

MAGNUS WISTRAND, *Entertainment and Violence in Ancient Rome: The attitudes of Roman writers of the first century A. D.* University of Göteborg, Department of Classical Studies, 1992, p. 133

Concerning the subject mentioned in the title of this book, nine first century Roman writers are consulted: Juvenal, Martial, Petronius, Pliny the Younger, Seneca the Younger, Suetonius, Tacitus, Valerius Maximus and Velleius Paterculus.

After an analysis of nature of entertainment in the first century A. D. in Rome presented in Introduction (more lavish entertainment of that time, the games are under control of a new regime, the fact that many texts dating from that period are kept), in the first chapter of the book the author exposes some general attitudes about ancient writers. In spite of many negativ points in their descriptions, their general interest was neutral. Suetonius described a lot of kinds of performances which were organized by the Emperor, but he didn't assess them. Tacitus had an idea that the history should be about great things, not about trifling matters. The opinion more or less negatively overcomes depending on what entertainment is being compared with.

The second chapter titled "Arena" regards the sports organized at a named place. Juvenal and Tacitus are distinguished for sarcastical criticism. Animal shows, say Martial, offer the symbolistic explanation of the Emperors divine power. Public executions were done just to maintain the law and the order in the society.

The events carried out on scaena are explained in the third chapter. The scaena is a real opposite of the arena. It is a place where the negative ideas and vices are pretended. Scaena has many characteristics like: corruption, softness, indecency, disgrace, depravity, licentious behaviour, riots and strife, frivolities, idleness and inactivity. But Seneca has a philosophical explanation of scaena entertainments as an event where the mind has to relax „in order to replenish its forces . . .". In Petronius' "Satyricon" is given a picturesque view of theatre performances. Suetonius is always good describer but his own attitude is never published. Tacitus is proverbially negative towards theatres and actors.

The fourth chapter contains attitudes towards equestrial performances in the circus. Though thousands of people very often watched horse-racing and manstanding in chariots, Pliny preferred to devote the spare time to literary activities. Tacitus could find nothing interesting in horse-racing or seating and just watching them. Petronius expresses the disdain for all public performers "by they gladiators, charioteers or actors." *Panem et circenses* are the famous deep containing Juvenal's words. He and Martial wrote more about circus performances and mentioned famous racehorses by name.

Athletic competitions are inspected in the fifth chapter named "Stadium". Almost all authors spread an idea that the Emperor couldn't be the participant of competitions and performances: it is too indignt. Martial warns about woman participation and public opinion about that. More hints related to Stadium are left by Seneca. He got the point that there was a kind of competition between the body and the mind, so the more was given to the body the less there would be for the mind.

The sixth chapter contains the conclusions where the author summarizes all the viewpoints. All ancinet writers consider that entertainment is a subject which has no dignity to be mentioned and discussed. The philosophical viewpoint allows to see *spectacula* or *ludi* like the real opponent of the virtue. *Ludi* could have some positive themselves if they included the mind and the selfcontrol. Entertainment is popular, it is a feature of *vulgus* or *plebs* or common people.

With an intention to be clear, the author presents a diagram which distinguishes the positive, neutral and negative qualities of an entertainment and list of the characteristics of all kinds of *ludi* arranged in Rome.

In the chapter of discussion the author explains that the games were organized by the extremely rich and politically activated men. They got an idea that the *vulgus* paying an attention to the entertainment couldn't interfere in the politics too much. An entertainment as propaganda in a very positive light (near to hyperbole) illustrates the basic values in the society.