

## SPECTATORSHIP AND FANDOM OF THE ROMAN CHARIOT RACES

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By

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is concerned with the spectators of the Roman chariot races throughout the empire. It addresses how the sport was experienced and engaged with in the Roman context, with consideration of the everyday lives of circus fans, social networks and consumer patterns. By making use of a variety of sources, including the structural remains of circuses, material culture, epigraphic evidence, and both literary and historical writings, it is possible to gain a picture of a vibrant community of circus fans that as a group were able to make an impact on the sport as well as on Roman society and culture more broadly.

Circus spectators were confronted with an array of stimuli from the moment of their arrival at the venue - from the sights to the sounds and even the feel of the seats - all of which added to their shared experience. Audience members engaged not only with the sport but also with one another, finding common ground in their collective interest in the races. Aside from the casual spectator, many audience members identified themselves to be within a community of fans with common views and beliefs concerning the popular spectacle. Fans of the races passionately followed the sport and its competitors, and offered their support when in attendance at the circus and in their actions outside of the venue. An examination of the phenomena of Roman sport spectators further reveals a rich sub-culture of racing fans that offered an active social experience at the circus and various methods of engagement with the sport at the venue and beyond.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

N.B. Throughout the dissertation, a note (footnote or endnote) has been abbreviated: “n.”, and a catalogue number has been abbreviated: “no.”. Circus *defixiones* which can be found in the Appendix (Collection of Circus *Defixiones*) at the end of the dissertation have been abbreviated: “App. No.”.

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année Épigraphique</i> , pub. in <i>Revue Archéologique</i> and separately (1888–)
<i>BE</i>	<i>Bulletin épigraphique</i> , pub. in <i>Revue des études grecques</i> .
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (1863–)
<i>Graf. Pal.</i>	Väänänen, V., Solin, H., Itkonen-Kaila, M. <i>Graffiti Palatino</i> (1968)
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> (1873–)
<i>PGM</i>	Preisendanz, K. <i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i> , 2 vols. (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. 1973-4)
<i>P. Oxy.</i>	<i>Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> (1898–)
<i>ILS</i>	Dessau, H. <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> (1892-1916)
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> (1923–)



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## INTRODUCTION

Public games were presented regularly in Rome as a method of entertaining the masses, and as the spectacles (*spectacula*) continued to grow in popularity, they also grew in scale, with elite citizens funding them to reinforce their status and to gain popular support in politics. Although gladiatorial combat has been the basis of much scholarship, chariot racing in fact had the greater popularity in the Roman world. The Circus Maximus in Rome was far older and larger than the nearby Colosseum, and the races were beloved by devoted fans throughout the Roman empire, drawing crowds centuries after the gladiatorial games ended. The sport of chariot racing was an integral part of public entertainment that engrossed the majority of the Roman population, with popularity so great that it pervaded Roman society and politics.

The Roman spectacle audience was lively and responsive; at the circus the spectators fervently supported their favourites and were devoted in their engagement with the sport. Fans of the chariot races were remarkably influential, as they not only sought to participate in the competitions from their places in the stands but also prompted the involvement of others with the increasingly popular sport. Studies of sports, both ancient and modern, tend to focus on the sport itself, its production and performance; seldom are the fans identified as the central subject for examination. In the ancient sources sports fans, particularly circus fans, are a group that is under- or unrepresented and often relegated to little more than brief anecdotes concerning their boisterous and immoderate

behaviour. Yet questions concerning the interest and behaviour of sports fans, who themselves represent a significant aspect of Roman culture, are worthy of sustained attention.<sup>1</sup>

Modern scholars have often attempted to correlate the partisanship of circus fans to political parties or religious connections; while these possible connections do have value, they are by no means the only factors of merit in the discussion of these fan groups. Beyond political or religious affiliations, sports fandom can have substantial influence on the lives of individual fans and their social identities as members of a larger group. The allegiance of Roman racing fans to one competitor or faction illustrates fundamental psychological and sociological properties of the self, including bolstering one's self esteem through the close association with victorious groups, and fostering a sense of belonging in a larger community. The multi-sensory experience shared by the circus audience was a dynamic spectacle of sights, sounds, smells, and more, as spectators engaged with the competition, their fellow audience members, and the venue itself. A spectacle day at the circus drew in vast numbers of interested parties, many of whom welcomed the sense of group identity that was established as they perceived of themselves as fans of the races.

Such connectedness inherent in the sport fandom, both to other fans and to the sport at large, had marked effects even outside of the circus. As the popularity of the sport grew, Roman officials responded with the construction of new racing venues

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<sup>1</sup> Fagan (2011) also recognized that answers to such questions were lacking in scholarship and made a close study of the spectators of arena events. I draw inspiration from his work as I direct my focus to the fans of the circus.

throughout the empire and the presentation of more race days with new and exciting variations to the competitions. Many emperors took up the racing fandom for themselves, as did numerous elite Romans who sought to utilize an association to the popular sport for their own benefit. The large fan base of the races also furthered the proliferation of circus imagery as artists, responding to a demand, produced images of the popular races in mosaics, wall paintings, and various small objects. While it is impossible to claim that sport was important to all Romans, the impact of popular sport and spectacle in the Roman world cannot be ignored. Through the study of the spectators of the Roman chariot races we can find that, for many, the sport held a significant place in their social and cultural identity and was experienced and consumed in a myriad of ways both at the circus and beyond the venue in their everyday lives.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

While there is no shortage of scholarship on Roman spectacle, academic interest in the subject has long been directed toward gladiatorial combats and the violent spectacles of the arena. Works such as Thomas Wiedemann's (1992) *Emperors and Gladiators*, and Alison Futrell's (1996) *Blood in the Arena: The Spectacle of Roman Power*, make a close examination of the Roman desire for entertainment and its outcome in the elaborate gladiatorial shows produced for the masses. Both texts provide insight into the importance of popular entertainment in the Roman world and the role of entertainment venues as social and political tools. In her article 'Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments', Kathleen Coleman (1990) examined the public

displays of punishment as staged performances for the audience that demanded such brutal entertainment. Coleman's article has become an essential read for those studying Roman spectacle, and her method of combining evidence, including mosaics, graffiti, inscriptions, and literary sources, is one that is very applicable to this study of Roman chariot racing. Other scholars have addressed the subject of Roman spectacle more broadly, such as Donald G. Kyle's *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, which was published in 2007. Kyle organizes the material chronologically, giving a detailed examination of ancient sport from the Bronze Age through to the fall of Rome. Through this approach Kyle is able to identify key changes over the centuries and the manner in which Greek and Roman sport gained a layer of performance, or spectacle.

In *The Lure of the Arena: Social Psychology and the Crowd at the Roman Games* (2011), Garrett Fagan offered a new perspective on the spectacles of the arena that had, as yet, been lacking in modern scholarship by turning his attentions to the spectators and asking the question; why did they go to watch? Fagan provided his answer through the application of modern social psychological research alongside ancient sources and proposes that the public was motivated to attend the spectacles by various forces that can be understood by a modern audience. Fagan did not outrightly dismiss the common scholarly view of the Roman interest in observing aggressive behaviour in a bloody sport and instead develops the discussion further to highlight various psychological processes potentially at work behind the popularity of violent spectacles that occur in different cultures and times. As a result, Fagan contended that the attraction to these violent entertainments was not about the actions themselves but rather "who is doing what to

whom, and for what reason”.<sup>2</sup> The text in its entirety offers a thoughtful examination of the spectators of gladiatorial combats and their interest in both the competitors and the competition.

Just as gladiatorial combats have been acknowledged as an important expression of Roman cultural priorities, the Roman chariot races have gained the interest of scholars for their role as both a popular entertainment and a political tool. One of possibly the most vital studies on Roman chariot racing to date is John Humphrey’s (1986) *Roman Circuses: Arenas for Chariot Racing*. In his publication, Humphrey employed archaeological and historical evidence in order to make a close examination of circuses themselves from across the empire. While he addressed many circuses from the various provinces, Humphrey paid particular attention to architectural features of the circus at Lepcis Magna, one of the best preserved of all Roman circuses. Humphrey dedicated multiple chapters to the architecture of the Circus Maximus, utilizing evidence that included literary references, imagery on coinage and other visual media, and archaeological remains, to trace the evolution of the structure and to provide a clear report of its design. Humphrey’s exhaustive text remains the seminal work on the venues of the races.

Alan Cameron also has produced two notable publications on the study of Roman chariot racing and is an authority on the subject of circus factions, particularly those of the later Empire. In *Porphyrius the Charioteer*, published in 1973, Cameron studied two statue bases from Constantinople that once held statues of Porphyrius, a popular

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<sup>2</sup> Fagan 2011: 243.

charioteer of the early sixth century CE. In this work Cameron offered insights into the historical context of Porphyrius, his fellow charioteers, and the prestige garnered by those who raced in the circus. Cameron followed this work in 1976 with the publication of *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*. Here, Cameron turned his attention to major theories regarding the composition and intentions of circus factions. After defining a difference between members of the factions, the professionals who produced and performed the races, and the fans who watched and supported the groups, Cameron dismissed the notion of the factions as political groups in favour of groups focused on their shared enthusiasm for the races.

More recent contributions have offered new treatments on the subject of the races, particularly through the study of visual representations of the sport. For instance, Eve D'Ambra's 2007 article, 'Racing with Death: Circus Sarcophagi and the Commemoration of Children in Roman Italy', followed by Sinclair Bell's 'Roman Circus Sarcophagi: New, Lost and Rediscovered Finds' in 2009 addressed the motif of the chariot races that appears prominently in Roman sarcophagi. Both D'Ambra and Bell noted the symbolic dimensions of the venue of the circus as well as the competing charioteers, which could be used in a funerary context to express the length, condition, or conclusion of one's life. Moreover, the presence of such images associated with the circus and chariot racing on sarcophagi and other media is demonstrative of the importance of the competition and its competitors in wider Roman culture.

A 2012 article from Sylvain Forichon, 'Furor circensis: étude des émotions et des expressions corporelles des spectateurs lors d'une course de chars', adds another



dimension to the current scholarship on the Roman circus. Forichon used a combination of literary and iconographic evidence to develop an image of the emotional state of circus spectators. As Forichon observed, the great popularity of the races was in itself a cause of further shows, with the production of spectacles taken up by political leaders who could benefit from the recognition of the grateful crowds. Forichon examined the emotional reactions of the spectators to the entertainments at the circus and demonstrates the powerful influence of the circus-goers in different spheres of Roman life.

Recent work in another field also is worthy of mention here for its relation to the study that follows. The field of inquiry into the Roman *sensorium* tackles aspects of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste in the Roman experience. In the 2016 work, *Stadterfahrung als sinneserfahrung in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (edited by Annette Haug and Patric-Alexander Kreuz) the contributing authors consider how the city of Rome was perceived through the senses of the population. These papers raise new issues concerning the urban sensory experience of the Romans and what such perceptions might tell us both about an individual's lived experience and about the Roman culture at large. The following year, *Senses of the Empire: Multisensory approaches to Roman Culture* (2017) edited by Eleanor Betts was released. Each of the contributors explores case studies of different senses and their impact on different aspects of the Roman world, from the soundscape of Rome to the perceptions of one's own identity. Acknowledging the multi-sensory nature of one's lived experience, the work as a whole presents new social and cultural investigations with the five senses at the forefront. While in both volumes the approaches of the individual authors vary, the papers demonstrate the wide application of

sensory studies to the ancient world and represent significant contributions to the difficult task of reconstructing lived experiences of the past.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THESIS**

The subject matter has been separated into five chapters, each subdivided to facilitate discussion. In Chapter 1 (*The Roman Circus*) I provide a preliminary exploration of the history of the Roman circus and chariot races in particular. The origins of the Greek and Etruscan forms of chariot racing are addressed as well as the development of the Roman races with influences from these earlier models. Proceeding from this discussion I review the development of the Circus Maximus as well as other racing venues at and beyond Rome, and explore the growing interest in the races that is demonstrated in the construction of numerous purpose-built structures throughout the Roman empire. A further topic of discussion in this chapter is the views of our elite Roman sources on spectacle and the circus. Although various sources show disapproval of the behaviour of the spectators and point to their mindlessness and over-enthusiastic responses to the events, there is also evidence for the attendance of numerous authors at the circus and other spectacles. It is important then to confront the literary evidence and evaluate how we can reconcile the treatments of the races and the crowds by our sources with what we know of their own attendance at such events. Lastly, prior to turning to the matter of spectators more generally, the attendance of the emperor at the circus must also be considered. The presence of the emperor offers a unique elite perspective to the engagement in the popularity of the circus. While the authenticity of each emperor's

personal interest in the races as a fan is addressed more closely in a subsequent chapter, it is evident that each emperor recognized the importance of the sport in the popular mind and was able to utilize his attendance at the circus as a means to engage with the populace and maintain social and political order.

In Chapter 2 (*A Day at the Races*) I seek to develop a picture of the spectator's lived experience at the races through the consideration of the various stimuli they encountered and the effect on their senses by the many sights and sounds of the circus. To best understand the spectators of the races it is essential to examine how they interacted with the space and how the space itself influenced their experience and overall enjoyment, both of the day's spectacle and the sport at large. I begin by tracing the movement of spectators from outside the venue to their seats, and confront issues of traffic flow and crowd control, and the implications on the spectator's comfort, safety, and enjoyment. Scholarship on modern stadium design alongside the physical remains and excavation reports of ancient circuses are vital sources, as I discuss the functional designs of public entertainment venues. I then examine the experience of the spectator when seated, including the size and comfort of the seats, sightlines, and the many sounds at the event. While seating at the amphitheatre was strictly regulated to reflect and reinforce social divisions and hierarchy by the Imperial period, the circus did not follow the same plan of order and stratification; rather, spectators were permitted great freedom in their seat selections. It is necessary to review this open manner of seating and to assess how the experience of those in attendance was influenced by it in terms of visual and

acoustic conditions, as well as the opportunities for socializing and interaction with other spectators afforded to them in the space and that became so integral to the experience.

Upon having explored the experience of spectators throughout a day at the races, in Chapter 3 (*Spectators and Fans*) I direct my attention to the devotion of spectators as fans of the sport and look at what aspects of the sport drew the interest of the fans. I first discuss the four factions of the circus that divided spectators into separate fan bases, with audience members staunchly supporting one over the others. Yet, while the faction system was fundamental to the structure of the races, individual charioteers also gained significant prestige and popularity among circus fans. The charioteers themselves held a unique position in Roman society as officially disgraced individuals (*infames*), alongside gladiators and actors. Despite their lowly legal status, charioteers reached great heights of celebrity, honoured as sporting stars by circus fans and celebrated for their efforts on the racing track. Throughout this chapter I explore the fierce devotion of racing fans and consider if a sense of loyalty can be identified among them, given what is known of the popularity of both individual charioteers and the larger factions. Before concluding this discussion of fans and their interest in the races I turn once more to the presence of the emperor at the races, this time from the perspective of the emperor as a racing fan. The reports by some ancient sources of the intense passion and obsession with the races displayed by various emperors suggest that, in these instances, the emperor was no longer in attendance at the circus in a solely official capacity. Instead, the emperor showed himself to be among the most highly invested fans who sought to engage with the races in whatever way possible.

Chapter 4 (*The Psychology of a Circus Fan: a Modern Sport Psychology Approach*) represents a unique case study in which I approach the behaviour of Roman circus fans from a modern psychology perspective and examine the interest in attending the races and the motivations to become a fan of the sport. I review the available evidence that has been gathered in previous chapters and explore potential connections between modern psychological and sociological theories of sports fan motivations and the Roman version of the phenomenon. While a number of motivations are evident among individuals drawn to the races with various goals of entertainment and socialization, I propose that, among these motivations, the desire for group affiliation is prominent. In this chapter I consider the wide variety of circus-goers, from the casual to the most fiercely devoted fan and employ modern sports psychology when addressing not only a Roman fan's love of the races, but also the social psychology of the crowd and the influence of group dynamics on the race experience and the reactions of individuals. It seems that many identified highly as fans of the races and sought to engage with it as much as possible even beyond the walls of the circus through art and other media, or through their interactions with fans and others associated with the sport. The behaviour of such avid fans is at the forefront of this chapter as I analyze their fierce desire to engage with and perhaps participate in the beloved sport.

In light of the previous chapters I confront once more the experience and behaviour of racing fans at the circus in Chapter 5 (*Spectator Participation and the Use of Circus Defixiones*). The spectating crowds at sporting events are often pictured shouting from the stands as they cheer and jeer the competitors. This image shows fans who seek

not only to be involved in the proceedings but also to have their voices heard, if perhaps they might have some effect and give their presence meaning. Here I study this behaviour of fans in the stands of the circus and the methods by which they were able to express themselves and participate in the spectacle being presented. The potential for fan influence through these actions is also discussed, not only on the competition, but also on the fan experience and the culture of the races more broadly. It is apparent that racing fans were fiercely engaged with the sport, some even feeling compelled to take extreme action to support their favourites and oppose their competitors. A key body of evidence presented in this chapter is the circus *defixiones*, or curse tablets, which called upon various spirits and deities from numerous cultures and implored them to act against a charioteer or faction in order to aid another. Having gathered numerous examples of circus *defixiones* that have been found throughout the Roman world, I consider the location in which they were buried as well as elements of their content, such as who was targeted and in what manner, and demonstrate the extremes to which some fans were willing to go, as they went so far as to seek their target's torment and death. These circus curses represent the height of the passion for the competition held by so many and serve to expand our understanding of the fervent interest of Roman racing fans.

## **CHAPTER 1.**

### **THE ROMAN CIRCUS**

#### **1. 1. INTRODUCTION**

In order to present a study of the spectatorship and fandom of the Roman chariot races it is vital first to understand the origins of the races and their development in the Roman context. The Romans were by no means the first peoples to hold competitions of chariot racing and the influences of earlier forms of the sport are apparent in the Roman model; elements from both Greek and Etruscan chariot racing in particular can be identified in what became one of the most popular public entertainments in Rome. The early history of the Roman form of chariot racing firmly established the sport in the religious life of the city as part of the festival celebrations for different gods throughout the year. Presented on only a select number of days in the religious calendar, a day of races was a special event greatly anticipated by the populace. As the sport increasingly captured the interest of the public, the structure of the races was formalized to ensure both their consistency at each show and the enjoyment of spectators, and modifications were made to the traditional racing venue. The space that would become known as the Circus Maximus had a long evolution, with many changes and additions that reflected the growth in popularity and regularization of the sport. What began as an open field with hills on either side where those who wished to observe the competition could sit, slowly developed to become a permanent, monumental stone structure with a seating capacity

larger than any other entertainment venue at Rome. It is only by considering these aspects of the Roman circus, its history and development, can we then address the spectators themselves.

Of course, not all Romans demonstrated the same all-embracing love of the races and, despite the emphasis of the widespread popularity of the sport in this study, the oppositional voices must also be considered. Numerous elite Roman authors focus attention on the circus in their writings and offer sharp criticisms of the racing spectacles and those who attended them. However, through a close examination of their works, it becomes apparent that the opinions the authors present are often rhetorically antagonistic, utilizing the condemnation of the circus to assert their own position as elite Romans and separating themselves from the entertainment of the masses. Even so, the common people were not the only ones present at the races, since many of the authors who claimed disapproval of the spectacles still attended the shows, some even admitting interest or identifying value in their content.

Perhaps the most notable member of the elite to attend the races was the emperor himself, whose presence could create a connection with the people and offer them a glimpse of their leader engaging in the popular pastime. However, the emperor faced significant public scrutiny at the races, as at other public appearances, as a representative of the strength and security of Rome; a balance to his presence was necessary, in order to show a leader to whom the people could relate and in whom they could entrust their lives and the governance of the state. The Circus Maximus thus served religious, social, and political functions, as a central venue for the Roman public to come together as a



community, to honour their gods, to be entertained, and to draw close to Roman leadership. The lengthy history of the circus and the races themselves are demonstrative of these roles through which, from humble beginnings, the sport of chariot racing became a prominent aspect of Roman culture with influence across the empire.

## 1. 2. ORIGINS OF THE RACES

Chariot racing was one of the oldest spectacles presented at Rome, with a long history prior to its rise in popularity there. Although chariots were used by various cultures, the origins of Roman chariot racing are often attributed to Greek chariot racing and the Etruscan form of the sport. Indeed, there remains debate as to which, Greek or Etruscan culture, influenced what would become Roman chariot racing. The debate of the origins of Roman racing has not been confined to modern scholars, as ancient authors also had differing opinions; while Dionysius of Halicarnassus asserts that it was adopted from Greek customs and Tacitus specifies that the equestrian contests (*equorum certamina*) came to Rome from Greek Thuri, both Livy and Tertullian suggest that the races were introduced through the Etruscans.<sup>3</sup> After examining the evidence for racing in both Greek and Etruscan cultures, the most reasonable conclusion is to accept the involvement of both since, while many features of Roman chariot racing can be identified as Etruscan in origin, it is apparent that the Greek form of racing influenced the Roman organization as well.<sup>4</sup> The following summary is an overview of key details that help provide some

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<sup>3</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.73.1-3; Tac. *Ann.* 14.21.1; Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 1.35.8-9; Tert. *De Spect.* 5.2.

<sup>4</sup> See Bell 2014: 493; Bronson 1965; Humphrey 1986: 11-17, 64; Rawson 1981; Thuillier 1981, 1985.

understanding of the origins of Roman racing through both the Greek and Etruscan models.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest account of chariot races appears in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE in Homer's *Iliad*, during the funeral games for Patroclus in Book 23.<sup>6</sup> The detail included in Homer's scene suggests that, at the time the *Iliad* was composed, chariot races were organized often and in a consistent manner that could be clearly followed and recounted by the audience. Some details of the organization of Homer's race call to mind the later Roman format, with a defined starting line and the competitors' positions determined by the drawing of lots.<sup>7</sup> On this occasion the race did not take place in an official venue and instead an open field served as the track and a tree trunk at the far end was designated as a turning post for the drivers to race around.<sup>8</sup> While the description of the scene suggests that the audience was not a primary concern, with only a few interested spectators were gathered on a hill behind the starting line, a fragmentary Athenian black-figure pot from 600-550 BCE shows the chariot races of the funerary games of Patroclus with onlookers seated on stands.<sup>9</sup>

Chariot racing is also known to have been a part of various Greek religious festivals and to have played a role in the mythological origins of the Olympic Games, the most prestigious of the four Panhellenic festivals. According to Pindar, the king

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<sup>5</sup> For other discussions of the history and origins of the races, see Bernstein 2007; Cameron 1976; Rawson 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Hom. *Il.* 23.262-565.

<sup>7</sup> Hom. *Il.* 23.352-7.

<sup>8</sup> Hom. *Il.* 23.326-333.

<sup>9</sup> Athenian National Archaeological Museum, NM 15499. In the account of the event in the *Iliad*, although it seems that it is a relatively small group that has gathered to watch the races, the spectators are very engaged in the race and debate with one another as to who is in the lead (*Il.* 23.448-498).

Oenomaus had his daughter's suitors compete for her hand and challenged them to chariot races, with the lone victor permitted to marry her.<sup>10</sup> While Oenomaus defeated all previous suitors, he was defeated by Pelops, who then organized the first of the Games to give thanks to the gods and as funeral games for Oenomaus.<sup>11</sup> Pausanias' description of the space for racing at Olympia as it was in the second century BCE is of a large field with turning posts and starting gates and no seating set out for spectators aside from the natural formation of the area that allowed people to seat themselves on hills at either end of the track.<sup>12</sup> In his tragedy *Electra*, Sophocles puts great detail into an account of a fifth century BCE race, when Orestes' aide tells a false report of a crash in a race at the Pythian Games in order to trick Electra into believing that her brother had been killed. In the report of the race, more details are revealed concerning the structure of the competition, including that there were ten competitors, their starting positions again based on lots, and multiple laps in the race.<sup>13</sup> This is very similar to what is later seen in Rome, particularly the large number of competitors who needed to be organized into the starting gates by the drawing of lots and the multiple laps that increased the length of the competition and made each turn vital to the competitors and exciting for the audience. Accordingly, there is also increased emphasis on the presence of the audience with various references back to the crowd, who watch the laps of the race with great interest. The audience had come as part of the Pythian Games, one of the four great Panhellenic

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<sup>10</sup> Pind. *O.* 1. 69-104.

<sup>11</sup> *Cf.* Paus. 5.8.1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Paus. 6.20.10-16, 6.20.19-6.21.1.

<sup>13</sup> Ten charioteers: Soph. *El.* 700-9; starting positions and lots: *El.* 709-10; laps: *El.* 725-6 (Orestes' aide says that the crash took place during the last turn of the sixth lap into the seventh, revealing that there were at least seventh laps in the race).

festivals, of which racing was likely an exciting event. While the scene demonstrates to us the presence and engagement of the audience akin to Roman racing spectators at a day of races as part of a religious festival, the details of the audience reactions must also be read with an understanding of their added purpose in Sophocles' scene to illustrate the emotion and shock of the crash from a crowd who reportedly saw it firsthand.

These depictions of Greek chariot racing bear some resemblance to the early forms of racing at Rome, yet scholars have also identified the connection of Roman racing to that of the Etruscans. It must be recognized that much of Etruscan sport was likely influenced by the Greek equivalent as a result of geographic proximity and the movement of peoples between Greece and Italy.<sup>14</sup> Bronson, for instance, argues that the formal institution of Etruscan racing developed from the Greek model; still, he identifies differences between the two, suggesting that some aspects later seen in the Roman racing were unique to the Etruscan form.<sup>15</sup> Without any surviving Etruscan literary sources, and no Etruscan racing venues that can be analyzed and compared to later Roman designs, it is necessary to turn to Etruscan iconographic evidence, a great deal of which depicts scenes of chariot racing and that call to mind the later Roman form of the sport.

Much like the inclusion of chariot racing in Greek funeral games, the sport was closely associated with Etruscan funerary rites, and notably, many images of chariot racing come from that context, with frescoes found in various burial chambers. Two that merit mention here are frescoes in the Tomba delle Olimpiadi and the Tomba delle Bighe

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<sup>14</sup> See discussion in Thuillier 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Bronson 1965: esp. 94-95.

from the Necropolis of Monterozzi (Tarquinia, Italy). One of the oldest images of a horse team is a wall painting in the Tomba delle Olimpiadi, or the Tomb of the Olympics (530-520 BCE) that shows a race of four two-horse teams (*bigae*).<sup>16</sup> The competitors race across from the right side of the scene and the charioteer in the front turns to look behind him, perhaps concerned that another charioteer may pass him. Meanwhile, the second and third chariots are in close competition as the second charioteer leans forward in an attempt to gain speed and not be overtaken by the third. The fourth charioteer is no longer a threat in the race since he has crashed, with one of the horses on its back on the ground. There is a rounded post on the far left of the scene, possibly representing a turning post, although it could also mark the finish of the race.

A chariot-themed painting from another burial chamber was used for the name of the tomb, the Tomba delle Bighe, or the Tomb of the Two-Horse Chariot (c. 500-490 BCE).<sup>17</sup> On one wall there are multiple friezes that show scenes of various athletic competitions and games taking place, including wrestling, boxing, and chariot racing. In the chariot racing scene, two charioteers are underway, driving their horses from right to left, while a third has yet to attach the chariot to his horses and he and an aide work to complete preparations. The painting also attests to temporary wooden stands for spectators, as the competition field is lined with stands at the edge of each frieze. The spectators, both men and women, watch the chariot races intently, all facing the competition, some with hands raised in exclamation or about to applaud. Beneath the

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<sup>16</sup> For image see Thuillier 1985: 125 fig. 17.1.

<sup>17</sup> Pallottino 1952: 61-4; Thuillier 1985: 126-7, 622-5, fig. 66.

raised seats another group of people are gathered, likely the slaves of those seated above; while two figures seem distracted from the competition, two others are focused on the activity taking place before them, leaning in to watch the action.

Numerous elements in the racing scenes from these two tombs bear striking similarities to what is later seen in Roman racing. In both images the reins of the horses are wrapped around the waists of the charioteers, a technique later used by the Romans; in the scene in the Tomba delle Olimpiadi they are knotted behind the back of each charioteer, and in the Tomba delle Bighe they are looped around the charioteer's arms and then his waist. The wrapping of the reins around one's waist helped to fasten a driver in his chariot, although Roman drivers carried a knife to cut themselves loose should they crash and be taken down with their chariot and horses. It also freed up their hands to maneuver more and, if needed, apply their short whip or goad. Given the dangers of racing and high possibility of a crash, Roman charioteers wore a form of leather cap as protection for their heads and ears, an accessory seen in the fresco from the Tomba delle Olimpiadi, in which the drivers grip the reins in one hand and a goad in the other. In contrast, Greek charioteers wore no head protection, nor did they tie the reins around their waists, instead holding them tightly with both hands. The apparel of the charioteers in the frescoes also have more similarities to the Roman style than the Greek, with short tunics in contrast to the longer belted chitons worn by Greek charioteers.<sup>18</sup>

Although the emphasis on spectators does seem to have been a later development, it is not entirely of Etruscan origin. Indeed, Etruscan imagery includes spectators in the

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<sup>18</sup> Bronson (1965: 96-100) identifies this in early vase paintings as well.

scene, thereby giving the message that they were an integral part of the event and communicating that what is presented in the image was a spectator experience.<sup>19</sup> In the early Homeric account of a chariot race the audience was of little importance, yet, by the fourth century BCE, the audience had a notable enough presence at the races that Sophocles chose to include it for a pivotal scene in *Electra*. With that said, in the Greek style it was still an elite competition and not a spectacle for the spectator; it is likely that this elitism in part prevented the Greek system of racing from gaining the interest of the masses in the same way as the Roman system.

As Etruscan art was made by and for Etruscans, it is possible to identify details of Etruscan racing that the artist himself knew and understood would be recognized by the viewer. The apparel and accessories of the charioteers, as we have seen, were likely familiar, and subtle additions such as in the Tomba delle Olimpiadi fresco, in which the lead charioteer turns back, could indicate racing techniques; perhaps the charioteer was anticipating a surge of speed from a competitor behind him, or possibly also preparing to block an advance from his challenger. Although what such a small gesture meant in the image cannot be confirmed, it is reasonable to believe that an Etruscan viewer had a good understanding of what it represented. Moreover, the images included details that were interesting to the Etruscan audience, notably the scene of a chariot crash, also in the Tomba delle Olimpiadi fresco. The subject of a chariot crash, also known as a *naufragia*, or shipwreck, was popular in Roman circus imagery as well.<sup>20</sup> While it likely did not

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<sup>19</sup> There is also an artistic purpose for the presence of the spectators in the image as it draws the viewer in to watch the competition that is depicted alongside the spectators in the scene.

<sup>20</sup> Tuck 2014: 427 divides the depictions of races into two categories: portraits of a winning charioteer, horse, or team, and action scenes, of which teams making a turn are the most common. It was not only the

occur in every race, the possibility of a crash gave an air of real danger to the competition and increased the tension that was certainly exciting to the crowds. Consequently, it is not that surprising that both Etruscan and Roman images include depictions of crashes, which served to draw in the viewer to the scene and call to mind the thrill of watching the high-speed sport.

The iconography clearly demonstrates that there are many aspects of Etruscan chariot racing that are seen again in the later Roman form; however, there are also identifiable similarities between the Greek and Roman forms of racing. It is apparent that the procedures before a Greek chariot race resembled the Roman, with multiple chariots divided into their starting lineup according to the drawing of lots.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the scenes of racing in Etruscan tombs depict chariot teams of two or three horses and, although the *bigae* and *trigae* did appear on occasion in Roman racing, it was the *quadrigae*, the four-horse team, typical of Greek racing that became the norm in Rome. Influences from both Greek and Etruscan chariot racing can be identified in the Roman version and, given the possible influence of Greek sport on Etruscan forms, it is difficult to prove that Roman racing originated from only one model. Rather, we might consider the division of influences between Greek and Etruscan racing, for while similarities in the organization and structure of the race are apparent in the Greek and Roman formats, it

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excitement of the moment that made it a popular image, but also the angle allowed the composition to include the architectural detail and decoration of the circus. Bergmann (2008: 370-1) similarly notes that art depicting circus scenes attempts to depict the speed of the chariots, an aspect of the sport that was enjoyed by spectators and needed to be captured in circus imagery.

<sup>21</sup> It is unclear in the available evidence whether or not the drawing of lots was used in the Etruscan racing system.



seems that there were more Etruscan influences in the style and technique of racing ultimately adopted in the Roman version.

### 1. 3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMAN RACES

By Livy's account, the first horse races were introduced by Romulus soon after the founding of Rome. The races were presented as part of the Consualia, a religious festival to honour the god Consus, which grew to be held annually on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August and December.<sup>22</sup> Not only were races integral to a festival in the early history of Rome, they also acted as the setting for a pivotal story in the history of the Roman peoples, the Rape of the Sabines.<sup>23</sup> Peoples from regions around Rome, including the Sabines, were invited to the festival and Livy reports that, while the many visitors were distracted by the races, the Roman men carried off the Sabine women as their new wives.<sup>24</sup> Livy's account was meant to emphasize not the violence or force involved in the kidnapping of the Sabine women, but the humble origins of the Roman people and the honorable desire for the growth and continuation of Rome.<sup>25</sup> Aside from the focus of the story in Romulus' plot to establish families and populate his new territory, it suggests that the Sabines were genuinely interested in the racing spectacle being presented; evidently, they enjoyed watching the races at home and were engaged enough in this presentation of the sport so

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<sup>22</sup> See Scullard 1981: 163, 177-8, 204-5. Tertullian (*De Spect.* 5.7) notes that sacrifices were offered to Consus on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July and 20<sup>th</sup> of August on an underground altar in the Circus Maximus. See also Plut. *Vit. Rom.* 14.3.

<sup>23</sup> See Tert. *De Spect.* 5.5; Varro *Ling.* 6.20.

<sup>24</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 1.9.

<sup>25</sup> In the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid addresses the Rape of the Sabines as well, but emphasizes the sexual nature of the act (see 1.101-2, 131-2).

as to not notice the other events taking place. Moreover, it is possible that Romulus' entire plan anticipated a predisposition for the races by the Sabines, perhaps aware of their interest or judging it likely from his own people's love of them. Indeed, whether before or after the success of this deception, the Roman people began to take an interest in the sport and the Etruscan kings that followed developed the races further, refining the structure of the races and constructing venues for their presentation.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the continuation of Greek-style racing on mainland Greece into the second century CE, it was in no way as popular as the Roman-style racing that engaged the Roman masses so deeply.<sup>27</sup> In the Greek format, rich men paid to enter their own chariots in the race and, whether they chose to drive or hired a driver to do it, they were considered the winners, taking the prizes and all the prestige and glory that came with it. It was an elite sport and, as early descriptions indicate, the emphasis was not on the production of the competition as a spectacle for audiences; rather, it was an opportunity for those wealthy enough to own horses to demonstrate their status and superiority to the common people and to each other. Although it seems that the earliest forms of Roman racing followed this style, by the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE the state began to pay horse-breeders to provide horses for the races instead of relying on self-financed individuals, each competing with their own horses. It is likely that by this time, as the competition became more common and popular, there was a shortage of rich individuals both willing

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<sup>26</sup> For more discussion regarding the development of Roman circuses, see 'Development of Circus Maximus' section in this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> Garland 2006: 72-3.

and able to enter their horses in competition.<sup>28</sup> Slowly, aristocrats stopped performing as charioteers and the sport's position as a prestigious, elite activity declined.<sup>29</sup> It was at this time that the chariot races transitioned to more of a professional sport and, while honour and glory remained connected to a racing victory, it was the financial prizes that took precedence. Drawn from the lower classes, charioteers trained for the races as a career and became the focus of attention for circus goers.<sup>30</sup> For many spectators these individuals seem to have been more engaging than past charioteers of elite status; from humble beginnings they became sport stars and broadened the reach and relatability of the races.

Although the audience took on a vital role in the circus, spectacles and games were primarily intended to gain the favour of the gods as part of religious festivals to honour them and provide them with entertainment. The festivals were an official part of the Roman religious calendar staged on fixed days of the year with the games, or *ludi*, held in conjunction with or as a major feature of the festivals, often as multi-day events themselves. During the Republican period, gladiatorial combats remained as private productions and were not connected to the public festivals and *ludi publici*, public games. According to Cicero, the *ludi publici* were divided between performances at the theatre (*ludi scaenici*) and at the circus (*ludi circenses*).<sup>31</sup> There are various explanations for the

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<sup>28</sup> Although elite men could have chosen to stop competing if it became too expensive or time-consuming, it is also possible that their ability to participate was hindered by larger governing or political forces that wanted elite men to seek honour and glory through political or military avenues and to put their efforts to use in more civic duties.

<sup>29</sup> See Rawson 1981: 5.

<sup>30</sup> For further discussion of charioteers, see Chapter 3: 'Spectators and Fans'.

<sup>31</sup> Cic. *Leg.* 2.38.

importance of chariot races in the games. In both Greece and Rome horses belonged to the chthonic realm and, in myth, the horse was born out of the earth, thereby associating horses with the earth and even agriculture and the harvest.<sup>32</sup> These close ties offered symbolic connections at the races as well, in which the success of the horse in a race indicated success in the harvest.<sup>33</sup> To be sure, there is correlation between the cyclical nature of the racing track and the agricultural cycle, an association emphasized further in the calendar of festivals.<sup>34</sup> As mentioned above, the Consualia honoured Consus, the god of the stored harvest, in August and again in December, corresponding both to the end of harvest season and autumn planting. Consus remained closely associated to chariot racing at Rome with an underground altar positioned near one of the turning posts of the Circus Maximus.<sup>35</sup> The Equirria, held in honour of Mars, took place on February 27<sup>th</sup>, immediately prior to the start of the month of Mars, with another festival day in the middle of the month on March 14<sup>th</sup>.<sup>36</sup> Both dates were near the beginning of the new year and at the start of both the agricultural and campaigning seasons. The association of horses with the Roman military is readily apparent and the display of great Roman virtues of strength and honour, and the importance of victory in competition were likely not lost on the crowd. Moreover, as will be discussed in an upcoming chapter, the chariot races in

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<sup>32</sup> For discussion, see Harmon 1988. *Cf.* Burkert 1977: 218-219.

<sup>33</sup> As Harmon (1988: 248) notes, “the horse seems to incorporate the very power and vitality of the earth itself, so that victory in the horse race somehow assures victory – or success and survival – for mankind in a bountiful harvest”.

<sup>34</sup> See also Harmon 1988: 246-8.

<sup>35</sup> See n. 22. The god may have also had some associations to death and the early forms of the sport as part of funerary games (see Rawson 1981: 1, n. 4).

<sup>36</sup> See Scullard 1981: 82, 89.

the circus were preceded by a grand procession known as the *pompa circensis*, which contained many nods to Roman military and the strength of Rome.

As interest in chariot racing grew, more *ludi* were added to the festival calendar with at least one day of each set aside for chariot racing. The chief Roman festival was the *ludi Romani* held in honour of Jupiter.<sup>37</sup> By Livy's account, these *ludi* were established by Tarquinius Priscus after he conquered the Latin town Apiolae, while both Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Cicero report that they were founded after a victory over the Latins in the early Republic ca. 496 BCE.<sup>38</sup> The *ludi Romani* featured theatrical shows and chariot races, over time growing to fill two weeks with events from the 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> of September. More *ludi* were added, including the *ludi Plebeii*, established at the beginning of the Second Punic War in 216 BCE in honour of Jupiter and which ran from the 4<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> of November with the last three days set aside for chariot races.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in 208 BCE, the *ludi Apollinares* were introduced to celebrate the god Apollo from the 6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> of July, with the last two days set aside for chariot racing.<sup>40</sup> The races seem to have often been the final event at games as within the next few decades the *ludi Megalenses*, *ludi Cereales*, and *ludi Florales* all set aside the last day in the week of games for chariot racing.<sup>41</sup> The increased presence of chariot racing at events had much to do with the rapid growth of Rome and a significant influx of different peoples into

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<sup>37</sup> See Scullard 1981: 183-6.

<sup>38</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 1.35.9; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.71; Cic. *Div.* 1.26 (55).

<sup>39</sup> See Scullard 1981: 40, 196-7.

<sup>40</sup> See Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 26.23.3; Scullard 1981: 159-60.

<sup>41</sup> The *ludi Megalenses* (204 BCE) was presented in honour of the goddess Cybele from April 4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>. The *ludi Cereales* (202 BCE) for the goddess Ceres, came immediately after from April 12<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, followed by the *ludi Florales* (173 BCE) from April 27<sup>th</sup>-May 3<sup>rd</sup> to celebrate the goddess Flora. See Scullard 1981: 40, 97-100 (*Megalenses*), 101-3 (*Cereales*), 110-111 (*Florales*).

Rome in the second century BCE. In need of entertainments to occupy the increasing population, chariot racing was practiced in many other places and thus likely was seen as an entertainment that would be recognizable to, and likely already popular with, the new population and that could engage the interest of the Romans as well.

Roman generals had often put on *ludi votivi*, or votive games, at their own expense after their military successes to pay tribute to the gods who aided in their victory, which led the way for magistrates to take up the games themselves. While religion was still integral to the production of *ludi*, throughout the Republic Roman leaders began to recognize the popular interest in the spectacles and were increasingly motivated to institute more festivals to commemorate their own deeds and be celebrated by the public for them. It was a useful tactic for those in the public eye to show themselves engaging in and enjoying that which the public loved, thereby connecting with the common people, even if not appearing to be one of them. Furthermore, as the spectacles were offered free to the public, the politicians and other ambitious individuals who paid for the games were acclaimed for their generosity and goodwill. As Veyne describes, such euergetism became a useful device in the advancement of one's political career that earned the individual recognition and thanks from the public and that could prove advantageous in an election.<sup>42</sup> This seems to have been particularly true in the late Republic at which time there was significant political competition that relied heavily on popular support, with the production of spectacles providing a worthwhile opportunity for publicity and

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<sup>42</sup> Veyne 1990: esp. 212-4.

propaganda.<sup>43</sup> The production of games was mutually beneficial for the citizens of the city, who enjoyed the free entertainments, as well as the magistrate who organized the events and was honoured for his gift to the people.

In 81 BCE Sulla established the *ludi Victoriae* which, although tenuously associated with the goddess of Victory, primarily celebrated his victory over the Italians at the Colline Gate the previous year.<sup>44</sup> The *ludi* included multiple events and concluded with the usual day of races on the final day, the full affair eventually being extended to run from October 26<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>. Sulla clearly intended for the games to promote his restoration of the *res publica Romana* and the successes of the Roman people together; however, his leadership was central to these achievements and, as such, the games were fundamentally tied to his person and became identified as the *ludi Victoriae Sullae* when presented annually after his death. Julius Caesar followed suit by creating the *ludi Victoriae Caesaris* from the 20<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> of July as a celebration of his conquests, with the last four of the eleven days dedicated to races.<sup>45</sup> Like those established by Sulla, Caesar ensured that his games had clear ties to religion, by combining his games with the festival in honour of Venus Genetrix, the mythical divine matriarch of the Julian family. After Caesar's death, Octavian continued the games as an annual event to honour his adoptive father and began to recognize the value that such festivals had in unifying the Roman people. As Augustus, he instituted more *ludi* among his reforms, soon subsuming the production of all spectacles and public entertainments under imperial control. While

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<sup>43</sup> Wiedemann (1992: 7) notes that by this time the provision of games was almost expected of those intending to run for the consulship

<sup>44</sup> See Velleius 2.27.6; Scullard 1981: 196.

<sup>45</sup> See Dio Cass. 45.6.4; Scullard 1981: 167.

thereafter the emperor monopolized the right to put on games, it was necessary to defer the organization to others who would present them in the name of the emperor, as the public's love for the races and demand for spectacles required the institution of more festivals and more days of *ludi* entertainments. The events had become more than just entertainments on fixed days of the religious calendar and were now professionally produced spectacles that employed the services of many people to staff the venue, provide horses and equipment, and to compete for the pleasure of the circus crowds.

#### **1. 4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS**

The centre of racing entertainments at Rome was the Circus Maximus, the largest of the circuses built in the city. Despite the limited archaeological remains, with only a portion of the semicircular end still visible, evidence for the design of the venue can be gathered from descriptions in ancient sources as well as from the depiction of the Circus on coins and other media.<sup>46</sup> One of the best sources for the overall shape and design of the Circus Maximus is the *Forma Urbis Romae*, the Marble Plan of Rome that was created under the emperor Septimius Severus c. 203-11 CE and mounted in the Temple of Peace.

However, as this representation comes to us from the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, it depicts the Circus after centuries of alterations, additions, and reconstructions. It is evident that the Circus Maximus went through a lengthy evolution, and written sources record numerous occasions of construction and reconstruction of the Circus Maximus; Livy's *Ab Urba Condita* in particular refers to many of the developments of the Circus Maximus from its

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<sup>46</sup> For instance, see Bergmann 2008.



establishment through to the end of the Republic. While it is unnecessary to reiterate many of the facts of the venue's construction and changes here, I will offer a brief survey of the development of the Circus Maximus and consider the subject as it relates to the expansion and popularity of the races.<sup>47</sup> It is apparent that the design of the Circus Maximus changed over time as features were added or altered and that many of the changes were in response to shifts in the structure and production of the races and to the increasing interest in the races.

As has been noted in a previous section, Livy's account of the history of Rome claims that Romulus and Tarquinius Priscus organized horseracing in the valley between the Palatine and Aventine hills.<sup>48</sup> Livy reports that after a war with the Latins, Tarquinius Priscus (traditional dates 616-578 BCE) returned with a great amount of war booty that he used to produce large and elaborate games and that "it was then that the ground was first marked out for the circus now called Maximus".<sup>49</sup> The scene Livy depicts is a time of growth in power and stature for Rome; the concern for public entertainments and the decision to establish an official space for spectacle was an aspect of this growth. Moreover, at any period the interest in the entertainment of the population was surely thought to aid in the popularity of the leadership. Livy makes it clear that there was no permanent structure yet built, but rather a space was demarcated for the express use of public entertainments. In this first reference to the Circus, the only feature that Livy

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<sup>47</sup> For the development of the Circus Maximus, see for instance, Humphrey 1984 and 1986: 56-131. The venue will be considered further in Chapter 2 with specific consideration for the aspects that had a more direct role in the spectator's experience, including entryways, stairways, and seating.

<sup>48</sup> See 'Origins of the Races' in this chapter.

<sup>49</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 1.35.7-8.

mentions is the seating space where “places were divided amongst the Fathers and the knights where they might each make seats for themselves”.<sup>50</sup> The attribution of the introduction of dedicated elite seating to Tarquinius Priscus is problematic as such seating is attested to have been established much later than the Regal Period; indeed, Humphrey finds Livy’s claim to be anachronistic and suggests that he misreported the early history of the Circus in attempt to expand his description.<sup>51</sup> Livy also credits the construction of seating to Tarquinius Superbus (traditional dates 534-510 BCE), two generations later.<sup>52</sup> Although perhaps Livy made an error in his account, as he had already asserted the seats were constructed by Tarquinius Priscus, or he was unclear to whom to ascribe the work, it is possible that Livy meant to indicate two periods of seating construction. It may be that the earlier form of seating was comprised of more informal seating designations on a hillside, while the later construction included more permanent seating structures. Given the early history of the races themselves, it appears that the sport had been active in Italy for some time and therefore it is probable that seating was constructed around this period to accommodate the interested spectators at the competitions, despite it being unclear as to who instigated the project.

According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Tarquinius Superbus also sought to erect covered porticos around the performance space, from the foundations that his grandfather had only begun.<sup>53</sup> If the account is to be believed, Tarquinius may have

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<sup>50</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 1.35.8. See also Dion. Hal. 3.68.1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations come from the Loeb Classical Library series.

<sup>51</sup> Humphrey 1986: 65.

<sup>52</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 1.56.1-2. See also Dion. Hal. 4.44.1; *De. Vir. Ill.* 8.3.

<sup>53</sup> Dion. Hal. 4.44.1.

recognized the potential of an entertainment venue like the circus not only to distract the public but also to gain support for himself. Yet by Dionysius' description, it does not seem as though it was the support of the plebeians that Tarquinius was after, since he had them labour on the Circus and other projects and, according to Dionysius, "he believed that monarchs are exposed to the greatest danger when the worst and the most needy of the citizens live in idleness".<sup>54</sup> There is no indication as to whether the lower classes were provided seating at the circus in this building project or if it remained a privilege of the elite. While it is reasonable to believe that the Roman public was growing more interested in the sport, despite its elite origins, it is unlikely that Tarquinius Superbus put much emphasis on expanding the seating for their benefit. The circus had been recognized for its political potential; however, it seems that Tarquinius Superbus was concerned about the elite audience members and their enjoyment.

According to Livy, in 329 BCE permanent starting gates were constructed at the Circus, thereby formalizing a start point for the races.<sup>55</sup> Starting gates were by no means a unique feature, having been seen in early Greek hippodromes as well; however, their construction in the Roman venue at this time demonstrates a developing attentiveness to the formalities of the race. If the races were indeed becoming more common, the importance of a regularized system likely increased, as both spectators and participants cared about how the races were run. Similarly, those in charge deemed it important

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<sup>54</sup> Dion. Hal. 4.44.1.

<sup>55</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 8.20.2. See also *Varro Ling.* 5.153.

enough to address this by adding starting gates to the Circus and ensuring an equitable race.

The start of the second century BCE brought with it numerous construction projects and changes at the Circus, which Humphrey convincingly attributes to the conclusion of a long period of war and the subsequent increase in games.<sup>56</sup> Magistrates and other elite individuals turned their attention to projects that could offer them publicity and political advancement, and the public's interest in the races made the Circus an ideal area in which not only to invest time and money but also to gain public appreciation by improving the venue for quality competition and spectatorship. One such project involved the division of seating at the Circus when in c. 194 BCE, the seats at the Circus were demarcated for the senators, separate from the rest of the audience.<sup>57</sup> The assignment of seats for the use of one group relies on the expectation that this group would attend regularly enough and in large enough numbers both to desire it and to justify the demarcation of the stands. Consequently, this new seating division at the Circus demonstrates the interest of the upper classes in the sport of racing, as they sought to define a section of seats solely for their use. Furthermore, the identification of these seats as specifically for the elites indicates not only that many people of the lower classes attended the races and were provided seating at this time, but also that there had not yet been a division of classes in the stands, as Livy states that "up to that time the seats from which they watched the games were taken indiscriminately".<sup>58</sup> The prioritization of elite

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<sup>56</sup> Humphrey 1986: 69.

<sup>57</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 34.44.5.

<sup>58</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 34.44.5.

seating was not unique to the circus as the front sections of other entertainment venues were designated for the upper classes; however, this status-based system of seating would not define the seating of the Roman circus, which instead for the most part allowed spectators to sit wherever they chose.<sup>59</sup>

Other projects at the Circus in this period include the efforts of the censors Q. Fulvius Flaccus and A. Postumius Albinus, who had the starting gates rebuilt in 174 BCE and erected seven large wooden eggs on the *euripus* as counters to mark the completion of each lap.<sup>60</sup> The fragmentary condition of Livy's text in this section makes it difficult to ascertain if any more changes were made to the venue at this time, although it is possible that there were other modifications and improvements. As there do not appear to have been lap counters prior to this addition it seems that the modifications to the venue were responding to the newer needs of the growing sport. It demonstrates the desire of Roman officials to improve the venue and further institutionalize the racing structure that ensured more consistency in the running of the races and a better viewing experience for spectators, who could follow the progress of the race through each lap.

Despite these changes to the Circus, the venue remained fairly rudimentary until the Late Republic. Much of the overall design was established at this time, with two long sides meeting in a semicircular end surrounding the elongated oval track. Suetonius reports that in 46 BCE Julius Caesar lengthened the track and built a ditch around it.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> For more on seating at the Circus, see Chapter 2.

<sup>60</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 41.27.6. Although the central barrier is more commonly referred to as the *spina*, a persuasive argument has been made by Humphrey (1986: 175-6) that the more accurate term to use is the *euripus*. As a result, I will be using the term *euripus* to refer to the central barrier of the circus.

<sup>61</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 39.2. See also Dion. Hal. 3.68.1-4; Plin. *NH.* 8.21, 36.102.

The lengthening of the track could indicate that there had been developments in the races, such as the alteration or improvement of chariot designs or an adjustment to the duration of each lap, that led to the further standardization of the racing track. The growing interest in the races could also account for the extension in the length of the track, thereby increasing the duration of the races overall and prolonging the excitement and tension developed in each race as well as in advance of each turn in a lap. On a more functional level, the increased track length meant an increase in seating capacity, which was quite possibly the intent of the expansion in the first place.<sup>62</sup> The mention of projects at the Circus in the sources indicate a relatively steady evolution of the venue that grew in conjunction with the interest in the sport and the corresponding audience. The new ditch was used to divide the performance area in the Circus and the spectator stands. Prior to the inauguration of the Flavian Amphitheatre in 80 CE, the Circus was one of the primary venues for animal shows and therefore the addition of such a barrier was necessary for the safety of the spectators. It is unlikely, however, that animal shows only began to be presented after the division was made and instead it is probable that it was the increased number of spectators in attendance, and possibly after some incidents of danger or accidents, that resulted in the need for a dividing feature that ensured the safety of spectators in the stands.

More lap counters were added to the venue when in 33 BCE Augustus' general Agrippa added seven bronze dolphins to the already established wooden eggs, as well as

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<sup>62</sup> Population growth in the late Roman Republic can also account for the increased seating capacity of the Circus, as there were more people in Rome intending to attend the races.

another set of wooden eggs near the starting gates.<sup>63</sup> It seems that this new set of counters were intended for the use of those involved in the race in order to better indicate each lap for the charioteers, as Cassius Dio reports that they had apparently been making mistakes prior to their addition.<sup>64</sup> This change suggests that there was greater concern for the awareness of charioteers and their ability to follow the race. Similar to the introduction of the first lap counters in the early second century BCE, it is evident that there was greater emphasis on the structure of the races and the quality of the competition. In particular, by installing additional lap counters on the *euripus*, the needs of charioteers were addressed, thereby making certain that they could compete to the best of their abilities. Insofar as the competitors had a better understanding of where they were in a race with the lap counters, it was also possible for them to employ techniques and maneuvers that relied on such knowledge, including overtaking competitors in the middle of the race or a surge of speed in the last lap.

Although a fire in 31 BCE destroyed much of the Circus, Augustus soon rebuilt all that was lost and made additions, including the construction of the imperial box or *pulvinar*. While in the pre-Augustan period the *pulvinar* was little more than a raised wooden platform where the statues of the gods could be placed as if to observe the games, Augustus expanded its purpose to serve as a seating box for the imperial family.<sup>65</sup> Augustus includes his construction of the *pulvinar* among his accomplishments listed in the *Res Gestae*, mentioning the seating box in a section of his text that principally reports

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<sup>63</sup> Dio Cass. 49.43.2.

<sup>64</sup> Dio Cass. 49.43.2.

<sup>65</sup> See Rodriguez 2005; Van Den Berg 2008.

temples that he built.<sup>66</sup> While he also notes his construction of porticos at the Circus Flaminius in this list, it is likely that Augustus also wanted to emphasize the religious importance of the *pulvinar* and his dutiful concern to improve the seat of the gods at the circus. There certainly was some religious significance to his work on the *pulvinar*, which resulted in Augustus and his family appearing, in a way, to sit among the gods. From a viewing perspective, the *pulvinar* was located amid the stands directly across from the finish line, which afforded the emperor a perfect view of the exciting conclusion of each race and, more importantly ensured that he could be seen taking in the popular sport. The changes made by Augustus suggest that he understood the positive response his involvement with the races as well as his close affiliation with the gods would get, as he and the cult images were seated in close proximity to one another in a space meant to be seen by the audience and intended for their adoration.

In his third book recounting the history of Rome, Dionysius of Halicarnassus gives details of the appearance of the Circus Maximus during the Augustan period and, after describing the size of the venue, notes that:

“on the outside of the Circus there is another portico of one story which has shops in it and habitations over them. In this portico there are entrances and ascents for the spectators at every shop, so that the countless thousands of people may enter and depart without inconvenience”.<sup>67</sup>

The manner in which Dionysius describes the entryways of the Circus suggests both that there was a large number of people visiting the circus at this period and that there was a

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<sup>66</sup> Aug. *Res Gest.* 19.2.

<sup>67</sup> Dion. Hal. 3.68.4.



concern for their ingress and egress in the design of the venue.<sup>68</sup> Evidently, spectatorship had increased and needed to be accounted for in the design of the structure in order to ensure its proper function as a public venue. The shops mentioned by Dionysius as located around the perimeter arcade of the Circus indicate the multifunctional opportunities of the venue; the high number of visitors coming to the venue to watch the races presented merchants with an built-in customer base, thereby making it an opportune location to set up business. Tacitus refers to the shops at the Circus in connection to the Great Fire of 64 CE, identifying the Circus as the starting point for the blaze and remarking that “amid the shops containing flammable wares, the conflagration both broke out and instantly became so fierce and so rapid from the wind that it seized in its grasp the entire length of the circus”.<sup>69</sup> Although it is probable that Tacitus intended to recount the extent of the fire and the great effects it had on many people and businesses, the inclusion of this information also reiterates how important the Circus was as a venue, both for having housed so many businesses and for the loss it represented to Rome.

The Great Fire resulted in significant damage to the Circus; however, as the emperor Nero was well known to have been a fan of the races, the reconstruction likely did not take long to get underway, and he was able to use it for a triumphal procession after his return from Greece in 68 CE.<sup>70</sup> There is also evidence that Nero used this as an opportunity to make modifications to the venue, including filling in the ditch that divided the performance space from the stands.<sup>71</sup> It is possible that animal shows were presented

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<sup>68</sup> For further discussion of spectator arrivals and movement through the venue, see Chapter 2.

<sup>69</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.38.

<sup>70</sup> See Suet. *Nero* 25; Dio Cass. 62.20.4, 62.21.1.

<sup>71</sup> See Plin. *NH.* 8.21; Tac. *Ann.* 15.32.

less regularly at the Circus or that new accommodations were made to ensure the safety of the spectators, either of which could explain Nero's decision to remove the dividing ditch. Perhaps more likely the choice was made to permit the construction of additional seats, as Tacitus reports another attempt to delineate seats specifically for the use of Roman *equites*, possibly the reinstatement of earlier seating regulations.<sup>72</sup> By removing the *euripus* from in front of the stands, it was possible for Nero to add a section of seats in its place, thereby increasing the seating capacity and affording Roman elites seats that could be considered appropriate to their station.

During the reign of Domitian another fire destroyed much of the Circus, which suggests that a majority of the construction done under Nero was of wood. In any event, repairs began quickly and the Circus was fully rebuilt by 103 CE, with various sources crediting Trajan for the new circus structure.<sup>73</sup> Suetonius, however, asserts that the project was undertaken by Domitian and Ciancio Rosetto points to masonry techniques and materials used on the Circus as evidence for her assertion that much of the work was done under Domitian.<sup>74</sup> It is probable that, while Domitian was involved in the early stages of reconstruction, the building project was completed by Trajan, who in turn received most of the credit for the work. Trajan appears to have willingly accepted recognition for his involvement, even issuing a *sestertius* bearing the image of the Circus Maximus and thereby directly himself to the new grand form of the venue.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.32. The seating organization of the Circus will be discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>73</sup> See Dio Cass. 68.7.2; Pausanias 5.12.6; Plin. *Pan.* 51.2-5. See also *CIL* VI. 955. For a more in-depth discussion of the Circus at the time of Trajan, see Humphrey 1986: 102-6.

<sup>74</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 5. Ciancio Rosetto 2008: 24, n. 37.

<sup>75</sup> See Coleman 2000: 213, fig. 9.3. Amid his praises for the emperor Cassius Dio (68.7.2) emphasizes Trajan's generosity and modesty reporting that "after enlarging and embellishing the Circus, which had

After the major construction completed by Trajan, the key features of the venue were fully established, with high arches, columns, walkways, and podium walls, and the wooden seating replaced with concrete and brick. While Pliny the Elder estimates the capacity of the Circus at 250,000 spectators, an impressive although impractical number for the available space in the seating rows, Dionysius of Halicarnassus suggests a more manageable figure of 150,000 spectators, a number which agrees with modern estimates as well.<sup>76</sup> Even with this lower estimate, the Circus Maximus was significantly larger than the other entertainment venues at Rome, with space for approximately three times as many spectators as the Flavian Amphitheatre.<sup>77</sup> The Circus had evolved from an open field with temporary wooden seating for spectators to a permanent, monumental stone structure with extensive stands to accommodate the expansive number of visitors to the venue. Although it seems that, by the Trajanic period, the Circus had taken on its canonical form, this is not to say that building projects at the Circus Maximus concluded. It was all but impossible for the emperor not to recognize the great popularity of the races and to understand that the people would appreciate the venue being kept up to date and their emperor engaging with their entertainments. As such, as large audiences continued

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crumbled away in places, he merely inscribed on it a statement that he had made it adequate for the Roman people”.

<sup>76</sup> Plin. *NH*. 36.102; Dion. Hal. 3.68.3. Humphrey 1986: 126 suggests that Pliny the Elder’s claim of 250,000 spectators likely included the possible seating available to spectators who sat outside the venue on the slopes of the Palatine and Aventine hills. There have been numerous estimates for the capacity of the Circus Maximus. See Forichon (2012: 170) for a summary of both ancient and modern estimates. For calculations of the capacity of various circuses, including the Circus Maximus, see Fauquet 2002: 289-292. Fauquet (2002: 291, table 58) estimates the Circus Maximus to have had a capacity of approximately 130,000 spectators, which fits closely to the figure of 150,000 offered by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (3.68.3). Humphrey (1986: 126) similarly posits a capacity of a little under 150,000.

<sup>77</sup> See Rose 2005: 118.

to visit the Circus, numerous emperors continued to add to and adapt the structure in order to make their mark on the popular venue.

## 1. 5. OTHER RACING VENUES

### A) AT ROME

While the Circus Maximus was the main venue for chariot racing at Rome, it was not the only circus, as from the Republic through the later Empire various other circuses were built in the city.<sup>78</sup> The central location and large seating capacity of the Circus Maximus made another venue with the same purpose unnecessary and therefore not all of these venues served as new public spaces for racing. Instead, some were used as private tracks to entertain the emperor and others who also enjoyed the sport. Despite hosting smaller audiences, these circuses are demonstrative of the popular interest in the races; the new circuses, even if for more private use, bore the names of the Roman leaders who constructed them, thereby ensuring that they be remembered in association with the venues and the favoured public pastime.

The second oldest circus to be established in Rome was the Circus Flaminius, built in the south end of the Campus Martius in 220 BCE by Gaius Flaminius.<sup>79</sup> As was noted in the previous section, while the Circus Maximus was not yet a monumental stone

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<sup>78</sup> While I will only address those circuses that were built within Rome, there were other circuses built outside the city, including the Arval Circus and the circus at Bovillae (see Humphrey 1986: 561-567).

<sup>79</sup> Livy (*Per.* 20) identifies him as a censor (*'C. Flaminius censor viam Flaminiam muniit et circum Flaminium exstruxit'*), while Festus (Paulus 79L) suggests that he was consul (*'Flaminius circus et Flaminia via a Flaminio consule dicta sunt, qui ab Hannibale interfectus est ad lacum Thrasimennum'*). For further discussion of the Circus Flaminius, see esp. Wiseman 1974, 1976. See also Humphrey 1986: 540-5.

structure, by this period the venue did have permanent features including starting gates and some seating. In contrast, Wiseman demonstrates that there was no permanent structure or seating ever built at the Circus Flaminius and it instead consisted of an open space that was sectioned off in a manner that could be used as a track.<sup>80</sup> Although sources suggest that games did take place at the Circus Flaminius, the *Ludi Taurii* by Varro's account, or the *Ludi Plebeii* according to Valerius Maximus, it is apparent that the space and the facilities available were not solely designed for the regular presentation of chariot races.<sup>81</sup> Livy describes a military presentation in the Circus Flaminius and Cassius Dio recalls Augustus pronouncing a funeral oration for Drusus there as well.<sup>82</sup> There is also evidence of banking and markets in the space identified as the Circus Flaminius, as well as various other forms of public assemblies and meetings.<sup>83</sup> The absence of any permanent seating in particular meant that the circus was not defined for the purpose of spectacle presentations or other public events that anticipated a large audience to be seated. Therefore, it is probable that the Circus Flaminius was developed as a multi-purpose venue in which races occasionally took place.

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<sup>80</sup> Wiseman 1974: 3-4; 1976: 44.

<sup>81</sup> Varro *Ling.* 5.154 ('*Item simili de causa Circus Flaminius dicitur, qui circum aedificatus est Flaminium Campum, et quod ibi quoque Ludis Tauriis equi circum metas currunt*'). Val. Max. 1.7.4 ('*cum plebeiis quidam ludis pater familias per circum Flaminium, prius quam pompa induceretur, servum suum verberibus mulcatum sub furca ad supplicium egisset, <T.> Latin<i>o homini ex plebe Iuppiter in quiete praecepit ut consulibus diceret sibi praesultorem ludis circensibus proximis non placuisse: quae res nisi attenta ludorum instauratione expiata esset, secuturum non mediocre urbis periculum*').

<sup>82</sup> Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 39.5.17; Dio Cass. 55.2.2.

<sup>83</sup> An inscription from Rome (*CIL* VI. 9713 = *ILS* 7511 mentions a money broker or moneychanger of the Circus Flaminius ('*[nu]mmulario de Circo Flaminio*') and Martial (12.74.2) refers to cups from the Circus Flaminius ('*de circo pocula Flaminio*'). For references to public assemblies at the Circus Flaminius, see Liv. *Ab Urb. Cond.* 27.21.1; Plut. *Marc.* 27; Cic. *Att.* 1.14.1, *Sest.* 14 (33).

The next circus to be built was the Circus of Gaius and Nero (Circus Gai et Neronis), begun by the emperor Caligula on the Ager Vaticanus, hence the venue's other name, the Circus Vaticanus.<sup>84</sup> Caligula's love of chariot racing is well known and thus it is not surprising that he chose to construct a new venue under his name in which he could practice his skills as a charioteer.<sup>85</sup> While it may have begun as a private circus for his personal entertainment, the emperor likely intended to make the circus public and host races at his pleasure, as he mimicked the grand decoration of the Circus Maximus in his design and installed an Egyptian obelisk in the venue.<sup>86</sup> Caligula was assassinated before the circus was completed and his successor Claudius completed the construction. When completed the arena of the circus was only slightly smaller than that of the Circus Maximus; the similarity was likely a deliberate choice that began with Caligula's original designs.<sup>87</sup> Suetonius reports that Claudius often gave games in the Vatican Circus, with beast hunts between every five races to divide the entertainment.<sup>88</sup> Humphrey rightly theorizes that, given the implied audience at these games and the wild animals that were part of the entertainment, it is likely the venue included a full perimeter wall and possibly seating tiers.<sup>89</sup> Like Caligula, Nero was a fan of the races and enjoyed the use of the circus for his personal entertainment.<sup>90</sup> After some time of practicing privately in the space, Nero made his circus more public, performing for larger groups and putting on

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<sup>84</sup> Plin. *NH.* 16.201 (Circus Vaticanus), 36.74 (Circus Gai et Neronis). For further discussion, see Humphrey 1986: 545-552.

<sup>85</sup> E.g., Dio Cass. 59.14.5-7; Suet. *Calig.* 54.1, 55.2-3, 30.2.

<sup>86</sup> See Plin. *NH.* 36.70, 74; 16.201-2.

<sup>87</sup> See Humphrey 1986: 551-2.

<sup>88</sup> Suet. *Claud.* 21.2.

<sup>89</sup> Humphrey 1986: 550.

<sup>90</sup> E.g., Suet. *Nero* 22.2, 24.2; Tac. *Ann.* 14.14.

spectacles.<sup>91</sup> It is also very probable that the Neronia, the games instituted by Nero in 60 CE, included races at the Circus of Gaius and Nero where the emperor could show off the great racing venue that he had a hand in constructing.<sup>92</sup> After Christians were convicted of arson in the Great Fire of 64 CE, Tacitus reports that Nero made a show of their executions in his circus, while he dressed as a charioteer and socialized with the people, occasionally driving himself.<sup>93</sup> Despite opening the venue for more public entertainments, the Circus of Gaius and Nero was not in use for long however, as the emperor Vespasian repurposed the space for a park, likely amid his attempts to rid all signs of Nero's opulence and extravagant rule.

For some time, no new circuses were built in Rome, likely due to the prominence of the Circus Maximus, which emperors chose to modify and improve as their contribution to the popular interest rather than constructing an entirely new venue. It was not until the early third century CE when the Circus Varianus was begun on the eastern edge of the city, probably under the emperor Caracalla, and completed by Elagabalus, both of whom were reportedly interested in the races.<sup>94</sup> This new circus was part of a palace complex called the Sessorium, and served as a space where Elagabalus, another great fan of the races, practiced his skills as a charioteer.<sup>95</sup> Akin to the designs of the Circus of Gaius and Nero, the dimensions of the Circus Varianus' arena level are

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<sup>91</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.14.

<sup>92</sup> See Suet. *Nero* 12; Tac. *Ann.* 14.20; Dio Cass. 61.21

<sup>93</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.44.

<sup>94</sup> Interest in the races: Herodian 3.10.3-4, 4.7.2, 4.11.9, 4.12.7; SHA. *Elag.* 6.3-4, 23.1. Construction by Elagabalus: Herodian 5.6.6. For discussion on the Circus Varianus, see Humphrey 1986: 552-7.

<sup>95</sup> E.g., Herodian 5.6.10; SHA. *Elag.* 14.5. See also SHA. *Elag.* 27-28. Elagabalus raced under his family name of Varius, which gave the circus the name Varianus.

strikingly similar to the Circus Maximus and were likely intended to match the appearance of the Great Circus.<sup>96</sup> This circus was only in use for approximately fifty years as, out of concern for possible invasion, the emperor Aurelian built a defensive wall around the city which went through the Circus Varianus. Prior to that however the circus served both as a private track for the emperors to indulge their love of the races and as the setting for public events, likely including Elagabalus' own circus games that celebrated his cult of the Sun.<sup>97</sup>

The last notable circus constructed at Rome was the Circus of Maxentius, constructed on the Via Appia during the reign of Maxentius (306-12).<sup>98</sup> The venue is only mentioned in one source, by the Chronographer of 354, in which it is referred to as the circus *ad catecumbas* ('opposite the catacombs of St. Sebastiano').<sup>99</sup> Although the lack of written records limit what is known about the Circus of Maxentius, the remains of the venue itself offers insights, as it the best preserved of the circuses at Rome. Excavations have estimated a seating capacity of no more than 10,000 spectators, far below the Circus Maximus, although the dimensions of the entire venue were not drastically smaller.<sup>100</sup> The vast difference in capacity suggests that the events at the Circus of Maxentius were not as large as those at the Circus Maximus and thus not as many spectators were expected. It is probable then that the Circus of Maxentius served a purpose similar to that of other circuses in Rome that allowed the emperor to invite

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<sup>96</sup> Humphrey 1986: 553. The circus was also decorated with an obelisk.

<sup>97</sup> Herodian 5.6.5-9. See also Barnes 1972: 60-61.

<sup>98</sup> For discussion of the Circus of Maxentius, see Humphrey 1986: 582-602.

<sup>99</sup> Chronog.a.354 (*Chron. Min.*p.148).

<sup>100</sup> Humphrey 1986: 586, 591-2. See also 'Seating' in Chapter 2, esp. n. 373.



smaller, more elite crowds to performances. A *pulvinar* was located in the stands and was connected by a covered portico to the emperor's villa, demonstrating that the emperor had significant enough interest in the entertainments presented in the venue to ensure that he had easy access to an official seat.

It is apparent that none of the other circuses constructed in Rome took over for the Circus Maximus, which remained the primary venue for chariot racing in the city. Even those circuses with similar dimensions and decoration as the Circus Maximus do not appear to have been intended as additional public venues for the major religious festivals; instead, their resemblance to the Great Circus was an acknowledgement of the centrality and importance of the venue to the sport of racing, which the new circuses honoured by emulating. The emperors continued to put effort into the maintenance and advancement of the Circus Maximus, while some also developed their own circuses for their personal enjoyment. These new venues were often opened to an audience; however, the audience was much smaller than at the Circus Maximus and often represented a crowd of more select, and likely political important, individuals. Moreover, the affiliation of these circuses with the emperors permitted them to present spectacles that were more personal or closely associated to them and, while celebrations of the achievements and anniversaries of the imperial family took place in these venues, the Circus Maximus hosted massive crowds of racing fans during the games for annual festivals on the religious calendar.

## B) BEYOND ROME

Before returning to the Circus Maximus and the spectators who attended the races there, the numerous circuses that were constructed across the empire must be addressed. A detailed analysis of the circuses outside Rome is provided by Humphrey, who examines the available archaeological and textual evidence and reports his findings divided by geographical regions.<sup>101</sup> While it is unnecessary to repeat the full extent of Humphrey's discussion, it is important to offer a brief overview of the venues as their presence alone demonstrates the widespread popularity of the Roman races.

Two notable regions in which circuses were built outside Rome are Spain, where monumental circuses were constructed in the first century CE, and North Africa, where circuses are dated primarily to the mid-second century CE.<sup>102</sup> Among the regions that raised and trained horses for the circus, it seems that both Spain and North Africa were known for the breeding of quality racing horses.<sup>103</sup> Hyland recalls a fourth century CE text (*Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium*) that ranks places where one could get good horses and that recommends Spanish and African horses among the top choices.<sup>104</sup> Epigraphic evidence appears to corroborate the preference for horses from these regions; an early second century CE inscription from Rome honouring the charioteer Avilius Teres includes an extensive list of racing horses, their names, and breed or origin; seventy-four names are still legible and forty-six of the horses are identified as having come from

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<sup>101</sup> Humphrey 1986.

<sup>102</sup> See Humphrey 1986: 295-336 (North Africa), 337-87 (Spain).

<sup>103</sup> See Bell and Willekes 2014: 485; Hyland 1990: 210-14; Rossiter 1992.

<sup>104</sup> Hyland 1990: 210.

Africa.<sup>105</sup> Another inscription from Rome, dated to the second half of the second century CE names one hundred and twenty-two horses and while it does not identify the breed of each, it does note that the charioteer for whom the inscription was made, won 584 times with African horses and 1,378 with Spanish horses.<sup>106</sup> The supply of racing horses to Rome connected the provinces with the races at Rome, which was possibly part of the appeal of the sport for local populations. Given the quality of racehorses coming from the area, perhaps it is unsurprising that successful charioteers came from these regions as well, the most notable being the Spanish charioteer Gaius Appuleius Diocles, one of the most famous charioteers and about whom a lengthy honorary inscription was written that recorded his many career achievements.<sup>107</sup> It is plausible that local populations took such an interest in the sport for which their regions supplied quality horses and drivers that the construction of circuses in the area was warranted. While the development of each circus was certainly influenced by regional politics, finances, and other circumstances specific to each city, it appears that as cities of Spain and North Africa prospered, new public buildings were constructed, including monumental circuses that pleased the public and allowed the people to embrace the popular races.

The growing interest in the races is evident in the construction of new monumental circuses throughout the second century CE in major cities in the west and east, including Carthage, Antioch, and Alexandria. The circus at Lepcis Magna, Libya,

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<sup>105</sup> *CIL* VI. 10053. The remaining twenty-eight having origins in Gaul, Mauretania, Spain, Sparta, Cyrenaica, and Thessaly.

<sup>106</sup> *CIL* VI. 10056 = *ILS* 5290.

<sup>107</sup> See *CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287. For more on hometowns and the regional origins of charioteers, see Chapter 3.

also built in this period, is one of the best-preserved circuses in the empire and exemplifies the practice of copying the design of the Circus Maximus which was seen among the circuses at Rome.<sup>108</sup> Numerous elements of the circus at Lepcis Magna mimic the form that was established by the Circus Maximus, from the elaborately decorated podium wall to the monumental arch in the semi-circular end of the circus wall. There were also similarities in the designs of the circuses' starting gates, turning posts, and the colonnaded galleries that surrounded the tiers of seating. The extensive similarities were undoubtedly intentional; Rome represented the epicenter of the advancing public interest in the races and the Circus Maximus was the foundational venue, which other cities looked to as the ideal example. However, it must also be said that, despite the visual comparisons between the venues, the circus at Lepcis Magna was a fraction of the size of the Circus Maximus, with a capacity of just over 20,000 spectators. While there was indeed an aim to emulate the appearance of the capital's circus, each new circus throughout the empire reflected local demand and was designed to accommodate the local population at racing presentations on a smaller scale than seen at Rome.

Although there is evidence for chariot racing across most of the empire, it does not appear to have had the same level of popularity in the northern provinces as it did in places closer to Rome. Circuses are attested in four cities in the Gallic region – Lyon, Saintes, Trier, and Vienne – and it is apparent that there were other circuses in major northwestern cities; remains of a monumental stone circus were uncovered during excavations in 2004 at Colchester, England and Humphrey makes an argument for there

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<sup>108</sup> For a detailed discussion of the circus at Lepcis Magna, see Humphrey 1986: 25-55.

having been a circus at London, although one has not yet been identified.<sup>109</sup> However, the lack of monumental circuses does not prove the absence of racing, as many forms of racing needed little more than an open field to serve as an informal racetrack. In addition, chariot racing iconography has been identified in the northern provinces, which could suggest a greater presence of the sport in the area than the architecture indicates. The second century CE Lyon mosaic, for example, depicts a circus scene with a chariot race in progress.<sup>110</sup> Eight teams of horses race around the decorated central barrier, two of the teams have crashed after coming out of a turn, one on either end of the track. The mosaic includes numerous details that demonstrate a strong understanding of the content of a race; all four faction colours are represented, with two chariot teams in each colour; each charioteer holds a short goad to encourage their four-horse teams; and racing staff, including those to set the pace of the race (*hortatores*) and to splash water on the competitors (*sparsores*) appear on the track. Beyond the track itself there are egg and dolphin lap counters on the central barrier, the officials waiting with a palm branch for the victor, and the presiding magistrates observing the race from seats above the starting gates. Such content in the image suggests that the person who commissioned the mosaic not only had an interest in the subject matter but also knew the details of chariot racing and was able to report it to the mosaicist. Also from Lyon, two second century CE lamp disks each depict a victorious charioteer with his name and faction inscribed beside the

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<sup>109</sup> For the circus at Colchester, see Crummy 2008: 213-231. Humphrey (1986: 431-437) posits the existence of a monumental circus at London from the examination of a number of walls found in the southwestern part of the city.

<sup>110</sup> Lavagne in Landes 1990: pl. 4.

image.<sup>111</sup> These items demonstrate not only interest in chariot racing in the region, but also the knowledge of specific information like the names of charioteers and their associated factions. It is possible that, while the local inhabitants of Britain and other northern provinces did not engage with the sport, at least not to the degree evident in other provinces, Romans in the area maintained the same interest in the races that swept over Rome itself and had a strong enough desire to see the entertainments that they found a way for them to be presented, however informally it may have been. To be sure, full stables and factions were not set up on the Roman frontier, as it was not feasible to maintain a supply of the necessary horses, drivers, and staff for regular competitions and the demand was not extensive enough to warrant such an expensive enterprise.

The popularity of chariot racing at Rome was not enough to ensure that circuses would be set up throughout the Empire. Foremost there needed to be local interest in the races; if the people in the area did not care to come and see the competitions, it was not in the best interest of the local magistrates to invest in such a large building project. While the proximity of a city to Rome likely increased local interest in the races, influenced by its popularity in the capital, a town could be filled with ardent racing fans and still not be large enough to maintain a permanent circus that seated upwards of ten thousand spectators. Therefore, the town or city also needed to be of a size or level of importance in the empire that could warrant the construction of a monumental circus. More important locations, such as the capitals of provinces, ensured that there were more people in the area that would attend the potential circus and that there were available

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<sup>111</sup> Desbat in Landes 1990: figs. 3-4.

finances, either from the local economy or provided by the emperor to put toward the construction of the venue.<sup>112</sup> Possibly other locations that did not fit these requirements could construct temporary wooden structures for races or present even less formalized competitions on tracks in an open field, akin to the early Greek and Roman forms of the sport. People from areas where there were no races produced, or who found the smaller productions dissatisfying, resorted to visiting the nearest monumental circus, possibly in a neighbouring city, in order to see the chariot races and engage in the sport that had spread across the empire.

## **1. 6. ELITE ROMAN VIEWS OF SPECTACLE AND THE CIRCUS**

### **A) SPECTACLE**

In examining the attitudes of ancient authors toward public entertainments, it becomes apparent that in many instances sources conflate the circus and the arena and refer to the cultural phenomenon of spectacle more generally. Accordingly, it is necessary to consider the views of ancient sources on public entertainments in order to gain insight into the perceptions of the circus. Public entertainments had a significant role in Roman life, as people attended performances and eagerly awaited the next day of spectacle entertainments; however, these events were not viewed with the same intense enthusiasm by particular elite Roman authors as they were by the general public. Despite the importance placed on leisure, some authors take issue with the type of activity that gained

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<sup>112</sup> Humphrey (1986: 388, 428) notes that in the northwestern provinces, circuses have been identified in the capitals, including Lyon (capital of Lugdunensis), Saintes (capital of Aquitania), and Trier (capital of Belgica).

popularity, as they were more concerned about the effect the spectacles had on the people than criticizing the content of the shows themselves. For these authors, public entertainments were considered to be indulgent and potentially harmful to principal Roman cultural values such as *virtus* and *pietas*. Accordingly, in their works they promoted more high-minded pursuits of the liberal arts over the mindless entertainments of public spectacles.

However, it is important to acknowledge the position from which such elite Roman authors were making their critiques. In the Roman context there were many things that were considered inappropriate to elite behaviour, and attendance at the circus and other spectacles were included in that list. The overall perception of the spectacles as mass amusements, produced to entertain and control the common people, set them outside what might be expected of elite individuals.<sup>113</sup> In this way the comments of our sources concerning the races and other spectacles seem, in large part, to be a rhetorical response to the narrowly defined notion of ideal elite behaviour. It is apparent that some of these authors self-fashioned their identities in the texts by identifying an ‘other’, the uneducated and vulgar commons, and by opposing a major aspect of mass entertainment, the lowly, unsophisticated, and mindless spectacles. The subject of the spectacles therefore, was able to be used by various elite Roman authors as a didactic tool, to define their own social identities as well as those of other Romans and the image of Rome itself.

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<sup>113</sup> Among other reasons for their production, the spectacles were a means of political and social control, to serve as an entertainment and escape from daily life for the public and to ensure a positive relationship with Roman leadership through the generous offering of games by the emperor. See also Flower 2004; Wistrand 1992: 64-6; Veyne 1990: esp. 208-14.



Although the focus of their criticisms varies, the distaste for the spectacles is relatively consistent across the authors and, in many instances, their disapproval of the shows did not require a full rejection of them. There were certainly authors who genuinely disapproved of spectacles; however, it is apparent that some feigned a distaste for the shows and exaggerated their condemnation for rhetorical purposes even while they attended the shows themselves. Although the sources do not tend to admit their attendance or their interest, as it went against the image they presented in their works, the knowledge of the content of the spectacles that the authors provide suggests that they were present at the spectacles.<sup>114</sup>

While this study is primarily focused on the chariot races during the imperial era, I would like to include one earlier source from the Republican period. Cicero (106-43 BCE) offers a perspective of an elite Roman author that is not all that different from what is later seen in sources of the imperial period, and it is apparent from Cicero's writings that he had attended spectacles often. In a correspondence with his friend M. Marius, dated to 55 BCE, Cicero describes the inaugural show at Pompey's new theatre, revealing that he himself was present.<sup>115</sup> Cicero writes that the games overall were "on the most lavish scale" (*apparatissimi*) and affirms that the five days of beast hunts (*venationes*) were magnificent, but at one point stops himself and considers, "Anyhow, if these sights are worth seeing, you have seen them often; and we spectators saw nothing new".<sup>116</sup> The comment suggests that both Marius and Cicero had attended the spectacles before and so,

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<sup>114</sup> See Cic. *Mur.* 19 (40): "Therefore, believe me, men do find pleasure in games, not only those who admit it, but those as well who pretend they do not".

<sup>115</sup> Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.

<sup>116</sup> Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.3.

as Cicero determined, there was no need to recount details that were obvious to someone with an already close familiarity with the events. Instead, he mentions only certain aspects and distinguishes parts that he enjoyed and those he did not.

Cicero's primary motivation for writing appears to be to console Marius for having missed the games, who it seems was ill and unable to attend.<sup>117</sup> He assures Marius that he would not have enjoyed the games (*'non tui stomachi'*) and that, considering what both men had seen at other spectacles, this was nothing new; he concludes the letter with a wish that Marius will come to the games in the future.<sup>118</sup> Cicero also makes a few elitist remarks about the masses, differentiating himself and Marius from the vulgar crowd, who were swept up in the spectacular nature of the events.<sup>119</sup> Although Cicero demonstrates his knowledge of and an apparent interest in such spectacles, he juxtaposes his own tastes with those of the masses and fashions himself and Marius to be more high-minded than the idle populace who are easily swayed to enjoy the presentations.<sup>120</sup>

Cicero's knowledge of the games is demonstrated elsewhere, as he uses examples from public entertainments to make his point to the reader. In particular, in the *Tusculan Disputations*, which includes discussion of Stoic philosophy, Cicero addresses the subject

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<sup>117</sup> A letter from Cicero to his brother Quintus (Cic. *Q. Fr.* 2.8) suggests that Marius was in chronic ill-health and was regularly confined to his villa.

<sup>118</sup> Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.2, 7.1.3 (*'quae tamen, si videnda sunt, saepe vidisti, neque nos qui haec spectavimus quicquam novi vidimus'*), 7.1.6 (*'quod si adsecutus sum, gaudeo; sin minus, hoc me tamen consolor, quod posthac ad ludos venies nosque vides neque in epistulis relinques meis spem aliquam delectationis tuae'*).

<sup>119</sup> Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.1, 7.1.6.

<sup>120</sup> It is possible that Cicero's apparent distaste for the slaughter of the elephants at the spectacle, noted elsewhere in the same letter, furthers his intended contrast between his view of proper elite behaviour and the brutish behaviour of the common masses.

of endurance and employs a comparison to gladiators who were trained to bear wounds and endure pain, and who would face death if commanded by their masters, and says:

“What gladiator of ordinary merit has ever uttered a groan or changed countenance? Who of them has disgraced himself, I will not say upon his feet, but who has disgraced himself in his fall? Who after falling has drawn in his neck when ordered to suffer the fatal stroke?”<sup>121</sup>

Cicero praises gladiators for their abilities and their demonstration of steadfast discipline, strength, and endurance, all of which were idealized traits for Romans, especially Roman soldiers. Despite it being found in the public entertainments of the amphitheatre, Cicero notes the value of the performance of gladiators as even the lowly fighters of the arena could educate Roman spectators on proper behaviour through the courageous execution of their duties.<sup>122</sup> Near the end of a letter to Atticus from April of 59 BCE, Cicero mentions that he will be arriving in Antium on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May in advance of games being produced there that his daughter Tullia wants to attend.<sup>123</sup> The brief comment suggests that not only that Cicero openly attended the spectacles, but also that he approved of his daughter joining him at such events that elsewhere he described with distaste and contrasted with the leisurely *otium* preferred by cultured Romans.

Seneca the Younger (4 BCE-65 CE) refers to spectacles on numerous occasions throughout his writing and demonstrates his understanding of various aspects, including the tactics and training of gladiators, suggesting that he, like Cicero, attended the events.<sup>124</sup> Seneca laments the fact that philosophy and other liberal pursuits were passed

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<sup>121</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* 2.41.

<sup>122</sup> Mammel 2014: 604; Wistrand 1992: 52, 77.

<sup>123</sup> Cic. *Att.* 2.8.

<sup>124</sup> Seneca's refers to the games include the cost and need to advertise (*Sen. Ben.* 1.12.3, 2.21.5-6; *Brev. Vit.* 16.3; *Ep.* 117.30), training gladiators (*Ep.* 13.2, 18.8, 78.16, 117.25), gladiatorial schools (*Ira* 2.8.2; *Ben.*

over in favour of the games, but does not focus on the censure of the Roman public for this choice and instead identifies the value of such a distraction from everyday toils.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, a similar acknowledgment of the educational value of spectacles as that of Cicero can be found in his work, as Seneca considers the spectacles and how they apply to Stoic notions of emotion, rationality, pleasure, and virtue. As a major Stoic philosopher, Seneca employs the spectacles in his writing as rhetorical tools with which to illustrate the ideas of proper Stoic behaviour in relatable terms for his readers.<sup>126</sup> With this approach Seneca identifies a similar focus as Cicero and finds the contenders in the arena to be exemplars to the audience and praises them for their ambition, fortitude, and desire for glory. The suffering and hardships of the fighters presented a useful example for Stoic thought as it was valuable and necessary to go through such struggles in order to reach the highest good. In this way the adversity faced by those in the arena gave them an opportunity to demonstrate their *virtus*, which the Romans in the audience should hope to attain themselves.<sup>127</sup>

Seneca also shows admiration for those condemned to the arena who chose death by their own hand rather than dying in the spectacle at the hands of others and, in one of his *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, he offers three stories of such outcomes in succession.<sup>128</sup> It

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6.12.2), and tactics of gladiators (*Ira* 1.11.2; *Ep.* 22.1). Cagniard (2000: 607 n. 1) notes that, excluding his tragedies, Seneca mentions the arena and circus in all except two works (*Ad Marciam* and *Ad Polybium Consolatione*). See also Wistrand 1990.

<sup>125</sup> See Sen. *Q. Nat.* 7.32.1; Sen. *Tranq.* 17.5-7.

<sup>126</sup> Mammel 2014: 605-6.

<sup>127</sup> See Sen. *Prov.* 1.4.6 ('*calamitas virtutis occasio est*').

<sup>128</sup> Seneca (*Ep.* 70.20-21) first tells of a German gladiator who choked himself to death by putting a latrine sponge down his throat. He goes on to recount the fate of a prisoner who, while being transported into the arena on a cart, dropped his head between the spokes of one of the wheels and broke his neck (*Ep.* 70.23). The final story is of a man who was given a spear to use during a mock sea battle and used it on himself before the spectacle began (*Ep.* 70.26).

is not cowardice or shame that Seneca identifies in these suicides, but bravery in the face of death and courage in acting on the decision to die. To Seneca, the actions of these men served as a lesson for all Romans to overcome the fear of death, an inescapable outcome for all men, and he contends that the virtue thought of so highly by elite Romans could be found in the actions of lowly gladiators.<sup>129</sup>

Although Seneca identified a morally positive feature of the spectacles in the virtues on display for spectators, he still had concerns regarding the influence of the presentations on the minds and the souls of audience members. Seneca's objections were firmly grounded in the Stoic view that one should be governed by reason and not the baser emotions which the public spectacles aroused and which could be corruptive and distract them from other pursuits.<sup>130</sup> The spectacles were considered a form of pleasure (*voluptates*) which, in the Stoic tradition, stood in opposition to the ideal traits of *virtus* and *pietas*.<sup>131</sup> For Seneca the crowds at the spectacle were the most dangerous element as they could corrupt other spectators by disrupting their philosophical self-control and stirring up emotions.<sup>132</sup> As it was necessary to control one's passions, the discipline and skill of gladiators were useful and recognizable examples to Seneca's readers, other elite individuals who, like him, were familiar with the content of the spectacles.<sup>133</sup> Seneca

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<sup>129</sup> See Sen. *Ep.* 70.22; Sen. *Ep.* 93.12 ("Death visits each and all; the slayer soon follows the slain. It is an insignificant trifle, after all, that people discuss with so much concern. And anyhow, what does it matter for how long a time you avoid that which you cannot escape?"). Despite the virtues displayed by gladiators, it was not appropriate for elite Romans to fight as gladiators themselves (see for instance, Sen. *Ep.* 87.9; Dio Cass. 73.16-21; Suet. *Calig.* 54.1).

<sup>130</sup> Wiedemann 1992: 142-3.

<sup>131</sup> Wistrand 1992: 61. See also Torlone 2014: 413-4.

<sup>132</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 7.1-3.

<sup>133</sup> See also Sen. *Ira* 1.11.1.

makes a point of differentiating himself and other elite men from the common people and claims that:

“Even Socrates, Cato, and Laelius might have been shaken in their moral strength by a crowd that was unlike them; so true it is that none of us, no matter how much he cultivates his abilities, can withstand the shock of faults that approach, as it were, with so great a retinue.”<sup>134</sup>

While defining himself as a part of a group that was distinct, and perhaps superior, to the Roman populace, Seneca finds that the large crowd at a spectacle could undermine his values. The excess emotion and passions that pervaded the audience was a danger to the Stoic perception of proper behaviour.

Despite identifying educational value in gladiatorial combats for the Roman audience, Seneca was critical of spectacles made up of the public execution of criminals. In fact, the spectacles that Seneca himself says he attended were the midday executions, although he indicates that he saw them by mistake and had expected something else.<sup>135</sup> It was not the violence that was of concern, as that was the primary feature of gladiatorial fights as well, but what Seneca considered to be displays of senseless cruelty that could have a detrimental moral effect on spectators. The criminals were unskilled and unwilling, and therefore did not present the same model of *virtus* as did the gladiators. In his moral essay *On the Shortness of Life*, Seneca describes the spectacle of a mock battle presented by Pompey and scoffs at the unnecessary pageantry and the sharp imbalance in the execution in which criminals were pitted against eighteen elephants.<sup>136</sup> Seneca does

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<sup>134</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 7.6.

<sup>135</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 7.3 (*‘Casu in meridianum spectaculum incidi lusus expectans et sales et aliquid laxamenti, quo hominum oculi ab humano cruore adquiescant’*).

<sup>136</sup> Sen. *Brev. Vit.* 13.6-7. Cf. Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.3 and Plin. *NH.* 8.21.

not disapprove of public executions themselves, except when the intent was solely to entertain and delight the audience. These scenes were dehumanizing, both to the condemned and to the audience, for whose pleasure men were killed with no armour, weaponry, or skill to use in the fight.<sup>137</sup> As a result, the public became desensitized to the bloodshed and became more engrossed in the base emotions that Seneca had cautioned against.

The popularity of spectacles made them an ideal and abundant topic for satire and, in particular, the work of Juvenal (c. 55-c. 127 CE). Throughout the *Satires* Juvenal presents topics of Roman life as a stage for consideration of issues such as personal ethics and social morality, and the audiences of public entertainment venues were a perfect source of insights, as the behaviour of the Roman people was on display and thus offered a representative view of Rome itself. Juvenal lists the theatre among places rife with gossip, where the sons of pimps, auctioneers, gladiators and trainers sit in the front seats demarcated for equestrians.<sup>138</sup> In his sixth *Satire*, Juvenal recounts the immoral and shameful behaviour of women who either fell in love with a gladiator or chose to perform in the arena themselves.<sup>139</sup> The scenes Juvenal offers, of men of low station taking prominent seats in the theatre by force and of women wooed by gladiators or fighting themselves in stark opposition to their matronly dignity, were undoubtedly exaggerated for comic effect. In doing so, Juvenal emphasizes the perverse aspects of public entertainments and characterizes the venues as places of disreputable behaviour that were

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<sup>137</sup> See also Sen. *Ep.* 7.3-4.

<sup>138</sup> Gossip at the theatre: Juv. *Sat.* 11.4. Demand for seats: Juv. *Sat.* 3.153-8.

<sup>139</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 6.102-12, 246-67. For a discussion of women in the arena, see Brunet 2014.

contrary to traditional Roman values and that had negative influences on Roman culture. Perhaps one of the most famous passages addressing public spectacle comes from Juvenal's tenth *Satire*, in which he asserts that all the Roman people desire is 'bread and circuses', in this instance using circuses ('*circensis*') as a general reference to all forms of public spectacles.<sup>140</sup> With this comment Juvenal does not show his distaste for spectacles, of the circus or otherwise, but attempts to draw attention to what the Roman people have become; although once they held power in governance of the society they are now easily placated with simple pleasures. In order to illustrate his view of a morally degraded Roman state, Juvenal reduces the position of the people to a comically absurd degree with only two desires: food and entertainment.<sup>141</sup> Of course, in order to provide such observations of the behaviour that took place in these venues, it is highly probable that Juvenal attended the spectacles himself. Although the satirical nature of his work compelled sharp comments on the pleasures of the games and the effect it had on the morals of Rome at large, Juvenal's rhetorical position did not demand that he himself avoid the spectacles.

A similar case can be made for Martial (c. 40-c. 104 CE), who offers concise treatments of various topics of Roman life in his *Epigrams*. Rather than employing crude and outrageous jokes, Coleman asserts that Martial used "sophisticated wit" in his epigrams to emphasize his commentary on the spectacles and other subject matter.<sup>142</sup> Martial's first book of poems, *On the Spectacles*, was written to celebrate the opening of

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<sup>140</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 10.78-81.

<sup>141</sup> See also Juv. *Sat.* 3.223-25, 8.117-8, 9.142-4.

<sup>142</sup> Coleman 2006: xliv.



the Flavian Amphitheatre in 80 CE. The extent of the text itself suggests that Martial was present; the inauguration of a new public venue was an event unto itself that merited attendance. While Martial does make criticisms of the popularity of spectacles, and particularly, as we shall see below, of charioteers, his account of the games at the Flavian Amphitheatre serve to “encapsulat[e] the experience of the spectacles for an audience of vicarious spectators” and present his observations as a detached spectator of the events.<sup>143</sup>

Pliny the Younger (c. 61-112 CE) does not appear to have viewed the public entertainments in a wholly negative manner. In his *Panegyricus*, the enlarged and published version of a speech he delivered in the Senate after his consular appointment in 100 CE, Pliny applauds the emperor Trajan for having put on gladiatorial games.<sup>144</sup> The public nature of the original formal speech permits some doubt as to Pliny’s intentions; as the speech was intended in large part to thank and honour Trajan it is possible that Pliny set aside his own personal views to commend the emperor for his efforts in regard to public spectacles that were clearly favoured by the masses. Even so, such positive sentiments about the games are repeated by Pliny in a private letter when he praises a personal friend for planning a gladiatorial show to honour his wife’s memory.<sup>145</sup> It seems as if, at least on these occasions, Pliny was willing to recognize the use and the popularity of spectacles, regardless of his own personal preferences. Similar to authors such as Cicero and Seneca, who identified positive educational value in gladiatorial combats, Pliny the Younger also appreciated the virtues on display; although the participants were

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<sup>143</sup> Coleman 2006: lxxxii.

<sup>144</sup> Plin. *Paneg.* 33.1.

<sup>145</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 6.34.

of lowly status, the performances in the arena required the traits of strength, bravery, and a contempt of death that Romans held in high regard. Pliny expounds on this by writing that, in such entertainments, there was “nothing lax or dissolute to weaken and destroy the manly spirit of [Trajan’s] subjects, but one to inspire them to face honourable wounds and look scorn on death, by exhibiting love of glory and desire for victory even in the persons of criminals and slaves.”<sup>146</sup> Indeed, for Pliny, the low status of the performers emphasized the lesson in the spectacles even further as the more elite men of Rome surely should display the same, if not more virtue, than those who fought for the entertainment of the public. Pliny’s assertion of the lesson to be found in spectacles by the Roman elite demonstrates that he was aware of the attendance of other elite individuals and suggests that he too was present at the entertainments.

Tertullian (c. 160-220 CE) offers his opinions on spectacles that come from a far different perspective than the other elite Roman authors that have been discussed so far. Foremost, Tertullian was a Christian author and an early apologist writing in defense of Christianity against objections of pagans. His text *De Spectaculis* (‘On the Spectacles’) was a moral and ascetic treatise against the attendance of Christians at the public entertainments of the theatre, amphitheatre, and circus, in which Tertullian asserted the negative moral consequences of such shows. Unlike other sources who were opposed to particular aspects of the popular shows, Tertullian was in vehement opposition to all forms of pagan spectacles. The subject of the spectacles served a useful rhetorical purpose for Tertullian in his arguments for Christianity by redirecting allegations of

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<sup>146</sup> Plin. *Paneg.* 33.1.

impiety that were leveled against Christians for not participating in Roman religious life. Tertullian contended that the shows themselves, which were produced as part of religious festivals to celebrate Roman gods, were disgraceful; in making presentations of such extravagance and indulgence and allowing men of low status to perform, they were not showing honour or respect to their gods.<sup>147</sup> Making this point against the spectacles, Tertullian identified the venues for spectacle as places of vice that did not agree with Christian morals.<sup>148</sup>

The treatise was addressed to a Christian audience, those who had been baptized and those who were preparing for baptism.<sup>149</sup> As such, the discussion of the spectacles, fixed in a pivotal moment of the Christian experience, emphasized the importance of the correct decision concerning the shows for the reader. Given that Tertullian found it necessary to write this treatise to advise his fellow Christians against the spectacles, it is highly probable that there were Christians attending spectacles. Perhaps they only attended certain shows that they considered to be more elevated and least objectionable to Christian morals, or they attended assuring themselves that such entertainments in moderation were acceptable; Tertullian had a more puritanical view of the issue and argued in favour of the full denunciation of public spectacles by Christians.<sup>150</sup> Tertullian's conservative perspective did not allow for the spectacles in Christian life; instead, he needed to explain to both newly converted and long-practicing Christians why

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<sup>147</sup> See also Tert. *Apol.* 15.

<sup>148</sup> See Sider 1978.

<sup>149</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 1.

<sup>150</sup> See Tert. *De Spect.* 15 "For even if a man enjoy the spectacles in modest and upright fashion, agreeably to his dignity, his age, and his natural character, still he cannot with a mind quite unstirred or without some unspoken agitation of spirit."

such pleasures of the shows, which they likely engaged with to some degree, should be forbidden to them.

In establishing what he found to be the incontrovertible sinfulness of the spectacles, Tertullian set Christians apart from the rest of the public. Not unlike the self-fashioning rhetoric of authors such as Cicero or Seneca, who attempted to make status distinctions that separated themselves from the boorish behaviour of the common masses at spectacles, Tertullian writes with the intent of defining a public image; however, the image he seeks to present is of not just himself but of all Christians. The emphatic criticism of the pagan shows, those who attended, and those who produced them, identified an ‘other’ from which Tertullian separated Christians, thereby asserting a religious and cultural Christian identity through a definition of what they were not.

Tertullian makes this sentiment clear in his *Apology* as well, and states:

“Your public games, too, we renounce, as heartily as we do their origins; we know these origins lie in superstition; we leave on one side the matters with which they are concerned. We have nothing to do, in speech, sight or hearing, with the madness of the circus, the shamelessness of the theatre, the savagery of the arena, the vanity of the gymnasium. Why should we offend you, if we assume the existence of other pleasures? If we do not wish to know delight, it is our loss; in any case, not yours. But we reject what pleases you; what pleases us gives you no delight.”<sup>151</sup>

Throughout the *De Spectaculis*, Tertullian sets out his arguments to condemn the shows and separate Christians from their influence. The offensive nature of the spectacles and the abuse of God’s gifts for pagan purposes were contrary to Christian values and the behaviour that was central to a proper Christian life.

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<sup>151</sup> Tert. *Apol.* 38.4.

In the first few chapters of the treatise, Tertullian takes on the task of responding to the arguments of defenders of the shows; after refuting the argument that the materials for shows came from God and therefore must be good, Tertullian counters the view that Scripture does not forbid the shows by providing his own interpretation. Tertullian then seeks to demonstrate, through much of the text, how idolatry is an inherent part of the shows and to fully condemn the shows by paralleling the situation to the Christian renunciation of the devil when baptized.<sup>152</sup> He does so by first exploring the origins of the spectacles, citing the work of pagan authors for information. There may have been an intentional level of irony on Tertullian's part in using the text of pagans to prove the negative effects of their practices. Tertullian reports the names of Roman gods and the festivals in honour of them, often with names derived from those of the gods, including the *Liberalia* for the god Liber, and the *Consualia* for the god Consus.<sup>153</sup> He also notes the religious associations of the venues, which were fundamentally temples themselves, and the details of the events: the grand procession (*pompa circensis*) and sacrifices preceding the games with statues and images of gods on display, and the various decorations and celebrations of gods and magistrates, to prove that the idolatry of the venues was unavoidable and that it was impossible for one to attend and remain clear of it.<sup>154</sup> Tertullian then turns to consider each of the major venues for public spectacles, both identifying the pagan associations of the spectacle's architectural setting and origins,

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<sup>152</sup> Various scholars have attempted to define the structure of the treatise and identify an overarching theme or subject that could group chapters together. See, for instance, Boulanger 1933: 36-7; Büchner 1935: 23; Castorina 1961: 270-1, 341; Sider 1978.

<sup>153</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 5-6

<sup>154</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 7-8

and explaining how it was not in keeping with Christian practices.<sup>155</sup> In confronting each spectacle, Tertullian reiterates his position that the shows were antithetical to Christian beliefs and practices, and that no Christian should attend in order to protect his own moral character.

Tertullian also puts great emphasis on the harmfulness of the environment of the shows to one's spiritual well-being. He finds that those who attend construe good and evil as it fits the pleasures of the entertainment so that what they would not do or allow to be done beyond the spectacle venues they find acceptable at the shows; he who would cover his daughter's ears to protect her from foul language will also take her to the theatre to hear words and gestures of the same sort, and he who would disapprove of or seek to stop a fight in the streets will applaud more violent exchanges in the stadium and observe the bodies of those killed in the amphitheatre.<sup>156</sup> According to Tertullian, the venues had a corruptive effect on the spectators that led them to actions and emotions that were inappropriate to Christian life and irreconcilable with the Christian faith:

“What concord can the Holy Spirit have with the spectacles? There is no public spectacle without violence to the spirit. For where there is pleasure, there is eagerness, which gives pleasure its flavour. Where there is eagerness, there is rivalry which gives its flavour to eagerness. Yes, and then, where there is rivalry, there also are madness, bile, anger, pain, and all the things that follow from them, and (like them) are incompatible with moral discipline.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Circus: Tert. *De Spect.* esp. 9, 16. Theatre: Tert. *De Spect.* 10, 17. Stadium: Tert. *De Spect.* 11, 18. Amphitheatre: Tert. *De Spect.* 12, 19. As will be discussed below, Tertullian returns to the subject of the circus on multiple occasions.

<sup>156</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 21. Similarly, Tertullian found the behaviour toward the performers of the spectacles to be perverse, as the Romans cheered for and honoured their performances yet openly condemned them to disgrace and degradation (see Tert. *De Spect.* 22).

<sup>157</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 15.

Tertullian maintains that such responses could not be avoided when at the shows, as all spectators of the entertainments would have a lapse in judgment and decorum. While he seems to address the concern of Christians in the audience and the struggle to maintain themselves when confronted with the spectacles, Tertullian is also disturbed by the possibility of dutiful Christians coming into contact with the impious and sinful people he judges to have made up the crowd. Indeed, Tertullian asserts that, “a man really condemns himself when he finds him set among others with whom he does not wish to be”.<sup>158</sup> Tertullian was concerned by the potential emotional influence on his fellow Christians by the crowds who were overtaken by their baser passions and the spiritual agitation that would come of interactions with them. Thus, he sets Christians apart from those who attended the shows and asserts to his Christian readers that they must keep their distance and avoid engaging with the immoral crowd in order to remain uncorrupted. Tertullian ends the *De Spectaculis* with a rhetorical conclusion that utilizes the image of the Last Judgement.<sup>159</sup> He displays contempt for the wicked souls who devoted themselves to the spectacles and reflects on their coming destruction as a result of their sins. It is on this day, which Tertullian calls the final spectacle, that he claims he will enjoy the show as he reaffirms his belief in things of greater joy than the spectacle venues and the shows within them.

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<sup>158</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 15.

<sup>159</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 30.

## B) THE CIRCUS

In contrast to the discussion of other types of spectacle found in the sources, there are far fewer direct references to chariot racing or evidence of elite Roman opinions of it. While the discussion of the circus was often subsumed under references to spectacle more generally, it is also possible that some sources were ambivalent toward the races, which represented little more than another public entertainment or leisure activity that did not merit specific mention.<sup>160</sup> Even so, the repeated references to the circus do demonstrate that various authors thought it to be a useful example by which to prove their point and engage their readers. What exactly this point was, however, differs among authors, who each had a different agenda in their writing.<sup>161</sup> Some elite authors surely preferred other activities and wished that the masses did as well, yet many authors also recognized that the races were well-established in Roman life and that they did not have to stand in direct opposition to the position and preferences of the elites. The venue of the circus provided an opportunity for socialization and to both see others and be seen, whether interested in the spectacle being presented or not. Often what appear to be competing ideas about the circus in the writing of these authors represent the elite perspective in which an elite Roman in control of himself would not succumb to the unruly behaviour of the common

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<sup>160</sup> As some sources, such as Seneca or Pliny the Younger, made their preference for more intellectual pursuits clear, the races and other spectacles in comparison were simply unworthy of commentary. See Torlone 2014: 413.

<sup>161</sup> Torlone (2014) addresses Roman attitudes toward entertainments and gathers authors into two categories that represent their respective genres and the messages in their writing - the “serious” genres, which includes Cicero, Pliny the Younger, and Seneca, and the “lighter” genres, which focuses on the satire and epigrams of Juvenal and Martial.



masses.<sup>162</sup> Accordingly, various authors did not find their criticisms of the circus or their comments concerning the negative influence of the spectacle on its audience to be at odds with their own attendance at the event.

Seneca's discussion of spectacle is often inclusive of the arena as well as the circus and, as a result, his opinions of spectacle for the most part also indicate his opinions on the circus. Seneca's Stoic philosophies regarding emotion, rationality, pleasure and virtue colour his views on the spectacles since he is concerned with, in particular, the effect of the crowd and the base passions that took over during the enjoyment of the pleasures of the entertainments, which could overtake the rationality and self-control of one's proper and moderate soul. He identifies an excess of emotions in various places of Rome, including the Circus and, in his dialogue *On Anger*, asserts that "just as many vices are gathered there as men".<sup>163</sup> Seneca observes that the masses at the Circus and other venues are driven by the desire for pleasure to the point that they act irrationally in its pursuit. When, in one of his *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, he claims that he could hear the shouting of the Circus crowd but says that he was easily able to ignore the noise, which faded into the background and did not distract him from his own thoughts.<sup>164</sup> In this brief comment Seneca sets himself apart from and above such sudden emotional reactions and affirms to his reader that his attentions were on more intellectual matters.

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<sup>162</sup> Wiedemann 1992: 141-4; Wistrand 1992: 62. In contrast to the authors who will be discussed below, Fronto (*Ep.* 2.3 [*Ad Am.*]) reports in a letter to Volumnius Quadratus that he attended the spectacles at the circus after being "seized with a passion for the games". Moreover, Fronto explains that he had such an interest to attend the races that, even though his hand was in severe pain, he had himself carried to the circus.

<sup>163</sup> Sen. *Ira* 2.8.1.

<sup>164</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 83.7.

The references that Seneca makes to the circus in his writing demonstrates that he was a well-informed spectator, having attended the races enough to understand much of its content and the tactics involved in the competitions. He employs his knowledge of the races and presents circus scenes to illustrate a lesson in Stoic belief in a manner that his readers could easily understand and relate. Twice in the dialogue *On Anger* Seneca employs circus scenes to make his point; on one occasion he discusses controlling one's anger like a chariot team and the restraint needed to maintain control throughout and not be lost to disorder and rash action, while on another he addresses the moments when it is necessary to rouse one's anger and offers the example of using goads or firebrands on a horse at the start of a race.<sup>165</sup> In another dialogue, *On Peace of Mind*, Seneca advises that “not only in the race and the contests of the Circus, but also in the arena of life we must keep to the inner circle”.<sup>166</sup> By making reference to the racing technique of taking the inside line around the turns and central barrier, Seneca conveys a message of staying within bounds and follow a rational plan and order in life. Even in a passage from one of the *Moral Letters to Lucilius* noting the increasing joy felt by a friend, Seneca frames the emotion with the imagery of the joyful smile of a charioteer that cannot be contained when he is leading the competitors in the seventh lap of a race.<sup>167</sup> It is evident that Seneca attended the races in order to gather this much knowledge and detail concerning the events and, insofar as he repeatedly employs descriptions of the races to convey examples of proper behaviour, it seems as if Seneca did not disapprove of the races

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<sup>165</sup> Sen. *Ira* 1.7.1, 2.14.1.

<sup>166</sup> Sen. *Tranq.* 9.3.

<sup>167</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 30.13 (*‘Qui sic crescebat illi, quomodo manifestior notari solet agitatorum laetitia, cum septimo spatio palmae adpropinquant’*).

themselves. Certainly, it would have been counterintuitive for Seneca to emphasize a pastime that he condemned when offering guidance for a life grounded in Stoic thought. Instead, Seneca recognized that his readers attended the races and therefore that the subject of the circus was useful to dramatize the Stoic education he was offering.

As writers of satire, both Martial and Juvenal recognized the source of material offered by the popular spectacles that could be used in their discussions of Roman life. The degree to which the circus was embedded in popular thought was similarly identified by the two authors, who, it seems, attended the races and gained knowledge of the sport that they could apply in their writings.<sup>168</sup> In his eleventh *Satire*, Juvenal claims that “all Rome today is in the Circus”, an innumerable crowd of people that represented a microcosm of the city, rich in material for satirical commentary.<sup>169</sup> Both satirists demonstrate their familiarity with the races, often referring to racehorses and charioteers by name.<sup>170</sup> Martial adopts the role of circus spectator and takes a jab at drivers of the Blue faction and another at drivers of the short-lived Purple factions, mocking them for whipping their horses too much and going no faster for it, ending one epigram with the biting remark, “truly, Catianus, you do wonders!”<sup>171</sup> He also warns fans of the Greens and Blues not to wear the colour Red for fear of appearing disloyal to the fierce

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<sup>168</sup> See also Juv. *Sat.* 3.223-225, 8.117-8, 9.142-4, 10.78-81, 11.52-3, 11.193-201.

<sup>169</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 11.197.

<sup>170</sup> Martial: *Ep.* 3.63 (Hirpinus), 7.7 (Passerinus and Tigris), 12.36 (Passerinus, Tigris), 10.50 (Scorpus), 10.53 (Scorpus), 10.74 (Scorpus), 10.76 (Incitatus), 11.1 (Scorpus, Incitatus), 13.78 (Porphyron).

Juvenal: *Sat.* 7.112-4 (Lacerta), 8.62-3 (Corphaeus, Hirpinus). A charioteer, C. Annius Lacerta, is named in *ILS* 5293 and could be the Lacerta that Juvenal mentioned in *Satire* 7.

<sup>171</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 6.46 (*‘vapulat adsidue veneti quadriga flagello, nec currit: magnam rem, Catiane, facit.’*) and *Ep.* 14.55 (*‘proficies nihil hoc, caedas licet usque, flagello, si tibi purpureo e grege currit equus’*).

partisanship that held sway over many circus spectators.<sup>172</sup> Juvenal also takes aim at the popular interest in the races, often drawing on the reactions of the circus fans and, in his eleventh *Satire*, Juvenal addresses the subject of moderation, a trait that he finds lacking in the circus audience. He employs this perception of the circus audience as the punch line to his comments on those who refused to moderate themselves and who were ultimately forced to flee from Rome bankrupt, pronouncing that “the only grief they experience fleeing the City, their only regret, is having to miss a year of races in the Circus”.<sup>173</sup> The comment conveys a sense of unnecessary indulgence and a passion that, despite having lost so much, still holds great sway over so many people. Later in the same satire, Juvenal reports that while dining with a friend he could hear the roar of the crowd and concludes that the Green faction must have won, as otherwise all of Rome would have been as sad as after the defeat at Cannae.<sup>174</sup> Calling to mind a pivotal failure for the Roman military, Juvenal depicts an exaggerated response of circus goers and quantifies the usual reactions of circus goers as inappropriate. In both examples, Juvenal presents the rabid love of the people for the races for comic effect, portraying it to be not only excessive but also somewhat ridiculous.

A further topic of consideration that, for both Martial and Juvenal, embodied the excessive nature of the circus and the reaction of spectators, was the charioteers. Indeed, charioteers became sport stars whose fame reached beyond the walls of the circus; as these performers became such a large part of Roman life they also were perfect targets for

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<sup>172</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 14.131. This passage, as it concerns the fandom of the races, will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

<sup>173</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 11.52-3.

<sup>174</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 11.193-201.

the satirical comments of Martial and Juvenal. Both writers draw attention to the popularity of charioteers and the money they earned at racing in comparison to the lesser recognition and earnings of themselves and others following more high-minded paths. Juvenal laments that the income of a charioteer for the Reds equals that of a hundred lawyers, and details the extensive work required of a teacher that after a year earns him the same amount as a victorious charioteer at a race.<sup>175</sup> Similarly, Martial lists the great qualities of a learned man named Maevius and contends that his only fault is that he is a poet who “shivers in a faded black hood; while the mule-driver Incitatus glitters in purple”.<sup>176</sup> Martial goes further on the subject of charioteers by drawing himself into the discussion, and compares his situation to that of the charioteer Scorpis, as he remarks “how long shall I be a dangler at levees...earning a hundred paltry coins with a whole day’s work, while Scorpis triumphantly carries off in a single hour fifteen heavy bags of gold?”.<sup>177</sup> The sharp juxtaposition of the two roles described in each work created a comically large disparity between the two professions, their incomes, and their recognition by the Roman public. While it was the competitors who earned the vast quantities of money and could become sporting celebrities in Rome, it was the spectators, through their interest in the sport and support of the charioteers, who created the environment that made it possible. As such, the anger and resentment in the tone of Martial and Juvenal’s comments sought to display further the devotion to the races and

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<sup>175</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 7.112-14, .237-243.

<sup>176</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 10.76. Incitatus is also the name of Caligula’s favoured race horse (see Suet. *Calig.*55.3).

<sup>177</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 10.74.2-6. Martial does not seem to bear any ill-will toward Scorpis in particular and celebrates the popular driver after his death (see *Ep.* 10.50 and 53).

the response of the spectators and emphasize the prevalence of the circus in the popular mind.

In his letter to Calvisius Rufus, Pliny the Younger discusses the popular interest in the circus and his own opinions of the sport; he contends that the races were monotonous, with nothing appealing that would explain the popular fascination with them.<sup>178</sup> He fills the letter with reasons that he is not attracted to the spectacles and uses a relatively biting tone to deliver criticisms of those who were entertained by the sport. Not unlike Cicero in his letter to Marius, Pliny the Younger fashioned himself as above the popular interest in games and more taken by intellectual pastimes.<sup>179</sup> He begins the letter confidently claiming that he has been content spending time with his books while everyone else was taken in by the games; he finds the people to “have such a childish passion for watching galloping horses and drivers standing in chariots, over and over again”.<sup>180</sup> By not joining in the common entertainment, Pliny sets himself apart from the childlike individuals who were so easily amused by the repetitive sport. He goes on to assert that if the people were interested in the skills being presented then their enthusiasm could be explained, but instead they were focused solely on the faction colours that they had chosen to support.<sup>181</sup> Pliny’s evaluation of the circus here reveals his own recognition of the skills involved with the sport and his possible appreciation of them, indicating that he attended the races enough to identify some value in certain aspects.

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<sup>178</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6.

<sup>179</sup> While in his letter it was Cicero who went to the spectacle and assured his correspondent that he did well by not attending, here Pliny the Younger asserts that he stayed away from the races and comments on those who were present in the crowd.

<sup>180</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6.1-2.

<sup>181</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6.2. I will return to Pliny the Younger’s opinion on this subject in Chapter 3.

Aside from the monotony of a day at the races, Pliny does not assert dislike of the sport itself; rather, it was the blind devotion of the public to the circus factions that took most of his attention. As mentioned above, Pliny was willing to acknowledge the skill of the competitors themselves but considered the public's captivation with the circus to be focused entirely on the faction colours, with no regard for the content and athleticism on display. Pliny dismisses the interest of the common people, as if he expects it from such a group and so deems it unworthy of discussion, and shows more concern for the 'respectable men' who engage with the sport and the faction partisanship, as he writes:

“Such is the influence and authority vested in one cheap tunic, I don't say with the common crowd, - for that is even cheaper than the tunic, - but with certain men of position; and when I consider that they can sit for so long without growing tired, looking on at such a fruitless, cheerless, and tedious sport, I really feel a sort of pleasure in the thought that what they take delight in has no charm for me”.<sup>182</sup>

Pliny maintains that the races were pointless and dull and made the audience irrational and undignified, an experience of which he was happy not to be a part. Whereas Seneca was concerned by the disruption to one's self-control that crowds could bring about and the generally immoral nature of spectacles, Pliny shows contempt for the crowds and more ambivalence toward the spectacles. It appears that, for Pliny, it was not that the races were necessarily immoral but that, for a man of substance, they were a waste of time; he is pleased that he chose to do something better with his time and judges that those who attended such spectacles with such devotion misused theirs.

Pliny the Younger evaluated the races as a pastime below literary and other intellectual pursuits and deemed his own choice of activity as the superior option.

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<sup>182</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6.3.

Nevertheless, Pliny acknowledges that his peers did attend the races and, in his letter to Maximus, reports a story from Tacitus who conversed with an equestrian while at the circus:

“...but never have I felt such pleasure as I did recently at something Tacitus said. He was describing how at the last Races he had sat next to a Roman knight who engaged him in conversation on several learned subjects and then asked if he came from Italy or the provinces. “You know me,” said Tacitus, “from your reading.” At which the main said, “Then are you Tacitus or Pliny?” I can’t tell you how delighted I am to have our names assigned to literature as if they belonged there and not to individuals, and to learn that we are both known by our writing to people who would otherwise not have heard of us.”<sup>183</sup>

Although it appears that Pliny included the story in his letter primarily to call attention to his own prominent reputation, the anecdote also reveals the simple fact that elite men attended the races. Moreover, if the story is to be believed, Tacitus was not embarrassed to mention his attendance to Pliny at what his peers wrote of as a lowly amusement. Pliny’s letter does not suggest that he was offended by it either, giving no indication of criticism or disapproval of Tacitus for his presence at the games and instead reporting that Tacitus was there in learned company. Pliny did not condemn his peers for their attendance at the spectacles, even noting that while Tacitus attended the races he engaged in lengthy and learned conversation, a pastime acceptable for those of elite status. While it is probable that Pliny too attended the spectacles with his peers, he sought to present a public image of elite intellectualism that promoted his virtuous pursuits of scholarship and his resistance of mindless pleasures and popular entertainments.

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<sup>183</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.23.2-3.



Despite his own apparent dislike of the races and the resulting behaviour of the audience, amid his praises of Trajan in the *Panegyricus* Pliny shows his support of the emperor's rebuilding of the Circus Maximus and the changes he made to the imperial box that allowed for the emperor to attend the races and be seen by the masses.<sup>184</sup> The circus is not the focus of Pliny's writing in this instance, but its importance in the public mind makes the circus a useful example to include among his compliments for the emperor that correlates his good works with the popular sport. The formal and public nature of the speech seems to influence how Pliny refers to the spectacles, as he does not stress an elite stance against the circus or reveal any of the distaste for the sport that he expresses in his private letter to Calvisius. Instead, Pliny acknowledges the social and political uses of the circus and commends the emperor's involvement with the circus and attendance at the spectacles so enjoyed by the public.

Although the aforementioned letter from Pliny the Younger indicates that Tacitus (c. 56-c. 120 CE) too was among those elite Roman men who attended the circus, he does not hold the spectacles in high regard, and asserts in his *Annals* that "in accordance with the dignity of the Roman people" (*cum ex dignitate populi Romani*), historical texts should report great things (*res illustres*) and subjects of amphitheatres and gladiators should be kept to the urban gazette (*diurna urbis acta*).<sup>185</sup> It is unsurprising then that Tacitus does not often refer to spectacles in his writing although, when he does, he reflects a similar sense of criticism of the games as seen in the work of other elite Roman

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<sup>184</sup> Plin. *Pan.* 51.3-5. This passage will be discussed further below.

<sup>185</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 13.31.

authors. Tacitus draws attention to the engagement of the Roman people with such lowly entertainments in his *Dialogue on Oratory* and asserts the love of gladiators, actors and horses resulted in the neglect of more worthwhile pursuits.<sup>186</sup> He found the love of the races to be so deeply engrained in the public as to express it in the most exaggerated terms, that it was as if the interest in racing took hold of Romans when still in the womb.<sup>187</sup>

In his *Histories* Tacitus characterizes the spectacles as a vice of the masses that drew them away from better things and criticizes the addiction of the lower classes to the circus and theatre.<sup>188</sup> The circus and other spectacles were corruptive to Roman virtues and could make one spoilt and soft, which Tacitus emphasizes as an explanation for the poor performances of soldiers. He reports that supporters of Vitellius taunted Otho's troops for their feebleness brought on by attendance at the circus and theatre and later faced ruin themselves for having been weakened by the circus, theatre, and other delights of Rome.<sup>189</sup> Tacitus' condemnation of the circus does not seem to have been because of the sport, which he does not address directly much at all; rather, Tacitus criticizes the spectacular nature of the event and the experience in the venue for its negative influence on the city and its people. His concern arising from the unmoderated interest in the sport suggests that the overindulgence in such base entertainments and passions could make one soft and distract from more virtuous activities. Despite the indication from Pliny the

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<sup>186</sup> Tac. *Dial.* 29.3.

<sup>187</sup> Tac. *Dial.* 29.3 ('iam vero propria et peculiaria huius urbis vitia paene in utero matris concipi mihi videntur, histrionalis favor et gladiatorum equorumque studia...').

<sup>188</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.4.3 ('plebs sordida et circo ac theatris sueta'). See also Tac. *Hist.* 1.72.3.

<sup>189</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 2.21.4., 3.2.2.

Younger than Tacitus attended the races and openly discussed it with Pliny, in his texts Tacitus fashions himself to be above the idea of attending. He offers similar sentiments as other authors who emphasized the positive use of one's time in the liberal arts and in writing historical works that he claimed were no place for the topics of popular entertainments – he is sure to not appear to have himself succumbed to the spectacles of the circus.

As previously discussed, in his treatise *De Spectaculis*, Tertullian addresses each type of public show and explains why they are sinful and fully incompatible with Christian beliefs and practices. Tertullian spends a significant amount of time on the subject of the circus. It is possible that Tertullian considered the circus a useful medium through which to make his point and important because of its widespread popularity, or that he might have found the intense *furor* that it instigated to be a case that needed to be discussed in detail. Many of Tertullian's criticisms of the circus stress the idolatry inherent in its origins, the venue itself, and the contents of the spectacle. He reports that the circus was primarily dedicated to the god Sol (Sun), with a temple of Sol on the central barrier of the racing track and the god's effigy on top of the temple. Tertullian also notes that some believe the name of the venue had its origins in the name of Circe, who first produced the circus spectacles for her father the Sun.<sup>190</sup> Numerous other idolatrous elements of the circus are identified by Tertullian, including the underground altar to Consus at which sacrifices were made before the races, and the race lap counters on the central barrier, shaped as eggs to honour Castor and Pollux, and as dolphins to

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<sup>190</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 8.

represent Neptune.<sup>191</sup> The list Tertullian makes of the many names of Roman deities associated with the circus and its features serves as a demonstration and warning to his Christian readers how much of a pagan religious connection there was in the circus and how much it was possessed by spirits of the devil.<sup>192</sup> Even the four colours of the circus factions, which Tertullian describes as each representing one of the four seasons and different accompanying deities, are argued to be offensive for their origins in pagan symbolism.<sup>193</sup> In Tertullian's view, it seems as if the idolatry of the venue was inescapable, fundamental to the space and the experience within it. The venue itself is a temple of sorts, dedicated to pagan deities and founded in pagan religious practices, and as such, it was inappropriate for a Christian to enter and take pleasure in a temple filled with idolatry and sinful activity.<sup>194</sup>

Tertullian does also note that, while the physical environments of the shows were inappropriate to Christian faith, the places themselves did not defile the spectators; rather, it was the things done in the places that corrupted those who attended.<sup>195</sup> When considering chariot racing itself, Tertullian identifies it as a simple sport that had been perverted to celebrate pagan idols and the horses used in the races, which had once been a gift of God, were now used in the service of demons and no longer represented the good of God.<sup>196</sup> The simple entertainment and animals involved had been contaminated by the

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<sup>191</sup> See Tert. *De Spect.* 5 and 8. According to myth, Castor and Pollux were hatched from an egg.

<sup>192</sup> See Tert. *De Spect.* 8.

<sup>193</sup> By Tertullian's account (*De Spect.* 9) the White was sacred to winter and the Zephyrs, the Red to summer and Mars, the Green to spring and the mother Earth, and the Blue to autumn and the sea and sky. See also 'Factions' in Chapter 3.

<sup>194</sup> See Sider 1978: esp. 350-1.

<sup>195</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 8.

<sup>196</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 9.

ties to pagan religious festivities and represented a spectacle of idolatrous celebrations with which a Christian should not engage. Not only was it possible to be corrupted by watching the shows but also Tertullian warns against the corruptive nature of the circus spectators, whose madness need to be avoided. Tertullian observes that the spectators of the circus were ruled by frenzy (*furor*) and a passionate love of the spectacle presentation with no self-control:

“Look at the populace coming to the show – mad already! Disorderly, blind, excited already about its bets! The praetor is too slow for them; all the time their eyes are on his urn, in it, as if rolling with the lots he shakes up in it. The signal is to be given. They are all in suspense, anxious suspense. One frenzy, one voice! (Recognize their frenzy from their empty-mindedness.) “He has thrown it!” they cry; everyone tells everybody else what every one of them saw, all of them on the instant. I catch at that evidence of their blindness; they do not see what was thrown – a handkerchief, they think; no! a picture of the devil hurled from heaven! So it begins and so it goes on, - to madness, anger, discord – to everything forbidden to the priests of peace. Next taunts or mutual abuse without any warrant of hate, and applause, unsupported by affection. What of their own are they going to achieve who act there in that way – when they are not their own?”<sup>197</sup>

The people in attendance at the circus were so easily swept up in emotions of the spectacle that there was, to Tertullian, a distinct lack of self-control and moderation. The spectators arrive already at a fever pitch, excited for the show to come, and once inside they reacted to everything with fierce emotion; they raged against the competitors, argued with one another, and obsessed over the smallest details. Tertullian remarks how the audience was so emotional that they lost respect for the *editor*, the sponsor of the games, yelling and cursing him for not beginning the races quickly enough. For Tertullian, the scene lacked any sense of decorum and represented a conflict to Christian religious

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<sup>197</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 16.

values. The hatred brought up in the competition, for opposing charioteers and even fans of a rival faction was inappropriate to Christian thought and Tertullian confronts his reader with the partisanship of the races as a fundamental problem of the circus. God forbids hating and cursing, and commands to love one's enemies and the partisanship of circus factions was contrary to those principles and did not encourage the sort of harmony desired of Christian life.<sup>198</sup> The circus was merciless and filled with an audience that had lost the sense of what is right and good in the madness of the spectacle, all of which demonstrated to Tertullian a disrespect of God's commands.

It is very plausible that Christians attended the spectacles presented at the circus. As was discussed in the previous section, the treatise was fundamentally intended to define why Christians should not attend, thereby suggesting that they had been going to the shows and that Tertullian set out his work to change their minds. Tertullian's knowledge of the circus and the races themselves is evident, as he describes aspects such as the inside of the venue, the division of the factions, the opening procession, the drawing of lots, and the reactions of the crowd. Although it is possible that Tertullian gathered this information second-hand from someone else who had attended the races, the amount of information and the detail provided does suggest that he had been at the circus himself. It could also be the case that Tertullian's writing was self-fashioning in order to present his best self-image for the public in his writing. It is apparent that the treatise presented a positive, and perhaps idealized, image of Christianity set in contradistinction to the pagan practices of the spectacles and thus could also present a positive self-image

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<sup>198</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 16.

of Tertullian, and the dutiful Christian he desired to be. Yet, from what is known of Tertullian and his rigidly conservative perspective, it seems unlikely that he attended the spectacles while also demanding their denunciation by his fellow Christians. It is possible that Tertullian attended the spectacles on a limited number of occasions but quickly became disgusted and stopped; this could account for both his knowledge of the shows and fit within his Christian faith. It is also possible that, as a young man, Tertullian went to the shows regularly and enjoyed the entertainments that engaged the populace and that, when he grew older he stopped attending, becoming more resolute in his conservative views and his condemnation of the circus and other spectacles. Whatever the exact circumstances, it is most likely that Tertullian maintained his distance from the shows, including the races, in which he found no redeeming qualities to support the deep love for them held by so many Romans.

### **1. 7. THE EMPEROR AT THE CIRCUS**

As has already been discussed, the views of the ancient sources with respect to the circus were often ambivalent at best; while few had serious criticisms with the races themselves, many sources were bothered by the response of the audience toward the spectacle. Repeatedly sources point to the mindlessness or frenzied fandom that came over spectators and show disappointment in the public's preference for such low entertainments instead of more intellectual pursuits.<sup>199</sup> Despite the opinions of these various authors, many emperors regularly attended the races at the circus which, for the

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<sup>199</sup> See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in this chapter.

most part, was perceived of as a useful political and social maneuver. Attendance at the circus was an opportunity for the emperor to show himself to the people and to garner recognition as the provider of the entertainment and the cause of such great display of Roman wealth and power.<sup>200</sup> Moreover, the emperor's presence lessened the perceived distance between the Roman populace and the elite leadership of Rome and helped the people to feel more connected to the political system of Rome.

It was politically valuable for the emperor to attend spectacles and demonstrate his interest in the events; this was particularly true in the transition away from the Republic, as Augustus needed to demonstrate his *civilitas* and position himself as the first citizen among fellow citizens. It was vital for Augustus, while asserting his authority at Rome, to seem accessible to the public; the public spectacles at the circus offered a perfect opportunity, both to be seen observing, and perhaps enjoying, the entertainments alongside the people.<sup>201</sup> In his biography of the *princeps*, Suetonius states that:

“He himself usually watched the games in the Circus from the upper rooms of his friends and freedmen, but sometimes from the imperial box, and even in company with his wife and children. He was sometimes absent for several hours, and now and then for whole days, making his excuses and appointing presiding officers to take his place. But whenever he was present, he gave his entire attention to the performance, either to avoid the censure to which he realized that his father Caesar had been generally exposed, because he spent his time in reading or answering letters and petitions; or from his interest and pleasure in the spectacle, which he never denied but often frankly confessed.”<sup>202</sup>

It is difficult to know whether Augustus' interest in the races was genuine or part of a necessary public persona to appear engaged with the public's interest. In either case,

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<sup>200</sup> On the use of spectacle to see and be seen, see Cameron 1976: 157-90; Hopkins 1983: 14-20; Millar 1977: 368-75; Parker 1999: 166-7.

<sup>201</sup> Bollinger 1969: 50-55.

<sup>202</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 45.1.



Suetonius gives an account of his actions that suggest Augustus took great care around the circus. Suetonius acknowledges that Augustus did miss entire days of circus spectacles, a stark difference from later emperors who seemed to forget their station as emperor when absorbed in the races; however, when Augustus did leave to attend to other affairs, he was sure to send another official in his place.<sup>203</sup> The races were popular with the people and it was important that Augustus was seen to understand this, both by giving the competitions his full attention when he was there, and being respectful of the favoured pastime when he did not attend.

Although the emperor's engagement with the races was meant to demonstrate his closeness to the people, it was necessary to maintain a sense of division appropriate to his position. At the circus the emperor was seated separate from the masses in the *pulvinar*, the imperial box, which provided some distance between the emperor and the regular circus audience and reinforced his separate and higher status. The imperial box seating also was apt to draw attention, easily seen raised amid the stands and positioned directly across from the finish line.<sup>204</sup> This was undoubtedly intentional since not only was the *pulvinar* the seat of the emperor, as well as the rest of the imperial family when they attended, but also it housed the statues of the gods for whom the circus games were

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<sup>203</sup> The emperor as a fan of the races will be discussed in Chapter 3. In this passage Suetonius also claims that Augustus would make an apology of some sort when he could not attend. It is unclear if this is to mean that he would arrive at the start of the day, perhaps attending the *pompa circensis*, and then take his leave after apologizing to the crowd, or if, perhaps more likely, a messenger was sent to offer condolences on his behalf.

<sup>204</sup> Millar (1977: 371) further suggests that the conspicuous nature of the imperial seating allowed the emperor to demonstrate favour to individuals simply by sitting with them in view of the common spectators.

presented.<sup>205</sup> The *pulvinar* was a place of honour that was meant to have a clear view of the circus and the track and to be seen clearly by the public; in this way those in the *pulvinar*, including the images of the gods, had a quality view of the competition, and those outside could see and celebrate the gods and the emperor inside.<sup>206</sup>

This clear view to the emperor gave the people a rare opportunity to see the head of Rome, a situation that the emperor recognized for its importance to be seen at his best and enjoying the day's races. As our primary source for the correspondences of Augustus to the members of his family, Suetonius reports one particular letter from Augustus sent to his wife Livia in which the emperor asserts that his great nephew Claudius should not sit in the imperial box "for he will be conspicuous if exposed to full view in front of the audience".<sup>207</sup> The focus of Augustus' message was likely the illness or impairment that afflicted Claudius, with Augustus troubled by how his great nephew might appear or act at the circus, and how he might be received by the public.<sup>208</sup> If the crowds became aware of Claudius' ill-health it is possible that such information would raise concerns about the health of the imperial family and the security of Rome at large. It is evident that Augustus was cognizant of public opinion in all of his actions and, in this instance, the scrutiny the imperial family faced when attending the games. The presence of the emperor at the circus and seated in the *pulvinar* could be beneficial to the emperor's dominance but it

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<sup>205</sup> E.g., Suet. *Aug.* 45.1; *Res Gestae* 19. For a close discussion of the *pulvinar* at the Circus Maximus, see Humphrey 1986: 78-83.

<sup>206</sup> It is likely that spectators were expected to make associations between the gods and the emperor who, seated in the *pulvinar* with the statues of the gods, could be likened to a god himself.

<sup>207</sup> Suet. *Claud.* 4.3.

<sup>208</sup> See Levick (1990: 13-15) for a survey of ancient evidence concerning Claudius' condition.

was necessary that he remain cautious of public perception and the responses of the crowd to his presence.<sup>209</sup>

By the end of the Republic, it seems that public spectacles had become known as events at which the people could raise concerns about the state or other issues affecting them.<sup>210</sup> Indeed, writing in 56 BCE, Cicero contends that:

“in truth, there are three places in which the opinion and inclination of the Roman people may be ascertained in the greatest degree; assemblies, elections, and meetings at the games and at exhibitions of gladiators”.<sup>211</sup>

With few places that the general public could have their voices heard, the circus offered an opportunity for contact with Roman officials, which became all the more important during the empire as the people had even less direct involvement with governance than before.<sup>212</sup> While officials were able to use the venue for their own gains, producing games that were welcomed by the people and earning themselves recognition and praise at the events, the politics and social issues of the time could make their way into the circus and divert attention from the spectacle at hand. By regularly attending the games the emperor was open to receive requests from the public and was resultingly left in a position to either grant the requests or offend the public and possibly cause more upset by refusing them in front of the entire circus audience.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> As Veyne (1990: 400) describes, “it followed that the shows became, in several ways, a political arena, because there the plebs and their sovereign came face to face.”

<sup>210</sup> See Cameron 1976: 157-92; Hopkins 1983: 14-20; Millar 1977: 368-375; Yavetz 1969: 18-24.

<sup>211</sup> Cic. *Sest.* 106.

<sup>212</sup> E.g., Tac. *Hist.* 1.72; Tert. *De Spect.* 16. The use of the public spectacles as opportunities for mass demonstrations and the expression of popular demands is discussed in particular by Bollinger (1969) and Yavetz (1969).

<sup>213</sup> Yavetz (1969: 18-21) contends that the feeling of power and the absence of individual responsibility when part of the large circus audience contributed significantly to the mass behaviour of the crowd and the willingness of the people to express their opinions before the emperor.

Two references to public protests by Tacitus demonstrate the possible positive change that could come about; in 19 CE, when the public protested the cost of grain Tiberius responded by fixing the prices, while in 58 CE Nero made a full review of the system of tax collection after the people complained about the revenue collectors.<sup>214</sup> The exact location of these protests are not included in Tacitus' accounts, although it is highly plausible that they took place in either the circus or the theatre, another venue that had been used for public complaints, where the people could make their concerns heard and demonstrate their seriousness in large groups.<sup>215</sup> An episode described by Cassius Dio likely took place in the Circus, as the crowds shouted at Hadrian while he attended a spectacle that he ought to manumit a particular charioteer.<sup>216</sup> The subject of the protest being a charioteer likely is an indication that it occurred at the Circus, possibly on a day that the charioteer in question was to race. In any event, Hadrian does not appear to have been swayed by the public's request, and Cassius Dio reports that the emperor left his reply on a public notice board that read: "It is not right for you either to ask me to free another's slave or to force his master to do so."<sup>217</sup>

An incident clearly identified as having taken place in the Circus is reported by the late first century CE historian Josephus in which, in January of 41 CE, the people had begun to protest the current high taxes in the hope that the emperor would ease their financial burdens. Josephus asserts that Caligula refused to listen to the demands of the people:

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<sup>214</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2.87, 13.50.

<sup>215</sup> See Cameron 1976: 164 n. 3.

<sup>216</sup> Dio Cass. 69.16.3.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

“and when they shouted louder and louder, he dispatched agents among them in all directions with orders to arrest any who shouted, to bring them forward at once and to put them to death”.<sup>218</sup>

While the story is of particular importance as a prelude to the emperor’s assassination, it is also a clear example of the public’s use of the Circus as a forum in which to air their grievances and seek change.

It is not all that surprising that the sources report instances of the emperor’s refusal and the negative results more often than occasions of the emperor’s agreement; it is hardly necessary to list the numerous times the emperor agreed and far more interesting to document turbulent outcomes. Yet even when the emperor denied the request of the people, the chance to give voice to their concerns offered a release for the masses.<sup>219</sup> Of course, this was not always the case, as there is ample evidence for circus riots in the later Empire, often begun after a protest or demand was made at the circus and not accepted by the emperor.<sup>220</sup> However, with no evidence for hostilities reaching such extremes in the early or high Empire, it appears that the games generally provided a safety valve for tensions and, after some hostility, and perhaps some angry shouting in the audience, attention would turn back to the races with the heightened emotions of the confrontation shifting to excitement concerned with the outcome of the races.

As has been shown, many elite Roman sources seem to agree that there were certain things that were inappropriate to elite behaviour and that watching the spectacles

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<sup>218</sup> Josephus *AJ.* 19. 25. See also Dio Cass. 59.13.3-4; Wiedemann 1992: 165-76.

<sup>219</sup> This is not to say that there was no hostility as a result the emperor’s refusal, as the competitive nature of the circus created an environment conducive to shouts and jeers, some of which could certainly be directed at the emperor.

<sup>220</sup> See Cameron 1976: 271-96; Whitby 1999; Whittaker 1964.

was one of them; yet, the emperor was the epitome of the elite and was regularly seen in attendance at the circus. While this might initially seem like a contradiction it was understood that the emperor, as representative for both the upper and lower classes, needed to engage with both aspects. The emperor's attendance at the races was in an official capacity rather than as a result of his own personal interest; the emperor displayed himself as the leader of the people in the circus context and attempted to create a sense of solidarity between the populace and himself. It was vital as leader of the Roman people that the emperor acknowledged the popularity of the races and showed similar interest in the spectacles as his people, a situation which the sources seem to have accepted. Suetonius often reports the facts of the emperor and his involvement with various *spectacula* but does not seek to emphasize his opinion or enforce judgements about it, presumably because he did not find imperial involvement to be a concern that he should address.<sup>221</sup> Despite negative comments elsewhere regarding the circus, Pliny the Younger compliments Trajan in his *Panegyricus* for adding seats in the circus and being there himself.<sup>222</sup> He does not criticize Trajan for his engagement with the circus and expansion of the monumental entertainment venue; instead, he offers praise for rebuilding the Circus Maximus and making it worthy of the Roman people, declaring that:

“Elsewhere the vast façade of the Circus rivals the beauty of the temples, a fitting place for a nation which has conquered the world, a sight to be seen on its own account as well as for the spectacles there to be displayed: to be seen indeed for its beauty, and still more for the way in which prince and people alike are seated on

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<sup>221</sup> E.g., Suet. *Jul.*39, *Aug.* 43-5, *Tib.* 47, *Cal.* 18-20, *Claud.* 21, *Nero* 11-13, *Dom.* 4. Suetonius does seem to have more concerns when addressing the interest of emperors in performing as charioteers themselves (see below).

<sup>222</sup> Plin. *Pan.* 51.2-5.

the same level. From one end to the other is a uniform plan, a continuous line, and Caesar as spectator shares the public seats as he does the spectacle.”<sup>223</sup>

Pliny is impressed by the structure itself and what it represents of Rome and of the people that could build such a venue. Looking to the interior of the Circus, Pliny is similarly pleased by the unity created in the seating as, by this period, the *pulvinar* was no longer an isolated podium amid the stands but had been lowered into line with the other seats. Such approval for this arrangement demonstrates that Pliny too identified the purpose of the emperor at the circus was to engage with the common people by means of a day shared taking in popular entertainment and to offer a connection that unified the population under his leadership.

The presence of the emperor at the games was accepted by the elites as a necessary part of his duties to acknowledge and embrace the popular interest and to improve his public image by sharing in the experience with the people. His presence was, in a sense, a performance that engaged the population and set the tone for social and religious order. However, as will be discussed further in an upcoming chapter, there were instances when the emperor’s actions went beyond the accepted decorum, with some emperors showing themselves to be great fans of the races, even practicing as charioteers themselves.<sup>224</sup> It was this behaviour that the sources took issue with, asserting their disapproval of conduct they considered inappropriate for someone of the emperor’s station. The emperor’s attendance at the circus was meant to be primarily in an official

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<sup>223</sup> Plin. *Pan.* 51.3-5.

<sup>224</sup> E.g., Suet. *Calig.* 22.2, 54.1, 54.2; *Nero* 22.2; *Vit.* 4, 12. See ‘The Emperor as a Racing Fan’ in Chapter 3.

capacity to maintain a strong relationship with the people and assure social, religious, and political order. While the emperor's attentiveness to the races was beneficial for his intended public image, it was important that his official role at the circus superseded any genuine interest he had in the sport, and that he attended the races as the venerated emperor among the spectators and not as a fellow devoted fan.



## CHAPTER 2.

### A DAY AT THE RACES

#### 2. 1. INTRODUCTION

The interest Romans had in chariot racing relied heavily on the live experience at the circus and the examination of the circus from the spectator's perspective can assist in the study of the races, by showing both how spectators interacted with the space and how it influenced their perception of the day's events and their enjoyment of the sport. There were multiple races in a day, although the number differed over time; during the late Republic and early Empire the *ludi circenses* consisted of ten to twelve races, interspersed with other performances and athletic competitions, until Caligula increased the number of races to twenty-four.<sup>225</sup> Special occasions also resulted in an increase in the number of races, and Suetonius notes an exceptional case in which Domitian reduced the number of laps in a race from seven to five in order to fit a hundred races in the Secular games.<sup>226</sup>

The many races made the *ludi circenses* a full day affair that engaged visitors from morning to evening and, while the races were indeed central to the event, there was a

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<sup>225</sup> Ten races: Dio Cass. 60.23.5. Twenty-four races: Dio Cass. 60.27.2. Suetonius (*Nero* 22.2) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.74) both report that Nero increased the number of races, although they do not specify how many races he added. Cassiodorus (*Var.* 3.51.10) asserts that the twenty-four races were symbolic and intended to equal the number of hours in a day. This is in stark contrast to the sixth century circus programme from Oxyrhynchus that only mentions six races in the day's events (*P. Oxy.* 34.2707). This programme will be discussed in an upcoming section.

<sup>226</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 4.3. When the birthday celebrations for the emperor Trajan coincided with the commemorations for Constantine's victory over Licinius the number of races were doubled to forty-eight. Similarly, the birthday celebrations of Nerva and Constantius coincided on November 8<sup>th</sup> resulting in two festivals of twenty-four races combining for a day of forty-eight races. See Salzman 1990: 131-145.

great deal more involved in a day at the races. A spectator's time at the circus began with their arrival, continuing as they moved through the corridors and into a seat, and concluded only after exiting at the end of the day. With so much time spent in the space, it is apparent that one's day was heavily influenced by the venue itself and other factors inside. It is important to recognize these influences in order to understand the full lived experience of a spectator.

As was noted in the previous chapter, some of the concerns that elite Roman authors had with the races concerned the reactions of the crowd and the emotional state of the spectators during the spectacle.<sup>227</sup> The Christian apologist Tertullian presents the spectator experience as evidence for the immoderate behaviour at the circus that was contrary to Christian ideals. In particular, he emphasizes the overarching excitement and enthusiasm demonstrated by spectators as they yell at the competitors and argue with one another.<sup>228</sup> Tertullian's account is not only heavily characterized by his Christian disapproval of the emotions stirred up by the races, but also focuses almost entirely on the spectator's time watching the spectacle, without offering insight to any other aspects of the day. A more significant source for this information is Ovid who, in both the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, provides information concerning the spectator's time in the stands and possible interaction with other audience members, as will be discussed further below. As his attentions are focused on those seated around him more so than the action on the track, Ovid's accounts offer valuable details concerning the spectator's time in the stands;

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<sup>227</sup> See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1.

<sup>228</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 16. See Chapter 1 n. 146.

however, they still do not address the full experience at the circus, which began long before one had sat down in the audience.

Before any of the day's races had begun, spectators had already spent a significant amount of time inside the circus, and therefore the venue itself is a central point of analysis.<sup>229</sup> The limited remains of the Circus Maximus make it necessary to examine the evidence available from other circuses as well, notably the circus at Lepcis Magna in Libya, one of the best-preserved circuses and a vital source of information concerning the design of the venue. It is apparent that circuses followed a similar pattern in construction and design, with many modeled on the Circus Maximus, thereby allowing for comparative analysis among circuses. Other Roman entertainment venues are also worthy of consideration, as theatres and amphitheatres were constructed with similar goals as the circus, to serve as venues within which the public could both observe various performances and spectacles and be entertained in a comfortable and safe space. The evidence for these other venues can serve as useful comparisons to the design and function of circuses and can be used to fill in gaps where evidence in the circus context is lacking.

The archaeological remains and written records of Roman circuses suggest that care was taken in the design of the venues to address what was needed for the spectators who would be attending. While the size and capacity of circuses differs among the venues, the functional elements such as entry-points and stairways often follow a similar

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<sup>229</sup> Despite the growth in popularity of the chariot races, some communities only maintained temporary wooden venues, if they built anything at all. However, as focal points of the popularity of chariot racing, and venues which served large numbers of spectators, the focus of this study will be on the monumental stone venues of races.

design. It is apparent that crowd management was considered in the construction of the venue, as issues such as the ease of the audience's entry and exit, the flow of movement throughout the venue, and general safety and comfort in the space are addressed in the design in a manner suitable for high volumes of traffic as seen at a circus. The result was more than just a functional design, but an attempt to create optimal conditions in the space for spectators.

By all accounts, in order for the chariot races to have maintained their long-standing and widespread popularity, it was essential that spectators enjoyed their time at the circus. Unlike spectatorship of modern sports, in which media permit individuals to take in a sport without attending the competition, it was impossible for Romans to separate the viewing of the races and the live experience at the venue and still engage with the sport in a meaningful way. Consequently, Roman fans needed to accept that the experience at the circus was necessary for their connection to the sport; although the races were the focus of the day, if an individual hated their time at the venue it is unlikely that they would be keen to return.<sup>230</sup> Furthermore, the *ludi circenses* were presented as part of religious festivals to honour the gods and celebrate important events in the year. With such significance ascribed to the races, it would have reflected poorly on the occasion if those in attendance were uncomfortable or not enjoying the event as a result of issues in the venue. Similarly, it was a central concern for the *editor*, the sponsor of the games, that the day be well-received by the public in order that he have the best returns in

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<sup>230</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 4, it is possible that for some the experience at the venue was a greater draw than the content of the sport.

publicity and popularity; if the day did not go smoothly, he was sure to be blamed. It is apparent that there were many reasons to ensure a quality experience from start to finish and that all those involved had the motivation to provide a venue that was conducive to a positive experience for the spectator.

While the structure of the races once underway has been well documented and does not need to be covered here, it is necessary to address how spectators observed the races, from the comfort of the seat to the quality of the view. It is unlikely that spectators spent a day at the races without interactions with those seated around them influencing their day, whether it was a lengthy conversation about a race, possible wager on the outcome, or an emotional connection found amid the cheers of the crowd. So too, the other features and facilities at the circus, the shops and vendors offering goods and services to visitors and the performances put on between races, drew the attention of those in attendance. Thus, all aspects of what was seen, heard and felt by a spectator must be considered in order to produce a full account of the spectator experience in a day at the races.

## **2. 2. ARRIVALS**

The first contact a spectator had with the venue was certainly the most important; it informed what the experience was apt to be like as the spectator gathered first impressions of the venue and the event.<sup>231</sup> With many people attempting to enter the

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<sup>231</sup> If it is a difficult and stressful arrival, with large and uncomfortable crowds, it is reasonable to suspect that spectators would not be pleased and would enter the building in a negative state of mind.

same building at relatively the same time, it was important to aid the flow of movement into and through the space. It had to be ensured that spectators could find their way easily and safely, without people getting lost or areas becoming overcrowded or blocked.<sup>232</sup>

Prior to the start of an event, before spectators were allowed to enter the venue, crowds gathered outside, and thus a large open area of space outside the venue helped to control the crowds and to provide a safe space to gather. Such a ‘buffer zone’ between the venue and any nearby streets and structures also eased the flow of traffic before and after events. This was not much different from modern venues, which often provide an open, paved area for spectators to gather in before the event and to disperse through after. At Rome, broad travertine pavements bordered three major entertainment venues, the Colosseum, the Theatre of Marcellus, and the Circus Maximus, separating each of them from the surrounding area.<sup>233</sup> At the Colosseum, a series of five stone blocks still stand upright around the edge of this space, likely once having encircled the entire venue.<sup>234</sup> The original function of these stones has been much debated, with possible uses including anchor points to secure and hold the awning (*velarium*) atop the amphitheatre, or a method by which to aid crowd control and to block vehicular traffic from moving too close to the venue.<sup>235</sup> As a method of crowd and traffic control, the blocks would have

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<sup>232</sup> Peter Rose (2005) considers similar issues of movement and flow patterns through entertainment venues at Rome. Throughout this chapter I will engage closely with Rose’s analysis, particularly his work regarding the Circus Maximus.

<sup>233</sup> Rose 2005: 103-4. A section of this, measuring 17.5 metres remains visible on the eastern side of the Colosseum.

<sup>234</sup> Sear 1983: 144, fig. 84. Similar blocks can also be found outside the amphitheatres of Puteoli and Capua. See Bomgardner 2000: 76 (Puteoli), 90-1 (Capua).

<sup>235</sup> Bomgardner 2000: 5 n. 5, 76; Scobie 1988: 220-1; Sear 1983: 143. Cf. Rose 2005: 103-4.

created a safe pedestrian space around an entertainment venue, including the circus.<sup>236</sup>

Fragments of the Marble Plan that include the southeastern end of the Circus Maximus also show a road, approximately twelve metres wide, around the perimeter of the Circus, which likely aided the circulation around the venue for local traffic and improved accessibility for the arriving crowds.<sup>237</sup> A pedestrian zone around the perimeter of a circus served as an area within which spectators could take time to find the appropriate entrance to access their seats, as well as a space that permitted socialization and interaction among spectators. The space would have been filled not only by spectators, but also by merchants selling their wares to the waiting public.<sup>238</sup>

Given the capacity estimates of the Circus Maximus and other monumental circuses, it is understandable that open space would be needed around the perimeter of the venue in order to accommodate the large crowds before they entered. It is not clear when spectators were permitted to enter the circus, although Suetonius remarks on an excited group that waited overnight outside the Circus, the noise from which disturbed the emperor.<sup>239</sup> This suggests that there was a time in the morning when the public could gain entry, perhaps after preparations for the spectacles had been made and the competitors and other staff had arrived. Accordingly, it is possible that, once allowed

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<sup>236</sup> In order to ensure crowd and traffic control, it is likely that rope or chain was strung between the blocks to limit entry points to the pedestrian space. In modern stadium design, similar concerns for space outside the building are present, as a “safety zone” of twenty metres is recommended to encircle the venue (John, Sheard, Vickery 2013: 30-32, 168-9).

<sup>237</sup> Humphrey 1986: fig. 119, 121. It is likely that this road went around the entire circus, although the fragmentary condition of the Marble Plan makes it difficult to confirm.

<sup>238</sup> The shops and independent vendors found around the circus will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>239</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 26.4 (*inquietatus fremitu gratuita in circo loca de media nocte occupantium, omnis fustibus abegit; elisi per eum tumultum uiginti amplius equites R., totidem matronae, super innumeram turbam ceteram*). See also *S.H.A. Elag.* 23.2.

inside, there was a sharp influx of those who had gathered in advance of the day's events.<sup>240</sup> Those who had been waiting for some time, particularly those who stayed overnight, were likely to be very excited and highly anticipating the start of the races, an emotional state which could make the experience for the spectators more difficult and stressful, and in need of a venue design that addressed concerns of traffic flow for the ease and comfort of those entering and exiting.

With such large groups of spectators entering the Circus, there needed to be clear identification of entry points, so that individuals could take a route that would get them to their seats most easily and efficiently. At the Colosseum, Roman numerals (I to LXXVI) inscribed above the ground level arches around the perimeter of the building were used to indicate the different entrances to arriving spectators.<sup>241</sup> Although the remaining archaeological evidence does not give any indication of it, it is probable, given the size of the Circus and the number of possible entrances distributed around its circumference, that there was some form of identification or signage at the exterior entrances to help guide people inside.<sup>242</sup> Arriving spectators may have been aided by visual cues based in the physical layout of the structure itself, with some choosing to enter as close as possible to the curved end of the circus, others walking to the middle of one of the long sides, or accessing the seats from closer to the starting gates at the open end of the circus. As will

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<sup>240</sup> There would be a similarly large movement at the end of the day as spectators exited the venue, which could in fact be more intense with the full capacity of the circus choosing to leave at the same time, rather than possible staggered arrivals at the start of the day.

<sup>241</sup> The numbers began on the south side of the building and continued counter-clockwise. The four entrances at the major axes were not numbered.

<sup>242</sup> At the amphitheatre at Capua, sculpted images of various divine figures decorate the exterior arches, which served to differentiate the entrances for the spectators (Bomgardner 2000: 91, 95-6).



be discussed below, the seating at the circus was not as rigidly controlled as it was at the amphitheatre, and therefore, without the need to reach specific seats, there was less of a need to ensure access from a particular entrance. Instead, it is probable that spectators selected a seat based upon its location along the track and from where they preferred to view the races; however, given the size of the Circus Maximus, at 621 metres in length, it is also probable that spectators could easily lose track of their position in relation to the seating layout inside when walking along the outside the venue.<sup>243</sup> In an effort to maintain order at such a monumental venue it is likely that some form of labeling, whether numbers or symbols, was used to distinguish the entrances and identify their access to different sections of seats.

The number of entrances at the circus ensured that the crowds gathered outside would begin to be distributed around the building on arrival. Individual spectators then could choose either to walk around the perimeter of the building until they found the entrance that would provide the most direct route to their seating section, or to enter immediately and walk in the covered portico just inside the façade of the building. The portico served as a comfortable walking path with shade and access to shops out of the direct path of the crowd moving into the circus, and the colonnaded galleries that ran behind the back of the uppermost level of seats provided lateral circulation through the venue, in contrast to the radiating passages and staircases that led people in and out of the building.<sup>244</sup>

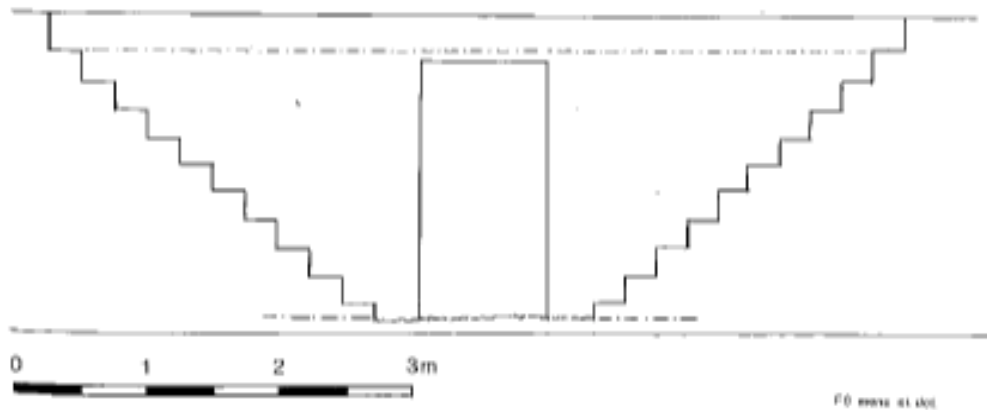
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<sup>243</sup> See 'Seating' section below.

<sup>244</sup> There was a colonnaded gallery in the circus at Lepcis Magna, and there is believed to have been one at Carthage, El Djem, and Hadrumetum (Humphrey 1986: 336).

### 2.3. ACCESSING SEATS

The monumental arch at one end of the Circus Maximus served as an access point for spectators as well as the numerous entrances that were positioned around the circumference at the ground or arena level.<sup>245</sup> Beyond the arcades in the façade were passages through the substructure of the seating tiers that reached from the outer arcades to the podium wall, with a doorway providing access out to the arena level and track. Often, a set of stairs was built directly into the interior side of the podium wall, by which spectators could move from the arena level up to the first set of seats (fig. 1).<sup>246</sup>

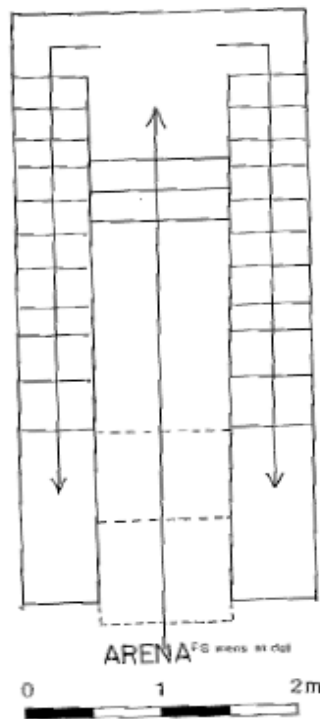


**Figure 1**  
Plan of stairway type 1, as seen at Lepcis Magna  
(Humphrey 1986: fig. 13)

<sup>245</sup> The circus at Lepcis was attached to the adjacent amphitheatre, allowing people to make their way between the venues over the upper section of seats or through tunnels under the seating tiers in the shared hillside (Humphrey 1986: 27). The choice to construct the entertainment venues in this way demonstrates a keen interest in improving the flow of traffic between the venues by offering spectators different points of entry and exit. On either side of the monumental arch at Tyre were additional entrances for access to the podium level and the stairs to higher levels (Humphrey 1986: 471).

<sup>246</sup> Humphrey (1986: 33) identifies this type of stairway as having been most commonly used in later circuses, such as at Tyre and in the Circus of Maxentius.

From here, as well as from elsewhere on the ground level and beyond, subsequent tiers of seats could be accessed by means of stairways built into the substructures of the seating tiers. In order to fit beneath the seating tiers, the stairways were designed to break halfway, with the second half of the stairway doubling back above the first (fig. 2).

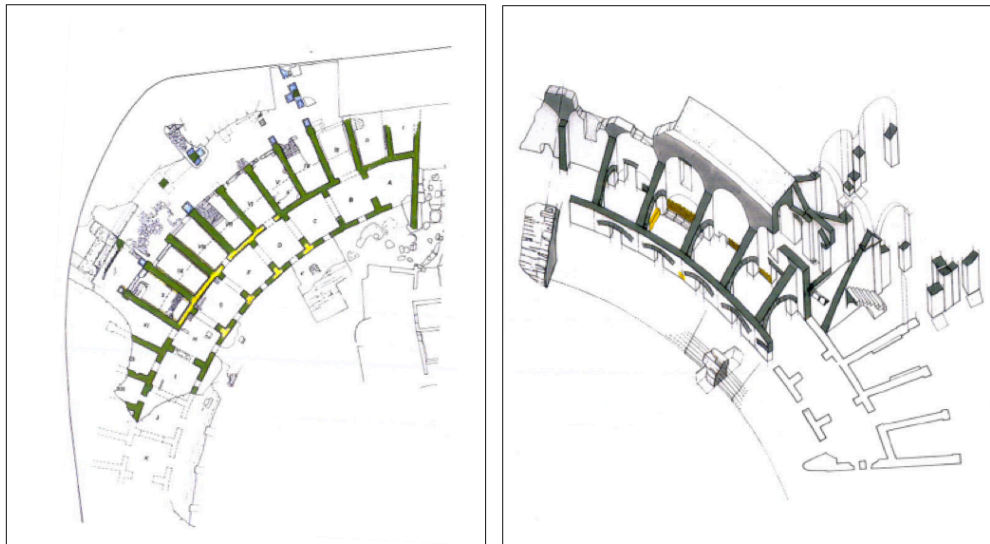


**Figure 2**  
Plan of stairway type 2, as seen at Lepcis Magna  
(Humphrey 1986: fig. 12)

The stairways were distributed throughout the venue to ensure that each level could be accessed around the circus.

Although the limited remains of the Circus Maximus hinder the ability to map traffic flow through the structure, it is apparent from its well preserved substructures that the venue followed the typical design and emphasized efficient routes of travel for visitors. The passageways in the substructures of the seating tiers allowed spectators to

move directly from the exterior of the building to the back of the podium wall where a stairway that split on either side of the doorway through the podium wall led to the first seating level.<sup>247</sup> Spectators could also move to the upper levels of seats at the Circus Maximus by way of staircases positioned in every third bay. Groups of three rooms are found in the surviving section of the Circus, one room fully enclosed and likely having been used as a shop, one with a doorway to the substructures below the seats, and one with a stairway to the next level (fig. 3).<sup>248</sup>



**Figure 3**  
Plans of series of rooms in remains of Circus Maximus  
(Ciancio Rossetto 2008: fig. 4)

<sup>247</sup> This same type of stairway is seen around the first level of the circus at Tyre (Humphrey 1986: fig. 222, 468).

<sup>248</sup> Humphrey 1986: 114, fig. 50. At Antioch, these same types of stairways are distributed in every fourth bay, although in a few instances they are further apart in every fifth bay (Humphrey 1986: 448-449). Similar manners of access found at the Circus Maximus are apparent at Lepcis Magna, with staircases at the podium level that break left and right, as well as staircases to subsequent levels that double back (see Humphrey 1986: figs. 12 and 13). Some circuses, such as at Toledo, also had external stairways that led from outside the building to the first level of seats (Humphrey 1986: 353). This is also seen in the design of the amphitheatre at Pompeii. The circus at Toledo also demonstrates how the topography of the site could alter the venue's design. In this case the ground level outside the circus was lower than that within the arena, thus requiring spectators to follow an additional set of stairs from the bay floor to reach the arena ground level.

Once out among the mass of seats, additional stairways divided the seats into sections or wedges (*cunei*), which aided the flow of traffic throughout the rows and back to the access points to the tier. It is apparent that the design of circuses ensured that, when accessing seats, spectators were provided with a simple choice of a flight of stairs; each stairway served as a break point at which the spectators were divided further, as some spectators would stay on the current level to find their seats, while others moved higher up in the venue.

The number of entry points and stairways at Roman circuses demonstrates that ease and efficiency of movement was of utmost concern in the building design. Accordingly, modern methods for the functional design of entertainment buildings are not unlike those applied in ancient construction, with traces of the same goals evident in the design of the circuses.<sup>249</sup> The first method for safe and efficient movement is to keep the choices simple. This ensures the quickest, safest, and most comfortable route to one's seat when moving within a crowd, particularly, if feeling rushed prior to the start of the event, one might make a wrong turn if too many options are presented. The second method advises that there be clear visibility and buffer-zones to allow people the time and space to slow down and consider what is before them and not block a corner or staircase when deciding their route.<sup>250</sup> Both methods are present in the design of circuses not only by means of clear routes for the ingress and egress of spectators, but also by lateral

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<sup>249</sup> See John et al., 2013: esp. 171.

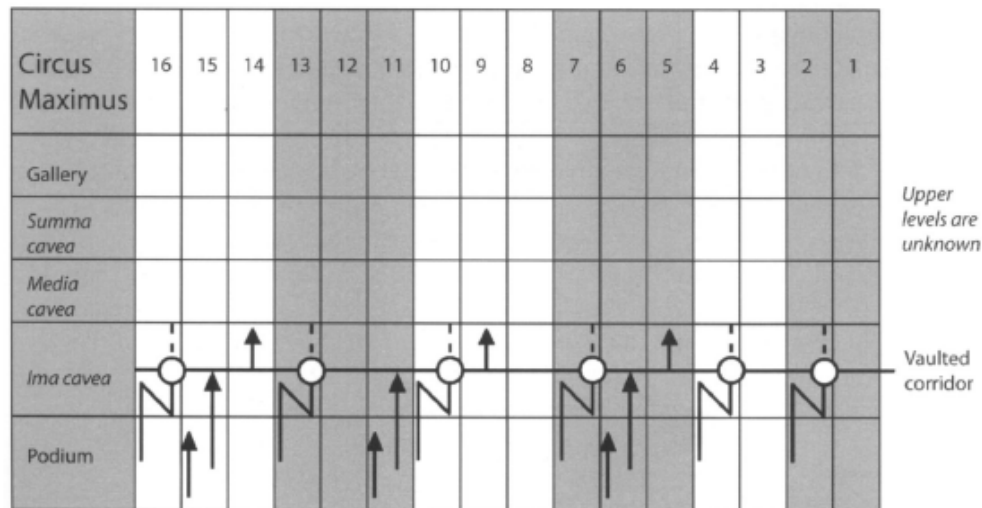
<sup>250</sup> John et al., (2013: 171) offer additional methods, including the presence of good stewarding, to assist people in finding their seats. There is no evidence to indicate that this additional step was taken at the Roman circus; rather, the design of the venue was meant to be simple enough to guide spectators appropriately.

passageways, shops, and other spaces within which arriving crowds could stand out of the flow of traffic when deciding where to go. The design of the staircases that doubled back on themselves also aided in this, as the landing created by the directional change of the staircase could offer some space, however limited, for spectators who have slowed or stopped on their way, without dramatically disrupting the flow of traffic.

Peter Rose has applied the methods of J.-C. Golvin, who combined information from axonometric and plan drawings to analyze the circulation system in amphitheatres, to other entertainment buildings, including the Circus Maximus.<sup>251</sup> The graph produced by Rose (fig. 4) presents the available information for the two lower levels of the Circus Maximus that can be gathered from the surviving section. The vertical column or y-axis lists the original five levels of the Circus; the horizontal, x-axis represents the identified passageways of the Circus, numbered on the graph as 1 through 16. In the body of the graph Rose uses an arrow to indicate a *vomitorium*, and a circle to indicate a point of choice for a spectator. It is at such a point that the spectator can enter the seating tier or continue to the next level.

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<sup>251</sup> See Golvin 1988: esp. 368-9, pl. LX, 1 and 2. Ward-Perkins (1981: fig. 31) provides another very successful axonometric drawing of the Colosseum, which has been used in many other works and can be used to compare the designs of passageways and staircases of the iconic amphitheatre to those of the Circus Maximus.



**Figure 4**  
 Analysis of circulation system at Circus Maximus  
 (Rose 2005: fig. 8)

Rose’s graphical analysis further demonstrates the simple choices offered to spectators when moving through the circus and the intended clarity of the circulation system at the Circus Maximus. The entrances to the first level were evenly spread throughout the structure, thus ensuring that the arriving crowds could be divided up from the outset. Individuals flowed through the available passageways in these small groups until they were provided with another place to go. After proceeding up the first flight of stairs beyond the podium level, spectators were faced with a choice, either to proceed up the next flight of stairs or to exit the flow of traffic out to the *cavea*. If a spectator elected to remain on the present level, a vaulted corridor behind the seating tier helped to facilitate movement. These annular passages around the seats were particularly important at the circus. While the layout of a venue such as the Colosseum would encourage the progression of spectators upward through the stands, at a circus movement around the

building needed to be taken into greater consideration, in an effort to spread spectators down the length of the venue. The more elaborate flow patterns in the Colosseum are also associated with the hierarchy of the seating, which dictated each spectator's movement through the building.<sup>252</sup> Due to the regulations on seating at amphitheatres, the choices for movement at the Colosseum were designed more in terms of deciding whether one would move around the venue before or after climbing to one's predetermined seating level. At other venues, social status had already determined a spectator's destination and left only the choice of how to get there, while at the circus more seating options were left open for arriving spectators. Choices were kept simple, with the intention of avoiding confusion as circus spectators made their way into the *cavea*, and the well-designed structure of passages ensured both that individuals could make a quick decision on their way and that their decision-making would not slow the movement of others who could be blocked on stairways or in corridors. Spectators needed to be able to find their seats quickly and efficiently in order to fill the large capacity of the circus before the races were to begin.

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<sup>252</sup> Bomgardner 2000: 14-16. Sear (1983: 138) posits that, with this division engrained in the routes of access in the amphitheatre, even stairways were used by the separate social classes. As only elite citizens were permitted to sit in the lowest seats, they were the only spectators who needed to move deep into the seating substructures toward those seats. Each subsequent rank would move down the passageways less and utilize a different route to climb to the next tier of seats. The spectators who would expect to sit in the uppermost seats would need to go no further than the stairways in the outer galleries. An extensive study of spectacle seating was completed by Jones 2008 (PhD. Diss., McMaster University).



## 2. 4. SEATING

All movement through a venue relies upon the movement of spectators into their seats. At venues like theatres and amphitheatres, spectators were required to sit in certain locations based upon social groups.<sup>253</sup> Legislation made clear regulations for seating at venues like theatres and amphitheatres; spectators were required to sit in certain locations divided among the *ordines* – senators, *equites*, and urban plebs, with further possible divisions of social hierarchy within these groups.<sup>254</sup> Another set of divisions was made among the urban plebs and separated non-citizens, women, and slaves, who would sit at the very back of the venue. This sort of seating stratification did not begin until the early second century BCE, when, in 194 BCE, senators were singled out from the mass of spectators, and provided with a section of seats reserved for their use.<sup>255</sup> In the late Republic, the three *ordines* were seated separately at the theatre with the *lex Roscia theatralis* of 67 BCE reserving the fourteen front rows of theatre seating for *equites*.<sup>256</sup> While seating at the *munera* was not yet as strictly regulated, there is evidence that some of the best seating areas were set aside for magistrates and their families.<sup>257</sup> Extensive new regulations in the seating of entertainment venues were introduced by Augustus, including the *lex Iulia theatralis*, which first addressed seating arrangements in the theatre

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<sup>253</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 44. For studies on the organized seating of theatres and amphitheatres, see especially Kolendo 1981; Rawson 1987; Small 1987; Gunderson 1996: 123-6; and Edmondson 1996: 84-95.

<sup>254</sup> Ville (1981: 439) posits that slaves may have been permitted to attend if they paid for their own seats.

<sup>255</sup> Livy 34.44.5, 34.54.3-8; Cic. *Har. Resp.* 24; Val. Max. 2.4.3. In the earliest forms of the Circus, the wooden bleachers built by Tarquinius Priscus were divided into thirty sections, one for each tribe (Dion. Hal. 3.68.1)

<sup>256</sup> Cic. *Sest.* 120. *Lex Roscia theatralis*: Cic. *Phil.* 2.44; Dio Cass. 36.42.1; Plut. *Cic.* 13.2-4.

<sup>257</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 9.7.16, 9.16. The seats were held in posterity for the children of the magistrates.

and was later extended to the amphitheatre.<sup>258</sup> The new guidelines for seating in the theatre and amphitheatre gave an added purpose to the entertainment venues, as an ideal representation of social and political hierarchy, strictly controlled by the power of the *princeps*, and a reminder of the order of the state to all who attended.

By the Imperial period, the social segregation of seating at these venues was well defined and recognized, yet most of the legislation did not address the seating at the circus.<sup>259</sup> According to Cassius Dio, Augustus did introduce a system of division among the *ordines* at the Circus as “the senators witnessed the Circensian games separately and the knights also separately from the remainder of the populace, as is the case to-day also”.<sup>260</sup> It is not clear how extensively this was enforced or for how long, and elsewhere Dio asserts that it was Claudius who established a section for senators in AD 41, explaining that the three classes – senatorial, equestrian, and populace – had long sat apart from one another at the games without any official divisions or seating arrangements prior to Claudius’ new system.<sup>261</sup> Given the demarcations of seating that had previously been put in place, it is likely this was a reintroduction of an earlier regulation, possibly one from among the reforms of Augustus.<sup>262</sup> Nero followed this by standardizing seats for the *equites* in front of the urban *plebs* beyond the fourteen rows that the Roscian law

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<sup>258</sup> See Rawson (1987) for a close study of the *lex Iulia theatralis*.

<sup>259</sup> On occasion, *ludi* could be held in the circus rather than the more traditional venue of the amphitheatre, and, as such, there could be some ties to the circus in the legislation presented. However, as there is no mention of chariot racing, the connections to seating at the circus cannot be taken to have a great effect on our overall understanding of seating at the popular races.

<sup>260</sup> Dio Cass. 55.22.4 (‘καὶ τὰς ἵπποδρομίας χωρὶς μὲν οἱ βουλευταὶ χωρὶς δὲ οἱ ἱππῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ λοιποῦ’). See also Coltelloni-Trannoy 1999: 493.

<sup>261</sup> Dio Cass. 60.7.3-4. See also Suet. *Claud.* 21.3.

<sup>262</sup> It is possible that the seating at the circus was affected by the senatorial decree of 26 B.C., which reserved the front rows of venues for senators. Coltelloni-Trannoy 1999: 487, 492; Leppin 2011: 663.

provided.<sup>263</sup> Despite these changes, the seating at the circus was not as rigidly assigned nor were the regulations as strictly followed as at other venues; even though senators were provided with a section of seats of their own at the circus, they were not required to sit there.<sup>264</sup> Rawson suggests that even the upper *ordines* appreciated the open and unregulated seating arrangements at the circus, as they could choose where they preferred to sit.<sup>265</sup> Moreover, the circus did not enforce seating divisions based upon gender, as the accounts of the circus by Ovid make it clear that women and men could sit together, while elsewhere women would not be present except at the very back in the uppermost rows.<sup>266</sup> It is impossible that such open seating did not influence the spectator experience, particularly as it was something unique to the circus that was not seen at other entertainment venues. While it seems unlikely that people of all social classes intermingled themselves without any second thought, there is also no evidence for those

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<sup>263</sup> Suet. *Nero* 11.1; Tac. *Ann.* 15.32. Nero had a new seating section built around the edge of the arena. The reserved senatorial seats moved to the newly built section and the *equites* were given the existing space behind them (Plin. *HN*. 8.7.21). See also Humphrey 1986: 647 n. 240.

<sup>264</sup> Provided the senators were not wearing their full senatorial dress, they were permitted to sit with the *plebs* (Suet. *Claud.* 21.3; Dio Cass. 60.7.3-4).

<sup>265</sup> Rawson 1987: 113. Edmondson (2002: 44) posits that while in theory the elite and plebs could sit together at the *ludi*, it is likely that in practice the elite took advantage of their status and sat in the front seats. See also Val. Max. 4.5.1.

<sup>266</sup> In sections of both the *Amores* (3.2) and the *Ars Amatoria* (1.135-176) Ovid describes a scene in which a man is seated beside a woman in the circus stands, which Ovid employs as an opportunity for flirtation. See also Ovid *Tr.* 2.282-283; Juv. *Sat.* 11.201; Plaut. *Poen.* 32-5; Suet. *Aug.* 44.1; Ter. *Hec.* 35; Vitr. 5.3.1; Bollinger 1969: 19-20; Rawson 1987: 90-91. There are a number of possible reasons for this division by gender, including the intent to shield women from the violence of the spectacles, from the gazes of male spectators, or even from contact with gladiators, who often became celebrities and symbols of sexual prowess (E.g., *CIL* IV. 4289, 4342, 4345, 4353, 4356 = *ILS* 5142 a-e, and *CIL* IV. 4397). See also Kyle 2007: 218). Bomgardner (2000: 11, 16-17) further suggests either that the colonnade behind these seats perched atop the venue shaded the women seated there from the sun (thereby protecting the pale complexion of the women), or that the requirement to climb so high to reach their seats might have been intended as a deterrent against female attendance entirely. The only exception made was for the Vestal Virgins, who were afforded a space separated from the rest of the seats (Rawson 1987: 85). It is reasonable to believe that there were hierarchical divisions among women's seats as well that reflected the ranks divided elsewhere in the venue, with elite women seated in front of those of lower status (Rawson 1987: 89-90).

of the upper classes creating a disturbance at having to sit near people from the lower classes. We might imagine that, although there were not official divisions of seating based on social classes, people were likely to have often sat with people they knew, thereby unintentionally making groups of the same social class.<sup>267</sup> Even still, with the classes of society less divided than at other entertainment venues, the seating stands at the circus invited a more open, unrestrictive atmosphere, in which spectators found common ground in the day's entertainments and the community of a unified audience.

The reason that the circus did not receive or maintain the same rules and regulations for seating as other entertainment venues had much to do with the design of the seating itself and the inability to mimic the divisions of social status within it. The stratified seating arrangements in theatres and amphitheatres reflected and reinforced the ordered and ranked nature of Roman society; seats rose high up, with each new tier of seats accommodating another rank in society and separate rows or wedges (*cunei*) of seats demarcating further divisions in the seating of social groups.<sup>268</sup> Yet, unlike the height of other venues, the focus at the circus was on spreading through its elongated shape, thereby creating a venue in which social classes were not as easily defined and segregated into vertical hierarchies. At the theatre, the front rows were strictly reserved for senators, but at the circus, senators could never fill the entire front row of such a long circuit and

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<sup>267</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 3, many spectators sat with other supporters of their preferred faction. While this could appear to be a factor that further categorized and subdivided the audience, it is likely that some individuals with connections in other aspects of their lives also happened to share a common partisanship for a particular circus faction, which led them to sit together at the races.

<sup>268</sup> In his description of the seating regulations made by Augustus, Suetonius (*Aug.* 44.1) notes that separate areas of seating were defined for particular groups, including soldiers, married plebeians, and freeborn boys and their tutors. The freeborn boys were given their own area of seats, with the seats nearest to them assigned to the boys' tutors.

even if they did, the distance would spread them out and result in very different viewing experiences for the individual senators. The wide nature of the circus, with a long *cavea* and low height, required that the seats available in the front rows be offered to numerous different groups.<sup>269</sup> It was necessary to spread spectators out along the length of the building to ensure the maximum capacity and the best viewing conditions possible for all spectators.<sup>270</sup> Cassius Dio reports that during a day of races under Nero, the elephants leading the chariot of Augustus went as far as the senators' seats and no further, indicating that the senators were seated together in one section rather than spread around the front rows of the entire circus.<sup>271</sup> As the opening procession, of which the chariot was a part, stopped in front of the *pulvinar* for the statues of the gods to be deposited for the duration of the races, it is likely that the senators sat in a section along the length of the circus where they had a clear view of the races as well as the preceding ceremonies.<sup>272</sup>

While there may have been partial segregation at some point in the circus, seating in the venue by the time of Augustus was not fully defined by social groups and therefore the movement of spectators through the venue reacted to the open seating possibilities. If seats were completely open, most of the arriving crowds would undoubtedly attempt to reach the same place, wherever they deemed the best seats to be. Rose evaluates the Circus Maximus for its visual and acoustical conditions, considering the angle at which one is able to see comfortably in the stands, as well as the distance to which one can both

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<sup>269</sup> The senators would still be seated together, possibly given a reserved section rather than a row, somewhere along the length of the track. The seating for these elite men will be discussed below.

<sup>270</sup> Later, when Trajan increased the seating capacity of the Circus Maximus, he did so by expanding into the arena rather than by building higher and adding another tier of seats (Humphrey 1986: 110-11).

<sup>271</sup> Dio Cass. 61.16.4.

<sup>272</sup> Possible seat rankings according to the quality of view will be discussed below.

see and hear.<sup>273</sup> Included in this is an optimal viewing zone of 120 degrees before one's sightline is hampered by the angle or by other spectators, and a possible viewing distance of no further than 200 metres.<sup>274</sup> He then applies these calculations to the Circus by ranking the seating in the venue from 1, as the best seats, to 7, the worst seats (fig. 5).



**Figure 5**  
Evaluation of visual conditions in seating sections of Circus Maximus  
(Rose 2005: fig. 15)

All of the uppermost rows in the circus are furthest from the arena level and, consequently, spectators seated there had some of the worst views. However, the only sections of seating to receive the lowest ranking are the uppermost rows immediately adjacent to the *carceres*, where the issue was exacerbated being furthest both from the arena level and the circuit of the track. When describing the scene of a race, sources occasionally mention the significant amount of dust kicked up by the racing teams, which

<sup>273</sup> Rose 2005: 121-2, fig. 12. See also Golvin 1988: esp. 341-346).

<sup>274</sup> Fauquet (2002: fig. 127) also examines the potential viewing angles at the Circus Maximus and presents a diagram of the venue indicating these angles at different points on the track and in the stands. See also Forichon 2012: 176; Golvin 1988: 342-3, pl. LVIII, 1; John et al., 2013: 132-137.

undoubtedly caused more difficulty for spectators to see individual drivers.<sup>275</sup> While the cloud of dust could indicate the location of the teams to those elsewhere in the stands, it would hinder one's ability to see the colour worn by each charioteer and identify the position of each faction in the competition. In addition, although sound was not a primary feature of the races, which were focused on the visual excitement of the chariots racing around the track, the acoustics are likely to have been worse higher up in the stands as well.<sup>276</sup> A possible positive feature for the seats by the *carceres* was their proximity to the starting point for the race, which was surely an exciting moment. Even so, as the starting gates traditionally were between 140-160 metres from the inside of the central barrier, once the competing teams rushed out from the gates, they would not pass in front of those seats again.<sup>277</sup> The rows in front of these seats were only slightly better as they were closer to the arena level and therefore had a better view of this one moment of excitement. Rose does improve the ranking of the high seats in a few particular areas, including those positioned near either end of the circus and close to the turning posts. Not only did these seats fall within the acceptable viewing distance and angles presented by Rose, but they also offered a good vantage point from which to see the chariots make their turns, a popular part in any race.<sup>278</sup> Although the distance from the track remained the same as that from other upper row seats, those by the turning posts had a better chance than others to see some action.

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<sup>275</sup> E.g., Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.348-9; Sil. *Pun.* 16.325-27; Stat. *Theb.* 6.411-12.

<sup>276</sup> See Rose 2005: esp. 123-126. See Barron (2010) for discussion of auditorium acoustics, esp. 276-281. What sounds were present at the races will be discussed below.

<sup>277</sup> Humphrey 1986: 21.

<sup>278</sup> The turns were considered highlights because this was when chariots were likely to crash (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.408-415; Sil. *Pun.* 16.405-415; Stat. *Theb.* 6.504-12; Fauquet 2008: 270-1, fig. 9.

The seats along the length of the circus also had their advantages. While those seated at either end of the track always looked in one direction to see the race, the spectators along the straightaways turned their heads to follow the action of the race, as teams flew past them from the left to right.<sup>279</sup> In accordance with the viewing distances and angles presented by Rose, the spectators in these sections had better use of their visual capacity than those at the ends of the stands who had a smaller angle within which they could see the races. Fundamentally, spectators along the straightaways should be able to see more than those on the ends of the track, and for longer, yet Rose ranks the seats at the midway point of the straightaway as a 3 out of 7, in contrast to the other seats in front row sections that he ranked as 1 or 2.<sup>280</sup> It seems that Rose ranks the seats in this way out of concern for obstructions to a spectator's view, particularly of the far side of the track, created by the central barrier.<sup>281</sup>

While the height of a central barrier and the decorations on top did impede a spectator's sightline to the other side of the track to some degree, it did not create such a hindrance as to ruin the seats and the experience of the spectators there. The barrier at Lepcis Magna is the best preserved of any Roman circus and follows a typical design seen in other barriers of the High Empire, made up of a succession of pools of water and decorated with various monuments and sculptural pieces, and measuring an estimated 1.6

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<sup>279</sup> The two long sides of the Circus at Tyre curve outwards slightly, making the arena widest at the centre of the straightaway as a result, a bulge that is also identified in the circuses at Antioch, Caesarea, and Gerash (Humphrey 1986: 445, 462, 482, 498). This could alter the evaluation of spectators' sightlines and viewing capacity from the stands.

<sup>280</sup> The exception to this is the seating section adjacent to the *carceres* mentioned earlier, which is ranked from 3 to 7 out of 7.

<sup>281</sup> Rose 2005: fig. 12.



metres tall.<sup>282</sup> Although the barrier of the Circus Maximus does not survive in full, Fauquet estimates a height between 0.8 metres and 1.5 metres, shorter than what has been calculated at Lepcis Magna.<sup>283</sup> Utilizing the proportions of a miniature bronze *biga*, Junkelmann calculates the measurements of a typical racing chariot, among which he asserts a height of 65 cm for the wheels of the chariot.<sup>284</sup> The position of the chariot body on top of the axle provides for the base of the chariot body to be at least 32 cm, or just over one foot, off of the ground.<sup>285</sup> An average Roman, between 5' 4" and 5' 7" tall, when standing on the chariot would reach approximately six and a half feet tall.<sup>286</sup> This suggests that, even with the tallest measurement of 1.6 metres from the height of the barrier at Lepcis Magna, a charioteer could still be visible by at least one foot over its top. Although the sight of much of the chariot and horses would indeed be blocked, the drivers atop their chariots were visible enough to be spotted from the far side of the barrier.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Humphrey 1986: 36-38, and fig. 18. Similar measurements are indicated by the remains of the barrier at the circus at Dougga (Humphrey 1986: 325).

<sup>283</sup> Fauquet 2002: 191. *Cf.* Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.359-60.

<sup>284</sup> Junkelmann 2000: 91. See also Junkelmann 1990: 144-5.

<sup>285</sup> The height of the chariot base likely would be slightly higher when taking into consideration the width of the axle and the chariot base itself.

<sup>286</sup> Studies of skeletal remains assert an average Roman height in the range of 5' 4"-5' 7". (E.g., Giannecchini and Moggi-Cecchi 2008). We might assume that, much like modern jockeys, many charioteers were short in stature to ensure a lighter load for their team of horses and increase their potential speed. As a result, the height of a charioteer should be considered to be on the lower end of the range heights for the average Roman when making further calculations.

<sup>287</sup> When describing a chariot race Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carm.* 23.356-60) does note that the charioteer disappears from view "as if flying out of sight on wings" (*iam vos ex oculis velut volantes*), however, it is not clear where the spectator was seated for this to occur. Moreover, the brief remark does not indicate whether the spectator's view was fully blocked or made difficult for a brief time, as Sidonius Apollinaris refers to the central barrier as a "long low double-walled structure" (*longam, humilem duplamque muro*). Although the passage does suggest the charioteers had moved beyond the central barrier, it is possible that the difficulty in view was the result of the tight pack of charioteers who had just made the turn and were making it difficult to discern the position of each individual charioteer.

Fauquet 2008: 283, fig. 22 makes a computer-generated reconstruction of the view possible over to the far side of the track given the possible height of the *euripus*. While the height and angle of upper rows would mitigate the difficulty of seeing beyond the central barrier, the distance from the track would negatively affect the view.

There could be some issues of visibility for the front rows when a charioteer made a tight turn and pressed against the barrier, but with a large field of competitors the teams would be at least partially visible from the stands.<sup>288</sup> The barrier at the Circus Maximus was more richly decorated than at Lepcis or other circuses outside the capital and the monuments atop the barrier would indeed block spectators' sightlines for portions of the track. Nonetheless, the speed at which the races were run would ensure that the view was not blocked for long, as the chariots moved quickly beyond any obstruction. Moreover, at circuses where the *euripus* was less decorated, if at all, there would be no obstructions and spectators could easily see over the other side.

If the ranking of the front rows along the length of the circus can be improved, it is possible to reconsider where the best seats in the venue could be. As has been mentioned, Rose identifies the front rows at the curved end of the circus as some of the best, with a rank of 1. Indeed, those seated here had a good view of some of the exciting, dangerous turns; however, the chariots quickly raced beyond view and only returned to the small portion of the track for a brief duration in the next lap. Instead, it seems that the best seats in the circus were close to the finish line, where one could see the exciting conclusion of each race. The line was set near the middle of the straight length of the circus and would be marked on the sand in chalk after the chariots passed for the final lap.<sup>289</sup> The spectators seated here benefited from the widest view of the track, were able

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<sup>288</sup> Remains of barriers from Spanish circuses are lower, with a height of 1.25 metres at Sagunto and only 0.95 metres at Mérida (Humphrey 1986: 349, 370). The height of the *euripus* in these venues would have been far less of a concern for the sightlines of spectators as a result.

<sup>289</sup> There has been disagreement among scholars regarding the location of the finish lines. It has also been posited that the finish line was near the end of the left hand straightaway at the near turning post. Humphrey (1986: 85-91) provides extensive evidence to refute this theory and support the location of the

to look left and right as well as across the track and had the best view of the closing moments of the race. Accordingly, it is probable that this seating area was most coveted by spectators and, in turn, was reserved for senators or other elite citizens. These seats were an optimal place from which not only to see but also from which to be seen.

Located in the front section of the stands, at a place on the track to which the entire audience turned at the end of the race, these seats provided the opportunity to be visible to the rest of the crowd and offered a degree of recognition and prestige to those seated there.<sup>290</sup> It is likely that many spectators sought out these seats and, when unsuccessful, chose seats radiating out from that section, remaining as close as possible to their first choice. Even so, as has been shown, the size and shape of the circus allowed for many different locations to provide quality views of the spectacle. Thus, to some degree, an individual's personal preference regarding their favourite part of the race could also influence the selection of seating.

It is apparent that there were both advantages and disadvantages to sitting in various areas of the circus stands, including the seats in the front rows. The size and shape of the circus made it nearly impossible for any seat to have a clear view at all times, as it could be hindered by other people, the size or decoration of the central barrier, clouds of dust, or the sheer distance from the competition. Consequently, spectators needed to rely on other cues when unable to see the action taking place. The activities preceding the race, including the drawing of lots for starting gate position or the dropping

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finish line as being at the midway of the track. The Silin mosaic (see Fauquet 2008: fig. 18) depicts a charioteer on his victory lap holding a palm branch. A line is shown from the midway point of the central barrier out to the edge of the track, clearly representing the finish line.

<sup>290</sup> Kolendo 1981: 301-2.

of the *mappa* to signal the start of the race, were important, particularly for interested fans or those with a wager on the race's result, but were difficult to be seen by most of the audience in the stands. Those further away, down the length of the track or high up in the stands would not see these features of the day's events; rather they were informed by a trumpet sounding the release of the starting gates, or the reaction of those who were nearby and were able to see. Outcomes could be carried through the crowds, passed on from one spectator to another, or shouted for large sections to hear all at once. In other instances, it was simply a reaction of applause or boos that indicated to other spectators whether or not the results were favourable to particular racing teams. For any who did lose sight of charioteers behind the central barrier, a wave of rising shouts and cheers marked the movement of the competitors, as the chariots passed in front of different sections of the stands. While they might not have known who was in the lead, it is possible that this moment of ignorance added to the excitement of the race, as fans waited anxiously to see who emerged first around the turn.

## **2. 5. THE *POMPA CIRCENSIS***

The first moment to gain the attention of the majority of the spectators at the circus was the *pompa circensis*, a ritual procession that marked the opening of the games. The *pompa* began atop the Capitoline hill and traveled through the Forum Romanum along the Via Sacra before turning toward the Forum Boarium.<sup>291</sup> A large archway stood between

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<sup>291</sup> For a map of the *pompa circensis* route during the Imperial period, see Latham 2016: 135 map 2. See also Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.72.1; Latham 2016: 69 map 1, and 221 map 3; Latham 2015: 298, n. 46.

the starting gates at the western end of the venue nearest the Forum Boarium, through which the procession made its entrance into the Circus Maximus. The most complete description of the procession comes from Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the late first century BCE, who discloses that he is retelling a third century BCE account from a Roman senator, Fabius Pictor.<sup>292</sup> Moreover, the description comes as a digression from Dionysius' main topic of the Greek origins of Romans and as such he draws attention repeatedly to aspects of the procession that can be associated to Greek practices.<sup>293</sup> As a result of the chronological disparity and Dionysius' possible intentions for the passage, his account becomes an undeniably complicated and relatively controversial source for the circus procession and therefore must be examined cautiously. When considering Dionysius' credibility as a source for the *pompa*, Latham notes that, while it was likely not an historical record of a procession that had taken place, Dionysius' description does express "the essential rhythms of the processions", thereby providing an understanding of the structure and key features of the *pompa circensis*.<sup>294</sup>

"Before beginning the games the principal magistrates conducted a procession in honour of the gods from the Capitol through the Forum to the Circus Maximus. Those who led the procession were, first, the Romans' sons who were nearing manhood and were of an age to bear a part in this ceremony, who rode on horseback if their fathers were entitled by their fortunes to be knights, while the others, who were destined to serve in the infantry, went on foot, the former in squadrons and troops, and the latter in divisions and companies, as if they were going to school; this was done in order that strangers might see the number and beauty of the youths of the commonwealth who were approaching manhood. These were followed by charioteers, some of whom drove four horses abreast, some two, and others rode unyoked horses. After them came the contestants in both the light and the heavy games, their whole bodies naked except their loins. This custom continued even to

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<sup>292</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.71.1. Fabius Pictor: Frier 1979: 84; Momigliano 1990: 80-108. For further discussion, see Beard 1998: 40-1.

<sup>293</sup> E.g., Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.70-71.

<sup>294</sup> Latham 2016: 21; cf. Beard 1998: 40.

my time at Rome, as it was originally practised by the Greeks; but it is now abolished in Greece, the Lacedaemonians having put an end to it...

...The contestants were followed by numerous bands of dancers arranged in three divisions, the first consisting of men, the second of youths, and the third of boys. These were accompanied by flute-players, who used ancient flutes that were small and short, as is done even to this day, and by lyre-players, who plucked ivory lyres of seven strings and the instruments called *barbita*...The dancers were dressed in scarlet tunics girded with bronze cinctures, wore swords suspended at their sides, and carried spears of shorter than average length; the men also had bronze helmets adorned with conspicuous crests and plumes. Each group was led by one man who gave the figures of the dance to the rest, taking the lead in representing their warlike and rapid movements, usually in the proceleusmatic rhythms...

...But it is not alone from the warlike and serious dance of these bands which the Romans employed in their sacrificial ceremonies and processions that one may observe their kinship to the Greeks, but also from that which is of a mocking and ribald nature. For after the armed dancers others marched in procession impersonating satyrs and portraying the Greek dance called *sicinnis*. Those who represented Sileni were dressed in shaggy tunics, called by some *chortaioi*, and in mantles of flowers of every sort; and those who represented satyrs wore girdles and goatskins, and on their heads manes that stood upright, with other things of like nature. These mocked and mimicked the serious movements of the others, turning them into laughter-provoking performances. The triumphal entrances also show that raillery and fun-making in the manner of satyrs were an ancient practice native to the Romans; for the soldiers who take part in the triumphs are allowed to satirise and ridicule the most distinguished men, including even the generals, in the same manner as those who ride in procession in carts at Athens; the soldiers once jested in prose as they clowned, but now they sing improvised verses...

...After these bands of dancers came a throng of lyre-players and many flute-players, and after them the persons who carried the censers in which perfumes and frankincense were burned along the whole route of the procession, also the men who bore the show-vessels made of silver and gold, both those that were sacred owing to the gods and those that belonged to the state. Last of all in the procession came the images of the gods, borne on men's shoulders, showing the same likenesses as those made by the Greeks and having the same dress, the same symbols, and the same gifts which tradition says each of them invented and bestowed on mankind. These were the images not only of Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Neptune, and of the rest whom the Greeks reckon among the twelve gods, but also of the son of still more ancient from whom legend says the twelve were sprung, namely, Saturn, Ops, Themis, Latona, the Parcae, Mnemosynê, and all the rest to whom temples and holy places are dedicated among the Greeks; and also of those whom legend represents as living later, after Jupiter took over the sovereignty, such as Proserpina, Lucina, the Nymphs, the Muses, the Seasons, the Graces, Liber, and the demigods whose souls after they had left their mortal bodies are said to have

ascended to Heaven and to have obtained the same honours as the gods, such as Hercules, Aesculapius, Castor and Pollux, Helen, Pan, and countless others.”<sup>295</sup>

The *pompa circensis* was foremost a religious ceremony opening the games put on to celebrate a religious festival and honour the gods.<sup>296</sup> Ahead of the statues of the gods, men carrying gold and silver bowls with various perfumes prepared the way; the statues themselves were given a position of honour as the last to enter the procession, with all other participants in the procession leading them into the circus.<sup>297</sup> The images of the gods were then positioned on the *pulvinar* for the day’s events to represent the presence of the gods at the games, as if watching the contests. So as to not offend the gods, the *pompa* needed to run smoothly with strict adherence to tradition and religious protocols; any error meant that the ritual was a failure and could lead to negative consequences for the Roman state. The practice of *instauratio*, or repetition, was used to prevent any such troubles by redoing whatever had been interrupted or done incorrectly, which could require restarting the full *pompa circensis*.<sup>298</sup> Cicero lists several other errors in presentation that could require the ceremony to be restarted, asserting that:

“if a sacred dancer stops, or a flute-player has on a sudden ceased to play, or if a boy with both father and mother alive has ceased to touch the ground, or has lost his hold of the sacred car, or of the reins, or if an aedile has used a wrong word or made the slightest mistake, then the games have not been duly celebrated, and those mistakes are forced to be expiated and the minds of the immortal gods are appeased by their repetition.”<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.72.1-2, 5-6, 10-11, 13.

<sup>296</sup> The *pompa* was also immediately followed by a sacrifice (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.72.15).

<sup>297</sup> See Latham 2015: 304-6.

<sup>298</sup> Monti 1950.

<sup>299</sup> Cic. *De Har. Resp.* 23 (‘*an si ludius constitit, aut tibicen repente conticuit, aut puer ille patrimus et matrimus si tensam non tenuit, si lorum omisit, aut si aedilis verbo aut simpuvio aberravit, ludi sunt non rite facti, eaque errata expiantur, et mentes deorum immortalium ludorum instauracione placantur*’). See Cic. *De Har. Resp.* 21-24.

Numerous sources give their account of a particular incident of ritual failure in the *pompa circensis*, one account of which serves to bookend Dionysius' description of the *pompa*.<sup>300</sup> In the episode, after various disturbances befell Rome, including abnormal births, frenzied women, and great illnesses, a man named Titus Latinius came to the senate house claiming that it was all caused by Jupiter Capitolinus, who did not approve of the dancer appointed to head the recent game's *pompa*. In order to regain the support of the god, it was important that the ritual of the procession be completed again. The seriousness of any disruption or disorder in ritual procedure is evident from the many reports, each reflecting on the great concern that followed and the dutiful response in repeating the rites. Although the *pompa circensis* was likely appreciated by audience members for its entertainment value, as a visual spectacle to open the games, in addition to its ritual function, the games themselves were produced to honour the gods, whose support Romans could not claim to have if they did not complete rituals properly.

Integrated into the religious ritual of the procession were significant social and political messages as well. The lengthy route of the *pompa circensis* was much like that of a military triumph, the *pompa triumphalis*, certain elements of which seem to have been borrowed for the elaborate procession into the circus.<sup>301</sup> Perhaps most notably, the *editor* of the games led the procession in a manner evoking the image of a triumphant general, as he rode in on a chariot and wore a purple toga with an eagle-topped ivory

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<sup>300</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.68-7.69.2, 7.73.5. Other ritual failures: Cic. *Div.* 1.126.55; Livy 2.36.1-8; Val. Max. 1.7.4; Plut. *Coriol.* 24.1-25.1; Min. Fel. *Oct.* 7.3, 27.4; Arn. *Adv. Nat.* 7.39, 7.41-43; Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 2.7.20-21; August. *De Civ. D.* 4.26; Macrobian. *Sat.* 1.11.3-5. See also Bernstein 1998: 85-96.

<sup>301</sup> Versnel (1970: 101-115) discusses the connections between *ludi* processions and the *pompa triumphalis* and the arguments of previous scholars in favour of their shared origins.



scepter in his hand and a slave behind him holding a golden crown over his head.<sup>302</sup> The Roman ideals of competition and high valuation of success and victory that were put on display in a triumph also were apparent at the circus and, akin to a successful general, the *editor* earned great praise and recognition for his efforts presiding over the games. The *pompa circensis* was the time for the *editor* to show himself in front of all of Rome, receive the gratitude of the surrounding spectators, and to position himself well in the minds of the public for possible future social and political advancements.

One of the first significant changes to the structure of the procession came in the late Republic, when an image of Caesar, and later a chariot, were added to the procession among those of the gods.<sup>303</sup> Suetonius in particular viewed this as another abuse of Caesar's power and another of the excessive honours accepted by Caesar "which were too great for mortal man".<sup>304</sup> Nevertheless, more additions to the images carried among those of the gods in the *pompa* soon followed under Augustus and then Tiberius.<sup>305</sup> Statues of deceased imperial family members began to be included in the procession whether they had been deified or not, thereby demonstrating the importance of the *domus Augusta* both to the production of the spectacles for the people and to the Roman empire at large.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> E.g., Juv. *Sat.* 10.36-46.

<sup>303</sup> Dio Cass. 43.45.2. See also Cic. *Phil.* 1.13; 2.110-222. Val. Max. 1.6.13. For further discussion see Gradel 2002: 54-61, 69-72; Weinstock 1971: 110-12, 184-6, 270-4.

<sup>304</sup> Suet. *Jul.* 76.1 ('*sed et ampliora etiam humano fastigio decerni sibi passus est: sedem auream in curia et pro tribunali, tensam et ferculum circensi pompa, templa, aras, simulacra iuxta deos, pulvinar, flaminem, lupercos, appellationem mensis e suo nomine*').

<sup>305</sup> See Arena 2009: 79-83.

<sup>306</sup> E.g., Marcellus: Cass Dio. 53.30.6; Germanicus: *Tabula Hebana* (ed. M. H. Crawford [1996] *Roman Statues I* (London), 519 nr.37, ll.4-7; Livia (Suet. *Claud.*2.2; Dio Cass. 60.5.2); Agrippina the Elder (Suet. *Gaius* 15.1; *RIC I<sup>2</sup> Gaius* 55); Drusilla (Cass Dio 59.11.1-4). Antonia (Suet. *Claud.*11.2). Claudius (Tac. *Ann.*12.69.4; 13.2.6; Suet. *Claud* 45; Suet. *Nero* 9). For a more extensive list, see Arena 2009: 83, n.18. For those included in second century, see Arena 2009: 84, n.19.

Although the stands of the circus were not divided by social classes, the organization of the procession and its participants did represent the order of society to the spectators. After the magistrate, honoured for his leadership and role in putting on the games, came the ranks of Roman youth, either on horseback or on foot to signify their social class and the position that they would soon take in the Roman military, horsemen or infantry.<sup>307</sup> These young men were embodiments of important Roman ideals of youthful strength, honour, and civic duty, and symbolized the continuing strength of the state. In this manner Dionysius' description of the *pompa* emphasizes the power and military strength of Rome, both in the present and yet to come with the ranks of young men ready for service. The procession was meant to create a scene of civic pride, for those observing the *pompa* as well as those participating.

Yet, amid the religious ceremony and messages of civic duty and pride there was an extravagant spectacle that emphasized lighthearted celebration and entertainment.<sup>308</sup> Despite Dionysius' image of the *pompa* with hierarchical formations that demonstrated social order to the population watching, interspersed among the officials and Roman youths were athletes, musicians, dancers, and other performers who exemplified the subversion of that order.<sup>309</sup> The organization of the procession alternated between solemnity and levity, between the structure of ritual and the freedom of performance. Perhaps this was part of what elite authors disliked when referring to the disorder of spectacles and the foolishness in the lowbrow entertainments of the circus.<sup>310</sup> Yet, the

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<sup>307</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 7.72.1.

<sup>308</sup> A "characteristic Roman combination of religious ritual and popular entertainment" (Beard 2007: 281).

<sup>309</sup> Bernstein 1998: 254-68, 2007: 228-9; Latham 2015: 303.

<sup>310</sup> See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1.

entire presentation was still a well-defined ceremony and of such religious and political importance that strict guidelines ensured it would not get out of control. While the form of the *pompa circensis* acknowledged the elements of spectacle that went beyond the typical Roman boundaries of decorum, it was reined in by Roman values of civic and religious duty, beginning with the presiding magistrate, who was responsible for the good of the day, and concluding with the images of the gods, responsible for the good of all Rome.

Although it is possible that some avid circus fans were impatient and found the *pompa circensis* to be no more than an added ceremony that delayed the main event, it is likely that the majority of the crowd enjoyed the pomp and circumstance of the opening procession. With only sixty-six race days in a year, it was by no means a regular event and, for those who came to Rome specifically for a visit to the circus, it was likely considered a special occasion. Dionysius' description depicts a procession with mass appeal and such variety that it was nearly assured to have something to interest everyone. Rüpke contends that this was part of the intent of the procession ritual, as it presented the features of an ideal, unified city while attracting and bringing together all those gathered in a common interest.<sup>311</sup> Indeed, with such religious importance in the ritual and so many political messages to be conveyed in it, it was vital that the procession was produced in a manner that would have the support and engagement of the masses. The *pompa circensis* served to unify the crowd from the start, beginning with the arrival of the *editor*, who

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<sup>311</sup> Rüpke 2012: 39.

drew in the audience to the grand procession.<sup>312</sup> As the *pompa* continued the audience was presented with an array of sights and sounds that were difficult to ignore. Moreover, with so many people involved in the procession, it is reasonable to believe that audience members were keen to see particular participants; parents and family of the children who participated were sure to pay close attention and, fans and gamblers were undoubtedly excited to get their first look at the day's competitors, possibly even a star of the sport, as the charioteers entered with their teams of horses.

The *pompa* was the first 'spectacular' element of the games and acted as an announcement of the start of a full day of entertainments, which in itself could prove exciting and rouse the attention of the crowd. Ovid asserts that it is a time to applaud ('*tempus adest plausus*') as the people gathered in the stands were drawn into the grand display and cheered for those arriving: the *editor*, the youths, the competitors, the many assorted performers, and the images of the gods.<sup>313</sup> The swell of noise increased the energy in the stands and lifted the mood, with the entire audience taking on the role of spectators for the first time as they became occupied by the visual spectacle in front of them. While some spectators focused on the religious features of the event, and others embraced the political messages of civic pride and celebration of Roman leadership, the procession drew in the audience together and built up the excitement and anticipation for the games about to begin.

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<sup>312</sup> As Fagan (2011: 142) describes, "crowds are often at their most cohesive and vocal when they are focused on a leader".

<sup>313</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2.44.

## 2. 6. BETTING ON THE RACES

For many, a key feature of the sporting experience is placing bets on the events. In the modern world, sports fans can bet on different aspects of various sports, both online and in person at betting shops. Gambling is nearly synonymous with modern horse races, as people go to the track with the intent of putting money on their favoured horse. The crowds gather and cheer as the horses gallop to the finish, and those who selected the victorious horse go to collect their winnings. Gambling was a popular activity in the Roman world as well, with gaming tables even found etched on pavements throughout cities, and it is reasonable to believe that the same interest in betting found its way into the circus.<sup>314</sup> Juvenal asserts in no uncertain terms that the two selling points for those attending the races were the opportunity to sit near a pretty girl and to make ‘daring bets’ (*audax sponsio*).<sup>315</sup> Martial also notes that people would only move on when they were tired of betting and gossiping about two popular charioteers, Scorpus and Incitatus.<sup>316</sup> The desire to feel part of the action was key among the fans of the races and those spectators who already loved to gamble elsewhere would have found it hard to resist the urge to make wagers on the races unfolding at the circus.<sup>317</sup> Furthermore, spectators who supported a particular team likely felt a sense of personal victory when that team was

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<sup>314</sup> Gambling in the Roman world, see Lanciani 1892: 97-105; Toner 1995: 89-101. See also Hopkins 1983: 26.

<sup>315</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 11.201-2 (*‘spectent iuvenes, quos clamor et audax sponsio, quos cultae decet assedissee puellae’*).

<sup>316</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 11.1.13-16 (*‘Sunt illic duo tresve, qui revolvant nostrarum tineas ineptiarum, sed cum sponsio fabulaeque lassae de Scorpo fuerint et Incitato’*).

<sup>317</sup> See also Plass 1995: 22. Coleman (1996: 56) posits that the element of chance involved in mass scatterings (*sparsiones*) at public spectacles similarly appealed to the spectators’ gambling instincts, as not only did one have to participate to win, but also results could vary, with different prizes of different values. *Sparsiones* will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

victorious, a feeling that was increased when a wager was involved as a result of the closer connection to the win and the more personal feeling of success at having correctly chosen the winning team.<sup>318</sup> The tension and anticipation, although part of the enjoyment for many gamblers, could prove overwhelming for some, as Epictetus recalls a man who fainted after the horse he favoured had an unexpected victory.<sup>319</sup>

As was discussed in the previous chapter, Pliny the Younger firmly asserts that he has no interest in the circus; he reports that there is no variation in the show, and thus once should be enough for any observer.<sup>320</sup> Bets on the outcome of the races could, at first glance, appear similarly simple and monotonous. The charioteers were trained to drive their teams of horses skillfully and to maneuver them around their competitors and it would therefore seem that the driver with the most skill in his craft would win, yet this was not always the case. Although one charioteer might enter the race with a long and successful career, a new opponent could present circumstances that the other racers had not faced before. It is also possible for even the most experienced charioteer to have a stroke of bad luck in a race, even to the point of crashing his chariot, a danger that could befall any charioteer no matter his experience and change the outcome of the race in a sudden and unexpected way. Furthermore, a sport featuring animals will always run the

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<sup>318</sup> Such a successful wager could even make the spectator feel more personally connected to the charioteer and his team, as now they are all winners. Plass (1995: 22) expands on this to suggest that the power and excitement a fan could feel in the face of a successful or failed bet acted as "an exaggerated form of...the intense highs and lows well attested in mass sports at Rome and elsewhere".

<sup>319</sup> Epictetus 1.11.27.

<sup>320</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6. See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1.

risk of a loss of control.<sup>321</sup> A charioteer needed to maintain control even before the start of the race, as the eager horses could be difficult to restrain in the starting gates. Both Lucan and Ovid employ the image of a racehorse straining in the starting gates in similes to better illustrate a scene; in Lucan's *Pharsalia* it is Caesar's fervour and anticipation for war, while Ovid employs the simile in the *Tristia* to emphasize eagerness and longing in the muse Thalia.<sup>322</sup> The success of any charioteer relied heavily on the horses that made up his team and, no matter the training or the relationship between horse and driver, there remained a level of uncertainty regarding how each horse would respond to the commands of its driver in the moment. Will the horse remain focused on its task or will it react unfavourably to the situation, in the center of the circus surrounded by other teams of horses and cheering crowds?<sup>323</sup> The resulting level of uncertainty built tension in the race and meant for a combination of skill and chance that allowed the already energetic fan base to grow more engaged and excited.

While it is probable that a few spectators made impulsive, last minute wagers in the stands, it is likely that the majority knew on whom they would bet well in advance of making their wager. Serious gamblers ensured the odds were in their favour and used all information available to determine the best choice. However, it does not seem that there

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<sup>321</sup> A charioteer needed to maintain control even before the start of the race, as the eager horses could be difficult to restrain in the starting gates (Cf. Ovid *Met.* 2.153-5; Lucan 1.293-5; Plin. *HN.* 8.65.160; Sil. *Pun.* 8.279).

<sup>322</sup> Lucan 1.293-5 ('*sic postquam fatus, et ipsi in bellum prono tantum tamen addidit irae accenditque ducem, quantum clamore iuuatur Eleus sonipes, quamuis iam carcere clauso imineat foribus pronusque repagula laxet*'). Ovid *Tr.* 5.9.29-32 ('*utque fores nondum reserati carceris acer nunc pede, nunc ipsa fronte lacessit equus, sic mea lege data uincta atque inclusa Thalia per titulum uetiti nominis ire cupit*'). See also Ovid *Met.* 2.153-5; Plin. *HN.* 8.65.160; Sil. *Pun.* 8.279.

<sup>323</sup> See Artem. 4.56 in Toner 1995: 43. There could, however, be very focused horses that were determined to continue running even without their driver to control them. Pliny the Elder (*HN.* 8.65.160-161) tells of some horses that, after their driver had fallen from the chariot, continued to run the race and even won.

was much information available for circus spectators to make their decisions and set out their wagers. Gladiatorial fights would have been a straightforward event on which to bet, as spectators simply had to choose a victor from the two head-to-head competitors.<sup>324</sup> Spectators were also provided with a great deal of information in advance of the event, which could inform them further on the fighters. *Edicta munerum*, painted on walls around the city, advertised gladiatorial games and gave the passer-by important details about the upcoming event.<sup>325</sup> These advertisements were often expanded to serve as programmes for the event, with details of the gladiator's fighting style, the school in which he was trained, and his fighting record.<sup>326</sup> Small pamphlets, *libelli munerari*, which contained similar information, were sold in advance of the spectacles as well.<sup>327</sup> On many occasions the results of each fight were added to the text that had been written on the walls of the city, as if someone had stopped by after the match-up to report on it. This is also apparent in gladiatorial graffiti, in which fans of the spectacle scratched images of gladiators into a wall and included such information as the names of the

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<sup>324</sup> There is some evidence for gladiators fighting in groups or teams, although this may have been done more often as part of *damnatio* fights with condemned criminals (Suet. *Calig.* 30.3; Scobie 1988: 206). There is also limited evidence of “factions” at gladiatorial spectacles that identifies fans of particular types of gladiators and fighting styles: the *parmularii* (“small-shielders”) who supported Thracian fighters, and *scutarii* (“rectangular-shielders”) who cheered for *murmillones*. See Fagan 2011: 219-221; Scobie 1988: 206; Ville 1981: 443-5.

<sup>325</sup> Mentioned as *edictum ludorum* in Sen. *Ep.* 117.30. Details included the time and place, the reason for the production (*causa muneris*), and the number of gladiators competing (*gladiatorium paria*). Advertisements also often included incentives for attendance, such as an increased number of combatants, additional fights, or the provision of shade, thus ensuring a full and happy audience, grateful to the *editor* who provided such entertainments. Cooley (2004: Appendix 1, Tables 1 and 2) provides data collected from notices for games at Pompeii and surrounding cities regarding venue, date, number of gladiators, duration, and other types of entertainment or facilities advertised.

<sup>326</sup> *CIL* IV. 2508; Sabbatini Tumolesi 1980: 71-4 (no. 32). There is also evidence of a ranking system for gladiators based on their experience, which many had some influence on betting (Carter 2003: esp. 87-98).

<sup>327</sup> Ovid *Ars Am.* 1.167-168 refers to a spectator asking to see a programme (here referred to as *libellum*) before placing a bet. Cicero mentions both programmes for gladiatorial games (*libelli gladiatorum*) (*Phil.* 2.97) and an account of the fights after they were completed (*gladiatorum compositiones*) (*Fam.* 2.8.1).



gladiators, number of past wins for each, and results of the fight.<sup>328</sup> By means of these advertisements, pamphlets, and even the graffiti, spectators became knowledgeable enough about each gladiator’s level of experience and success rate that they could have an opinion on the gladiator’s ability to fight and likelihood to survive each pairing, knowledge which, if they chose, could be used to place a bet on the fight.

In contrast to the great extent of information provided to spectators in the days before gladiatorial games, there does not appear to have been a similar concern to circulate such information in advance of the chariot races. Only one example of a circus programme survives, from the sixth century CE, among the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, which reads:

“For good fortune.		ἀγαθῆ τύχη
Victories (?).		νῆκ[α]ι
1st chariot race.		α μίσσος ἡνιόχων
Procession.		πομπή
Singing rope-dancers.	5	καλοπ[α]ῖ[κτα]ι βοκ[άλιοι]
2nd chariot race.		β μί[σσο]ς ἡνιόχ[ων]
The singing rope-dancers.		[ο]ῖ καλοπαῖκται βοκάλιοι
3rd chariot race.		γ μίσσος ἡνιόχων
Gazelle and hounds		δόρκος καὶ κύνες
4th chariot race.	10	δ μίσσος ἡνιόχων
Mimes.		μῖμοι
5th chariot race.		ε μίσσος ἡνιόχων
Troupe of athletes.		ξυστός
6th chariot race.”		ς μίσσος ἡνιόχων
[2 <sup>nd</sup> hand] “Farewell.” <sup>329</sup>	15	[2 <sup>nd</sup> hand] διευτύχει

<sup>328</sup> *CIL* IV. 1421, 8055a, 8056, 10221, 10236a, 10237, 10238a; *Graf. Pal.* 304. Fagan (2011: 213 n. 73, 224 n. 106) asserts that the similarities in content among graffiti and *libelli* prove that they engaged with the same information.

<sup>329</sup> *P. Oxy.* 34.2707.

The programme appears to have been a handwritten draft that a second individual signed off on with the farewell ‘διευτύχει’. It is unclear if this was a draft of something to be distributed to the public or a document associated to the production of the spectacle used when planning the day’s schedule. Amid Ovid’s description of a day in the circus audience, he refers to checking the programme (‘*libelli*’), which possibly outlined the order of events for the day as seen on the circus papyrus.<sup>330</sup> Elsewhere, Ovid mentions spectators with a writing tablet (‘*tabella*’), which has often been translated as a fan, as he seems to convey that, on a hot day at the circus, spectators would fold their tablets or programmes into fans so as to cool themselves.<sup>331</sup> If spectators did indeed have programmes on the day of the races, the only surviving example does not indicate that they included details about the drivers, horses, or their records that could be used to excite the fans about those participating or to calculate odds for bets. Yet, during the opening procession (*pompa circensis*), placards were carried ahead of each charioteer that indicated the names of the horses and their driver.<sup>332</sup> The presentation of the names of both the charioteers and the horses would only be done if the audience was expected to recognize or remember the names.<sup>333</sup> If fans were already aware of the careers of different charioteers in the factions, upon learning of their participation in races that day the fans could make an informed choice on whom they would place their wager. With the arrival of the charioteers and horses, spectators had the opportunity to look over the

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<sup>330</sup> Ovid *Ars Am.* 1.167 (‘*Dum loquitur tangitque manum poscitque libellum*’).

<sup>331</sup> Ovid *Ars Am.* 1.161 (‘*profuit et tenui ventos movisse tabella*’). See also Humphrey 1986: 77, n. 106.

<sup>332</sup> Such a scene is depicted on an oil lamp: Decker and Thuillier 2004: 211, fig. 124.

<sup>333</sup> The writing on the signs would not be visible all the way to the back rows, however, word would travel quickly about the identity of the participants, as the spectators in the front read the names and began to spread the information to the crowds around them.

competitors, judging and analyzing each team of horses or their drivers to see who appeared energetic, tired or distracted, before making a final decision for their bet.<sup>334</sup>

There is no evidence of any large betting shops at the Circus and no record of a bookie or other third party involved in the transaction and making money off of the wagers. Without any recognizable gambling organization, it is probable that gambling at the circus was an entirely informal activity among friends and acquaintances, as spectators turned to those seated around them to offer the terms of a bet. Insofar as information concerning the competitors was gathered upon their arrival during the *pompa*, most bets were likely made on the day of the races, once the audience had the chance to see the condition of the drivers and horses. While eager gamblers might make a bet immediately after the procession, it is more likely that bets would be made preceding individual races, once the lots were drawn and starting gates were selected. Ovid describes a scene in which a bet is made seemingly during the race, as a man speaks with a woman in the stands and, after asking for the programme, he “inquir[es] which is winning as he lays his stake”.<sup>335</sup> Although the man’s question could allude to the position of the chariots in the starting gates, as those with an inside lane to the central barrier had an optimal starting position, it seems that the scene depicts a spontaneous bet made after the teams had been released and the race had begun.<sup>336</sup> Moreover, with multiple races in

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<sup>334</sup> As noted previously, in a sport that utilized animals, a skittish horse could prove disastrous to a racing team. Even the movement and position of celestial bodies were considered for their possible influence on the performance of different factions (Wuillemier 1927).

<sup>335</sup> Ovid *Ars Am.* 167-8 (*‘Dum loquitur tangitque manum poscitque libelum et quaerit posito pignore, vincat uter’*).

<sup>336</sup> Ovid mentions that the man asks for the programme immediately before making his wager. While this could be an innocuous addition, with the man taking hold of the programme to use it as a fan (as was discussed above) or for some other reason, it might indicate that the programme did contain information

a day, one might not bet on every race, particularly if the previous selections had not proven to be successful. It is possible that gamblers settled their current accounts at the conclusion of each race and waited for the next occasion to stake money on the outcome.

Wagers did not have to be made solely at the circus; rather, fans intending to come to the races might prepare a wager in advance. Tertullian criticizes the devoted crowds making their way to the circus, “already disordered, already agitated about their bets”.<sup>337</sup> While this could indicate that the people had their bet in mind and were filled with nervous excitement ahead of placing the wager, some eager fans may have already made the bet and were excited yet concerned about the outcome.<sup>338</sup> In fact, wagers on the races could be made anywhere that interested parties could be found. In Petronius’ *Satyricon*, the cook convinces his master, Trimalchio, to make a bet on the Greens being first in the next races, even though it appears neither man will be in attendance at the races.<sup>339</sup> This interaction demonstrates that both men not only had knowledge and interest in the races, despite their different social status, but also that their interest was still strong when not at the circus, readily engaging in a wager on the events they would not see themselves. Presumably news of the winners would spread through the city later in the day or on the following day, at which time the bet could be settled. Pliny the Elder describes how

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relevant to the wager, such as the names of the drivers and horses. Unfortunately, there is no additional evidence to support this hypothesis.

<sup>337</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 16.1 (*aspice populum ad id spectaculum iam cum furore venientem, iam tumultuosum, iam caecum, iam de sponsionibus concitatum*’).

<sup>338</sup> We must not ignore the possibility that some bets were made somewhat blindly, with fans betting in favour of their preferred faction no matter the odds. Although gambling was common and many likely had a good understanding of the odds, it cannot be overstated how devotion to a particular faction could result in blind support.

<sup>339</sup> Pet. *Sat.* 70.13 (*et subinde dominum suum sponsione provocare si prasinus proximis circensibus primam palmam*’).

Caecina, a member of the equestrian order, would stain the feathers of swallows the colour of the winning faction in that day's races and release the birds as a way to send the news to his friends.<sup>340</sup> It seems therefore that fans of the races could make a wager in advance of coming to the races and those who, for whatever reason, did not attend could still place a bet and engage with the event, although at a distance. However, these bets were likely only concerned with the winning faction and not the particular driver and chariot team, as the communication of those away from the circus appears to consist only of faction colours. Indeed, bets could be made in favour of one faction, yet many races included more than four chariots, often with eight or twelve in the race, with two or three chariots for each faction colour. Only one chariot team and driver were victorious in each race and, as a result, it is plausible that some wagers specified the winning team, possibly increasing the stakes of the bet for such a prediction. Moreover, with no formalized system governing betting at the races, it is possible that spectators made wagers with one another on a variety of aspects in the competition. The high value placed on victory in the Roman context suggests that spectators would not concern themselves with which teams came in second or third, and with only four factions competing it would hardly be an exciting wager; rather, the winning faction and winning chariot team were likely the most common outcomes on which to make a bet. Other factors in the competition could also make interesting wagers, such as if someone will crash, or the manner of victory,

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<sup>340</sup> Plin. *HN*. 10.34.71 ('*Caecina Volaterranus equestris ordinis, quadrigarum dominus, comprehensas in urbem secum auferens victoriae nuntias amicis mittebat in eundem nidum remeantes in lito victoriae colore*').

whether they lead the entire time or have a last-minute rush.<sup>341</sup> In each case, how many bets were made, on what, and with what stakes, were left to the discretion of each spectator and could vary with each race.

The limited impact of betting practices associated with the circus, done relatively informally by means of exchanges between friends and acquaintances, could explain the lack of concern for gambling at such events in legal texts.<sup>342</sup> Although gambling was considered illegal, with various laws prohibiting the activity, wagers made in association to the circus are never directly mentioned; rather the focus tends toward dice games and other betting done at gaming tables.<sup>343</sup> If wagers on the races remained small and relatively inconsequential, there would be no need to draw up a law in opposition to them. It is likely that the widespread popularity of the circus with the masses and elites alike,

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<sup>341</sup> We might again consider the scene described by Ovid as the man asks who is winning before he places his bet. There are many possible interpretations of this one exchange, to which I will offer another. If racing fans did bet on the manner of a victory, the man's request for clarification about who is in the lead could be necessary to complete a wager related to that competitor either remaining in the lead or another overtaking him before the finish line. The inscription honouring the charioteer Diocles (*CIL VI. 10048*) contains a record of the manner of his victories, including leading from the gate (*'occupavit et vicit'*) 815 times, coming from behind (*'successit et vicit'*) 67 times, after being passed (*'praemisit et vicit'*) 36 times, at the finish line (*'eripuit et vicit'*) 502 times, and in other, unspecified ways (*'variis generibus vicit'*) 42 times. It is probable that spectators were well aware of these differences in victories, which deemed such information pertinent for the full report of Diocles' career.

In book 23 of the *Iliad*, during the funeral games of Patroclus, Homer tells of an exchange between Lesser Ajax and Idomeneus as they watch a chariot race at the festivities (XXIII.448-498; the race itself: XXIII.362-447). The two men stand and argue about where the chariots are, and make a bet about their position. After having lost sight of the racers in the distance, Idomeneus was confident he could see the driver Diomedes emerging in the lead, while Lesser Ajax asserted that Eumelus, who had been in the lead when last seen, was still in front. The bet was not concerned with the outcome of the race and the ultimate winner, but rather the position the teams were in at that moment. The men do not make the common wager on the results of the race but instead take up a simple bet on the accuracy of their eyesight. While this example is far removed from the time of Roman chariot racing, it demonstrates the possible creativity of spectators, who could find new and different aspects of an event on which to place a bet.

<sup>342</sup> Harris 1972: 225; Toner 1995: 92.

<sup>343</sup> Laws that prohibit gambling include the *Lex Cornelia*, *Lex Publicia*, and *Lex Titia*. *Digest* 11.5 (Justinian) also includes various edicts concerning gambling, mainly focused on dice games and other forms of games on which a wager could be placed.

also helped to keep gambling at the races out of legal trouble as those who could enact legislation against it would choose not to do so. As the enjoyment of chariot racing reached every tier of society, gambling that took place at the circus may have been overlooked so long as the spectacles and their role in Roman society were not disrupted.

## 2. 7. EXPERIENCE IN THE STANDS

There is very little evidence available to illustrate the spectator's experience once they were in their seats, as most sources turn their attention to the action of the races. Ovid however provides two rare accounts of the experience of an audience member.<sup>344</sup> In an elegy from the *Amores*, Ovid describes a scene in which he is seated beside a woman in the stands of the circus; his focus is not on the action on the track but rather the female spectator whom he is intent to pursue:

“I sit not here because fond of high-bred horses; yet, the one you favour I pray may win. To talk with you I came, and to sit with you, so that you might not miss knowing the love you stir. You gaze on the races, I on you; let us both gaze on what delights, both feast our own eyes. O, happy driver whoever he be, that wins your favour!...

...Why draw back from me? – it will do no good; the line compels us to sit close. This advantage the circus gives, with its rule of space – yet you there on the right, whoever you are, have a care; your pressing against my lady's side annoys. You, too, who are looking on from behind, draw up your legs, if you care for decency, and press not her back with your hard knee! But your cloak is let fall too far, and is trailing on the ground. Gather it up – or look, with my own fingers I'll get it up. Envious wrap you were, to cover such pretty limbs!...

...Would you like, while we wait, to bid soft breezes blow? I'll take the fan in my hand and start them. Or is this rather the heat of my heart and not of the air, and does love for a woman burn my ravished breast? While I am talking, a sprinkling of light dust has got on your white dress. Vile dust, away from this snowy body! But now the procession is coming – keep silence all, and attend! The time for applause is here – the golden procession is coming...

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<sup>344</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2, *Ars Am.* 1.135-176.

...But your feet are dangling. If you like, you can stick your toes in the grating. The circus is clear now for the greatest part of the shows, and the praetor has started the four-horse cars from the equal barrier. I see the one you are eager for. He will win if he has your favour, whoever he be. What you desire the very horses seem to know!”<sup>345</sup>

While Ovid’s attention is focused on the nearby woman, the elegy offers numerous details concerning the experience of spectators when seated in the stands of the circus. Ovid modifies this scene for the *Ars Amatoria*, in which he offers a didactic version of the former love-elegy, adapted to instruct readers how to use the circus as a venue for engaging with women and making amorous advances.<sup>346</sup>

“Nor let the contest of noble steeds escape you; the spacious Circus holds many opportunities. No need is there of fingers for secret speech, nor need you receive a signal by means of nods. Sit next to your lady, none will prevent you; sit side by side as close as you can; and it is good that the rows compel closeness, like it or not, and that by the conditions of space your girl must be touched. Here seek an opening for friendly talk, and begin with words that all may hear. Mind you are zealous in asking whose horses are entering, and quick, whomsoever she favours be sure to favour too. But when the long procession of ivory statues of the gods passes by applaud Queen Venus with favouring hand. And if perchance, as will happen, a speck of dust falls on your lady’s lap, flick it off with your fingers; even if none fall, then flick off – none; let any pretext serve to show your attentiveness. If her cloak hangs low and trails upon the ground, gather it up and lift it carefully from the defiling earth; straightaway, a reward for your service, with the girl’s permission your eyes will catch a glimpse of her ankles. Then again look round to

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<sup>345</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2.1-7, 19-27, 37-43, 63-68 (*‘Non ego nobilium sedeo studiosus equorum; cui tamen ipsa faves, vincat ut ille, precor. Ut loquerer tecum veni, tecumque sederem, ne tibi non notus, quem facis, esset amor. Tu cursus spectas, ego te; spectemus uterque quod iuvat, atque oculos pascat uterque suos. O, cuicumque faves, felix agitator equorum!... Quid frustra refugis? cogit nos linea iungi. Haec in lege loci commoda circus habet — tu tamen a dextra, quicumque es, parce puellae; contactu lateris laeditur ista tui. Tu quoque, qui spectas post nos, tua contrahe crura, si pudor est, rigido nec preme terga genu! Sed nimium demissa iacent tibi pallia terra. Collige — vel digitis en ego tollo meis! Invida vestis eras, quae tam bona crura tegebas; ...Vis tamen interea faciles arcessere ventos? Quos faciet nostra mota tabella manu. An magis hic meus est animi, non aeris aestus, captaque femineus pectora torret amor? Dum loquor, alba levi sparsa est tibi pulvere vestis. Sordide de niveo corpore pulvis abi! Sed iam pompa venit — linguis animisque favete!... Sed pendent tibi crura. potes, si forte iuvabit, cancellis primos inseruisse pedes. Maxima iam vacuo praetor spectacula circo quadriiugos aequo carcere misit equos. Cui studeas, video, vincet, cuicumque favebis. Quid cupias, ipsi scire videntur equi’*).

<sup>346</sup> For a comparison of Ovid’s two accounts of the circus, see Thomas 1969.



see that whoever is sitting behind you is not pressing his knee against her tender back. Frivolous minds are won by trifles: many have found useful the deft arranging of a cushion. It has helped too to stir the air with a light fan, or to set a stool beneath a dainty foot. Such openings will the Circus afford to a new courtship, and the melancholy sand scattered on the busy Forum. Often has Venus' boy fought upon that sand, and he who watched the wounds has himself been wounded. While he is speaking and touching her hand and asking for the book, and inquiring which is winning as he lays his stake, he feels the winged barb and groans with the wound, and is himself part of the show which he is watching."<sup>347</sup>

The repetition of ideas in both works emphasizes various features of the audience experience. While Ovid is interested in exploring the erotic possibilities of being seated beside a woman at the circus, the scene he describes also gives the impression of very crowded seats and close quarters that likely were quite uncomfortable. Certainly the longer the event, the more uncomfortable such conditions would be, particularly if, as Ovid describes, spectators were seated close together with the knees of those in one row

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<sup>347</sup> Ovid *Ars. Am.* 1.135-176 ('*Nec te nobilium fugiat certamen equorum; multa capax populi commoda Circus habet. Nil opus est digitis, per quos arcana loquaris, nec tibi per nutus accipienda nota est: proximus a domina, nullo prohibente, sedeto, iunge tuum lateri qua potes usque latus; et bene, quod cogit, si nolis, linea iungi, quod tibi tangenda est lege puella loci. Hic tibi quaeratur socii sermonis origo, et moveant primos publica verba sonos. Cuius equi veniant, facito, studiose, requiras: nec mora, quisquis erit, cui favet illa, fave. At cum pompa frequens caelestibus ibit eburnis, tu Veneri dominae plaude favente manu; utque fit, in gremium pulvis si forte puellae deciderit, digitis excutiendus erit: etsi nullus erit pulvis, tamen excute nullum: quaelibet officio causa sit apta tuo. Pallia si terra nimium demissa iacebunt, collige, et inmundas sedulas effer humo; protinus, officii pretium, patiente puella contingent oculis crura videnda tuis. Respice praeterea, post vos quicumque sedebit, ne premat opposito mollia terga genu. Parva leves capiunt animos: fuit utile multis pulvinum facili composuisse manu. Profuit et tenui ventos movisse tabella, et cava sub tenerum scamna dedisse pedem. Hos aditus Circusque novo praebebit amori, sparsaque sollicito tristis arena foro. Illa saepe puer Veneris pugnavit arena, et qui spectavit vulnera, vulnus habet. Dum loquitur tangitque manum poscitque libellum et quaerit posito pignore, vincat uter, saucius ingemuit telumque volatile sensit, et pars spectati muneris ipse fuit. Quid, modo cum belli navalis imagine Caesar Persidas induxit Cecropiasque rates? Nempe ab utroque mari iuvenes, ab utroque puellae venere, atque ingens orbis in Urbe fuit. Quis non invenit turba, quod amaret, in illa? Eheu, quam multos advena torsit amor!').*

digging into the backs of those seated in front.<sup>348</sup> However, those in the front row of each section also could stretch their legs a bit by slipping their feet into the metal gratings (*cancelli*) that divided each section from the one below, and senators were permitted to bring cushions to sit on in the stands and thereby improve the comfort of their seats, a comfort that was taken up by the lower classes by the Flavian period.<sup>349</sup> Ovid also mentions the use of a stool to raise one's feet off the ground, although this was likely only an option for the upper classes who could afford to bring such a luxury item.<sup>350</sup> For all other seats the design of the seating and space available per spectator determined the degree of comfort for spectators in the stands.

The size of the seats undoubtedly affected the comfort and experience of a spectator. Although by no means spacious, the recommended dimensions in modern stadium design allows for a minimum seating space of approximately 0.5 m<sup>3</sup> per spectator, in which space one could expect enough room to sit comfortably without too much pressure from surrounding audience members.<sup>351</sup> In his work late first century BCE work *De Architectura*, Vitruvius calculates measurements for theatre seating, with a minimum and maximum advised size.<sup>352</sup> While the minimums fall below those of

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<sup>348</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2.21-24; *Ars. Am.* 1.157-8. Ovid does not see this as a negative and instead suggests there is an opportunity to get closer to the object of one's amorous interests (See esp. Ovid *Am.* 3.2.19-20, *Ars Am.* 1.139-142).

<sup>349</sup> Metal grating: Ovid *Am.* 3.2.63-64. Cushions: Dio Cass. 59.7.8; Mart. *Ep.* 14.160; Ovid *Ars Am.* 1.159-160. Friedländer 1964: II, 44 posits that cushions stuffed with rushes were sold to the public. Cushions could also help separate the spectator from the heat that would have built up on the stone seats in the sun.

<sup>350</sup> Ovid *Ars Am.* 1.162.

<sup>351</sup> This number is broken down in John et al., (2013: 146-149, 154) with a full discussion of the modern stadium specifications for seat dimensions. There are variations in the desired size of seating that depend upon the style of seat used in different modern venues. The most relevant style of modern seating is bench seats, which are used for the measurement comparisons that follow.

<sup>352</sup> Vitr. 5.6.3-4.

modern designs, the maximums allow for a range that comes near to the modern equivalents. Vitruvius suggests a seat height of 0.35-0.4 metres, to the modern minimum of 0.4 metres, and a seat depth of 0.6-0.7 metres, to the modern minimum of 0.7 metres, dimensions which are observed in various entertainment venues thereby demonstrating a clear design standard for seating.<sup>353</sup> A series of tables compiled by Sear record similar measurements in numerous theatres.<sup>354</sup> The table addressing theatres of the western type shows heights ranging from 0.31-0.44 metres and depths ranging from 0.59-0.91 metres, neatly falling between the calculations of Vitruvius and those of modern designs.<sup>355</sup> Similar measurements are found at circuses as well. At the circus at Tyre, thirteen tiers of seats are identified measuring 0.47 metres high and 0.65 metres deep, while at the circus at Gerasa the seats are measured at 0.41 metres high and 0.6 metres deep.<sup>356</sup> Rose considers possible seating measurements for three of the most notable entertainment venues at Rome: the Theatre of Marcellus, Colosseum, and Circus Maximus.<sup>357</sup> Rose's table of measurements (fig. 6) includes calculations for three different seating capacities at each location, demonstrating how increased space per spectator in turn decreases the overall capacity of the venue.<sup>358</sup> While the lowest and highest capacity estimates presented by Rose generate seating measurements that correspond to modern recommendations and Vitruvius' suggested theatre seating size respectively, it seems most

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<sup>353</sup> The measurements noted here as 'depth', are identified by Vitruvius as width (*latitudines*), when referring to the width of each step that made up the seating rows.

<sup>354</sup> 30-31, tables 3.3, 3.4, 3.5.

<sup>355</sup> Sear 2006: 30, table 3.3.

<sup>356</sup> Humphrey 1986: 468, 501.

<sup>357</sup> Rose 2005.

<sup>358</sup> There have been numerous estimates for the capacity of the Circus Maximus, although most fall within 130-150,000 spectators. See n. 76.

reasonable to take up Rose's middle estimate, which produces a seating measurement of 0.4 x 0.7 metres per spectator and resembles seating measurements calculated in the circuses at Tyre and Gerasa.

	<i>Theatre of Marcellus</i> (5500 m <sup>2</sup> )	<i>Colosseum</i> (1,000 m <sup>2</sup> )	<i>Circus Maximus</i> (32000 m <sup>2</sup> )
0.3 × 0.5 m	42,000	122,000	220,000
0.4 × 0.7 m	22,000	65,000	115,000
0.5 × 0.8 m	16,000	46,000	80,000

**Figure 6**  
Estimated seating capacity and measurements for individual seats  
at major entertainment venues at Rome.  
(Rose 2005: table 6)

The modern measurements for seating also include a width of 0.45-0.5 metres per spectator, but there is no corresponding width measurement in Vitruvius' work.<sup>359</sup> At various venues, including circuses, lines were marked onto the wooden or stone seats. The distance between these lines suggests that they did not mark off space for one person but a certain number of people.<sup>360</sup> Indeed, in both the *Amores* and the *Ars Amatoria* Ovid

<sup>359</sup> Modern calculations suggest a minimum seat width of 0.5 metres if the seat has arms, and 0.46 metres if it does not (John et al., 2013: 147).

<sup>360</sup> For example, at the amphitheatre at Nîmes, markings were found measuring two metres apart (Formigé 1965: 1-2, fig. 2). If five people were seated in the space between these markings, it would give an average width of 0.4 metres per spectator. Similar markings on seats of the amphitheatre at Pola allowed for seats 0.4 metres wide (Golvin 1988: 173), as did those at the amphitheatre at El Djem (Lézine 1960: 30). These per spectator measurements also would match with the estimated capacity of the circus at Lepcis Magna (Humphrey 1986: 31). Golvin (1988: 355-6, table 44) provides a range of 0.3-0.5 metres by 0.45-1.20 metres for seats at amphitheatres. Greek theatres are also found to have similar per spectator measurements, including the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens, where markings indicated individual seats 0.41 metres apart (Sear 2006: 26).

refers to the lines that divide the row of seats into smaller sections and suggests that spectators were expected to sit within them, a fact which he uses as another opportunity to get closer to the woman next to him.<sup>361</sup> However, numerous other entertainment venues seem to have had a larger amount of space allotted to individual spectators. Wiseman posits a width of two Roman feet per spectator, approximately 0.59 metres, in the seats at the Theatre of Pompey.<sup>362</sup> While comparatively this seems to be a very large space available to spectators, Rawson asserts that the allotted space should be greater and draws attention to larger seats, such as those approximately 0.8 metres in width at the theatre at Stobi in Macedonia.<sup>363</sup>

The difference in measurements can be explained by the use of these larger seats. At many venues, particularly those in the provinces, high status individuals would be provided with larger seating.<sup>364</sup> As mentioned, seats at the amphitheatre at El Djem measure 0.4 metres wide throughout the tiers. This is except for the podium level, where the individual seats are 0.65 metres wide.<sup>365</sup> Similarly, at the theatre at Stobi individual seats are marked off with a width of 0.8 metres in the first two rows, while the rest of the theatre seating is believed to have followed the typical design, allotting 0.4 metres per spectator.<sup>366</sup> These larger seats consistently are found in the front rows of theatres and amphitheatres, which, in accordance with the hierarchical seating regulations at those

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<sup>361</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2.19-20; *Ars Am.* 1.139-42.

<sup>362</sup> Wiseman 1970: 72. One Roman foot is equivalent to approximately 0.971 feet in modern Imperial measurements, or 0.296 metres in metric.

<sup>363</sup> Rawson 1987: n. 124. Stobi: Gebhard 1981: 16.

<sup>364</sup> Scobie 1988: 204-5.

<sup>365</sup> Lézine 1960: 30.

<sup>366</sup> Gebhard 1981: 16.

venues, were reserved for elite citizens. Such accommodations in seating likely were made to provide more space for the bulk of the traditional toga worn by senatorial elite as well as to provide elite individuals with more dignified personal space.<sup>367</sup> In the subsequent rows and tiers, the consistency among the measurements at theatres, amphitheatres, and circuses demonstrate a design standard throughout entertainment venues, which closely resembles the desired measurements for seating in modern venues and suggests a relative concern for spectator comfort. The one exception is the width of ancient Roman seats, which on average were 0.1 metres smaller than the modern equivalent.<sup>368</sup> Although some elements of structural design considered spectator comfort at the circus, it is evident that the seating size was also concerned with accommodating the largest crowd possible in the venue.<sup>369</sup> The average spectator sat shoulder to shoulder with his seatmates, finding respite from the tight quarters when the crowds, unable to contain their excitement, rose to their feet to cheer on the racers.

The seating design at Roman entertainment venues also addressed the spectator's viewing experience in terms of sightlines in the stands. As has been noted, front row seats generally offer the best view up close to the action, while the further back the seats, the more difficult it is to see. Not only does the action take place further away, but also

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<sup>367</sup> Rawson 1987: 104-5.

<sup>368</sup> This comparison to modern seating is being made with the more common seats throughout Roman entertainment venues and not the larger elite seating.

<sup>369</sup> A unique case is the Circus of Maxentius at Rome where, while the rows of seats fell within the desired height at 0.37-0.4 metres, the depth of the seats was much smaller than usual, only 0.3 metres deep. Ippolo 1988: 51-53, fig. 52, Ippolo 1999: 139-140) contends that the intention was for spectators to sit on one tier and put their feet on the one below them, thus providing far more spacious seating than other entertainment buildings. However, this would greatly diminish the seating capacity of the venue as what appears to be twelve tiers of seats would only seat six rows of spectators. See also Pisani Sartorio 2008: 58-59, fig. 18.

the spectators must deal with obstructions to their views in the form of those seated in front of them. The incline, or seating rake, created by the tiered design of seating stands in entertainment venues was intended to ensure a clear sightline for all spectators, but had to increase gradually in order to compensate for the rising height of the seats.<sup>370</sup> Here, the desired angle calculated for modern entertainment venues corresponds to that found in ancient venues, with a seating rake of 30-40 degrees.<sup>371</sup> Electronic models of Roman structures, including the Circus Maximus, were created as part of an extensive image research program entitled "Iconic" at the University of Bordeaux's Ausonius Institute.<sup>372</sup> In this reconstruction an increase of the seating rake emerges, beginning with the sharpest slope of 37 degrees in the front rows at the podium level. As these rows were the closest to the track, a steep incline was necessary to ensure that spectators in these seats could see past the spectators immediately in front of them. Beyond this level the seating rake drops to 30 degrees at the *ima cavea* before increasing at a low rate, with 31 degrees at the *media cavea*, and 35 degrees at the *summa cavea*.<sup>373</sup> By changing the angle of the seating rows spectators in any seat in the circus, no matter their distance from the track, were provided with an unobstructed view down to the races.

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<sup>370</sup> See John et al., 2013: 137-142.

<sup>371</sup> Rose (2005: 125) identifies a range of 30-34 degrees for inclined seating, while Barron (2010: 13-15) asserts a maximum rake of 35 degrees. From excavations of the Circus Maximus, Bigot estimates a seating rake of 32-40 degrees at the venue (quoted in Humphrey 1986: 106-7). Golvin (1988: 293, table 32) sets a 30-40 degree seating rake for the Colosseum. Pisani Sartorio (2008: 59) makes a reconstruction drawing of the position of spectators in the seats and their eyeline based on the gradient. Fauquet (2002: 293, table 60) compiles the slope of the seating tiers in the circuses at Antioch (30°), Tyre (36°), Lepcis Magna (33°), and the Circus Maxentius (45°) for an average of 36 degrees.

<sup>372</sup> See, for instance, Ciancio Rossetto 2003, 2008 and Pérès 2003.

<sup>373</sup> See also Fauquet 2002: 293-6.

With up to twenty-four races in a day, much needed to be done between races, including cleaning the track from any damage that may have occurred in the previous race and arranging the next line-up of teams competing. While a spectator could reasonably be patient for a few of these intervals near the start of the day, it is highly likely that as the day continued, such breaks in the entertainment proved frustrating and could lead to a bored and impatient audience. At the amphitheatre the *ludi meridiani* ('midday games') filled the noon hour with spectacle executions as a way to engage the crowd who otherwise might have left; similar distraction through entertainment was vital at the races to draw the attention of the spectators and keep them from becoming agitated or disruptive.<sup>374</sup> The surviving sixth century CE circus programme from Oxyrhynchus lists a variety of entertainments on offer, including singing rope-dancers after the first and second races, a gazelle hunt after the third, mimes after the fourth and an athletic event after the fifth.<sup>375</sup> While certainly meant to entertain, these performances between races were sideshows to the main attraction, and hardly a point of excitement for spectators to anticipate. As a result, it is likely that many spectators chose instead to get up between races. The shops and vendors around the venue would benefit from these occasions, as the audience exited the stands in search of food, drink, and other distractions.<sup>376</sup> Shops

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<sup>374</sup> Of particular note is Coleman's 1990 article concerning the staging of executions as mythological scenes to enhance the entertainment. Additional entertainments at the circus could also break up the races so as to minimize any weariness or monotony that might develop if races were run without a pause to generate more variety in the spectacle.

<sup>375</sup> *P. Oxy.* 34.2707. There is also a procession noted to take place after the first race. It is not clear if this indeed was the order of events or, as Humphrey (1986: 519) hypothesizes, it was an error in the writing of the programme that should have the procession preceding the first race. Other performances included acrobats, tightrope walkers, horseback skills, and military presentations (Livy 44.9; *CIL* VI. 10157 = *ILS* 5316; Suet. *Aug.* 43.2, *Claud.* 21.3).

<sup>376</sup> There is limited information regarding possible toilet facilities in entertainment venues. Some evidence for urinals, possibly to be used by both male and female spectators, has been found at the amphitheatres at



were found around the perimeter of the Circus Maximus, and could be visited by spectators before, after, or during the day of races.<sup>377</sup> When describing the earliest construction of the Circus Maximus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus describes a one-story portico outside the Circus with shops in it and homes above. This is consistent with the remains of the Circus Maximus, in which there are sets of three rooms, including one fully enclosed except for the doorway to enter the room.<sup>378</sup> Enclosed rooms at the circus in Gerasa have also been identified as shops, akin to those at Rome.<sup>379</sup> Various merchants and vendors also set up shop in the outer corridors of the Circus or in the open space around the venue, and prostitutes made their way among the crowds, using the gathering for public entertainment as an opportunity to find customers before and after the spectacle.<sup>380</sup> Yet, even with the enticements of the wares being sold around the circus, spectators would be sure to return to their seats for the start of the day's events and the races of their favoured teams.

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Arles and Nîmes (Formigé 1965: 134-136 [Arles]; Mazauric 1910: 15-35 [Nîmes]; Scobie 1986 and 1988). On most occasions it seems that spectators were expected to go to public toilets (*foricae*) or those at the public baths. Scobie (1988: 225-6) rightly finds this to be a great inconvenience to spectators that likely would lead those "less civic minded" spectators to go no further than the street to relieve themselves.

<sup>377</sup> Cicero (*Mur.* 73, *Mil.* 65) mentions that elite individuals could hire out the *tabernae*, from which they could watch the events. Humphrey (1986: 72) posits that these were shops positioned along the long sides of the circus and that, given that there still was no monumental seating structure at the time of Cicero's writing, they would have provided a clear view of the races.

<sup>378</sup> Humphrey 1986: 114, fig. 50. The other two rooms, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, contained a stairway to the next level and a doorway to the seating substructures.

<sup>379</sup> Humphrey 1986: 500. The measurements of the rooms at Gerasa are different than at Rome but likely still served a similar purpose as some type of shop.

<sup>380</sup> Merchants and vendors: *CIL* VI. 31900 (barbers), 9822 = *ILS* 7496 (fruit sellers); *Juv. Sat.* 6.582-661 (fortune tellers). See also Dio Chrys. *Or.* 20.10. Prostitutes: *Juv. Sat.* 3.65; *Anth. Lit.* 1.190.7; S.H.A. *Elagab.* 26.3; Aldrete 2004: 117; Humphrey 1986: 72; McGinn 2004: 22, 2002: 17. A mid-third century Christian source notes that there is an entrance to the circus through a brothel ([Cypr.] *Spect.* 5, *CSEL* 3.3.8).

Although not explicitly mentioned in the context of the circus, there is also the possibility that the audience of the circus received giveaways, called *sparsiones* ('scatterings' or 'sprinklings'), which were distributed to the crowd. *Sparsiones* were present at many occasions in Roman life and were very popular at other public games, making it very plausible that they were carried over to events in the circus, whether on a regular basis or on particularly special occasions.<sup>381</sup> At public games spectators could be enticed by these gifts distributed in two ways. The first was by means of tokens or vouchers, in the form of *tesserae*, pieces of reed, coins, or small wooden balls.<sup>382</sup> The tokens were inscribed with the name of a prize and thrown into the stands for spectators to catch. Each item served as a voucher that could be exchanged for whatever prize was inscribed on it, including food, money, jewelry, cattle, and even homes.<sup>383</sup> The second form of giveaway did not use tokens at all and instead the prize itself was thrown directly into the audience.<sup>384</sup> At many events food, such as fruits, nuts, cheeses, cakes, and even birds and pheasants, were showered down onto the audience.<sup>385</sup> The free distribution of food, gifts, and prize vouchers not only acted as a demonstration of the emperor's generosity but also drew the excitement of the spectacle into the stands. While, in many ways, the crowds were mere passive spectators to the action in the arena, the giveaways

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<sup>381</sup> Nibley (1945) makes a close study of *sparsiones*, noting their presence in Roman life from the early Republic, even in familial events such as weddings and funerals.

<sup>382</sup> Nibley 1945: 515.

<sup>383</sup> Dio Cass. 66.25.4-5; Sen. *Ep.* 74.7; Suet. *Calig.* 18.2, *Nero* 11.2. The 'vouchers' became part of the estate of whoever caught them and could be passed on to heirs if they were not redeemed by the time of the holder's death (Futrell 2006: 112). Kyle (1998: 192) notes that the tickets used to assign seats at the Colosseum could also be used as a token to claim gifts. See also Mart. *Ep.* 5.49.8-10.

<sup>384</sup> During the celebrations for the Saturnalia in the amphitheatre, Domitian distributed baskets of food and other gifts for spectators to grab (Suet. *Dom.* 4.5; Dio Cass. 67.4.4).

<sup>385</sup> Stat. *Silv.* 1.6.9-50; Friedländer 1964: II, 17; Scobie 1988: n. 196.

offered a chance to participate in a communal game, even interacting with their leaders in a way.<sup>386</sup> As *sparsiones* were seen at other public entertainment venues, it seems inconsistent that the popular circus was not included in this practice. Although it is possible that the large seating capacity of the circus was deemed too great to permit the giveaways, it would have been unreasonable to expect the number of giveaways to match the number of spectators in attendance at any other entertainment venues. The finite number of free items available for the crowd enhanced the lottery-like character of the practice and, given the atmosphere of the circus in which there were no status-based seating hierarchies or divisions, it is highly probable that the energetic crowds would have been receptive of such distribution of gifts. The emperor also was likely to recognize the popularity of the venue and the occasion it presented to further demonstrate his generosity to the masses.

## 2. 8. SOUNDS OF THE CIRCUS

While sound was not the key aspect of the production of the races, which relied upon the visual excitement of high-speed chariots, the noise of the circus was an unavoidable element of the Roman soundscape that could not be held in by the grand architecture of the circus.<sup>387</sup> The sounds of the circus could be heard in the days leading up to the races with the final preparations being made in the circus and nearby in local stables. These

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<sup>386</sup> Coleman 1996: 56. Day (2017: 176-92) explores the olfactory contributions of *sparsiones* to the Roman games. If *sparsiones* were offered at the circus, they undoubtedly would have added to the multisensory experience of the spectacle by delivering sights, smells, and potentially things to touch or taste.

<sup>387</sup> Laurence (2017: 13-22) discusses the impactful role of sound in our understanding of Roman space and the multisensory experience of an environment.

sounds built as the day of the races arrived and the track was prepared, merchants set up their stalls and shops, and the crowds began to gather. Once the public was permitted to enter, the venue exploded with noise, as the spectators poured through the *vomitoria* and out to their seats, where spectators could then begin conversation with those seated around them, discussing the upcoming races and possible bets on their outcome.

Nelis-Clément considers the soundscape of the circus and identifies three main types of noise: (1) the sounds from the track itself, created by the race and its participants; (2) the sounds from the crowds in the stands; and (3) the sounds from officials, often relaying a signal for the race.<sup>388</sup> The sounds of the crowds by far were the loudest, dramatically influencing the experience of all those in the stands and possibly drowning out whatever sound was created on the track. Numerous sources comment upon the noise of the audience; in his eighth satire Juvenal credits the speed of a horse with exciting the crowd and filling the Circus “with the hoarse shout of victory” and in his eleventh satire he finds the love of a circus faction responsible, pronouncing “a roar strikes upon my ear which tells me that the Green had won; for had it lost, Rome would be as sad and dismayed as when the Consuls were vanquished in the dust of Cannae”.<sup>389</sup> As spectators needed to follow little more than the visual cues of the egg and dolphin lap counters and the chariots making their way around the track, spectators could engage in conversation

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<sup>388</sup> Nelis-Clément 2008: 434. Among the more recent studies of the Roman urban sensory experience, the soundscape of Rome has gained prominence as scholars consider the types of sound in the urban environment and the responses to them by Romans of different social rank and experience. See, for instance, Hartnett 2016: 159-178; Laurence 2017: 13-22.

<sup>389</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 8.59 (*‘exultat rauco victoria circo’*), 11.197-201 (*‘fragor aurem percutit, eventum viridis quo colligo panni. Nam si deficeret, maestam attonitamque videres hanc urbem veluti Cannarum in pulvere victis consulibus’*). See also Dio Cass. 76.4.2-6; Procop. *Arc.* 7.13; Tert. *De Spect.* 16.2-4; Sen. *Ep.* 83.7; Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.315-16, 376; Sil. *Pun.* 16.319-45.

with one another throughout the races without much concern for disturbing the show for others.<sup>390</sup>

Certain moments did command the attention of those in attendance, such as the *pompa circensis*, the procession that began the day's events.<sup>391</sup> In the *Amores*, Ovid notes how his conversation is interrupted by the arrival of the *pompa* as he urges '*linguis animisque favete*' ("hold [your] tongues and spirits"); yet it is not a time for silence as he also calls for his fellow spectators to applaud and cheer for the arriving images of deities.<sup>392</sup> The procession itself was very noisy, with numerous people and animals parading into the venue accompanied by musicians playing flutes and lyres.<sup>393</sup> The charioteers who were set to compete in the day's races also arrived in the procession, undoubtedly to the cheering of their fans, and the arrival of the emperor too, whether entering as part of the procession or separately, could trigger great celebration.<sup>394</sup> At the end of the procession came the cult images of the gods carried on litters or in carts. In some respects such opening ceremonies might not have been that different from the opening of modern sporting events, with the arrival of competing teams, the introductory remarks from officials, and the singing of national anthems. Although there was likely an air of solemnity to this portion of the proceedings, the scene was still jovial and celebratory, as the energies of the crowd continued to build up ahead of the first race.

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<sup>390</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.23.2-3; Ovid *Am.* 3.2.1-85, *Ars.* 1.135-170, *Tr.* 2.283; Juv. *Sat.* 11.201-202.

<sup>391</sup> Dion. Hal. 7.72; Tert. *De Spect.* 7.2-3.

<sup>392</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2.43-56. Cf. Nelis-Clément 2008: 440-444.

<sup>393</sup> Dion. Hal. 7.72.5, 13. See 'The *Pompa Circensis*' in this chapter.

<sup>394</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 43.5; Aldrete 1999: 112-113. Cf. Cic. *Att.* 1.16.11, *Phil.* 1.36-37, *Sest.* 115-8, 123-4; Mart. *Ep.* 7.7.9-10, 8.11.5-6; Tac. *Ann.* 16.4-5; Plin. *Pan.* 54.

The music heard in the *pompa circensis* may have continued throughout the day. Despite the harsh and violent image of gladiatorial combats, such spectacles regularly were accompanied by music from trumpeters or organists.<sup>395</sup> For chariot races it is probable that the focus was on the time preceding and following each race, as any attempt at musical accompaniment during the race itself would be lost in the shouts and cheers of the crowd. The sound also functioned to draw the attention of the spectators, who were likely talking amongst themselves. The venue was filled with anticipation and tension as the audience anxiously waited for the *editor* of the games to drop a linen napkin called the *mappa*, which signaled that the starting gates be opened and the race begun, an act that undoubtedly spurred on more chatter from excited crowds.<sup>396</sup> It is possible that the sound of a trumpet also signaled the start of the race at the Roman circus as was common at the Greek hippodrome.<sup>397</sup> Once the *mappa* was dropped cheers rose from the stands again, as the chariots burst out of the starting gates and the race was begun.<sup>398</sup> However, given the size of the venue, not everyone could see this one visual cue to start the competition. As a result, other sounds in the circus were likely relied upon to inform spectators in the

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<sup>395</sup> Numerous examples in art and references to inscriptions and graffiti are provided by Carter (1999: 245-6).

<sup>396</sup> Silius Italicus (*Pun.* 16.314-16) comments that the circus was humming with noise and that the spectators kept their eyes on the starting gates even before they were opened (*Cf.* Cic. *Div.* 1.108). There is clearly some exaggeration in this description as it is evident that most spectators would not have a view of the starting gates; however, it illustrates the anticipation of the crowds, all turned in the direction of the starting gates whether they could see them or not.

<sup>397</sup> Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carm.* 23.339-41) mentions a herald with a trumpet who called up the chariot teams to their gates and sounded as they were released onto the track Humphrey 1986: 156; *cf.* 8-9. Harris (1968: 125) agrees and adds that the trumpet announced to the teams that they could change lanes and signaled the final lap, although there is no written or visual evidence to demonstrate these additional uses. *Cf.* Nelis-Clément 2008: 445. The procedures for the start of the races did not remain the same as later, a small gesture or nod from the emperor was enough to begin the event (See Dagrón et al., 2000).

<sup>398</sup> Sil. *Pun.* 16.317-324.

furthest seats what had happened. In particular, the cheers of nearby spectators could indicate to others that the race was underway, and more specific information could be conveyed either through shouts in the crowd or through neighbours in the stands.<sup>399</sup>

Upon the conclusion of the race, amid the cheers and applause of the crowd, a trumpeter participated in the presentation of the race's winner and his prizes.<sup>400</sup> In the Piazza Armerina mosaic the *editor* of the games stands holding a purse and a palm branch, items that will be given to the victorious charioteer. Beside the *editor* is a trumpeter, who presses the trumpet to his lips and plays as the victor rides toward them.<sup>401</sup> The trumpeter may have begun to play at the conclusion of the race and continued through the charioteer's victory lap and the presentation of prizes. It is likely that during all this time the crowd would not be silent, but rather would be on its feet applauding the victorious charioteer. Fans of the winning faction, including those spectators who bet in its favour, would celebrate even louder at the success. Perhaps the only quiet moment at the circus can be found immediately preceding a race when a hush fell over the crowd for the briefest of moments and all eyes looked to the far end of the track and the restless teams in their starting gates. Yet the quiet did not last long for just as the signal was given and the gates were opened, again the stands erupted with shouts and cheers with the race now underway.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Of course, the excitement and volume in the circus could lead to some spectators misreporting what had occurred and other mishearing the information (See Tert. *De Spect.* 16.3).

<sup>400</sup> Lydus *Mens.* 1.12.5

<sup>401</sup> Humphrey 1986: 227, fig. 114.

<sup>402</sup> Marchet (2008) offers a detailed discussion of the release of the *mappa* and the start of the races, including appendices of references to the signal to start and other uses of the word '*mappa*' in literature.

## CHAPTER 3.

### SPECTATORS AND FANS

#### 3. 1. INTRODUCTION

The chariot races were perhaps the most popular sport at Rome. While gladiatorial spectacles were enticing in terms of their rarity, the frequency with which chariot races were presented ensured that they were on the minds of the public more often. The events at the circus attracted people from all tiers of society, including the emperor himself, and developed a substantial fan base; Juvenal satirizes such a popular scene by remarking that on one day the circus “contains the whole of Rome”.<sup>403</sup> The fandom of chariot racing was focused on two fundamental aspects of the racing system: the factions and their charioteers. The factions served two functions, as the organizations that provided all necessary personnel and equipment to run the races, and as the groups with which fans identified. The division of the factions into four distinct teams became the basis of fan support in the circus and fierce partisanship developed, with fans devoting themselves to one faction over the others. At the races fans applauded the efforts of their favourite and scrutinized the performance of the others, and a sense of camaraderie was thereby created, as spectators were united by their shared enthusiasm to cheer and jeer at the circus.

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<sup>403</sup> *Juv. Sat.* 11.197.



Despite the vital role of the factions in the fandom of the sport, the importance of the charioteers themselves, who both represented the factions in the races and earned the victories, cannot be disregarded. Avid fans of the races were knowledgeable about the skills needed for victory and became supporters of the charioteers who demonstrated them best. The popularity of charioteers was manifested in visual and textual forms, from inscriptions and monuments erected in their honour to mosaics and other images depicting great charioteers. The proliferation of images and text that included the names of charioteers and information about their careers demonstrates that it was not only the performance of racing but also individual performers who interested the masses. Charioteers were popular both in association with and independent of their factions; while some charioteers were honoured by their own factions for the victories that they won, others moved repeatedly between the factions and were celebrated for their efforts alone.

It is necessary to examine these two aspects of the races both separately and together in an effort to understand their roles in the fandom of the sport. Despite the devotion to a single faction that was maintained by most fans, spectators could also openly celebrate the skills and successes of a charioteer from an opposing faction.<sup>404</sup> This raises the question of whether fans defined their support by allegiance to one of the four factions or to a particular charioteer. Moreover, it must be asked whether fans were willing to shift their loyalties and follow a charioteer to another faction, or if their support

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<sup>404</sup> There is evidence for alliances among factions that could permit a fan of one faction to support another to a degree so long as they were not in direct opposition to one's own faction. This will be discussed further below.

did not waiver. The issues of fan allegiance and loyalties are central to any discussion of sports fandom, including the exploration of the system of racing fandom.

Certainly, the frequency with which the races were put on kept them in the minds of the Roman public; however, it was not scheduling alone that ensured such strong fandom. The viewing of the races evoked the passions of spectators and led much of Roman society to put a high value on the sport. Elements of the spectacle or the experience of attending the event drew spectators' attentions, first gaining their interest and then their praise. Thus, it is necessary to reflect upon not only how they became fans, but also what exactly they were they fans of, in an effort to understand fully the popularity of the sport. The motivations of spectators to engage with the sport and become fans can in turn be used to clarify the mindset of fans as they became wholly committed to chariot racing and participated in the advancement of this fandom.

### **3. 2. CHILDREN AND THE RACES**

Before advancing too far into the discussion of spectators and the fandom of the races, the composition of the audience must briefly be addressed. It is readily apparent that adult males of varying social classes made up a significant portion of the audience. While the spectacles were often looked at as mass entertainments for the common populace, there is evidence for seats having been reserved for men of senatorial and equestrian classes at different periods and, despite their criticisms of the circus, the knowledgeable discussions of the races by some elite Roman authors suggest that they attended as well.<sup>405</sup> At the

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<sup>405</sup> See 'Seating' in Chapter 2.

theatre and amphitheatre, slaves were required to remain at the back of the venue and, although the seating at the circus was not as strictly defined as at other entertainment venues, it is reasonable to believe that such a division was common at the circus as well, in an effort to ensure the best seats went to the free population.<sup>406</sup> Ancient sources show that women also attended the races; Ovid in particular makes the presence of female spectators the focus of his poetry in sections of the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*.<sup>407</sup> The women at the races were permitted to sit throughout the seats among the men, rather than in the back, uppermost seats as at the amphitheatre.<sup>408</sup> It is not only possible that many men were pleased at the prospect of sitting near women, as Ovid indicates, but also that women likely appreciated the improvement in their seating and the associated views, from what was standard for them at other entertainment venues. While it is probable that women enjoyed the experience of sitting closer to the spectacle, there is no evidence to suggest that this unique seating arrangement resulted in an increased number of female spectators at the circus compared to other spectacles. The presentation of public spectacles was an exciting event and likely to attract the Roman people no matter where they anticipated that they would sit at the show.

Although there is clear evidence for the presence of Roman men, women, and slaves at the circus, another large group of the population remains unaddressed: children. The spectacles were an important part of Roman life and, as a result, it is reasonable to

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<sup>406</sup> See Futrell 1997: 165; Moore 1994: 116-7; Rawson 1987: 87-89. In the prologue of Plautus' *Poenulus* (pr. ll.23-25) slaves are told to get out of the seats they are currently in and to make room for free individuals. See also Jones 1998: n. 11.

<sup>407</sup> See 'Experience in the Stands' in Chapter 2.

<sup>408</sup> See Lilja 1985: 69-71; Rawson 1987: 89-90.

believe that children were permitted to attend. Indeed, when discussing the decision-making process for the construction of a spectacle venue, Vitruvius advises concern for spectators who are sitting at the games for the entire day with their wives and children.<sup>409</sup> Suetonius also reports that, among the new seating regulations that Augustus imposed on the games at the amphitheatre, he assigned a section of seats to boys under age and an adjoining section for their tutors whose responsibility it was to control the children at the spectacle.<sup>410</sup> The social status of the tutors as freedmen or slaves suggests that their seats were located nearer to the back of the venue, but as instructors of freeborn Roman youths they may not have been relegated to the very back and could instead sit among the freeborn.<sup>411</sup> These examples do not address the seating of the circus directly; however, it is possible that the same principles were at work in the racing venue.

By Suetonius' account, the imperial family sometimes attended the circus spectacles together; he notes an occasion when Germanicus' children sat with him and records that when Augustus did not watch the races from the upper rooms of friends' homes he would sit in the *pulvinar* with his wife and children.<sup>412</sup> Elite families were occasionally given reserved seats in thanks for service to the state, such as the *gens Aelia* which Valerius Maximus reports was granted a *locus spectandi* in both the Circus Maximus and Circus Flaminius.<sup>413</sup> Of course, these can all be viewed as exceptional

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<sup>409</sup> Vitr. 5.3.1.

<sup>410</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 44.2. See also Beacham 1999: 123; Rawson 1987: 91.

<sup>411</sup> Orlandi 2004: 176.

<sup>412</sup> Germanicus: Suet. *Aug.* 34.2; Augustus: Suet. *Aug.* 45.1.

<sup>413</sup> Val. Max. 4.4.8. See also Humphrey 1986: 70. The family of Manius Valerius Maximus was provided a curule seat (*sella curulis*) at the Circus Maximus, although this only indicates a seat for one individual and not necessarily space for the entire family (Livy 2.31; Festus 464).

cases of families whose status exempted them from the common rules or decorum associated with the attendance of children. In turn, the actions of the imperial and other elite families cannot alone be taken as evidence for the behaviour and practices of the general populace or the degree to which children were interested in the races and were permitted to attend. However, the actions of Augustus in particular stand out for the influence that they had on the public. Augustus' concerns for the Roman birth rate are well attested as he established benefits and penalties to increase the number of children in families and, therefore, it is possible that his being seen with the imperial family was a further demonstration of the importance of children. The presence of his children at the games instilled an image of appropriate behaviour and an appropriate Roman family, which he envisaged for the Roman public and sought to encourage by his own actions. The public appearance of the imperial family at the circus was more than a family outing that allowed the children to enjoy the spectacles; it was a demonstration of the strength of the Roman state and its great future in the next generations.

While we have a variety of evidence that demonstrates the interest of adults in the races, the nature of our sources provide stories through the eyes of adult authors and do not represent the views of children and, as a result, the evidence for the interests of children is largely anecdotal. In an aforementioned passage from the *Annals*, Tacitus derides the public's interest in the circus by claiming that Romans, when still in the womb, already loved the sport.<sup>414</sup> Tacitus may have intentionally exaggerated the degree of popular obsession in order to underscore that Romans became interested in the circus

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<sup>414</sup> Tac. *Dial.* 29.3-4. See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1.

from childhood. It is readily apparent that elite children were introduced to horses and riding from an early age. Small lead wheels found on the Esquiline Hill in Rome were each engraved around the circumference with what appear to be the names of horses and charioteers: Euprepes, Paramithius, and Scorpus; Lanciani has posited that these small finds were once part of a very small cart, possibly a toy.<sup>415</sup> Indeed, numerous examples of horse toys, with or without riders, have been found, some of which include wheels and have been suggested to represent a chariot.<sup>416</sup> After playing with these and other equine toys through childhood, Galen suggests that at age seven a child was of an appropriate age to move away from hobby-horses and learn to ride the real thing.<sup>417</sup> The toys and training received in childhood establish early awareness of horse riding and even racing that could plausibly transition to an interest in the races at the circus.

In his biography of the emperor, Suetonius describes Nero as having had an interest in the races from a young age and often talking about the races, on one occasion discussing with fellow students how a charioteer of the Greens was dragged by his horses.<sup>418</sup> This not only establishes an early interest in the races by Nero, but also alludes to other youths interested in the subject. Although the children may have learned about the incident second-hand, either told by family who had attended the races or hearing about it on the streets around town, it is also possible that the young boys saw it for themselves and wanted to discuss their time at the spectacle with friends. In his fifth

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<sup>415</sup> The wheels were found on the Esquiline hill, Rome, in 1872. *CIL* XV. 8009; Lanciani 1876: 190.

<sup>416</sup> See Dolansky 2017: 121-2.

<sup>417</sup> Galen, *De Sanitate Tuenda* 1.8 (Kühn: VI. 38). See also Plat. *Rep.* 5.467e. See also Horace *Sat.* 2.3.247-9; Val. Max. 8.8 ext. 1.

<sup>418</sup> Suet. *Nero* 22.1.

Satire Juvenal describes a dinner party and assures the host, Virro, that his guest, Trebius, will be gracious in his home and that, if Virro's children come to Trebius at dinner, he will offer them small gifts, including "little green jackets" (*viridem thoraca*) that would match the charioteers of the Greens.<sup>419</sup> The promise of such a gift supposes that the children would understand what it was and likely have interest in it themselves. It is unclear if this genuinely could be a gift to children or if it was meant as a satirical comment by Juvenal to illustrate the love of the races even among children; nevertheless, the result is the same, as it further affirms the interest in the races held by Romans even when they were young.

As has been discussed, some elite Roman authors acknowledged the educational value of spectacles for their demonstration of Roman virtues.<sup>420</sup> The races offered lessons on achieving excellence, the competitors demonstrated great skill and courage throughout the high speed races, and he who was successful in the attempt gained honour and glory for his efforts. Although Roman authors seem to direct this commentary to adult men who could employ the lessons in their civic duties, political lives and military service, the shows could potentially be useful to instill the same values in boys at an early age. Moreover, many charioteers began their training and performance at a young age, with some records of teenage competitors in the circus. The charioteer Crescens began driving at the age of thirteen, the same age the *auriga* Sextus Vistilius Helenus was when he

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<sup>419</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 5.143-5 ('*viridem thoraca iubebit adferri minimasque nuces assemque rogatum, ad mensam quotiens parasitus venerit infans*').

<sup>420</sup> See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1.

died.<sup>421</sup> It is possible that the opportunity to see a charioteer who was athletic, skillful, and brave, and closer to one's age than most spectacle performers, was engaging to a youth, who could relate what he saw in the circus to what he wanted to become in his own life.<sup>422</sup>

A particular body of evidence that has implications for this topic is the circus imagery that decorated many children's sarcophagi, which has been examined closely by scholars in recent years, including Bell, D'Ambra, and Huskinson.<sup>423</sup> The circus motif is in fact one of the most popular image types on the sarcophagi of children and serves to further demonstrate the widespread popularity of the races and their association to children.<sup>424</sup> The images tend to follow a typical compositional format, with four cupids (*erotes*) driving two-horse chariots (*bigae*), each representing one of the four circus factions. Much like other circus iconography the scenes depict the race underway, with a victorious charioteer waving to the crowds, other competitors still racing at full speed behind him, and one chariot having crashed somewhere along the track.<sup>425</sup> Even recognizable decorations from the Circus Maximus are included in the images, such as the Egyptian obelisk or the dolphin and egg lap counters that stood on the central

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<sup>421</sup> Crescens: *CIL* VI. 10050 = *ILS* 5285. Sextus Vistilius Helenus: *AE* 2001: 268; Thuillier 2004. See 'Charioteers' in Chapter 3.

<sup>422</sup> There were also instructors who disapproved of their students' predilection for the races, such as the fourth century Greek Sophist Libanius (*Or.* 35.13-14) who asserted that his students were too interested in the races and charioteers and as a result became distracted from their education. See also Eyben 1993: 90. *Cf.* Epictetus 3.16.14-5.

<sup>423</sup> Bell 2003, 2009; D'Ambra 2007; Huskinson 1996. See also Amedick 1991.

<sup>424</sup> D'Ambra 2007: 341, n. 13; Huskinson 1996: 46 n. 10.

<sup>425</sup> E.g., Naples sarcophagus, ca. 150-160 CE, National Archaeological Museum, Naples, inv. 6712; Vatican sarcophagus, ca. 150-160 CE, Vatican Museums, Sala della Biga, inv. 613. See D'Ambra 2007: 341-2 figs. 18.1 and 18.2. For further discussion and examples, see also Huskinson 1996: 17, 46-51.



barrier.<sup>426</sup> The intensity of the racing scene is somewhat lessened by the use of childlike cupids in place of adult charioteers, but it is otherwise representative of the races in the circus and other popular images of the subject. The potential symbolism of the circus and its performers is apparent; the cyclical nature of the race and its venue has been interpreted for its representation of the life cycle or a mirror of the cosmos, while the charioteer himself could be viewed as an icon of fortune and fame whose name, if he were great, could be immortal.<sup>427</sup> It is understandable that a family might want to convey such positive wishes as success in the future in the burial of their child. Even if we might consider that the imagery had no symbolic intent and was instead purely decorative, it is plausible that families also selected imagery that had some connection or relevance to their child's life. Insofar as grave goods were selected based on what a loved one used or enjoyed in life and could continue to use or enjoy in the afterlife, the image depicted on the sarcophagus could be one that the child would enjoy and to which they could relate.

While the available evidence certainly sustains the possibility that young boys were present at the chariot races, it is worth considering if the same permission for attendance was extended to young girls. Ovid's comments on the possibility of amorous advances toward female spectators at the circus in the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* implies that they were unmarried and available for a romantic liaison, furthering the possibility of young women attending the races.<sup>428</sup> Before signing off a letter to Atticus from April of

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<sup>426</sup> For the central barrier of the Circus Maximus, see Humphrey 1986: 175-294.

<sup>427</sup> See Bell 2003; D'Ambra 2002: 240, 2007: 345, n. 28; Lyle 1984, esp. 838; Snodgrass 1990: 258-60; Wuilleumier 1927. Schauenburg (1995: esp. 57-8) proposes that the motif drew on the Roman interest in the imitation of children and therefore the *erotes* represented the youthful drive of children participating in an adult sport and striving for success. See also Cassiod. *Var.* 3.51.

<sup>428</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2, *Ars Am.* 1.135-176.

59 BCE, Cicero remarks that he would return to Antium by the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May because his daughter Tullia wanted to attend the upcoming games there.<sup>429</sup> As Tullia was born in 79 or 78 BCE, we can set her age at the time of this letter between eighteen and twenty years old, depending upon the month of her birth. Aside from the indication that she requires a male guardian at the event, there is no suggestion that the spectacle would be inappropriate for her age or gender. Certainly dignified young women did not attend the spectacles alone but were accompanied by a male guardian, and perhaps it was similar for young girls who, once deemed an appropriate age, were permitted to attend while in the company of their parents or another adult guardian. According to Suetonius, among Augustus' reforms it was mandated that, at the Secular Games, young people of either sex were not permitted to attend any entertainment by night except in the company of an adult relative.<sup>430</sup> This anecdote suggests that both young men and women could attend the spectacles during the day, which included chariot racing on the final day of the festival, and that a distinction was made for the potentially more rowdy nighttime events. The problem that remains is at what age it was considered appropriate for girls to attend the races, or if age was an issue so long as they were accompanied by an adult.

The masculine character of sporting life certainly lends itself more to a male audience, and the early childhood education of young girls was focused primarily on the home and preparation for marriage. Even so, Galen's instruction for a child's training in horse riding is not gender specific and, as Dolansky argues, it is possible that some horse

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<sup>429</sup> Cic. *Att.* 2.8.

<sup>430</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 31.4.

toys were enjoyed by girls as well as boys.<sup>431</sup> Returning to the subject of children's sarcophagi, a late second-early third century CE example repeats the same imagery seen in other examples, with cupids taking the role of charioteers as they race around the track.<sup>432</sup> Unique to this sarcophagus is an inscription that survives on the upper molding of the front panel, in which a father and mother dedicate the sarcophagus to their daughter, Cossutia Flavia, who was only five years old.<sup>433</sup> An early second century CE marble cinerary chest, decorated with the scene of a cupid driving a chariot, was also dedicated to a girl, Prima Cossutia.<sup>434</sup> These examples suggest that circus iconography was not associated only with boys but that it was also appropriate as funerary decoration for girls. A late fourth century CE burial of a girl contained within it a doll, a typical toy for a young girl, as well as ivory gaming tokens decorated with images of charioteers and horses.<sup>435</sup> Although it is possible that the circus imagery on the gaming tokens had symbolic significance related to the fame and fortune of charioteers, much like what was discussed above, it could also be that the imagery was of interest to the young girl as she

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<sup>431</sup> Dolansky 2017: 122. Dolansky continues by reflecting upon a passage from the second century CE diviner Artemidorus (*Oneir.* 1.56), who notes that, while it is good for elite women and maidens to drive a chariot through the city, the same practices are inappropriate for poor women. Contrary to the position asserted by Bradley (2001: 43) that the passage does not prove women actually engaged in driving chariots or riding horses, Dolansky (2017: 122 n. 27) contends that Artemidorus' comments serve as "a record of social attitudes and conventions widely shared and understood in the era of the Antonines. It is not of concern whether or not women were permitted to drive a chariot, but that such an image was considered plausible and appropriate to associate with Roman women. See also Wiedemann 1989: 151.

<sup>432</sup> Vassar sarcophagus, ca. late second-early third c. CE, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, inv. 1981.82. See: Bell 2009: taf. 29, 3; D'Ambra 2007: 343-4, fig. 18.3.

<sup>433</sup> D FLABIVS CHRYSION PATER ET MAT FILIA

COSSVTIA FLABIA DVLCIS ANNOR V M  
Schauenburg 1995: 66 no. 23. See D'Ambra 2007: 344, n. 26.

<sup>434</sup> CIL VI. 16539 (*D(is) M(anibus) Cossutiae Primae matri pientissim(a)e bene merenti fecit*) ('To the spirits of the dead. (He or she) made (this) for Cossutia Prima, a most pious mother, well deserving of it'). British Museum inv. 1805,0703.167. Villa Moroni, Rome.

<sup>435</sup> The sarcophagus was discovered *in situ* near the Basilica of S. Sebastiano, Rome, in 1939. Helbig 1963: 1.605-6 no. 825 [T. Dohrn]). See also Bell 2003: 103.

herself enjoyed the races and played with toys associated with the spectacle. Insofar as toys are representative of accepted behaviour in the contemporary social context, given by adult to child, it is possible that young girls were permitted to have an interest in charioteers and the competitions of the circus.<sup>436</sup> A woman's place was foremost in the domestic sphere; however, the spectacles were considered entertainments for all the Roman public and the values of strength and success exhibited by charioteers were important for all Romans to have, regardless of gender.

It seems entirely possible that girls were allowed to attend the races alongside young boys; yet, given the divisions by gender in the early education and enculturation of Roman children, it is equally plausible that young girls learned about the races second-hand and developed an interest in the races simply because of its presence in popular culture. To be sure, the nature of the evidence severely limits the ability to come to a satisfactory conclusion concerning the attendance of children, particularly girls, at the circus. While it seems that youths of a certain age were permitted to attend the races and became fans of the races themselves, additional evidence is necessary to expound on the presence of children at the races and reveal a complete picture of the circus audience.

### **3. 3. FACTIONS**

When using the term 'circus faction', scholars often are referring solely to the partisanship within the racing fandom. However, the term can also be used to identify the 'faction proper', as Cameron styles it, the organizations that were responsible for much of

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<sup>436</sup> See Wilkie 2000: esp. 101-3.

the production of the races throughout the empire.<sup>437</sup> A faction was primarily a business that was contracted by the local magistrate or other official who was producing and paying for a spectacle. The factions provided all necessary elements for the event, which included not only the charioteers and their horses but also the service staff and equipment needed to run the races. The *dominus factionis*, a man of equestrian rank, owned and operated all aspects of the faction.<sup>438</sup> Much like a *lanista*, who owned and trained gladiators to be contracted out for shows in the amphitheatre, the *dominus factionis* acquired and trained charioteers to race in the circus.<sup>439</sup> But the *dominus factionis* had more to consider than his gladiatorial counterpart as, aside from his human performers, the *dominus* also needed to purchase, feed, and train racehorses, and to purchase and maintain chariots that would be supplied for the races. Each *dominus* was assisted in these various aspects by an extensive support staff, including trainers, veterinarians, doctors, and other service staff.<sup>440</sup> The *domini* were businessmen who ran their factions for a profit. The financial investment of the factions was returned by the fee paid to them by the officials producing the spectacle as well as by a portion of the winnings awarded to the victor of each race.<sup>441</sup> Suetonius reports an incident in which Nero's father, Cn. Domitius, tried to withhold the promised prizes for the victors of the chariot races, and

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<sup>437</sup> Cameron 1976: 15.

<sup>438</sup> *CIL* VI. 10046, 10058, 10060 = *ILS* 5296, 5297, 5313; Potter 2010: 318-9. By the late third century, retired charioteers began to take on the role of the *dominus*, much like what was seen in the guilds (synods) of pantomimes and athletes.

<sup>439</sup> As will be discussed below, the majority of charioteers were slaves.

<sup>440</sup> *CIL* VI. 10046, 10069, 10071-4, 33949a, 33950 = *ILS* 5278, 5295, 5304-8, 5313; *ILS* 5279, 5309-10; Nelis-Clément 2002.

<sup>441</sup> In addition to the figure of the *dominus factionis*, see also *AE* 2013: 830 = de la Vega and de la Hoz Montoya (2013: 243-256), at 249, for the suggestion that the Antonianus of the 'grex Antoniani' named in the *defixio* may be an underwriter/sponsor acting as an intermediary between the *dominus factionis* and the presiding magistrate of the games.

notes that, after the *domini* complained, he issued an edict that guaranteed all future prizes.<sup>442</sup> The *domini factionum* were able to demonstrate significant influence in the production of the games, even later refusing to hire out their charioteers for less than a full day of racing.<sup>443</sup>

The identification of the four factions was done through their association with one of four colours: red, white, green, or blue.<sup>444</sup> It is relevant to note here that the timing of the introduction of the four colours is not completely clear.<sup>445</sup> According to Tertullian, the first two factions were the Reds and Whites, and were both present during the time of Romulus.<sup>446</sup> Some scholars have thus supposed that the Greens and Blues were not established until the early Principate, although there are no sources to confirm the origins of the two factions at that time.<sup>447</sup> While one of the first known references to the Greens comes from an inscription dated to 35 CE, it only serves as evidence of the colour's presence at that time and not its introduction.<sup>448</sup> Although it seems impossible to make a firm identification of the time that the four colours were first introduced, it is probable

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<sup>442</sup> Suet. *Nero* 5.2.

<sup>443</sup> Suet. *Nero* 22.2. It seems to have been under Nero that the *domini* asserted their control over the races, and according to Dio Cassius (61.6.2), with the knowledge that the races were beloved by the emperor and so were unlikely to be stopped, they “proceeded to treat both the praetors and consuls with great insolence” (‘καὶ δεινῶς τοὺς τε στρατηγούς καὶ τοὺς ὑπάτους ὑβρίζοντων’). Dio Cassius (61.6.2-3) goes on to report that, unwilling to accept what the *domini* were demanding, the senator Aulus Fabricus trained dogs to draw chariots. The emperor Nero ultimately intervened to furnish the prizes for the races and ensure the spectacle went ahead.

<sup>444</sup> Tertullian (*De Spect.* 9.5) and Isidore of Seville (*Origenes* 18, 41), authors from the third and seventh century respectively, identify the colours as having an association with the seasons and corresponding elements: white signified the winter and snow, green, the spring and the earth, red represented the summer and the sun, and blue, the autumn, the sea and sky. Cf. Lyle 1984.

<sup>445</sup> For a more extensive discussion of the establishment of the factions, see Thuillier 2012: 193-196.

<sup>446</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 9.4-5.

<sup>447</sup> For instance, Friedländer 1964: II, 34; Harris 1972: 194.

<sup>448</sup> *CIL* VI. 33950 = *ILS* 5278; cf. Harris 1972: 194. John the Lydian (*De Mens.* iv. 30) indicates that the Blue faction was established sometime after the other three, although the timing is left unclear.

that all four were present through the Republic.<sup>449</sup> Their origins corresponded with the development of the faction organizations themselves and their transition from informal sources that rented out horses into successful businesses managing much of the circus productions. Once the organizations were established and productive in the Republic, the factions likely began to be referred to by the four colours as a unified method by which to identify the competing organizations and make the divisions between them clear for all spectators and others involved with the sport.

Throughout the empire, fans of the races identified themselves in association with the faction they supported. These divisions were central to the spectatorship of the races and the growth of the spectacle itself. The more common use of the term ‘faction’ is in this manner, as it relates to the partisanship of the circus fandom. The four factions were vital to this identification and division among partisan groups, and at the races competing charioteers distinguished themselves by wearing tunics dyed with the colour of their faction.<sup>450</sup> The colours served as a helpful visual aid for spectators, particularly those higher up in the stands, to identify the different charioteers despite the distance and dust kicked up from the high speed race. The presence of the faction colours also further engrained the divisions of the factions in the minds of the spectators.

The configuration of the races around four faction colours presented a relatively uncomplicated structure of competition; yet, it must be considered how a spectator chose one faction to support from among the four. In arena competitions, spectators could shift

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<sup>449</sup> Cameron 1976: 56-61; Rawson 1981: 5-6.

<sup>450</sup> The leather helmets they wore could also be tinged with the faction colour.

their loyalties easily among the combatants, as fans identified the gladiator whom they deemed the better fighter and cheered him on through the match. Spectators could also base their decision on a preference between the fighting styles of the competitors.

Although it did not form the basis of gladiatorial fandom, factions did develop in the arena, with one group called the *parmularii* supporting Thracian fighters, and another called the *scutularii* supporting the *myrmilliones*.<sup>451</sup> Fan support was not drawn to the larger gladiatorial schools from which the gladiators came, but was focused on the individual competitors. At the circus, however, the division of the four factions could not be ignored as each charioteer wore the colour of a faction and claimed victory in its name. As a result, fans of the sport must have tended to side with one faction over the other.

It is, of course, plausible that a number of those in attendance at the circus were not serious fans and, therefore, were not determined to favour one particular faction in every race. That is not to say that these spectators were unaware of the format and content of the event. The proliferation of information by means of graffiti, inscriptions, and even word of mouth, ensured that even the most disinterested individual would be well informed of the races. By accumulating second-hand knowledge of the sport, one would know enough about the races to understand the premise and recognize the better drivers. Even so, such casual spectators still might not be concerned with devoting themselves to one faction, and instead could vary their support among the factions in each race as they preferred.

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<sup>451</sup> Fagan 2011: 219-221; Scobie 1988: 206; Ville 1981: 443-5. An epitaph commemorates an oil dealer who may have been a supporter of the Blues in the circus and of the Thracians at the amphitheatre (*ILS* 7492).



Aside from the casual spectators who attended the races, many people not only were knowledgeable about the content of the races but also made definitive choices regarding which teams they would support. Scholars have previously suggested that circus partisanship, at least in the later Empire, was divided between the upper and lower classes, with the elite supporting the Blues and the Roman populace cheering for the Greens.<sup>452</sup> The separation of sports fans by social group is not unique to the Roman circus as individuals often will take up support of the team favoured by their peers. In modern sports this tends also to correspond to geographical divisions, as individuals customarily align themselves with their local team or that which is closest.<sup>453</sup> Manojlović contends that the division of faction fans in Constantinople was manifested in regional divisions as well, with the Blues in the central suburbs and the Green in the poorer, outer edges of the city.<sup>454</sup> While it is plausible that this was the general trend of faction fandom, it is impractical to consider the city as having been divided between the two prominent factions with the geographical distinctions being firmly maintained. Surely individuals who either became fans or lost interest could not be expected to move to the corresponding neighbourhood.<sup>455</sup> It would be improper to represent divisions of cities, neighbourhoods, or populations as being based in circus partisanship; however, it is reasonable to consider the influence of those pre-existing divisions on racing fandom. It is plausible that regional pockets of fans developed informally within cities through

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<sup>452</sup> A discussion of the social compositions of circus factions in the east is provided by Cameron 1976: 74-104.

<sup>453</sup> While this is frequently the case, some are fans of more distant teams.

<sup>454</sup> Manojlović 1936: 644-55.

<sup>455</sup> Cameron 1976: 86-95 has similar difficulty with the possible geographical divisions of circus fans. See Meijer 2010: 99-100; Roueché 1993: 130-131.

groups with previous associations, such as a profession or trade. It is common, even at modern sporting events, for those of a shared social group, whether friends or colleagues, to sit together and cheer on the same team. This is not unlike the partisanship of the theatre, at which people of the same profession sat together as supporters of a particular group.<sup>456</sup> Although one's neighbourhood did not decide one's the preferred faction, it is understandable that one might lean toward the fandom that was most prominent among one's social group.

It is apparent that, although the factions were important to the structure of the races, there were not strict definitions for who would support them through the early Empire. No sources indicate a division based on social rank at this time, and even at the imperial level it seems that the emperor could make his own selection. While Vitellius and Caracalla both favoured the Blues, Caligula, Nero, Lucius Verus, Commodus, and Elagabalus all preferred the Greens.<sup>457</sup> Doubt is easily cast upon the reasoning behind the emperor's choice. If the social divisions apparent between the supporters of the two major factions seen in the late Empire were present at all in the early Empire, the choice of various emperors to support the Greens could be taken as a political maneuver to draw closer to the Roman masses by means of their favoured faction.<sup>458</sup> However, the selection of a specific faction was not necessary; rather, the selection in and of itself was enough to bring the emperor closer to the masses by embracing the entertainments that they

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<sup>456</sup> For instance, Roueché 1993: 130-132.

<sup>457</sup> Vitellius: Suet. *Vit.* 14.3; Caracalla: Dio Cass. 78.10.1, Herodian 4.6.4-6; Caligula: Dio Cass. 59.14, Suet. *Calig.* 55.2; Nero: Dio Cass. 63.6.3; Lucius Verus: S.H.A. *Verus* 6.2; Commodus: Dio Cass. 73.17.1; Elagabalus: Dio Cass. 80.14.2.

<sup>458</sup> Meijer (2010: 126) suggests that Caracalla's support for the Blues was due in part to his hatred of his brother, Geta, who was a fan of the Green faction.

loved.<sup>459</sup> The people were pleased by the engagement of their emperor as he shared a common interest with them, and together they could attend the races and cheer on the teams.<sup>460</sup>

As with any sports teams competing against one another, rivalries developed among the factions. With only three other factions against which another could compete, it was easy for factions and fans to identify which matched another in skill and success. The competition between rivals was exciting to watch and could become heated, as each vied for victory and overall superiority in racing. A type of race called the *diversium* required the victor of a race to switch teams with another driver from an opposing faction and race again.<sup>461</sup> The goal was to prove who was the better driver despite the victor of the previous race being given horses that had lost and both drivers being put in command of tired teams.<sup>462</sup> In these races factions were paired up to compete against one another – the Whites against the Reds and the Blues against the Greens.<sup>463</sup> In another race variation, two factions paired up against the other two, thereby furthering the sense of rivalry seen in the *diversium* and potentially creating alliances between factions.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> In fact, in some cases it might have been appropriate for circus-goers, particularly senators and other elites, to support the preferred faction of the emperor in an effort to remain in his good graces.

<sup>460</sup> For further discussion, see ‘Emperor as a Racing Fan’ section below.

<sup>461</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.307-427; *Anth. Pal.* 15.47.5-6; Bell and Willekes 2014: 486; Cameron 1973: 208-9, 1976: 51-3; Potter 2010: 320.

<sup>462</sup> The charioteer Porphyrius was celebrated for his skill in the *diversium* and, having chosen to participate in the races himself, the emperor Constantine is reported to have won twenty-one times by *diversium* in a single day (Porphyrius: *Anth. Gr.* 16.337, 340; Constantine: *Anth. Gr.* 16.374).

<sup>463</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.324; Thuillier 2012: esp. 198-199. The swap of teams is mentioned as late as the Byzantine era (*Book of Ceremonies*, Bk.1 Ch. 69, R 336; V2, 139).

<sup>464</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter 5, circus curse tablets have been found that target two factions at a time as opposition, often the Blues and Reds or Greens and Whites. Diocles’ inscription (*CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287) also lists the number of wins he earned jointly with members of other factions.

In the later Empire, particularly during the period of popularity for the races in the East, the Red and White factions were minor groups in comparison to the dominant Green and Blue factions. It is possible that this dominance began with the earlier successes of the Green and Blue factions in the circus. Toner uses the detailed record of the wins of the second century charioteer Diocles to calculate an overall average win percentage for each of the four factions: 14% for the Reds, 14% for the Whites, 35% for the Blues, and 37% for the Greens.<sup>465</sup> Although these figures rely on information gathered from the career of one charioteer, it does support the possibility that the Blues and Greens were more successful factions, resulting in their pre-eminence in the later Empire. The comparable win percentages of the Reds to the Whites and Blues to the Greens surely also intensified their rivalries, as the factions sought to outdo the one seen as their direct competition. Despite the apparent greater success of the Greens and Blues, the Red and White factions cannot be discounted, as likely both had their share of successes and supporters as a result. The great charioteer Diocles had his longest period of success when he drove for the Reds, probably earning the praise of loyal Red fans if not drawing more to the faction. Even if not viewed as one of the top factions, fans of the Reds and Whites might not have been swayed. It is not uncommon for sports fans to support a team that is considered to be a long shot, or to remain loyal even when a team is doing

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<sup>465</sup> Toner 1995: 93-4. Toner goes on to suggest average odds for the factions in competition, furthering the appearance of greater success for the Blues and Greens over the Reds and Whites, and discusses these figures in relation to the practice of betting at the circus. Since the victory record comes from the period when Diocles was a charioteer for the Reds, Toner calculates the win percentage for the Reds with the assumption that they were performing comparably to the Whites. Although there is no direct evidence to confirm this, it is supported by the sources available which regularly identify the Whites and Reds together as the weaker factions in comparison to the successes of the Blues and Greens.

poorly.<sup>466</sup> Fans of the races made their own selection among the factions and cheered for its success on the track. In spite of what seems to have been varied records in competition, all four factions could hold the interest of fans, particularly when led by a star charioteer who would bring victories to the faction. The choice of which faction to support therefore was an individual one, based upon personal preference and knowledge of the successful charioteers and their factions.

### 3. 4. CHARIOTEERS

The crux of the chariot racing system was the structure of four factions and the partisanship that developed around them. Even so, the drivers within these factions could earn extensive fame and fortune as individuals. Regardless of the deep devotion felt toward one of the factions, it is probable that most fans of the races could not help but become fans of the charioteers themselves, who raced around the circus track for the entertainment of the masses.

Most charioteers began as slaves purchased by one of the four factions to be trained as drivers in the hope that they would eventually make money for the faction through their successes on the track. Horsmann compiles a catalogue of 223 records of charioteers from various epigraphic sources.<sup>467</sup> While in more than half of the cases the legal status of the charioteer is unclear, sixty-six are identified as slaves (*servi*), and fourteen as freedmen (*liberti*). Horsmann considers thirteen additional cases that are

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<sup>466</sup> This sense of loyalty will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

<sup>467</sup> Horsmann 1998: 175-306. Within the 223 inscriptions, 229 charioteers are identified.

either *servi* or *liberti* but cannot be confirmed. The low status of the charioteers is unsurprising and corresponds to what is seen among other types of entertainers. Despite the notoriety that could be gained by individual charioteers, the profession was still considered inappropriate for freeborn citizens and the imposition of legal restrictions and the designation of performers as *infames* kept freeborn Romans from taking up the trade. In fact, only one inscription identifies the charioteer as freeborn (*ingenuus*).<sup>468</sup> The emperor Nero expressed a love for the races and an interest in becoming a charioteer himself, but Tacitus presents such interests as shameful and degrading.<sup>469</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible that the popularity and financial success of prominent charioteers could have convinced the rare few to attempt a career in the circus despite the accompanying social disapproval.<sup>470</sup>

All charioteers contracted to race by the producer of the event were paid for their participation, and the victor would receive additional prize money. As slaves they kept a portion of their earnings and the rest went to the *dominus factionis* and the upkeep of the faction. The money these charioteers saved up over time ultimately could be used to buy their freedom and, even after they were manumitted, freedmen could choose to continue work as a charioteer. If skilled, chariot racing could be very lucrative and bring the driver fame and fortune; the great charioteer Diocles retired at the age of forty-two having amassed a fortune of nearly thirty-six million sesterces.<sup>471</sup> Moreover, charioteers could

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<sup>468</sup> Horsmann 1998: 226-228 no. 94; *CIL* VI. 10047 a-c = *ILS* 5288.

<sup>469</sup> *Ann.* 14.14. See discussion in 'The Emperor as a Racing Fan' below.

<sup>470</sup> See 'The *Infamia* of Charioteers' below.

<sup>471</sup> Diocles: *CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287 (35,863,120 sesterces). The great financial achievements reported in the inscriptions for charioteers cannot be considered common to all drivers, and instead represent exceptional instances of the most skilled and successful of the charioteers. The deductions made from

compete in more than one race in a day and therefore had the opportunity to accumulate more winnings. Given the popularity of gambling and its presence at the circus, it is probable that charioteers themselves engaged in wagers as well. It is plausible that charioteers would have had extensive knowledge of the other drivers competing and an understanding of their skills and, in turn, whether they placed bets on their own races or those of another charioteer, a successful wager was another method for charioteers to increase their holdings. A cycle was then created as the most successful charioteers gained more winnings, grew in popularity, were likely presented with more opportunities to race, and, in turn, gained more winnings, popularity, and so on. The charioteers were rewarded for their efforts both with financial gain and with the adoration of fans who cheered for them throughout their careers.

Evidence suggests that charioteers often began racing at a young age. The funerary inscription of a charioteer named Crescens reveals that he died at the age of twenty-two, after racing with the Blues for nine years.<sup>472</sup> This means Crescens began driving at thirteen. His driving record boasts only forty-seven wins out of his 686 races.<sup>473</sup> Although Crescens is not among the most successful charioteers of whom we know, his record does demonstrate an extensive career in racing that began at an early age. The funerary inscription of Sextus Vistilius Helenus tells that he died at the age of

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winnings likely were not a chief concern for leading drivers whose prize money reached many million sesterces. It could however be a more important issue for less successful drivers, whose savings were severely diminished by deductions. For further discussion regarding the financial earnings of charioteers see Horsmann 1998: 147-171. Thuillier 2012: 209-13.

<sup>472</sup> *CIL* VI. 10050 = *ILS* 5285.

<sup>473</sup> He also earned 130 second and 111 third place finishes.

thirteen while acting as an *auriga*, a driver of a two-horse team.<sup>474</sup> This was generally considered the lesser position for a driver and, if he had lived longer, it is possible that Helenus eventually would have been promoted to the more elite four-horse team races as a *quadrigarius* or *agitor*.<sup>475</sup> The move from two-horse to four-horse chariots might have been the typical progression for charioteers. Not unlike an apprenticeship in a trade, the youths would learn about different areas of chariot racing and gain experience before advancing to the next level. This likely was the preferred method of training new charioteers as it allowed for the education and molding of a potential champion. If the age at which Crescens began his career is any indication, it may be that Helenus' role as an *auriga* was one of the last steps in his training before he was to be promoted to the premiere league of four-horse chariots.

Age was not a definitive signal for the start of a career; rather, skill determined when one was ready to enter the competition as a full charioteer.<sup>476</sup> Although a *dominus* would have been eager to begin making money with a new charioteer, a skilled driver was likely to earn more for his faction than an ill-prepared youth. Even so, the smaller stature and weight of younger drivers were undoubtedly preferred, much as they are among modern jockeys, in an effort to increase the potential speed of the chariot and horses.

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<sup>474</sup> *AE* 2001: 268; Thuillier 2004. Bell 2014: 497-8 considers this same young charioteer and offers a recently discovered bronze statuette of an African child charioteer as further evidence for charioteers starting at a young age.

<sup>475</sup> In the fourth century the difference is less distinct and the term *auriga* is used for all charioteers, not just those of a lower skill or driving the two-horse teams (Thuillier 1987, 2012: 177-84).

<sup>476</sup> An inscription for M. Nutius Aquilius recounts that he had been driving for twelve years when he died at the age of thirty-five, meaning that he began his career at twenty-three (*CIL* VI. 10065). Another inscription honours a slave, Eutyches, who died at the age of twenty-two while he was a *rudis auriga*, permitted only to drive *bigae* and not yet *quadrigae* (*CIL* II. 4314 = *ILS* 5299; Humphrey 1986: 344, fig. 153). Cf. Landes 1990: pl. 9.



Moreover, the youthfulness of charioteers could have been part of the attraction for the public.<sup>477</sup> Gladiators became known as sex symbols by means of their masculine competition and display of their bodies, and athletes were praised for their physical abilities. So too the youthful energy displayed by charioteers could certainly have been a feature that was both admired and desired by the crowds who came to watch them perform in the circus.

### 3. 5. STARS OF THE RACES

The popularity of the races and charioteers in particular was demonstrated beyond the walls of the circus, as images and inscriptions celebrating race participants were found across the Roman world. In the fandom of the races spectators were drawn to its stars and sought to know all they could about them. They considered charioteers to be celebrities, whose names and faces they remembered and recorded for others to see.

Symbols of the great celebrity of charioteers were the monuments set up in their honour. Martial alludes to such statues erected to celebrate the charioteer Scorpis as he describes the nose of the charioteer glistening everywhere in gold.<sup>478</sup> Although Martial generally refers to charioteers in a disapproving tone, sneering at their great popularity and incomes, he mentions Scorpis again as he laments the driver's death.<sup>479</sup> It seems that Scorpis was killed in the races, possibly during one of the dangerous turns, an all too familiar end for a charioteer. Despite his premature death at the age of twenty-seven,

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<sup>477</sup> A subtle mention is found in an epigram for the charioteer Porphyrius that asserts, "Victory fell in love with the eyes and chariot of Porphyrius" (*Anth. Gr.* 16.357).

<sup>478</sup> *Mart. Ep.* 5.25.9-10. *Cf. Luc. Nigr.* 29.

<sup>479</sup> *Mart. Ep.* 10.50 and 10.53.

Martial makes it clear that Scorpus was not only very popular in the circus, but also well known across Rome by describing him in one epigram as “the glory of the clamorous circus, your applause, Rome, and brief darling”.<sup>480</sup> The charioteer Porphyrius was honoured with monuments, which stood in the hippodrome at Constantinople, from both the Blues and Greens, who were appreciative of the success that Porphyrius brought to them.<sup>481</sup> The monuments were also to the benefit of the factions as they further publicized the association that the Blues and Greens had with such a beloved driver. Another charioteer for the Greens, Marcus Aurelius Liber, was honoured with a monument at Teanum Sidicinum in central Italy.<sup>482</sup> This monument was commissioned by the *municipium* rather than the driver’s faction, suggesting that Liber’s success and fame built him up as a sort of local hero, praised by the larger community.<sup>483</sup> The monuments for Liber and other charioteers were not only a result of their fame and popularity but were also erected with the intent of proliferating this fame and pronouncing the great love elicited by charioteers to all viewers of the monuments.

Inscriptions set up to honour retired or deceased charioteers carefully recount their careers and include such information as the number of races they took part in, the number of races they won or placed, and even the total amount of prize money accumulated over

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<sup>480</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 10.53 (*‘clamosi gloria Circi, plausus, Roma, tui deliciaeque breves’*). Scorpus is also depicted on the grave altar of T. Flavius Abscantus, an imperial freedman from the late first century (Bell 2014: fig. 33.2).

<sup>481</sup> Porphyrius is the subject of thirty-two epigrams in Greek Anthology (*Anth. Gr.* 15.44, 46-7; 16.335-62, 380-1) and the first charioteer ever to have won a statue from the two colours (from the Blues: *Anth. Gr.* 15.46-7; from the Greens: *Anth. Gr.* 15.50, 347-50). The two known monuments are the focus of Cameron’s 1973 monograph. The text of the thirty-two epigrams leads Cameron to contend that there were more monuments than the two known (Cameron 1973: 117-49).

<sup>482</sup> Palmieri 1978 = *AE* 1979: 155. See also Horsmann 1998: 118.

<sup>483</sup> See also ‘The ‘Home-Advantage’ and Hometown Heroes’ in this chapter.

their careers. Each inscription is evidence of the great skill of the charioteer described in it who was successful enough to deserve such a report, and of the public interest in the details of the charioteer's career. An inscription for the charioteer Fuscus celebrates the fact that he was the first to ever win during his debut in the circus.<sup>484</sup> Such an event was surely a landmark achievement for Fuscus himself and for the history of the races and was therefore a detail worth recording. An inscription for Marcus Aurelius Liber was set up by his son in recognition of Liber's three-thousandth victory.<sup>485</sup> While this inscription demonstrates a degree of personal pride, with Liber's own son advertising his accomplishments, it was expected that fans of the races would see the inscription and recognize the achievement as well.<sup>486</sup> A similar case can be seen in one of the longest and most well-known of the charioteer inscriptions was that set up in honour of Gaius Appuleius Diocles, likely commissioned by someone close to Diocles, whether a spouse or friend, or by Diocles himself.<sup>487</sup> The length of the inscription alone demonstrates the great interest in memorializing Diocles' career, with the full text serving as a tribute to a favoured charioteer that recounts numerous details of his career, from moves between factions to the horses with which he was victorious. The public nature of these inscriptions ensured that they would be read and seen by many people; their contents was information that the common reader was expected not only to understand but also to find interesting. It would not help the case of a charioteer if an inscription to him were found

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<sup>484</sup> *CIL* VI. 33950 = *ILS* 5278.

<sup>485</sup> *CIL* VI. 10058 = *ILS* 5296.

<sup>486</sup> *Cf.* *CIL* VI. 10047b = *ILS* 5288

<sup>487</sup> *CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287; Friedländer 1979: IV, 185-96; Horsmann 1998: 194-8, no. 38; Thuillier 2012: 200-203; *cf.* *CIL* XIV. 2884.

to be long and boring, filled with details and specialized information that a common reader could not understand. The seemingly endless list of statistics, such as the detailed accounting of the number and nature of Diocles' many wins, was in fact pertinent information for the knowledgeable racing fans who understood the technical details and the importance of the numbers reported in a charioteer's record.<sup>488</sup> Just as much as the inscriptions were intended as a personal celebration of a charioteer's own successes, they were also for the public, drawing the attention of the Roman people to sporting greatness and immortalizing the careers of their circus heroes.

While monuments and inscriptions were produced at a cost, the general populace produced their own informal record of charioteers. A unique source of evidence are inscribed stone slabs that were used as boards for variants of the game *alea* found throughout the Roman world.<sup>489</sup> On the gameboard thirty-six spaces of play were marked with letters in each space, typically arranged in six groups of six, to create a phrase. Two boards testify to the clear interest in the races of whoever inscribed them, as each directly references a charioteer and praises his success; one proclaims: "may you always win, Hesyclus, best player of all", and the other: "noble Eugenius, go on and make a million for the Blues".<sup>490</sup> Not only were the inscribers of these gameboards knowledgeable about the races and able to identify charioteers by name, but also in so doing they celebrated

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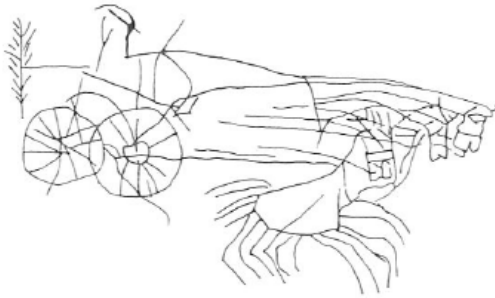
<sup>488</sup> The manner by which Diocles won his victories included maintaining the lead from the outset of the race (*occupavit et vicit*), making a quick sprint from second position at the last moment (*eripuit et vicit*), or coming from behind the pack to win (*successit et vicit*). See also *CIL* VI. 10050 = *ILS* 5285 (Crescens); *Anth. Gr.* 15.47 (Porphyrius). Another style of win listed on Diocles' inscription is termed '*praemissus vicit*', which may be associated with team races and the secondary charioteer being sent ahead of his teammate for the win (Harris 1972: 199-200).

<sup>489</sup> See Ferrua 1964; Purcell 1995.

<sup>490</sup> *AE* 1965: 151; *AE* 1949: 83.

those charioteers and shared their love of the races with whoever played with them and would use the board after.

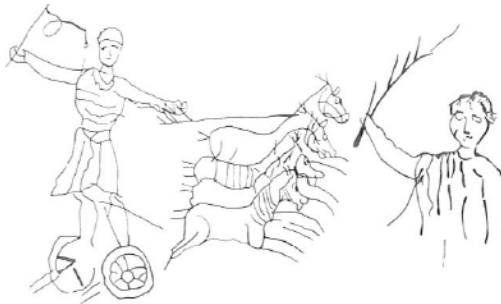
In addition, crude depictions of charioteers were scrawled onto the walls of buildings, often showing a victorious charioteer with a palm in his hand, an image celebrating the culmination of the races and the goal of all charioteers (see figs. 7-9).<sup>491</sup>



**Figure 7**  
Graffito of victorious charioteer  
Rome, Domus Aurea, room 64  
(Langner 2001: 1129)



**Figure 8**  
Graffito of two chariot teams and victor  
Alexandria, theatre  
(Langner 1130-1131)



**Figure 9**  
Graffito of chariot team and presentation of palm  
San Salvatore, Cabras, Hypogeum, room 5  
(Langner 2001: 1132)

<sup>491</sup> Langner 2001: nos. 1129-1132. See also Langner 2001: no. 1396.

The simplicity of this graffiti is understandable, given their creation on public walls and street corners, although it does hinder the ability to determine whether the authors had a particular charioteer or race in mind. Nevertheless, their existence alone demonstrates the socio-cultural significance of the sport, as individuals felt the desire to leave images depicting the competitors. The author of a graffito was engaged with his subject matter and desired to demonstrate it, knowing that the graffito would be seen and understood by passers-by. Nearby the Circus Maximus in the Palatine *Paedagogium*, where imperial slaves were trained, numerous graffiti were found, including some associated with the circus. By accompanying their masters to the circus, the slaves would have been able to see the races and possibly become fans themselves.<sup>492</sup> Among the graffiti here are images much like those seen elsewhere, with a charioteer usually bearing a palm of victory.<sup>493</sup> Another graffito depicts two circus horses, one with a palm in its mouth, and text to identify both.<sup>494</sup> The interior location appears to have allowed the authors of the graffiti in the *Paedagogium* to take their time in rendering their images and include additional details, unlike those who paused briefly on the side of a road to leave a quick sketch in the surface of a wall. Variations or portions of what appear to be the name ‘Victor’ are found scratched into the walls of the *Paedagogium* twelve times, possibly in reference to a star charioteer.<sup>495</sup> It is apparent that the occupants of the building not only found

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<sup>492</sup> As noted previously, the extensive saturation of Roman life with circus images, themes, and talk would have ensured that even the most disconnected individual had some knowledge of the circus.

<sup>493</sup> *Graf. Pal.* I.300, 302 and 303.

<sup>494</sup> *Graf. Pal.* I.298; Langner 2001: no. 1396.

<sup>495</sup> *Graf. Pal.* I.99, 101, 109, 176, 310, 319, 324, 350-353 and 358. The name Gordius is also seen in the graffiti (*Graf. Pal.* 302, 303), and may refer to a favourite *auriga* of the emperor Elagabalus (Keegan 2014: 212).

pleasure in the spectacles of the circus, but also engaged with the contemporary popularity of the races and celebrated its stars on their walls. Akin to those graffiti found in more public locations, the creation of these graffiti suggests an expectation that they will be seen. The readership of these graffiti would not only recognize the image depicted but also share in the interest in the sport and enjoy the thoughts of a great driver that the graffiti called to mind. The competitors of the races engaged popular interest and gained fame beyond the walls of the circus. As will be discussed further in the following section, the interest in and fame of charioteers was apparent in more than inscriptions and graffiti as depictions of the sport and its participants could also be found on a variety of small objects and in large works, such as mosaics. The prevalence of the images and names of charioteers in various media demonstrate their widespread celebrity, as the public desired to know more about them and possess images and objects that illustrated their interest in the circus and their love for the stars of the races.

### **3. 6. THE POPULAR IMAGE OF THE RACES**

The circus became a popular motif in various media, including mosaics, lamps, dishware and medallions and representations of the circus and its stars could be found in both public and private locations. The iconography of the circus has been addressed in various previous studies; Dunbabin in particular has presented numerous works addressing depictions of the circus in mosaics and other media, and has provided a comprehensive

examination of circus images in a chapter of her 2016 monograph.<sup>496</sup> While it is therefore unnecessary to provide a full catalogue of the extant evidence here, it remains vital to the subject of the spectatorship and fandom of the sport that racing imagery be addressed. The presence of racing imagery in different media demonstrates the far-reaching popularity of the chariot races that influenced the production of material culture and art with circus iconography that was, in turn, intended to engage the large fan base of the circus that would purchase such items and enjoy the images that reflected the popular sport.

Committed fans as well as those who sought solely to follow the popular trends decorated spaces with racing imagery. Scenes of action with chariots racing at full speed are seen in large pieces of art, the mid-late second century CE Silin mosaic (Libya) and late third century CE Foligno relief (central Italy) being notable examples, and even on a small surface, such as the disk of a lamp (figs. 10-12).<sup>497</sup> A late second-early third century CE example from central Italy manages to include four *quadrigae* within a circus on the surface of the lamp disk (fig. 12).

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<sup>496</sup> Dunbabin 1978, 1982, 1999, 2016: 138-170. For other examples and discussions of charioteers as a motif, see Granino Cecere 1999; Landes 1990. Symbolic interpretations of the circus became popular in the late Empire-Byzantine period and are seen particularly in the use of circus imagery on sarcophagi (Bell 2003, 2004, 2009; D'Ambra 2007; Dunbabin 1978: 88-9; Lyle 1984). A catalogue of all chariot racing imagery is forthcoming from a doctoral candidate in France (This information was provided by Dr. Sinclair Bell, Northern Illinois University).

<sup>497</sup> Silin mosaic, mid-late second century, Silin, Libya: Al Mahjub 1983: 302, fig. 7 and colour pls; Bergmann 2008: 374-6, figs. 13-14; Dunbabin 2016: 147, 149-50, fig. 6.9, 154; Humphrey 1984; Humphrey 1986: 211-16, fig. 107. Foligno relief, late third century, central Italy: Dunbabin 2016: 146-7, fig. 6.6, 154; Humphrey 1986: 98, 144, 246-8, fig. 121. Lamp, ca. 175-225, central Italy: British Museum Inv. GR 1814.0704.106; Bailey 1980: 56, 351; Bergmann 2008: 372-3, fig. 12; Desbat 1990: 77-9, fig. 2; Dunbabin 2016: 144, fig. 6.3; Humphrey 1986: 141-2, fig. 62.





**Figure 10**  
Silin mosaic  
(Bergmann 2008: fig. 13)



**Figure 11**  
Foligno relief  
(Dunbabin 2016: fig. 6.6)



**Figure 12**  
Lamp depicting *quadrigae* race in circus  
British Museum Inv. GR 1814.0704.106  
(Dunbabin 2016: fig. 6.3)

In this type of image there is often no indication of who the competitors are, although in the larger depictions the faction colours can be represented in paint or with the use of differently coloured mosaic tiles. While such art might have been meant to call to mind a moment from a particular race engrained in popular memory, without details to identify the participants, it is more likely that they served to capture the overall experience and energy of seeing the races live. The dynamic images of movement and speed invoke the spectacle of the races in its entirety, as the viewer can enjoy being a circus spectator even when not at the races.

More popular than the broad racing scene is circus imagery that focuses attention on individual charioteers.<sup>498</sup> On many occasions the charioteer's name is included nearby the figure, indicating that the images represented specific charioteers whom the artist wanted identified. The Gerona mosaic from Spain, dated to the fourth century CE, shows a very active scene with numerous teams of horses in full gallop around the track (fig. 13).<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Dunbabin 2016: 155. Desbat 1990: 78 refers to a lamp disk that depicts a charioteer, actor, and gladiator celebrating their triumphs together, the charioteer on the far right holding a palm and crown. The name 'Scorpianus' is inscribed on the right side of the image, possibly referring to the charioteer. Two copies of the disk have been found in Grenoble and Martigues, France.

<sup>499</sup> One team has crashed and the horses are shown crumpled on the ground with the chariot above them. Bergmann 2008: 368, 381-3, fig. 20; Dunbabin 2016: 147, 150-1, fig. 6.10, 154-5, 236, 250; Humphrey 1986: 239-42, fig. 120. Dunbabin 2016: 151 n. 50, dates the mosaic, from a villa at Torre de Bell-loc, to the late fourth century based upon the style of the mosaic although she asserts that it cannot be dated with any certainty.



**Figure 13**  
Floor mosaic, Bell-lloc (Gerona)  
(Bergmann 2008: fig. 20a)

Although damage to the mosaic makes it difficult to read all of the names, it is apparent that the names of each charioteer, and one horse from each team, are written in the open space near each team so as to identify the participants of this particular race.<sup>500</sup> A late third-early fourth century black and white mosaic from Ostia depicts six different charioteers, each standing with a slightly different collection of items, including wreaths, palms, moneybags, and short pillars of varying number and size (fig. 14).<sup>501</sup> Above or beside each charioteer is his name and that of a horse, most likely the lead horse from their team.<sup>502</sup> It is probable that the group must have represented the leading drivers of the time, with the many prizes and other symbols of victory around each charioteer meant

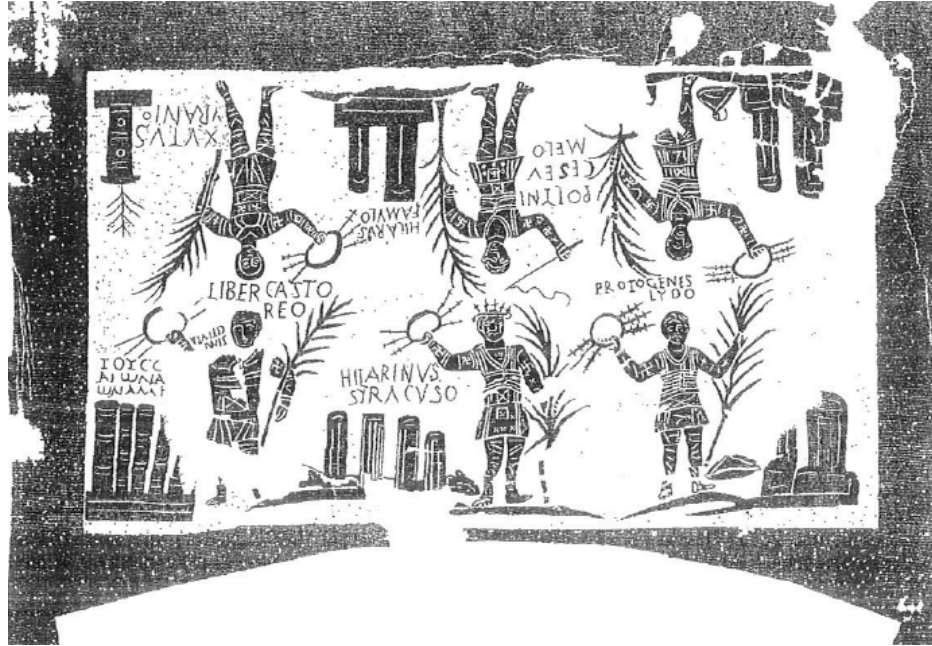
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<sup>500</sup> Filoromus with the horse Pantaracus; Torax with the horse Polistefanus; Calimorfus with the horse Patynicus; Limenius with the horse Euplium.

<sup>501</sup> Dunbabin 2016: 162-6, fig. 6.19; Santa Maria Scrinari 1988.

<sup>502</sup> The names on the mosaic are Liber with Castoreus, Hilarinus with Syracusus, Protogenes with Lydus, Polynices with Eumelus, Hilarus with Famulus, and Xutus with Uranius.

to indicate their success; the details of the different numbers and types of prizes with each charioteer possibly were used to signify what the charioteers had won.<sup>503</sup>



**Figure 14**  
Black and white mosaic, Ostia  
(Dunbabin 2016: fig. 6.19)

The image commemorated the great success of these charioteers and used visual cues that fans could recognize, and the location of the mosaic in the baths of the so-called Palazzo Imperiale further suggests that it was an image that people were expected to understand and enjoy. It is unlikely that art would be displayed that could not be easily identified and appreciated; rather, the decoration of public spaces required an understanding of the interests of the people, in an effort to engage their senses and increase their enjoyment of the space.

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<sup>503</sup> Dunbabin 2016: 164.

Despite the small size of objects such as terracotta lamps and cups, these items not only carried the image of a charioteer but also occasionally included text to identify the figure.<sup>504</sup> For example, two second century lamp disks each depict a charioteer during a victory lap with a laurel wreath and palm, and include the charioteer's name inscribed on the left, behind the charioteer, and the colour of his faction above; the first reads '*Nica Prasine*', indicating the Green faction, while the other reads '*Calos Venete*', referring to the Blues (figs. 15 and 16).<sup>505</sup>



**Figure 15**  
Lamp disk  
(Desbat in Landes 1990: fig. 3)



**Figure 16**  
Lamp disk  
(Desbat in Landes 1990: fig. 4)

A late first century lamp shows a charioteer with the inscription '*Gegas va*' ("Gegas, go!/be well!") a name that appears in two other inscriptions from Rome (fig. 17).<sup>506</sup> Even

<sup>504</sup> More than fifty fragments of cups have been found depicting scenes relating to the circus. Cups were manufactured across the empire, many with the names of charioteers included in the upper frieze of the image or around the rim of the cup (Humphrey 1986: 188-193).

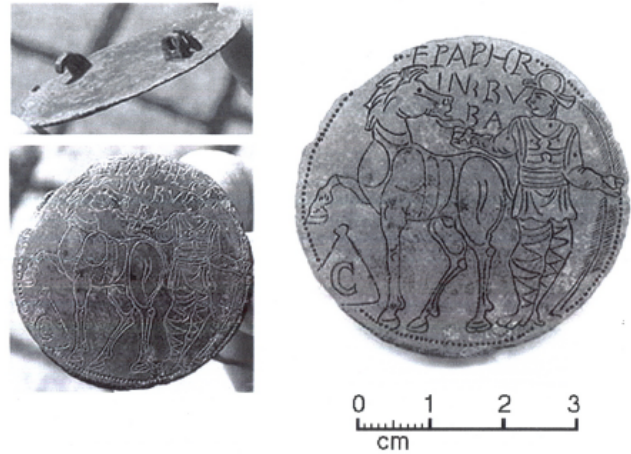
<sup>505</sup> Desbat 1990: 78, figs. 3 and 4. Both lamp disks are from Lyon. Desbat 1990: fig. 5 includes an additional lamp disk fragment from the second century CE that appears to show a victorious horse being held by its bridle, perhaps by the winning charioteer. The full text is not visible; what remains reads '*MASUE*', which possibly is a portion of the name of the charioteer or his horse.

<sup>506</sup> The lamp was originally found at Sidi Krebish Benghazi. *CIL* VI. 7759 and 33946 = *ILS* 5280; Landes 1990: 245 and 249 n. 36, 2008: 413. The combination of an abbreviated verb form with the name of a

an object as small as a *fibula* could be decorated with images of the races, such as one from the mid-second century CE found near Pinthières, depicting a horse and driver and the engraving ‘*Epaphr(oditus) / in Bu/ba(lo)*’ (“Epaphroditus with Bubalus”) (fig. 18).<sup>507</sup>



**Figure 17**  
Lamp  
(Landes 1990: 249 no. 36)



**Figure 18**  
*Fibula*  
(Landes 2008: fig. 9)

The charioteer Epaphroditus is acknowledged in Diocles’ inscription for having five more victories than Diocles’ own impressive record.<sup>508</sup> Epaphroditus must have been quite successful to merit a mention in the inscription of Diocles, and it is possible that the pin was produced during the height of Epaphroditus’ career, perhaps after a famous victory that he won with the horse Bubalus.<sup>509</sup>

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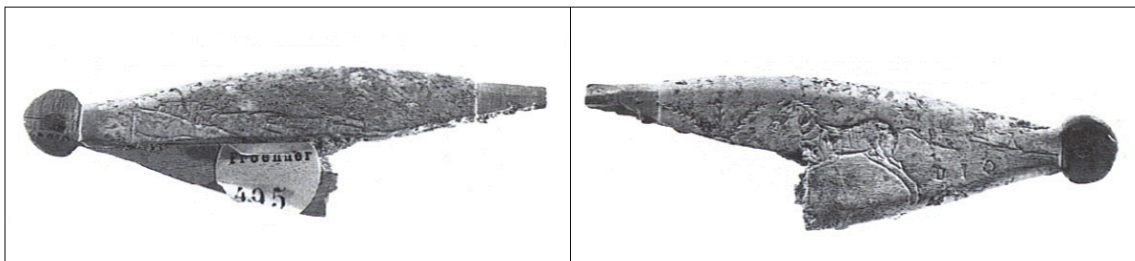
charioteer is not uncommon in circus-themed imagery. Other common verbs used are ‘*Av[e]*’ (“hail!”) and ‘*Vic[it]*’ (“win!”). The abbreviation *Va[...]* proves difficult to translate with certainty. It is possible that the letters ‘*va*’ on the lamp could indicate ‘*va(le)*’ (“be well!”), as Landes 2008: 413 asserts, or a variation of ‘*va(de)*’ (go!). Fontaine 2010: 116-117 notes that the primary meaning of *valere* is ‘to be strong’ and that it was commonly used as an exhortation in ancient graffiti. Cassibry 2018: 7 posits that the need for the reader to supply the endings of the verbs allowed the reader to “participate actively in the creation of the cups’ verbal component” and permitted individual translations dependent upon the readers selection of verbs and their relation to the named charioteers.

<sup>507</sup> Barat and Venet 2008; Feugère 2002; Landes 2008: 424-5.

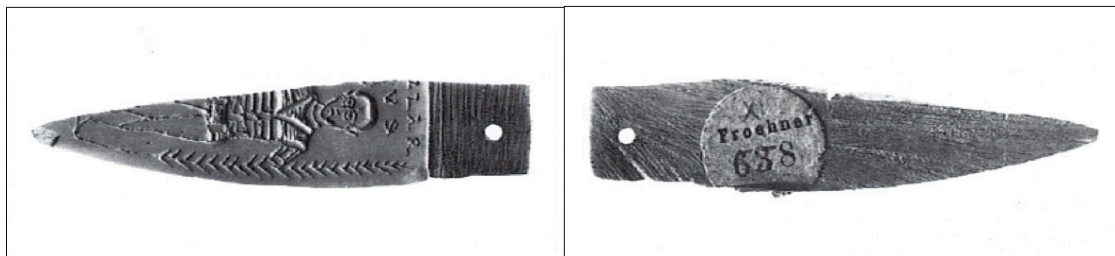
<sup>508</sup> *CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287.

<sup>509</sup> Landes 2008: 425.

Landes makes a close study of a series of bone and ivory knife handles that bear the images and names of charioteers and racehorses (figs. 19-24).<sup>510</sup> Although some of the handles are worn or damaged, it appears that they followed a similar design schematic, with a horse head and palm on one side and charioteer accessories, such as a helmet and whip, on the other.



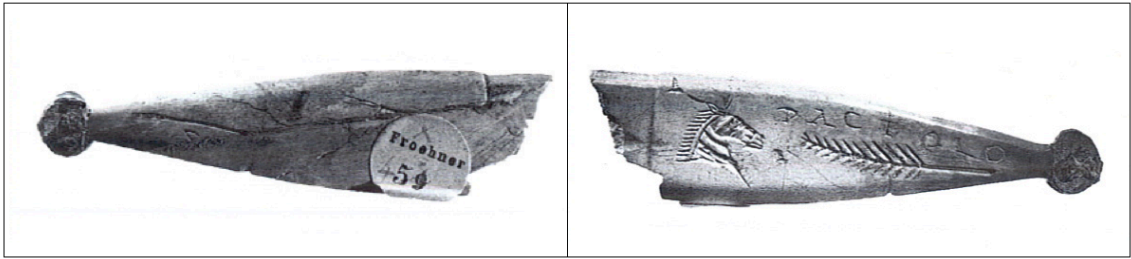
**Figure 19**  
Knife handle  
(Landes 1990: fig. 67a and 67b)



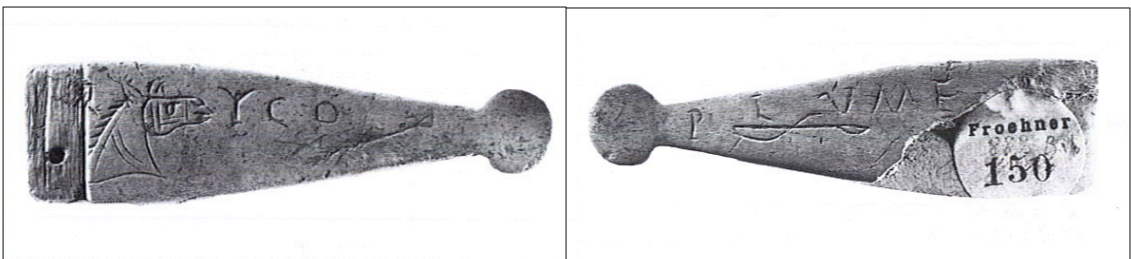
**Figure 20**  
Knife handle  
(Landes 1990: fig. 68a and 68b)

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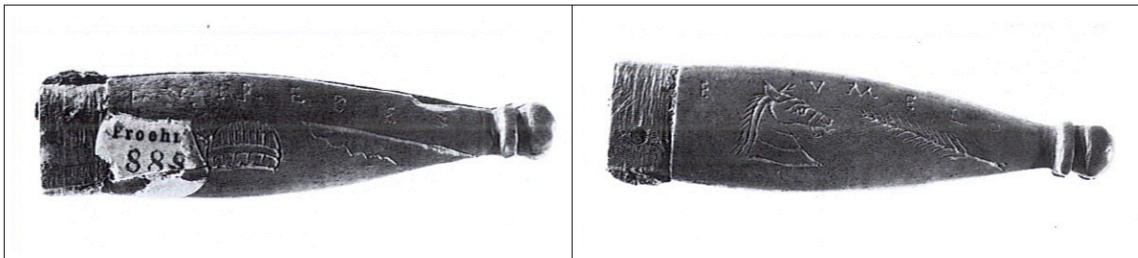
<sup>510</sup> Landes 1990: 305-311, n. 67a-72b. The provenance of the handles is unclear; they were purchased in Rome in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. National Library of France, Froehner Collection, inv. no. 882, 885-9.



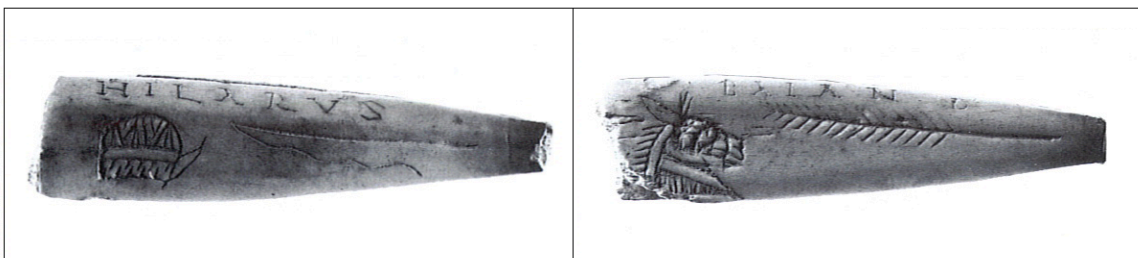
**Figure 21**  
Knife handle  
(Landes 1990: fig. 69a and 69b)



**Figure 22**  
Knife handle  
(Landes 1990: fig. 70a and 70b)



**Figure 23**  
Knife handle  
(Landes 1990: fig. 71a and 71b)



**Figure 24**  
Knife handle  
(Landes 1990: fig. 72a and 72b)



The images on each side were also accompanied by a name, likely the name of a circus horse, with the depiction of the horse head and the name of a charioteer with the helmet and whip. The names on two of the knife handles are legible as Eurrepes and Hilarus with their horses Eumelo (Eumelus) and Balano (Balanus) respectively, while on one other, only the name of the horse, Palladius, remains (figs. 23, 24 and 19). The name Hilarus appears to be repeated on another knife handle, and Landes posits that the unclear name on an additional example is Eurrepes, carved opposite the name of the horse, Pactolo (Pactolus) (figs. 20 and 21). The sixth knife handle bears the name Plume (Plume[us]) and, on the other side beside the image of a horse head there are the letters YCO, possibly indicating a name in Greek (fig. 22). While the image on the one side of each handle seems to vary, from a helmet to a full body depiction of a charioteer, four of the six examples follow a very similar design on other side, with the right profile of a horse head, a palm frond, and the name of the horse included. The examples demonstrate not only a public interest in the various circus competitors who are named on the knife handles, but also a larger market for such circus-themed objects. It appears that manufacturers were well aware of the prevailing interest in the races and the desire of fans to have items that reflected their interest in the sport and particular racing stars.

Images of charioteers and other spectacles are also found on glassware. In an article on spectacle imagery on glassware, Kimberly Cassibry discusses seven principal, well-preserved spectacle cups from the first century CE, five of which bear the images of

charioteers.<sup>511</sup> The images on the cups appear to follow a similar format; each depicts an active race scene with four *quadrigae* racing around the central barrier of a circus and includes text in a band around the top of the vessel.<sup>512</sup> In each of Cassibry's examples the architectural features of the central barrier reflect the design of the Circus Maximus.<sup>513</sup> However, these circus cups were found in what had been the northwestern provinces of the empire, in regions of England, France, Belgium, and Germany. Indeed, hundreds of fragments of glass vessels have been found in the northwestern provinces of the empire in comparison to the relatively few examples recorded in Italy.<sup>514</sup> A later glassware example from Rome dated to the early second century CE, although found in Rome (fig. 25a-b), not only has been posited as having been made in northern Italy or Gaul but also has been identified as being from the same mold as another fragmentary example from Montans (fig. 26).<sup>515</sup>

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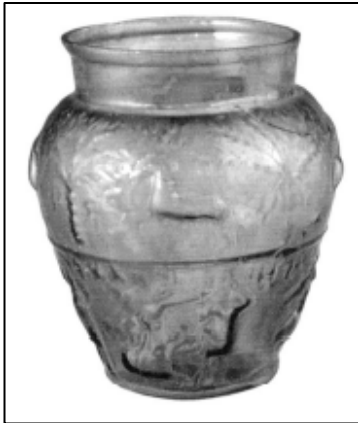
<sup>511</sup> Cassibry 2018: 1-20. The examples Cassibry discusses all come from the northwestern provinces of the empire, as will be discussed below.

<sup>512</sup> Cassibry 2018: fig. 4 provides drawings of the best-preserved circus cups that show the full design and text on each vessel.

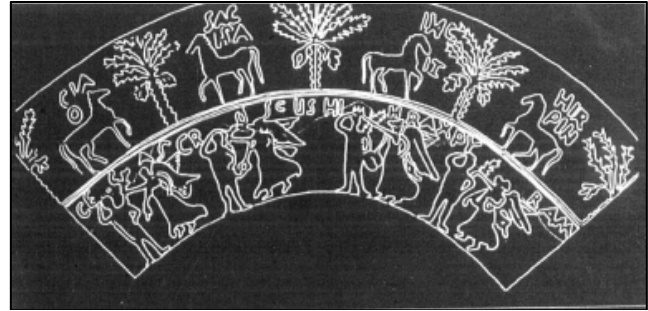
<sup>513</sup> Architectural features such as three *metae* at either end of the central barrier and an obelisk in the center are recorded in both literary and artistic accounts of the Circus Maximus and appear to be repeated often in circus-themed imagery. See Foy and Fontaine 2010; Golvin and Fauquet 2001; Marcattili, 2009. For a discussion of the arrangement of these architectural elements in the images on the cups, see Cassibry 2018: 13-16.

<sup>514</sup> See for instance, del Vecchio 2001.

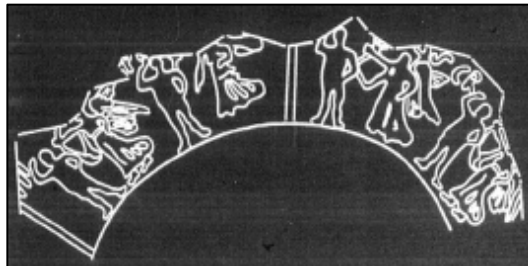
<sup>515</sup> Corning Museum of Glass, inv. 58.1.32. Landes 2008: 414-15, fig. 1a-b. Sennequier, Berger, Arveiller-Dulong 1998: 75-6.



**Figure 25a**  
Glass beaker, Corning Museum inv.: 58.1.32  
(Landes 2008: fig. 1b)



**Figure 25b**  
Complete decoration of cup, Corning Museum  
(Landes 2008: fig. 1a)



**Figure 26**  
Fragment of cup decoration, Musée d'ALBI  
(Landes 2008: fig. 1a)

Not only does the use of molds indicate an expectation that multiple copies of the item would be worthwhile to make and likely to be sold, but also the dispersal of these items throughout the provinces strongly suggests that a significant amount was produced in these regions.<sup>516</sup> Whether consumers had the opportunity to attend races in the provinces or engaged more with the popular center of the sport at Rome, the cultural affinity for the races is evident and was undoubtedly recognized by manufacturers. So long as the public maintained a strong interest in chariot races, manufacturers could produce circus-themed items for sale to a large potential market.

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<sup>516</sup> Foy and Fontaine 2010: 85-93.

As previously noted, each of the vessels discussed by Cassibry bearing circus-themed imagery also includes a band of text around the top. The text on the cups include both the names of up to four charioteers and an abbreviated verb form, such as *av[e]*, *vic[it]*, or *va[...]*.<sup>517</sup> The early second century CE glassware example introduced above depicts a team of horses among palm trees with their names on the upper register, and figures including a Victory and charioteer also named on the lower register. The names four charioteers: Gegas, Cruscus, Hierax, and Pyramus, as well as four horses: Cino (or Ciao), Sagita, Incit(ato), and Hirpin(o) all appear on the vessel (fig. 25a-b). Giulia Baratta examines a series of fragments of thin walled ware which are not only decorated with circus scenes evoking the Circus Maximus but also include the names of various charioteers and, on multiple fragments, the charioteer's faction.<sup>518</sup> Both Baratta and Cassibry identify correspondences between the names of charioteers on the vessels and charioteers for whom documentary sources remain, connections which add further support to the view that these items were intended to call to mind actual past races and known competitors.<sup>519</sup> The prominent use of the names of charioteers and even horses on these objects also demonstrates active engagement with the races by manufacturers. The creators of these items needed to keep themselves well informed, so as to include the

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<sup>517</sup> See n. 506 for discussion of the abbreviated verb forms.

<sup>518</sup> Baratta 2017. E.g., Fronto and the White faction, Blastus and the Blues, Theres and the Greens (Baratta 2017: 212). For a catalogue of images of the fragments, see Baratta 2017: 225-244.

<sup>519</sup> Baratta 2017: 213-14; Cassibry 2018: 6.

names of the popular drivers of the time and draw the eye of potential customers to buy their wares.<sup>520</sup>

Much like modern sports fans who purchase shirts, caps, banners, and other items that represent their love of a sport and support of a particular team, fans of chariot racing sought out items to signify their own interest. The examples identified by Baratta offer additional insights on this subject, as some of the fragments include longer inscriptions that reveal the names of presiding magistrates and the dates of two *ludi circenses*.<sup>521</sup> The specificity in their text demonstrates that these vessels were intended to memorialize particular circus games held in the *municipium* of Calagurris, Spain. It is likely that these particular vessels were sold at the races, perhaps even at the request of the financier of the games themselves as a further opportunity to gain the recognition and appreciation of the circus crowds. Alternatively, if not produced by the individual presiding over the races, a private merchant may have been motivated to offer such objects, aware of the importance of the event and/or the general public interest that could result in sales.

While not all small finds identified bearing circus-themed imagery or the names of charioteers can be categorized as souvenirs from a day spent at the circus, it is possible to identify the objects as having served as general memorabilia for the fans of the charioteers and of the sport in its entirety. The creator of each image and text considered

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<sup>520</sup> Landes 2008: 416 draws on the provenance and design of these items so as to consider whether their creators worked independently or on behalf of particular factions seeking to publicize their successful drivers.

<sup>521</sup> Baratta 2017: esp. 211-219. One fragment reads: “*Pri(die) • idus • decembres • G(aio) • Semproni[o •] Avito • L(ucio) • Aemilio • Paetino • II [vir(is)] • circienses • mun(icipi, -icipium) • Calagorri • Iul (iae, -a)*” (Baratta 2017: 218). Another fragment reads: “*III • K(alendas) septembres [- - -] pri^ma*” (Baratta 2017: 219).

the information conveyed within it relevant enough to pass on and believed that those who viewed the final product would understand the content. In this case the creators of these items could have no interest in the circus themselves; they were, however, keenly aware of the interest in the circus among the populace. The images and inscriptions commemorated the fandom of the circus and the careers of its most successful drivers, the charioteers who were icons of the races and represented the glory of victory that could be achieved there. Fans held them up as celebrities and ensured a lasting record of their deeds in visual and textual forms.

### **3. 7. THE *INFAMIA* OF CHARIOTEERS**

As was noted above, the role of charioteers as performers meant that they were marginalized for their lowly status with other performers, including gladiators and actors, and were given the designation of *infamia*, officially disgraced individuals (*infames*) in a legally defined state of dishonour and ill-repute.<sup>522</sup> While some elite Roman authors found educational value in the spectacles and the display of *virtus*, beyond the entertainment venues the performers were held to be lacking in reputation and devoid of honour, both vaunted cultural values in the Roman context.<sup>523</sup> Yet it has also been clearly demonstrated that the charioteers were extremely popular and were commemorated in

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<sup>522</sup> Edwards (1997: 69-70) discusses previous definitions of *infamia* from primary and secondary sources. For larger discussions of *infamia*, see Greenidge 1894 and Kaser 1956.

<sup>523</sup> See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1. Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.67.2) reports that Subrius Flavius, a tribune who was implicated in the Pisonian conspiracy against Nero, told the emperor "I began to hate you when you became the murderer of your mother and your wife, a charioteer, and actor, and an incendiary". Here, the profession of a charioteer is thought of negatively and considered in the same thought as murder.

sculptures, epitaphs, and a variety of circus imagery that bore their names. Even the emperor acknowledged the skills of the charioteers, and the emperors who became fans of the races sought out social relationships with these racing stars. Tertullian seems bemused at the odd position held by these spectacle performers, as the people celebrate them and “openly condemn them to disgrace and civil degradation; they keep them from council chamber, rostrum, senate, knighthood, and every other kind of office and a good many distinctions”.<sup>524</sup> The result is an apparent conflict in the identity of charioteers as they were both loved and hated by the public, honoured for their skills in racing and dishonoured for their position as performers of the circus.

It is possible that the association with *infamia* did not have as significant an influence on charioteers as might initially be thought. *Infamia* was preventative in nature, and while it may have been intended to keep charioteers from moving up in social status, it also prevented freeborn men from moving down. The restrictions put on the advancement of those identified as *infames* would not have been a great concern to slaves, who it has been demonstrated made up the majority of charioteers, and would have been more relevant to free men who could be severely affected by them if they attempted to participate in the races.<sup>525</sup> The concern was certainly not for the individual’s social or financial well-being but for the well-being of the state, which needed to remain strong in its body of elite citizens and to prohibit the downward social movement of citizens. Accordingly, those emperors who desired to perform as charioteers were met

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<sup>524</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 22.1 (*‘immo manifeste damnant ignominia et capitis minutione, arcentes curia rostris senatu equite ceterisque honoribus omnibus simul et ornamentis quibusdam’*).

<sup>525</sup> Horsmann 1998: esp. 44-50; Leppin 2011: 670-2.

with significant disapproval; as leaders of Rome, they could not be seen playing at such a lowly and disreputable profession.<sup>526</sup> Horsmann reports that in 19 and 11 BCE, special decrees of the Senate were needed to keep freeborn men from signing up for the races. This suggests that there were enough freeborn men interested in performing in the circus for it to raise concerns and merit intervention by the Senate and similarly, that the ruling elite did not want Roman citizens as charioteers. The regulations that were set forbid them from participating any such performing arts (*ars ludicra*) before 25 years old, by which age it was far too late to switch careers and begin training as a driver.<sup>527</sup> Indeed, as has been mentioned, only one inscription has been found that identifies a charioteer as freeborn (*ingenuus*).<sup>528</sup> While it is probable that there were more freeborn charioteers, the *infamia* associated with the role saw one's rights as a Roman citizen severely diminished or limited, which likely kept more from taking up the practice for fear of what could be lost to them.<sup>529</sup> This is not to say that charioteers were not identified to be of low status and engaging in a disreputable trade; they were clearly marginalized in society and deemed socially inadequate. However, it is possible that, while charioteers were associated with *infamia*, it did not imply as severe outcomes as it did for other performers or left charioteers exempt from certain penalties associated with it. We might also

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<sup>526</sup> See also 'The Emperor as a Racing Fan' in this chapter.

<sup>527</sup> Horsmann 1998: see esp. 54-5.

<sup>528</sup> See n. 468.

<sup>529</sup> This does not remove the possibility that non-Roman citizens were willing and able to become charioteers.



consider how the rules of *infamia* not only varied geographically but also likely changed overtime, thereby influencing the degree to which charioteers were affected by *infamia*.<sup>530</sup>

No matter the extent to which *infamia* was officially applied to charioteers, it is readily apparent that there was a negative perception of charioteers as performers. This however seems to be at odds with the popularity and celebrity of charioteers and presents a conflict that modern scholarship has repeatedly sought to resolve. One possible explanation is the form of performance; while gladiators and actors partook in shows that put their bodies on display, charioteers did not present themselves in the same manner.<sup>531</sup> As a result, the vulgarity of the performances was less of a concern, given that the charioteers, their apparel, and behaviour in the circus, did not clash with Roman notions of propriety. It is also possible that the long history of the races set them apart from other forms of spectacle in the Roman mind.<sup>532</sup> The heritage of the event as a competition among elites might have allowed for different treatment of the charioteers and more respect for those who continued to present the spectacle that had such aristocratic origins.

Two jurists, Sabinus and Cassius, are recorded in Justinian's *Digest* as having argued that various performers, including charioteers, competed in the pursuit of honour (*virtus*) rather than money and therefore should not be classed as *infames*.<sup>533</sup> By this interpretation, the goals of the competition in the circus were more noble and thereby set the charioteers above other performers. While this one instance demonstrates the

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<sup>530</sup> Edwards 1993: 123-6 notes that Greek charioteers who raced in the *agones* did not face the same disgrace as Roman charioteers.

<sup>531</sup> See Edwards 1997: 67.

<sup>532</sup> See Coleman 2000: 215-6; Edwards 1997: 75.

<sup>533</sup> *Dig.* 3.2.4.pr (Ulpian). See Greenidge 1894: 124. Cf. Horsmann, esp.44-50.

potentially more lenient views concerning charioteers, the existence of the argument alone implies that there were others who thought that they should face the same restrictions as other performers; surely there were also arguments against this perspective of charioteers competing for honour over financial gain, as the top charioteers earned significant sums for their victories.<sup>534</sup>

For charioteers, there seems to have been a level of flexibility concerning the boundaries of their social identities. A possible explanation for the seemingly contradictory nature of the status of and reactions to charioteers can be found in the contrast between the two worlds in which they took part, the world of the circus and that of public life.<sup>535</sup> Although these two worlds met when Roman spectators watched the races and carried the pleasure of the experience with them afterwards, there was a recognized division that separated charioteers as great performers and as low members of society. At the circus, the production of the races presented an image to the spectator of an epic event with drivers of immense skill and the fans accordingly celebrated the performances of exceptional sportsmen. The charioteers represented masculine ideals in a competition where victory above all was the goal, a valuable reflection of Roman culture. Perhaps by standing as a model of particular Roman virtues, charioteers were able to stand apart from other performers in the circus context. However, the charioteer was a persona of sorts that embodied what the audience wanted to see and to celebrate; beyond this, the man was but no more than a public entertainer. The social structure of

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<sup>534</sup> See n. 471. Juvenal and Martial both comment on the significant earnings of charioteers in contrast to the income of more intellectual professions (see 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1).

<sup>535</sup> Horsmann 1998: 109.

Rome relied on well-defined roles for its members; the man who took on the profession of a performer still lacked the *dignitas* of a Roman citizen and those fans, including emperors, who were taken in by the entertainment and desired to be charioteers, faced sharp disapproval for lowering themselves to a role commonly held by slaves. It was the charioteer who was lauded for his performance, not the man himself, and in this way the Romans could interpret the identities of charioteers as not contradictory, but rather representative of the sphere of life in which they took part. The striking figure of the charioteer could reach great heights in the popular mind while the man behind the performance remained limited by his social ranking.

### 3. 8. HORSES

Consideration must also be given to the racehorses that were stars of the circus in their own right and recognized by fans for the important part they played in the success of their drivers.<sup>536</sup> In the races of *quadrigae* the common tactic was to position the best horse on the left side of the chariot. As the chariots raced counter-clockwise around the track this horse, the *equus funalis*, was the dominant and led the other three through the tight turns at either end of the central barrier. It is not surprising that fans of the races acknowledged the role this horse in particular had in the victory of the team and that horses of the circus more generally could be celebrated for their skill. Despite the time between the two, Martial and Juvenal both refer to the racehorse Hirpinus.<sup>537</sup> Hirpinus must have been a

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<sup>536</sup> For the role of horses in the Roman world, see Hyland 1990.

<sup>537</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 3.63.11; Juv. *Sat.* 8.57-63.

horse of particular note if both writers felt that a reader would understand a reference to him. Moreover, much like the comments Martial and Juvenal make about the fame and fortune of charioteers, Martial further satirizes the popularity of the races by comparing his own level of fame to an animal, bemoaning that he is not better known than the horse Andraemon.<sup>538</sup>

Facts concerning the breeds, colouring, and even the lineage of circus horses were included in inscriptions for charioteers; for the racing aficionado, each detail was relevant to the overall understanding of the races and their participants.<sup>539</sup> African horses were the most popular stock in the early Empire, as exemplified by the numerous records of African horses on inscriptions for charioteers.<sup>540</sup> The inscription honouring Diocles makes the claim that he was the best driver of African horses, implying that African horses were more difficult to drive than other breeds and that his control over them was a demonstration of his skill as a charioteer.<sup>541</sup> Specific horses that participated in memorable moments of a charioteer's career could also be credited by name in inscriptions.<sup>542</sup> The charioteer Crescens was sure to include the names of all four horses that were in his team during his very first win in 115 CE.<sup>543</sup> Again in the inscription for Diocles, a significant portion of the space was allotted for the acknowledgment of a select number of horses. The horses referred to by name in the inscription likely represented a memorable few from across Diocles' career, perhaps associated with some of his greatest

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<sup>538</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 10.9.

<sup>539</sup> Silius 16.329-332.

<sup>540</sup> See 'Other Venues' in Chapter 1, esp. n. 103 and 104.

<sup>541</sup> *CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287.

<sup>542</sup> For a discussion of horse nomenclature in the Roman Empire, see Toynbee 1948: 26-30.

<sup>543</sup> *CIL* VI. 10050 = *ILS* 5285.

successes, thereby meriting inclusion above all others. The presence of these names also suggests that they were widely known and that a passer-by who stopped to read the inscription would recognize them and recall the associated careers.<sup>544</sup> An inscription that was mentioned in Chapter 1 includes the names of one hundred and twenty-two horses.<sup>545</sup> Although the first portion of the inscription has been lost it is evident that the second half was devoted heavily to the horses and even included the number of victories the charioteer won with them, from as few as one victory to one hundred and fifty-two with a horse called Olympus. This not only reaffirms the view that the horses merited remembrance, but also suggests that there was some effort to keep clear records of the names of horses in every win in order for this detailed list to be possible.<sup>546</sup>

This expectation of recognition is also seen in the depiction of racehorses in circus imagery.<sup>547</sup> Various images, including some that have already been discussed, incorporate the names of horses with their drivers; other images direct full attention to the stardom of the horses, often depicting them without a charioteer. In a mosaic from Cherchel one horse is clearly identified as Muccosus, with the additional details of the letters ‘*Pra*’ and ‘*Cl. Sabini*’ visible on its shoulder, likely some form of stable mark to indicate the owner or breeder, Claudius Sabinus, and the Green (*prasina*) faction to which

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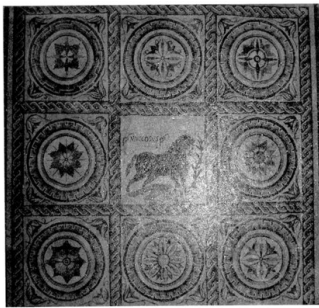
<sup>544</sup> See also *CIL* VI. 10047, 10052, 10053, 10069, 10080.

<sup>545</sup> *CIL* VI. 10056 = *ILS* 5290. See ‘Other Venues’ in Chapter 1.

<sup>546</sup> Horses are also referred to by name in numerous circus *defixiones* from across the Roman Empire, a body of evidence which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Their inclusion in the curse tablets demonstrates again that circus fans were keenly aware of the names of circus horses and indicates that fans considered the horses to be important components to victories in the races, which needed to be helped or hindered through the use of curses and other supernatural means.

<sup>547</sup> For circus horses in art see Dunbabin 1978: esp. 94-102. See also Toynbee 1948: 30-33.

Muccosus must have belonged (fig. 29a-c).<sup>548</sup> Similarly, a detail from a fourth century mosaic uncovered in Sidi Abdallah, Tunisia, shows two horses with stable marks on their hindquarters and their names, Diomedes and Aicides, in the space above them (fig. 28).<sup>549</sup> Another mosaic, from a house at Hadrumetum and dated to the early third century CE, depicts four horses all with their names written above them and accompanied by four attendants wearing tunics of the faction colours (fig. 29).<sup>550</sup>



27a

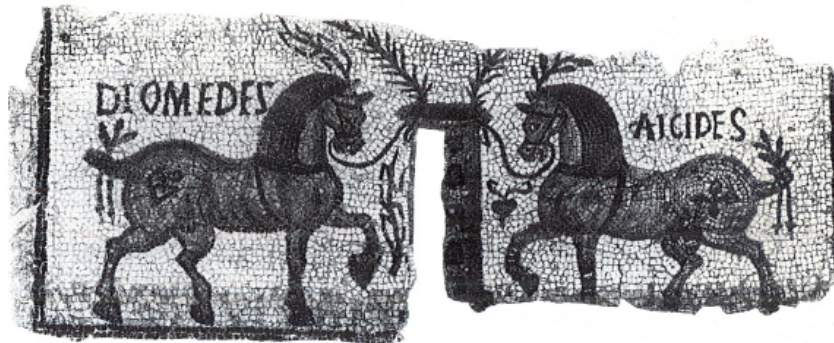


27b



27c

**Figures 27 a-c**  
Mosaic, Cherchel  
(Ferd 2005: pl. 14)

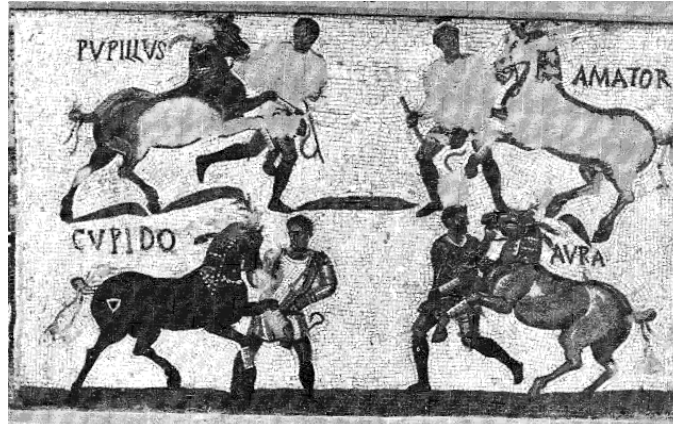


**Figure 28**  
Mosaic detail, Tunisia  
(Duval in Landes 1990: fig. 12)

<sup>548</sup> This mosaic has not been dated. Ferdi 2005: pl. 14.

<sup>549</sup> Duval 1990: fig. 12. Bardo National Museum.

<sup>550</sup> Foucher 1960: 57.211, pl. XLIX. The colours indicate that Pupillus is from the Blue faction, Amator from the Green, Aura from the Red, and Cupido from the White.



**Figure 29**  
Mosaic, Hadrumetum  
(Foucher 1960: 57.211, pl. XLIX)

The scene is not enhanced by any details or decorations of the circus and, instead, the focus is entirely upon the horses, which were considered important and interesting beyond the circus context. A circus horse could also be the focus of the image on small objects. The disk of a first century CE lamp believed to be from Pozzuoli depicts a circus victory procession in which the central figure is a horse, likely the lead horse from the winning team (fig. 30).<sup>551</sup>



**Figure 30**  
Lamp with procession  
British Museum, GR 1856. 12-26.47  
(Junkelmann 2000: fig. 113)

<sup>551</sup> Junkelmann 2000: 101, fig. 113. British Museum, GR 1856. 12-26.47.

Among the various figures standing around the horse, one leads the procession holding a placard that would have told the horse's name and possibly the number of its victories. Although its name is unknown to us, the horse merited celebration, not only in its depiction on a lamp but also within the context of the image's scene, all in the absence of the charioteer.

It is clear that the Roman public knew the names of the star racehorses and recognized them in the art.<sup>552</sup> The images without the name of a horse might have been intended as a broader celebration of circus horses or they may have included other details meant for the viewer to identify the subject. A mosaic from the House of the Horses in Carthage dated to the start of the fourth century CE depicts numerous horses in individual, portrait-like squares. While each has a stable mark on its hindquarters, no names are visible. Instead it has been theorized that the viewer was required to use the imagery that decorated the space around each horse as a visual riddle to decipher the name of the horse (fig. 31a-c).<sup>553</sup> Such a design offered entertainment to the viewer and anticipated that they could reach the appropriate conclusions with the information provided. Consequently, the names of the horses depicted needed to be well known and easily recalled, perhaps from among past circus greats or contemporary favourites.

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<sup>552</sup> The names of the horses were even repeated in graffiti (E.g., *Graf. Pal.* I.298). See also Figure 10.

<sup>553</sup> Two dice-players standing near a horse could indicate a name such as Aleator (Dice-Player), while fowling equipment in a tree behind a horse could suggest the name Auceps (Bird-Catcher). Dunbabin 2016: 160-2, fig.6.18a-b. This explanation for the mosaic design is presented by Salomonson 1965. See also Dunbabin 1978: 94-6; Ennaifer 1983: esp. 825-6.





31a



31b



31c

Figures 31 a-c

Mosaic of horses, House of the Horses, Carthage  
(Dunbabin 2016: figs. 6.17-18a and b)

Racehorses were an integral part of the successes of charioteers and fans of the sport were well aware of this partnership. Unlike the brutal treatment shown to other animals such as those in the *venationes*, people had somewhat sentimental feelings about racehorses. The horses of the circus were praised for their role and honoured alongside their drivers in art, graffiti, and inscriptions. Some top racehorses even received special treatment independent of their human counterparts, with gifts of food, money, and more provided for their wellbeing. As will be discussed further below, a select few benefitted

from the emperor's favour with absurd extravagances that the average fan could only dream of offering to the great horses of the circus. Once they were unable to continue as racehorses they were permitted a comfortable pastoral retirement.<sup>554</sup> Some even merited individual recognition upon their death, with funerary monuments erected in their honour.<sup>555</sup> The emperor Lucius Verus had a tomb built on the Vatican Hill for his favourite racehorse Volucer, and the funerary monument to the racehorse Speudusa includes an inscription written in metre to honour the African mare.<sup>556</sup> It is evident from these actions that fans of the races took great interest in the horses. Although the average racehorse did not become as rich and famous as so many charioteers, they were celebrated for their victories alongside the drivers and were considered stars of the races.

### 3.9. FAN SUPPORT

Amid his accounting of his dislike of the races, Pliny the Younger asserts that the spectators were interested in no more than the faction colours.<sup>557</sup> First addressed in Chapter 1, Pliny contends in his letter to Calvisius that,

“...if the colours were to be exchanged in mid-course during a race, they would transfer their favour and enthusiasm and rapidly desert the famous drivers and horses whose names they shout as they recognize them from afar.”<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> Ovid *Tr.* 4.8.19; Cic. *Sen.* 5.14. Cf. *Anth. Pal.* 9.20.

<sup>555</sup> Herrlinger 1930: 106f; Dunbabin 1978. Humphrey 1986: 408, n. 22 notes excavation work in a cemetery outside the back wall of the Carthage circus in 1983, during which six relatively complete skeletons of horses were found. It is possible that these were racing horses buried near the venue in which they performed.

<sup>556</sup> Volucer: S.H.A. *Verus* 6.4; Speudusa: *CIL* VI. 10082.

<sup>557</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6.

<sup>558</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6.2-3 (*‘si in ipso cursu medioque certamine hic color illuc ille huc transferatur, studium favorque transibit, et repente agitadores illos equos illos, quos procul noscitant, quorum clamitant nomina relinquent’*).

Although Pliny rightly identifies fierce enthusiasm among fans for the races, he presents an image of circus fans that addresses solely the focus of their interest and the intensity with which they direct their attention to the faction colours. It is clear that circus fan behaviour was fundamentally competitive and embraced Roman ideals of success and pleasure in victory. Pliny recognizes the obsessive desire to win and identifies it as an inconsistency among fans; however, his criticisms of fans for their apparent fickleness and lack of loyalty do not acknowledge that it is precisely a fan's loyalty that is being observed when fans followed their favoured faction in each race and cheered for one colour over the other four in each competition. While fans had a desire to win, it was held within the confines of faction loyalty.

Such devotion to the colours seems contradictory to the attention that was paid to charioteers. When describing a day at the races, Ovid instead suggests an interest in the charioteer rather than the colour.<sup>559</sup> Granted, Ovid's focus is on a woman in the stands and a charioteer could constitute a rival for her attentions in this situation; yet this approach to single out a charioteer fits with much of what is seen elsewhere. Rawson draws on Ovid's descriptions as evidence that enthusiasm first was focused on charioteers and then shifted to faction colours.<sup>560</sup> However, it is not necessary to view the interest in these two aspects of racing as isolated from one another or chronologically separated; rather, it is both possible and reasonable for devoted fans of the races to applaud individual charioteers and a single faction.

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<sup>559</sup> *Am.* 3.2, *Ars Am.* 1.145.

<sup>560</sup> Rawson 1981: 8.

Although the support of fans was divided fiercely among the four factions, charioteers did not have to show the same loyalty. Just as modern sports clubs seek to fill their teams with the best possible athletes, the circus factions also maneuvered to acquire the best charioteers. The charioteers Calpurnianus, Musclosus, and brothers Marcus Aurelius Polynices and Marcus Aurelius Mollicius Tatianus each competed for all four factions during their careers, while the famous Diocles drove for all except the Blues.<sup>561</sup> The moves could be conducted through the sale of the charioteer if he was a slave currently owned by the faction, or by a form of negotiation if the charioteer was a freedman or, in a rare instance, freeborn. While some charioteers could be sold or traded to another faction, if their original faction was dissatisfied with their performance, it is more likely that the movement of charioteers between factions was instigated by the faction wanting to acquire a charioteer with the potential of bringing them victories. This may have been the case for Diocles, who had the most successful period of his career after moving from the Whites to the Reds. The potential seen in a charioteer in training might have also been enough for him to be moved among factions. The previously mentioned inscription for Helenus, who did not make it beyond the role of *auriga* before he died, also notes that he had first been trained with the Greens until he transferred to the Blues.<sup>562</sup> Fans of the races were aware that charioteers were not lifelong members of a faction and could move to drive for a competitor at any time. It seems impossible to

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<sup>561</sup> Diocles: *CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287; Calpurnianus: *CIL* VI. 10047 = *ILS* 5288; Musclosus: *CIL* VI. 10063 = *ILS* 5281; brothers Polynices and Tatianus: *CIL* VI. 10049 = *ILS* 5286 = *IG* XIV. 1474.

<sup>562</sup> *AE* 2001: 268; Thuillier 2004. Bell 2014: 497 proposes that Helenus' move between factions during his training was likely the result of some form of talent scout, who poached him from the Greens in favour of the Blues.

believe that fans would be willing and able to shift their support as rapidly among factions as charioteers might be expected to move. Instead, while the loss of a charioteer to another faction would likely bother some fans, they would nonetheless maintain support for the faction at large.

It was a common occurrence for more than one charioteer from a faction to participate in a race.<sup>563</sup> The twelve starting gates at the Circus Maximus, for instance, could accommodate up to three chariots from each of the four factions. Nevertheless, it does not seem as though this caused any conflict or confusion when spectators decided whom they would support in a race. The presence of a teammate on the track allowed the charioteers to work together in an effort to defeat their opponents, cutting off attempts to pass or forcing another off the track.<sup>564</sup> Of course, there must have been occasions on which one charioteer ignored the presence of his teammate and sought the glory of victory alone, but the victory would still go the faction to which he belonged.

Indeed, the deep devotion to the separate factions at first seems to be in conflict with the love fans had for individual charioteers. The idea that a fan might celebrate the skills and successes of a charioteer who raced for an opposing faction does not fit within the system of strict faction partisanship. However, the organization of chariot racing cannot be defined in such a narrow way as to suggest that fans could only celebrate one or the other. No matter one's allegiance among the factions, a fan could appreciate the qualities of a top driver. An avid fan of the races would be discerning and knowledgeable

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<sup>563</sup> Team races for factions could include two, three, or four chariots from the same faction (*certamina binarum, ternarum, and quarternarum*). The *certamina singularum* was an individual race with one charioteer representing each faction. (Harris 1972: 198).

<sup>564</sup> Sid.Apoll. *Carm.* 23.360-427.

about the necessary skills and techniques and would recognize their use by a charioteer.<sup>565</sup>

In every modern sport there are a select number of athletes who represent the best and most elite of their sport. Fans of the sport know their names, can acknowledge their skill, and celebrate their contribution to the sport, all the while remaining loyal to a different team than that of the sport's star and even cheering against them. Such opposition does not diminish the importance of the support for either the teams or individuals. Instead, they represent two separate but equally relevant aspects of the sport fandom. So too, the support of circus factions does not need to stand in contradistinction to that of individual charioteers. Faction partisanship was the foundation of the chariot racing fandom and the love for and celebration of individual charioteers was simply another level of the fandom that engaged so many.

### **3. 10. THE 'HOME ADVANTAGE' AND HOMETOWN HEROES**

In modern sports, the so-called 'home advantage' is often considered an important and possibly decisive factor in competitions.<sup>566</sup> While an understanding of the competition space and a general comfort in the venue is one explanation for the advantage, the influence of supportive fans is also acknowledged for its role in helping the home team. For instance, modern sport psychologists assert that a positive and supportive home crowd is likely to result in a better and more aggressive performance by the home team,

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<sup>565</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus (14.6.25-6) notes that fans of the races would often spend the day discussing the sport and "examining minutely the good points or the defects of charioteers and their horses".

<sup>566</sup> The subject of home advantage in competitive sport has been the topic of much research. For modern analysis of home advantage see for instance, Carron, Loughhead, Bray 2005; Courneya and Carron 1992; Greer 1983; Legaz-Arrese, Moliner-Urdiales, Munguía-Izquierdo 2014; Nevill and Holder 1999; Pollard 1986, 2006; Russell 1993: 34-45.

and a poor and more frustrated performance by the visitors, potentially having been shaken or disheartened.<sup>567</sup> However, the same supportive group can influence competitors in an unintentionally negative manner by putting pressure on their team.<sup>568</sup> A heightened self-awareness among competitors will draw their attention away from the performance, as they become concerned with the fear of failure and a quality “self-presentation”. Given the importance of ‘home advantage’ to modern sport, it is pertinent to consider if and how such a phenomenon manifested in Roman chariot racing. Charioteers faced significant pressure to be victorious; the most successful charioteers became widely recognized and popular, which undoubtedly led to high expectations for their performances and for the charioteers to live up to the image of greatness created around them. The racing fans provided support for their favourites but, in their fierce devotion, could surely be a burden to charioteers that increased the stress of competition and the competitors’ desire to prove themselves worthy of such support.

While this posits a structure of intense competition, it does not represent the sense of ‘home advantage’ noted in modern sport. Although the structures of sporting contests from the ancient to modern world appear to maintain the same desire for victory and thus, the same anxieties for competitors and fans, in the context of the Roman races this is the general atmosphere of the competition and does not seem to have been defined by ‘home advantage’. In an effort to judge whether or not it is viable to apply the concept of ‘home advantage’ to Roman racing at all, we must look to how the factions were run. As

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<sup>567</sup> See Edwards and Archambault 1989; Laird 1923; Sloan 1989: 195.

<sup>568</sup> See Baumeister 1982; Baumeister and Hutton 1986; Baumeister and Tice 1984.

already discussed in this chapter, permanent faction stables were only raised in cities large enough to have a monumental circus. At small venues it was not economically feasible to maintain full faction organizations and, as a result, horses and drivers often had to be brought in from larger, nearby cities. It seems that there were only faction organizations in large centres and, while smaller venues could certainly hire a local horse owner to fill out a competition or have local horse breeders compete against one another, those that desired a more official competition would need to have competitors brought in from elsewhere. In these instances, it is doubtful that any of the drivers or racing teams considered themselves to have ‘home advantage’ with knowledge of the track or the inherent support of the crowds.

In places where the factions had permanent facilities and stables, it appears that all the factions were located in the same general area. Humphrey notes the presence of an open rectangular space near the circus at Tyre, where he posits the stables or faction clubhouses were located.<sup>569</sup> Similarly, at Caesarea Maritima, a late fourth to sixth century CE inscription associated with *hippotrophoi*, those charged with the care of the stables, was found at the north end of the circus and has been hypothesized as originally having been posted on the wall of the faction stables.<sup>570</sup> There is no indication that the faction buildings were spread out in different areas of the city; rather, it was most convenient for all factions to be in close proximity to the circus itself. Given the densely packed nature of many Roman urban spaces it would not have been functional to allot space throughout

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<sup>569</sup> Humphrey 1986: 462. Humphrey (1986: 477) also identifies two buildings in the area that were possibly the faction buildings of the Blues and Greens.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid., 483-4; Weiss 2014: 107, 191 230. For the inscription, see Lifschitz 1957; Robert 1958: 344 no. 514.



a city for different circus faction facilities. It is more probable that the buildings would be situated together as near to the circus as possible, so as to devote only one area to the circus and chariot racing. The size of a circus often meant that it was constructed at the edge of the city, where there was open land available for the purpose. In turn, it is reasonable to believe that stables and all other support facilities were erected in the same area.

At Rome, all four factions had established stables in the Campus Martius, thereby sharing a general location for their bases of operations and limiting what could be identified as the territory of any one faction.<sup>571</sup> Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that the Circus Maximus or any of the other circuses at Rome were considered to be the home track of one faction over the other three. The prominence of the Circus Maximus and its regular use for other events would have made it impractical to serve as a training site. Other circuses in the city also presented problems due to their size, use for other events, or location in the city.<sup>572</sup> The Trigarium, an open space in the northwest corner of the Campus Martius had long been where horses were trained and, after the establishment of the faction system, was likely also used for the training and practice of charioteers and faction horses.<sup>573</sup> It was in this space, in addition to whatever space was available in a

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<sup>571</sup> The buildings of the Greens were located at the position of the modern Palazzo della Cancelleria, while the Blue faction had its facilities in the space that is now the Piazza Farnese. See Coarelli 1977: 845-6; Meijer 2010:54.

<sup>572</sup> For instance, Humphrey (1986: 558) calls attention to the size and location Circus Flaminius, which would not have been large enough to accommodate faction training and was located in a busy, monumental area of the city where crowds would gather for other purposes.

<sup>573</sup> Humphrey 1986: 558. Humphrey also posits that Strabo's comments (5.3.8) are referring to this space as Strabo praises the beauty and size of the Campus Martius that affords space for chariot-races and various equestrian exercises as well as numerous other activities. See also Coarelli 1977, 809 fig. 1. Humphrey (1986: 558) hypothesizes that it was in fact the longstanding use of the space as a training ground for horses, possible as early as the Etruscan period, that led the factions to set up in this area.

faction's facilities, that drivers could practice without venturing out to the larger tracks in the city. With only one major circus in Rome, the Circus Maximus, and no evidence to indicate its use by one faction more often than the others, it is not feasible to assert it as the home track of any one faction. Consequently, without identifiable home tracks, the concept of 'home advantage' cannot be applied to the Roman circus in the same manner as it is to modern sports.

Although it does not seem that there was any sense of 'home advantage' among racing factions, there is evidence to suggest that where the individual charioteers were from was of interest. Various inscriptions erected to honour charioteers include regional identifications; for instance, the inscriptions celebrating the careers of the charioteers Diocles and Crescens, both include where the men were from, with Diocles born in Lusitania, Spain, and Crescens originally from Mauritania.<sup>574</sup> It is possible that the origins of charioteers was perceived to be relevant to their skills as competitors at the races. The information could also prove relevant to gamblers, if it was believed that charioteers' origins influenced had bearing on their racing skills, to determine who to bet on or against. It is evident that the best racing horses were considered to come from Africa and Spain and therefore a similar consideration might have been associated with charioteers.<sup>575</sup> One of the most prolific charioteers, Diocles, was from Spain and was possibly but one of the skilled drivers to come from the region. It was a convention to

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<sup>574</sup> Diocles: *CIL* VI. 10048 ('[C(aius) Appu]leius Diocles agitator factionis russatae / [nati]one Hispanus Lusitanus'). Crescens: *CIL* VI. 10050 = *ILS* 5285 ('Crescens agit(ator)/factionis ven(etae)/natione Maurus/annorum XXII').

<sup>575</sup> See 'Horses' in this chapter.

indicate the origin (*natio*) of slaves, particularly skilled ones such as gladiators and charioteers. As reported in Book 1 of *The Edict of the Curule Aediles*,

“Those who sell slaves must state the *natio* of each at the sale; for the *natio* of a slave frequently encourages or deters a prospective buyer; hence it is advantageous to know his *natio*, since it is reasonable to suppose that some slaves are good because they originate from a tribe that has a good reputation, and others bad because they come from a tribe that is rather disreputable.”<sup>576</sup>

If a charioteer were known to come from a region judged to produce quality drivers, it is plausible that his popularity could increase as a result of that information. It is otherwise possible that a region or city was looked upon negatively, whether in association with the skill of its charioteers or a broader social or political concern. Although there is no direct evidence for a generally unfavourable opinion of charioteers from a particular place, it may have been that such views were of a personal nature and that individual circus spectators had varying opinions concerning the origins of charioteers.

It is also conceivable that, for some, knowledge of a charioteer’s origins was not predominantly concerned with their potential success on the track, but instead held importance in their overall interest in the sport. It is not uncommon for fans of a sport to seek out information about its competitors, and fans who became devoted to a faction and individual drivers likely desired to know all they could about them. In particular, those more notable charioteers gaining great success on the track undoubtedly peaked the interest of fans, who then may have begun following their careers and learning of their backgrounds. A charioteer’s place of origin became part of the identification for them as notable competitors and stars of the races.

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<sup>576</sup> *Dig.* 21.1.31 (Ulpian).

We might also consider that the skill associated with a region did not interest some spectators as much as the possibility that they came from the same region as a charioteer. For those spectators who were not devoted to a particular faction, the knowledge that a charioteer had the same origins as them potentially served as a deciding factor by which to offer support. When recounting the funeral games for Scipio's father and uncle in *Punica* 16, Silius Italicus describes the chariot races, at which "one man backs with fury the mettled steed, another the charioteer. Some are zealous for horses of their own country, others for the fame of some ancient stud."<sup>577</sup> Although not taking place as part of one of the festivals of the Roman religious calendar, the scene suggests that spectators found a variety of reasons to support different chariot teams, including the origins of the driver or his horses. Despite there being no real sense of 'home advantage' in Roman chariot racing, it is possible that charioteers had the goodwill of the crowd when competing in their home territory, acknowledged in this situation more for his connection to a place rather than his skill as a driver. A monument raised in honour of Marcus Aurelius Liber, a charioteer for the Greens, was commissioned by the *municipium* at Teanum Sidicinum, central Italy.<sup>578</sup> While other honorary inscriptions and monuments were erected by family or friends of the charioteer, some of his fans, or members of his faction, this example demonstrates a greater interest in a particular charioteer by a community at large. It is possible that Liber was from the area and that the local municipal council wanted not only to celebrate the success of the charioteer but also to

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<sup>577</sup> Silius Italicus *Pun.* 16.328-330 ('*hic studio furit acris equi, furit ille magistri. Hos patriae favor, hos accendit nobile nomen antiqui stabuli*').

<sup>578</sup> Palmieri 1978 = *AE* 1979: 155. See also Horsmann 1998: 118.

associate his success with the local population by drawing attention to his origins. There was also potential for individual spectators to connect with a charioteer if they both came from the same place. Perhaps for those watching the races while far from home, the realization that a competing charioteer was from the same place could draw the spectator's interest and give them a connection to the charioteer.<sup>579</sup> This is not to say that a 'hometown connection' superseded the loyalty a fan had for their faction; rather, it is possible that a mutual heritage led fans to favour a charioteer over others within their own faction or, to be less prone to hostility against a 'hometown' charioteer from an opposing faction.

It is apparent that the origins of charioteers were relevant to circus spectators and their overall fandom of the sport. The declarations of a charioteer's background associated him with a place that spectators could add to their knowledge of competitors and inform their fandom for better or worse. The hometown or region of a competitor could be perceived to inform on his skill and used as reason either to cheer against him or to show support. The public knowledge of such information turned each circus competitor into a familiar figure with a recognizable and possibly even relatable background. The more famous that a charioteer became, the more fans of the races were keen to learn about him; his geographic identity served as one part of the biography attached to him as a sporting star. His career became inscribed in popular memory, as the public became closely familiar with his personal history and tales of the star's

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<sup>579</sup> Conversely, as mentioned above, a charioteer potentially faced scrutiny from spectators based on his origins as well.

achievements. Inscriptions and other sources for such information about charioteers aided in mythologizing them, as the narrative surrounding their pasts and careers made them racing icons. The origins of charioteers were one part of the enduring narrative that established them as sporting heroes, to their hometowns and to the circus fans at large.

### 3. 11. THE EMPEROR AS A RACING FAN

As seen in Chapter 1, it was common, if not expected, for the emperor to attend the races. The emperor's presence at the Circus served multiple functions, as he demonstrated his closeness to the people and to the gods for whom the spectacles were presented. The people were afforded the opportunity to see and be near the emperor, occasionally even taking the opportunity to make requests of the head of Rome. It was necessary that the emperor display the *dignitas* and *gravitas* expected of a man of his elite station and portray a sense of distance and untouchability, while also appearing as a leader of the people by demonstrating a level of engagement with the popular entertainments.<sup>580</sup> Although needing to have a balance in the imperial persona, it appears that many emperors were successful in the task. There were, undoubtedly some who did not enjoy engaging themselves with the races; Suetonius remarks that Julius Caesar was reproached for being preoccupied with other business while at the Circus, which later led Augustus to ensure he gave the spectacle his full attention when present.<sup>581</sup> Marcus Aurelius is reported in the *Historia Augusta* as to having preferred dealing with administrative affairs

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<sup>580</sup> As Edmondson (1996: 103) remarks, “if he erred by showing too plebeian an enthusiasm for the spectacles or by maintaining too aristocratic a disdain, he could upset the traditional social balance in a potentially dangerous manner”. See also Wallace-Hadrill (1982: 32-48, esp. 42).

<sup>581</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 45.1.

rather than observe the races while at the circus.<sup>582</sup> It would seem that the emperor understood the importance of the races and his presence at the spectacle; nonetheless, his lack of personal interest led him to complete other work while fulfilling his obligation of attendance.<sup>583</sup> In his *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius explains that his ‘τροφέως’, his tutor, dissuaded him from supporting either the Greens or Blues.<sup>584</sup> His position on spectacles followed those expressed by Stoic philosophers, who advised not becoming embroiled in the fanatical partisanship of the day’s spectator sports.<sup>585</sup> Yet, it seems that there were some emperors who did not heed such warnings and who took the task of engaging with the public and their entertainments too far. A number of emperors are recorded in the sources as having become deeply involved with the races to the point of becoming fans themselves and even taking to the track to race.

Various emperors openly favoured one of the four circus factions; while the emperors Vitellius and Caracalla both supported the Blues, Caligula, Nero, Lucius Verus, Commodus, and Elagabalus all preferred the Greens.<sup>586</sup> There is no record of an emperor supporting the Whites, and the late fifth century emperor Anastasius is the only emperor known to have favoured the Reds, despite it having become a lesser faction by that

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<sup>582</sup> S.H.A. *M. Ant.* 15.1; *Cf.* M. Aur. *Med.* 6.46.

<sup>583</sup> When away from Rome Marcus Aurelius arranged for spectacles to continue to be presented for the public (S.H.A. *M. Ant.* 23.4; *cf.* 23.5). Conversely, a *senatus consultum* from 177 CE shows that the emperor introduced legislation to regulate and limit costs associated with gladiatorial shows (CIL II. 6278; Carter 2003). While this measure may have been motivated by the emperor’s dislike of spectacle entertainments, it is possible that the legislation was intended to address expenditures and to ensure practical spending more generally.

<sup>584</sup> M. Aur. *Med.* 1.5.

<sup>585</sup> See ‘Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus’ in Chapter 1.

<sup>586</sup> Vitellius: Dio Cass. 65.5, Suet. *Vit.* 7, 14.3; Caracalla: Dio Cass. 78.10.1, Herodian 4.6.4-6; Caligula: Dio Cass. 59.14, Suet. *Calig.* 55.2; Nero: Dio Cass. 63.6.3; Lucius Verus: S.H.A. *Verus* 6.2; Commodus: Dio Cass. 73.17.1; Elagabalus: Dio Cass. 80.14.2.

period.<sup>587</sup> The reasoning for these selections has already been addressed, with the conclusion that the selection alone, regardless of what faction was chosen, served to bring the emperor closer to the people and demonstrate his relatability by sharing in the entertainment of the races and its partisanship. However, it is possible that this decision could cause trouble with some devoted fans who might be upset that the emperor chose to support a faction that was not their own. According to the *Historia Augusta*, supporters of the Blues shouted insults at the emperor Lucius Verus because he had taken the side of the opposing faction, the Greens.<sup>588</sup> This seems to represent an instance of partisanship at the extreme, in which the anger of devoted fans at any opposition is directed toward the emperor as it would be toward any other rival fan. As will be discussed below, numerous emperors gave gifts to their favourite charioteers and horses and therefore the fans of the Blues may have felt that the imperial favour shown by Lucius Verus offered their competition an unfair level of support or advantage. Of course, it is very likely that, out of their fierce loyalty and desire to win, the Blues would not have refused the support of the emperor if he had offered it to their own faction. It was common for the emperor's preferred faction to be known and therefore it is probable that the concern of the Blues was not that the emperor should remain impartial and not take sides, but only that the side taken was not their own.

While the sources repeatedly describe sporting fans in terms of their intense passion or obsession, there are not an overwhelming number of specific examples

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<sup>587</sup> John Mal. 16.2.24-25 (393). It is unclear if the emperor had a genuine interest in the Reds or if his support of the faction was a strategic choice to limit the influence of the more prominent Greens and Blues.

<sup>588</sup> S.H.A. *Verus* 6.2.



provided.<sup>589</sup> It is possible that this was a conscious decision of sources, who were determined not to give attention to a group they deemed ridiculous; however, when an emperor acted in the same manner as these avid fans, the behaviour was less likely to be ignored. The actions of the emperor were more important to authors than those of the Roman public, particularly when the activities of the emperor provided salacious stories. It has already been noted that numerous Roman emperors were fans of the circus.<sup>590</sup> These emperors shared in the popular obsession with the races, but some demonstrated their devotion in grander ways than could be done by fans of lower status. A distinct example of this is the close interactions that emperors had with their favoured factions, charioteers, and even racehorses. Both Caracalla and Vitellius are reported to have socialized with charioteers and other performers, and the emperor Nero gave gifts of money to racehorses to pay for their feed.<sup>591</sup> Lucius Verus was particularly devoted to the races and, when away in the provinces, would receive messages about the races, possibly containing updates on the latest competitions.<sup>592</sup> He also is reported to have given gold, food, and other gifts to his favourite racehorse, Volucer, even having a golden statue of the horse made to carry around with him.<sup>593</sup> Caligula is well known for his factional devotion, with reports that he ate with members of the Greens at their stable and gave a large sum of money to one of the drivers.<sup>594</sup> Most notable was Caligula's love for

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<sup>589</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>590</sup> E.g., n. 456.

<sup>591</sup> Caracalla: Dio Cass. 77.7.1. Vitellius: Tac. *Hist.* 2.87.2. Nero: Dio Cass. 61.6.1.

<sup>592</sup> S.H.A. *Verus* 6.1.

<sup>593</sup> S.H.A. *Verus* 6.3-6.

<sup>594</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 55.2. Suetonius (*Calig.* 18.3) also reports that, when giving games in the Circus, Caligula decorated the venue in green and red, the colours of his favourite faction (Green) and the faction with which it was commonly allied (Red). See 'Factions' in this chapter.

Incitatus, a racehorse that Dio claims the emperor used to invite to dinner and feed golden barley.<sup>595</sup> Suetonius also reports that Caligula provided the horse with a highly decorated stall of marble and ivory, with precious gems and purple blankets, a house with slaves and furnishings, and even sent soldiers to quiet the neighbourhood around Incitatus' stable on race days in an effort to aid the horse's rest.<sup>596</sup> Such grand gestures were not performed for all horses; they were reserved for the emperor's favourites, likely selected from among those most popular and successful at the time.

It appears that for some emperors the opportunity to connect with the competitors of the circus was not enough and, as a result, they too sought to perform as charioteers. Emperors Caligula, Nero, Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus all reportedly trained as charioteers, some dressed in the colour of their favoured faction, possibly imagining themselves among the famous drivers who raced in the Circus to the cheers of the crowd. While most preferred to race privately or in front of small groups, the emperors acted upon their fandom to experience what most racing fans could only imagine. Commodus is the only one of the five who is said to have only driven privately, despite his desire to race in public.<sup>597</sup> Cassius Dio asserts that the emperor kept his driving to dark, moonless nights out of shame to be seen partaking in such an activity, although it seems just as plausible that he was ashamed of his limited skill. Nevertheless, Commodus engaged in the fantasy of being a charioteer by wearing the Green uniform during his private races.<sup>598</sup> Most references to Caracalla's interest in racing suggest that, although he was not

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<sup>595</sup> Dio Cass. 59.14.7.

<sup>596</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 55.3.

<sup>597</sup> Dio Cass. 73.17.1; Herodian 1.13.8; SHA. *Comm.* 2.9.

<sup>598</sup> Dio Cass. 73.17.1.

secretive about it, the emperor tended to drive his chariot for exercise or in competition with his brother Geta, rather than performing for an audience.<sup>599</sup> Caligula, Nero, and Elagabalus all dared to act the part of a charioteer in public; Caligula is said to have appeared as a charioteer in various circuses, Nero trained in the Circus Vaticanus and raced a ten-horse team at Olympia, and Elagabalus raced both privately and in front of small groups.<sup>600</sup>

In each instance, while such activities can be understood as the actions of a devoted fan who had the means to engage with and actively support his favourite faction, it was of concern to the sources that such behaviour was exhibited by the emperor. The sources disapprove of such actions and assert them as inappropriate or ill-advised. While it might be acceptable, or at least understood, that racing fans from among the lower classes might behave in this manner, in these cases the fandom of the emperor went too far. In addition to the story mentioned above of factional anger directed at the emperor Lucius Verus, sources also recorded occasions in which the emperor himself demonstrated anger toward rival faction fans. Suetonius reports that Caligula, a supporter of the Greens, was angry when the crowds at the circus cheered for a faction that he opposed.<sup>601</sup> While this is a common reaction among fans of any sport, Cassius Dio claims that the emperor was so invested in the success of the Greens that he had horses and charioteers of rival factions poisoned.<sup>602</sup> The emperor Vitellius also was deeply

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<sup>599</sup> See Dio Cass. 77.7.2; Herodian 4.7.2, 4.11.9, 4.12.6.

<sup>600</sup> Caligula: Suet. *Calig.* 54.1. Nero: Tac. *Ann.* 14.1; Suet. *Nero* 24.2. Elagabalus: Dio Cass. 80.14.2.

<sup>601</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 30.2.

<sup>602</sup> Dio Cass. 59.14.5-7. Such behaviour was not confined to the circus, as Suetonius (*Dom.* 10.1) recounts how Domitian had a supporter of the Thracian gladiators thrown to the dogs in the arena with a placard that read, “A favourer of the Thracians who spoke impiously” (*Impie locutus parmularius*).

devoted fan of his faction, the Blues, and is said to have ordered the execution of spectators who spoke against the faction.<sup>603</sup>

It is very possible that many of the stories involving the emperor were exaggerations or interpretations of events biased against the emperor. Herodian's account of the history of Rome after the death of Marcus Aurelius includes discussion of some of the extreme actions of the emperor Caracalla. After listing other acts of the emperor, such as ordering the deaths of those friendly to Geta, murdering men nightly, and burning Vestal Virgins alive as punishment for accused impurity, Herodian claims that, while at the races, Caracalla heard the crowd insult a charioteer that he favoured and, taking it as a personal attack, ordered the Praetorian Guard to seek out those who had insulted the charioteer and kill them.<sup>604</sup> If true, the incident is an overt demonstration of the extremes to which the fandom of the races could go and the danger that such fandom could pose when it was held by the emperor himself. It appears that Herodian intended to stun his reader by including the story of Caracalla's offense at the Circus as the last in a list of increasingly appalling imperial acts. The scene is made all the more intense by the claim Herodian makes immediately before telling the story, that the emperor "was responsible for one unprecedented action".<sup>605</sup> Such commentary by the author emphasizes the shocking nature of Caracalla's behaviour and builds anticipation and astonishment prior to revealing what exactly the emperor did. However, this careful construction again

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<sup>603</sup> Suet. *Vit.* 14.3.

<sup>604</sup> Herodian 4.6.4-5.

<sup>605</sup> Herodian 4.6.4 ('καὶ μήποτε γινόμενον ἔργον').

raises questions as to the accuracy of Herodian's report and what other motives he might have had in presenting the emperor in this light.

The love Caligula had for the racehorse Incitatus was infamous and likely often exaggerated with the intention of mocking the emperor's devotion to the races. Perhaps the best example is the reports of both Cassius Dio and Suetonius, who assert that the emperor considered installing Incitatus as a consul.<sup>606</sup> The story must have been known well enough for two different sources to report it; however, it is difficult to know if Caligula did make such a suggestion or if it is entirely fiction.<sup>607</sup> If the consulship of Incitatus was proposed by Caligula, I find it unlikely that the emperor meant it earnestly and instead suggest that it was some sort of provoking joke or satirical comment against the senate and the job that Caligula found even a horse could do.<sup>608</sup> Whatever the truth of the story, the result is the same, as the authors add interest to their narratives through a shocking story that discredits the emperor and his character. Indeed, Suetonius' intentions are made clear as he begins the section in which he recounts such actions of Caligula by saying, "toward those to whom he was devoted, his partiality became madness".<sup>609</sup> Suetonius introduces his reader to the subject matter with the notion that the stories that follow will demonstrate a mad emperor who acted inappropriately and

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<sup>606</sup> Dio Cass. 59.14.7; Suet. *Calig.* 55.3.

<sup>607</sup> The historical accuracy of the claim is also considered by Barrett 1990.

<sup>608</sup> Woods 2014: 775-7 explains the supposed consulship of the *equus Incitatus* ("fast horse") as a sly reference to Asinius Celer, whose name can be misrepresented to mean 'swift ass', and his appointment as suffect consul. Woods proposes that Caligula might have intended to criticize Celer's candidacy by suggesting the superiority of a 'swift' prize-winning chariot horse for the position over a 'swift ass' such as Celer.

<sup>609</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 55.1 (*'Quorum vero studio teneretur, omnibus ad insaniam favit'*).

disgraced his position by engaging with performers of the theatre, amphitheatre, and circus.

It does not go unnoticed that the emperors about whom the sources reported stories of inappropriate, scandalous, and even violent behaviour associated with the races, were those considered among the ‘bad’ emperors of Rome. As a result, it is possible that the stories were misrepresentations of their actions intended to give a hostile portrayal of the emperors who were already looked at unfavourably.<sup>610</sup> Generally, our sources demonstrate a concern for the close attachment that some emperors had to the spectacles, including the races. The emperors appear to have become fiercely devoted to the competitions and the success of their teams, cheering them on and doing what they could to ensure a victory, just as any other avid fan would desire to do. As Tacitus remarks when describing Nero’s interest in the races,

“Before long, the Roman people received an invitation in form, and began to hymn his praises, as is the way of the crowd, hungry for amusements, and delighted if the sovereign draws in the same direction”.<sup>611</sup>

Although the sources show clear disapproval of this behaviour, it does not appear as though the actions of the emperor were done with those elite Roman authors in mind; instead, the emperors appealed to the Roman public and sought their favour by engaging with their popular entertainments.

We also cannot disregard how much the emperor might have embraced the races on a personal level. It is apparent that children were introduced to the races at an early

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<sup>610</sup> See Edwards 1994: esp. 87.

<sup>611</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14.14.1 (*‘Mox ultro vocari populus Romanus laudibusque extollere, ut est vulgus cupiens voluptatum et, si eodem princeps trahat, laetum’*). Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 16.4, *Hist.* 1.4.

age with many children quickly becoming fans; Nero in particular is reported by Suetonius as having been interested in the circus since he was a boy and would discuss the competitions with other youths.<sup>612</sup> Therefore it is not implausible to suggest that a man who had grown up admiring the star charioteers of the circus and who now had all the power of Rome in his hands would choose to act on his desires and to live out his childhood dreams. Although it is possible to understand the motivations of the emperors, the sources seem to suggest that in this behaviour the emperors discarded the balance necessary to maintain at the circus and did away with the dignified separation from the public in favour of full participation with the spectacle. The interest that these emperors showed was not the superficial engagement required as a formality when attending in an official capacity; rather, they demonstrated genuine enthusiasm for the popular entertainment. These emperors took on the behaviour of other devoted racing fans and were viewed as such by the sources, as deeply devoted individuals, willing to do whatever they could to support their faction. The most highly invested partisans wanted to engage, encourage, and participate in any way that they were able, and the emperor was in a position to do more and get away with it.

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<sup>612</sup> See 'Children and the Races' in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A CIRCUS FAN: A MODERN SPORT PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

Although there is a variety of ancient evidence for the fans of Roman chariot racing, there is certain information that our ancient sources do not provide. While some elite Roman authors report on how fans acted, emphasizing the deep devotion to the sport and the irrational actions of those who intently watched the races and shouted at competitors and one another, they do not address why fans acted as they did, beyond the moralistic assertion of the madness of sports spectators.<sup>613</sup> Moreover, the sources do not consider why people were drawn to the races and subsequently became such devoted fans. The races are casually discussed in the sources alongside the other spectacles available to the public and often are considered to be little more than another popular entertainment for the common masses. These same issues, and others like them, have been examined by modern sport psychologists and sociologists studying the behaviour of modern sports fans. Unlike the study of ancient sports fans and the limited sources available for it, scholars studying modern sports have numerous sources available to them, most notably living modern fans, who can be interviewed, observed, and analyzed. The modern studies available on sport psychology offer insight to the motivation and behaviour of modern

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<sup>613</sup> See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1.



sports fans that cannot be gleaned from the ancient context. A cross-cultural study with the modern sporting world also provides the opportunity to consider modern concepts and their bearing on the fan following of the Roman races.

In this chapter, I will present a select number of key concepts in modern sport psychology and discuss their relevance to the spectators and fans of Roman chariot racing. This exercise of looking to the modern is intended to consider the open question of why Roman racing fans acted as they did by addressing the initial motivations of spectators to attend the sport and by examining the behaviour of those devoted racing fans. It is not possible to assert firm answers regarding the behaviour of ancient sports fans, as modern scholarship alone cannot provide the necessary evidence; instead, this chapter acts as an exploration of the psychology of modern sports fans and its possible implications in the Roman context. Through this exploration it is possible to identify common strains of behaviour between modern sports fans and those of the Roman circus, and to recognize similarities in the composition of sports fandom in both the modern and ancient world.

Before continuing, it is important to acknowledge where the modern models are too different from the ancient context, perhaps most notably in the presence of modern media, which have a significant influence on the manner in which modern sport is consumed and which offer opportunities for engagement with a sport that were unavailable to an ancient spectator. However, many modern fans, like those of the ancient world, engage with sport through the live events and therefore it is possible to draw comparisons and explore the behaviour of modern and ancient sports fans in relation

to their lived experience and interest in the live sporting events. Furthermore, it is a necessary concession that ancient and modern minds are different, since some factors that influence daily life in our contemporary world do not apply to ancient life; yet, as history has taught many times over, they are not so disparate as to negate all comparison. The use of contemporary analysis and recorded behaviour of modern sports spectators can be applied to the world of Roman chariot racing to obtain greater understanding of Roman spectator behaviour.

#### **4.2. SPORTS SPECTATOR MOTIVATIONS**

It is evident that the races and their charioteers captivated the Roman public and that the extensive seating stands of the Circus Maximus were filled with spectators on each race day. Even before much of the Roman public became committed fans of the circus and the factions that competed there, it is probable that they came to the races as casual spectators. Upon one's first visit to the circus, the details of the sport and the careers of the competitors were likely still unknown and possibly irrelevant to the desire to join the audience. It was not a sense of deep devotion and loyalty to the competitors that first led them to the circus. The discussion of similar matters exists in modern sport psychology, which considers what first motivates one to become a sports spectator. Amid the extensive modern analysis of motivations for sports spectatorship, the most notable concepts can be best organized into five separate categories, which are termed by modern sport psychologists as entertainment theories, salubrious effect theories, stress and

stimulation seeking theories, catharsis and aggression theories, and achievement seeking theories.<sup>614</sup>

Chariot races were presented as part of various religious festivals throughout the year to which the public could come for a pleasant day of entertainment and celebration outside their usual routine. An important purpose of the events was, indeed, to entertain the Roman populace, but more so to solemnly entertain the gods for whom the events were produced. It is reasonable to believe that spectators were motivated to attend with this in mind, expecting foremost to be amused at the circus. This coincides with modern entertainment theories, which posit that individuals become spectators of sports because there are specific elements of the competition that they anticipate will bring them pleasure.<sup>615</sup> In the discussion of the other modern concepts it will become apparent that many could in fact be considered subsets of the entertainment motive as the interest in enjoyment or pleasure is present to some degree in most motivations of spectators. The aesthetic nature of sport is one element that the entertainment theories posit will bring a spectator pleasure. The physicality of the chariot races demonstrated strength, speed, and coordination; the horses could be considered graceful when striding around the track, as could the charioteers who directed them with precision. Such aspects could certainly draw in interested spectators. A spectator could also be attracted to a sport for its representation of life's values, such as perseverance, hard work, loyalty, or teamwork. Roman entertainments often showcased Roman virtues and the traits and skills that were

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<sup>614</sup> Schwartz 1973; Sloan 1989; Wann, Melnick, Russell, Pease 2001; Zillmann and Paulus 1993. In the discussion that follows I will use the terms applied to these concepts by modern sport psychologists.

<sup>615</sup> Duncan 1983; Gantz 1981; Sloan 1989; Zillmann, Bryant, Sapolsky 1989.

expected of the people, and the races were likely not all that different.<sup>616</sup> It is readily apparent that charioteers who demonstrated great skill in the circus intrigued the Roman people, who celebrated their individual careers with inscriptions and art in their honour, and it is probable that the embodiment of important Roman virtues by charioteers was an influential factor that drew spectators, who were eager to see such ideals on display, to the event.

Another category of modern concepts that merits discussion is the salubrious effect theories, which suggest that sports provide some form of pleasure and well-being to spectators. A particular concept within this category is known as diversion theory, which identifies sport as an escape for spectators from harsh or tedious aspects of life.<sup>617</sup> The Roman audiences possibly were enticed to the races not only by anticipating the provision of entertainment but also with the promise of an escape from regular life. The nature of the races as a special event during a festival was undoubtedly a great contrast from everyday activities and an opportunity for distraction and enjoyment away from one's usual work and daily routine. The Roman populace was dutifully focused on their own tasks and functions in society throughout the year and, when the occasion arose and entertainments were offered, it is unsurprising that the people readily accepted the pleasant diversion. Such acceptance, however, does not assume great interest or devotion

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<sup>616</sup> See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1.

<sup>617</sup> Another theory in the same model is recreation theory; however, it is more applicable to reasons for participation in sport than spectatorship, as it considers the physical restoration and rejuvenation of individuals.

to the sport; rather, the spectacle at the circus is used as a means to an end for many people, a source of amusement that they do not receive elsewhere.<sup>618</sup>

The content of the races undoubtedly also engaged new spectators; the races were exciting, combining high speed and physical danger, and requiring great technical skill and precision for success. Much like seeking an escape from a tedious, mundane life, it is possible that Roman spectators sought opportunities for more excitement and stimulation. This is the premise of stress and stimulation theories, which draw attention to the positive and negative stresses that may result from sport consumption.<sup>619</sup> Sport itself acts as a stressor that provides both participants and spectators a stimulating experience and the thrill of the competition creates a sense of tension and arousal that many find desirable. Those leading a quiet life outside the city or even those among the urban populace who found their lives dull or monotonous could potentially appreciate the positive stresses of the circus competition that offered new energy and a break from routine. While some might not enjoy the high speed of the races and the constant risk of danger for the competitors, it is possible that others were motivated to attend the circus under the promise of such excitement to liven up their day.

Modern sport psychologists identify another category as catharsis and aggression theories, which consider the stimulation of one particular interest among spectators, that is, aggression. It is generally asserted that by this motive spectators are interested in the sport because of the aggression or violence displayed in it.<sup>620</sup> Although such theories of

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<sup>618</sup> Wann and Branscombe 1994; Gantz and Wenner 1995; Sloan 1989.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

<sup>620</sup> Iso-Ahola and Hatfield 1986; Sloan 1989.

catharsis and aggression seem to have greater relevance for spectatorship motivations at gladiatorial combats, it is possible that the high level of danger and intensity of circus competition, which often resulted in crashes and injury to charioteers, was of interest to some spectators. It was not guaranteed in every race, but a crash was a thrilling incident in the circus and perhaps the unexpected nature of a chariot crash was part of what made them so exciting. As has been demonstrated, chariot crashes were often included in circus imagery that was intended to capture the energy and excitement of the circus, further demonstrating the prominence of the chariot crash in the popular mind.<sup>621</sup> While the crashes were not necessarily demonstrations of intentional aggression from competitors, given that it cannot be proven whether the crashes were instigated intentionally by rival charioteers or they were caused accidentally from the close quarters of the race, they were clearly violent moments that were intently watched by the circus audience. These theories do not simply suggest that spectators like aggressive content; rather, it is contended that the presentation of aggressive content serves a cathartic purpose so as to release the aggression from spectators in a safe environment. It must be noted that the merits of the theory of catharsis through sport have long been debated among modern sport psychologists, who offer contradictory statements concerning sport's relationship to aggression. Sport psychologists debate about whether observing violence in sport serves as a cathartic release and decrease a spectator's own aggression, or whether seeing aggression on display increases one's desire to act aggressively.<sup>622</sup> It is

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<sup>621</sup> See n. 20.

<sup>622</sup> See, for instance, Alderman 1974: 225-245; Coakley 1982: 57-81.

not possible to firmly support the application of modern catharsis and aggression theories to the Roman races and the motivations for spectatorship at the circus given their contentious position among modern sport psychologists; however, the possible violence or danger in the races can still be considered a possible motivation for attendance divorced from any cathartic response. It is apparent that Roman spectators were excited by crashes in the circus and it is plausible that some were interested enough to attend knowing the high level of risk involved in the races and the potentially violent outcome. Yet, in evaluating the impact of possible motivations for circus spectators, it seems most appropriate to consider that the anticipation of violent content had some of the least influence. Since crashes and other violent incidents were not main features or expected outcomes of every day at the circus as it was in the arena, it is unlikely that the hope for such content was a primary motivating factor for people to attend the spectacle.

It is evident that charioteers themselves gained significant popularity and fame that carried beyond the walls of the circus. With such prominence it is plausible that their reputations preceded them and that they were known even by those who had not seen them race. It has been shown some elite Roman authors noted the educational value of spectacles for the virtuous displays of the performers and that it is plausible that charioteers were among those recognized for their courage, skill, and determination. Although Pliny the Younger shows disdain for the behaviour of those who became devoted fans of the races, he does seem to appreciate the efforts of the horses and drivers and claims that the skills of the charioteers and their teams was a more valid subject of

interest than supporting faction colours.<sup>623</sup> Charioteers were among those spectacle performers who demonstrated worthwhile qualities to which all Romans could aspire. In modern sport psychology, achievement-seeking theories postulate that spectators are drawn to a sport because of their identification with the achievements of others, specifically the competitors in the sport.<sup>624</sup> Whether lacking something in their own lives or not, it is possible for spectators to connect with the successes of sports stars and perhaps even feel successful by proxy. There are marked comparisons between this modern concept and the context of the Roman races; the personification of great Roman virtues in the competitors was likely an engaging feature of the sport. Moreover, it is possible that members of the audience found the portrayal of such virtuous skills and traits more than entertaining, and instead, acknowledged what was presented as something that they themselves wished to attain. In a more general sense, the success of a victorious charioteer could be identified by Romans as something that they wished to emulate so as to find success in their own lives. The pleasure of watching a favourite triumph allowed spectators to identify closely with their successes and, in a way, live vicariously through their victories. Such connections with the competitors of the circus increases in the motives of fans and, as will be discussed later in this chapter, have the ability to influence the behaviour of fans at the circus and beyond.

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<sup>623</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6.

<sup>624</sup> Anderson 1979; Wann and Branscombe 1991; Murrell and Dietz 1992; Zhang, Pease, Hui, Michaud 1995. Fagan 2011: esp. 199, 238-9 also addresses the issue of catharsis in association with gladiatorial spectacles.



It is important to acknowledge that the concepts mentioned above are each only able to focus on a specific aspect of spectatorship, which is itself complex and multi-dimensional in nature. Numerous factors help to shape an individual's decision to attend the races and certainly motivations can differ among individuals, with one aspect providing more motivation for one person than another.<sup>625</sup> It is likely that, for many Romans the promise of a day of entertainment free from the usual routine was enough, while others were motivated by the anticipated content of excitement and danger of the circus spectacles. To be sure, these motivating factors are not particularly unique to the races and instead demonstrate the way in which most sports and spectacles, both ancient and modern, attract an audience. Such entertainments have the capacity to satisfy certain desires or needs among the public, an effect which in itself incentivized potential spectators. In this way, the offering of the races represented an opportunity for people to find rewards for themselves, the only condition being their attendance at the circus.

#### **4.3. SPORTS FAN MOTIVATIONS**

While the modern concepts concerning motivations for spectatorship offer possibilities as to why individuals first went to the races, they do not address the question of why they continued to go. Given the significant popularity of the chariot races, it is reasonable to believe that the majority of the audience at the circus regularly consisted of returning spectators rather than those attending for the first time. Sport psychologists explain that,

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<sup>625</sup> Some factors can change significantly by experience, including the venue and other spectators in attendance, which are difficult to calculate in regard to spectator motivations; Smith (1988: 55) refers to this as a “complex web of causal factors”.

as spectators become interested in a sport, many will feel more strongly motivated to attend regularly and to make the event a fixture in their lives.<sup>626</sup> These spectators are thereby identified as fans of the sport, who find something in the sport or its presentation that draws them in and results in a stronger degree of interest in or devotion to the sport than is had by a casual spectator. Fans represent a vital group in the study of the Roman races, as their existence alone demonstrates the popularity of the sport. By considering the potential motivations for spectators to become fans of the races, it is possible to better understand the position of the sport of chariot racing in the popular mind and the growth of its popularity.

Just as with the motivations for sports spectatorship, there are various motivations for sports fandom recorded by modern sport psychologists. The constructs of spectating and fandom are quite similar and therefore the similarities in their motivations are not only understandable but also further demonstrate the relation between the two. The overlap between the motivations of sports spectatorship and of sports fandom suggests that it is possible that what motivates one to first attend a sporting event be the same as what motivates one to continue attending and become a fan of the sport.<sup>627</sup> Even so, there is room to recognize a distinction between spectatorship and fandom as, while all fans are spectators of the sport, not all spectators are necessarily fans. As will be seen, the difference in many cases is the intensity with which the motivations are felt in connection to the sport, with the motivating factors having a greater or more focused draw for an

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<sup>626</sup> Wann et al., 2001: 2-3.

<sup>627</sup> The same issues are also present in identifying motivations for sports fandom as sports spectatorship, as one can be influenced by a single factor or a series of factors.

individual to not just casually attend but to become devoted to the event. There are eight prominent concepts in modern psychologists' analysis of sports fan motivations: economic, family, group affiliation, entertainment, aesthetic, eustress, and escape, each of which I will address and evaluate for their value in understanding Roman racing fans.<sup>628</sup> It is apparent that sports fans in both the modern world and the ancient Roman context are influenced by similar factors that draw on fundamental interests and desires and motivate many individuals to attend sporting events.

Before discussing some of the more relevant motivations for sports fandom, it is necessary to address the motivations presented in modern sport psychology that are not so easily applied to the Roman context. As was discussed in Chapter 2, gambling was popular among many spectators at the races despite the lack of large betting shops or any official structure to the activity at the circus and therefore it is possible for gambling to have motivated racing spectators to become fans of the event. Indeed, modern sport psychologists term one motivation for sports fandom as economic, in which individuals are interested by the potential economic gain from betting on the competition.<sup>629</sup> Despite the informal nature of the wagers made at the circus and the many opportunities for gambling elsewhere in Rome, it was still practiced by many in the circus audience and likely enticed those who enjoyed making such bets to return to the races. However, modern sport psychologists note that individuals who are motivated to attend sports by the potential economic value of the outcome do not engage with the sport in the same

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<sup>628</sup> Wann et al., 2001: esp. 31, table 2.3.

<sup>629</sup> Chorbajian 1978; Frey 1992; Gantz and Wenner 1995; Guttmann 1986.

manner as those interested in other aspects and who identify as fans. At the circus, it is plausible that such audience members were not emotionally invested in the same way as other attendees, and were primarily concerned for their own personal, financial success rather than the success of the charioteer or faction. Sport psychologists assert that many of those focused on financial success will not self-identify as a fan of a team or the sport and, as a result, the psychologists contend that such “economically motivated fans are, by definition, not fans at all”.<sup>630</sup> This is not to say that anyone who gambled on the races was not a fan; on the contrary, it is very likely that many devoted fans, having great confidence in the success of their faction, placed bets on the outcome of the competition. Additionally, an emotional reaction to the success or failure of a favourite charioteer or faction undoubtedly was intensified when the individual had made a wager on the outcome of a race. While there were certainly fans who bet on the races, the economic concept presented by modern sport psychologists cannot be considered a primary motivation for spectators to become fans of the Roman races.

Some modern concepts concerning fan motivation are less concerned with the sporting contest itself and instead underscore the experience with others in the audience as the primary motivation. For instance, the family motivation postulates that an individual will become a fan of a sport because it provides an occasion to spend time with family members.<sup>631</sup> This modern concept is difficult to situate in the Roman context as

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<sup>630</sup> Wann et al., 2001: 37. See also Guttman 1986; Wann 1995.

<sup>631</sup> Evaggelinou and Grekinis 1998; Gantz and Wenner 1995; Guttman 1986; Pan, Gabert, McGaugh, Branvold 1997; Quirk 1997; Weiller and Higgs 1997. While this modern sport psychology concept generally assumes that families will attend live sporting events together, modern media also allows for families to gather on a regular basis to watch televised sporting events.

our evidence does not clearly demonstrate the relationship of the Roman family with spectacle. While various ancient sources discuss the structure of the Roman family and address relationships within it, most are writing about a highly sentimental ideal of the family. For instance, the first century CE Stoic Musonius Rufus, when considering the subject of children, wrote:

“One may remark what a fine sight it is to see a man or woman surrounded by their children. Surely one could not witness a procession arrayed in honor of the gods so beautiful nor a choral dance performed in order at a religious celebration so well worth seeing as a chorus of children forming a guard of honor for their father or mother in the city of their birth, leading their parents by the hand or dutifully caring for them in some other way”.<sup>632</sup>

Musonius addresses the pleasures that children bring to their parents as well as a consideration of them being seen in public together; however, his intent is to conjure an ideal image of a family with the children serving a particular religious function for the honour of the parents. Proper conduct in an elite Roman family meant that newborns were reared by the *nutrix* and children from a young age were given into the care of tutors and other guardians. This by no means proves that Roman families did not spend time together; rather, with the fundamental duties of child rearing handled by slaves, it is possible that parents could instruct their children in other areas, teaching them about religious, social, and cultural life, including sport and spectacle. It is reasonable to believe that families did spend time together, but it is unclear to what degree and if the circus was considered an opportune venue for a family outing. Our sources do not address the subject in a manner that allows us to compare the ancient with modern

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<sup>632</sup> Muson. *Fr.* 15.2.

conceptions of close family ties; nevertheless, the motivation of family to attend a sporting event seems more of a modern concept, given the busy modern world that divides households and families with various individual activities and the desire to find time for one another. While there was undoubtedly separation in the Roman *domus* as well, it remains unclear as to whether there was the same impetus to organize such social time for the family unit.

Additionally, the structured seating arrangements at other Roman entertainment venues made it nearly impossible for families to sit together, except in the case of the imperial family or perhaps other elites who were honoured with special seats. While it is possible that the unique, open format to seating at the circus was considered an opportunity to sit with one's family, it is also plausible that, at least for some, the traditional structures and expected norms overshadowed the freedoms of circus seating. As has been noted in a previous chapter, we also do not have firm evidence to determine the presence or location of Roman youths at the circus; it is probable that male youths were present, although it unclear where they were seated or if female youths were also permitted to attend.<sup>633</sup> To be clear, the modern concept of family as a fan motivation does not stipulate that children were part of the appeal and therefore we can think of seating with family more broadly. Even so, there is still a lack of evidence for such seating at the Roman circus, as the sources that address the seating arrangements tend to include references to the mixed-gender seating and opportunities to socialize with friends and

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<sup>633</sup> See 'Children' in Chapter 3.

acquaintances.<sup>634</sup> Even in modern sport psychology family represents one of the least common fan motivations as it seems to be a radical step to become a fan of a sport in an effort to have time with family.<sup>635</sup> Although there certainly was potential for family members to sit together in the circus stands, it is improbable that Roman audiences primarily considered the chariot races as an opportunity for ‘family time’ and that they attended the races foremost for that purpose.

Despite the significant difficulties in applying the fan motivation of family to the Roman context, the motivation itself does address an important aspect of the experience at the races, that being the social opportunities in the circus stands. The lively crowd experience at the circus is noted by various sources, with the noise of the audience often prominent in descriptions of a day of races.<sup>636</sup> As has been shown, social divisions were not asserted as strongly in the circus seating arrangements as at the amphitheatre and it is probable that the mixed gender seating in particular was a unique enticement for some circus-goers.<sup>637</sup> Spectators of the races also had plenty of occasions to engage with one another in the stands before, after, and during the races, whether discussing the competition or not. In his letter to Maximus, Pliny the Younger reports that, while at the Circus, Tacitus engaged “in conversation on several learned subjects” with an individual seated beside him.<sup>638</sup> It is apparent that they were not acquainted before the conversation, seeing as the man asked if he was Tacitus or Pliny, and that their discussions were not

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<sup>634</sup> See ‘Seating’ in Chapter 2.

<sup>635</sup> Wann 1995; Wann, Schrader, Wilson 1999; Wann et al., 2001.

<sup>636</sup> See ‘Sounds of the Circus’ in Chapter 2.

<sup>637</sup> See ‘Seating’ in Chapter 2.

<sup>638</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.23.2.

focused on the races. The seating stands of the circus presented an open environment for socializing that possibly drew in new fans of the races who enjoyed such an experience. This is representative of the modern sports fan motivation of group affiliation, in which fans are motivated by the desire to spend time with others in the sport setting. To a great degree this has nothing to do with the sport itself and is instead about the experience, since the fundamental human need for connection and social interaction can be satisfied by attendance at a sporting event and participation in the sport fandom. Similarly, the desire for social interaction, whether with particular people or a crowd in general, could be satisfied by attendance at the circus and, thus, likely drew fans to the venue and the sport of racing. The large capacity and relaxed arrangements of seating at the Roman circus provided audience members with a venue to socialize and to spend time with others, whoever they might be. Moreover, the structure of racing fandom, with strict partisan groups, gave opportunities for individuals to affiliate themselves with others and to create further social bonds. The organization of the seating and fandom ensured that a day at the races was a particularly social in nature and, as such, was likely part of what interested people in the sport and motivated many to become fans.

An undoubtedly influential factor for the motivation of Roman circus fans is the entertainment of the sport, prominent in modern analysis of the motivation of sports fans as well.<sup>639</sup> This motivation closely resembles the entertainment theories that concern the motivation of sports spectatorship and likens sport spectating to other recreational pursuits that bring individuals pleasure. For various reasons, fans find a sport

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<sup>639</sup> Gantz 1981; Gantz and Wenner 1995; Sloan 1989; Smith 1988.



entertaining enough to partake in it often and possibly become more knowledgeable about and engaged with the competition and its competitors. One aspect that sport psychologists suggest fans find most enjoyable and entertaining is the opportunity to see one's favourite team succeed and the opposition fail.<sup>640</sup> Such a dynamic is clearly present at the circus, where all fans align themselves with one of the four factions and, in turn, against the other three. Circus imagery often includes the faction colours and inscriptions to charioteers specify the factions to which they belonged, which demonstrates the importance of faction distinctions for racing fans.<sup>641</sup> As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, circus *defixiones*, curse tablets associated with the circus, often refer to the faction colour of the charioteer(s), horse(s), or team(s) that were being targeted by the curse. For example, a late fourth century CE lead tablet found in a tomb along the Via Appia curses charioteers and horses from the Blues and appeals to various goddesses for their help to restrain the racing competitors and take away their power.<sup>642</sup> It appears that certain racing fans desired the success of their own faction so much that they determined to find a method to assist in its victory. The factional structure of the races provided further entertainment for Roman fans, as their faction allegiance means that they have a greater investment in the content and outcome of the sport.

We might also consider the subject of violence in the races from the previous section and the notion of violence being entertaining, which seems to be supported in

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<sup>640</sup> Within this view, spectators are expected to be happiest when their preferred team succeeds and their least favourite team fails (see Smith et al., 1996) and in turn, least happy when their favourite team fails and least favourite succeeds.

<sup>641</sup> See 'The Popular Image of the Races' in Chapter 3.

<sup>642</sup> Audollent 1904: 231-2, no. 167; Wunsch 1898: 40, no. 29. See also Gager 1992: 71-2, no. 14, fig. 10.

some research of modern sport.<sup>643</sup> Of course, as each of these modern concepts represent an individualized motivation, it is plausible that while many Romans were not only accepting of violence and bloodshed in life but also found entertainment in its presence at spectacular presentations, there were others who did not find violence in sport as appealing. Indeed, although very popular and acknowledged for the lessons of strength, bravery, and duty they taught, fights in the arena were considered by some elite Roman authors to be brutal and needlessly sensational; Seneca the Younger describes a day at the amphitheatre when, “in the morning they throw men to the lions and the bears; at noon, they throw them to the spectators”.<sup>644</sup> Seneca’s comment was an expression not of empathetic concern for the condemned fighters but rather of disapproval for the indulgent and unnecessarily extravagant display of violence that served no purpose except the entertainment of the public. It is possible that some Romans similarly considered a chariot crash to be an unfortunate incident in a race and not something that should be considered entertaining. Nevertheless, the same valuation of violence in the motivation of entertainment for circus spectators can be applied in the motivation of entertainment for circus fans, as violence was not an expected outcome of the spectacle. Indeed, it was possible for violence to be part of the excitement as a surprising incident in a race, and perhaps there were those in attendance who enjoyed the sight, but it is overreaching to suggest that circus-goers became fans of the sport because of the potential for violence.

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<sup>643</sup> Bryant 1989; Bryant, Comisky and Zillmann 1981; Bryant and Zillman 1983; Kaelin 1968.

<sup>644</sup> Sen. *Ep.*.7.4.

Whereas the aesthetic elements of a sport are subsumed under the category of entertainment theories in studies of the motivations of spectators, sport psychologists identify aesthetics as an independent motivation of sports fans. In this instance, the desire to engage in a sport is due to one's enjoyment of the beauty and grace involved in the movement of the sport.<sup>645</sup> Just as was mentioned above when addressing a spectator's interest in the aesthetics of the races, whether the movements of the horses, the precision of the charioteers, or the coordination and skill of all participants racing around the track, it is possible that a Roman could find the aesthetics of the races so enjoyable as to become a fan. As has been noted previously, in one of his letters Pliny the Younger contends that Roman racing fans were not at all interested in these aspects of the races, although, if they were, it could explain their fascination.<sup>646</sup> Indeed, the fundamental structure of the sport as a simple race was easy to understand and could make it possible for one to engage in the excitement of the competition before developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of what went into them.<sup>647</sup>

Despite Pliny the Younger's perception of racing fandom as a superficial interest in the competition itself, not only were charioteers celebrated for their efforts in the circus but also horses were recognized for their skills and involvement in a racing victory. As has been shown, some horses could become particularly famous, such as the racehorse Hirpinus, mentioned by both Martial and Juvenal, or Andraemon, the horse called to mind

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<sup>645</sup> Hemphill 1995; Sloan 1989; Smith, Patterson, Williams, Hog 1981; Smith 1988.

<sup>646</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6. See 'Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus' in Chapter 1 and 'Fan Support' in Chapter 3.

<sup>647</sup> Koppett 1981: 17-21.

by Martial as he laments his comparatively inferior level of fame.<sup>648</sup> Some racing horses even merited the inclusion of their names in mosaics and other circus art, further demonstrating the interest of fans in the skillful horses of the competition. Although some fans may have honoured certain horses simply because of their association with a faction or their role in a victory, modern sport psychology indicates that many fans are able to acknowledge the physicality and athleticism of the sport that in turn makes their team successful, and it is possible that, for many Roman racing fans, this appreciation went hand in hand with their love of the competition. There were certainly spectators interested in other aspects of the sport, some of which could fall into what Pliny deemed lesser categories, yet it is also plausible that some spectators were motivated to become fans when observing the skill and technique demonstrated in the sport. While these individuals may have been subsequently swept up in the partisanship of the contest, the aesthetics of the sport remain a viable factor to motivate fans of the races.

Although it is possible to find beauty in the chariot races and be motivated to become a fan of the sport because of its aesthetic value, it is conceivable that the stimulation and excitement inherent in the competition was more influential. Modern sport psychologists identify sports fans interested in this aspect of a sport as being motivated by eustress, a form of moderate psychological stress that is considered to be beneficial. It is not defined by the type of stress experienced but how one experiences it, with an individual feeling fulfilment or satisfaction as a result. Akin to the stress and

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<sup>648</sup> Hirpinus: *Mart. Ep.* 3.63.11; *Juv. Sat.* 8.57-63. Andraemon: *Mart. Ep.* 10.9. See also 'Horses' in Chapter 3.

stimulation theories of spectatorship, the basis of the motivation is that the average person does not receive a sufficient amount of stimulation in their daily life and seeks it elsewhere.<sup>649</sup> Chariot crashes, which have been discussed in relation to their possible entertainment value and the popular interest in the motif of *naufragia* in circus imagery, could be particularly stimulating and, while a crash was not assured in each race, the threat of one was ever-present, and undoubtedly made it a gripping facet of the event. Moreover, the energy of the high speed and the suspense of a close race were likely enticing to the average Roman who did not experience such exhilarating stimuli on a normal day in the city. It is possible for one to have found the tension and anxious energy in the audience during a race to be particularly enjoyable, with the suspense in the race intensifying if one was a supporter of a particular team in the competition. Each element – the speed, the danger, the close competition – had the capacity to be stressful for audience members, but represented a positive form of stress and arousal that some racing fans greatly enjoyed.

A motivation of sports fandom that reflects similar desires as those addressed in the category of salubrious effect theories and the motivation of sports spectatorship, is the use of sport as an escape. Similar to what was seen before, sports provide fans with a diversion from their everyday lives, which may be filled with stress or hardship, and indeed, the chariot races and many Roman spectacles were produced as a diversion for the masses and to provide entertainment and revelry in their lives.<sup>650</sup> It is possible that

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<sup>649</sup> Gantz 1981; Gantz and Wenner 1995; Sloan 1989; Smith 1988.

<sup>650</sup> Gantz and Wenner 1995; Sloan 1989; Smith 1988; Smith et al., 1981.

those with an escapist mindset found the races to be particularly appealing and that this same perspective could lead an individual to become a regular attendee and fan. What exactly each fan sought to escape by attending the races cannot be known; while one individual may have been under-stimulated in daily life, another may have felt overstimulated. For one who was overstimulated, the simplicity of the races could offer respite and relax tensions in the spectacle competition. Sporting contests generally offer clear rules and an established order that can be anticipated by the audience; chariot racing involved a select number of racers and a definite winner at the end. Again, it is this simplicity and repetitiveness that Pliny the Younger points to in his letter to Calvisius to explain his dislike of the sport, contending that it is a tedious (*'assidua'*) sport and that “there is no novelty, no variety in it, nothing which one wants to see twice”.<sup>651</sup> Yet, Pliny’s argument does not consider that this is what some fans enjoyed, as they were guaranteed a finite outcome through clear rules and a structured competition. It is possible that such regulation and, in some respects, simplicity, was satisfying for some spectators in contrast to the complexities and disorder of their everyday lives. Those who are under-stimulated in their everyday lives will also seek an escape which, for Romans, could be provided by the excitement and competition of the races. As G. J. Smith rightly points out, “the search for excitement represents one of the most familiar means of escape”.<sup>652</sup> Excitement can be found in the novelty of the experience itself, the frenetic

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<sup>651</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 9.6.1.

<sup>652</sup> Smith 1988: 58.

energy of the space and the contest, and the nervous tension built up from the potential danger to the drivers.

Nervous excitement in particular is increased in fans who feel an emotional investment in the success or failure of those competing. Such investment is more prominent for individuals motivated by what modern sport psychologists term self-esteem enhancement.<sup>653</sup> By this sport fan motive, individuals seek to use their fandom to help maintain a positive self-identity. Consistent with the achievement-seeking theories of spectator motivation, fans may closely identify with a team and enjoy its successes as if they were their own. Indeed, the art and epigraphic evidence celebrating great competitors of the circus demonstrate how fans of the races took pleasure in associating themselves with successful teams and drivers and all that their achievements represented.<sup>654</sup> Fans purchased items depicting their favourite factions and charioteers and put up inscriptions to honour competitors, such as the monuments erected by fans of the Blues and Greens, both past factions of the charioteer Porphyrius. The fans sought not only to celebrate their sporting hero but also to publicize their connection and devotion to the successful figure by including inscriptions that the monuments were erected by them.<sup>655</sup> Such fans are motivated by the opportunity to attach themselves to the positive appearance of a successful competitor and to feel success by association.

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<sup>653</sup> Gantz and Wenner 1989; Gmelch and San Antonio 1998; Pan et al., 1997; Sloan 1989; Weiller and Higgs 1997.

<sup>654</sup> The identification of circus fans with a particular faction will be discussed below.

<sup>655</sup> Cameron 1973.

It is evident from the exploration of the various modern sport psychology concepts for fan motivations that there are many ways to evaluate the Roman interest in the races. Fans approached the races from a range of backgrounds and perspectives, and accordingly are likely to have been engaged by different aspects of the sport of chariot racing. A fan does not make a conscious choice about what was appealing to them; rather, the motivations to fandom address the various subconscious wants and needs of an individual that can be satisfied through one's engagement with the sport. For some the sport could appear simple and stable when compared to daily life, while for others it was highly stimulating and exciting. The contrast between the reasons for fandom does not invalidate the motivations but instead demonstrates the wide range of possible motivations for a sports fan in both the modern and ancient worlds. Although there are clearly limits in our ability to apply the modern concepts to the Roman context, it is also possible to see where similarities are present in both the more and less common fan motivations. While both economic and family motivations have little influence in drawing in new fans to a sport, it can be clearly seen how entertainment, eustress, and group affiliation can each motivate modern sports fans as well as ancient fans of the Roman chariot races. It is reasonable to acknowledge the merits of multiple motivations for the fandom of the races as the sport had many features that could engage the public and lead individuals to go from casual spectator to devoted fan.



#### **4.4. THE PRIMARY MOTIVATIONS OF CIRCUS FANS**

It is readily apparent that there were numerous different factors that could motivate individuals to become a fan of the races; however, many of the motivations discussed above can be similarly applied to most other Roman spectacles. As such, it is worthwhile to briefly consider if it is possible to identify a motivation that can be more particularly associated with the races. This is not to suggest that any one motivation was present only at the races and nowhere else, but that one factor potentially had a greater impact in motivating fans of the races than of other events. As noted in the previous section, three of the most common motivations among modern sports fans are entertainment, eustress, and group affiliation, all of which can also be identified among ancient sports fans. Entertainment and eustress have been suggested as influential in fans' attendance at the circus, yet such motivations can influence individuals to become fans of other sports and spectacles. While group affiliation can also be considered among possible motivations to become a fan of other Roman spectacles, it was fundamental to the social nature and fandom of the races, and therefore is likely to have had greater importance as a fan motivation for the races than at other spectacles.

Scholars have similarly considered what motivated people to become fans of gladiatorial combat. In particular, Fagan presents essential analysis of various theories and assesses the Roman interest in the violent spectacles presented in the amphitheatre.<sup>656</sup> In his discussion, Fagan demonstrates that the gladiatorial spectacles were fun to watch and thus that their entertainment value inspired people to attend, a conclusion that

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<sup>656</sup> Fagan 2011.

captures the modern sport psychology concepts of entertainment and eustress as motivations of fandom.<sup>657</sup> While one's entertainment and excitement were undoubtedly important factors that led the Roman people to attend the races, they were by no means features particular to that sport. We might also consider that in many ways the content of the races had less variety than gladiatorial entertainments, in which new pairings were presented in each match and different numbers of competitors, weaponry, fighting styles, and settings were regularly introduced.<sup>658</sup> Attempts were made to create variation in the races by adjusting the number of competing teams or their sizes; however, the premise of the sport of racing fundamentally does not offer much variety. Although one could indeed find the races enjoyable to watch without any change in its content, the potential entertainment and excitement do not seem to explain the intensity of the enthusiasm and commitment of circus fans, as it was not unique to the sport.

I contend that it was not the format of the races alone that was responsible for maintaining such fervent interest and that resulted in such emotionally committed consumers of the sport; it is possible that a vital motivating factor was not in the sport itself but the experience at the circus more broadly. The fan motivation of group affiliation has been shown to have had great prominence at the circus, by means of the open seating and the social contact made possible there. Moreover, at the circus audience members often depended on one another to ensure a satisfying experience. Unlike a theatre or amphitheatre, the size and shape of the circus limited the ability of all attendees

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<sup>657</sup> Fagan 2011: esp. 209.

<sup>658</sup> Perhaps it was a similar comparison between the content of chariot races and gladiatorial combat that led Pliny the Younger to conclude that there was no variety in the races.

to see and hear the proceedings to the same extent.<sup>659</sup> As a result, it was necessary for spectators to inform one another of moments at the event, whether through direct communication or by means of interpreting the shouts of the crowd.<sup>660</sup> Although they may have begun their experience as anonymous spectators, fans who were engaged and eager at the races relied on one another and the community that was created in the audience. The emphasis on the faction system also had a significant role in the fandom and general structure of the sport. All competitors belonged to one of only four factions and spectators selected one to support, cheering for it and against the others. In an effort to engage in the fandom of the races, individuals devoted themselves to one faction and found a shared bond with fellow supporters of their chosen faction. The system also ensured group affiliation in a larger community of faction partisans who, no matter their factional allegiance, identified themselves as fans of the races.

Of course, it is unreasonable to argue that partisanship was an exclusive concept of the circus, since fans could be divided in the amphitheatre as well as the theatre. There is evidence for some factions in the amphitheatre, and the selection of a favourite certainly had potential to make a fight more entertaining or exciting; however, the available evidence for factions in spectacle suggest that partisanship was far more central to the fandom of the races than of gladiatorial combats.<sup>661</sup> Partisan groups also developed at the pantomime performances in the theatre, with audience members choosing to

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<sup>659</sup> This issue was first discussed in the 'Seating' in Chapter 2.

<sup>660</sup> See n. 399.

<sup>661</sup> See 'Factions' in Chapter 3.

support different performers.<sup>662</sup> While the rivalries at the pantomimes could be fierce, partisanship was not a regular feature of the theatre-going experience; fans of the theatre did not need to pick a side in an effort to enjoy the experience and instead could take in the performances without being a supporter of a particular performer.<sup>663</sup> Whereas the theatre audience included pockets of individuals who were devoted to partisan groups, the circus audience was filled with fans who backed one of the four factions in the competition. The sport was based upon the question of which of the faction teams would win, and the structure of racing fandom followed suit, making partisanship a fundamental aspect of the fan experience. It seems that those who viewed themselves as fans of the races did not select a favourite faction for only one race and readily shifted their loyalties to a new contender in the next; instead, they offered their allegiance to one faction alone. The selection of a faction to support had the potential to increase one's enjoyment of the experience, as the connection to a particular chariot team and hope for its success made the race more exciting and intense and allowed the fan to share in the community of other supporters. Fagan rightly points out that even a new or neutral spectator of a sport might arbitrarily pick a team to support with the aim of better experiencing the excitement of the event and feel a greater part of the competition in the temporary bond.<sup>664</sup>

In addition, it is possible that, even though the factions were inherently divisive by separating the audience into four distinct groups, there was a sense of group experience

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<sup>662</sup> For discussion of partisanship and factions in the theatre, see for instance, Beacham 1992; Slater 1994.

<sup>663</sup> Scholars have also discussed the social and political motivations behind the factions that used the theatre as a venue to serve other goals. See, for instance, Slater 1994; Whittaker 1964.

<sup>664</sup> Fagan 2011: 203.

and connection within the circus audience at large as part of a greater community of racing fans with a mutual enthusiasm for the sport. Many emperors recognized the importance of the races in the popular mind and attended the competitions to show themselves to the people and their engagement with the popular entertainment. It appears that such action tended to get a positive response from the populace, as the people appreciated the emperor's closeness to them and the opportunity to feel close to him in return. However, elite Roman sources were concerned that the emperor could get too close to the masses and that he should instead maintain his dignified station and demonstrate separation from the general populace. Emperors such as Nero, Caligula, and Commodus did what the elite authors feared, by breaking from traditional order and decorum and wholly embracing the fandom of the races. These emperors engaged too closely with the sport of racing, identifying as fans and affiliating themselves with the factional community of the circus.

The fundamental features here, both in the feeling of the crowd and in the structure of the sport, are connection and affiliation. People enjoy gathering in groups for a common purpose; it offers the chance to participate in something and engage with other people with a common focus. The experience at the chariot races offered the opportunity to satisfy a significant human need for a feeling of connection in a manner that differed from other public shows.<sup>665</sup> The sense of unity and a collective identity were essential Roman ideals, and therefore it is not unsurprising that the group affiliation and factional

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<sup>665</sup> A significant degree of connection and affiliation was likely drawn from the purpose of the shows as part of a religious festival. Modern sport psychologists have considered the importance of social interaction and group affiliation for sport fans. See, for instance, Beisser 1977; Lofland 1973; Sloan 1979.

ties of the circus were appealing to so many. The affiliation that arose from an organized sport such as chariot racing allowed for entertainment as well as social and psychological enrichment through the relationships established with fellow fans and the factions.<sup>666</sup> Fans connected with one another by identifying with a faction, its driving teams, and its top competitors, and by developing loyalties toward them. A community was established around the fandom of the races that may have itself motivated fans; insofar as the partisan community in the circus was a key interest that led spectators to become fans, it is possible that, as the fan community increased and became more prominent, more people became aware of the group and desired to be affiliated with it, thereby growing the community and popularity of the races further. The potential result was an unintentional cycle in which fans were motivated by group affiliation and inadvertently ensured that the experience and the community of the races continued to grow, welcoming more and more fans.

As at the amphitheatre and other entertainment venues, it is reasonable to believe that a chief motivation for fans at the circus was in fact entertainment. The Roman chariot races gained popularity as an exciting and energetic event composed of skillful, high-speed competition and garnered a large fan base that enjoyed attending such a spectacle. The intention here has not been to diminish the entertainment value of the races, as one of the primary purposes of the event was indeed to entertain; rather, the discussion above has been intended to call attention to the importance of group affiliation at the circus compared to other sporting events. Although the potential for group

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<sup>666</sup> Melnick 1993: 44.

affiliation was present at other events, I suggest that a distinction can be found in the prominence of group affiliation in association with one's experience at the races. The manner and extent to which socialization and group connections were involved in the circus was unlike what was available elsewhere for Roman sporting fans and it is possible that the distinct division of circus fans into four groups was a notable feature of circus fandom that figured heavily into the motivation of a fan.

#### **4.5. THE 'FANDOM-BOUND' IDENTITY**

It is necessary to recognize that not all sports fans share the same degree of interest; some fans may have a minimal interest or only engage in the sport when the locally favoured team is doing well.<sup>667</sup> In addition, it is not uncommon for some spectators to be drawn to a sport solely for the enjoyment of cheering for one team over another. This is apparent in modern sports, particularly when a team gains great success or reaches a championship level and locals, those who may not have been fans beforehand, become fierce supporters of the team, at least for a time. Many other spectators, however, will have a genuine interest in the sport and grow increasingly committed to the fandom. Drawing upon and combining elements from earlier models, Crawford describes the evolution of a sports fan as the progression along what he terms a "career path".<sup>668</sup> The "career path" for sports

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<sup>667</sup> This is commonly referred to as a 'fair-weather fan'.

<sup>668</sup> Crawford 2004: 42-9. The two uppermost steps on Crawford's career progression are 'professional', comprised of individuals who make at least some of their income from their involvement in the sport, and 'apparatus', who are involved in the production or administration of the sport, such as team managers or marketing directors (Crawford 2004: 48-49). While most of those involved in the running of the races were obligated by employment, it is reasonable to suggest that many were intently interested in the competition. Their role at the circus meant that these individuals were not seated in the stands among the many fans of

fans does not demand a linear progression; rather, fans may begin at different stages and progress or regress along the path according to their own interests.<sup>669</sup> The application of this modern psychology model to the Roman context demonstrates the many possible degrees or stages of racing fandom and our extant evidence for racing fans further signals the interest of the Roman public and their potential positions along the fan's "career path". This, like so many other concepts from modern psychology, of course can only offer suggestions, given the lack of ancient testimony on the subject; nevertheless, it is a useful exercise to confront the available analysis concerning sports fans and the parallels among ancient fans. It is apparent that there was a wide range of interest in the races, with the many Roman fans distributed throughout the various stages of fandom. In particular, the way in which Crawford defines the highest levels of interest in a sport correlates strongly with what is known about the devoted fans of the races and offers an opportunity to consider the well known popularity of the races through the psychology of a devoted sports fan.

From an initial position among the general public, Crawford posits that individuals progress to the 'interested' stage, taking time to learn of the final outcome or scores of a contest or seeking out other news from the events. It is apparent that many Roman fans fell at least within this stage of the career progression. A pertinent body of evidence is graffiti, which has been referred to earlier in this dissertation. Some graffiti that has been found report the results of races and the names of victorious charioteers and

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the races. As such, the corresponding stages on Crawford's career path will be set aside in favour of discussing the stages that relate to the fans at the center of this study.

<sup>669</sup> Crawford 2004: 46.



demonstrates not only the interest in sharing racing news but also an anticipated audience who would wish to gain the information.<sup>670</sup> The *acta diurna* played a similar role in spreading news of race results; the final section of the inscription honouring the charioteer Diocles records the successes of other charioteers and includes the detail that “the *acta* say that Avilius Teres was the first in his faction to win 1,011 and he won most often in one year for single chariots”.<sup>671</sup> One only needed to have a general interest in the sport to consider reading the information available here; the *acta* were easily accessible and available to any Roman who had even a low level of interest in the races. Given the capacity of the circus stands it is likely that not all in attendance were deeply devoted fans and that a significant number had a more limited interest in the sport. As the races fundamentally were part of religious festivals, even those uninitiated in the fandom of the races were likely to be among the spectators who attended for more civic and religious reasons. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to believe that many of those who attended out of a sense of religious duty still sought a general understanding and awareness of the sport so as to enjoy the entertainments being presented.

Those with more than a passing interest, who might seek out information about the races from graffiti, advertisements, or discussion with other fans, Crawford labels ‘engaged’. From here, an individual may become ‘enthusiastic’, with his interest in the sport occupying an important part of his life. In modern analysis, this individual identifies himself as a fan and would attend the races regularly; the purchase of

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<sup>670</sup> See ‘Stars of the Races’ in Chapter 3.

<sup>671</sup> *CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287. See also Tac. *Ann.* 13.31.1; Baldwin 1979; Friedländer 1964: II, 27.

merchandise associated with the sport is also done commonly by fans with this level of interest. As has been discussed previously, there are numerous examples of small finds from the Roman context, such as terracotta lamps, knives, and dishware that depict popular charioteers or circus horses.<sup>672</sup> The artists who created these items were likely responding to a demand for the subject matter and thereby produced merchandise that found buyers within the community of racing fans across the empire.<sup>673</sup> Those whom Crawford terms ‘devoted’ tend to be a smaller group of long-term supporters. In the Roman context, such individuals had extensive knowledge of the races and its participants, and the sport had a significant role in both their everyday lives and their identity. If following Crawford’s career path, Roman fans at this level also purchased items associated with the races and went further by making a greater commitment to their fandom, possibly by means of large or more permanent displays of circus imagery in their homes. There are examples of large circus-themed mosaics and paintings that could have been commissioned by devoted fans who sought to relive great moments from past races or to capture the excitement and energy of the circus in a fictional scene.

Fans among these upper stages of Crawford’s career path have the deepest interest in the sport and, as such, respond in the strongest way to events associated with the competition. Given the ardent love of fans for the races reported in our sources and the variety of visual and material culture containing circus-themed imagery, it plausible to classify dedicated Roman circus fans among these stages. In turn, it is worthwhile to ask

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<sup>672</sup> See ‘The Popular Image of the Races’ in Chapter 3.

<sup>673</sup> This will be discussed further below.

what else modern sport psychologists say about fans in these stages and consider how it might pertain to fans of the races. It is apparent that, for those with the strongest interest in the races, who were deeply devoted to the sport and its competitors, the success and failure of their favoured faction was important. It is unlikely that a fan would have purchased an item bearing the name or image of a charioteer if that competitor were known to be unsuccessful; victory was important in Roman culture and in the culture of racing fandom as well. Fans were loyal to their chosen faction and attended the races with the intent to cheer their chariot teams on to victory. While a win for a fan's faction was undoubtedly a good experience to which the fan reacted in a positive manner, it is possible to consider the negative reactions of a modern fan to a team's loss and their disappointment and dejection as a viable comparison to the potential reaction of racing fans after a loss for their faction. A modern fan is not simply saddened by the loss in the competition but, as a result of becoming so connected and devoted to the team, feels close to the failure, thereby impacting their own identity as a fan. This correlates with a particular aspect of sport psychology known as spectator identification, the "extent to which individuals perceive themselves as fans of the team, are involved with the team, are concerned with the team's performance, and view the team as a representation of themselves".<sup>674</sup> Fans further along Crawford's career progression are likely to identify more closely with the team than those less devoted to the sport, and the higher identification that fans have with a team, the more they are involved and emotionally

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<sup>674</sup> Wann and Branscombe 1992: 1017.

invested in the team.<sup>675</sup> Moreover, such close identification with a team can lead fans to have biased opinions of the team's accomplishments and to favour fellow fans of their team.<sup>676</sup> In this way, a fan's identity is bound up in their association with the team, its experiences, and the outcomes of each competition. It is a human desire to create and maintain a positive social identity, and most simply, for those who identify closely with a sports team, successes for the team mean successes for the fan.<sup>677</sup> Of course, this also means that highly-identified fans would take the failures or losses of their team personally, as if they themselves had failed in some way. As such, a fan must work to create and maintain a positive social identity through their favoured faction.

Social psychologists identify various techniques that can be used subconsciously by sports fans to maintain social identity. One of the most prominent is “basking in reflected glory”, often abbreviated to the term ‘BIRGing’.<sup>678</sup> This behaviour addresses much of what has been discussed above, in which a fan celebrates the victories of the team as his own; his association with the team connects him to their successes, and thus, in essence, he basks in the glory of the team that, by association, reflects back on him as his own. Here we might recall those interested in the races for the purpose of gambling and the notion in modern psychology of economic motivations for spectatorship and fandom. For these individuals, the victory of a team was truly a victory for themselves if they had made a successful wager on the outcome of the competition. Indeed, it is

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<sup>675</sup> Wann 1993: 134.

<sup>676</sup> Lau and Russell 1980; Murrell and Dietz 1992; Wann 1993; Wann and Branscombe 1991, 1993.

<sup>677</sup> Crocker and Luhtanen 1990; Tajfel 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1979.

<sup>678</sup> Selected sources on ‘BIRGing’: Cialdini et al., 1976; Russell 1993: 245-247; Sloan 1979: 235-8; Wann 1993: 135-6.

possible for economic stakes to lead to very emotional reactions from audience members, who felt deeply involved in the outcome and were closely affected by the results. It is important to acknowledge the differentiation made by modern psychologists between those who are motivated to attend sports to gamble and those who identify as fans; however, it is apparent that, although not their primary motivation for becoming fans, many sports fans will bet on the competitions. Among Roman racing fans it is also highly probable that those particularly devoted to the sport were confident in the skills of their faction and placed bets on their success. As a result, these racing fans would become even more closely connected to the faction and intent on it being victorious. In modern psychology terms, in an effort to draw close to a successful team, bask in their reflected glory, and increase his own self-esteem as a result, a fan increases his association with and decreases his psychological distance from the successful group. Such connection can be enacted in different ways, most notably by wearing team colours and advertising one's fandom for the successful team.<sup>679</sup> It is also common for fans to use the term "we" to refer to team victories.<sup>680</sup> Whether the choice of vocabulary is deliberate or subconscious, the result is an impression of closeness in which the fan is part of the team.<sup>681</sup> The tactic of 'BIRGing' is common in sports fandom, and in fact, can be used by all fans with at least some degree of interest and no matter their level of identification.

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<sup>679</sup> Cialdini et al., 1976 finds that this is particularly true in the days immediately after a victory.

<sup>680</sup> Various studies of the phenomenon have been conducted, including those by Cialdini 1985: 167; Cialdini et al., 1976; Lee 1985; and Sloan 1989: 198-200.

<sup>681</sup> Cf. Fagan 2011: 203.

Certain features of ‘BIRGing’, such as a fan’s choice of vocabulary, are difficult to identify in Roman fans as the nature of our evidence does not provide such details. There is, however, some indication of fans wearing faction colours by the late first century CE, as an epigram of Martial warns, “If you, who put on scarlet, support the blue or the green, mind this lot doesn’t make a deserter of you”.<sup>682</sup> Juvenal’s mention of giving children little green jackets (*viridem thoraca*) that mimicked the apparel of charioteers, although an example particular to children, also alludes to the practice of wearing the faction colours, and it is possible that the child-sized charioteer jackets were meant to copy the appearance of not only the circus competitors but also other adults who wore faction colours to demonstrate their interest in the races and support for a faction.<sup>683</sup> The practice of dressing in a manner that identified one’s partisanship, whether at the races or elsewhere, demonstrates the interest of a fan in identifying with a particular faction and their successes.

It is also plausible that circus partisans regularly chose to sit with fellow faction supporters at the races. It has been demonstrated that racing fans showed great support for their favoured faction and, as such, it is reasonable to believe that they also preferred to sit gathered with like-minded fans, with whom they could cheer and offer support. It is also probable that many faction fans knew one another from outside the circus, whether

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<sup>682</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 14.131. Cf. Mart. *Ep.* 5.23.

<sup>683</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 5.143-4. In the sixth century, Procopius (*HA* 7.8-14) reports how individuals identifying themselves as members of one of the factions wore particular clothing to distinguish themselves from other factions. While this seems to demonstrate that the practice of wearing faction colours continued for an extensive period of time, there were undoubtedly numerous other influences that expanded the practice beyond earlier coordination of clothing to express support of a team. Cf. Plin. *NH.* 33.90. See also Futrell 2006: 210.

from the same social circles, *collegia*, or other association, and therefore may have attended the races in these groups that happened to correspond to factional divisions. Although it appears that there were no divisions in the circus stands by class status or by faction in the early Empire, it is possible that this informal gathering of acquaintances, friends, and colleagues who supported the same faction signify an early form of factional seating. There is no evidence to suggest that all circus-goers sat according to factional divisions; however, there are significantly more references to faction-based seating in the sources of the later Empire, particularly from the East when the Blues and Greens had become the two primary factions.<sup>684</sup> It is likely that it was this partisanship, so sharply divided between two sporting factions, that fostered a fierce rivalry and compelled more strictly defined separation in the stands. An entry in Malalas reports that Theodosius II redistributed the βάρθρα, seating blocks, of the hippodrome occupied by the Blue and Green partisans to soldiers of the city garrison.<sup>685</sup> This suggests that not only did circus partisans sit together but also that such seating was organized to such a degree that the emperor could command the reorganization of the partisan seating sections.<sup>686</sup> The regulated seating might have been intended as a system of crowd control in order to separate the rival factions from one another and discourage confrontation, although it

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<sup>684</sup> Cameron 1976: 79, 287-8.

<sup>685</sup> John Mal. 14.2 (p. 351). See also Whitby 1999: esp. 237-240. Audience organization by faction colours occurred at the theatre as well, where partisanship also had a significant role. Jones 2008: 149-152 provides close analysis of factional inscriptions found in the odeon at Alexandria and three venues at Aphrodisias and considers possible seating arrangements by faction colours. Further discussion of seating at the circus can be found in Chapter 1.

<sup>686</sup> Whitby (1999: 240) considers that Theodosius' rearrangement of faction seating may have unintentionally caused more conflict as the Greens and Blues were moved closer to one another, now on the same side of the track.

does not seem to have been entirely successful as, during a circus riot in 561 CE, the Blues are reported to have rushed "into the seats of the Greens".<sup>687</sup> It is doubtful that such clear divisions among faction supporters in the stands was a sudden development of the late Empire; rather, it is likely that the form of seating that merited mention by the later sources was the result of years of growth as the community of racing fans grew larger and the circus partisanship grew more intense. Group seating and the enjoyment gained from sharing the experience with others is understandable in any sporting context. At the races, such seating had the potential to gather like-minded fans and facilitate both conversation and opportunities for cheering as a group. Moreover, by choosing to wear the colour of a faction or sit with fellow supporters, fans were able to associate themselves with the faction, express a sense of group identity, and further demonstrate their personal identification with the team.

Racing fans could also bask in the success of a faction by discussing the races with other fans, as modern sports studies assert that those high in identification with a team are more invested and more likely to attempt to share their interest in the team with others.<sup>688</sup> Our sources make passing reference to conversations about the circus, Lucian in particular noting that such discussions took place "on every side street" throughout Rome.<sup>689</sup> Similarly, Ammianus Marcellinus comments on the multitudes who "from sunrise until evening, in sunshine and in rain...stand open-mouthed, examining minutely

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<sup>687</sup> "εἰς τὰ βᾶθρα τῶν Πρασίνων" (Theophanes 235-6). This source was identified by Roueché 1993: 129, who posits that it is from a missing passage of Malalas and translated as such by Jeffreys, Jeffreys, Scott 1986.

<sup>688</sup> Sloan 1979: 11; Smith et al., 1981; Wann and Branscombe 1993: 10.

<sup>689</sup> Luc. *Nigr.* 29.



the good points or the defects of charioteers and their horses”.<sup>690</sup> Despite the air of disapproval in his remarks, the scene that is depicted is of devoted fans who enjoy the races to such a degree that they will spend the entire day, no matter the weather, sharing in that enjoyment with their fellow fans. In an epigram describing his preparations for a banquet, Martial asserts that “my guests may speak of the rival factions in the circus, and my cups shall make no man guilty”.<sup>691</sup> While this passage does not speak to Martial’s own opinions of circus fandom, he clearly expects it to be a subject of conversation among his guests and pronounces that the banquet will be a time for his peers to freely discuss the sport that interested so many.

Although not in direct contact with another individual, the creation of graffiti, like conversation, allowed Roman racing fans to demonstrate as well as celebrate their knowledge of and association with the races. The previously discussed graffiti in the Palatine *Paedagogium* included depictions of charioteers and horses with a palm of victory and messages encouraging particular competitors to win.<sup>692</sup> In such messages, authors of graffiti engaged with the competitions, proclaiming their favoured faction and either invoking its victory or celebrating it afterward; they also demonstrated their familiarity with the sport by providing names or other details of the contest. Despite the usual anonymity of graffiti, the author could feel some satisfaction and pride at proliferating his own knowledge and displaying faction affiliation publicly.<sup>693</sup>

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<sup>690</sup> Amm. Marc. 14.6.25-6.

<sup>691</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 10.48.23-4.

<sup>692</sup> See ‘Stars of the Races’ in Chapter 3.

<sup>693</sup> Numerous graffiti are also attested from the east that refer to the colours of the factions; however, by the time that these graffiti were made in the later Empire, the system of faction colours had grown to include the partisanship at the theatre. While these graffiti are potentially useful to further demonstrate the loyalty

Additionally, those who were not in attendance at the races on a particular day could find enjoyment by learning about the results of the competition and following the action after the fact.<sup>694</sup> The inscribed gameboards for variants of the game *alea*, first noted in Chapter 3, further demonstrate how prominent the races were in the popular mind.<sup>695</sup> As has already been seen, some boards were inscribed with messages of praise to particular charioteers; others seem to celebrate the experience of attending the races more generally, such as one that reads: “the circus is full; the shout of the people [goes up]; the citizens are enjoying themselves”.<sup>696</sup> The appearance of such phrases on the gameboards demonstrate how easily fans called up the races in their minds and made public attestations of their interest and knowledge. After having inscribed the board, a fan not only enjoyed their well-constructed phrase while playing but also could expect that it would be seen by more people afterward, who themselves might play on the board, recognize the references to the races and reflect on the favoured pastime.

The purchase of small objects also gave individuals the opportunity to celebrate their circus fandom. As the iconography of the circus has already been discussed, here I will refer to some examples and offer a few more. Various types of items were produced bearing images of the circus, from jars and glassware depicting *quadrigae* in the midst of a race, to small engraved gems (*intagli*) decorated with the common four-horse team or a

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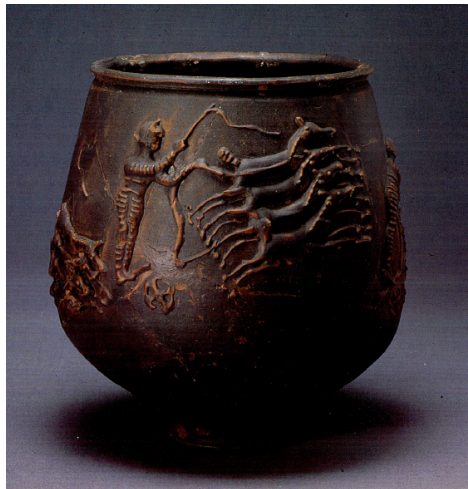
of fans and knowledge of a faction system, they cannot be used as evidence for circus fans alone as the nature of the graffiti does not clearly define the parameters of their partisanship.

<sup>694</sup> Smith 1988: 56.

<sup>695</sup> See ‘Stars of the Races’ in Chapter 3.

<sup>696</sup> *CIL IX. 4907 = ILS 8626e*; Purcell 1995: 24. *Cf. AE 1949: 82.*

seemingly impossible twenty-horse team (figs. 32-35).<sup>697</sup> Often victorious charioteers were depicted on lamp disks, such as a late second early third century CE example that is believed to have come from Italy (fig. 36). Also from the late second early third century CE, a ceramic money box from Rome bears a similar scene to the lamp disk, with a victorious charioteer holding a palm frond and standing among other symbols of his winnings (fig. 37).<sup>698</sup> Although the name of the charioteer is not visible on either object, it is apparent that the images were meant to portray a scene of triumph that racing fans would be pleased to see, whether evoking general feelings of success and pride for their preferred faction or calling to mind a specific win. Beyond one's personal enjoyment of the item, it is also reasonable to consider the outward projection of a fan's love of the sport to anyone who might see the object.



**Figure 32**  
Jar depicting race of *quadrigae*  
(Junkelmann 2000: no.114)



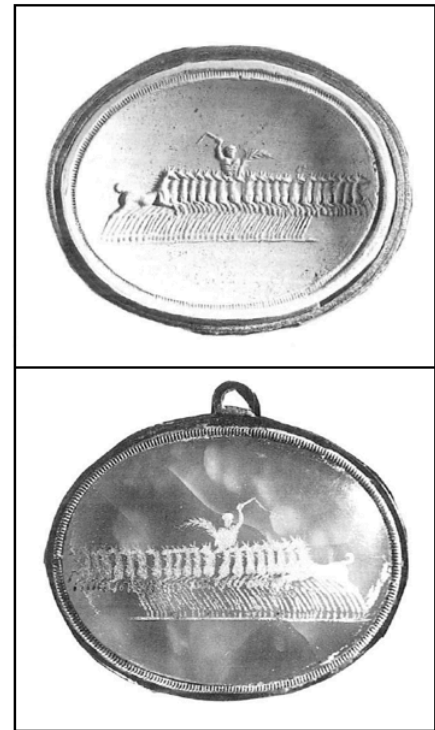
**Figure 33**  
Glass vessel depicting race of *quadrigae*  
(Lavagne in Landes 1990: pl. 9)

<sup>697</sup> Chabouillet 1861: nos. 1866 and 1871; Veljovic 1990: figs. 1-2. See also Chabouillet 1861: nos. 1865, 1867-1870.

<sup>698</sup> Dunbabin 2016: figs. 6.21-22. Lamp: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Inv.: v. 562; Money box: Schlossmuseum, Gotha, Inv. A. Va. 199. Cf. Figure 17. In both examples, the charioteer stands among cylinders like those in the black and white mosaic from Ostia (fig. 14).



**Figure 34**  
Four-horse chariot team on an *intaglio*  
(Veljovic in Landes 1990: fig. 1)



**Figure 35**  
Twenty-horse chariot team on an *intaglio*  
(Veljovic in Landes 1990: fig. 2)



**Figure 36**  
Victorious charioteer on a lamp  
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Inv.: v 562  
(Dunbabin 2016: fig. 6.21)



**Figure 37**  
Victorious charioteer on a money box  
Schlossmuseum, Gotha, Inv. A.Va.199  
(Dunbabin 2016: fig. 6.22)

The imagery on many items included specific details that identified the charioteer or horses; such objects demonstrate the interest in particular competitors and the desire among fans to celebrate the successes of their favourite charioteers or faction.<sup>699</sup> The two second century CE lamp disks from Lyon show not only the victorious charioteer but also his name and faction, with the inscription '*Nica Prasine*' ("Greens win!") on one, and '*Calos Venete*' ("Bravo, Blues!") on the other, both exclamations of support transliterated from Greek (figs. 15 and 16).<sup>700</sup> A late first century CE lamp also bears the image of an apparently victorious charioteer, in this instance holding a bridle and leaning against a winning post marker, with the message '*Gegas va*' ("Gegas, go!/be well!") to the right of the image (fig. 17).<sup>701</sup> Text and image are once more paired together on a *fibula*, on which a circus scene of a charioteer and horse is depicted alongside the text '*Epaphr(oditus) / in Bulba(lo)*' ("Epaphroditus with Bubalus") (fig. 18). While it is evident that individual charioteers could become famous, it is probable that these items were each made at an important time, such as after a momentous victory or during a period of notable success for the individual charioteer or faction at large, that fans wished to remember and celebrate. It seems that, once victorious at the circus, charioteers became more popular and recognized as sports stars by fans, likely then meriting recognition on purchasable items. The inclusion of names on these various objects suggests not only the fame of the charioteer or horse that was named, but also the

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<sup>699</sup> These small finds were discussed briefly in Chapter 2 in regard to the popularity of circus imagery alongside the growing interest in the races and its competitors.

<sup>700</sup> See also Humphrey 1986: 413-4.

<sup>701</sup> Chapter 3, n. 104. Landes 1990: 239-245, n. 24-36 provides a catalogue of lamps bearing different types of circus themed imagery.

devotion of fans to these sporting figures, as they chose to purchase items that signaled their fandom. As was discussed in Chapter 3 when addressing the iconography of the races, the proliferation of these images is demonstrative of the popularity of the circus; the public showed a desire to engage with the sport and its stars and, as a result, items were produced that would appeal to their interest. The subject matter in particular reveals how circus fans could connect with the sport, its competitors, and the uniting concept of victory. The scenes celebrate success in the circus, which viewers could enjoy as Romans, acknowledging the skills of the competition and merits of victory, and as fans of a particular competitor or faction.

Here we might also recall the series of bone and ivory handles that bear the images and names of charioteers and racehorses, and the fragmentary cup from Rome that seems to have come from the same mold as another example from Montans, both first discussed in Chapter 3 (figs. 19-26). Again the names of charioteers and images associated with the circus are produced on small objects that could be sold to the public. Those manufacturing such items were aware of the public's interest in the sports stars and took advantage of the ardent circus fandom. Akin to modern merchandising of sports, with caps, jerseys, flags, and other paraphernalia that fans will buy to show their pride, fans who purchased these and other circus-themed items likely did so to affirm their support and demonstrate it to anyone who might see the object.<sup>702</sup> Each item represented a public proclamation of allegiance to a faction and fandom of the sport at large.

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<sup>702</sup> Crawford 2004: 112-129 (esp. 124-126), offers a discussion of consumer goods and their various connections to the identity of sport fans.

Similarly, it was possible for those interested in the races to celebrate their affiliation with the races by commissioning large pieces of art or mosaics. The decision to commission such large decoration demonstrated significant devotion to the races and its fandom, as it not only took time to be completed but was also a permanent installation and reminder of the sport. Whether meant to capture the scene of a particular race or one conjured from the mind of the fan, the imagery served as a visual representation of the fan's connection to the events at the circus.<sup>703</sup> The Silin mosaic (Libya) dated to the mid-late second century CE, depicts an active circus scene, including four teams of horses that seem to have just been released from the starting gates, four other teams of horses galloping around different points of the track, and one team with the driver holding a palm frond to symbolize his victory (fig. 10). Much of the mosaic is worn and discoloured, yet it is apparent that the glass tesserae that made up the victorious charioteer's tunic is blue, thereby identifying him as a member of the Blues. An official to the right of the victor is shown holding various coloured scarves, one of which he holds high to indicate the winner of the race to the audience.<sup>704</sup> The mosaic was not originally located in a public venue, but rather in a seaside villa at Silin, thereby suggesting that the residents of the villa selected an image to be depicted that had relevance to them. It is possible that the scene was meant to immortalize a particular race in which the Blues were victorious; however, without names included on the image there is potential for it to have been an imagined race. In either case, it is possible that the residents were

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<sup>703</sup> Thuillier 2003 examines three particular circus mosaics that clearly identify the faction of the charioteers depicted.

<sup>704</sup> Dunbabin 2016: 150.

supporters of the Blues, if they chose to live with a permanent visual celebration of a triumph of that faction.<sup>705</sup>

Much like the Silin mosaic, the fourth century CE Gerona mosaic, from the villa of Bell-loc (near Gerona in Hispania Tarraconensis), comes from a villa and depicts an active circus scene with various teams racing around the track (fig. 13). Whereas the colours of the Silin mosaic served to identify the figures in it, the Gerona mosaic also includes the names of both the charioteer and his lead horse for each team. The chariot driven by Filoromus, in white with the horse Pantaracus, is the winner of the competition, followed by the red chariot with Torax and horse Polistefanus; further behind is the blue chariot with Calimorfus at the reins of Patynicus, and in green there is the charioteer Limenius with his horse Euplium. The inclusion of the names indicates that there was the intent to represent a particular race with particular drivers and horses. It establishes knowledge of the races by the villa's residents and a desire to relive a specific race, one that perhaps was famous or even iconic to certain racing fans. On the mosaic, one team is shown to have crashed, with the horses on the ground beneath the chariot. While such a scene would be terrible for fans of that team, fans from rival factions would identify the failure of one team as a better chance of success for their own. It is even possible that the scene recalled the defeat of a driver who had been favoured in the race and whose failure was exciting and memorable. The art and memorabilia available meant fans could

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<sup>705</sup> Another plausible explanation, which will be discussed further below, is that this was located in the home of an *editor* who sought to memorialize the spectacle that he had been instrumental in presenting and remind all those who saw the mosaic of his connection to the races.



vicariously share in the triumphs of their factions and establish links for themselves with a successful group.

Despite the potential for these examples to have been commissioned by fans of the races, it is necessary to acknowledge that they could also have been commissioned by an official associated with that particular race day, perhaps the *editor* of the event, who wanted a permanent, grand reminder of his involvement in the production. It is possible that the interest such an individual had in the races was primarily financial, political, or a combination of the two, and therefore does not represent the motivations and interests of the racing fans at the center of this study.<sup>706</sup> Nevertheless, the art can still be interpreted as a form of ‘BIRGing’ on the part of an *editor*, insofar as he could bask in the successes of the races, which represented his own successful work in presenting the event. If the day of circus spectacles did not go well, whether through issues in its presentation or disruptions in the crowd, perhaps even angered by the loss of a favourite, it would not have been an accomplishment to celebrate and the *editor* likely would have had no interest in memorializing the event in a permanent image on a wall or floor of his home. Moreover, the decision to commission the art, whether or not a fan of the faction or the sport at large, demonstrates an engagement with the popular interest in the circus nonetheless. Considering the Silin mosaic, for instance, it is conceivable that, given the prominence of the Blue faction, the mosaic was intended to celebrate the success of the Blues generally and thereby bask in the glory of the popular faction, despite not having

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<sup>706</sup> It remains possible as well that, their financial or political goals notwithstanding, an *editor* or other Roman official involved in the races could have a genuine interest in the sport.

the same level of interest as other racing fans. Likewise, if we suppose that the residents of the villa of Bell-Iloch had an interest in the races solely from a business perspective or with the intent to appear relatable and taking part with the interests of the masses, it remains that residents did engage with fan behaviour, even if on a superficial level, by mimicking a fan response and celebrating the successes of a particular chariot team and driver in a mosaic and basking in that success through their viewership of the image.

Whereas the tactic of ‘BIRGing’ seeks to emphasize the affiliation of a fan with a team, particularly during times of success, modern sport psychologists also consider how a fan would respond when confronted with the defeat of their team, in an effort to maintain their positive identity as a fan. The prominent technique identified by psychologists is “cutting off reflected failure”, or ‘CORFing’ as it is abbreviated, and is meant to distance a fan from a team.<sup>707</sup> Just as with the technique of ‘BIRGing’, the process of ‘CORFing’ is typically an unconscious reaction by fans intended to maintain a positive self-identity in association with the team; however, while ‘BIRGing’ is used in the instance of the favoured team’s success, when a team faces failure, whether by means of a disappointing performance or an outright loss, the fan will circumvent the defeat by disassociating himself from the negative appearance of the team. The distance created through this is meant to protect the fan’s identity and demonstrate, to himself as much as to others, that the failure of the team is not his own. Among modern sports fans, ‘CORFing’ can be observed in various subtle changes in behaviour; for instance, after

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<sup>707</sup> Selected sources on ‘CORFing’: Snyder, Lassegard, Ford 1986; Wann 1993: 135-7; Wann and Branscombe 1990.

seeing or hearing of the team's poor performance, the fan will be less likely to display items or wear clothing that would indicate his association with the team.<sup>708</sup> He will also not discuss the team as much, possibly avoiding conversation that refers to a particularly poor showing. If reference to the team does occur, there is a shift in vocabulary in which the fan will refer to the team as "they", rather than the "we" used during times of the team's success. In doing so, the fan can consider himself to not be connected to the failure and therefore the failure does not reflect on him or his identity.

Although some circus fans certainly would have felt the need to resort to such a defense mechanism on occasion, it was difficult for many to do so. Small actions may have been taken, by avoiding discussion of a faction or one's loyalty to them, at a time of failure, but fans who made larger demonstrations of their support in art, mosaics, or other forms, would not be able to take them down on a whim. As was considered in the previous chapter, despite Pliny the Younger's remarks that spectators were interested only in victory and would shift their loyalty among charioteers to follow the anticipated victor, no matter the faction, it has been shown that many circus fans became devoted and firmly supported their factions.<sup>709</sup> In terms of modern sport psychology, it is possible that many fans of the races were so deeply committed and highly identified with their faction that, as a result, their membership in the group was too central to their identity to be abandoned so easily.<sup>710</sup> For particularly devoted fans it is all but impossible to shift their loyalties to

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<sup>708</sup> Fans of modern sports will choose not to wear team hats or jerseys and may remove other displays of team insignia such as flags or banners.

<sup>709</sup> See 'Fan Support' in Chapter 3.

<sup>710</sup> For a discussion of the modern sport psychology, see Russell 1993; Wann and Branscombe 1990.

another team, even if it is fairing far better than their own. Those who identify highly with a team are more likely to think positively about possible future successes and, accordingly, many fans will maintain their allegiance despite a losing record. As was noted in Chapter 3, the Red and White factions both appear to have had less successful records than the other two factions.<sup>711</sup> Despite the apparent losing record, during the first half of the second century the Reds boasted the famed charioteer Diocles among their ranks, who brought numerous victories to the faction. The lengthy inscription honouring Diocles indicates that he won against the Greens 216 times, against the Blues 205 times, and against the Whites 81 times; given that his victories against the Reds are not mentioned in this list it is likely meant to refer to his victories while a member of the Reds.<sup>712</sup> While it may not have drastically improved the overall standings of the Reds, it is likely that Diocles' time as one of their charioteers was a highlight for the faction's fans.<sup>713</sup> There is less information available for the Whites; however, it appears that with or without an iconic driver to lead it, the faction also remained in the competition.<sup>714</sup> Even if the faction was proving unsuccessful overall, the structure of the races, with only four competing groups, made it difficult to eliminate one. The four factions were paired up in races and could make alliances against one another and the distinct sense of

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<sup>711</sup> See n. 465.

<sup>712</sup> *CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287.

<sup>713</sup> Modern sports fans tend to remain loyal to their team, even through the disappointing loss of key players, and are rewarded, and possibly reinvigorated, when a new asset is acquired. Much later, in the sixth century, the Reds gained the emperor Anastasius as a supporter of the faction (John Mal. 16.2 [pp.392-3]).

<sup>714</sup> At least eleven circus *defixiones* are known that appear to curse charioteers or horses of the Whites. (Audollent 1904: no.175 (Rome), no.235 (Carthage)(Reds and Whites), nos. 286-294 (Hadrumetum)(Greens and Whites).

opposition between factions made for intense rivalries.<sup>715</sup> The elimination of one faction would leave an odd number of factions, with one possibly without a direct ally or rival, and a community of fans without the group that had been the focus of their passion and commitment.

In his biography of Domitian, Suetonius reports that the emperor attempted to integrate two new factions, the Purples and the Golds, into the racing system.<sup>716</sup> Suetonius provides this information only as a statement of fact and does not offer additional details to explain the emperor's decision. It could be supposed that Domitian felt that the fandom of the circus was too intense and needed to be diluted with more teams. However, the circus factions had not yet developed the connection to politics that could have been of concern to the emperor and that led to riots in the later Empire. While the partisanship and rivalries were indeed strong, I do not believe that Domitian would have considered it to be an issue that needed imperial intervention. It is possible that Domitian believed that the races had become so popular that they should be expanded by the introduction of more factions. With this intent it then must be considered if Domitian perceived room in the fandom for fans to move away from their earlier faction to support a new contender. Whatever his original intent, it appears that Domitian was unsuccessful at establishing the Golds and Purples as permanent factions, as there is no evidence for them beyond his reign. It is conceivable that the failed integration of the two new

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<sup>715</sup> See n. 463 and 464. As will be discussed further in Chapter 5, numerous circus *defixiones* curse two factions at a time, either the Blues and Reds, or the Greens and Whites. This suggests that the two factions named were paired in allegiance at some point against the other two.

<sup>716</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 7.1; Dio Cass. 67.4.4. See also Mart. *Ep.* 14.55. An inscription reports that a charioteer won 178 races for the Reds before transferring to the Purples, where he won eight (*CIL* VI. 10062 = *ILS* 5282). Martial (*Ep.* 14.55.2) also mentions the Purples, but not the Golds.

factions was due in significant part to the fans, who were too focused on their own faction to consider changing their allegiance. Certainly, it was not impossible for fans to shift loyalties, but with only four factions, and fierce divisions among them, it is likely to have been difficult for most fans to make the transition. If the factions were based on regional divisions or another well-defined categorization, it would have ensured that each faction had an inherent fan base. This would have also made the launch of the Golds and Purples easier, as the territory of the four pre-existing factions would have been divided up and fans introduced to their new ‘local team’.<sup>717</sup> However, there is no available evidence to support the position that factions were structured in this manner, and therefore it seems that the Purples and Golds were left to try and pull fans away from their current favourites. Moreover, the other four factions had existed long before the attempted introduction of the two new factions, with well-established and strong fan support. Without a compelling reason to shift to a new one, it is feasible that fans were set with their factions and cultivated a strong sense of loyalty and community.

As was noted at the outset of this section, the discussion above represents an exploration of modern sport psychology and its possible bearing on Roman racing fans. While it is not possible to make firm conclusions in this area, as the topic of study in association with the ancient context does not allow it, the exercise presents provoking questions and possible new perspectives on the ancient fans of the races, who were not all that different from fans of modern sport. Both ancient and modern fans were influenced

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<sup>717</sup> Of course, many fans would likely still find it difficult to change allegiances and would take time to grow accustomed to the new faction.

by a number of analogous motivations and similarities in their responses to sport are evident. Just as with modern sports, the Roman chariot races attracted numerous spectators at each spectacle day, and boasted a large fan base, with fans who could become fiercely loyal to the sport as well as their favourite faction. For some supporters, circus fandom influenced other aspects of their lives, learning about charioteers and news of the races and enjoying the circus-themed art and material culture that was created as a result of the widespread popularity of the sport. The chariot races in Rome took on an influential role in the lives of many people, whose behaviour both resulted from and was influenced by their love of the sport.

## CHAPTER 5.

### SPECTATOR PARTICIPATION AND THE USE OF CIRCUS *DEFIXIONES*

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

On a given race day, the stands of the circus were filled with eager fans offering shouts of advice and cheers of support to their favourites and howls and jeers to the opposition.

The majority of the noise in the circus was undoubtedly created by the audience as they yelled and applauded throughout the competition.<sup>718</sup> Yet such behaviour does not stand out as unexpected or inappropriate; rather, it can be considered typical of spectators at a sporting event whose noise was one of the only outlets through which they could express themselves. Moreover, in making these loud noises, and perhaps gestures with them, it was possible for members of the audience to regard themselves as participants in the races. Without the physical presence of the spectators there would be no event and, in turn, the spectators became crucial to the action with an important role to play.

Beyond clapping and shouting during the competitions, it is evident that some fans had a great desire to get involved, not only for the entertainment it could offer as part of the day's spectacle but also for the opportunity it presented to help their own identification as fans. Such participation from the stands allowed fans to feel a part of the races by showing support for their favourites and hostility toward opponents, and possibly

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<sup>718</sup> See 'Sounds of the Circus' in Chapter 2.



even help their preferred competitors through their loud contributions to the event. It is likely that those ardent fans who believed that their attentive encouragements and discouragements from the stands did indeed have an influence on the outcome of the races, then turned to other methods that had the potential to help them make a further impact and aid their favourites.

The desire of fans to get involved in the races and to have an effect on their outcome is seen most notably in circus *defixiones*, curse tablets directed at the charioteers and their horses. While curse tablets were an aspect of Roman culture that had many uses, among circus curses the primary intention was to immobilize or injure the targeted race competitor and improve the odds in favour of another. The number of circus curse tablets found throughout the Roman world demonstrate the prevalent wish of circus fans to get as close as possible to the popular sport. For those most passionate circus fans, the inability to be directly involved in a race was likely to have been very frustrating, particularly after a recent loss or when faced with a rival in competition. By producing a curse ahead of a race, a fan could feel connected to what happened after and possibly feel like a participant, as if he himself had a role in influencing events. In most instances the curses appear to have the sole focus of hindering the abilities of a rival chariot team for the benefit of an unnamed favourite and say no more than is needed to call on supernatural forces to bind the racing abilities of the targets. Nonetheless, some examples also reveal the fierce emotion of the cursers as they seek exceptionally violent action

against charioteers and horses, going so far as to request their deaths.<sup>719</sup> Although reaching extremes in some of their requests, the tactic of circus curse tablets evidently was a viable method for avid fans to feel more closely tied to the races and their preferred faction. Through the medium of circus *defixiones* highly-identified circus fans found some level of control and a feeling that they were able to exert influence from their position as mere spectators of the chariot races.

## 5.2. FANDOM TO FANATICISM

Fans desired a successful outcome for their faction at each competition, both for the enjoyment that a victory could bring and for the positive effect that it had on their identification as fans and their association with the team. This desire was powerful for many fans and could result in intense responses when their hopes or expectations both were and were not met. It is here that some fans moved beyond the level of enthusiasm that was common and demonstrated what might better be considered a degree of fanaticism for the races. For these more fanatical fans, the satisfaction from success at the races and the disappointment at a loss had the potential to influence their behaviour before, during, and after the races. While other spectators and casual fans could certainly enjoy a victory and show displeasure over a favoured team's defeat, the evidence suggests that some devoted fans felt compelled to engage more deeply with the races and, in certain cases, to find a way to get involved and potentially help their favourites win. The

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<sup>719</sup> It appears to have often been the case that the individual who desired the curse to be made was not in fact the person who wrote out the curse itself. Therefore, for the purpose of clarity, the person behind the curse will not be referred to in this discussion as the author of the curse but rather the curser.

actions of these fans are demonstrative of the high identification with the sport that was possible for some fans and the extremes to which they were willing to go for their love of the races.

When addressing the popular interest in the races, various ancient sources point to the passion of the fans and the fierce reactions that the spectacle seemed to encourage in the public. In many instances, the language used to describe the devotion of these spectators accentuates the intensity of the circus fandom perceived by the authors.<sup>720</sup> Lucian employs the word ἵππομανία ('hippomania') to describe an all-encompassing interest in the races, and identifies this 'madness for horses' as a sort of epidemic that many had caught.<sup>721</sup> Tertullian remarks that the passionate excitement of the spectacles is forbidden to Christians and names the circus in particular as a site of such inappropriately high emotion. He continues to describe those arriving at the circus as "already under strong emotion, already tumultuous, already passion-blind..."<sup>722</sup> In this commentary Tertullian emphatically uses '*furor*' three times to refer to the passion of the fans and call to mind a frenzied, mad interest, beyond the temperate moderation that he advises for his Christian audience.<sup>723</sup> Moreover, in Tertullian's *Apology* he urges Christians to renounce public sports and advises that they "have nothing to do with the madness of the circus..."<sup>724</sup> Here, Tertullian chooses the word 'insania' to characterize the emotions drawn out in the atmosphere of the circus. Another Christian author, Lactantius,

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<sup>720</sup> See Forichon 2012: esp. 195-162.

<sup>721</sup> Lucian *Nigr.* 29.

<sup>722</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 16.1.

<sup>723</sup> Tert. *De Spect.* 15.4-6.

<sup>724</sup> Tert. *Apol.* 38.4.

addresses the popularity of the Circensian games and contends that they are no more than a “trifling and empty-headed silliness”.<sup>725</sup> Not unlike Tertullian, Lactantius confronts the emotional attachment of spectators who seem to become absorbed in the spectacle, and claims that:

“People’s spirits are stirred to a frenzy with the same energy as goes into the races; once they start shouting and raving and jumping up and down, there is more of a spectacle to be had from the people who go to watch.”<sup>726</sup>

Through his description, Lactantius seeks to direct his Christian readers away from such unruly and indulgent behaviour and toward more calm, tranquil piety. In each instance these authors characterize the popular interest in the races as if the devoted spectators had lost their minds and become rapt in insensible behaviour. While such depictions are employed to suggest the inappropriateness of the behaviour of such sporting fans and attendance at spectacles more generally, more anecdotes and references can be found in the works of other authors that support the notion of a deeply beloved sport with intensely supportive fans.

As was seen in Chapter 4, there is evidence of circus fans wearing faction colours or jackets that emulated the apparel of charioteers.<sup>727</sup> Some fans may have even become so invested in the races that they used the names of famous charioteers for themselves and copied their mannerisms.<sup>728</sup> An oft-cited anecdote concerning the obsessive love of fans for their faction and its drivers comes from Pliny the Elder, who reports that, after the

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<sup>725</sup> Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 6.20.32. Translation by Bowen, A. and Garnsey, P. (2003), *The Divine Institutes of Lactantius* (Liverpool).

<sup>726</sup> Lactant. *Div. Inst.* 6.20.32. Trans. Bowen and Garnsey 2003.

<sup>727</sup> See ‘The ‘Fandom-Bound’ Identity’ in Chapter 4.

<sup>728</sup> Meijer (2010: 101) cites the names of Scorpus, Muscolsus, or Diocles, as those that fans might use.

death of a charioteer from the Reds, a distraught fan threw himself on the charioteer's pyre. Pliny goes on to say that members of the other factions did not want the incident to be remembered for the great glory of the charioteer or the devotion of the fan, and so made claims that the man had simply fainted from the overwhelming scent of perfumes at the cremation and fallen onto the pyre by accident.<sup>729</sup> The portrayal of the incident as something that the other factions attempted to downplay emphasizes in what manner such behaviour could be taken to show the intense fan support for a faction. Pliny notes that he read about this incident in the *acta diurna*, posted as a sort of news bulletin for the public to read in the Forum, which could offer credence to the account.<sup>730</sup> If such stories were in fact publicized in this or a similar manner it can be appreciated why some authors described fans of the races as mad. Yet even if the story must be taken as hyperbole, the public perception of racing fans is still evident, as Pliny considered fans devoted enough to take such drastic actions as those he described. In this way, while the truth of the incident is a potentially vivid example of fanatical fan behaviour, the existence of the story alone is evidence of the way in which circus fans were viewed. Pliny's account, whether accurate or not, presents a scene that encapsulates their fierce love of the sport.

Pliny the Elder is by no means the only source to furnish an example of extreme behaviour by circus fans. Other actions of fanatical circus fans are reported in the sources, many of which pertain directly to occurrences at the races. Ammianus

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<sup>729</sup> Plin. *NH.* 7.186.

<sup>730</sup> Baldwin 1979; Friedländer 1964: II, 27. As the chariot races were presented at festivals as part of the official state religion, it is understandable that they would be mentioned in the *acta*. With the reasonable assumption that the daily acts did not include false stories, the original report of the story amid the news of the day could be taken as evidence that it was true.

Marcellinus describes the morning of a race day and claims that at dawn crowds of fans began to rush to the circus so quickly that it was “as if they would outstrip the very chariots that are to take part in the contest”.<sup>731</sup> He further emphasizes this high energy and sense of anticipation by asserting that these fans were so anxious about the impending competitions that they were unable to sleep in the days leading up to the races.<sup>732</sup> This is not a unique account of eager spectators, as Suetonius testifies to the noise of crowds gathering outside the Circus the night before the races.<sup>733</sup> Epictetus tells of an individual at the circus who was so concerned about the success of a particular horse running the track that he covered his face and, upon the conclusion of the race, needed to be sponged down to recover from nearly fainting.<sup>734</sup> For this man, the excitement and tension felt during the competition was too much as he became overwhelmed by his apprehension for his favourite’s success. This was by no means the behaviour of a casual spectator, but that of a devoted fan who was extremely invested in the day’s proceedings. It is apparent that, for many ardent racing fans, the excitement for the competition began well before the races themselves. Moreover, it seems that this anticipation and dedication led fans to find ways to check in on the competitors, most likely their favourites. Galen reports that partisans of the Blues and Greens would smell the dung of the faction’s racehorses to ensure that they were being fed well.<sup>735</sup> While it is doubtful that this behaviour was demonstrative of a wider concern for the well-being of the animals, devoted fans certainly

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<sup>731</sup> Amm. Marc. 28.4.31.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid.

<sup>733</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 26.4. See ‘Arrivals’ in Chapter 2.

<sup>734</sup> Epict. *Disc.* 1.11.27.

<sup>735</sup> Galen *De Methodo Medendi* 14 (Kühn: X. 478).

were keenly aware of the horse's relevance to a successful race; the care of the horse directly affected the faction's performance and therefore was an important factor.<sup>736</sup> Such interest in the outcome of the race potentially also had significant weight if a wager was made on the competition.<sup>737</sup> It is possible that, despite the unpleasant prospect of smelling horse dung, those most keenly interested in the success of a faction considered it a necessary action in an effort to keep apprised of the workings of the faction. A thirteenth century Byzantine manuscript includes descriptions of practices from imperial Rome and details the observance of celestial bodies and their positions and the use of this information to determine the way in which the factions of the circus will be influenced.<sup>738</sup> It is possible that such celestial interpretations also helped to explain performances in hindsight and allow a fan to soothe their disappointment at a loss by noting that the planets were in fact not aligned in their favour. But more often the practice was likely employed to foretell auspicious days to race or those on which a faction might have trouble. This desire to seek out further information is indicative of how immersed many fans became in the races, interested in far more than a single day's spectacle. Fans were invested in the outcome of the races and sought out ways to learn more about the factions, their welfare, and their potential performances.

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<sup>736</sup> See 'Horses' in Chapter 3.

<sup>737</sup> While throughout this discussion the emotional and psychological investment of fans is at the forefront, the potential economic investment made when betting at the circus must not be forgotten. Conceivably many fans bet on the races, thereby increasing their overall investment in the competition and concern about the results.

<sup>738</sup> See Wuilleumier 1927: 185-6.

### 5.3. EXPRESSIVE COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR

At most modern sporting events, it is expected that spectators will get involved with the competition by cheering and applauding for the athletes.<sup>739</sup> Often such actions are encouraged by way of commentators or signs inviting those in the stands to make noise. For many, this aspect of participation at a live sporting event is a highlight and considered to be a fundamental part of the experience. Despite being surrounded by strangers, it seems that there is a sense of community and comfort among fellow spectators that permitted their indulgence in the same behaviours, and together, fans would have found a shared enthusiasm, knowledge, and commitment for the competition being presented.<sup>740</sup> As has been noted previously, the dynamics of the ancient sporting audience allowed for a degree of sociability in the stands of the Roman circus, with fans sharing in discussion of the competitors, their teams, or the sport at large.<sup>741</sup> It appears that many ancient circus fans, just as those of modern sports, established a sense of identity as a member of a group, which allowed them to enjoy the experience together and feel comfortable acting in a loud and boisterous manner.<sup>742</sup>

It is apparent that the Roman circus audience was exceptionally vocal and sought to involve themselves in the competition from their position in the stands.<sup>743</sup> Numerous

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<sup>739</sup> An exception includes professional golf, in which spectators are expected to remain quiet during competition so as not to distract the golfers, although clapping is permitted when a golfer has completed his stroke.

<sup>740</sup> Melnick 1993: 50.

<sup>741</sup> See 'Sounds of the Circus' in Chapter 2.

<sup>742</sup> Lott and Lott 1965; Zander and Havelin 1960. Fagan (2011: 146-7) notes that the participation in group cheers allowed an audience to express its social identity, particularly when they generated cohesion in subgroups, such as chants against rival fans and competitors. See also Horsfall 2003: 67-8.

<sup>743</sup> The Roman audience is reported as having vocal reactions and participating at the theatre and other spectacles as well. See Amm. Marc. 28.4.33; Cic. *Off.* 97, *Sest.* 124; Dio Cass. 39.38.2-4; Hor. *Ars P.* 153-157, *Ep.* 2.1.182-186; Plaut. *Rud.* 1249-1251; Sen. *Ep.* 7.4-5, 108.8; Sil. *Pun.* 16.397-8.



sources refer to applause at the circus, with Varro in particular claiming that people would rather “busy their hands” clapping at the circus than working on a farm.<sup>744</sup> The shouts of the crowd and applause began from the outset of the spectacle day, with the *pompa circensis*, during which, as Ovid makes clear, different groups in the audience might cheer and clap for the parading images of different deities, such as soldiers for Mars or craftsmen for Minerva.<sup>745</sup> The arrival of the emperor too could earn a noisy reaction from the crowd, appreciative of his attendance at the popular event.<sup>746</sup>

Sidonius Apollinaris remarks on the whistles and shouts of spectators who then became hoarse from their cheers, while both Tertullian and Seneca describe the raucous noise of the circus with many voices blending into one as the crowd shouted together.<sup>747</sup> The noises that fans made served not only to express their intense emotions associated with the races, but also to communicate their opinions, whether in cheers of support and advice or shouts of insults and criticism.<sup>748</sup> Beyond the group identity of the larger Roman audience, team loyalty and faction partisanship increased spectator comfort to vocalize at the venue. The sense of cohesiveness and togetherness in the individual partisan groups was likely increased by the perceived threat from outside the group, such as from an opposing team or its fan base.<sup>749</sup> It was this sense of division and partisanship that intensified the fan’s interest in participation with the intent to help encourage their

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<sup>744</sup> Varro *Rust.* 2. praef. 3. See also Amm. Marc. 28.4.33; Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.376, 400; Sil. *Pun.* 16.336-344; Tert. *De Spect.* 16.1; Forichon 2012: 193-5.

<sup>745</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2.43-56.

<sup>746</sup> E.g., Mart. *Ep.* 8.11. Cf. Dio Cass. 59.13.5. See ‘The Emperor at the Circus’ in Chapter 1.

<sup>747</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23. 315-316 and 376; Tert. *De Spect.* 16.2-3 (‘one frenzy, one voice’); Sen. *Ep.* 83.7 (‘medley of voices blended into one note’).

<sup>748</sup> Forichon 2012: 187-8.

<sup>749</sup> Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, Sherif 1961.

favourites or impede the opposition. Silius Italicus reports that, the moment the teams were released from the starting gates, the circus crowd began to shout at the horses and encourage the drivers, even scolding if they disapproved of a charioteer's technique.<sup>750</sup> Ovid's description of sitting in the circus stands indicates this was a typical audience reaction, as he recounts another scene of spectators shouting encouragements, reprimands, and advice at competitors.<sup>751</sup>

Cheers at modern sporting events can both develop organically, as a small group begins a shout that is picked up on by those around them, or be prompted by an announcer or a sign that could serve as a cue for the audience. Similarly, ancient Roman audiences at the circus and the theatre were known to give both planned and unplanned reactions to the spectacles.<sup>752</sup> At the Roman theater, performers were known to hire groups known as *clagues*, tasked with instigating a positive response from the audience.<sup>753</sup> *Claquers* seated themselves throughout the audience and awaited a cue from the leader of the *claque*, who signaled the start of a cheer or round of applause with the intent to spur on the audience to join them.<sup>754</sup> Yet despite the prominence of *clagues* at the theatre, the evidence does not suggest that these organized groups were typically present at the circus. Foremost, the size of the circus prohibited against a group inciting a chant throughout the entire audience; while *claque* members were strategically placed throughout a theatre crowd, it seems unlikely that individuals were able and willing to hire a large enough

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<sup>750</sup> Sil. *Pun.* 16.319-345.

<sup>751</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2.69-72. Cf. Dio Cass. 76.4.3; Procop. *Arc.* 7.13.

<sup>752</sup> Plass 1995: 19-21, 68-9; for reactions/applause at the theatre see Rawson 1991: 570-76. See also Horsfall 2003: 11-19, 39-42.

<sup>753</sup> Cameron (1976: 234) asserts that this is part of why theatres had worse riots than the circus.

<sup>754</sup> For further discussion of *clagues*, see Cameron 1976: 221, 234-249, and Vanderbroeck 1987: 61-2.

group to occupy seats all around the circus stands or that a *claque* spread to such a degree in the circus would be able to successfully bring a cheer together.<sup>755</sup> Moreover, the shape of a Roman theater allowed *claque* members to make visual contact with one another, whereas at a circus the long sides of the venue and the large space across the track made such an organization system unrealistic. We might also consider the purpose of the *clagues*, whose services were paid for to manipulate the response of the crowd and hopefully bring success to the performers, who relied heavily on popularity and audience approval.<sup>756</sup> Conversely, circus-goers were presented with a more objective spectacle in which they could evaluate the skills demonstrated on the track and acknowledge the victor of each race.<sup>757</sup> Although, as we will see, competitors undoubtedly appreciated a positive response from the crowd, the contests at the circus were not the type that needed planted praise as at the theatre and, therefore, without the demand for their specific function, it was not necessary to hire *clagues* for use at the circus.<sup>758</sup>

Given what has already been presented concerning the disposition of the circus audience, it seems that additional prompting was not needed, since spectators were already quite vocal. Indeed, the boisterous nature of the circus crowd made them receptive to the instigation of cheers and in reports, particularly from the late second

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<sup>755</sup> Cameron (1976: 235-6) makes this same argument and asserts that, while an organized *claque* of 400 men could manage a theatre of 5-10,000 spectators, it would be far too small to make an impact in a venue as large as a circus.

<sup>756</sup> Cf. Cic. *Off.* 1.97; Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.182; Plaut. *Cas.* 3.

<sup>757</sup> This does not mean everyone will cheer for the victor; indeed, if not part of one's faction a fan could certainly be disappointed and even argue that the race was unfair. Nevertheless, the results of the races can be considered far more objective than at the theatre.

<sup>758</sup> In the later Empire theatre partisans were subsumed under the names of the faction colours, the Blues and Greens, and, by the late fifth century, *clagues* are identified in eastern cities that led spectators in cheers supporting the Blues and Greens. For further discussion of *clagues* in the later Empire, see Cameron 1976: 237-249.

century onward, the circus appears to have been considered a prime venue in which to stage popular demonstrations. With a large audience guaranteed and the presence of the emperor himself a good possibility, the circus was an advantageous space in which individuals and groups were able to voice their concerns, often enlisting the energetic crowd in their display as well.<sup>759</sup> Dio Cassius describes how, in 190 CE, a young woman interrupted the races at the Circus Maximus by running out with a group of children and accusing the official Cleander of hoarding grain. Dio claims that the entire circus audience was provoked by the shouts of the woman and children, and that the spectators joined in to yell insults before setting out from the circus and marching through the streets to find the emperor Commodus and urge him to get rid of Cleander.<sup>760</sup> Although the circus was merely a venue in which to pursue goals motivated by issues unrelated to the races or its fans, it is apparent that animated circus fans were at the core of such incidents and, engaged by the sense of conflict that could be expected at the races, they eagerly took up the shouts of the protestors to cheer together.

Another example is furnished by Dio as he reflects upon an incident that he observed at the Circus, in which the crowds remained silent and did not applaud any of the competitors of the sixth race until, prior to the beginning of next event, they began to clap and shout together.<sup>761</sup> Amazed at this organized, yet seemingly unprompted, demonstration Dio asserts that the circus audience must have been inspired by some

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<sup>759</sup> Bollinger 1969: 45; Nelis-Clément 2008: 451; Toner 2009: 116.

<sup>760</sup> Dio Cass. 73.13.3-4. Vanderbroeck (1987: 62) posits that the woman Dio describes who began the chants against Cleander was a cheerleader hired by senatorial conspirators.

<sup>761</sup> Dio Cass. 76.4.3-6.

divine power.<sup>762</sup> As Dio describes the scene in the Circus, he explains that the spectators were not applauding “as was their custom”, not only emphasizing the impressively organized expression by the audience but also affirming that it was generally expected of the circus crowds to applaud during the races and cheer on their favourites.<sup>763</sup> To be sure, applause was the most commonly practiced form of expressive collective behaviour for an audience. At the circus fans were also comfortable shouting out with cheers for their favourites and hurling insults at the competition. In his eleventh *Satire* Juvenal remarks that the Green faction must be winning when he heard the commotion coming from within the walls of the Circus.<sup>764</sup> It is unclear how Juvenal identified the Greens as the victors, since he says no more than that if the Greens had lost “Rome would be as sad and dismayed as when the Consuls were vanquished in the dust of Cannae”.<sup>765</sup> While it may be that Juvenal simply assumed the success of the Greens, as they were indeed a popular faction, it is also possible that Juvenal discerned the faction by what he heard coming from inside the venue. Perhaps the noise included a cheer in favour of the Greens that revealed the success of the faction in the races that day. Although *claque*s were not hired for the circus, it is reasonable that the shouts of the spectators included cheers or chants that fans could join in together, whether instigated by a particular individual or developing organically throughout the stands. A second-third century CE inscription honouring the charioteer Marcus Aurelius Liber on the occasion of his three thousandth

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<sup>762</sup> Bollinger 1969: 32-3.

<sup>763</sup> It was this failure to meet expectations that made their silence so surprising.

<sup>764</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 11.195-198. This further illustrates the excessive noise that could be created by circus fans.

<sup>765</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 11.199-201.

victory includes a line of text written vertically on either side of the main inscription that together reads: ‘*Garamanti nica! Genti nica!*’.<sup>766</sup> Lamps disks first discussed in Chapter 3 bear similar phrases that support particular factions or charioteers, including ‘*Nica Prasine*’, ‘*Calos Venete*’, and ‘*Gegas va*’.<sup>767</sup> It is plausible that these represent a typical format of cheer – that was spread throughout the circus stands by fans to encourage their favourites and to express their excitement.<sup>768</sup> An epigram in the *Greek Anthology* recounts that the circus crowds shouted for the charioteer Porphyrius four times before he was racing, evidently calling for him during previous races in which he was not competing.<sup>769</sup> Together the audience voiced their love for Porphyrius, possibly even in an attempt to have him join an earlier race. Although spectators, the circus audience were not passive consumers of the sport; through collective behaviours like applause and cheers the audience was able to express themselves and actively participate in the events at the circus.

#### **5.4. THE INFLUENCE OF FANS**

The extent of all this noise created by the circus audience was liable to be very affecting and difficult to ignore. The shouts of fans could certainly bother supporters of another faction and, if groups of spectators called the name of a charioteer or shouted a message

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<sup>766</sup> *CIL* VI. 10058 = *ILS* 5296.

<sup>767</sup> See ‘The Popular Image of the Races’ in Chapter 3.

<sup>768</sup> It is possible that similar chants existed to shout at rival factions and insult the opposing competitors. Similarly, in her discussion of spectacle cups Cassibry 2018: 7 proposes that abbreviated verbs included on the vessels allowed readers to participate in completing the message on the cup, potentially creating a form of cheer like what was heard at the circus.

<sup>769</sup> *Anth. Gr.* 16.366.

together, whether of praise or criticism, it was likely to be noticed. Even so, experienced charioteers were undoubtedly accustomed to the noise from the stands and, for the most part, were able to ignore it. Indeed, while Silius Italicus reports that the circus spectators shouted protests at a charioteer, Cynus, for his driving, Cynus did not react to their criticisms as, “his ears were deaf” to them.<sup>770</sup> Moreover, the competition on the track was noisy as the charioteers themselves shouted encouragements to their teams of horses to try and make them go faster.<sup>771</sup> Individuals known as *hortatores* are attested riding on horseback nearby the chariot of the same faction, seemingly tasked with keeping the charioteer apprised of where the other drivers were on the track; a job that added even more noise to the environment.<sup>772</sup> These figures appear in circus imagery and are often depicted holding some sort of megaphone, which they needed in an effort to be heard over the noise coming from both the track and the stands.<sup>773</sup> Yet, whatever professional focus competitors could muster was unlikely to dissuade the emotional crowd who continued to cheer and jeer as they pleased.

There have been several investigations regarding the level of influence spectators could have over competitors in modern sports. Most seem to indicate that the behaviours of spectators can influence athletes or teams at large, particularly negative behaviours

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<sup>770</sup> Sil. *Pun.* 16.336-344.

<sup>771</sup> For charioteers yelling at each other and their horses during a race: Verg. *Aen.* 5.177, 188-189; Stat. *Theb.* 6.455-468; Sil. *Pun.* 16.388-439; Dagron, Binggeli, Featherstone, Flusin 2000: 162.

<sup>772</sup> Nelis-Clément 2008: 446; Potter 2010: 317-8; Thuillier 1996: 109. The task of *hortatores* can be likened to the personnel in modern racing sports who stand on the sides of the track and use signals or messages on boards to indicate the current positions of all competitors and possibly offer suggestions for the next lap. *Hortatores* may have also aided in encouraging the horses to pick up speed or helped to keep the pace of the race.

<sup>773</sup> Bell 2009: 136; Bergmann: 2008: 372, fig. 7; Cameron 1973: 47; D'Ambra 2007: 342-3, fig. 18.3); Dunbabin 2016: 144-45, 149, figs. 6.4 and 6.9; Nelis-Clément 2008: fig. 5.

such as shouting or throwing objects at competitors.<sup>774</sup> It is plausible that competitors who hear cheers and shouts of encouragement might react by redoubling their efforts in an attempt to win, not only for themselves but also for their fans to show them that their support is justified. Foremost, the goal of circus fans was to cheer on and encourage charioteers and horses and Pliny the Elder asserts that the horses themselves understood the shouts of encouragement and applause.<sup>775</sup> It is possible that, in some ways, the roar of the crowd at the circus was energizing for charioteers and even the horses, who were spurred on to go faster. Indeed, when telling of the loud noise created by the circus crowd, Sidonius Apollinaris indicates that the charioteers could be sensitive to the encouragement of the audience, as he explains that “the hoarse roar from applauding partisans stirs the heart”.<sup>776</sup> Similarly, in an accounting of a chariot race Silius Italicus follows the maneuvers of one charioteer and notes how “a shout of applause from his supporters drove the chariot on”.<sup>777</sup> Despite the anonymity of one’s position amid a large circus crowd, it is evident that the fans of the races were capable of coming together and using their voices as an effective tool to energize or, conversely, demoralize, competitors.

In his description of a chariot race, Sidonius Apollinaris claims that a charioteer was embarrassed by a maneuver that he had made.<sup>778</sup> While there is no mention of the audience in the account, the suggestion that the charioteer could feel this way during the

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<sup>774</sup> Greer 1983; Laird 1923; Thirer and Rampey 1979; Wann 1997.

<sup>775</sup> Plin. *NH.* 8.159-160.

<sup>776</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.376-8.

<sup>777</sup> Sil. *Pun.* 16.419. On a much larger scale, an epigram from the Greek Anthology (15.44) suggests that circus fans cheered so hard and loudly in celebration of the retired charioteer Porphyrius that the emperor had him return to the competitions.

<sup>778</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.365-7.



race indicates that perhaps he understood that those around were knowledgeable about the sport. As a result, the charioteer might have been concerned about his performance and in what way he appeared to his fellow drivers and to the discerning audience.<sup>779</sup> A further comment on the subject by Sidonius Apollinaris implies that even the positive cheers of the crowd could prove distracting to drivers during the competition. When recounting the movements of the various competitors, he reports that one, “exulting in the public plaudits, ran too far to the right”, thereby slowing him down in the pack of chariots and keeping him from the win.<sup>780</sup> In this instance the audience is clearly identified as the cause of the charioteer’s actions. Despite the undoubted skill the driver must possess, he is distracted by even the praise of the audience leading to an error in his performance.

Such accounts of the actions of spectators and reactions of charioteers establish that the circus audience had the potential to make a definite impact on the performance of competitors. However, it is then necessary to consider to what degree spectators were genuinely aware of their own influence. In a passage from Ovid that was mentioned previously, the circus crowds engage in the races by cheering and shouting at the racers with the hope, however unrealistic, that the charioteers hear and heed their comments.<sup>781</sup> Ovid goes on to urge the other members of the crowd to shake their togas as a method to communicate their demand that the officials restart the race.<sup>782</sup> Just as inscriptions included details of a charioteer’s win, such as if he held first place the entire race

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<sup>779</sup> Perhaps the error itself can be attributed to the charioteer’s self-conscious concerns to perform well for the audience.

<sup>780</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.400-1.

<sup>781</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2.69-72.

<sup>782</sup> Ovid *Am.* 3.2.73-75.

(*occupat et vicit*) or won at the last moment (*eripuit et vicit*), some also reveal if the victory occurred after a recall (*revocatus*); a charioteer for the Whites, Carisia Nesis Scirtus, recorded eleven wins, including four identified as *revocatus*.<sup>783</sup> It is possible that fans who saw a charioteer win in such a race after they had called for a restart felt that they had some role in it, as if their cheers were minded by officials and their actions in the stands had an effect on the track.

A great deal of sporting behaviour, particularly that of the audience, could become somewhat ritualized in its repetitive nature. Even less avid fans were sure to engage in the applause and cheers that filled the circus, in part because it was the traditional behaviour of an audience as a collective. For some, such behaviours also proved as a cathartic means to release tension, frustration, or anger during a race; spectators could scream insults at rival competitors and blame them for the failure of their favourites. Yet it appears that the sporting crowd's expressive collective behaviour was able to influence the performance of competitors who were encouraged or discouraged by what they saw and heard coming from the stands. It is reasonable to believe that the most ardent racing fans recognized this and that, in whatever actions they took, a primary desire was to increase the chances for a chariot team or faction's success.<sup>784</sup> The decision to act was not necessarily made on a conscious level, and instead many fans simply felt compelled to

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<sup>783</sup> *CIL* VI. 10051. See also *CIL* VI. 10054, 10055; Thuillier 2006: 377. *Cf.* Dio Cass. 60.6.4-5; Sen. *Contr.* 1.3.10.

<sup>784</sup> Leary 1992 points out that a positive and wholly supportive crowd in fact may have the opposite effect intended as the pressure to do well ultimately decreases an athlete's performance. For analysis of this psychology among modern sports fans, see Novak 1976. In their discussion on the subject of fan involvement from a modern sports psychology perspective, Wann (1997: 354) claims that "greater attempts at influence should result in greater amounts of investment and personal involvement in the competition. This, in turn, should result in more dramatic affective reactions to the outcome".

take action in the hope that, perhaps, their support was able to encourage a charioteer and influence their performance. In the analysis of similar behaviours in modern sports psychology, Thorndike explains that, through what he terms the ‘law of effect’, if a behaviour is followed by a positive consequence it increases the likelihood that that behaviour will be repeated.<sup>785</sup> Furthermore, Wann points out that the behaviour need not have caused the positive consequence; rather, so long as the positive consequence follows, the behaviour should increase.<sup>786</sup> Highly-identified fans of the races were willing to believe in their power to affect the competitors and the competition, however subtle their influence might be, and took action accordingly.<sup>787</sup> Whether their behaviour had a direct and genuine effect or not, the action alone allowed the circus fan to feel like an integral part of the events, with an important role to play.

### **5.5. CIRCUS *DEFIXIONES***

For the avid fans who wished to support their faction at the circus, traditional methods of encouragement were often not enough and as a result they might seek other ways to aid their favourites. The Romans believed that good fortune, including in sport, could be harnessed or counteracted with the appropriate symbols or charms and indeed, charioteers kept small charms and tokens that they felt offered protection or aid in the race.<sup>788</sup>

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<sup>785</sup> Thorndike 1905. See also Wann 1997: 92-3, 98.

<sup>786</sup> Wann 1997: 98. See also Neil 1982; Neil, Anderson, and Sheppard 1981.

<sup>787</sup> The results of a study by Wann (1997: esp. 354) indicate that fans often attempt behaviours that they believe can influence the outcome of the competitions. Notably, this study found “a strong positive correlation” between the fan’s degree of identification with the team and their belief in their ability to influence the sporting events.

<sup>788</sup> Charioteers themselves might wear rings, amulets, or other charms believed to have some protective or performance-enhancing power. See, for instance, Bell 2014: 498. For the same purpose, charioteers would

Although not directly participating in the races, fans used similar tactics to call upon supernatural forces in the hope that these other-worldly powers were able to enact some influence over events that they alone could not. Such behaviour is significant not only for the sense of power and control that a fan seemed to gain over something that was considered so important, but also as evidence of the devotion fans who so clearly perceived of themselves as members of a team and part of the circus faction. In the desire to become more closely involved and to feel that they had some influence on the outcome of the races, fans petitioned the spirits to assist them and the success of their faction, often through the injury or impairment of the opposition.

There were, to be sure, numerous supernatural methods intended to positively assist a chariot, his team, or faction at large. A recipe recorded in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* outlines three Homeric verses that, if written on an iron tablet, could offer help in various situations, including keeping a charioteer undefeated.<sup>789</sup> Insofar as the use of curse tablets, as will be discussed below, was common among those highly invested in the races more directly, it is plausible that fans also deposited spells intended to help their favourites to the detriment of rival charioteers. Support for a chariot team's speed appears to be a common concern; this is not surprising, since speed was vital for success in any race. The third to fourth century Jewish magical text, *Sepher ha-Razim*, includes a spell to be used to ensure victory in a race by forcing horses to run even when they are

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adorn their horses with various apotropaic devices as well, such as the plumes on their heads, gemstones in their manes, and bells around their necks (D'Ambra 2007: 350; Dunbabin 1982: 83-4; Heintz 2001: 167; Langner 2001: nos. 1390-1404).

<sup>789</sup> *PGM* IV. 2145-2240.

tired.<sup>790</sup> The instructions require that one write the names of the horses and the spirits to be called upon along with the appropriate spell on a silver *lamella* and bury it at the circus in the racing lane of the team one wanted to win. Another third to fourth century victory charm instructs the user to inscribe a spell that will call upon the support of the god Hermes who, known for his speed, was a perfect source of aid to increase the speed of the circus horses.<sup>791</sup>

While the fundamental goal of these fans was to offer assistance to their favourites and positively influence their race, much of the extant evidence demonstrates that this was often done by attempting to negatively influence an opponent. In contrast to victory charms and other performance-enhancing spells, various recipes detail far more aggressive spells that seek to disturb the well-being and skill of racing competitors. For instance, a fourth century spell recipe provides instructions to restrain charioteers in a race.<sup>792</sup> It calls for the ritual drowning of a cat and the request for action and names of the targeted charioteers and horses written on a sheet of papyrus and buried with the animal. The instructions provide further details of the necessary ritual, including the invocation of chthonic deities at the burial site followed by the sprinkling of some of the water that had been used to drown the cat, either at the place the ritual was performed or in the circus

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<sup>790</sup> *Sepher ha-Razim* 3.32-43 (see translation by Morgan [1983: 64]). See also *P. Oxy.* 1478. It seems that the use of a silver tablet was intended to counteract those curses, often with a negative intended action, on an iron tablet.

<sup>791</sup> *PGM* VII. 919-924. The description suggests that it could be used to improve the speed of a human, boat, or horse. Another third-fourth century victory charm has been suggested as intended for a runner, however, some translations have read the language in the spell to mean horses and hooves, which suggests that the spell was actually meant to aid competitors in the chariot races (*PGM* VII. 390-393; see Translation by R. F. Hock in Betz 1986: 128).

<sup>792</sup> *PGM* III.1-164 (see esp. ll. 15-30) Trans. by J.M. Dillon in Betz 1986: 18-22.

stadium. Another example from the same period provides instructions for a binding spell that begins with the assertion that it is “a restraining [rite] for anything, works even on chariots. It also causes enmity and sickness, cuts down, destroys, and overturns, for [whatever] you wish”.<sup>793</sup> The user is required to engrave their desired action into a piece of lead and, after a process of consecrating it with fragrant substances, throw it into a body of water during the night.<sup>794</sup> In an effort to ensure that the appeal was answered by the spirits being invoked, it was vital that the rituals were followed with the requests for action written out clearly and sealed away, sunken in water or buried in the earth.<sup>795</sup>

The tablets described in these spell recipes and that were buried so as to take effect against the circus competitors are the *circus defixiones*, curse tablets that called upon *daimones* and spirits of the dead to hinder the performance of particular horses or charioteers by disempowering, injuring, or killing them. Typically, *defixiones* were written on thin lead sheets, folded, and often pierced through with a nail.<sup>796</sup> The text consisted of magic formulas, symbols, and prayers that called on the spirits to perform a particular deed and, when completed, curse tablets were buried in areas such as

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<sup>793</sup> PGM VII.429-58. Trans. Smith in Betz 1986: 129-30.

<sup>794</sup> The provided instructions also include key sections of text that must be included on the lead so as to call upon the appropriate *daimon*, in this instance, Osiris, including a list of his magical names.

<sup>795</sup> As will be noted below, the deposit locations played a role in connecting the living with the dead and sending the message to the various supernatural forces.

<sup>796</sup> Gager (1992: 18) discusses the purpose of sealing the curse by nails, rolling, or folding and the association with the ‘binding’ of the victim. While curses have been found on wood, ceramic, papyrus, and other materials, the most common material used were thin pieces of lead or lead alloys. Faraone (1991: 7) considers why lead was the common material used and posits that not only was it a cheap writing medium but also the cold and dark appearance of the metal could have been intended to call to mind the pallor of a corpse. See also Graf 1997: 133; Ogden 1999: 10-12. The size of curse tablets vary; while most seem to have been relatively small, only 5-6 cm wide if not smaller, some could be much larger and accommodated lengthy curses as well as images. A *circus defixio* from Rome measures 14 x 24 cm (App. No. 6), while one from Carthage measures 32 x 17 cm (App. No. 34).

cemeteries or dropped into a drainage pipe or well, in order to aid in access to and communication with spirits of the underworld.

Many curse tablets are known from throughout the Graeco-Roman world and number somewhere around 2000 individual tablets.<sup>797</sup> Included among the large corpus of known curse tablets are numerous athletic or sport-themed examples such as circus curses. Like other supernatural spells and charms used by sport fans, the intent of circus curses was to attempt to affect the performance of at least one competitor and have an impact on the outcome of the races as a result. The practice of using curse tablets by fans is a significant demonstration of fan investment in the races and the importance of their results.

In an effort to better consider this unique body of evidence, I have compiled a collection of published circus *defixiones* with a total of eighty-five examples from throughout the Roman world, with dates ranging from the first to early sixth century CE (Appendix).<sup>798</sup> Unfortunately, the content of many circus curses has not been published; in some instances this is because the tablets themselves have not been unrolled or deciphered or simply that a full report on the text has not yet been done.<sup>799</sup> The

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<sup>797</sup> Gordon 2013: 268. The text of many curse tablets are unavailable for study, whether having been lost, being too fragile to unroll, or too fragmentary to decipher and analyze. See Eidinow 2007: 141, 286 n. 12; Ogden 1999: 1-4.

<sup>798</sup> Many of these dates are tentative, with scholars proposing different dates for some; therefore, it is not possible to divide this examination of circus curses by date. This collection contains the principal biographical information concerning each circus *defixio*, such as its find location, appearance, and suggested date. An abbreviated bibliography for each tablet is also provided that includes sources for the tablet's original publication, and in which the original text is transcribed and/or translated. The association with the circus of some curses are still debated and thus, I have not included those in the official Appendix list; instead, they are recorded separately at the end of the Appendix. Unless otherwise indicated, translations of excerpts of circus curses in the section below are my own.

<sup>799</sup> For instance, more than eighty curse tablets have been found in the necropolis at Tyre, which is located just to the east of the local circus. While the proximity of the find location to the circus suggests that some

incomplete published record of all circus curses does put some limitations on the what can be included in the analysis of this study; however, the available evidence is still extensive and offers a great deal of information concerning the formula of circus curses and the intentions of the fans who used them. Through the survey of extant examples from across the Roman world, it is possible to identify common sites of deposit and a degree of formula in the structure and content of the curses. Moreover, the content of the curses demonstrates the personal investment of fans in the races, as they clearly name various competitors who could block the success of their favourites and call upon a breadth of supernatural forces not only to hinder their targets in competition but also to cause them pain. Fans stood outside the action of the races and yet developed pronounced feelings about them and sought to use whatever power at their disposal to become more closely involved. The use of curses was accepted among circus fans as a viable stratagem to participate in the races and affect their outcome.

#### A) LOCATIONS

Find locations of circus curses are recorded throughout the Roman world, with examples from Beirut, Apamea, Carthage, Rome, Hadrumetum, Astigi, Lepcis Magna, and Antioch.<sup>800</sup> Much like other categories of curse tablets, curses associated with the circus were typically buried in places near their target, often near or in the circus, or in a cemetery where they could come into contact with powers of the underworld and spirits

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of the curses may be associated with the circus, only one has been deciphered and determined to be unrelated to chariot racing (Heintz [1998: 339] attributes this information to David Jordan).

<sup>800</sup> A useful summary of the archaeological contexts of circus curses is provided by Heintz 1998.



of the dead.<sup>801</sup> Additionally, curses were deposited in water drains, which also had associations with demonic forces; one recipe for a circus curse calls for it to be placed in the drain of a bath building to ensure its effectiveness.<sup>802</sup> A curse could be placed in a burial, possibly added to an urn inside a *columbarium*, or rolled up and dropped through a terracotta libation tube. In so doing, the powers of the spirits that were called upon were expected to become more potent and the magic of the *defixiones* was believed to be initiated.<sup>803</sup> The deposit of curse tablets in places associated with the dead also took advantage of the miasma that they were understood to generate; contact between the dead and the tablets was thought to pollute the intended victims and thereby unlock the curse. Moreover, the spirits of those who had died a violent or untimely death were considered to be restless and to roam their burial places, with a sense of anger or bitterness over their unfortunate deaths that might make them more receptive to offering help to those who called on them.<sup>804</sup>

Of the eighty-five curse tablets in the dissertation collection, the findspots of seventy-two are recorded as a cemetery or other burial context such as in a tomb or *columbarium*, indicative of the importance placed on the proximity of curse tablets to locations inhabited by *daimones* and other chthonic forces.<sup>805</sup> Several of these circuses curses were found in Rome in a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini and outside the Porta

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<sup>801</sup> The burial of a curse tablet also ensured that it was not discovered and removed.

<sup>802</sup> *PGM* VII. 429-458. Indeed, six circus curse tablets are identified as having been found in a drain or fountain. Drain: App. Nos. 84 and 85 (Apamea). It has been posited that the two found in the drain may have shifted from their original location within the water channel. Fountain: App. Nos. 47-50 (Carthage) in the ‘fountain of a thousand amphora’, a freshwater spring in Carthage. See also Ogden 1999: 23

<sup>803</sup> Guarducci 1978: 254-5; Jordan 1985b: 241-2, 1990: 440.

<sup>804</sup> Ogden 1999: 16.

<sup>805</sup> App. Nos. 1-29, 31-46, 54-80.

Appia, each folded and placed inside marble and terracotta urns that contained the remains of the deceased.<sup>806</sup> These locations allowed for easy access to human remains for the improved potency and potential success of the curses. The Vigna Marini *columbarium* is also reported to have been one of the closest funerary complexes to the Circus Maximus and was well-positioned between the major circus and the Circus of Maxentius.<sup>807</sup> Additionally, two large collections of these curse tablets, one from a cemetery at Carthage and one from a cemetery at Hadrumetum, are recorded as having been very near to the circus of each city: 500 metres north-northeast of the circus at Carthage and 200 metres south of the circus at Hadrumetum.<sup>808</sup> This is not entirely unsurprising as circuses, like cemeteries, were typically situated at the edge of town with the intention of taking advantage of the open space beyond the highly populated areas. Such locations were likely considered prime areas for the deposit of curses as they benefitted both from the powers of the dead as well as from being close to the target location.<sup>809</sup> As it is framed by Heintz, the proximity between the burial and target location ensured the efficacy of the curse as it meant that the *daimon* only needed to travel a short distance to perform the requested task.<sup>810</sup>

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<sup>806</sup> App. Nos. 2-29. App. Nos. 1 and 31 are reported as having been found in other tombs at Rome.

<sup>807</sup> Heintz 1998: 338-9.

<sup>808</sup> Carthage: App. Nos. 33-46. Hadrumetum: App. Nos. 54-80. While most records for these curses from Carthage report them as having been found in a cemetery 500 m. from the circus, Ogden (1999: 24) reports the find locations as being in the circus.

<sup>809</sup> Approximately eighty curse tablets have been found in the necropolis at Tyre immediately to the east of the hippodrome; however, the only one that has been deciphered is not concerned with the circus. A curse tablet from Beirut (App. No. 83) is documented as having come from the area around the curved end of the circus at Beirut; however, the exact findspot is unknown and therefore it cannot be confirmed if it had been originally deposited in a grave or somewhere in the structure of the circus. (For original publication of Beirut curse tablet see Mouterde 1930: 106-24; *SEG* VII. 213.)

<sup>810</sup> Heintz 1998: 338.

It may be that the burial of a curse in the circus was considered the most efficient option, since the curse was thought to be in close contact with not only the target but also the venue in which the curse was to be enacted. Even so, there are comparatively far fewer circus curses found in Roman circuses than in burial contexts. We might consider that the type of space itself made it difficult for curses to be deposited and remain undisturbed in the circus. In contrast to a cemetery, in which the burial spaces were unlikely to be opened or unsettled, the ground of the circus arena was regularly churned up during the races and resurfaced ahead of competitions.<sup>811</sup> If a curse was not buried particularly deep in the track, it was liable to have been discovered and removed. Furthermore, it is possible that the space in and around some circuses were frequented to such a degree that it was difficult for many people to deposit a curse unseen. While the venue emptied on non-race days, it is probable that individuals sought to initiate curses in the days immediately prior to the competitions, a time when the circus was becoming busy with preparations ahead of the spectacle.<sup>812</sup> Moreover, as at the Circus Maximus in Rome, the shops attached to the circus undoubtedly drew in many people, which was further trouble for individuals attempting a clandestine burial of a curse in the circus. However, it is possible that some of the individuals who attempted to deposit curses in and around the circus were associated with the circus or the factions and, therefore, would likely have been permitted in the space without issue.<sup>813</sup>

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<sup>811</sup> The day's races were also interspersed with other performances that were liable to disturb the sand and require the track to be prepared again preceding the next race.

<sup>812</sup> See 'd. Targets' subsection below for the timing of the deposit of tablets and the performance of curse requests.

<sup>813</sup> There are various possible motivations for personnel of the factions to deposit circus curses, including being invested in the outcome of the races as a result of their employment, finances (such as a wager in

Despite the seemingly inherent difficulty in burying a curse in the circus, there are extant examples from different sites. The most examples have been found at Carthage, with thirteen curses uncovered in the area of the circus starting gates. However, only six of the thirteen have been unrolled, only three of which contain circus curses.<sup>814</sup> One circus curse was also found in the circus at Lepcis Magna, deposited in one of the starting stalls.<sup>815</sup> The starting area was a place of vulnerability where all the competitors were positioned immediately preceding a race. While in the starting stalls the horses could become restless, with various ancient sources noting the behaviour of eager horses hitting the gates with their heads and hooves.<sup>816</sup> Pliny the Elder reports an incident at the Secular Games of 47 CE, in which a charioteer for the Whites was thrown by his horses while still in the stall, while Silius Italicus describes another occasion in which a team of horses broke down their gate and their inexperienced driver was tossed.<sup>817</sup> A curse buried in a threshold was likely intended to affect the space beyond and one in the area of the circus starting gates was sure to trigger misfortune once released from the stalls if it had not yet taken effect. A poor start was sure to negatively impact the rest of the race for a chariot

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favour of or against their own faction), personal interest and support for the faction, or a combination of these and other motivations.

<sup>814</sup> App. Nos. 51-3. The other three that have been unrolled have no writing on them. See Jordan 1988: 120-134. The content of another *defixio* (App. A2) from Carthage, found in the *spoliarium* of the amphitheatre, has been suggested to refer to horses and the Red faction of the circus. These translations have not been confirmed and so this *defixio* cannot be confidently listed among the circus curses from Carthage.

<sup>815</sup> App. No. 81. The high level of preservation of the circus at Lepcis Magna allowed for a clear identification of the deposit location within the space of the starting gates, near the foundations of a masonry pier.

<sup>816</sup> E.g., Lucan 1.293-5; Ovid *Met.* 2.153-5, *Tr.* 5.9.29-30.

<sup>817</sup> Plin. *HN.* 8.160; Sil. *Pun.* 8.279. Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carm.* 23.325-30) refers to servants who stood in the stalls at the start of the races, likely with the task of holding the bridles of the horses and keeping them calm. Those with this job appear to have been called *moratores* (see *CIL* VI. 10046).

team; if the horses did not start quickly or got jostled among the other chariots, a team could fall behind quickly, if not even crash at the outset. It appears that the dangers of curses at the starting gates was well known as, even in a late fourth century Christian record of the life of Hilarion, Jerome asserts that consecrated water could be sprinkled on the gates as a defense against such spells.<sup>818</sup>

One other circus *defixio* that merits attention here was discovered in the circus at Antioch.<sup>819</sup> Much like the curses found at the starting gates of the Carthaginian circus, a small group curses tablets were located in the drains around the turning posts and central barrier of the Antioch circus; however, two have been unrolled and only one deciphered and confirmed as pertaining to the circus.<sup>820</sup> Although others may ultimately be determined to be circus curses as well, they are as of yet unconfirmed and so will not be addressed in this discussion.<sup>821</sup> Nevertheless, this one confirmed circus curse was buried at another important location on the circus track, at the barrier. As competitors raced down the length of the track and jockeyed for position, the high speeds could prove dangerous and, as has been seen, could result in chariots crashing into one another or the central barrier. Moreover, the turning posts at the ends of the central barrier were considered points of particular danger, since crashes were common at these locations

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<sup>818</sup> Jerome *Vit. Hil.* 20 (*Patrologia Latina* 23.38).

<sup>819</sup> App. No. 82.

<sup>820</sup> The other curse tablets found near the central barrier of the Antioch circus are included at the end of the Appendix as App. A3-6 among those examples that have not yet been confirmed.

<sup>821</sup> Several *defixiones* have been discovered in a well near the curved end of the hippodrome at Caesarea Maritima and, although they are yet to be read, it is highly possible that many of them are related to chariot racing (see Heintz 1998: 339). However, proximity to a circus cannot be used as conclusive evidence. While Heintz (1998: 340) suggests that three curse tablets discovered at Corinth might be related to chariot racing as their findspot has been posited as part of a circus, he also reports that David Jordan has read one of the tablets and has determined that it is not circus related (n. 20) (see App. A4).

where charioteers attempted tight turns. Given that a charioteer was already at risk in these places it is possible that a curse tablet deposited nearby took advantage of this and make an attack on a competitor where it had the potential for the greatest and most grievous effect. The vulnerability and danger in these locations within the circus as well as their inherent proximity to the target promised a more potent curse and a higher likelihood of its success.<sup>822</sup>

## B) INVOCATIONS

Spirits that were called upon to lend their power to a curse often were considered the untimely dead, those who had died prematurely or violently. The circumstances surrounding their deaths meant that their spirits were not at peace, and were restless and vengeful, and thereby willing to help fulfill the curse being requested.<sup>823</sup> While the burial of curses in locations associated with the dead was meant to call on their power, at the outset of many curses there is an invocation summoning spirits of the dead as well as various deities and *daimones*. In the text, the dead person, often in whose grave or tomb the curse tablet has been deposited, is left unnamed, while the deities and supernatural powers are appealed to by their proper names and epithets. Most extant circus curses do not address gods that were officially honoured at the games, such as Consus, Sol, or

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<sup>822</sup> One circus *defixio* (App. No. 30) was found in Rome beneath the floor of a *taberna*. This deposit location will be discussed below as it pertains to the target of the curse. It may be that the location was chosen because it was near the residence of the intended victim or somewhere else that he frequented. Insofar as the location was in close proximity to the targeted charioteer the potency of the curse against him was to increase.

<sup>823</sup> D'Ambra 2007: 347.

Victory.<sup>824</sup> The variety of deities and other forces called on suggests that cursers were willing to turn to any being that could potentially assist them. In some cases, the invoking list of deities is longer than any other part of the curse, thereby demonstrating the great importance of successfully gaining support to enact the curse. By calling on so many and different forces there was the potential to add to the power of the curses, ensuring that at least one of those invoked would respond to the request for action, even increasing the strength of the curse if multiple forces responded.<sup>825</sup> These invocations also evoke a prayer formula, in which all the gods and powers of a place are referred to by name to ensure that no one felt neglected and would seek revenge as a result.<sup>826</sup>

A lead tablet found in a tomb on the Via Appia near the Porta S. Sebastiano in Rome was inscribed on both sides with a lengthy curse.<sup>827</sup> Throughout the curse different forces are invoked, requesting the powers of various cultures and religious practices, including such figures as Judeo-Christian archangels, Osiris and Phri-Ra from Egypt, a Phrygian goddess, and a nymph goddess.<sup>828</sup> No deity seems to take priority among them as they could each serve the intended purpose; the curser appears to have no preference as he is willing to look to any source for support in his goal. The curse also opens with an appeal to a figure identified as EULAMÔN, a magical name that is repeated three times in

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<sup>824</sup> Zaleski 2014: 599-600. The association of Nemesis to the circus remains a subject of debate. Hornum 1993: 55-6 asserts that the association of Nemesis to the circus is unique to a passage from Lydus (*De Mensibus* 1.12) and that there is no evidence for the presence of Nemesis at any excavated Roman circuses. Cf. Humphrey 1986: 669-70, n. 51. Zaleski (2014: 600 n. 8) identifies only one curse tablet addressed to Nemesis, found near the military amphitheater in Caerleon, Wales.

<sup>825</sup> It is possible that, in some instances, the repetition of names was intended to list all the names or variations of a particular god in an effort to honour the deity fully, avoid any offence, and have a better chance at gaining divine support.

<sup>826</sup> Graf 1997: 148.

<sup>827</sup> App. No. 1.

<sup>828</sup> For more on these identifications, see Ogden 2002: 214.

the curse, to restrain the targeted charioteer.<sup>829</sup> What is more, the name EULAMÔN appears in at least two other curse tablets from Rome as well as one from Beirut.<sup>830</sup> It is unconfirmed to who or what exactly this refers, with theories ranging from a connection to the Egyptian god Ammon, to a derivation of a West Semitic or Assyrian form of the term ‘eternal’, to an altered form of the Greek command “Destroy the body (of my enemy)!”.<sup>831</sup> In two curses the name appears combined with an imperative command as ‘EULAMÔN restrain’, and also is identified as ‘holy EULAMÔN’, which sustains the view that it refers to a deity of some form, whether the Egyptian god Ammon or another.<sup>832</sup>

In a curse tablet from Carthage nearly the entire tablet is filled with the invocation; only perhaps the last fifth of the text at most addresses the targets and the desired influences to be had on them.<sup>833</sup> The majority of deities called upon in this curse are not identifiable, as they appear among *vores magicae*, magical words, some made of mysterious strings of letters that may have only been known to the professionals who prepared the tablets.<sup>834</sup> While in most curse tablets it cannot be confirmed whether the strings of letters are names or other magical words, in this Carthaginian curse each name is followed by a brief description of the god who has been invoked, such as NEICHAROPLEX “the god who holds the power of the places down beneath”,

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<sup>829</sup> On the second occasion the figure is referred to as ‘holy Eulamôn’.

<sup>830</sup> App. Nos. 1, 10, 30, 83. While the full name EULAMÔN does not appear in the text of App. No. 30, various wing formations of letters in columns on the tablet appear to be based on ‘EULAMÔN’.

<sup>831</sup> Preisendanz 1972: 17-18; Wunsch 1898: 83; Youtie and Bonner 1937: 62-63. The theory of EULAMÔN as a variant of the Greek command suggests that the Greek letters *sôma lue* have been reversed to read *eulamôs*

<sup>832</sup> In App. Nos. 1 and 10. In App. No. 10 EULAMÔN is invoked directly by the individual behind the curse, with “I ask you, holy EULAMÔN...”. Cf. App. No. 83.

<sup>833</sup> App. No. 43.

<sup>834</sup> See Miller 1986: 481-505; Ogden 1999: 46-50; Tambiah 1968: 175-208.



AROUBAARZAGRAN “the god of Necessity”, and BLABLEISPHTHEIBAL “the firstborn god of Earth”.<sup>835</sup> None of the figures mentioned seem to have any direct association with the circus, horses, or competition; the closest is the call to “holy Hermes”, perhaps as a result of his speed either to hurry in enacting the curse or in relation to the speed of horses and chariots on the track that the curse wishes to hinder. The curser calls upon gods of the heavens, earth, and underworld, seemingly looking to any and all spheres of influence that might be useful. As the list continues a number of deities are also described by the favours that they had given to mortals in the past, including NEGEMPSENPUENIPE “the god who gives thinking to each person as a favour”, ECHETAROPSIEU “the god who granted vision to all men as a favour” and CHEAUNXIN “who granted as a favour to men movements by the joints of the body”.<sup>836</sup> Perhaps the references to the aid that these gods had given before was included with the hope that, by reminding them, they would do so again. It is also possible that the mention of these particular previous acts by the gods was intentional as each addresses an area targeted by the circus curses. Having summoned the help of gods who aided the minds, vision, and joints of mankind, the curses made at the end of the text directly reflect on these areas, requesting that the gods,

“bind every limb, every sinew, the shoulders, the wrists, and the ankles...Torture their thoughts, their minds, and their senses so that they do not know what they are doing. Pluck out their eyes so that they cannot see...”<sup>837</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> App. No. 43. Trans. Gager 1992: no. 10.

<sup>836</sup> Trans. Gager 1992: no. 10.

<sup>837</sup> App. No. 43 (ll. 50-58). Trans. Gager 1992: no. 10. The language of the curse requests will be discussed below.

Individual circus curses are not confined to calling upon deities of one region and instead were open to request the assistance of figures from various cults. In turn, it is difficult to identify any similarities in the invocations by location, as many curse tablets, no matter their find location, begin with a series of *voces magicae* and repeat some of the same forms, while other appearances of *voces magicae* utilize entirely different forms with no apparent geographical explanation. The resulting assemblage of invocations in circus *defixiones* demonstrates the willingness of cursers to look to any divine force that could prove helpful in reaching their goals.

### C) CURSE REQUESTS

Although the exact details differ among examples, the primary goal of circus curses was to hinder the performance of charioteers and/or their horses by making them immobile or ineffectual. The majority of curse tablets that have been found, after invoking the appropriate forces, make an appeal to ‘bind’ or ‘restrain’ their intended target before offering any more specific desires or intentions for the curse.<sup>838</sup> The emphasis on forms of binding was intended to confuse and constrain the actions of the targets, thereby ensuring that they did not win the race and possibly improving the odds for the curser’s favoured faction. Calls to bind the limbs of the curse’s victims are most common and often are emphatically repeated with requests to bind the sinews, the wrists, and more.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>838</sup> This is also likely the reason why the writing itself on the curses is often jumbled or twisted and written in different directions over the tablet. See, for instance, Ogden 1999: 29-30, 2002: 210. The binding of the target is occasionally emphasized with the inclusion of drawings on the tablet that depict a figure bound and/or pieced with nails. Drawings are attested on the original *defixiones* of App. Nos. 1-12, 15, 17, 19, 25-30, 33, 34, 40, 45, 53, 69, 71-2, 83.

<sup>839</sup> E.g., App. Nos. 42 (l. 6), 43 (ll. 50-1), 83 (esp. ll. 30-2), and 84 (ll. 1-4)

A curse from Carthage, which names circus horses as its targets rather than charioteers, appeals to the *daimones* to hold the horses back and entangle them so that they cannot move.<sup>840</sup> It is clear that, in this instance, the focus is on the mobility of the horses and the importance of their speed in the running of a race; if the horses themselves were bound and held back, the targeted chariot team, and faction at large, were sure to be defeated. Other curses ask for similar binding and detainment of their targets in lengthy lists that suggest numerous ways for the spirits to influence them. A circus curse from Rome makes an appeal to holy angels and holy names before proceeding to a list of imperatives against a charioteer and his horses, asking that the spirits “bind, tie up, block, strike, overthrow, harm, destroy, kill, and shatter Eucherios the charioteer and all his horses...”<sup>841</sup> Much like the invocations of numerous supernatural powers to aid in the curse, the provision of such a list ensures that there are many possible ways the spirits could help and that at least one will be successful.

Not only does another example from Carthage call for these same forms of binding as well as other cursing actions, but it also restates the request that the spirits of the dead “take away their victory, entangle their feet, hinder them, hobble them” twice in the text of the curse.<sup>842</sup> This is by no means the only circus curse to emphasize the

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<sup>840</sup> App. No. 34 (ll. 27-32).

<sup>841</sup> App. No. 30 (ll. 54-6).

<sup>842</sup> App. No. 38 (ll. 10-12, 32-4; cf. ll. 46-9). The body parts specified in the curses are also relevant to the theme of the request, as binding the limbs of a charioteer would include his arms, thereby hampering his ability to hold the reins or a whip, while the restraint of a target’s legs relates directly to the speed and mobility necessary for a race. See Preisendanz 1972: 10-11. Calls to bind the legs of a charioteer could be intended to block a variety of movements, including the driver’s ability simply to arrive at the competition or to stand safely on the chariot. Among other methods of victory, an inscription (*CIL* VI. 10047b) includes the phrase ‘*pedibus ad quadrigam*’, which has been hypothesized as a reference to a unique racing format in which a charioteer was required to dismount his chariot and run a lap on foot. See Friedländer 1979: IV,

intended action of the curse by saying it more than once; for instance, a circus curse from Hadrumetum makes multiple requests for *daimones* to bind the feet of the targeted horses so that they cannot run.<sup>843</sup> Even one particular action may be repeated to assert its importance to the powers that had been invoked. Two other circus curses from Hadrumetum reiterate the wish for their targets to fall through the use of the verb *cado* in different forms upwards of nine times in a curse.<sup>844</sup> The emphatic repetition of the curse requests illustrates the intensity of the curser's desire for success and the concern for clarity when appealing to various divine powers.

There are surviving examples of circus curses that sought to inflict other, often more brutal, physical effects that could lead to failure at the circus. Select Carthaginian curses ask that their target's vision be damaged, one such curse inviting forces to blind its victims and the other urging that their eyes be plucked out entirely.<sup>845</sup> The two circus curses identified at Apamea include the eyes in the list of things for the invoked spirits to bind, with the goal of blinding and disorienting their victims and hampering their performance in the races.<sup>846</sup> The physical results of these curses, if implemented successfully, were likely also anticipated to cause great disturbance and even pain, as the targets were suddenly struck by severe physical ailments. Others seek the

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152; Harris 1972: 204; Matz 1985: 34-36. If such a race was set to take place there would be ample reason for the limbs, legs, or feet of the charioteer to be the focus of the attack in a curse.

<sup>843</sup> App. No. 80 (ll. 11-13, 17-18, 23). See also App. No. 1 (ll. 9-10, 20-1, 46), which asks for its target to become 'bedridden'.

<sup>844</sup> App. Nos. 54 (ll. 3-12) and 67 (ll. 6-7, 13, 17-18). The verb *cado* (*cadat/cadant*) is used nine times in Cat No. 54 and at least eight times in App. No. 67. As App. No. 67 is quite fragmentary it is possible that the original text included more uses of *cado*. The verb *cado* is seen in numerous circus curses, including others from Hadrumetum (E.g., App. Nos. 55 and 68).

<sup>845</sup> App. Nos. 35 (ll. 58-62), 38 (ll. 47-51), 42 (ll. 13-14) and 43 (ll. 57-8).

<sup>846</sup> App. Nos. 84 (ll. 2-3) and 85 (l. 2).

dismemberment of their victims, such as a curse from Rome that calls for supernatural forces to take action and make the charioteer Artemios “headless, footless and powerless”.<sup>847</sup> The one circus curse tablet known from Beirut similarly goes beyond the rather common requests for binding of the feet, hands, and sinews of the targets, and also calls on supernatural forces to “attack, bind, overturn, cut up, chop into pieces the horses and charioteers...”.<sup>848</sup> Despite their possibly shocking nature, the fans who made these requests undoubtedly found logic in such extremes as they were sure to be effective in impeding an opponent.

With such requests for dismemberment there is a clear implication that the targets of these curses would die as a result. Indeed, in some extant examples that is unmistakably the desired outcome as the curser requests the target’s death. A curse from Hadrumetum appears quite forceful in its demands of the *daimones* to torture and kill circus horses and kill their drivers, asserting that they must “not leave a breath in their bodies”.<sup>849</sup> There is no doubt left in the curse that the ultimate intention was the deaths of these competitors. Another example from Hadrumetum parallels the current state of the dead spirit who has been invoked for the curse and the desired state of the curse’s victim, stating “let him perish and fall, just as you lie [here] prematurely dead...”.<sup>850</sup> It is possible that the curser hoped that, with its untimely death having been called to mind, the invoked spirit would be willing to direct its anger and desire for vengeance at the

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<sup>847</sup> Rome: App. No. 10 (ll. 10-13). Trans. Gager 1992: no. 14.

<sup>848</sup> App. No. 83 (ll. 19-21). Trans. Gager 1992: no. 5.

<sup>849</sup> App. No. 71 (ll. 9-10). See also App. Nos. 30 and 72.

<sup>850</sup> App. No. 80 (ll. 25-7) Trans. Gager 1992: no. 11.

target. After asking that its target charioteer, Kardelos, be bedridden in torment, a *defixio* from Rome furthers its curse by calling for Kardelos to “suffer the penalty of an evil death and expire within five days”.<sup>851</sup> Not only is the appeal for the death of the charioteer made abundantly clear and emphatically repeated throughout the text, but the curser also asks that it occur within a short period of time. Perhaps Kardelos was set to race within a week’s time, thereby making it necessary for the curse to take effect before then.<sup>852</sup>

A curse could direct forces against not only the body of a victim, but also his spirit and mind. Requests for psychological torture include haunting the target’s dreams, twisting their heart and soul, or torturing his thoughts and senses, all with the intent of making the affected individual confused and unable to complete the race successfully.<sup>853</sup> In these instances the sense of binding and twisting typical of curse tablets and often seen in relation to the physical constraint of the victim is applied to psychological and spiritual areas that had the potential for a great effect. It was also possible for a curse to request that the victim become unwell, unable to eat, drink, or sleep ahead of the races, by targeting practical ways to diminish the strength of competitors well before the race. One curse from Apamea follows many of the usual requests for binding the limbs of the targeted charioteers but continues with specific suggestions to limit the quality of life for the charioteers and asks that, “from this very hour, from today, may they not eat or drink

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<sup>851</sup> App. No. 1 (ll. 11-14, 22-24 [‘five days’ not repeated in these lines], 46-8).

<sup>852</sup> See ‘d. Targets’ subsection below.

<sup>853</sup> For example, App. No. 38 (l. 9) (Carthage) calls for various actions, including the binding of the target’s soul, while App. No. 42 (ll. 14-15) (Carthage) requests that the spirits “twist their soul and heart so that they cannot breathe”. App. No. 43 (ll. 55-7) (Carthage) bids a lengthy list of deities to “torture their thoughts, their minds, and their senses so that they do not know what they are doing”.

or sleep”.<sup>854</sup> While again concentrated on influencing the race, here the curser did not seek a physical attack at the time of the competition, but rather an attack that would occur in the days preceding it. The intent of these curses was to affect the life of a target beyond the circus and make him endure prolonged suffering.

Aside from seeking the more general physical and psychological impairment or torment of their victims, cursers demonstrate their knowledge of the sport of racing by making requests that are specific to moments in the competition, such as the start or dangerous turns, and other aspects particular to the sport, including the popular maneuvers of chariot teams. As has been shown, a strong start out of the gates was vital to run a good race. It is thereby understandable that circus fans directed their curses to take action when the targets were in the starting gates or as they were being released. A curse tablet from Carthage hopes for its targets to be hobbled so that “they are not able to run or walk about, or win, or go out of the starting gates, or advance either on the racecourse or track”, a sentiment that is repeated twice in the curse.<sup>855</sup> Moreover, a curse from Apamea summons the spirits of those who have died prematurely, those who have died violently, and the god Hephaestus to appear to the competitors in the starting gates “at the moment when they are about to compete”, with the intent to spook the horses and cause trouble for the team before they are released.<sup>856</sup> It is manifest that the horses were one of the more unpredictable elements in the races and it was not guaranteed that a

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<sup>854</sup> App. No. 84 (ll. 5-7). Trans. Gager 1992: no. 6. Similar commands to hinder eating, drinking, and sleeping appear in love spells (E.g., *PGM* IV.354-6).

<sup>855</sup> App. No. 38 (ll. 13-16). Trans. Gager 1992: no. 9. See also App. Nos. 30, 35, 84.

<sup>856</sup> App. No. 84 (ll. 8-9). Trans. Gager 1992: no. 6.

charioteer would be able to control his team.<sup>857</sup> An attack on the team's horses at the starting gates was a strategic choice on the part of the curser to change the state of affairs before the race got underway.

Akin to the interest in the starting gates as an important and potentially vulnerable place in the race, these same curses advise the *daimones* to attack their targets at the turning posts of the track. The tight turns around the central barrier of the racetrack were perhaps the most dangerous points in a race; experienced drivers sought to make the turn as close to the post as possible with the aim of gaining the inside lane and having to cover the shortest distance. However, this maneuver could lead to the chariot either striking the post or, if making the high speed turn close together with other competitors, striking another chariot, and thereby bring about a crash (*naufigia*).<sup>858</sup> As noted in chapter 2, a crash was a constant danger that all charioteers had to face; the level of the charioteer's experience did not matter, since it could occur unexpectedly and significantly change the outcome of the race.<sup>859</sup> With such inherent danger and potential for influence on the outcome of the race in the space around the turning posts, it is understandable that curses directed their force to this area with the intent to make the targeted chariot team crash. A curse from Carthage makes this clear as it asks that the spirits bind the team so that they are neither able to leave the starting gates "nor to turn around the terminals", and specifies the desired result that the spirits "throw them on the ground so that they fall everywhere

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<sup>857</sup> See n. 321.

<sup>858</sup> See n. 20.

<sup>859</sup> See 'Betting on the Races' in Chapter 2.



in the racecourse, but especially around the terminals”.<sup>860</sup> Another example, also from Carthage, directs the full force of the curse on the chariot to crash in the race and asks that the spirits,

“snatch them up from their chariots and twist them to the ground so that they alone fall, dragged along all over the hippodrome, especially at the turning points, with damage to their body, with the horses whom they drive”.<sup>861</sup>

In a fragmentary simile Cicero calls to mind this physical violence: “as an ill-trained charioteer is thrown from his chariot, ground, lacerated and dashed to pieces”.<sup>862</sup> Cicero’s use of such imagery suggests that it was commonly understood as a typical part of the circus and something with which the Roman audience could easily engage. Undoubtedly when at the races fans had the thought of possible crashes and the devastation that they could bring in their minds and, when creating a curse, sought such an outcome for their targets.<sup>863</sup>

Certain circus curses also reveal significant knowledge of the sport by referring to race maneuvers in their attacks. When the results of a race were recorded, it was often specified if the victor had held first position throughout the race (*occupavit et vicit*), if he had passed the pack (*successit et vicit*) or if he had seized the first position at the last moment (*eripuit et vicit*). This terminology appears in the lengthy inscription honouring the charioteer Diocles that includes a full record of the charioteer’s many wins and his methods of victory.<sup>864</sup> As was discussed in Chapter 3, the inclusion of this information in

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<sup>860</sup> App. No. 35 (ll. 49-50, 66-76).

<sup>861</sup> App. No. 38 (ll. 52-73).

<sup>862</sup> The fragment is attributed to Cicero’s *De Republica* 2.68 in Ziegler’s edition (1969). See Lee-Stecum 2006: 225; Toner 1995: 43.

<sup>863</sup> App. No. 71 (ll.8-9) (Hadrumetum) demands that the *daimones* kill the targeted charioteers in a crash.

<sup>864</sup> *CIL* VI. 10048 = *ILS* 5287. Cf. *CIL* VI. 10050 = *ILS* 5285. See n. 487 and 488.

a public inscription to be read by fans of the races implies that these maneuvers were known by the public and recognized for their role in the progress of a race. It is evident that these were typical tactics in a race and therefore theoretically, if one was able to stop a charioteer from making these moves, one could prevent that charioteer's victory. A curse from Rome demonstrates this understanding of the competition and, after a list of commands to bind, harm, and even kill the charioteer Eucherios and his horses, the text shifts to a series of negative subjunctive forms that read:

“Let the starting gates not [open] properly. Let him not compete quickly. Let him not pass. Let him not squeeze over. Let him not win. Let him not make the turn properly. Let him not receive the honours. Let him not squeeze over and overpower. Let him not come from behind and pass but instead let him collapse, let him be bound, let him be broken, and let him drag behind by your power”.<sup>865</sup>

Here the curser seems to have addressed all possible maneuvers that could be employed for the Eucherios to win. The curser begins with a series of negative requests that address the key moments of the race from the starting gates to the finish line and petitions the spirits to hinder Eucherios at every stage. In addition, after asking that the charioteer not win, the curser outlines all possible manners of victory that must be stopped. The language of the curse then turns to positive requests as the curser suggests a typical binding of the charioteer as well as a violent crash. It appears that it was not only Eucherios' defeat that the curser sought, but also his physical torment and possibly embarrassment if he were indeed to fall and be dragged behind his own chariot.

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<sup>865</sup> App. No. 30 (ll. 57-60). Trans. Gager 1992: no. 15.

In a similar fashion, one of the two circus curses from Apamea, after calling on the spirits of untimely dead and the god Hephaestus to scare the horses in their starting stalls, asks:

“may they not squeeze over, may they not collide, may they not extend, may they not force (us) out, may they not overtake, may they not break off (in a new direction?)<sup>866</sup> for the entire day when they are about to race. May they be broken, may they be dragged (on the ground), may they be destroyed...”.<sup>867</sup>

Just as seen in the previous example, here the curser begins with a series of negative requests that address all possible tactics known to be used by charioteers, in an attempt to block a win for the targets and secure a different outcome.<sup>868</sup> Again, the curser follows the appeals for hindrance in the progress of the race with additional possibilities to befall the targets, including that they be dragged on the racetrack. In each instance the curser is very clear about what needs to happen and demonstrates an authentic understanding of the competition through the identification of the common racing maneuvers. While the execution of the negative demands could be enough to ensure the target’s defeat, the addition of calls for their physical injury is suggestive of a greater emotional involvement in the affair on the part of the curser. It was not enough that the chariot team was impeded during the race but that it was brutally defeated and perhaps would not return as competition to ever rival the curser’s own favourites.

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<sup>866</sup> Gager 1992: 58 n. 52 points out that the use of ‘μη περικλάσωσιν’ (“may they not break off”) could refer to a chariot breaking away with greater speed or breaking away around the sharp turns of the turning posts.

<sup>867</sup> App. No. 84 (ll. 9-12). Trans. Gager 1992: no. 6.

<sup>868</sup> This curse targets Porphyrius, Hapsicrates and “his codrivers” of the Blues.

## D) THE TARGETS

### I. WHO

Although there are particular invocations and curse requests found in multiple curses, these aspects of the curse formula can differ a great deal among curses, and perhaps the most consistent inclusion in circus curses is the identification of a target.<sup>869</sup> No matter what else was added to the tablet, it seems that the only truly necessary part of a circus curse was the names of those that were meant to be cursed. While the targets of circus *defixiones* were almost entirely charioteers and/or their horses, how many targets are named and in what way does vary considerably.

Numerous examples survive in which the list of names given in the curse is short, in some cases naming no more than four charioteers and a small selection of horses to go with them, possibly each charioteer's lead horse or a few of the best from the chariot teams.<sup>870</sup> Moreover, some circus curses identify only one charioteer and his horses whom the curser wanted the spirits to attack.<sup>871</sup> As many races involved more than one chariot team from each faction, the naming of only one target rather than including any and all potentially relevant names suggests that that charioteer stood out to the curser in some way. Perhaps the fan behind the curse chose the individual driver as he represented a star charioteer for a rival faction and as such, was a dangerous competitor for their own

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<sup>869</sup> A curse from Astigi (App. No. 32) includes neither an invocation to the dead or other supernatural forces nor any verbs of cursing; it is instead comprised solely a list of targets.

<sup>870</sup> E.g., App. Nos. 1, 7, 10, 30, 33, 36, 42-3, 53, 69, 71, 80-1, 84-5. In many cases it is difficult to provide a conclusive number of names due to the fragmentary nature of some curses.

<sup>871</sup> E.g., App. Nos. 1, 10, 30, 42, 53, 69, 81.

favoured team.<sup>872</sup> As will be discussed below, some curse tablets include a sort of deadline in their curses by requesting that the spirits take action ‘tomorrow’ or another specified day. With this in mind it is plausible that, through advertisements and other means, fans were aware of the line-up of competitors for the upcoming races and thereby made their curses as specific as possible. If a specific charioteer was known to be competing against his faction, a fan might choose to create a curse unique to that competition and ensure that that charioteer would not be a threat. It is also likely that this specificity was particularly pertinent for those who placed a wager on the race and desired to secure its outcome in their favour.

One example from Rome makes its single target clear by repeating the name of one charioteer, Kardelos, ten times throughout the curse.<sup>873</sup> Akin to the emphatic repetition of curse requests discussed above, the repetition of the target’s name, which appears in various curses, calls to mind the incantatory nature of the text and was likely intended to focus the powers of the invoked spirits on the target.<sup>874</sup> If the curse was to work it was vital that it find the correct victim and therefore it was a practical choice for a curser to be repetitive in this way.<sup>875</sup> Yet the curse from Rome not only repeats Kardelos’ name ten times, but on two occasions also includes a series of adjectives ahead of his

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<sup>872</sup> If the best driver in an opposing faction, the suppression of that charioteer might also have a negative effect on the rest of the faction.

<sup>873</sup> App. No. 1 (ll. 6, 24, 42, 44-5, 47, 57, 61, 66, 78, 82).

<sup>874</sup> Numerous curses repeat one or more of the targets’ names. E.g., App. Nos. 1-7, 10-12, 31, 35-6, 38-42, 54, 57, 64-6, 68, 80.

<sup>875</sup> It is also possible that, chiefly in lengthy curses, there were certain names that beared repeating as they were considered to be a greater threat in the upcoming race. In a curse from Hadrumetum (App. No. 54), the names of four horses targeted in a list of approximately thirty-five horses are repeated two to four times. Perhaps these horses were known to be particularly fast and so were thought to be dangerous competitors. Similar lists of names appear in App. No. 55 and 56.

name, calling Kardelos impious, lawless, and accursed. While the repetition of the charioteer's name does demonstrate an emphatic restatement to ensure the spirits were certain of their target, the addition of the adjectives is indicative of more pronounced feelings about Kardelos. Indeed, this curse has been addressed previously in regard to the curse requests made, as the curser repeatedly called for the torment and "evil death" of the charioteer. Such language creates a picture of a curser who is emotionally invested and even angry at Kardelos. This is not necessarily from personal contact with the charioteer but rather feasibly represents the passion of a fan who identifies with the sport so highly as to make the situation quite personal and view Kardelos as the villainous enemy. Perhaps Kardelos was a well known charioteer for an opposing faction or had defeated the fan's favourite in recent memory; indeed, there may not have been a notable instigating incident and instead, Kardelos simply represented the "other" who stood between the fan's own faction and victory.

Another example from Rome seeks to curse the charioteer Eucherios and all of his horses and to block his chance at victory in the next day's races.<sup>876</sup> While the curse itself is not uncharacteristically personal or aggressive against Eucherios, the findspot of the *defixio* is unique among the circus curses. This particular curse tablet was neither in a cemetery nor near the circus, but instead was found under the floor of a *taberna* in a residential neighbourhood on the Quirinal.<sup>877</sup> It is conceivable that this was a curse of proximity and that, rather than being buried where the Eucherios competed, it was located

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<sup>876</sup> App. No. 30.

<sup>877</sup> The curse tablet was buried with human remains which would have served to connect the curse with the underworld and spirits of the dead.

in another place associated more personally with the charioteer.<sup>878</sup> Perhaps Eucherios was known to frequent the *taberna* or he lived nearby or in the upper stories of the *insula*; either possibility indicates that the curser knew a great deal about this charioteer outside of the circus. By making this curse tablet more personal in its burial location, it is probable that the proximity to the target was also believed to make the curse more potent and more likely to take effect ahead of the competition. It was important to be clear in a curse and as specific as possible when directing the spirits at one's target in an effort to ensure success.

However, it seems that, in many cases, it was difficult for cursers to be as specific as those mentioned above, and instead the better option was to include as many names as possible in the hopes that the curse would successfully strike at least one victim. A Carthaginian curse makes a clear attempt to be precise and names four charioteers of the Red faction and follows their names with those of their horses, listed one to three names at a time.<sup>879</sup> It is plausible that the names were grouped in this fashion to identify different chariot teams or particular horses paired together or with certain drivers in a further attempt to be as clear as possible for the spirits that had been invoked. After a list of horses the curser adds, "and any other horse teamed with them", an idea that is reiterated at the conclusion of the curse that reads: "If he should ride any other horse instead of them, or if some other horse is teamed with these, let them [not] outdistance

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<sup>878</sup> Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.69.5) tells of such spells of proximity, asserting that lead tablets naming Germanicus were found in the floors and walls of his house in Antioch along with ashes and charred bones. See also Suet. *Calig.* 3; Dio Cass. 57.18).

<sup>879</sup> App. No. 43.

[their foes] lest they ride to victory”.<sup>880</sup> It is apparent that the curser was trying to be specific in this area even when he was unsure and so chose to include the possibility in the curse that the names may be incorrect and that there may be other horses in the chariot team that must be attacked as well or instead. Yet, unlike other curses that distinguish one clear target, this curse remains open to attack multiple chariot teams of the Reds. It is probable that the curser did not have one driver to single out and instead simply sought the failure of the Reds in general, thereby naming four teams, all that were set to race for the Reds in an upcoming day of competition.<sup>881</sup>

Indeed, some circus *defixiones* do not seek to narrow down their victims and include a very lengthy list of horses and/or charioteers to be targeted.<sup>882</sup> Two circus curses from Carthage list approximately twenty-eight horses, a curse from Antioch and another from Beirut each name at least thirty-five targets, while eleven more curses from Hadrumetum name more than twenty-six targets each.<sup>883</sup> It is not particularly surprising that circus curses targeted horses as well as charioteers; while the charioteer drove and directed the team, he would find no success if any or all of the horses were unable or unwilling to follow his commands and run fast enough. In this way the horses represented a vital element of a chariot team that if overpowered could assure its defeat. The inclusion of the names of horses alone demonstrates how famous they could become for their role in racing victories, even possibly gaining popularity in their own right,

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<sup>880</sup> App. No. 43 (ll. 61-2, 69-78). Trans. Gager 1992: no. 10.

<sup>881</sup> As will be discussed below, the date of November 8<sup>th</sup> is specified for the curse to take effect.

<sup>882</sup> E.g., App. Nos. 31, 34-5, 38, 48, 50, 54-68, 82.

<sup>883</sup> Carthage: App. Nos. 34 and 35; Antioch: App. No. 82; Beirut: App. No. 83; Hadrumetum: App. Nos. 54-58, 60-1, 64-6, 68. As will be seen below, some of these curses from Hadrumetum targeted upwards of fifty circus competitors.



which also further explains how fans were able to name them in their curses.<sup>884</sup> The lack of specificity in the curses concerning which horses were to be cursed increased the likelihood that the curse would still be effectual if there was a change of chariot teams; a fan could list on a curse all the horses he knew from the faction's stable of horses and be assured that among them were the horses that would in fact be racing. Similarly, the horses are typically identified in association with their driver, often resulting in at least six charioteers being targeted with the horses in the curse.<sup>885</sup> It is possible that many curses were written in this open manner because it was not known who precisely would be competing in the upcoming races. As the goal of the circus curse was to hinder the opposition and thereby aid a favoured charioteer, team, or faction, it was important to be able to identify who that opposition was. In turn, if the curser did not know who was going to be racing, it is understandable that he might choose simply to name the opposing faction or to list as many members of the rival faction as seemed relevant. Indeed, two curses from Hadrumetum call for action against seven or eight drivers and fifty to sixty horses each.<sup>886</sup> The lists of names opened a field of targets for the *daimones* to attack and, while it likely was preferred if all of the opposing charioteers and horses were struck by the curse, the sheer number of names presented the opportunity that the spirits would be able to bind at least one. From what is known of the fierce devotion of fans to certain

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<sup>884</sup> See 'Horses' in Chapter 3.

<sup>885</sup> Some curses appear to only target horses. E.g., App. Nos. 33, 47-9, 54-6, 82.

<sup>886</sup> App. Nos. 65 and 66. App. Nos. 57, 58 and 68 are nearly as large, with seven drivers and forty to forty-seven horses listed as potential victims in each curse.

factions, it seems that there was a general desire to see an opposing faction lose, no matter which particular opposing competitor was defeated.

As has been said, most circus curses target charioteers and/or their horses and refer to them by name to ensure that the spirits bind the correct victims. In many cases the identification of charioteers and their horses is clarified by including the faction to which they belonged; one or more factions are named in at least thirty-eight of the catalogued examples.<sup>887</sup> It is also highly likely that the faction colour was included this often not only for to be specific but also because the faction organizations were the basis of the substantial partisanship of the circus. Devoted circus fans defined themselves fundamentally by the faction that they supported and in turn, those they did not.<sup>888</sup> Fans attempted to curse particular charioteers or horses that were selected because they were competing for an opposing faction; it was the faction that the curser wanted to defeat, which could be accomplished by incapacitating its members.

Of the examples that can be identified, the Blue faction is targeted the most often, in twenty-one curses, while the other three factions are not targeted much less, with eleven, fourteen, and sixteen potential identifications for the Whites, Reds, and Greens respectively. Interestingly, in many of these instances two factions are identified as

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<sup>887</sup> The circus curse from Astigi (App. No. 32) opens with ‘*Gregs An[t]oniani*’ (l. 1) and closes with ‘*grex Antoniani*’ (l. 13), which may have been intended to identify the *dominus* or local owner who leased his drivers and/or horses, to the *editor* of the race. See Garcia-Dils de la Vega and de la Hoz Montoya 2013: 247-9; *CIL* VI. 10054, 10072. A curse from Apamea (App. No. 84, l. 5) targets charioteers of the Blue faction “in the stable of Eugenius” (‘στάβλου Εὐγενίου’). While it was evidently not a necessary inclusion for all circus curses, the further specification regarding stables and owners of the named targets made curses more explicit and, to some degree, laid blame on these other groups and individuals for providing the competitors that opposed the curser and his own faction. *Cf.* The use of genitive forms in App. Nos. 42 and 43.

<sup>888</sup> See in particular ‘Factions’ in Chapter 3.

targets in one curse, often paired as Reds and Blues or Greens and Whites.<sup>889</sup> Two curse tablets from Carthage do not follow this combination of factions as one invokes spirits to curse three charioteers and their horses from both the Greens and the Blues and the other curses Dionysius, a charioteer from the Whites, and Superstianus, a charioteer from the Reds.<sup>890</sup> While these curses demonstrate the potential for alliances in the circus, they also indicate that those alliances might not have been firm, possibly changing over time or by place. It must also be considered that, on occasion, a fan did not have a faction alliance in mind but rather, simply directed the curse at two factions considered particularly troublesome for the success of his preferred faction. As has been suggested in curses directed at individual charioteers, the central goal of the curses was to hinder opposing factions whichever they may be. It did not matter which of the two named factions lost, so long as neither performed successfully against the curser's favourite.

## II. WHEN AND WHERE

After having laid out their demands, a large number of circus curse tablets conclude with some variation of the phrase, ἤδη ἤδη ταχὺ ταχὺ ('now now, quickly quickly').<sup>891</sup> In some instances the phrase is repeated throughout the text, before making additional requests or before restating the same ones. This phrase is a formulaic element that appears in many curses beyond those associated with the circus. It suggests a hope for

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<sup>889</sup> Reds and Blues: App. Nos. 32, 38, 57-66, 69. Greens and Whites: App. Nos. 71-79. In these cases it cannot be ascertained which of the unnamed factions was the curser's favourite and which was aligned with it, thereby benefitting indirectly from the curse.

<sup>890</sup> Greens and Blues: App. No. 35. Whites and Reds: App. No. 36. Cf. Potter 2010: 320.

<sup>891</sup> E.g., App. Nos. 1-7, 9-12, 17, 30, 35-6, 38-42, 69, 80, 84-5. App. No. 80 uses the Latin '*iam iam cito cito*'.

the speedy intervention of the spirits and a sense of urgency, most notably in the curses where the phrase is repeated. A number of examples reinforce this desire for a quick start to the action of the curse by incorporating variations of a call for the spirits to act “from this day, from this hour, from this moment”, often repeated at least once and written in combination with the formulaic call for speed noted above.<sup>892</sup> The curser plainly hoped that the curse would become effective immediately and made such desires clear to the spirits by including them in the curse itself. Among circus curses, it is plausible that the curse pertained to a race that was to take place soon after its deposit. With a deadline for the action of the curse, it was vital that the curser be efficient in the providing the necessary information to the spirits and make clear both the timing and location for the curse to take place against the target.

It is apparent that cursers targeted not only particular competitors but also particular competition days as, in various curses, the text is quite specific concerning when the curse should take effect. Numerous curses request that supernatural forces come to the circus “tomorrow” to act against various drivers and horses.<sup>893</sup> The common appearance of ‘tomorrow’ indicates that the production of curse tablets was a relatively last minute activity, with fans potentially making and buying curses the night before a day of circus spectacles, once they got word of the participating charioteers. One of the curses from Rome, noted previously for its attacks on the charioteer Kardelos, appeals to the spirits to kill the charioteer with the specification that he “expire within five days”, a

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<sup>892</sup> E.g., App. Nos. 2-9, 11-12, 17, 21, 48-50, 71-2, 75-9, 84-5.

<sup>893</sup> Most often this occurs in the Greek (‘τῆ αὔριον ἡμέρα’). See App. Nos. 30, 35-42, 80.

request that is repeated in the text.<sup>894</sup> Conceivably, there was a race coming up within the week in which the curser anticipated Kardelos was to take part; if the curser was uncertain as to exactly which day Kardelos was competing in the upcoming competitions, such an inclusion in the curse had the potential to serve as a reasonable precaution to block his participation entirely.<sup>895</sup> An example from Hadrumetum calls for the influence of the *daimones* to bind multiple horses on two days by repeating: “so that they cannot run tomorrow or the day after tomorrow”.<sup>896</sup> In this instance perhaps the curser was unsure which day the horses were actually going to race or included both out of the concern that they would in fact race on both days. It seems likely that the curser was covering his bases in an effort to ensure that the curse was in effect throughout multiple days of competition, also requesting that “at every hour they collapse in the circus”.<sup>897</sup>

Immediately prior to identifying the desired targets from the Red faction, the text of a *defixio* from Carthage specifies a date with the request that the spirits bring their assistance “in the circus on the eighth of November”.<sup>898</sup> It is unmistakable that the curser anticipated a competition against the Reds that he wanted to influence on the eighth of the month and considered it an important detail to offer the many spirits that had been invoked. Indeed, this particular curse has been addressed before; not only does it include a notably lengthy invocation of deities, listing any and all forces who could possibly help,

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<sup>894</sup> App. No. 1 (ll. 11-14, 46-8).

<sup>895</sup> It is also worth consideration that, given the seemingly emotional tone of the curser’s repeated calls for the torment and “evil death” of “impious, lawless and accursed Kardelos”, there may not have been any particular race in mind and the curser simply gave a timeline within which he wanted his enemy destroyed.

<sup>896</sup> App. No. 80 (ll. 17-18, 23-4).

<sup>897</sup> App. No. 80 (ll. 24-5).

<sup>898</sup> App. No. 43 (ll. 49-50).

but also the identification of the targets is made very clear with the names of the charioteers and horses, and the provision that the spirits also attack other horses if the driver should change teams at any point. This curse had a very clear aim, with specific targets and the date on which it should take effect; the curser evidently was very concerned about the outcome of the competitions on November 8<sup>th</sup> and did not want to leave anything to chance.

A circus curse from Rome requests supernatural involvement and charioteers and horses of the Blues “on/until the twelfth and twenty-fourth” (‘ἕως δω[δε]κάτης [καὶ εἰκοσι]τεσάρων’).<sup>899</sup> Unfortunately, the fragmentary nature of the curse makes it difficult to determine to what precisely these numbers refer. Gager proposes in his translation of the curse that they are meant to indicate the twelfth and twenty-fourth of the month.<sup>900</sup> While this is certainly possible if multiple festival days were expected to include races within the two week period, it is surprising when compared to other curse examples that the curser was able to specify his targets so clearly and be confident that they were to be racing on those days. I am inclined to offer another possibility, wherein the numbers are in reference to the races in a day, which often numbered twenty-four.<sup>901</sup> In this case however, it remains unclear if the curser intended to direct the spirits to attack the targets in the twelfth and twenty-fourth races of the day, or if the use of ‘ἕως’ was meant to keep the request general with the targets competing in any of the races until the

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<sup>899</sup> App. No. 10 (l. 35).

<sup>900</sup> Gager 1992: 71.

<sup>901</sup> See n. 225. App. No. 30 (ll. 60-1) invokes divine powers to attack a target “both in the early races and in the later ones”.

twelfth and twenty-fourth. Whether intended to indicate races or days, the curse nevertheless demonstrates the concern of cursers to be as specific as possible so as to ensure the success of the curse and the defeat of its targets.

A number of cursers take one final step to ensure that the spirits find their target by incorporating the detail that they should take the requested action “in the circus”.<sup>902</sup> While initially this appears to be a redundant inclusion in a curse that typically contained demands that were very specific to chariot racing in the circus and often named the targets by their circus factions, clarity of expression was necessary to ensure the successful operation of the curse. The majority of circus curses that have been found were not deposited in the circus and as such, by reinforcing the idea that the curse was to take place in the circus, the curser sought to ensure that the spirits did not get lost and were able to find their way to the target. Moreover, as the goal of many circus curses was the immobilization of their targets to render them ineffectual in the races, it was important that the spirits attack at the circus and directly influence the competition at hand. Despite having been buried beneath a *taberna* in Rome, the previously discussed curse against Eucherios is focused on the charioteer’s performance “tomorrow in the circus of Rome”; the deposit location may have enhanced the connection of the spirits to the target, but it remained the intent of the curser to harm the charioteer at the races.<sup>903</sup>

One further element to note in the curse against Eucherios is the specification of the circus as that “of Rome”. Given the multiple circuses at Rome it is understandable

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<sup>902</sup> E.g., App. Nos. 3-4, 30, 35-43, 48, 51, 80, 84.

<sup>903</sup> App. No. 30 (l. 57).

that this curser felt compelled to offer further clarification as to the site of the races, likely referring here to the Circus Maximus. Two additional circus curses from Rome provide similar clarification by asking that the spirits attack their targets at the “circus of New Babylon”.<sup>904</sup> While it is unclear at this time which circus this was meant to identify, it is apparent that this extra detail was intended to assist the spirits in finding the targets and acting against them during the races. Just as the invocations were laid out clearly, and the names of the targets and requests for actions were often repeated, it was important that no errors were made in providing the spirits with the correct time and place to offer their supernatural help.

#### **E) THE CREATION OF CURSES**

Despite the role of a fan in the deposition of a curse, the evidence suggests that, at least in some places, the curse tablets themselves were created and sold by professional magicians. Various curses show distinct similarities, particularly in the targets that they name and factions that they identify.<sup>905</sup> In particular, a series of thirteen circus curses from Hadrumetum all bring up similar names of charioteers and horses to be targeted and most also specify that their targets belong to the Blue and Red factions.<sup>906</sup> In the same way, another set of nine circus curses found at Hadrumetum include similar targets as one another, who are noted as members of the Green and White factions.<sup>907</sup> Such repetition

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<sup>904</sup> App. Nos. 3 (l. 23) and 4 (ll. 19-20).

<sup>905</sup> E.g., App. Nos. 5-7 (Rome), 48 and 50 (Carthage), 54-56 (Hadrumetum), 57-69 (Hadrumetum), and 71-79 (Hadrumetum).

<sup>906</sup> App. Nos. 57-69.

<sup>907</sup> App. Nos. 71-79.



among curses is indicative of the production of these curses by particular workshops that were able to reproduce a general list of faction members against whom a fan might want to purchase a curse. It is possible that some curses were made by amateurs who used what they knew of the practice to create an appropriate curse, but it is likely that many more were inscribed by professionals who utilized a formula that could be easily replicated and altered the details of the curse and its requests to suit the interests of their customer. While it is possible that supporters of each faction had their own particular supplier to whom they went for curses against their opponents, each with his own magical style, it is conceivable that a workshop did not wish to limit their customer base and instead was willing to offer whatever curses were requested in return for payment.<sup>908</sup> In either case the production of curses by workshops alone further establishes the popularity of circus curses that found their way into the repertoire of professionals.

Yet even professionals were not immune to making errors in the production of curses. A series of circus curses from Rome include a form of the word ‘Λόγος’, typically ahead of the invocation and curse requests, thereby acting as a sort of title for the curse that follows.<sup>909</sup> Similarly, a tablet from Carthage, preceded by little more than a series of *voces magicae*, opens with ‘καταρα’ (“the spell”), and a curse from Beirut, after the opening *voces magicae*, is headed with what appears to have been the label for the spell in the recipe book from which it came: “For Restraining Horses and Charioteers”.<sup>910</sup> It is very possible that the appearance of these words and phrases were the result of mis-

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<sup>908</sup> Cf. Squarciapino 1979: 278 n. 11.

<sup>909</sup> App. Nos. 1-6, 8-17. See also App. No. 83 (Beirut).

<sup>910</sup> Carthage: App. No. 42 (l. 4). Beirut: App. No. 83 (l. 1).

transcriptions on the part of the scribe who copied out the necessary curse formula.<sup>911</sup>

Their error however, is evidence of not only the defined formula that the curses needed to follow in order to be effective, but also again the popularity of the curses, which were recorded for easy duplication when requested by eager customers. There was a clear understanding of the use of circus curses that was spread widely enough that fans who sought aid for the races through such supernatural means could do so successfully.

Consistently among the extant circus curses the curser did not include their name; except for those praying for justice or seeking love this appears to have been a typical in most curses in an effort to avoid retribution from the living or the dead.<sup>912</sup> Although curses continued to be used, the illegal nature of the practice in the late Empire undoubtedly also influenced the desire to keep curses anonymous.<sup>913</sup> Despite the risk in using a curse for the curser himself, the perception of risk and uncertainty in regard to the races was more pressing. With the desire for the success of their favourites at the core of their position as fans, there are in fact numerous possible reasons for a fan to feel compelled to employ the tactic of cursing circus competitors. For fans who had recently seen their favourites lose or were anticipating a difficult competition ahead, perhaps aware of the skill of an opponent and concerned for their faction's performance, the use of curses appeared as a viable strategy to attempt to secure a better result. There is also the potential for fans to have rationalized their use of curses as a means to aid a favoured charioteer or faction against a team that was considered to have an unfair advantage. It is

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<sup>911</sup> For such errors in transcription, see Jordan 1985b: 235 n. 20.

<sup>912</sup> Versnel 1991: 62-3.

<sup>913</sup> Gager 1992: 27, 44-46, 1990: 223-4; Heintz 2001: 163.

possible that some fans looked to a previous race and took an action on the track, whether a particular maneuver by a competitor or the defeat of their favourites, as a specific act of hostility against them. This victimized thinking then could make way for a “deluded sense of righteousness that allows an attack to be construed as defense”.<sup>914</sup> In so doing, fans might also take some pleasure in the misery of their opposition as a just punishment for their enemy at the circus.<sup>915</sup> Indeed, various curses discussed above sought the physical mutilation of their victims or their outright death. While the violence visualized in these curses was likely considered to be very effective, since the targets would not be able to heal, return to the race, and possibly win, as could be possible with a lesser request for binding or restraint, such requests also suggest a significant degree of emotional intensity in the curser who was willing to inflict such permanent damage for the sake of a race.

It is evident that the circus fans believed in the effectiveness of the curses to influence the races, with extant examples of curses from across the empire and dated over multiple centuries.<sup>916</sup> With the fundamental desire to win and the appreciation for demonstrations of skill in the races, keen circus spectators undoubtedly were well aware of the rules of the competition and were liable to get angry if they observed an illegal maneuver or underhanded behaviour from the stands. Nonetheless, this same interest and devotion led fans to step in from beyond the boundaries of the competition and employ

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<sup>914</sup> Ashforth 2005: 70, quoting Scheler 1998: 35.

<sup>915</sup> Versnel 1999: 127.

<sup>916</sup> The legal condemnation of the use of curses in the later empire does not necessarily imply belief in their efficacy by the authorities but does suggest that their popular use was of concern. See Gager 1992: 23-4, 45. See also Cassiod. *Var.* 3.51; *Theodosian Code* 9.16.11.

supernatural methods to try and affect the outcome. Rather than be confined to traditional audience responses of cheering and clapping, circus fans found opportunities to take a more active role and utilize whatever method at their disposal to gain an advantage for their favourites, hinder their opponents, and demonstrate their sincere investment as fans of the races.

## CONCLUSION

The presence of spectators was a vital part of the presentation of chariot races. One of the appeals of competitive sport is the display and representation of human excellence; it is a forum in which the competitors demonstrate traits, virtues, and talents that are admired and that could be emulated by spectators. While the spectators might be seeking out such examples of excellence in the competitors, the exchange requires an audience in order to witness and acknowledge such skill and excellence. Spectators of the Roman chariot races saw the impressive performances of charioteers, many of whom were idolized as sporting heroes for their abilities, with even the emperor himself mimicking the admirable skills of a charioteer racing in the circus. The interest of those who sat in the stands not only led socially marginalized charioteers to gain great fame, but also increased the production of the competitions themselves, which became widespread across the empire as a popular public entertainment. What began as a sport among elites, presented with little concern for an audience, gradually grew into a grand spectacle with concerns for the entertainment of the audience at the forefront.

The examination of the spectacle of the Roman chariot races reveals a multi-sensory experience in which audience members could become avid fans closely involved with the outcome of the competitions and the sport at large. The elite condemnation of the sports fan phenomenon as a cultural low ground filled by a mindless mob does a disservice to the significant role of sport in any culture. Numerous aspects of Roman

society, from art to politics, were affected by the preoccupation that so many people had with circus competitions. The fandom of the races developed into a sub-culture of its own, in which members of the Roman populace were devoted in their engagement with the sport, its competitors, and fellow fans, and felt the effects of such fandom in their everyday lives. The racing fan culture offered an active social experience at the circus and various methods of engagement with the chariot races that furthered the popularity of the sport.

Through the study of the sensorial effects of various stimuli we gain a picture of the circus audience experience that is far more than passive and visual. Spectators were faced with an abundance of sights, smells, and sounds amid the crowds of eager circus-goers from the moment they arrived at the venue. The crowded seating of the circus, particularly on a warm day, undoubtedly resulted in strong smells, added to by the scents of the city and whatever foods were offered in nearby stalls for hungry spectators. The many sounds that rose from the circus track were joined by the conversations of audience members and their shouts and cheers for the competitors. Such noisy contributions to the events by spectators likely were also accompanied by movements, as fans gesticulated and jumped with enthusiasm. While the exact response of spectators to these factors derives from and is embedded in each individual's social experience, the sensorial effects of the circus environment allowed for a sense of community to develop among the many spectators who shared the experience of a day at the races cheering and chanting together, celebrating victories and lamenting defeats.

Studies of modern sport spectators and their psychology identify the potential for anonymity and conformity in such group affiliation as well as the so called “mob-mentality” that it could elicit among sport fans.<sup>917</sup> As has been shown, various ancient sources, such as Tacitus and Tertullian, point to the rabid mob of spectators and their nearly obsessive interest in the races as supporting evidence for their disapproval of the sport and spectacles more generally.<sup>918</sup> Yet it is short-sighted to conclude that all sense is lost when one fan is among a larger group of fans. Fans gather for a shared purpose and form a social identity together. Each has not lost his own identity; rather, he has found commonalities in the shared views of the group, which reflect his own interests and identity. Within this cohesive group, individuals embrace the same priorities associated with the sport and act accordingly, even if that logical action might seem ridiculous to an outside observer. The priority for circus fans was their fandom and support of their favoured faction, as they remained prepared to defend it against any hostile words or actions. Indeed, some adopted certain behaviours shared in the community of fans, such as their cheers for favourites, taunts of rivals, or wearing of faction colours, which served as an opportunity to affiliate further with the group and to feel involved in the competition. The potential for collective involvement and, in turn, comradeship is recognizable in the format of Roman chariot racing in which fans loyally supported one of the four factions. While we cannot be certain what factors first divided spectators among the four factions, it is apparent that, even if arbitrary selections were made, there

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<sup>917</sup> For discussions of modern sports psychology, see Chapter 4.

<sup>918</sup> See ‘Elite Roman Views of Spectacle and the Circus’ in Chapter 1.

were ultimately significant psychological implications of their allegiance. Circus fans were bonded in the excitement of the competition and in support for or opposition against a particular competitor or faction.

The emotion-laden context of sport spectatorship provoked fierce reactions to the events in the circus; spectators who identified closely with the community of racing fans also felt closely connected to the competitors and felt their wins and losses as if they themselves had participated. While many engaged in the more traditional behaviours of sports fans and contributed cheers of encouragement and the like, highly devoted fans strove for a more impactful act. Among the comments on the chariot races by our ancient sources, Cassiodorus in particular mocks the emotional involvement of circus fans and asserts that they competed with one another as if the safety of the nation were at stake.<sup>919</sup> While the mention of circus fandom by ancient sources often comes in a tone of disapproval or derision, it also makes plain the lengths to which fans would go in support of their faction. It is apparent that ardent fans were deeply invested in the sport, emotionally and psychologically, and thus easily could be swept up in partisanship and the progress of their faction. For the uninitiated observer, such a response to a sporting event surely appears unwarranted, unproductive, and generally absurd. Possibly the more bewildering feature was not how far fans were willing to go in their avid support of a particular faction, but how far fans seemed to need to go. Circus *defixiones* represent one of the furthest of these extremes in a racing fan's need for victory and fear of defeat. Racing fans sought to have influence on the sport that they loved so much through such

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<sup>919</sup> Cass. *Var.* 3.51.11-13.



supernatural means and gain a sense of satisfaction, security, power, and potentially success as a result of their intervention. Perhaps for those who were not engaged in the fandom of the chariot races it was difficult to understand its appeal or such resulting commitment. Yet circus fandom offered far more than a chance to observe an athletic competition and be entertained with a spectacle for a day. The full experience that could be had within the sub-culture of racing fans provided an opportunity for participants to feel a part of something bigger - a sense of group affiliation - identifying as part of a team, united with those around in a common interest and goal.

The subject of spectacle fans, circus fans in particular, offers many avenues that may still be examined further. In an effort to better understand the experience of spectators at the circus and other Roman entertainment venues, it is necessary to advance the study of the Roman *sensorium* and the potential sensory perceptions of the Roman city. Despite being a relatively new approach to the study of the Roman experience, recent publications on the subject have demonstrated the wide array of possible applications for this line of inquiry, not the least of which concerns the multisensory experience of audience members of the circus. While this study has offered a few contributions to such a discussion, close consideration of each sense (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) and its role in how the event was perceived by spectators has the potential to significantly improve our comprehension of the lived experience at the circus.

Furthermore, the utilization of modern psychology adds an intriguing new dimension to our understanding of the behaviour of ancient sport fans, and while aspects of the field cannot be applied decisively to the ancient context, numerous modern theories

do reveal striking comparisons that are worthy of additional consideration. In particular, the application of modern psychology to the consumption behaviours of fans engaging with the sport and the resulting commitment of fans to the sport and its competitors, including their responses to events at or associated to the races, is likely to provide unique perspectives on the subject matter that can expand the discussion of fans in Roman culture and society.

Lastly, circus *defixiones* represent a unique body of evidence concerning the fandom of the chariot races as well as the greater impact of the circus' popularity in Roman culture. Although we have numerous published examples, many of the curse tablets have been published alone or in small groups, while others have not been published at all. As the details of more curses are slowly released and, perhaps, even more are discovered, the compilation of a full catalogue of curses is an important next step in order best utilize the information that the curses can provide. Not only is it necessary to study the circus *defixiones* as a larger unit and address potential comparisons among them, but also it is worthwhile examining individual examples for the unique characteristics that arise and consider the variety of individual goals and targets of these curses that all shared a common final objective to influence the outcome of the races.

There is little question as to the popularity of the races. By the fourth century, the Roman form of chariot racing had also taken hold in the East, with municipal governments gradually moving to the faction system with permanent racing stables. Chariot races had a prominent position on the official calendar of *ludi*, with the Calendar of 354 recording sixty-four days for the sport in comparison to the only ten days of

gladiatorial games.<sup>920</sup> While it appears that the popularity of the amphitheatre's bloody spectacles was on the decline, whether a result of the increasing influence of Christianity or simply a general change in popular taste, the interest in the races did not wain. It was perhaps the decreasing importance of the gladiatorial games that created a vacuum that the circus was able to fill in the social life of the cities and the entertainment of the Roman public. Although the chariot races too faced opposition, from church leaders and disapproving elites, the circuses of the Roman empire continued to play host to large crowds of eager spectators. There remained surrounding the sport a devoted following of fans who engaged closely with the popular spectacle and who had formed a sub-culture unto themselves. The highly knowledgeable and discriminating tastes of Roman spectators coupled with their strong competitive inclinations elicited deep emotional commitment to the charioteers and their factions at the center of their beloved sport, all striving for victory at the circus.

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<sup>920</sup> Chronograph of 354 (Philocalus).

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## APPENDIX

### COLLECTION OF CIRCUS *DEFIXIONES*

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The following is a collection of curse tablets relating to the Roman circus. Those examples whose connection to the circus is still debated are recorded separately at the end of the list. The bibliography provided for each curse tablet includes the most important, recent, or accessible sources for each example. All dates are CE.

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#### ROME (31)

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#### 1.

**Location:** Rome

- In a tomb on the Via Appia near the Porta S. Sebastiano

**Date:** late 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 13 x 21 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 207-212, no. 155.
- Cagnat, Toutain, Lafaye, Henry 1901-3: 42-6, no. 115.
- Martin 2010: 104-5.
- Matter 1852: 28-30.
- Ogden 2002: 212-14, no. 173 and fig. 10.1.
- Preisendanz 1972: 17-18.
- Preisendanz 1926: 22-41.
- Wünsch 1898: 14-19, no 16.

#### 2.

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 17 x 11 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: pp.216-20, no. 159.
- Cagnat et al. 1901-3: 46-50, no. 116.
- Tremel 2004: no. 70.
- Wünsch 1898: 23-28, no. 20.

**3.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 16 x 15 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 220-4, no. 160.
- Tremel 2004: no. 71.
- Wünsch 1898: 29-31, no. 21.

**4.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 17 x 16 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 224-5, no. 161.
- Tremel 2004: no. 72.
- Wünsch 1898: 31-3, no. 22.

**5.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 10 x 15 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 225-6, no. 162.
- Tremel 2004: no. 73.
- Wünsch 1898: 34, no. 23.

**6.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 14 x 24 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 226-7, no. 163.
- Tremel 2004: no. 74-5.
- Wünsch 1898: 34-6, no. 24-5.



7.

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11 x 16 cm, three fragments

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 227-8, no. 164.
- Tremel 2004: no. 76.
- Wünsch 1898: 36, no. 26.

8.

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 17 x 11 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 228-30, no. 165.
- Tremel 2004: no. 77.
- Wünsch 1898: 37, no. 27.

9.

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 8 x 6 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 230-1, no. 166.
- Tremel 2004: no. 78.
- Wünsch 1898: 39, no. 28.

10.

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 9 x 10 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 231-2, no. 167.
- Gager 1992: 71-72, no. 14.
- Tremel 2004: no. 79.

- Wunsch 1898: 40, no. 29.

**11.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 10 x 10 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 232-4, no. 168.
- Tremel 2004: no. 80.
- Wunsch 1898: 41, no. 30.

**12.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 16 x 14 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 234-5, no. 169.
- Tremel 2004: no. 81.
- Wunsch 1898: 42, no. 31.

**13.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11 x 7 cm, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 235-6, no. 170.
- Tremel 2004: no. 82.
- Wunsch 1898: 43, no. 32.

**14.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 7 x 7 cm, double-sided, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 236, no. 171.
- Tremel 2004: no. 83.
- Wünsch 1898: 44, no. 33.

**15.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 14 x 10 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 236-7, no. 172.
- Tremel 2004: no. 84.
- Wünsch 1898: 45, no. 34.

**16.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** A = 4 cm; B = 5 x 10 cm, two fragments

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 237-8, no. 173.
- Tremel 2004: no. 85.
- Wünsch 1898: 44, no. 35.

**17.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 28 cm x 10 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 238-9, no. 174.
- Tremel 2004: no. 86.
- Wünsch 1898: 46, no. 36.

**18.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 6 x 10 cm, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 239, no. 175.
- Tremel 2004: no. 87.
- Wünsch 1898: 47, no. 37.

**19.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11 x 8 cm, seven fragments

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 239-40, no. 176.
- Tremel 2004: no. 88.
- Wünsch 1898: 47, no. 38.

**20.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 10 x 16 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 240, no. 177.
- Wünsch 1898: 47, no. 39.

**21.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 8 x 9 cm, double-sided, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 240, no. 178.
- Wünsch 1898: 47, no. 40.

**22.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 6 x 9 cm, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 241, no. 179.
- Wunsch 1898: 48, no. 41.

**23.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 13 x 9 cm, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 241-2, no. 180.
- Wunsch 1898: 49, no. 42.

**24.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 2 x 6 cm, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 242, no. 181.
- Wunsch 1898: 48, no. 43.

**25.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 4 x 3 cm, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 242, no. 182.
- Wunsch 1898: 48, no. 44.

**26.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 4 x 3 cm, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 242, no. 183.
- Wunsch 1898: 48, no. 45.

**27.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 3 cm, fragment

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 243, no. 184.
- Wunsch 1898: 48, no. 46.

**28.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** A= 6 x 3 cm; B= 10 x 6 cm, two fragments

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 243, no. 185.
- Wunsch 1898: 48, no. 47.

**29.**

**Location:** Rome

- In a *columbarium* near the Vigna Marini, outside the Porta Appia

**Date:** late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** A = 6 x 7 cm; B= 5 cm, two fragments

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 243, no. 186.
- Wunsch 1898: 48, no. 48.

**30.**

**Location:** Rome

- In amphora with cremation ashes
- Under the floor of a *taberna* in residential neighbourhood on the Quirinal

**Date:** late 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 17 x 12 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 243-6, no. 187.
- Cagnat et al. 1901-3: 50-1, no. 117.
- Cagnat 1897: 441, no. 101.
- Preisendanz 1926: 38-41.
- Tremel 2004: no. 89.

- Wunsch 1898: 49-52, no. 49.
- Wunsch 1897: 103-9.

**31.**

**Location:** Rome

- In tomb in a *columbarium* in the Villa Doria Pamphili near the Palazzina Algardi

**Date:** late 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 19 x 16 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Bevilacqua 1998: 113-34.
- Bevilacqua 1997: 545-555.
- Jordan 2002: 141-147.
- Tremel 2004: no. 90.
- Museo Nazionale Romano Inv. 402696.

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ASTIGI (1)

**32.**

**Location:** Astigi, Spain

- In a grave

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11.9 x 14.7 x 0.2 cm

- Triangular, folded in half

**Bibliography:**

- *AE* 2013: 830.
- Garcia-Dils de la Vega, and de la Hoz Montoya 2013: 243-256.

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CARTHAGE (21)

**33.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 5.5 x 10 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 305-6, no. 232.
- Delattre 1888: 296.
- Tremel 2004: no. 51.

- *CIL* VIII. 12506.

**34.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 32 x 17 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 306-8, no. 233.
- Buecheler 1886: 160.
- Cagnat 1898: 345.
- Delattre 1888: 294.
- Delattre 1886: 286.
- Delattre 1882: 226, no. 384.
- Martin 2010: 98-99.
- Tremel 2004: no. 52.
- *CIL* VIII. 12504.

**35.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 9.3 x 7.5 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 308-311, no. 234.
- Martin 2010: 99-100.
- Tremel 2004: no. 53.

**36.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 7.8 x 6 cm, folded

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 311-2, no. 235.
- Tremel 2004: no. 54.



**37.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 1.5 x 4 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 313-4, no. 236.
- Tremel 2004: no. 55.

**38.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 7.7 x 7.7 cm, folded

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 314-6, no. 237.
- Delattre 1888: 297-300.
- Gager 1992: 60-2 no. 9.
- Martin 2010: 100.
- Tremel 2004: no. 56.
- *CIL* VIII. 12508.

**39.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 8.5 x 7.3 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 316-8, no. 238.
- Tremel 2004: no.57.

**40.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 7.9 x 7.4 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 318-20, no. 239.
- Martin 2010: 100-101.
- Tremel 2004: no. 58.
- *CIL* VIII. 12509.

**41.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 7.8 x 5.8 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 320-2, no. 240.
- Tremel 2004: no. 59.
- *CIL* VIII. 12510.

**42.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11.5 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 323-4, no. 241.
- Delattre 1888: 300-2.
- Gager 1992: 65-7, no. 12.
- Tremel 2004: no. 60.
- Wunsch 1912: no. 3.
- *CIL* VIII. 12511.

**43.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 12.5 x 15.1 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 326-30, no. 242.

- Gager 1992: 62-4, no. 10.
- Martin 2010: 101-2.
- Molinier 1897: 212-20.
- Tremel 2004: no. 61.
- Wünsch 1912: no. 4.
- Wünsch: 248-59, no. 15.

**44.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 16 x 11 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 330-2, no. 243.
- Tremel 2004: no. 62.

**45.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Cemetery (approx. 500m NNE of circus)
  - Roman graves at Bir-el-Djebbana

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 13.5 x 8 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 332-3, no. 244.
- Tremel 2004: no. 63.

**46.**

**Location:** Carthage, cemetery (immed. north of amphitheatre and approx. 500m NNE of circus)

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 10 x 9.5 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 333, no. 245.

**47.**

**Location:** Carthage

- The ‘fountain of the thousand amphoras’

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 7.5 x 6 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1933: 120-1.
- Jordan 1985a: 184, no. 138.
- Solin 1968: 31, no. 44-47.
- Tremel 2004: no. 65
- *SEG* 9.837.

**48.**

**Location:** Carthage

- The ‘fountain of the thousand amphoras’

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 13 x 17 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1933: 121-28.
- Jordan 1985a: 184, no. 139.
- Solin 1968: 31, nos. 44-47.
- Tremel 2004: no. 66.
- *SEG* 9.838.

**49.**

**Location:** Carthage

- The ‘fountain of the thousand amphoras’

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** N/A

**Bibliography:**

- *AE* 1933: 234.
- Audollent, 1933: 129-31.
- Jordan 1985a: 185, no. 140.
- Solin 1968: 31, nos. 44-47.
- *SEG* 9.839.

**50.**

**Location:** Carthage

- The ‘fountain of the thousand amphoras’

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** N/A

**Bibliography:**

- *AE* 1933: 235.

- Audollent 1933: 129-31.
- Jordan 1985a: 185, no. 141.
- Solin 1968: 31, nos. 44-47.
- *SEG* 9.840.

**51.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Circus, near starting gates

**Date:** mid-late 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 9.1 cm x 10.4 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Jordan 1988): 118, 120-6, no. 1.
- Tremel 2004: no. 67.

**52.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Circus, near starting gates

**Date:** mid-late 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 10.9 cm x 5.5 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Jordan 1988: 118, 126-9, no. 2.

**53.**

**Location:** Carthage

- Circus, near starting gates

**Date:** mid-late 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 5.5 cm x 13.9 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Jordan 1988: 118, 129-134, no. 3.
- Tremel 2004: no. 68

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HADRUMETUM (27)

**54.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 5.5 x 8 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 378-9, no. 272.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1903: 175, no. 208.
- Gauckler, Gouwet and Hannezo 1902: 85, no. 1.
- Martin 2010: 102.
- Tremel 2004: no. 22.

**55.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 7.8 x 8.5 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 379-80, no. 273.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1903: 175, no. 209.
- Gauckler et al. 1902: 85, no. 2.
- Tremel 2004: no. 23.

**56.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 9.5 x 7.3 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 380, no. 274.
- Gauckler et al. 1902: 85, no. 3.
- Tremel 2004: no. 24.

**57.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum,

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 17 x 10.3 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 381-5, no. 275.
- Audollent 1902: 417-425.
- Cagnat 1903: 258.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1902: 436, no. 149.
- Martin 2010: 102-3.

- Tremel 2004: no. 25.

**58.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 10.5 x 10 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 385-6, no. 276.
- Cagnat 1903: 260, no. 1.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1903: 151, no. 133.
- Tremel 2004: no. 26.

**59.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 5.5 x 9 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 387, no. 277.
- Cagnat 1903: 261, no. 2.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1903: 152, no. 134.
- Tremel 2004: no. 27.

**60.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 8.5 x 9 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 387-8, no. 278.
- Cagnat 1903: 261, no. 3.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1903: 152, no. 135.
- Tremel 2004: no. 28.

**61.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11.5 x 10 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 388-9, no. 279.
- Cagnat 1903: 262, no. 4.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1903: 153, no. 136.
- Tremel 2004: no. 29.

**62.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 12.5 x 9.5 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 389-90 no. 280.
- Cagnat 1903: 262, no. 5.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1903: 153, no. 137.
- Tremel 2004: no. 30.

**63.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 12.5 x 10.5 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 390-1, no. 281.
- Tremel 2004: no. 31.

**64.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 12 x 9 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 391-2, no. 282.
- Tremel 2004: no. 32.



**65.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 13.5 x 9 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 392-3, no. 283.
- Tremel 2004: no. 33.

**66.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 14.5 x 8.8 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 393-4, no. 284.
- Tremel 2004: no. 34.

**67.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- In a tomb<sup>921</sup>

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 9 x 8 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- *AE* 1907: 25.
- Audollent 1906: 379-81, no. 1.
- Besnier 1930: 11 no. 10.
- Tremel 2004: no. 48.

**68.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

In a tomb in the Roman necropolis<sup>922</sup>

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 12.3 x 4.7 cm, double-sided

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<sup>921</sup> There is not a clear indication of the find location for this curse however, Audollent (1906: 379) reports that M. Gauckler specified that it was found in a cremation tomb.

<sup>922</sup> As with Cat. No. 67, the details of the find location come through a letter described by Audollent (1906: 379).

**Bibliography:**

- *AE* 1907: 68.
- Audollent 1906: 381-5, no. 2.
- Besnier 1930: 12 no. 11.
- Tremel 2004: no. 49.

**69.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 15.5 x 9 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1905: 182.
- Grenier 1905: 56-61, Pl. III.1.
- Jordan 1985a: 185, no. 144.
- Tremel 2004: no. 46.

**70.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 3.5 x 4.5 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 395-6, no. 285.
- Tremel 2004: no. 35.

**71.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11 x 9 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- *AE* 1893: 27.
- Audollent 1904: 396-9, no. 286.
- Bréal 1892: 231-2.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1902: 346-7, no. 54-5.
- Cagnat 1893: 258, no. 27.
- Choppard and Hannezo 1893: 199.
- Héron de Villefosse 1901: 326-330.

- Héron de Villefosse 1892: 226.
- Martin 2010: 103-4.
- Tremel 2004: no. 36.
- Wunsch 1900: 246, no. 14.
- *ILS* 8753.

**72.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 7.5 x 8.3 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 399-400, no. 287.
- Cagnat and Besnier 1902: 348, no. 56.
- Héron de Villefosse 1901: 330-2.
- Tremel 2004: no. 37.

**73.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 9.7 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 400-2, no. 288.
- Tremel 2004: no. 38.

**74.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11.8 x 10.2 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 402-3, no. 289.
- Tremel 2004: no. 39.

**75.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 6.5 x 7.5 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 403-4, no. 290.
- Tremel 2004: no. 40.

**76.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 12.2 x 9.3 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 404-5, no. 291.
- Tremel 2004: no. 41.

**77.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11 x 8.8 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 405-6, no. 292.
- Tremel 2004: no. 42.

**78.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 14 x 8.3 cm, double-sided

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 406-8, no. 293.
- Tremel 2004: no. 43.

**79.**

**Location:** Hadrumetum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 13 x 7 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 408, no. 294.
- Tremel 2004: no. 44.

**80.**

**Location:** Hadrumentum

- Cemetery (approx. 200m south of circus)

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 8 x 5.8 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 409-10, no. 295.
- Gager 1992: 64-5, no. 11.
- Tremel 2004: no. 45.

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LEPCIS MAGNA (1)

**81.**

**Location:** Lepcis Magna

- Circus starting gates
  - NW of pier 8a (behind the eighth front pier from the left as seen when facing the inner facade of the starting gates)

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 11.8 x 13.8 cm

- Was rolled up and compacted with a curved implement (impression left in the lead)

**Bibliography:**

- Jordan 1985a: 187, no. 149.
- Humphrey, Sear and Vickers 1972-3: 25-97 (esp. 93).
- Rea 1972-3: 92-6 (pl. 37b).
- Tremel 2004: no. 69.
- *SEG* 7.234.

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ANTIOCH (1)

**82.**

**Location:** Antioch

- Circus, near central barrier

**Date:** late 5<sup>th</sup>-early 6<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 26 x 9 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Campbell 1936: 2.
- Heintz 2001: 164-7, no. 53.
- Hollmann 2003: 67-82.
- Jordan 1985a: 193, unnumbered.
- Tremel 2004: no. 11.
- The Art Museum, Princeton University, 3603-I56.

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BEIRUT (1)

**83.**

**Location:** Beirut

- Possibly discovered near race course

**Date:** late 2<sup>nd</sup>-early 3<sup>rd</sup> c. (Mouterde 1930; Ogden 1999); ca. 4<sup>th</sup> c. (Jordan 1994); end of 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> c. (Martin 2010)

**Appearance:** 15.8 x 9 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Gager 1992: 53-6 no. 5.
- Jordan 1985: 192, no. 167.
- Jordan 1994: 325-333.
- Maricq 1952: 368-70.
- Martin 2010: 108-110.
- Mouterde 1930: 106-24 (Pl. III).
- Tremel 2004: no. 19.
- *SEG* 7.213; 15.847.
- *BE* 1954: 100-1, no. 21.

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APAMEA (2)

**84.**

**Location:** Apamea

- Discovered in fill along with #85 and some debris
- Near a drain; possibly shifted from original location (water channel)

**Date:** late 5<sup>th</sup>-early 6<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 5.2 cm x 11.8 cm, rolled up

**Bibliography:**

- Gager 1992: 56-8, no. 6.
- Gager 1990: 224-8.
- Jordan 1985a: 192-3.
- Martin 2010: 108.
- Tremel 2004: no. 17.

- Van Rengen 1984: 215-29, Pl. LXVII.
- *SEG* 34.1437.

**85.**

**Location:** Apamea

- Discovered in fill along with #84 and some debris
- Near a drain; possibly shifted from original location (water channel)

**Date:** late 5<sup>th</sup>-early 6<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 4.9 x 14.1 cm

- Hole in the center, possibly from a nail

**Bibliography:**

- Jordan 1985a: 192-3.
- Martin 2010: 108.
- Tremel 2004: no. 18.
- Van Rengen 1984: 229-32, Pl. LXVIII.
- *SEG* 34.1438.

POTENTIAL CIRCUS *DEFIXIONES*

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The following is a brief list of *defixiones* that have been noted in publications for their possible association with the circus, whether as a result of their find location or a translation of the text on the tablet. As of yet, the identification of none of these *defixiones* have been confirmed, although their potential relevance to the circus make them worthy of mention here.

**A1.**

**Location:** Damascus

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** 9.5 x 8.7 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Jordan 1985a: 192, no. 166.
- Mouterde 1930: 124-7.
- Tremel 2004: no. 20.
- *SEG* 7.234.

**A2.**

**Location:** Carthage

- In *spoliarium* of amphitheatre with other curse tablets

**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. (Audollent 1904); mid-late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. (Jordan 1988: 120)

**Appearance:** 11 x 15 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Audollent 1904: 334-6, no. 246.
- Tremel 2004: no. 64.
- Wunsch 1900: 266, no. 18.

**A3-6.**

**Location:** Antioch

- Circus, near central barrier
- Found in same set of drains as #82 in this catalogue

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup>-mid 6<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** Four curses still rolled

- Measuring in length: 14.5 cm; 10.5 cm; 8.8 cm; 13 cm

**Bibliography:**

- Heintz 2001: 164-7, no. 54.
- Princeton University Art Museum, 3618-162; 3573-154; 3608-I57; 5555-1182.



**A7.**

**Location:** Corinth

- Space interpreted as area of a turning post in a monumental circus (see Romano 2005).

**Date:** pre- 6<sup>th</sup> c.

**Appearance:** fragmentary, still rolled

**Bibliography:**

- Jordan 1985a: 166 no. 55.
- Romano, D. G. (2005), 'A Roman Circus in Corinth', *Hesperia* 74: 588 and 594.
- Wiseman, J. (1969), 'Excavations in Corinth, The Gymnasium Area, 1967-8', *Hesperia* 38: 69-70.