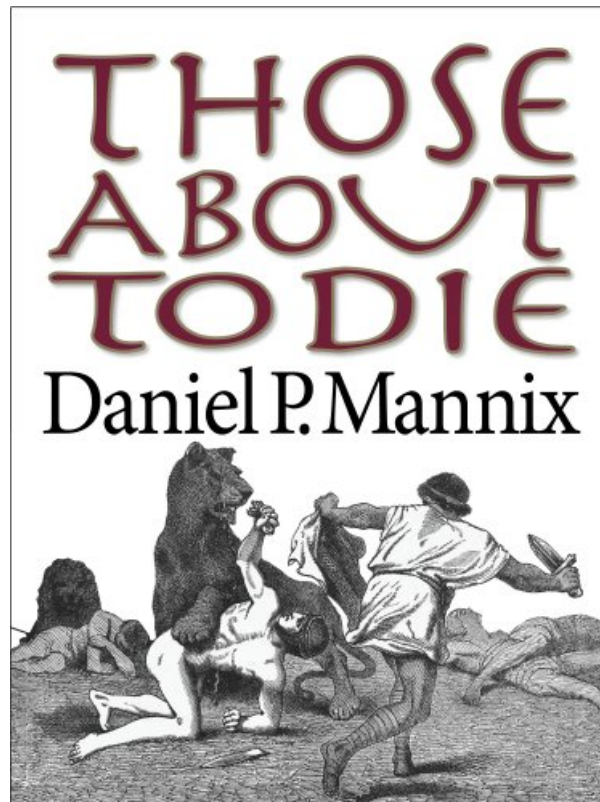


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During five centuries of popularity, the Roman games, or ludi, started out as celebrations no more heinous than the average neighborhood carnival and grew into a spectacles of pointless massacre that slaughtered thousands of people and animals every month. The games were so popular that they became a national institution through which millions of people?animal trappers, gladiator trainers, horse breeders, shippers, contractors, armorers, stadium attendants, doctors, promoters and businessmen of all kinds?made a living. In fact, the Roman economy was so dependent on their success that any attempt to terminate the games or to restrict their barbarity meant certain economic collapse.

Stadiums were everywhere and thousands of citizens flocked to see the unthinkable. Gladiators, chariot races, parades, fights between a vast assortment of wild animals?elephants and rhinos, buffalo and tigers, and leopards and wild boars, rape and bestiality, mock battles and naval combats were scheduled over a period of several days or even weeks, so that crowds were entertained by a continuous stream of exhibitions. They demanded innovation and emperors complied?each attempting to trump the last in order to sustain interest and fuel gluttoned appetites. The crowds shouted and screamed and laughed and betted as men, women, children and animals were hacked, crucified, torn to pieces, ravished, burned, and drown. The acts were inconceivable; the numbers staggering. A gathering of biographies, paintings, and other historical evidence would create a treatise worth noting, but like other great novelists, Daniel Mannix has gone beyond the facts, and has prepared the scenes, added script, and brought the games to life.

So, why? Why did the games to develop into nothing short of sadistic debauches? Why did no one stop them? In the last and most stunning chapter the author addresses the question that historians and philosophers have pondered for over fifteen hundred years. Today the reasons presented by the author for consideration are more significant than ever before. His observations are sobering. His conclusions profound. This is the book you will never forget.

Quote from LA Times:

"If you can imagine a superior American sports writer suddenly being transported back in time to cover the ancient Roman games, you will have some idea of the flavor and zest of *The Way of the Gladiator* . . . This popular history manages to compress an astonishing number of facts about the five centuries of games."

-Los Angeles Times

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Most helpful customer reviews

26 of 27 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent synthetic history of Roman Games and Gladiators

By A Customer

Mannix' "Those About to Die" combines a historical and sociological view of the Games of the Roman

Republic and Empire. With the title taken from the traditional gladiators' greeting, "Hail Caesar! We who are about to die salute you!", this book traces the history of the Roman games from Anchises' funerary games in Vergil's Aeneid to the inevitable coarsening and excess of Imperial Rome. Along the way, we learn about the engineering of the Circus Maximus, the training of the gladiators, the orgiastic response of both plebs and patricians in the audience, and even the horrific cruelty inherent in such a scene. Mannix' "Those About to Die" provides tremendous insights into a cultural and sociological ritual the likes of which have never been seen before -- and, hopefully, will never be seen again.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Daniel P. Mannix's magnum opus

By A Customer

Probably the most provocative work of historical fiction published this century, "Those Who Are About To Die" is pure Mannix at his best. A uncensored exploration of what likely took place in the circuses of ancient Rome. Filled with all the bloodshed, sadism, torture, sex and bestiality that Mannix could reasonably document. Just as fascinating today as when it became a cult classic thirty years ago. Mannix is the only author brave enough to make a career out of documenting man at his most inhuman. Hard to believe he also wrote the story for Disney's "The Fox and the Hound"! If you liked "Caligula" you'll love "Those Who Are About To Die"! But don't forget to follow-up with his "The History of Torture", and "The Hell Fire Club" if you can find a copy.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Shocks of Ancient Rome--about half right

By Wallace Wood

This is an update after actually receiving the book. Read first, then go to the end for the update.

Almost 50 years have passed since I first read this shocker and I've found it again. Before pushing "go to checkout" this is my memory:

Absolutely incredible book on Roman life. By "incredible," I really do mean "unbelievable" details of Roman excesses, not just in the killing arena, but in raising and eating rare foods: hummingbird tongues, fish that changed colors as they were boiled alive, unborn calves and other animals cooked inside their mothers, and on and on.

In the arena, there were specialists in animal as well as human destruction called "bestiarii" who could kill a lion with their bare hands. The author said the bestiarii hated and feared only leopards because of the animals' blinding speed.

The Roman Colosseum arena could be flooded in minutes, not only for mock sea battles, but for imaginary paradise islands populated by luscious women and handsome men singers and musicians--who were fed to crocodiles to the delight of the crowd.

So out of hand did the "Bread and Circuses" of Rome become that shipments of sand for the Colosseum floor were given priority over shipments of food, according to that author.

I read this shocking book as a very young teenager--it was a paperback book belonging to an uncle. If I can remember this much after nearly 50 years, this is a book that stays with you--whether totally true or not.

UPDATE---Well, I was half right, because this is about half the book it was. Not Amazon's fault. The book arrived in less than a week in surprisingly good condition for a paperback.

No, the 1960 publisher "reverse Bowdlerized" the original I read. Thomas Bowdler gave his name to heavy editing by taking out "indelicate" parts of Shakespeare for a family edition.

This publisher left all the indelicate parts in, resulting in 153 pages of blood, guts and sex.

My guess is that 100 pages of the original are missing. Nothing on the raising and eating of rare foods except a brief mention of thrushes' tongues (not hummingbirds) and baby mice. Very little on the daily lives of Romans and the rich. Probably considered too boring.

Still a helluva read by Daniel Mannix. He put together an exciting and only partly imaginary account of the horror and spirit of the "games" of ancient Rome. Today's "Mortal Kombat" types of computer games and popularity of "reality" TV shows are a perfect reflection of old bloodlust, proving Mannix right in saying in 1958 that America would revel in actual fights to the death today.

But I wanted more than blood and guts, and miss the "boring" parts. Instead of Bowdlerized, the original was disemboweled--with glee.

[See all 25 customer reviews...](#)

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