This is an interesting book, a revision of the author’s doctoral dissertation, which argues that Livy presents Rome’s past as something that visually unfolds before the eyes of his readers, making spectators of them. According to Feldherr (hereafter F), this occurs because both the makers and writers of history at Rome used rhetorical strategies designed to evoke civic spectacle. Livy’s *Ab Urbe Condita* goes to lengths to present rituals of power such as sacrifice and triumph in visual terms.

In Chapter 1 a variety of influences can be detected: literary theory, psychoanalytical theory, especially concerning the socially formative gaze, and recent work on the social function of civic spectacle. F begins with the rhetorical concept of *enargeia*, the vivid presentation of events in a literary work, which he argues is especially applicable to historiography, deriving from Herodotus’ preference for *autopsia* (seeing over hearing) and Thucydides’ eyewitness accounts. F uses the ritual departure (*profectio*) of P. Licinius in 171 BC to show how in Livy’s text this technique helps form a bridge between past and present—both spatially, by describing the spectators’ gaze as they follow the departing commander from the Capitolium to the gates of the city, and temporally, as the spectators reflect on past commanders who have followed the same route. But the reader is also a spectator. Thus a ‘layered’ reading of spectacle in Livy’s history is presented.

Livy’s representation of spectacle is conceived as a way of bringing *auctoritas* (political authority) to his text. F employs the insights of writers like Clifford Geertz and Simon Price to argue that these events were the venues where power was made manifest. Then, following the Dutch scholar Hendrik Wagenvoort, particularly in his understanding of the symbolic importance of contact in Roman culture, F argues that Roman leaders often ‘possessed a capacity, very like the quality Geertz defines as charisma, to connect those who came into contact with them to the state’s “active centers”’ (15). Livy, similarly, draws a connection between his text and public demonstrations of power, thus ‘situat[ing] his work at the active center of Roman civic life’ (17). His text acquires *auctoritas* in much the same way that an artistic representation or
memorial (*monumentum*) of a spectacle such as a triumph keeps the event 'present' even when it is long past. F takes the argument one step further: by preserving the past of the city in this way, with its institutions, laws, and customs, Livy, like an Augustus or a Camillus, also participates in a form of civic regeneration.

Chapter 2 (51-81) maintains the focus upon Livy's participation in two systems of representation: the civic spectacles through which the political and religious authority of the state are made visible to the citizens, and the traditions of literary history developed and described by his predecessors. F emphasizes especially the ways in which Livy uses the figures in his text, such as Camillus (78-81), as 'sources' who authenticate his narrative. It is through this means that Livy constructs the relationship between the two systems he describes.

Chapter 3 (82-111) analyzes both duels and *devotiones* as spectacles—'that is, as actions whose effectiveness depends on their being witnessed by others' (84). These spectacles become the means through which the collective power of the state operates on the spectators. Both the *devotio* of Decius Mus (the ceremony through which a Roman commander pledged his life in return for the success of his army) and the duel of the young Torquatus draw on similar performances as either imitation or model. The young Torquatus accepts the Latin's challenge because his father the consul had himself, when young, earned his *cognomen* by defeating a Gaul in single combat. Decius' son and grandson are traditionally held to have devoted themselves in later battles. This system of imitation, F argues, perpetuated a uniquely Roman *res publica* and served to distinguish Rome from her enemies (85).

Chapter 4 (112-64) examines the fall of Alba Longa, the city that stands as intermediary between the two *patriae* (fatherlands), Troy and Rome. The incorporation of Alban citizens into the Roman citizen body acts as a metaphor for understanding the conflicts of civic identity in Rome of the late Republic and early Principate. F uses *lustrationes*, purificatory rituals that allow for initiation into a group or community, and sacrifice, a ritual that draws sympathy both for victim and performer, as models for understanding these oppositions. He shows that sacrifice, through its controlled violence, could have a positive, unifying influence.
on a group, such as occurred in Augustan Rome at (e.g.) the annual sacrifices at the Ara Pacis.

We are asked to see Livy’s text as taking on a political, state-building function precisely when he is describing sacrificial ritual. It consequently communicates in the same medium as Augustus himself when he accomplished the restoration of the state. This begs a crucial question: can a literary work operate on its audience in the same way as an actual sacrifice (spectacle)? F discusses how a text might achieve this by considering the execution of Mettius Fufetius, the spectacle through which the Albans are finally incorporated into the Roman state (156-64). Tullus Hostilius uses the language of both ritual spectacle and the historian in describing his political intentions and the execution. Certainly F shows how spectacle and text might, deliberately it seems, contain elements that evoke the other medium, but this perhaps shows less that each has the same effect on its audience as that each recognises the different effect the other has and wants to take advantage of it for maximum effect.

In Chapter 5 (165-217) F argues that Livy distinguishes spectacles from drama. He begins by describing the theatre as an anomalous institution in Roman society, being closely connected to political life and yet a world apart from it. This is reflected in the ‘theatrical’ way that Livy presents the last days of Tarquinius Superbus, whose reign is something of a political anomaly both because the reigns of the other kings were fair and just and because it is diametrically opposed to Livy’s ideal Rome. There appear to be some problems with the argument. For instance, F contends that the palace acts as a ‘tragic stage set’ through which characters enter and exit, but only mentions Tullia, who returns home after murdering her father and then flees again when the régime falls. He states further that Tullia ‘becomes the centre around which tragic imagery clusters’ (191), although he can adduce only one phrase (muliebribus instinctus furiis, ‘inspired by womanly furies’) as an example of this ‘tragic imagery’. The chapter concludes with a comparison of how the two audiences—the audience within the narrative and Livy’s readers—see and understand Tarquin’s rise to power. Since Tarquin took pains to disguise the ‘dramatic influences’ on his rise to power, for example by conducting secret meetings and driving Tullia away from the Forum, the audience within the narrative could not have been fully aware of all that took place behind the scenes. Livy’s readers, on the other hand,
supposedly see the whole series of events staged as a drama and can fully appreciate it, therefore, as a negative exemplum.

The problems with the argument in this chapter make it difficult to agree that drama must have been a ‘less beneficial’ (165) means of visual display, and that Livy’s use of ‘dramatic influences’ in this story illustrates this fact. Given F’s view that Livy ‘consistently depicts the theater as antithetical to his narrative in its aims and effects’ (166), I was surprised not to see the books of Peter Wiseman given more prominence (especially Historiography and Imagination [Exeter, 1994], and his latest, perhaps too recent to be taken into account, Roman Drama and Roman History [Exeter, 1998]: on the latter, see my review in Scholia n.s. 8 [1999]). Wiseman thinks that Livy and other writers were inspired by historical drama (fabulae praetextae), so that their conceptions of famous events and characters were fundamentally shaped by what they saw on the stage. By contrast, although he limits his discussion to a few important episodes only, F seems to envisage a different relationship between dramatic festivals and visual spectacula on the one hand and Livy’s narrative on the other.

Was Livy’s world view shaped by the stage; or did he consciously shape his narrative so as to evoke the stage (and other public spectacula)? Wiseman favours the former view, F the latter. The end result, it seems to me, would be largely the same, but the difference of method implied by these two theories is profound. One involves an historian whose primary understanding of famous events comes from stage presentations; the other envisages an historian whose primary understanding could well have been formed by other means but who makes a conscious decision to choose a particular (‘visual’) mode of presentation. According to F, Livy made this decision because he wanted to affect civic life, to shape social attitudes and behaviour, more than we might expect from a literary work. The theory is plausible, but perhaps the views of F and Wiseman form parameters between which the reality of composition oscillated. Livy’s narrative could evoke public spectacula and staged events; this implies that it was also to some extent shaped by them. Similarly, political messages might derive from the ritual or the author or from both.

F’s reading of Livy’s text does appear to show how such an author could find a place for himself in a culture that demanded active
participation in public life. It also provides another possible model for understanding the historian's aims and methods as well as his place in the larger scheme of Roman historiography. This can only stimulate further interesting debate.

Tom Stevenson
University of Auckland.