladiator was not the sort of person one had over to dinner; see Ville, *Gladiature*, 290–5. The social situation was therefore more complex than the legal sources divulge, and even the legal situation with regard to actors is not wholly consistent; see Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 98–136, esp. 123–6 and 131–4.

<sup>75</sup> Luc. *Salt.* 81: ἕκαστος τῶν ὁρώντων γνωρίζῃ τὰ αὐτοῦ, μᾶλλον ὥσπερ ἐν κατόπτρῳ τῷ ὀρχηστῆ ἑαυτὸν βλέπει καὶ ἂ πάσχειν αὐτὸς καὶ ἂ ποιεῖω εἴσθην.

<sup>76</sup> The gladiator Pacideianus, according to Lucilius (of the second century BC), who is cited in Cicero (*Tusc.* 4.48 = Lucil. 4.155–60K = 4.153–8M = T.10), addressed spectators at a show, presumably in the forum. The notice is exceptional. Pantomimes stirring emotions: Luc. *Salt.* 83.

<sup>77</sup> That stage performances lasted hours is clear not only from the length of surviving plays and comments that (apparently private) recitations could stretch over days (Pliny *Ep.* 4.27.1, 8.21.4; cf. *ibid.* 1.131–3, 6.17.3), but also from other indications. The theatrical show that Caligula attended on the last day of his life lasted from morning at least into the early afternoon, when the emperor left the theater for lunch; Jos. *AJ* 19.84–101; Suet. *Cal.* 57.4, 58.1. Pantomimes may also have had a long duration, if several dances were performed in sequence. Ummidia Quadratilla, for one, would spend hours watching her mimes and pantomimes (who also performed publicly in the theatre); Pliny *Ep.* 7.24.4–87. Crato, the stern interlocutor in Lucian’s *The Dance*, implies that watching pantomimes took a lot of time (Luc. *Salt.* 2) and the extent of the mythological cycles performed (*ibid.* 37–61, 63, 66) also points in the same direction.

the crowd influenced action on the sand, not vice versa, and this further confused the ingroup/outgroup distinctions between performer and spectator.<sup>78</sup> It also blurred the theater spectators' focus outward on to the stage and turned it inward on to themselves. In these psychological circumstances, the division of the spectators into ranks of seats at the theater did not facilitate the expression of a crowd-wide social identity, as it did in the amphitheater, but rather stressed the divisions and disagreements within the audience. At *munera*, the crowd consistently paid attention to outgroups physically removed from it on the sand below; at the theater, the crowd recognized outgroups in its very midst. No wonder there was trouble.<sup>79</sup> It is possible that a psychological environment more akin to that typically found at theatrical events confronted the audience at Pompeii's amphitheater on the day of the riot in AD 59 (reviewed above, chapter 3, pp. 93–6). On this occasion social identities in the crowd coalesced around municipal affiliations, and when the longstanding rivalry between Pompeii and Nuceria was brought to the fore by the nature of the spectacle being staged, the crowd became acutely divided against itself.

A subtheme running through the preceding pages has been how hostile attitudes toward outgroups constituted a core element of the arena spectators' mental state. We now turn to this matter in detail.

<sup>78</sup> This is not to say that theater audiences were sedately attentive, they could call out commentary on proceedings (see Luc. *Salt.* 76 for the catcalls of Antiochene audiences). The point is that the communication was markedly more two-way in the theater than in the arena.

<sup>79</sup> The ancients can comment on how theater audiences divided against themselves; Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.180–5; Plut. *Cic.* 13.2–3; Tac. *Ann.* 13.25.4. No comparable statements are found in our sources in connection with arena events. See also Luc. *Salt.* 83, who notes divergent audience reactions to what happened on stage during a performance of the madness of Ajax: when the Ajax character hit Odysseus on the head so hard only the latter's cap saved him from serious harm, the rabble in the audience went wild, while the more discerning spectators at the front applauded in a more restrained fashion. The tensions in the theater are palpable.

## CHAPTER 5

*Arenas of prejudice*

Indeed my proposal is not cruel – for what could be cruel in the case of men such as these?

Caesar, speaking in Sall. *Cat.* 51.17

Since he has killed, he deserves to suffer.

Sen. *Ep.* 7.5

Prejudice is a mindset known to bring about not only an emotional distance from the agony of victims of violence but even to give license to revel in it. Prejudice, of course, is not to be invoked as an all-embracing, umbrella explanation for attendance at violent public rituals in all contexts – many psychological factors are likely to have been involved, including excitement (see chapter 6), the attractions of violent spectacle in general (see chapter 7), a morbid fascination with confronting one's mortality, or just plain curiosity. But spectatorship at ritual *punishments* in particular may often be rooted in a conviction that the condemned are getting what they deserve, a stance inherently prejudicial toward the victim, and all the more so if group affiliations are involved, as they were in the Roman arena. Since Roman society was rife with prejudice, and since virulent attitudes toward the arena's victims (and performers) are documentable from the surviving record, the role of prejudice in drawing spectators to arena spectacles warrants closer scrutiny.

As a psychological phenomenon, prejudice is complicated.<sup>1</sup> A classic formulation posits three components: (a) cognitive, or harboring negative

<sup>1</sup> The literature on the subject is vast; for lucid overviews, see R. Brown, *Prejudice: Its Social Psychology* (Oxford, 1995); R. Y. Bourhis and J.-P. Leyens (eds.), *Stereotypes, Discrimination, and Intergroup Relations*, 2nd edn. (Hayen, 1999); J. H. Duckitt, *Social Psychology of Prejudice* (New York, 1992); M. Jones, *Social Psychology of Prejudice* (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2002); T. D. Nelson, *The Psychology of Prejudice*, 2nd edn. (Boston, MA, 2006); T. D. Nelson (ed.), *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination* (New York, 2009); Zanna and Olson (eds.), *Psychology of Prejudice*. See also Chin (ed.), *Psychology of Prejudice and Discrimination*; J. F. Dovidio et al. (eds.), *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport* (Oxford, 2005); J. H. Duckitt, "Prejudice and Intergroup Hostility," in D. O. Sears et al. (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (Oxford, 2003), 559–600;