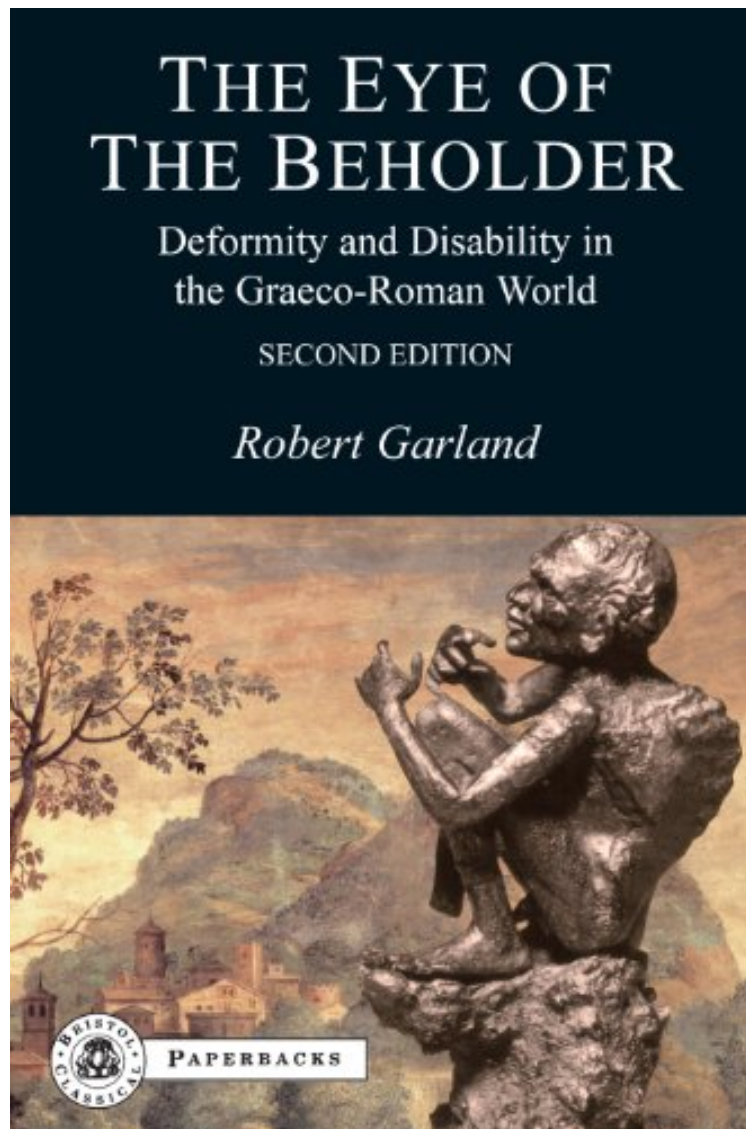


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## The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World, Second Edition (Bristol Classical Paperbacks)

*Robert Garland*

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**Robert Garland : The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World, Second Edition (Bristol Classical Paperbacks)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World, Second Edition (Bristol Classical Paperbacks):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting, but sad. By Jeri On one hand, the ancient Greco-Roman world insisted that any deformed infant be exposed immediately after birth. This was especially true in Sparta, where bodily perfection was demanded of every child, and it was made a law that all infants born with a deformity of any kind were not allowed to survive. Malformed children were also sometimes seen as a punishment from the gods, a curse that the parents had brought upon themselves. Handicapped people were the butt of cruel jokes in most comic plays, and the obese, the crippled, or the hunchbacked, were frequent subjects for vases, presumably for humor. Ugly people and dwarfs, those with deformities of any kind, were abhorred by the Emperor Augustus, who said they were 'of evil omen' (p 49), like walking curses. If an animal had an abnormal offspring, it could be regarded as a calamity about to befall the people who owned the animal, or on the city. At any rate, it was a cause for alarm, a sign from somewhere. Physical perfection in humans was all but worshiped, especially in Greece. Beauty was regarded as an important reflection of our inner self. No one who performed a pagan ritual was to be less than perfect. Any bodily deficiencies were seen as character flaws, even baldness. So obsessed was Caligula with his bald spot that he insisted on wearing a laurel wreath at all times to hide the bald area, and he forbade anyone to look down on the bald spot from a higher area. Aristotle proclaimed that mankind was perfection itself, and said 'All living creatures are dwarf-like compared with a man' (p 1). Pliny the Elder believed all of Nature was fashioned for use by man. Women who lost their beauty as they aged were cruelly mocked. Comedies poked fun at their ugliness. Although we know most handicapped infants were killed, clearly some survived, either because the deformity hadn't yet been revealed, or perhaps because the mother refused to expose her baby. Those who did survive were regarded as monsters; the Stoic Seneca could hardly say enough bad things about the Emperor Claudius' looks, walk, and speech. Yet, at the same time, Egyptian Pharaohs and Roman Emperors also collected odd looking people, rather like household pets. The Emperor Domitian, for example, went everywhere with a boy with an abnormally small head. He dressed him in scarlet and discussed Roman politics with him. The coldness and cruelty of the ancient world is portrayed in all its horror here.

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Overview, Inspires More Research By A Customer This is an excellent book. I read it for a research paper, and really enjoyed it. Garland researches his subject well, with hundreds of sources, and reminds the reader to be careful of archaeological bias. The extensive picture section was also very helpful, as is his bibliography. This is a great book for anyone with a little background in Classical studies who wants to learn more about this interesting aspect of ancient private life.

This engrossing book was the first ever investigation into the plight of the disabled and deformed in Graeco-Roman society, drawing on a wealth of material, including literary texts, medical tracts, vase paintings, sculpture, mythology and ethnography. It is now issued in paperback for the first time with a new preface and updated bibliography.

Garland (classics, Colgate U., New York) offers an initial foray of disability studies into the classical world, leaving for later studies such dimensions as mental incapacity, age as a cause of increasing disablement, changes in attitudes over time, and a comparison between Greek and Roman attitudes. His chapters include survival of the weakest, the Roman emperor in his monstrous world, the physiognomic consciousness, medical diagnosis and treatment, and racial deformity. The first edition was published in 1995; this second provides an additional preface, and has apparently been corrected but not revised substantially.... should be read by everyone with a concern for where we come from morally, intellectually, politically and culturally. Garland's enthusiasm and erudition have produced one of the most readable and informative books of recent years in the field of ancient social history ... an excellent introduction to the subject.

About the Author ROBERT GARLAND is Professor of Classics at Colgate University, New York. He is the author of many books, including most recently *Celebrity in Antiquity: From Media Tarts to Tabloid Queens* (Duckworth 2006), *Julius Caesar* (Bristol Phoenix Press 2004), *Surviving Greek Tragedy* (Duckworth 2004), *The Daily Life of the Greeks* (Greenwood Press, 2nd edn 2008), *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (Duckworth 1995), and *Religion and the Greeks* (Bristol Classical Press 1994).