

Female Gladiators

Tacitus. *Annals*. XV.32.3

Spectacula gladiatorum idem annus habuit pari magnificentia ac priora; sed feminarum inlustrium senatorumque plures per arenam foedati sunt.

The same year [A.D. 63] witnessed a number of gladiatorial shows, equal in magnificence to their predecessors, though some women of rank and senators disgraced themselves in the arena. (Jackson, 1937).

Suetonius. *Dom.* 4,1.

Spectacula assidue magnifica et sumptuosa edidit non in amphitheatro modo, verum et in Circo. . . . Nam venationes gladiatoresque et noctibus ad lychnuchos nec virorum modo pugnas sed et feminarum.

He constantly gave grand and costly entertainments, both in the amphitheatre and in the Circus. . . . Besides he gave hunts of wild animal beasts, gladiatorial shows by the light of torches, and not only combats between men but between women as well. (Rolfe, 1914).

Martial. *Liber De Spectaculis* VI.

**Belliger invictis quod Mars tibi servit in armis,
non satis est, Caesar; servit et ipsa Venus.**

It is not enough, Caesar, that war-waging Mars serves you with unconquerable arms; Venus herself serves you.

Statius. *Silvae* I, vi. 51-56

(An account of entertainment given by Domitian during the Saturnalia includes this unusual event.)

**Hos inter fremitus novosque luxus
spectandi levis effugit voluptas:
stat sexus rudis insciusque ferri;
ut pugnas capit improbus viriles!
credas ad Tanain ferumque Phasim
Thermodonticas calere turmas.**

Amid such excitements and strange luxuries the pleasure of the scene flies quickly by: women trained to the sword take their stand, daring, how recklessly, men's battles! You would think Thermodon's bands [of Amazons] were furiously fighting by Tanais or barbarous Phasis. (Mozley, 1928)

Cassius Dio. LXVII 8,4

Often [Domitian] would conduct the games also at night and sometimes he would pit dwarfs and women against each other.

Cassius Dio. LXVI, 25,1.

(in reference to the opening of the Flavian amphitheatre)

There was a battle between cranes and also between four elephants; animals both tame and wild were slain to the number of 9000; and women (not those of any prominence, however) took part in dispatching them. (Clay, 1968)

Cassius Dio. LXXVI, 16,1.

There took place also during those days [in the reign of Severus] a gymnastic contest at which so great a multitude of athletes assembled, under compulsion, that we wondered how the course could contain them all. And in this contest women took part, vying with one another most fiercely, with the result that jokes were made about other very distinguished women as well. Therefore it was henceforth forbidden for any women, no matter what her origin, to fight in single combat.

CIG 6855:

A relief with an inscription. From Halicarnassus. Now in the British Museum.

ΑΠΕΛΥΘΗΣΑΝ

ΑΜΑΖΩΝ ΑΧΙΛΛΙΑ

