

[REVIEW]

MARTIN T. DINTER, review of Anastasia Bakogianni, Valerie M. Hope (eds.), *War as Spectacle: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Display of Armed Conflict* (London 2015) (=Bloomsbury Classical Studies Monographs), xiv, 454 pp., ISBN 9781472522290, 120,00 £, in: Annemarie Ambühl (ed.), *Krieg der Sinne – Die Sinne im Krieg. Kriegsdarstellungen im Spannungsfeld zwischen antiker und moderner Kultur / War of the Senses – The Senses in War. Interactions and tensions between representations of war in classical and modern culture = thersites 4* (2016), 345-350.

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Anastasia Bakogianni, Valerie M. Hope (eds.), *War as Spectacle: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Display of Armed Conflict* (London 2015) (= *Bloomsbury Classical Studies Monographs*), xiv, 454 pp.
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Martin T. Dinter (King's College London)

The volume under review offers eighteen chapters ranging across a number of periods and disciplines such as literary studies, art history and reception studies which examine the concept of war as spectacle. Deriving from an interdisciplinary colloquium held at The Open University in June 2012 its declared purpose is not to provide military history as such but to shape our awareness of war as cultural performance by analyzing theatre, poems, narratives, artefacts and monuments, rituals, ceremonies, social interactions, political demonstrations and social movements under this aspect.

Anastasia Bakogianni's introduction emphasizes how performance permeates Greek and Roman culture. She demonstrates how on the one hand epic, lyric, drama as well as historical and philosophical texts create spectacles in the imagination of their listeners and readers. On the other she points out how Roman triumph, funerals, games and the census were all designed as interactive civic spectacles. Etymologically the Latin word *spectaculum* ranges in meaning from 'public sight or show/stage play' to 'wonder/miracle' and is in contrast to modern usage carrying positive connotations. She also highlights the connection between spectacle, Greek athletics and Roman gladiatorial shows which all relate to displays of *virtus* and acquisition of fame, both also characteristics of war. In addition, reminiscent of war spectacles are 'sites where contesting ideologies, identities and power structures met, clashed and struggled for supremacy' (5). She stresses that ancient audiences were not simply passive recipients but interactive agents in spectacles ('not above throwing food at performers'), which as 'multi-media events' addressed sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Due to the nature of our material from antiquity, however, as well as due to ancient literature's powers of visualization vision is the

dominant sense in what we can assess nowadays. A further fundamental difference of our perspective on war is that for most of us war is a distant event of which we share no experience while different periods within classical antiquity saw the involvement of smaller or larger segments of the population in warfare. Indeed, we are accustomed to perceiving democracies as essentially pro-peace and are shifting away from focusing on *kleos* to focusing on the suffering war brings whereas Athens, the world's first democracy, as well as Rome actively looked for conflicts to become involved in so as to expand their borders and influence. Bakogianni's introduction provides useful background and overview over the different theoretical approaches to spectacle, which are then adopted to a varying degree by the contributors.

The volume is structured in three parts, the first of which entitled 'Ancient and Modern Literary Spectacles of War' contains two subsections. The first of these subsections 'Epic Spectacles' contains five chapters ranging from Homer to Flavian epic whilst also including a comparative study of the *Iliad* and the Japanese epic *Heike Monogatari* (*The Tale of Heike*). Tobias Myers' chapter focuses on the duel between Menelaus and Paris in *Iliad* 3, a scene in which the epic's *enargeia* makes the audience believe that they are being part of a live event. In addition, by analyzing the epic's different layers of viewership as well as readership/audience Myers highlights the conceptualization and significance of viewing as part of the poem's self-reflexivity. Naoko Yamagata compares the *Iliad* with a thirteenth-century Japanese epic poem and explores in particular the role of the epic poet as 'war correspondent', the authorial voice that guides the audience's response to events. The authorial voice in the *Iliad* highlights the flip side of *kleos* when it draws attention to the sense of loss and grief of those left behind in the epic's obituaries. Similarly, an even more pronounced authorial voice laments the suicide of the child-emperor Antoku in the *Tale of Heike*. Neil Bernstein's chapter points to the role of the spectator and/or reader as interpreter of violence on the battlefield which customarily is depicted as heroic, but who also has to negotiate the voices of grieving parents, women or the common soldier. Exemplifying his approach Bernstein offers readings of the duel between Aeneas and Turnus in *Aeneid* 12 and of Eteocles and Polynices in Statius' *Thebaid* 11 before moving on to Medea's teichoscopy in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* 6 (modelled on that of Helen in *Iliad* 3), Pompey's surveying of the battlefield before the battle of Pharsalus in *Bellum*

Civile 7 and Fabius' role as an observer of the battle of the upstart Minucius in Silius Italicus' *Punica* 7. Helen Lovatt reflects on death scenes of young men in Statius' *Thebaid* focusing on warriors who die in the epic's margins. Statius creates *pathos* and makes the reader identify with Parthenopaeus, Atys, Crenaeus, Hippomedon, Amphiarus and Capaneus by appealing to all the readers' senses. We are thus implicated in the spectacles we are witnessing through an uncomfortable push and pull between identification and distancing.

The second subsection of part one discusses poetical, historiographical and philosophical spectacles. Laura Swift's chapter examines lyric samples from Tyrtaeus, Alcaeus, Archilochus, Sappho and Ibycus. She suggests that those poems performed in a private, sympotic environment show that a more critical approach to war was acceptable whereas those performed on civic occasions celebrate military success and endorse epic heroic values. Emma Bridges analyses the catalogue of the Persian troops in Herodotus' *Histories* 7.61–99 through Paul Violi's poem *House of Xerxes*, composed in response to 9/11, which through its focus on clothes and equipment re-imagines Xerxes' marching troops as a catwalk show. Andrea Capra examines the spectacular nature of the Platonic dialogues *Laches*, *The Republic* and the *Timaues-Critias*, while Rhiannon Ash dissects the shadowboxing depicted in Tacitus' *Annals* 15.1–31 between Nero's general Corbulo and the Parthian Vologeses who both move around troops and put on military spectacles sending home news of their successes but avoid real conflict. Valerie Hope examines the treatment of the war dead from a variety of sources and then eyes Lucan's description of a landscape carpeted with corpses after the battle of Pharsalus.

Part two of the volume offers three chapters that focus on the spectacle of war in material culture, the last of which by Andrew Fear provides a fascinating account of how the iconography of Trajan's Column set the standard for how war was commemorated for centuries to come. Part three on spectacles of war on stage and in modern media provides five chapters that range from a witty analysis of the classical heritage of depictions of war in operetta and burlesque by Justine McConnell to Gonda Van Steen's analysis of the Festivals of the Polemic Virtue of the Greeks staged by the Greek military dictatorship (1967–74) or Anastasia Bakogianni's of the Greek-Cypriot film-maker Michael Cacoyannis' Euripidean anti-war trilogy of *Electra* (1962), *The Trojan Women* (1971) and *Iphigenia* (1977). The volume

concludes with Jon Hesk's close reading of Terrence Malick's subversive war movie *The Thin Red Line* (1998) versus the *Iliad* and Sonya Nevin's report on the Panoply animations (www.panoply.org.uk), created from scenes on ancient vases. In this last section – but this is a matter of personal taste rather than quality – I particularly enjoyed McConnell's tracing of depictions of Homer in Brough's London-staged burlesque *Siege of Troy* (1858). Here Homer is dressed up as war correspondent who has been born simultaneously in seven different places (which helps to explain away the Homeric question) summarizing the concept of epic glory thus: 'Your fames are in my hands, premium or zero,/Whether each ranks a humbug or a hero.'

Even my brief and necessarily selective overview demonstrates the breadth of the material discussed in this volume under the heading of spectacle. As the introduction makes clear the concept itself is open to a variety of interpretations, which allows the contributors to take a wide range of approaches to their material. The reader then walks away from this impressive volume with heightened awareness of the ramifications of spectacle when approaching both the ancient and modern. As the editors have demonstrated, war as spectacle is present sometimes explicitly, at times more implicitly, in a wide range of material from antiquity. Through its reception, however, – indeed, the editors must be praised for having assembled such a wealth of both comparative and reception studies – its characteristics become apparent and inform our reading of the ancient material.

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