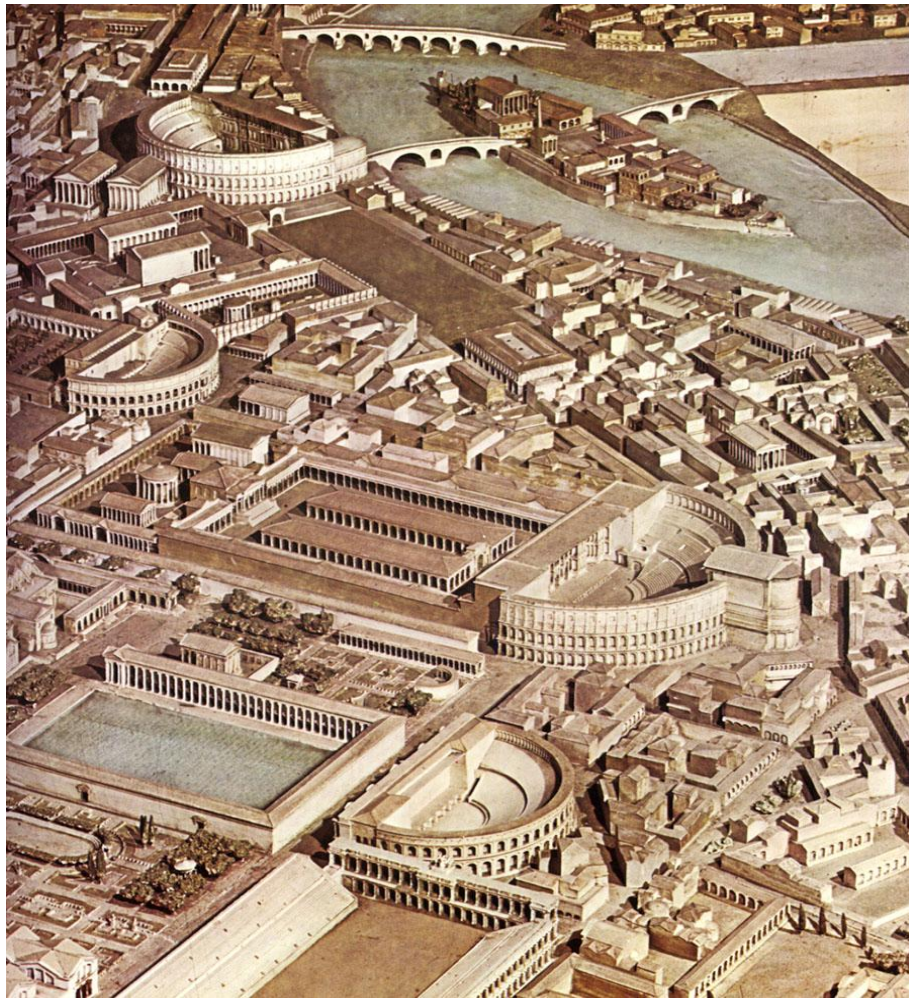


Roman Entertainment

*The Emergence of Permanent Entertainment Buildings and its use as
Propaganda*



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Introduction

'Barbarian Memphis be mute re the pyramids' wonders,
and you *Assyrians* stop bleating of Babylon;
no praise for tender Ionians, and Diana's *trivial* temple,
and may Apollo's many-horned altar bury Delos deep;
don't let the Carians cry extravagant words to the sky
regarding the Mausoleum that hangs in vacuous air.
All efforts now give way to Caesar's new amphitheatre,
Fame can speak of the one, and that can do for them all.¹

Martial wrote his poet not long after the dedication of the *Amphitheatrum Flavium*, in modern times better known as the Colosseum. In AD 72 emperor Vespasian started the construction the Colosseum and his successor Titus initiated it in AD 80. Martial states that other famous 'wonders of the world' cannot compete with this magnificent new amphitheatre, for which he praises Titus. The propaganda, in the form of a permanent entertainment venue, thus made a strong impression on Martial. The *Amphitheatrum Flavium* became the symbol of Roman display of imperial power. Even up till now, the Colosseum still remains the visible marker of Roman entertainment and a conspicuous example of Roman display of power.

However, permanent entertainment venues in Rome were not as self evident as it seems. Other Italian cities had acquired permanent entertainment venues much earlier than Rome. For instance Pompeii had a Greek inspired permanent theatre, which can be dated between the late third century and the early second century BC.² In 80 BC the Roman general Lucius Cornelius Sulla made Pompeii a Roman colony. To emphasize the link between Rome and its new colony, the Pompeian *duoviri*, C. Quinctius Valgus and M. Porcius built a permanent covered theatre (odium or *theatrum tectum*) in 75 BC and a stone amphitheatre in 70 BC.³ Although several attempts in the second century BC, Rome had no permanent entertainment buildings until the mid first century BC. There are several reasons

¹ Mart. *Spect.* 1 (transl. A.S. Kline).

² Frank Sear, *Roman Theatres. An Architectural Study* (Oxford 2006) 48-50.

³ For the odeum (*theatrum tectum*) see: CIL 10.844; Sear, *Roman Theatres*, 132.

For the amphitheatre see: CIL 10.852; D.L. Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre* (London 2002) 39.

why the Senate blocked these attempts in Rome, which will be further investigated in chapter 2. The Roman aristocracy continued a tradition in which they constantly build temporary stages to house their forms of entertainment. This immediately raises some interesting questions. How was it possible that a new-made colony had several permanent buildings for entertainment, at the time its ruler had none?

In this research I am answering the following main question: how did permanent entertainment buildings develop in Rome? And to what extent were permanent entertainment buildings used as propaganda? I will particularly investigate the transitional period between the Late Republic and the Early Empire, because in that period permanent entertainment venues emerged in Rome. In chapter 1 the individual development of the main Roman entertainment forms will be discussed, as well as the emergence of permanent entertainment venues in Rome. In chapter 2 I will analyse explanations why the Senate blocked several attempts to the erection of permanent theatres in the second century BC. In chapter 3, I will analyse how the use of entertainment as propaganda developed and came to its head. Was this development a gradual evolution, or a fast development in the context of the transitional period between the Late Republic and the Roman Empire? First, however, I will explain the used definitions, and take a look at the current status of the academic debate.

Terminology and definitions

It is desirable to analyse the past without projecting modern concepts into it. This research is about Roman entertainment, but the term entertainment (or amusement) itself is highly problematical. Roman entertainment includes a religious, political and social context that is in no respect comparable to our concept of entertainment. I am aware of these limitations and I will give the Roman terms where possible. The Romans named annual games for their gods *ludi*.⁴ They could for example consist of the *ludi circenses* (chariot races in the circus) and the *ludi scaenici* (theatre performances). The gladiatorial games were called *munera*.⁵ The strong difference in their origin will be discussed in chapter 1.

⁴ ‘*Ludi*: public games, plays, spectacles, shows, exhibitions, which were given in honor of the gods, etc.’ In: Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1879).

⁵ ‘*Munus*: A public show, spectacle, entertainment, exhibition, esp. a show of gladiators, which was given to the people by the magistrates, and generally by the aediles, as an expression of gratitude for the honorable office to which they had been elected.’ In: Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1879).

Roman entertainment is a problematic concept that developed over centuries. It is necessary to indicate and explain the working definitions I used, because Roman entertainment is a very wide and modern concept. Roman entertainment is completely different in both performance as well as in place and context than our modern concept of entertainment. I define modern entertainment as a performance that amuses people. Roman entertainment, however, contains a religious and political context. My working definition of Roman entertainment is: organised performances for a public, religious in origin and mostly politically motivated. In general, Roman amusement had to be organised. Whether it was on religious purpose or purely a part of self-advertisement, someone had to organise a place, participants (like horses and charioteers or gladiators) and obviously an audience. The definition contains theatre-, gladiatorial and circus games, as well as beast hunts (*venationes*). From the Late Republic on, they usually took place in a specific entertainment venue; the theatre, the amphitheatre or the circus.⁶ This definition is neither inclusive nor exclusive, which once again underlines the problems of an appropriate definition.

One could divide the organisation of Roman entertainment in two parts. Firstly, in Republican Rome, magistrates used the organisation of entertainment as self-advertisement to compete against each other, especially when its religious context became less important. Secondly, one could also fund a public building for entertainment, rather than fund the organisation of amusement. Also, through monumentalising those permanent structures, a powerful aristocrat, and later an emperor, could propagate his power and ideology to the visitors of the entertainment venues. Thus in short, one could use entertainment as a propaganda tool by organise any form of public amusement at the one hand, or by constructing an entertainment venue at the other hand.

The use of the concept entertainment building too needs to be more concretized. Modern scholars can understand different building types as an entertainment venue, and the Romans made no distinction at all. Their public buildings were multifunctional buildings, which were used for different functions including political and religious meetings, triumphs, entertainment and commercial activities. Circuses and theatres usually were *templa*: sacred places belonging to the gods.⁷ My definition contains, however, a clear distinction between

⁶ I left out the Stadium because of the maximum amount of words.

⁷ T. Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators* (London 1992) 2.

entertainment and leisure venues. I consider leisure buildings to be; baths, gardens, *palaestrae*, gymnasia and buildings that housed other pleasures of life such as banquets and sexual activities.

Lastly, I would like to explain the terminology used regarding propaganda. This is also a modern concept by which we study the Ancient World. Simon Hornblower demonstrated how the term propaganda can be used to understand the past. He says that 'it means active manipulation of opinion and some distortion of the truth.'⁸ By dividing it into propaganda that seeks to change attitudes and to reinforce them, it is helpful to understand the Ancient World.⁹ As an example he gives Augustus, 'who had the power, wealth and motive to promote a specific set of values and beliefs, using art, architecture, coinage, sculpture and literature, including Augustus own *Res gestae*.' I will focus in this research on propaganda through entertainment architecture, not specific that of Augustus, but this development from the Republic until the Early Empire. To specify propaganda further in its context I use the terms self-advertisement and political tool. Self-advertisement is an accepted academic manner to describe propaganda in Roman politics and society, which was all about visibility and gaining prestige.¹⁰ Permanent entertainment buildings were one of the means to achieve power and prestige, because they were particularly suitable as self-advertisement tools, as I shall argue in this research.

Academic debate on Roman entertainment

'Now that no one buys our votes, the public has long since cast off its cares; the people that once bestowed commands, consulships, legions and all else, now secures them no more and longs eagerly for just two things-Bread and Games!'¹¹

It is virtually impossible to avoid this quote of Juvanal, because it provides an insight into Juvanals view on entertainment in the late first and early second century AD. His opinion is

⁸ S. Hornblower, 'Propaganda', in: S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization* (Oxford 1998) 573-574.

⁹ Hornblower, 'Propaganda' 573-57.

¹⁰ For example see: Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Michigan 1988) (Transl. Alan Shapiro).

¹¹ Juv. 10, 80-81 (transl. G.G. Ramsay).

somewhat exaggerated and does not directly reflect the actual situation at that time: his work is satirical and not historiographic. Nevertheless, it shows that emperors used entertainment, at least to some extent, as a political tool to keep the people quiet and satisfied. Especially this development, the use of entertainment and its venues as propaganda which Juvenal complains about, will be analysed in this research.

For a long time though, scholars discussed quite different issues about Roman entertainment, if they were at all interested in the subject. Some scientists found it difficult to control their modern judgements of value, and they projected them on Ancient Rome. One notorious example is the monograph of Michael Grant (1967), in which he equates gladiatorial combats to the extermination programs of the Nazis.¹² Jérôme Carcopino (1939) suggests that the Colosseum was a torture chamber and a slaughterhouse.¹³ The last example I provide is John Balsdon (1969), who alleged that 'No one can fail to be repelled by this aspect of callous, deep-seated sadism which pervaded Romans of all classes.'¹⁴ I argue that the violence in the Roman society must be analyzed within the context of Roman values, because the projection of modern standards into a completely different world does not produce historical accurate knowledge of the Roman society.

Recently, however, scientists attach more value to researching the Roman World in its own context. Several significant researches have been published about the individual Roman entertainment venues.¹⁵ These specialized and detailed studies contain highly valuable information about the individual types of entertainment and their buildings, but a satisfactory explanation of the wider context, which contains all the individual entertainment buildings, is occasionally lacking. For instance, Hazel Dodge argues in a review that the monograph of Frank Sear about Roman theatres is missing an explanation of the differences and variations in theatre buildings across the Empire.¹⁶ By investigating all the main entertainment buildings in Rome, I hope to provide a wider context of the emergence of permanent entertainment buildings, in contrast to the studies that focused on one particular form of entertainment. Richard Beacham points out that there is limited and unsatisfactory evidence about Roman entertainment in general, and therefore a broad and

¹² M. Grant, *Gladiators* (New York 1967) 8.

¹³ J. Carcopino, *Het dagelijks leven in het oude Rome* (Utrecht 1961) 300.

¹⁴ J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London 1969) 308.

¹⁵ Such as: Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*; J. Humphrey, *Roman Circuses; Arenas for Chariot Racing* (London 1986); Sear, *Roman Theatre*.

¹⁶ H. Dodge, 'Roman Theatres: An Architectural Study (review)', *Antiquity* 314 (2007) 1112-1114.

overarching investigation has long been relatively neglected.¹⁷ He also suggests that it is due a disinclination by many who are too specialized to partake a topic that needs a multidisciplinary approach.¹⁸ I agree with Beacham, and therefore I try to make use of all the sorts of evidence as much as possible.

¹⁷ R.C. Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome* (Yale 1999) x-xi.

¹⁸ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, x-xi.

1: The development of permanent entertainment buildings in Rome

‘Public games are to be divided into those which take place in the *cavea* (theatre) and those which take place in the Circus. In the Circus footraces, boxing, wrestling, and chariot racing; in the theatre, singing, lyre-playing and flute-playing.’¹⁹

Cicero here divides the public *ludi* by means of the entertainment venue in which they usually took place. According to Wiedemann, Cicero probably wrote it down during the sole consulship of Pompey in 52 BC.²⁰ The (permanent) entertainment venues were adapted to the different sorts of entertainment, not vice versa. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish the development of the entertainment forms, together with the development of public entertainment buildings themselves.

1.1 *Ludi circenses and the circus*

The *ludi circenses*, the chariot-races, were the oldest form of entertainment that arrived in Rome. In the myths about the history of Rome, handed down to us by Livy, the circus played a major role in the initiation of the *Consuales* by Romulus and the Rape of the Sabine Woman.²¹ Although Livy wrote his history of Rome several centuries later, at the end of the first century BC, the myths provide an insight in the view of Livy and his contemporaries about the early history of Rome and the role of entertainment in it. In another reference to entertainment in the early history of Rome, Livy ascribed the first chariot races as part of the triumph that the Etruscan king Tarquinius Priscus (616-579 BC) held.²² Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who wrote a history of Rome at the end of the first century BC as well, also ascribed the first initial impetus to the Circus Maximus to the Etruscan kings.²³

Humphrey shows that archaeological sources are in broad agreement with the narrations of Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, that the Circus Maximus got its first appearance as circus around the sixth century BC, the period of the Etruscan kings in

¹⁹ Cic. *Leg.* 2.38 (transl. T. Wiedemann).

²⁰ Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 2.

²¹ Liv. 1.9 (transl. Rev. Canon Roberts).

²² Liv. 1.35, 1.56 (transl. Rev. Canon Roberts).

²³ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.44 (transl. E. Spelman).

Rome.²⁴ For example, chariot-races were represented in Etruscan friezes by at least the early sixth century.²⁵ Humphrey argues that the earliest circus rituals and traditions were established by the end of the sixth century and that they were at that time mainly votive games for the gods.²⁶ Humphrey further proposes that it appears most likely that annual *ludi circenses* evolved from them and that votive games continued irregularly thereafter.²⁷ In Republican Rome, the exact date of a *ludi* was of more importance than the place where it was held.²⁸ For example, the Circus Maximus had been an open space until the Late Republic and held no more than temporary stands of wood.²⁹ Several additions were made by various Roman magistrates, but all temporary.

In the Late Republic, Julius Caesar and Octavianus Augustus were able to monumentalise the Circus Maximus as part of their building propaganda.³⁰ Caesar started the first substantial structural developments in the Circus Maximus.³¹ Humphrey argues: 'There can be little doubt that the canonical shape of the Circus Maximus with its two long sides meeting in a semicircular end was firmly established by Julius Caesar, although some of the work was evidently finished by Augustus.'³² Major work in the Circus is attributed to Julius Caesar by Pliny³³ and Suetonius.³⁴ At least some stone seats as front rows must have been erected by him, together with a channel (*euripus*) of ten feet wide to protect the spectators from wild beasts in the *venationes*.³⁵

Augustus and his right-hand man Agrippa further monumentalised the Circus Maximus. According to Cassius Dio, Agrippa introduced the dolphin shaped lap markers on the *spina*.³⁶ Augustus ordered the construction of the *pulvinar*, the religious shrine that also

²⁴ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 64-67.

²⁵ *Ibidem* 17, 64.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, 66-67.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 66. See also: H.S. Versnel, *Triumphus. An inquiry into the origin, development and meaning of the Roman triumph*. (Leiden 1970) 101.

²⁸ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 69.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 69-72.

³⁰ H. Dodge, 'Amusing the Masses: Buildings for Entertainment and Leisure in the Roman World', in: D.S. Potter and D.J. Mattingly (ed.), *Life, Death and Entertainment in the Roman Empire* (Michigan 1999) 205-255, 237.

³¹ K. Coleman, 'Entertaining Rome', in: Jon Coulston and Hazel Dodge (ed.), *Ancient Rome; The Archaeology of the Eternal City* (Oxford 2000) 210-258, 212.

³² Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 73.

³³ Plin. *HN*. 36.102 (transl. John Bostock).

³⁴ Suet. *Iul.* 39.2 (transl. J. Eugene).

³⁵ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 69-73.

³⁶ Cass. Dio. 49.43.2 (transl. Earnest Cary).

could serve as 'royal sky-box'.³⁷ After a fire in 31 BC, Augustus renovated the Circus Maximus, and installed the Egyptian obelisk of Ramesses II on the *spina*.³⁸

After some fires seriously damaged the Circus, Trajan (AD 98-117) improved the Circus Maximus so that it was completely built in brick-faced concrete.³⁹ In AD 103, Trajan created the final, canonical appearance of the Circus Maximus and thus completed the development of the Circus that became more permanent from the initial impetus by Julius Caesar.

1.2 *Ludi scaenici and the theatre*

The main feature of the annual *ludi* were the *ludi scaenici* (theatre shows). Roman theatrical entertainment was heavily influenced by their early contact with the Greeks and Etruscans.⁴⁰ From the third century BC Greek styled plays were performed, and from the first century BC mimes and pantomimes became popular forms of theatrical entertainment.⁴¹ Although the Roman theatre itself was Greek in origin, the Roman theatre differs heavily from the Greek theatre.⁴² Besides technical differences, all early theatres in Rome were temporary structures of wood. Even after the first permanent theatre in Rome, wooden theatres continued to be constructed up to the Imperial period.⁴³ Beacham suggests that this long tradition of temporary theatres developed the typical Roman theatre form and performances.⁴⁴ As the theatre performances were part of the *ludi*, the wooden structures were mostly built around the steps of temples.⁴⁵

Vitruvius describes the use of temporary theatres in his own time (late first century BC) and the variations in techniques to build an acoustic theatre in wood or stone.⁴⁶ The first permanent theatre of Pompey was already built by then, but Vitruvius shows that there were still many wooden theatres in his age, and Beacham further indicates that this long

³⁷ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 78-83.

³⁸ For the propaganda of this obelisk, see chapter 3.2. '*Spina*: a low wall dividing the circus lengthwise, around which was the race-course; the barrier.' In: Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1879).

³⁹ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 103.

⁴⁰ Dodge, 'Amusing the Masses', 208-209; R.C. Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience* (London 1991) 10-20.

⁴¹ G.S. Aldrete, *Daily Life in the Roman City. Rome, Pompeii, and Ostia* (London 2004) 138.

⁴² Dodge, 'Amusing the Masses', 212. Vitruvius' description of early Roman theatre: *Vitr. De arch.* 5.3-7. (transl. M. H. Morgan).

⁴³ Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 56.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 65-85.

⁴⁵ S.L. Dyson, *Rome: a Living Portrait of an Ancient City* (Baltimore 2010) 59.

⁴⁶ *Vitr. De arch.* 5.5, 7-8 (transl. M. H. Morgan).

tradition went on until at least the Early Imperial period.⁴⁷ Beacham suggests that the period of temporary structures in Rome shaped the characteristic form of the Roman permanent theatre.⁴⁸ He had been investigating Roman wall-paintings (especially those preserved in Pompeii and Heracleum), which according to him probably depicted several wooden theatres.⁴⁹ In another study he adds: 'In the absence of a permanent structure, the frequent erection of temporary stages gave the Romans a continuous opportunity to mold these to reflect their own theatrical practice as it developed in its particular social and aesthetic context.'⁵⁰

In the Late Republic, Pompey was the first one able to build a permanent theatre in Rome, during his second consulship in 55 BC.⁵¹ With the first permanent theatres in Rome (Theatre of Pompey 55 BC, Balbus 13 BC and Marcellus 11 BC) the canonical shape of the Roman theatre was established: 'these theatres ultimately became the prototypes of the buildings so widely constructed during the subsequent centuries of the Imperial period', as Beacham points out.⁵² With this multifunctional complex, Pompey erected the largest and most important Roman theatre.⁵³ Pompey successfully advertised his influence, prestige and power, not only by organizing shows, but also through the architectural setting that became important to convey political messages.⁵⁴

Modern scientists often wrongly argue that Pompey could build his theatre because he built it mainly as a temple for Venus Victrix, that 'just happened to have a theatre beneath it.'⁵⁵ Zanker also argues, that Pompey needed to pretend it was mainly a temple, in order to prevent its destroying by the Senate.⁵⁶ There is some truth to these arguments but, as Kathleen Coleman strikingly shows, the theatre predated the temple with three years.⁵⁷ There is some discrepancy among scholars about whether contemporaries conceived the

⁴⁷ Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 56.

⁴⁸ Ibidem. For the characteristics of the Roman theatre see for example: Sear, *Roman Theatre*, 24-36. For the differences between the Greek and Roman theatre, see for example: Dodge, 'Amusing the Masses', 208-215.

⁴⁹ Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 56-85.

⁵⁰ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 25.

⁵¹ Sear, *Roman Theatre*, 57. For the context why Pompey was able to build a permanent entertainment building in Rome, see chapter 2 and 3.

⁵² Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 163.

⁵³ Sear, *Roman Theatres*, 57.

⁵⁴ Coleman, 'Entertaining Rome', 222.

⁵⁵ C. Campbell, 'The Uncompleted Theatres of Rome', in: *Theatre Journal* 55.1 (2003) 67-79, 69-70.

⁵⁶ Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 20-21.

⁵⁷ Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.3 (transl. E. Shuckburgh).

Aul. Gell. *NA.* 10.1.6-7 (transl. John C. Rolfe).

See also: Coleman, 'Entertaining Rome', 221.

building as a theatre or a temple. Campbell suggests that literary authors saw the building mainly as a temple.⁵⁸ Coleman suggests, however, that ‘the Roman nomenclature shows that it was recognised for what it was: a theatre’.⁵⁹ I would suggest that Coleman is right, because the complex is named as theatre on the *Forma Urbis Romae* as well.⁶⁰ Therefore I would suggest that the Roman contemporaries and later generations conceived it mainly as theatre. He probably needed the temple for moral objections from the Senate or his rivals and thus built it three years later. In addition, there is no evidence that it was conceived as a votive temple, like the Roman generals used to build and what is characteristic for Republican Rome.⁶¹ Pompey thus clearly searched for the boundaries of what was permissible to build: he first dedicated the theatre, and only later he defended his theatre as ‘mainly a temple for Venus Victrix.’⁶²

Julius Caesar wished to outdo the theatre of Pompey, in order to achieve more prestige than his rival. According to Suetonius, he planned the construction of a theatre on the slope of the Capitol, that overlooked the Forum.⁶³ This plan was never fulfilled, probably due to his sudden assassination. However, his other plan for a theatre at the south-east corner

⁵⁸ Campbell, ‘The Uncompleted Theatres of Rome’, 68. See: Cic. *Fam.* 7.1 (transl. E. Shuckburgh). Plin. *HN.* 8.7.20 (transl. John Bostock).

Aul. Gell. *NA.* 10.1.6-7 (transl. John C. Rolfe).

⁵⁹ Coleman, ‘Entertaining Rome’, 221. See: Augustus, *Res Gestae* 20.1;

Plin. *HN.* 34.40, 36.155 (transl. John Bostock);

Mart. *Spect.* 6.9.1, 10.51.11, 14.29.1, 14.166.1 (transl. A.S. Kline);

Suet. *Tib.* 47.1 (transl. J. Eugene).

⁶⁰ H. Denard, ‘Virtuality and Performativity: Recreating Rome’s Theatre of Pompey’, in: *A Journal of Performance and Art* 24.1 (2002) 25-43, 29.

⁶¹ Coleman, ‘Entertaining Rome’, 221.

⁶² Tert. *Spect.* 10 (transl. Rev. S. Thelwall).

⁶³ Suet. *Iul.* 44.1 (transl. J. Eugene).

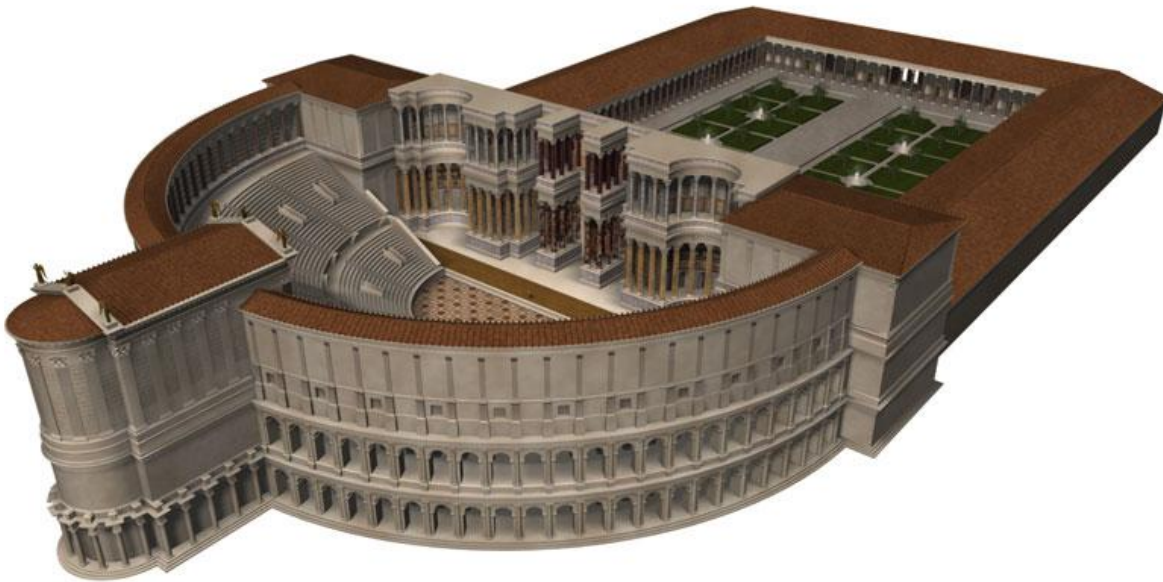


Figure 1: 3D visualisation interpretation of the theatre of Pompey created by Martin Blazeby, King's Visualisation Lab.

on the Campus Martius was already in an advanced stage.⁶⁴ His successor Augustus finally realised the theatre, adjacent to the temple of Apollo Medicus Sorianus, several years later and named it after his son-in-law Marcellus, who died in 23 BC. The theatre was one of the buildings in progress he inherited from Julius Caesar, along with the Basilica Julia, Curia Iulia and several others.⁶⁵ In 17 BC it was already in use, but it is debatable if it was inaugurated in 13 BC (Dio)⁶⁶ or 11 BC (Pliny).⁶⁷ Its architectural style, with colonnades in Doric, Ionic and Corinthian style from down to top (figure 2), seems to have influenced the builders of the Colosseum.⁶⁸ A part of the theatre is still standing in our days, incorporated in modern apartments (figure 3).⁶⁹

The third permanent theatre that was built in the transitional period between the Late Republic and the Early Empire, was the theatre of Lucius Cornelius Balbus. He built a combined theatre and covered passageway (*cryptoporticus*) to celebrate his triumph for his

⁶⁴ Cass. Dio. 43.49.3 (transl. Earnest Cary).

⁶⁵ Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 72.

⁶⁶ Cass. Dio. 54.26.1. (transl. Earnest Cary).

⁶⁷ Plin. *HN*. 8.65 (transl. John Bostock).

⁶⁸ Coleman, 'Entertaining Rome', 223-224.

⁶⁹ For technical characteristics of the theatre, see: Sear, *Roman Theatres*, 61-65.

campaign against the African Garamantes in 19 BC. In the literary sources it is only briefly mentioned by Suetonius.⁷⁰ Dio Cassius claims that during the dedication of the theatre in 13 BC, the Tiber was flooded so that Balbus had to enter the theatre by boat.⁷¹ It was smaller in size than the other permanent theatres of that time, those of Pompey and Marcellus.⁷² With its dedication in 13 BC, probably around the same time as the dedication of the theatre of Marcellus, Balbus was the last one who got the approval of Augustus to build a permanent entertainment building in Rome.



Figure 2: Model of the theatre of Marcellus, Museo della Civiltà Romana (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

⁷⁰ Suet. *Aug.* 29 (transl. J. Eugene).

⁷¹ Cass. Dio. 54.25 (transl. Earnest Cary).

⁷² Sear, *Roman Theatres*, 66.



Figure 3: Modern-day Theatre of Marcellus.

1.3 Munus gladiatorum and the amphitheatre

The development of the amphitheatre began with the rise of gladiator combats. In the quote from Cicero at the beginning of chapter 1, he did not mention the amphitheatre with its gladiatorial combats (*munus gladiatorum*), because they were usually were no part of the *ludi*. Gladiatorial combats have different origins. In their early onset, the *munera* were held at funerals of the higher class in Rome and had a religious context. These funerals are often wrongly named private funerals by scholars. As Bomgardner strikingly points out, they were public funerals, organised by private members of the aristocracy.⁷³ They were public, because of their increasing use as self-advertisement: visibility and status became characteristics of these funerals. Polybius, a Greek historian from the third century BC, gives a detailed description of such a funeral rite that further supports my argument. Polybius emphasises that communal pride and visibility of the family were the main focus points of

⁷³ Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*, 32.

these public funerals.⁷⁴ Bomgardner states that ‘the continuity of the family and its sense of tradition and cumulative glory were emphasised above all else.’⁷⁵ The emergence of gladiatorial combats at these funerals fit into this context of self-advertisement and visibility.

The first literary reference to gladiators at *munera* is from Valerius Maximus, who described three pairs of gladiators fighting at the public funeral of Decimus Brutus Pera in the Forum Boarium in 264 BC.⁷⁶ For a long time, these combats were held at different Fora in Rome with wooden temporary stands. During the Republic, competition among Roman aristocratic families led to the increase of the numbers of gladiators. Slowly the *munera* became detached from its religious context and, in Bomgardner's words, ‘led to the degeneration of these original funeral rites into flagrant bribes for political support.’⁷⁷

Pliny the Elder (first century AD) ascribed the development of the amphitheatre to C. Scribonius Curio in 52 BC, during the funeral spectacle he had organised in accordance with the testimony of his father.⁷⁸ However, amphitheatre structures, even permanent ones, existed ‘probably from the end of the second century BC, and certainly from 70-65 BC, the secure date for the construction of the amphitheatre at Pompeii’, as Bomgardner argues.⁷⁹ He suggests that the structure was not invented at the event described by Pliny the Elder, but that the term ‘amphitheatre’ from then on became common and the amphitheatre as structure became an appropriate venue for the Roman *munus gladiatorum*.⁸⁰ The canonical architectural form did probably take shape in the Forum Romanum during the second and first centuries BC, according to Bomgardner.⁸¹ However, Claire Holleran suggests that the amphitheatre and the gladiatorial combats developed independently in Campania of Roman influence.⁸² She makes it clear that the Romans believed they inherited the gladiatorial combats from the Etruscans, but that Samnite paintings depict them already from 400 BC, at the time the Romans annexed them.⁸³ The early amphitheatres have to be ascribed,

⁷⁴ Polyb. 6.53 (transl. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh).

⁷⁵ Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*, 32.

⁷⁶ Val. Max. 2.4.7 (transl. D. Wardle).

⁷⁷ Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*, 33.

⁷⁸ Plin. *HN*. 36.15, 116-20 (transl. John Bostock).

⁷⁹ Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*, 37.

⁸⁰ Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*, 37.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 59.

⁸² C. Holleran, ‘The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy’, in: K. Lomas and T. Cornell (ed.), *Bread and Circuses: euergetism and municipal patronage in Roman Italy* (London 2003) 46-60, 48.

⁸³ Holleran, ‘The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy’, 49.

according to Holleran, to the popularity of gladiatorial style entertainment in Campania.⁸⁴ I think that it is likely that both developments, permanent amphitheatres in Campania and temporary structures on the Forum Romanum, must have influenced each other, especially when the Campanian region came under Roman control.

It eventually led to the first permanent amphitheatre in Rome. Statilius Taurus secured the province of Africa for Augustus and was rewarded with a triumph in 34 BC. He paid the amphitheatre *ex manubiis* and dedicated it in 29 BC.⁸⁵ It remained under the management of Taurus and his family, because there are several inscriptions which connect the slaves of the Statilii to the amphitheatre, as Coleman shows.⁸⁶ Thus despite the fact that the amphitheatre was not built with private money from Taurus, this evidence confirms that permanent entertainment venues were pre-eminently used for self-advertisement. It has been suggested by various scholars, that the amphitheatre was only partly of stone, because it was completely burned down by the fire of AD 64.⁸⁷ This fire gave Vespasian and his successors the opportunity to build the greatest amphitheatres of all time: the Colosseum. This amphitheatre postdates my research period, but it is a striking example of the use of an entertainment venue as propaganda tool.

Although Taurus built the first permanent amphitheatre, *munera* were still being held in temporary structures in the Fora.⁸⁸ The value of permanent buildings must therefore not be overestimated. The major difference is, however, that permanent buildings were self-advertisements for a long, of not eternal period, while temporary structures remained short-term self-advertisements.

The relatively quick emergence of several permanent theatres in the Late Republic must have made a huge impression on the Romans and their visitors. From the Greek Strabo (64 BC - AD 19) we have an account of the outcome of these developments. He describes the Campus Martius in the time of Augustus, where several permanent entertainment buildings emerged in the preceding decades.

⁸⁴ Holleran, 'The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy', 49.

⁸⁵ Cass. Dio. 51.23.1 (transl. Earnest Cary).

⁸⁶ CIL 6.6226-8, 6258; Coleman, 'Entertaining Rome', 228.

⁸⁷ Cass. Dio. 62.18.2 (transl. Earnest Cary).

⁸⁸ Suet, *Tib.* 7.1 (transl. J. Eugene).

'We may remark, that the ancients, occupied with greater and more necessary concerns, paid but little attention to the beautifying of Rome. But their successors, and especially those of our own day, without neglecting these things, have at the same time embellished the city with numerous and splendid objects. Pompey, divus Cæsar, and Augustus, with his children, friends, wife, and sister, have surpassed all others in their zeal and munificence in these decorations. The greater number of these may be seen in the Campus Martius, which to the beauties of nature adds those of art. The size of the plain is marvelous, permitting chariot-races and other feats of horsemanship without impediment, and multitudes to exercise themselves at ball, in the circus and the palaestra. (...) Near to this plain is another surrounded with columns, sacred groves, three theatres, an amphitheatre, and superb temples in close contiguity to each other; and so magnificent, that it would seem idle to describe the rest of the city after it.'⁸⁹

The map of the Campus Martius at the time of Augustus (figure 4) supports the description of Stabo, in which he expresses the impression it made on him. His description clearly indicates that place and context had become at least as important as performance and time of entertainment in the Late Republic. I would like to extend the words from Hugh Denard, that not only the theatre of Pompey, but all these entertainment venues were not only a site of performance, but also performative in its own right with all the different levels of display.⁹⁰

1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, public entertainment can be broadly divided in the *ludi* and the *munera*. There were at the one hand annual *ludi* in honour of the gods, which were organised by someone holding public office. At the other hand special *ludi* which were organised by for instance an *triumphator* and later an emperor. The theatre- and circus games were the usual program features. The gladiatorial combats at *munera* developed from public funerals, a longstanding tradition in the Roman Republic.

Furthermore, it has become clear that until the Late Republic, the performance and time of entertainment was far more important than the location where it took place. Temporary structures were removed when the *ludi* or *munera* were completed. However,

⁸⁹ Strab. 5.3.8 (transl. H.C. Hamilton).

⁹⁰ Denard, 'Virtuality and Performativity', 25.

the strong magnates of the Late Republic and Augustus as new emperor, were able to built permanent entertainment venues in Rome. In the next chapter I will investigate more closely why these powerful magnates were the first constructors of permanent entertainment venues, while there were several attempts in the second century BC to erect permanent theatres in Rome that were blocked by the Senate.

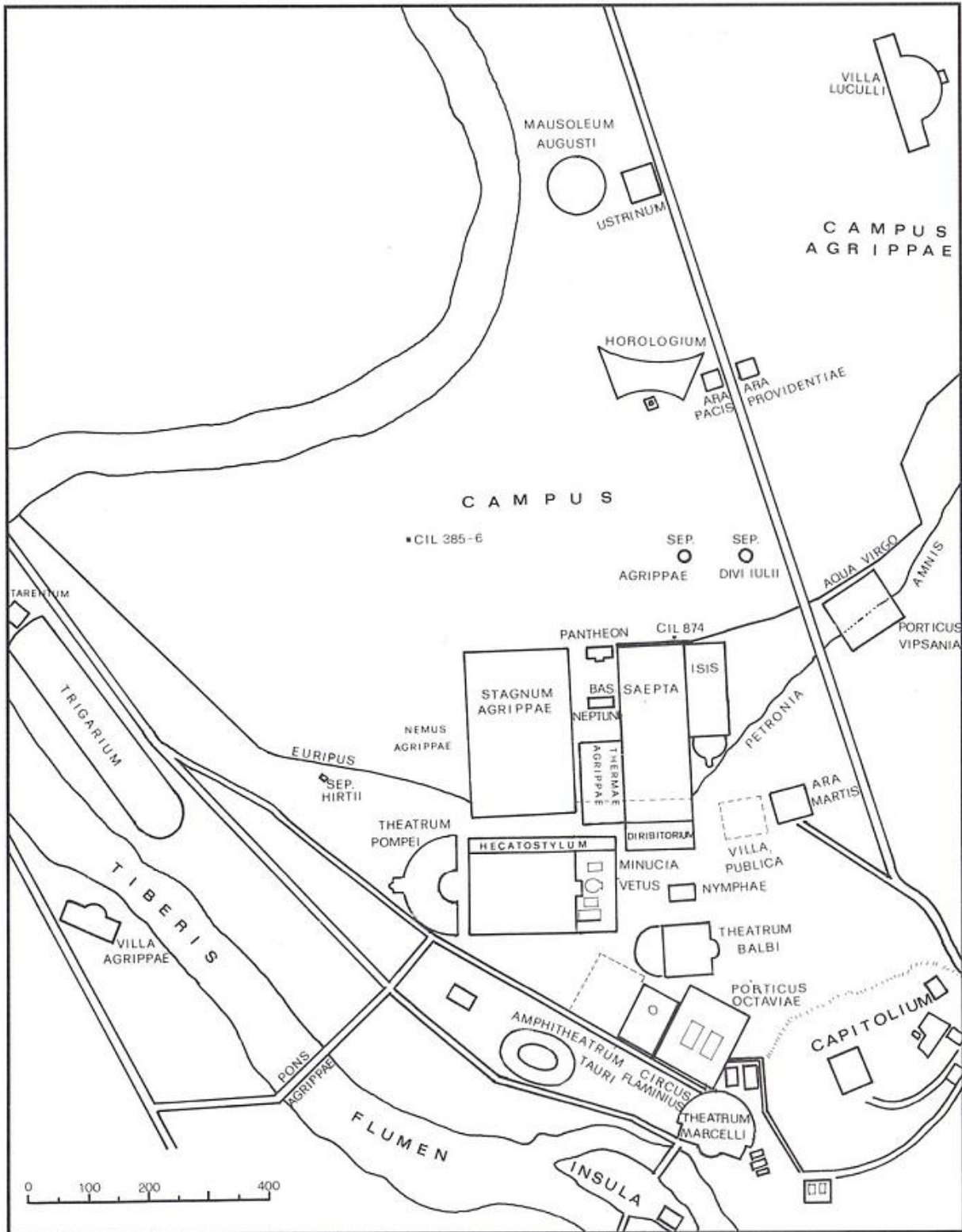


Figure 4: Campus Martius at the time of Augustus.

2: The uncompleted permanent theatres in Rome during the second century BC

2.0 Context

The Greek theatre arrived in Sicily and South Italy through Greek colonists, from the fourth century BC on. After the Second Punic War, during the second century BC, the importance of these regions declined. In Campania and Samnium prosperity prevailed.⁹¹ In fact, ‘before the Social War the Campanian cities were culturally more sophisticated than Rome’ and ‘therefore much of the archaeological evidence for the theatre in the second century BC must be sought in Campania and central Italy’, as Sear argues.⁹² The first theatre building in Pompeii have to be seen in the context of Greek-inspired Campanian theatres of the second century BC.

In Rome, temporary theatres developed in its own way. As I showed in chapter 1, their development eventually led to the free-standing theatre with all the Roman characteristics at the end of the Roman Republic.⁹³ Tacitus argues that it was economical favourable to construct permanent entertainment buildings, rather than building expensive temporary venues time after time.⁹⁴ This reason, and the intensified use of entertainment as self-advertisement, led to at least three attempts to erect a permanent theatre in Rome during the second century BC. Should these attempts be seen in the context of the Greek-influenced permanent theatres that rose in Campania in the same period? What did these attempts look like, and why were these first permanent theatres in Rome not completed or even demolished? By means of this chapter I will show that entertainment and its permanent buildings were already closely intertwined with propaganda in the second century BC.

2.1 First attempts in the second century BC

In the literary sources there are three different references to attempts of erecting a permanent theatre in Rome during the second century BC. There is much uncertainty about these theatres. Were they in planning phase only, or demolished after their completion? In the first case, Livius briefly mentions that censor Marcus Aemilius Lepidus planned the

⁹¹ Sear, *Roman Theatre*, 48-50.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 50.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 48-54.

⁹⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 14.21 (transl. Alfred John Church).

building of a theatre and proscenium near the Temple of Apollo in 179 BC.⁹⁵ Livy describes the second providing of a *scaena*⁹⁶ for the use of the aediles and praetors, in 174 BC.⁹⁷ It is not clear whether Livy describes permanent or temporary structures in these two events. Beacham suggests that these events were not recorded without reason by Ancient historians, because temporary structures were general and not recorded, these must be at least special.⁹⁸ Campbell shows that most recent historians of the theatre do consider this early records to be orders for permanent theatres.⁹⁹

However, there is more evidence available about the third attempt to erect a permanent theatre. In 154 BC the censors Messala and Cassius began the erection of a theatre at the southwest corner of the Palatine Hill.¹⁰⁰ Dyson suggests that this permanent theatre could fit precisely in the earlier mentioned context of Greek-styled theatres that rose in the Italian region in the second century BC.¹⁰¹ The location was namely close to the site of the Lupercal, on the slopes of the Palatine, what therefore could suggest that it was a typical Greek theatre, built on a hillside.¹⁰² The conservative consul Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica plead strong opposition, and the building was pulled down by order of the Senate.¹⁰³ If the theatre was already in an advanced stage, or even completed, this must have been a strong statement of the Senate.

Campbell has been analysing the various reasons for this decision of the Senate in the literary sources. Velleius Paterculus (AD 30) blamed the 'exceptional austerity of character [*severitas*¹⁰⁴] of the population', while Livy (writing most of his Roman history between 25 BC and 14 AD of which his *Epitome* is a summary) states that it 'was demolished by order of

⁹⁵ Livy, 40.51.3 (transl. Rev. Canon Roberts).

⁹⁶ 'Scaena: the stage, boards, scene of a theatre.' In: Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1879).

⁹⁷ Livy 51.27.6 (transl. Rev. Canon Roberts).

⁹⁸ Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 63.

⁹⁹ See: Campbell, 'The Uncompleted Theatres of Rome', 68: 'Among these historians can be numbered Catherine Saunders, "The Site of Dramatic Performances at Rome in the Times of Plautus and Terence," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 44 (1913): 92; John Arthur Hanson, *Roman Theater-Temples* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 24; Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 206; and Oscar G. Brockett with Franklin J. Hildy, *History of the Theatre*, 8th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 62.'

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, 67.

¹⁰¹ Dyson, *Rome: a Living Portrait of an Ancient City*, 59.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, 59.

¹⁰³ Liv. 40.51.3 (transl. Rev. Canon Roberts).

¹⁰⁴ 'Severitas: seriousness, gravity, sternness, strictness, severity, in a good and bad sense.' In: Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1879).

the Senate as being useless and harmful to the public character.¹⁰⁵ Tacitus mentions that around 120 BC sitting in the theatre was considered a decadent Greek influence, against which the Senate was very opposed.¹⁰⁶ Valerius Maximus was a contemporary of Velleius Paterculus (30 AD).¹⁰⁷ He stated that the Senate ordered the destruction of the theatre and passed a law that forbids the use of seats at a play within Rome or a mile distance, to preserve the manliness [*virilitas*¹⁰⁸] of the Roman character.¹⁰⁹

2.2 Resistance to permanent theatres

All these various explanations from the primary authors led modern scientists to discuss various theories, about why the Romans demolished their permanent theatres in the second century BC. I will analyse several perspectives on the question why the Senate blocked the erection of permanent entertainment buildings in Rome, because I think this will give a better insight into the relationship between entertainment, permanent housing of entertainment and propaganda from the second century BC. I will explain my point of view by dividing three different types of political and social arguments: aristocratic competition (1), entertainment as power instrument (2) and a conservative attitude (3). These explanations of the use of entertainment (both in its organisation and its housing), were not strictly separated in the Roman world. In fact they are all interrelated with each other, but it will be more comprehensible to treat them separately.

Aristocratic competition (1)

The organisation of entertainment received a political context early in the Roman Republic. Aediles, at the beginning of their political career, were responsible for the organisation of the *ludi*.¹¹⁰ Holleran states that it was common for an elite in an ancient society to glorify itself and display commitment to public service by means of permanent memorials and public buildings.¹¹¹ So the elite in Republican Rome, especially generals after a triumph or the responsible magistrates, was constantly building for its own prestige, without any form

¹⁰⁵ Liv. *Epit.* 48 (transl. Rev. Canon Roberts);

Vell. Pat. 1.15.3 (transl. Frederick W. Shipley).

¹⁰⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 14.20 (transl. Alfred John Church).

¹⁰⁷ Campbell, 'The Uncompleted Theatres of Rome', 68.

¹⁰⁸ 'Virilitas: manhood (perh. not ante-Aug.)' In: Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1879).

¹⁰⁹ Val. Max. 2.4.2 (transl. D. Wardle).

¹¹⁰ Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 25.

¹¹¹ Holleran, 'The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy', 57.

of city planning.¹¹² However, the elite was not allowed to build venues that 'benefited the masses in a frivolous or social sense.'¹¹³ T.J. Cornell argues that the lack of permanent public buildings in Rome, 'even though they were well established at Pompeii and elsewhere', can be explained by political reasons.¹¹⁴

'More probably it has to do with the fact that public building in Rome was always the object of competitive display among the aristocracy, and that buildings of all types, not just victory monuments, conferred prestige on the men who built them. The most obvious sign of this is the fact that all public works (...) bore the family name of their authors and were regarded as in some sense family monuments. They stood, isolated from one another, as reminders of individual achievements, with little or no attempt to contribute to a wider overall plan. The Republican city was no more than the sum of its parts. In this it precisely reflected the social and political system.'¹¹⁵

Thus constructing public buildings in Rome was already evidently a political activity in the Roman Republic, as Cornell clearly demonstrates. He further argues that the ruling senatorial aristocracy strived for two ambitions in their highly competitive society: 'to be the first among equals by doing everything possible to outmatch his fellows, and to prevent at all costs any of his rivals from doing the same thing.'¹¹⁶ The members of the Senate thus did everything to prevent their equals to achieve the erection of a permanent entertainment venue, because that would be devastating for their own strive to prestige and power. This characteristic of the Roman Republic resulted in the resistance against any permanent entertainment building: and even if a powerful magistrate was able to achieve it in the relatively short time he held office, his successors could ensure to offset his achievements.¹¹⁷ The political authority in Republican Rome was fragmented by the regular change of power and the competition among the rulers, and therefore nobody until Pompey was able to erect a permanent theatre in Rome.

Considered from city level, the Italic cities competed with each other by building several permanent theaters from the second century BC, as I have pointed out in chapter

¹¹² Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 88.

¹¹³ Holleran, 'The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy', 58.

¹¹⁴ T.J. Cornell, 'The City of Rome in the Middle Republic (c.400-1000 BC)', in: Jon Coulston en Hazel Dodge (ed.), *Ancient Rome; The Archaeology of the Eternal City* (Oxford 2000) 42-60, 53-54.

¹¹⁵ Cornell, 'The City of Rome in the Middle Republic (c.400-1000 BC)', 54.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

2.0. In a sense, permanent buildings served as self-advertisement for these prosperous cities. Rome, on the other hand, although not more culturally sophisticated than these cities was in political terms their superior. Rome therefore had not the priority to compete in cultural sense with other Italian cities, because they were the leading capital after all. Other concerns about permanent theatres, mentioned above, were of more importance to the Senate.

Entertainment as power instrument (2)

Besides the fact that entertainment was used in the highly competitive context of the aristocracy in Rome, entertainment was also a matter of power distribution. There are some tickets preserved and Holleran suggests that the organisers of entertainment could have at least some control over the audience that was attending their shows.¹¹⁸ At the start of a political career a magistrate had to use entertainment to gain influence and prestige in order to gain political power. They thereby were able to use entertainment as self-advertisement to show off their wealth and power and to make a name for themselves. Eventually building a permanent entertainment venue was the ultimate activity to use all of these elements.

Entertainment thus functioned as a power tool of individual aristocrats. Alongside this it functioned on a social level of the aristocracy and the legitimation of their power. Gruen considers the tradition of building temporary venues for entertainment to be a power tool of the aristocracy to maintain its power over the masses. 'The ritual of erecting and then dismantling temporary structures gave annual notice that the ruling class held decisive authority in the artistic sphere. A permanent theater, whatever its advantages in cost and convenience, would represent a symbolic relaxing of that authority. The vast edifice, exhibiting solidity and endurance, would enshrine the drama as an unshakable institution, no longer dependent upon the resolve of magistrates and the verdict of the aristocracy.'¹¹⁹ Thus the Senate tried to maintain their symbolic appearance of control. Allowing permanent theatres would seriously subvert their show of power and control.

¹¹⁸ Holleran, 'The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy', 50.

¹¹⁹ E. Gruen, *Cultural and National Identity in Republican Rome* (New York 1992) 31, 209-210.

Conservative nature (3)

Both the competitive element (1) and the power instrument element (2) are plausible explanations why the Senate blocked the erection of a permanent entertainment buildings in Rome. But there is a third element, namely the conservative nature of the Roman aristocracy. This strong traditionalist and conservative attitude was political and social.

Firstly, the conservative movement in the Senate considered permanent theatres as political dangerous. In Zankers words: 'They wanted no political discussion or public demonstrations such as regularly took place in the theatres of Greek cities.'¹²⁰ Beacham points at exactly the same reason: 'A public theatre represented a site where a large and unpredictable mass of people could assemble at any time, without warning and therefore, potentially, with no means at hand to control them. Theatres were, after all, built for mass communication.'¹²¹ And indeed, during the Late Republic, political expression in the theatre grew.¹²² The audience could use a specific passage of the play to either support or assault a political statesman to which they thought it was referring to.¹²³ Beacham points out that in this period, spectators demonstrate during theatre plays, or assemble in front of the theatre and express their political worries to the influential audience that was visiting the theatres, like the members of the Senate and other magistrates.¹²⁴ Holleran argues in addition that it is possible that the Greek theatres and their connection with politics and democracy was a cause of fear to the Senate of Rome.¹²⁵ The Greek theatres were in fact used for public and political assemblies.¹²⁶ That could explain why the Senate was so reserved about permanent theatres: with temporary theatres they were still being able to counteract the political dangerous theatres, with a permanent theatre they could not.

Secondly, the Senate was conservative in a social sense. Regarding the demolition of the permanent theatre in 155 BC, Valerius Maximus and Tacitus explained the behaviour of the Senate by their opinion that a permanent theatre was injurious to the public morals.¹²⁷ There was a short ban on sitting at theatre shows after this demolition, because they were afraid that the masses became idle, like they regarded the Greeks as they usually sat in their

¹²⁰ Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 20.

¹²¹ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 30.

¹²² *Ibidem*, 32.

¹²³ For some examples see: Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 158-162.

¹²⁴ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 57.

¹²⁵ Holleran, 'The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy', 49.

¹²⁶ Cic. *Flac.* 16 (transl. C. D. Yonge).

¹²⁷ See chapter 2.1.

theatres, according to Tacitus.¹²⁸ There was even a case in which they expelled all the theatrical practitioners from the city in 115 BC.¹²⁹ It is not likely, though, that these laws were strictly enforced for a long period, because theatre shows and their temporary housing continued to grow in popularity. Already in 145 BC there were seating erected for the plays that Lucius Mummius gave.¹³⁰ However, these measures serves as evidence that the Senate regarded permanent theatres as politically and socially dangerous, at least from the second century BC onwards.

Some scholars argue that the Senate was also religious conservative, and therefore opposed any permanent theatres. Brockett and Hildy argue that the Romans decided to build no permanent theatres, because it would disturb the balance between the gods.¹³¹ The Romans built their temporary theatres for many gods, on the steps of their temples. If they had to built permanent theatres for all their gods, the theatres would run to a prohibitive expense, or they had to choose permanent theatres for some gods and others not, which the Romans thought to be unwise.¹³² I disagree with this last religious explanation, because the Romans did build permanent temples for their gods, and were arbitrary as well in the quantities and expenditures in this temples. Furthermore, temporary theatres could indeed be placed at temples of their relative deities, but the structures itself are always recorded in the literary sources by their founders. Temporary theatres were in fact closely related with the name of its principals and were used as self-advertisement. The first permanent theatres in Rome are the proof of my argumentation: they are all named after their founders.

2.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, none of the attempts to construct a permanent theatre in Rome during the second century BC had succeeded. I would suggest, in accordance with the argumentation of Dyson, that at least one attempt in Rome fitted with the major trend of the Greek-styled theatres that rose during second century BC over the Italian region. However, the resistance of the Senate was stronger. Most of the ancient authors explained their resistance by their conservative nature. Modern scientists have analyzed various underlying effects that led to the strong oppositions against permanent entertainment buildings in Rome. I argue that the

¹²⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 14.20 (transl. Alfred John Church).

¹²⁹ Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 65.

¹³⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 14.20 (transl. Alfred John Church).

¹³¹ Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy, *History of the Theatre* (Boston 1999) 61-62.

¹³² Brockett and Hildy, *History of the Theatre*, 61-62.

competitive element of the Roman Republican aristocracy, the possible use of entertainment as a power instrument and the conservative nature of the Roman aristocracy all had its influence of the strong opposition against permanent entertainment venues. Rome had the capabilities to easily outdo other Italian cities, who were competing against each other with, for example, permanent entertainment venues, but their priorities were elsewhere. They were already in fact the leading capital at that time.

What I wanted to demonstrate in this chapter, is that entertainment had become an ultimate propaganda tool from at least the second century BC. In a hypothetical sense, one could argue that the Senate was rightly conservative. Naturally the Senate could not look with foresight, but they surely understand the significance of public entertainment in the political sphere. They understand that an individual got disproportionate power when he could dedicate a permanent entertainment venue in his own name.¹³³ In the Late Republic, precisely this happened what the Senate feared for so long. Strong individual magnates like Pompey and Caesar got too much power and used permanent entertainment venues, among other propagandistic tools, to achieve more power and prestige.

¹³³ Holleran, 'The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy', 51.

3: Roman entertainment as propaganda

‘The Senate, though able to prevent the building of major recreational buildings for generations, was for its own part incapable of erecting large civic buildings or monuments with which all Romans could identify, much less of developing a coherent city plan. Rome itself never succeeded in implementing the most basic features that were taken for granted at the founding of each of her *coloniae*.’¹³⁴

This expression of Zanker strikingly recapitulates the subject of my research. In the previous chapter I showed why the Senate was against the building of public entertainment venues. While other cities, under Roman control or not, built several permanent entertainment venues, Rome itself deprived itself from them. I discussed several explanations, and argued that the Senate was already well aware of the political motivations of permanent entertainment venues. Moreover, entertainment, both its organization and its housing, must had at least some political motivations, from at least the second century BC onwards.

In this chapter I will further explain my point of view, by treating two types of entertainment propaganda; entertainment as self-advertisement and entertainment as a communication tool. In analysing these two topics, two questions must be answered: how did the use of entertainment as propaganda develop? Was this development a gradual evolution, or a fast development in the context of the transitional period between the Late Republic and the Roman Empire?

3.1 Entertainment as propaganda until the Late Republic

Visibility, status and prestige

Visibility became very important in the career of a Roman magistrate in Republican Rome. Dyson argues that aediles and triumphators were using the display and performance opportunities of public entertainment as self-advertisement for their own benefits.¹³⁵

Wistrand shows that ‘the privileged few spend so much for the unprivileged many’, because they got status and prestige in return.¹³⁶ Status and prestige were crucial for a Roman

¹³⁴ Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 21.

¹³⁵ S.L. Dyson, *Rome: a Living Portrait of an Ancient City* (Baltimore 2010) 59.

¹³⁶ M. Wistrand, *Entertainment and Violence in Ancient Rome: The attitudes of Roman writers of the first century A.D.* (Göteborg 1992) 62-63.

magistrate in climbing up the political ladder. The complex and multilayered patronage system had for a long time been used by patrons to be ensured from the votes of their clients.¹³⁷

However, a Roman aristocrat had to be careful in spending his money on the appropriate forms of luxury. As Cicero strikingly characterises, the Roman people appreciated public *magnificentia* (entertainment), but hated private *luxuria*.¹³⁸ Organizing public entertainment forms became one of the few accepted options for a Roman magistrate to show off his power and affluence, and so achieve status, prestige, and potential voters: as long as it benefited the public.

Eventually, the competitive element in organizing entertainment changed the nature of entertainment itself. Beacham points out that that the emphasis was placed on more marvellous display and it intensified both 'the frequency and the increased scale and sumptuousness of the presentations.'¹³⁹ This was true both for the organization of entertainment, as well as for the providing of housing. As I have showed, it was not possible for a Roman magistrate to erect a permanent entertainment venue until the Late Republic. However, they could gain more prestige by making their temporary structures more extravagant than their rivals. Jory argues that theatrical activity in the Republic was a combination of 'religious ceremonial, eulogy of the family and vote-winning', the last also considered as individual self-glorification.¹⁴⁰ From the beginning of the second century BC, temporary theatres became more and more lavish. In the course of the first century it became even more violently, as literary sources point out. Valerius Maximus tells about different stages decorated entirely in silver, gold and even ivory.¹⁴¹ Plinius the Elder gives a striking example of the extravagant temporary theatre:

'M. Aemilius Scaurus constructed during his aedileship, and merely for a few days' temporary use, the grandest edifice ever wrought by man, even when meant to be permanent. I refer to this theatre. The structure had three stories, supported by three hundred and sixty columns (...) The lowest level was marble; the next glass –a

¹³⁷ Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*, 25.

¹³⁸ Cic. *Mur.* 76 (transl. C.D. Young). 'Luxuria: riotous living, extravagance, profusion, luxury, excess.' In: Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1879).

¹³⁹ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 43-44.

¹⁴⁰ E. J. Jory, 'Continuity and Change in the Roman Theatre', in: J. Betts, J. Hooker and J.Green (ed.) *Studies in Honour of T.B.L. Webster* (Bristol 1986) 143-152, 146.

¹⁴¹ Val. Max. 2.4.6 (transl. D. Wardle).

luxury never heard of since- and the top was fashioned from gilded boards. The lowest columns (...) were thirty-eight feet high, and between them were placed three thousand bronze statues (...) The rest of the equipment, including cloth of gold, painted panels, and various theatrical properties, was so lavish that when those remnants suitable for everyday use were taken to Scaurus' villa at Tusculum, and the villa then burnt by angry servants, the loss was calculated at thirty million sesterces.¹⁴²

Even if this account is exaggerated, it still was a splendid venue that must have made a huge impression. It is necessary to keep in mind that temporary structures still were being used in the early Empire, while permanent entertainment buildings already had emerged.¹⁴³ These richly decorated temporary structures, described by Plinius the Elder, could be just as impressive as the first permanent entertainment venues of the Late Republic.

Beacham argues that the traditional social system was not sufficient anymore during the Late Republic.¹⁴⁴ The population of Rome expanded heavily, and aristocrats increased their use of entertainment to manipulate the *plebs* to be ensured of their support. The fierce competitiveness grew and every magistrate wanted to organise the greatest form of entertainment for his individual glory. Openly offering gifts was considered to be offensive, but organizing lavish entertainment was an important exception, as I have shown above with the quote of Cicero. Organizing *ludi* was mostly the business of the *aediles*, but gladiatorial fights could be organized without official permission or regulation.¹⁴⁵ Bomgardner calls it 'the degeneration of these original funeral rites into flagrant bribes for political support.'¹⁴⁶ The only requirement was a dead relative, into which name the *munera* could be organized. Holleran shows that an aristocrat could be very creative and use the dead of any relevance of several years ago; Julius Caesar excelled by organizing gladiatorial fights for the death of his father twenty years earlier.¹⁴⁷

Cicero tried to restrict this development. He introduced a bill in 63 BC to prevent the exhibition of *munera* by prospective electoral candidates in the two years preceding their

¹⁴² Plin. *NH.* 36.144-115 (transl. R.C. Beacham).

¹⁴³ See for example several games that Augustus held in wooden stages, according to Suetonius. Suet. *Aug.* 43 (transl. J. Eugene).

¹⁴⁴ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 47.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 15.

¹⁴⁶ Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*, 33.

¹⁴⁷ Holleran, 'The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy', 52.

attempt to win election to office.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, Cicero wrote down his opinion about organising entertainment to win political power. He says that serious-minded men should not approve the sort of amusement that entertains the masses. However, he adds that even if men do not like the idea of spending a lot of money on entertainment, it is still demanded by the people and therefore required for a political career.¹⁴⁹ Neither Cicero nor anyone else could stop the overindulgence of the aristocracy and their use of entertainment as propaganda.

I argue that the use of entertainment as propaganda was a gradual evolution. My argumentation is consistent with the conclusion of Holleran:

‘It is hardly likely that the idea of building entertainment venues suddenly occurred to the upper classes: rather it is more likely that the power that such structures had on the city was recognised early and thus artificial factors prevented their development. With the breakdown of the Republic these artificial constraints disappeared and a rash of building occurred that made Rome into the sort of city that should be found at the head of such a huge empire.’¹⁵⁰

I have already showed in chapter 2 the artificial factors why the Senate posed strong opposition against permanent entertainment venues. The competitive nature of the Roman aristocracy led to entertainment that was more spectacular than the entertainment of their rivals. Housing entertainment also received increasing attention and the temporary theatres became more extravagant as well. The political and social conditions were crucial in the development of entertainment as propaganda. When these conditions changed in the Late Republic and political power was claimed by strong individuals, these magnates were able to go a step further in their use of entertainment as propaganda, by constructing permanent venues. As I have shown, other Italian cities acquired such permanent buildings much earlier than Rome. This can be explained due to the different political and social conditions. In Rome a permanent theatre was opposed by the strong competitive element of the Roman Republican aristocracy, the possible use of entertainment as a power instrument and the conservative nature of the Roman aristocracy, as I have argued in chapter 2. Outside Rome,

¹⁴⁸ Cic. *Sest.* 133 (transl. C.D. Yonge). See also: Bomgardner, *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*, 33.

¹⁴⁹ Cic. *Off.* 2.17.57-58 (transl. Walter Miller).

¹⁵⁰ Holleran, ‘The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy’, 58-59.

these constraints were not -or at least much less- existing. In the Italian cities under Roman control that achieved permanent entertainment buildings much earlier than Rome, there was a small Roman elite into power. They were able to build permanent venues, because there was no competition, and in fact it gave them the opportunity to gain prestige by investing their money in colony buildings, that had less constraints than Rome. It explains why for instance Pompeii had several permanent entertainment buildings, at the time Rome had none.

I agree with Coleman's conclusion, in which she argues that the political conditions were decisive in the development of entertainment:

'This monumentalization –coinciding with the transition from Republic to Empire, from oligarchy to autocracy – marks a shift in the attitudes of the ruling class towards the provision of public entertainment: spectacles, and their venues became a status-marker for the benefactor and regular expectation of the beneficiaries.'¹⁵¹

3.2 Entertainment as propaganda since the Late Republic

Communication

The gradual evolution of entertainment as propaganda in Rome thus increased and developed highly in the Late Republic. Roman aristocrats were using temporary entertainment buildings and elaborate entertainment performances to achieve status and power. For instance, Cicero complained that 'no one admires the capacity to give *munera*, for it's only a display of wealth, not native ability, nor is there anyone who is not already bored to death with them.'¹⁵² Eventually, strong individual magnates as Pompey and Julius Caesar went a step further by dedicate permanent entertainment buildings in Rome, when political and social conditions changed and the resistance against permanent buildings faded. The major difference with temporary buildings was that permanent venues were meant to be eternal. Permanent venues were actually a step higher, an increase in the use of entertainment as propaganda.

¹⁵¹ Coleman, 'Entertaining Rome', 245.

¹⁵² Cic. *Fam.* 2.3 (transl. E. Shuckburgh).

I argue, that permanent entertainment venues were the logical result of the gradual evolution of using entertainment as propaganda tool. From the emergence of entertainment, it was being used as political tool by its organisers. That was mostly part of their job as magistrate. However, they increased their use of entertainment as propaganda, as they used it in their competitive struggle for political power in the Republican state system. In the Late Republic and the Early Empire, this gradual evolution of entertainment as propaganda came to a head and accelerated. The powerful magnates had no resistance in rising to power. Their rivals were doing the same: advertise and enforce their power and influence by using various propaganda. Permanent entertainment venues and elaborate spectacles were just a part of these propaganda expressions.

In addition, Pompey extended the propaganda elements of entertainment buildings by use it as a communication tool as well. The decoration of the building complex was carefully chosen to commemorate his political ideology, as Coleman shows in his thematic programme: 'the sculptures emphasised the cult of Venus, and the world of poetry and the theatre; beyond that, Pompey's *imitatio* of Pergamene art in his porticus contributed to his self-image as the successor of the Hellenistic kings; and the ensemble that the sculptures formed with the paintings has recently been shown to celebrate his achievements in Roman Asia, and to place his unmistakable imprint on the landscape of the Campus Martius.'¹⁵³

Apart from the interior as communicative propaganda, the building itself conveyed a strong propagandistic message. Greek culture became a popular expression of prominent Roman statesmen and commanders.¹⁵⁴ Pompey fashioned himself as a successor to Alexander, and with a magnificent permanent theatre, that was still noticed for its Greek origin, he was able to demonstrate and to exploit the Greek culture for the greater glory of the Roman people and especially for his own status and ability.¹⁵⁵ The temple for Venus Victrix should be seen in this light too. To this goddess, Pompey dedicated his military victories. Due to the temple he was not only able to defend his permanent theatre¹⁵⁶, he was also able to ensure that both the theatre and the temple glorified his individual achievements, while they were actually public buildings.

¹⁵³ Coleman, 'Entertaining Rome', 222.

¹⁵⁴ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 63.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁶ See chapter 1.2.

In the multifunctional complex, Pompey built a new *curia*, that was dominated by a statue of Pompey himself. Plutarchus states that this statue was provided by the Roman people, to demonstrate its gratitude.¹⁵⁷ If the people provided it or Pompey himself, it acted as a permanent visible reminder in front of the Senate of his status. Pompey also built a new house for himself in 52 BC, a short distance from the theatre, if we may believe Plutarch.¹⁵⁸ The location of the theatre and his house were outside the holy boundaries of the city (*pomerium*), and therefore Pompey was able to visit the theatre while he was holding military authority.¹⁵⁹ At the location of his house, called the Porticus Pompeii, Pompey displayed rich spoils from Pergamum and a collection of statues and paintings, including his Greek role model Alexander the Great, painted by Nicias the Younger in the fourth century BC.¹⁶⁰ I only named a few examples of decorations, by which Pompey was able to convey to the Roman people that he was their political and cultural prominent. The entire complex became one of the most popular places in Rome to stroll¹⁶¹ and its visitors must have noticed that ‘Pompey’s complex was an amenity with a message.’¹⁶²

Conversely, entertainment became one of the scarce opportunities that the masses had to communicate directly with its political leaders. When magnates like Pompey and Caesar took more individual power, the people became more deprived of direct political influence. Thus during the Late Republic, theatre performances were increasingly used by the audience to express their political feelings. ‘In the case of Caesar they had been employed to communicate the power and glory of the leader as he literally became part of the show.’¹⁶³ Zanker argues that entertainment was the only form of direct communication that the citizens of Rome still had.¹⁶⁴ Holleran shows that in Imperial Rome, entertainment was one of the few places where the Roman citizens at least had some political participation, by communicating directly with the emperor.¹⁶⁵ I would agree with Zanker and Holleran, that the Romans, deprived of their political influence in Imperial Rome, used entertainment as a way to communicate with the emperor. They could honour him, or make clear to an

¹⁵⁷ Plut. *Brut.* 14 (transl. Bernadotte Perrin).

¹⁵⁸ Plut. *Pomp.* 40.4-5 (transl. Bernadotte Perrin).

¹⁵⁹ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 68.

¹⁶⁰ Plin. *HN.* 35.59 (transl. John Bostock).

¹⁶¹ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 69; Mart. *Spect.* 11.1.11 (transl. A.S. Kline).

¹⁶² Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 70.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*, 113.

¹⁶⁴ Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 147.

¹⁶⁵ Holleran, ‘The Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Rome and Italy’, 50-51.

emperor that they do not liked him. Augustus especially used theatre performances to gauge what the masses were thinking of him and conceive their honours. In addition, while ‘gauging the mood of the masses’, he was able to show his people that ‘he was one of them, with a feel for popular taste’, and by this also influencing the opinions of them.¹⁶⁶ However, in public he actively discouraged such use of entertainment by the masses.¹⁶⁷

Augustus rather ‘fashioned the occasions for the games subtly to convey an ideological message and thereby strengthen the political basis for the *principate*.¹⁶⁸ In this way he was able to influence their opinions so they would be positive about him and his sole leadership. He used propagandistic tools in entertainment venues where these contact between the ruler and his people had place, or gave them the most elaborate games they ever saw. When Augustus had become emperor, he was the sole ruler in both organizing entertainment and provide a housing for them. He was the *Pater Patriae* of Rome, the only patron of all the Roman clients and thus stood above everyone else. Augustus restricted the right of triumphs, and building a permanent venue or giving spectacles had become only possible in the name of the emperor.¹⁶⁹ Entertainment as propaganda tool came to a head in the Roman Imperial Age. Augustus extended the communicative and propaganda elements of entertainment even further. Public venues, especially the theatre, amphitheatre and the circus, were places where thousands of people gather in the same building. These buildings thus were pre-eminently suitable to convey propagandistic messages to the masses. In no other way one could communicate with so many people at the same time in the Ancient world, than during these gatherings. For example Augustus legitimized his power and he could convey cultural messages, both implicitly or explicitly shown in the monumentalisation of the venues.¹⁷⁰

For instance the Egyptian Obelisk that Augustus used as propaganda. The main lines of the Circus were established by Julius Caesar, but Augustus further monumentalised the Circus and made it more permanent.¹⁷¹ With the inscription on the base of the obelisk, he

¹⁶⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁷ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 113. See for example Suet. *Aug.* 53 (transl. J. Eugene).

¹⁶⁸ Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments of Early Imperial Rome*, 113.

¹⁶⁹ K. M. Coleman, ‘Euergetism in its place: where was the amphitheatre in Augustan Rome’, in: in: K. Lomas and T. Cornell (ed.), *Bread and Circuses: euergetism and municipal patronage in Roman Italy* (London 2003) 61-88, 65.

¹⁷⁰ See chapter 4, The Augustan Program of Cultural Renewal of: Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 101-166.

¹⁷¹ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 75.

showed the audience of the Circus Maximus his military achievement and at the same time present Egypt as a gift to the people: *aegypto in potestatem populi Romani redacta* (figure 5).¹⁷² The other inscription, both facing the side of the spectators, stated that he himself to the Sun as a gift: *solis donum dedit*.¹⁷³ Its place is significant, namely on the *spina* of the Circus Maximus. If there was one place that was visible for the thousands of visitors, it was the *spina*. Furthermore, because the obelisk, placed in the Circus in 10 BC, was dedicated to the Sun, it strengthened the overall connection of the Circus in general, that was dedicated to the Sun too.¹⁷⁴ The transportation of the giant obelisk, 23.70 metres high, was in fact in itself a form of propaganda and act of power that they ‘even controlled nature.’ The obelisk itself was a major symbol of the Augustus his power and thus served as legitimizing. The obelisk in general from then on became the dominating feature that was associated with circus architecture and propaganda.¹⁷⁵

The *pulvinar* was another major part of the work of Augustus that made the Circus more permanent. He must have viewed it not just as an expansion, but at least as a major structure, because he names the *pulvinar* in his *Res Gestae*.¹⁷⁶ He even used the Greek word for temple, so this monument had an important religious function.¹⁷⁷ It housed the statues of the gods, during spectacles and triumphs. The *pulvinar* was not new, but Augustus was the first that made it of stone, and thus permanent.¹⁷⁸ Augustus did even sometimes watch the games in the *pulvinar*.¹⁷⁹ This was a strong propagandistic message that Augustus conveyed on the spectators: he, as *divi filius* (son of a god), was able to watch the games from a religious dedicated place, together with the gods.

The use of entertainment to communicate ideologies can be further elucidated by the several laws and measures that Augustus ensured on a social level. Augustus proposed the Lex Julia Theatralis in 20BC, in which he arranged the seating of the social classes.¹⁸⁰ The seating in the theatre of Marcellus, and perhaps also the Circus Maximus, could be designed to conform this law.¹⁸¹

¹⁷² CIL 6.701.

¹⁷³ CIL 6.701, Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 270.

¹⁷⁴ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 269.

¹⁷⁵ Coleman, ‘Entertaining Rome’, 214.

¹⁷⁶ Augustus, *Res Gestae* 19.

¹⁷⁷ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 78.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁹ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 79.

¹⁸⁰ Coleman, ‘Entertaining Rome’, 223.

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 223.



Figure 5: Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum 6.701 Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

I would agree with Zanker that the new permanent theatres in the Augustan Era significantly contributed to the consolidation of the new social order that Augustus saw as ideology: with Augustus himself as leading figure.¹⁸² Each time a visitor of the Roman entertainment games of the Imperial Era, it was reminded to the stratification of the social society, and his own place in it.

¹⁸² Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 149.

3.3 Conclusion

Entertainment was already in the Roman Republic being used as a political tool to both reflect and achieve influence, status and prestige. Visibility was crucial for a Roman aristocrat to compete with his political rivals. The increasing competition among the Roman elite led to the magnification of organizing spectacles and housing the spectacles. Political bribery was conceived as disgraceful, but entertainment became the ultimate form of self-advertisement. In the Late Republic, strong individual magnates as Pompey and Caesar were struggling for power, in which they used propaganda to accomplish political power. They went a step further in the use of entertainment as propaganda, by constructing permanent entertainment venues.

These founders, with Octavian Augustus as ultimate example, used permanent entertainment buildings also as mass-communication tools, besides self-advertisement. These buildings were pre-eminently suitable to convey propagandistic messages, because thousands of people gathered there many times in a year. This concept worked in two ways. On the one hand, the permanent buildings were suited for its builders to convey political, cultural and ideological messages. Thereby they were useful to legitimize power and affect all the visitors of the spectacles. On the other hand, the permanent entertainment venues became one of the scarce opportunities in which the masses could communicate with an emperor and express their political thoughts. Emperors increasingly used entertainment events to gauge the mood of the masses, and they were even able to influence their opinions by propagandize strong messages in the scarce places where these forms of direct communication took place between them and the masses.

Conclusion

In this research I investigated the emergence of permanent entertainment venues in the context of the development of entertainment as a propaganda tool. I tried to use archeological, literary and epigraphical evidence in order to present answers as thoroughly as possible. I investigated the main three forms of entertainment, instead of focusing on one specific form, in their own context. As a result I was able to analyze the development of entertainment as propaganda on a larger scale.

It has become clear that public entertainment contained various forms with different origins, and all developed highly from their emergence onwards. In general, during the Roman Republic, *ludi* were organized by Roman aristocrats who held office. Gladiatorial combats were organized at *munera*, the traditional public funerals of the Roman aristocracy. During the Roman Republic, entertainment was increasingly used as self-advertisement tool. At an early stage, organizing entertainment was used by the Roman elite to not only reflect their authority, but also to achieve influence and prestige. Visibility was significant in achieving this political power and support for an aristocrat, to be able to climb up the political ladder in Republican Rome. The spectacles that they gave became increasingly extravagant in order to compete their political rivals.

Providing housing for the various forms of entertainment was also influenced by the competitive spirit among the aristocracy, and became more focused on acquiring status. However, the Roman magistrates were not able to provide permanent entertainment venues until the Late Republic. Permanent entertainment venues emerged already from the second century onwards in other Italian cities, but the Senate deprived Rome from these amenities. The Senate appeared to have well judged that permanent entertainment venues gave too much power to its builders. At least three attempts were done in Rome in the second century BC to construct permanent theatres, but the Senate was able to block them until the Late Republic. I argued that the Senate opposed permanent entertainment venues, because firstly they were well aware of the critical influence it could have on the competition among the elite. Permanent venues were eternal self-advertisements, and as will become apparent in the Late Republic, it truly gave the builders a tool to achieve individual political power on a high scale. Secondly, because entertainment became a tool to demonstrate power. Especially the costly temporary structures that the aristocracy constantly built, demonstrated that they were capable of providing certain public amenities.

Permanent entertainment buildings could stop this procedure that led the Roman aristocracy continue to show-off their power. Thirdly, because the Roman Senate had a conservative nature. It conceived permanent theatres as politically and socially dangerous.

This explains why other cities, for example the Roman colony Pompeii, had several permanent entertainment buildings, while Rome had none until the mid first century BC. On a city level, permanent buildings too gave cities status and prestige. Especially from the second century onwards, several Italic cities were competing against each other with permanent (entertainment) buildings. However, for Rome the artificial constraints to permanent venues outweigh the consideration to join this competition. In fact, Rome had already become the leader in political terms.

However, in the Late Republic, political and social conditions changed. Strong magnates as Pompey and Julius Caesar increasingly took individual power. Pompey was the first that went a step further in the use of entertainment as propaganda, by building a permanent theatre. He circumvented the opposing arguments of the Senate, by justifying his permanent theatre as a temple for Venus Victrix. However, it is likely that his contemporaries already realized that it was –at least partially- meant as a permanent theatre. In the transitional period from oligarchy to autocracy, the Senate was not able to adhere to their constraints against permanent theatres. This political and social change, not really further investigated in this research because that would be too distracting, appeared to be decisive in the emergence of permanent entertainment buildings and the development of entertainment as propaganda. From the Late Republic onwards, several permanent entertainment buildings emerged in Rome in a relatively short period after Pompey's first permanent theatre.

Permanent entertainment venues were the logical result of the gradual evolution of using entertainment as propaganda. Merely in the Late Republic this gradual evolution was accelerated. Permanent entertainment buildings and its spectacles became mass-communication tools, besides the ultimate self-advertisements that they already were. I argue that this worked both ways. Firstly, from emperor to the mass. Through entertainment and its permanent venues he was able to convey political, cultural and ideological messages and legitimize his power. Secondly, the mass, deprived from any direct political influence, could express their positive or negative political feelings during the spectacles.

Thus, each time a visitor attained a form of entertainment, he got several impressions that contained propagandistic messages. Firstly, he was impressed by the scale of the organised entertainment, which were used by the organiser (Republican aristocrat or emperor) as self-advertisement to acquire status and political influence. Secondly, the visitor was impressed by the building itself and its propagandistic messages it contained. In the Roman Republic through the elegance of the temporary structures and from the mid first century BC onwards through the impressiveness of permanent buildings and their propagandistic decorations and monumentalisation.

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