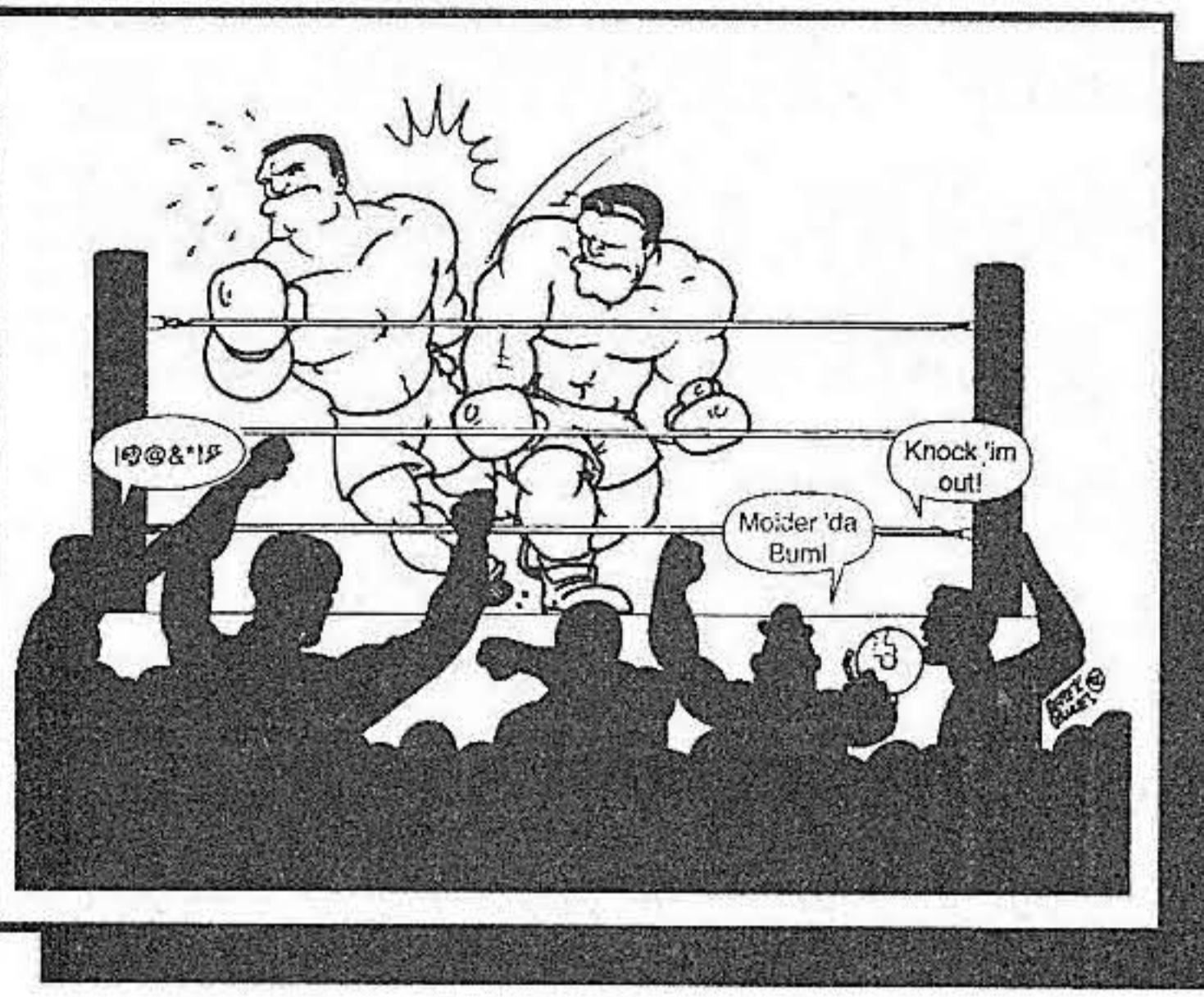


In transparency 1.3G we see a cartoon showing fans cheering wildly as a boxer hits his opponent.



- Some claim that America has experienced a decline of moral standards in recent decades. These critics argue that family values have deteriorated, that crime is out of control, and that children today increasingly cannot distinguish right from wrong. Moreover, many blame various forms of entertainment—movies, television, music, and sports—for glorifying sex and violence. And in many cases, people are attracted to entertainment simply because of its base appeal.
- The final years of the Empire were marked by a decline in morals and values, and some historians believe that this contributed to the decline of the Empire. Crimes of violence made the streets of the Empire's larger cities very unsafe. According to Roman historians there were 32,000 prostitutes in Rome during the reign of Trajan. Emperors like Nero and Caligula became infamous for wasting money on lavish parties, where guests ate and drank until they became ill.
- Most significant, however, was the growth of the Roman passion for cruelty. The most popular amusement was watching the gladiatorial combats in the Colosseum. These were attended by the poor, the rich, and frequently the emperor himself. As gladiators fought, vicious cries and curses were heard from the audience. One contest after another was staged in the course of a single day. Should the ground of the arena become too soaked with blood, it was covered over with a fresh layer of sand, and the revolting performances went on.

Critical Thinking Questions: Which theory on the fall of the Roman Empire does this cartoon most closely relate to? What are the similarities and differences between Ancient Rome and America today on this issue?