The Circus Maximus of ancient Rome was a real place. The largest arena in the world, it entertained over 300,000 spectators daily for nearly a thousand years. Chariot races, hunts and battles satisfied the Roman public's need for grander and wilder amusement as the Empire declined. The parallels between the high decadence of Rome and our present time are obvious. Entertainment dominates our culture, and ever-more-extreme 'reality' shows dominate our entertainment. Many of us have become as bemused by the violence and humiliation that flood the 500-plus channels of our television screens as those mobs of imperial Rome who considered the devouring of human beings by starving lions just another Sunday show. The shape of Circus Maximus was built both to embody and comment on this massive and glamorous barbarity. – John Corigliano