Spy, especially their quotations of comments on the film from industry insiders at page 28.

20. For Peter's request to be crucified upside down see Eusebius *History of the Church* 3.1.2. Eusebius claims Origen's *Commentary on Genesis* as his source for the deaths of Saints Peter and Paul under Nero. Cf. Perkins 1994.138–40 and, for the wider context, Cullmann 1962.71–157.

21. Suetonius *Caligula* 30.2. The saying has been given to Nero since at least the early seventeenth century: examples at Gwyn 1991.439–40.

22. On Hollywood as a Jewish "empire" see the standard work by Gabler 1988.

23. Quoted from Herman 1995.338. On Wyler's war service and his war documentaries (*The Memphis Belle*, *Thunderbolt*) see Herman 1995.242–77.

24. When Louis B. Mayer remonstrated with Wyler about this change, Wyler answered him: "Mr. Mayer, if I had several Germans in the picture, I wouldn't mind having one who was a decent young fellow. But I've only got one German. And if I make this picture, this one German is going to be a typical little Nazi son-of-a-bitch. He's not going to be a friendly little pilot but one of Goering's monsters" (quoted in Herman 1995.232).

25. Vidal 1976 (= 1993.1176) and 1995.303–06. He claims that his inspiration was conversations with Federico Fellini about *La Dolce Vita*, which Fellini was preparing at Cinecittà while *Ben-Hur* was shooting nearby (Vidal 1995.304).

26. On Wyler's political activities and his involvement in the anti-HUAC Committee for the First Amendment see Herman 1995.298–305. On Wyler's membership in the Republican and Democratic Joint Committee of Hollywood for the Preservation of Civil Liberties see Ford 1979.226. John Huston also belonged to both these committees. Wyler was himself an intended target of HUAC (Herman 1995.338). For a concise overview of Hollywood's entanglement with HUAC, the loyalty oath, and the blacklist see McBride 1992.561–80, with several references to Wyler. On the topic in general cf. Navasky 1980. As Ben-Hur tells his mother and sister about Messala after their quarrel: "He wanted to use me to betray our people."

27. Heydrich and the fate of Lidice had become familiar to American audiences in two 1943 films: *Hangmen Also Die* and *Hitler's Madman* (originally to be called *Hitler's Hangman*). The latter was filmed almost completely in the style of a documentary. Both films were directed by expatriate Germans, Fritz Lang and Douglas Sirk. Cf. Koppes and Black 1987.296–97.

28. See my detailed discussion of this film at Winkler 1995. Bondanella 1987.227 considers the dance of Commodus over a floor map of the Roman empire to be a historical allusion to Hitler's dance after the fall of France and a cinematic one to Adenoid Hynkel's dance with the globe in Charles Chaplin's Hitler parody *The Great Dictator* (1940). But the modern overtones in Mann's film express events and situations contemporary with its production. The fact that a close-up of Commodus's feet shows him treading on Italy and not on a conquered country speaks against Bondanella's view as well.

3 Seeing Red

Spartacus as Domestic Economist

Alison Futrell

The press book heralding the opening of *Spartacus* trumpeted its celebration of the "age-old fight for freedom," a theme judged sufficiently innocuous to be consistently emphasized in all press releases and official communications concerning the 1960 film.[1] The cover of this souvenir "guide," however, is redolent of currents underlying the production of the film (fig. 3.1). On a field of vivid scarlet, the principle characters are represented as a handful of coins; they have thus "become" money, the organizing force of a capitalist system, set against the red of Communist solidarity. This was, in fact, the film that broke the blacklist with its open acknowledgment of Dalton Trumbo, one of the "Hollywood Ten," as screenwriter. The meaning of "freedom" in this context could thus be understood in different ways by different audiences. The character of Spartacus is layered in multiple, sometimes conflicted meanings, but this is hardly a new development. *Spartacus* stands at the end of a long process of projection, in which the historical character and the movement he led have been reworked and reinterpreted in light of contemporary political, social, and economic values.

In the modern era, the story of Spartacus's revolt has been used as a metaphor for resistance to industrial capitalism, with Spartacus himself presented as an early leader of a workers revolution and a martyr to archaic communalism. This metaphor was particularly volatile during the McCarthy years, when a coalition of political and economic interests cooperated in an anti-Communist purge. The terms in which this movement were couched were not, however, baldly political or economic; this effort was represented as the defense of the American Way: the protection of quintessentially American values from forces hostile to them. To

Figure 3.1 Characters as coins. Cover of the souvenir guide to *Spartacus* (1960).

challenge or critique property rights of the individual, organized religion, and other traditional bulwarks of American society, was to take an "un-American" stance. An early and recurrent focus of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was the film industry because of the pervasiveness of films and their perceived capacity to set social standards, to model cultural norms and practices (overview in Ceplair and Englund 1979.200–06). The spheres of Hollywood's influence, therefore, were particularly open to suspicion because of the subtlety of the medium. In December of 1947, the heads of the major studios, catalyzed by fear of economic repercussions, issued the Waldorf Statement, vowing never to employ any known Communist in the film industry (text in Klingaman 1996, appendix iii.431). The prevailing climate in Hollywood for the next thirteen years would suppress overt political commentary in films, displacing it into distant contexts and different terms of discourse.

Under these circumstances, the presentation of the story of Spartacus in the mass media was provocative. The manuscript of Howard Fast's 1951 novel had been rejected by every major publishing house to which

it was submitted, to be finally printed and circulated by the author. In Fast's presentation, the Spartacan rebels explicitly reject the Roman system on economic grounds; Roman proto-capitalism represents the valuation of death over life. The proto-Marxist gladiators aim instead for a new society, one in which all property is held in common and all men are brothers in the tribe of mankind. The economics of film production did not admit Fast's narrative option; questions of personnel and content, as well as the requirements of the medium, demanded a shift in emphasis from the Fast source material. The Kirk Douglas film presents the ideology of Spartacus on a personalized scale; politics is encoded in symbolic interactions between individuals, thus avoiding the potential danger of any verbal articulation of a leftist stance. The escaped slaves construct a series of relationships in which the whole is more important than the individual and the viability of the system is measured not by profit but by the benefit to its parts. This whole is configured as a family; the affective bonds of the traditional, patriarchal family unit, of brother, father and husband, are idealized and replicated in the new polity of the slave army.

In *Spartacus*, the domestic paradigm is given political priority over the public, an inversion that, on the surface, catered to contemporary conservative values of home and family. The domestic emphasis of the film also securely locates it within a long tradition of representations of Spartacus in which his private connections both mirror and disrupt his political message. Since the eighteenth century, popular versions of the story of Spartacus have been inspired by his "age-old fight for freedom," but have typically concentrated on private conflicts and family drama, interpreting his political importance through a personal lens. Spartacus is made over into a budding patriarch, a family man, a character whose primary venue of dramatic action is the domestic household. This domestication of Spartacus shifts and diffuses the revolutionary quality of the story; the political and social disruption threatened by the radical slaves is relatively sanitized, serving primarily as a backdrop for the re-enactment of a non-radical personal conflict, one whose goal is not the leveling of unequal power relations but the establishment of a "natural" man at the head of a "natural" familial and gender hierarchy. Spartacus has thus long served as a homily, at best, for the egalitarian reworking of human society. This chapter offers a careful reading of texts and film, in an effort to reveal the projection of patriarchal values onto the modern character of Spartacus, a projection that distracts the contemporary audience from the unsettling radicalism of the ancient rebel.

An Empire Read? Spartacus's Origins

The revolt of Spartacus (73–71 B.C.E.) was the last and perhaps most memorable of a series of major slave wars in the later Roman republic.[2] Our knowledge of this event is dependent on a limited number of texts from antiquity, mostly written long after the event and from the viewpoint of an educated elite, anticipating an audience of elites. There are no surviving texts that represent the rebel voice. Thus from the outset Spartacus is shaped by authors whose sympathies and purposes are outside the original context, whose perspective places Spartacus within the process of Roman imperialism. We can extract an outline of actions from the ancient narratives; the details and motivations supplied by the ancient authors indicate the ancient meanings attributed to the Spartacan War.

In 73 B.C.E., a band of gladiators broke out of their training school; among the leaders was Spartacus, who, as the historian Appian tells us, was formerly a Thracian soldier whose defection from the Roman auxiliaries led to his confinement as a gladiator (*Civil Wars* 1.9.116). Having defeated the local militia based in Capua, Spartacus and his followers were victorious over the armies of both consuls and the army of Cisalpine Gaul in 72. The rebel gains inspired others to join them, with estimates of greatest support ranging between 60,000 (Eutropius *Digest* 6.7) and 120,000 (Appian *Civil Wars* 1.9.117). With the nullification of the northern Italian army, the way lay clear either to Rome, or over the Alps, toward the homeland of many of the rebels, where they could perhaps disperse beyond Rome's reach. M. Licinius Crassus, praetor in 73, was then granted the command in the Spartacan War (Appian *Civil Wars* 1.9.118 and Plutarch *Crassus* 10.1). Firmly imposing discipline on his six legions, he led his new army against Spartacus, eventually cornering him in Apulia in 71 where he could be cut off from his sources of supply. Spartacus was allegedly killed in the last serious battle, although the carnage was such that his body could not be identified. The last six thousand holdouts were rounded up and crucified along the Appian Way between Capua and Rome.

How did ancient authors explain this series of events, the causes, impulses, and personalities driving the dramatic changes in fortune? What sort of "spin" did the Romans put on the Spartacan War? The moral biographer Plutarch acknowledged that the immediate catalyst was Roman mistreatment, here defined discreetly as the wrongful confinement of the gladiators to their barracks rather than the institution of slavery as a whole. This hint of Roman culpability fades in importance next to the

attention the ancient authors focus on the caliber of Rome's opponents. In order to achieve that level of success against mighty Rome, they "must" have been extraordinary gladiators, and the Roman authors define their unusual qualities in accordance with Roman values. The gladiators are credited with a very Romanized sense of shame concerning their debased status; Plutarch suggests that an awareness of propriety led them to seek out the weapons of Roman soldiers, discarding their former armature as "dishonorable and barbaric" (*Crassus* 9.1). Spartacus is characterized as a very impressive figure, not at all "slave-like" or un-Roman in his appearance or his priorities. The historian Sallust acknowledges his spirit, strength, and intelligence (*Histories* 3.91); indeed, Plutarch presents him as a cultivated man, "more like a Greek than a Thracian" (*Crassus* 8.2). Appian praises Spartacus's leadership for its adherence to Roman military tradition, here characterized by an emphasis on military discipline, on training, on utilitarian looting to support the campaign, and on scrupulous distribution of spoils (*Civil Wars* 1.9.117). In this, Spartacus seems to surpass contemporary Roman commanders, which would account, in the eyes of a Roman audience, for the series of victories he achieved.

Spartacus's ultimate failure, as presented by the ancient sources, lay in his inability to sustain his "Roman-ness," to conceive a broader vision and fulfill a wide-ranging purpose. The rebel goals, as they appear in the ancient accounts, are short-term, with immediate perceived benefits. Initially the gladiators wanted simply to escape the real danger of their existence as gladiators. Appian suggests that they fled not only danger but shame, preferring freedom to the ignominy of providing amusement for spectators (*Civil Wars* 1.9.116). The decision to take up arms against Rome was likewise attributed by the historian Florus to the immediate concerns of the rebels, either their desire for vengeance or the realization that their swollen ranks did not allow for easy dispersal into the Italian countryside (*Abridgement* 2.8.3). Plutarch credits Spartacus with an awareness of his limitations, noting that Spartacus realized that the rebels could not possibly outlast the resources of Rome; nevertheless, he could not, in the end, persuade his men to seize the opportunity to escape, because his shortsighted and overconfident army preferred to pillage Italy's rich countryside (*Crassus* 9.5–6). Plutarch suggests that Spartacus planned to rouse another revolt on Sicily and was only foiled by the betrayal of the Cilician transport (*Crassus* 10.3). This purported connection with the other, earlier slave uprisings on Sicily is the best, if not the only, evidence to connect the Spartacan War to some sort of

overarching anti-slavery ideology, to some sort of spirit of insurrection running throughout the ancient population of slaves. The plan survives to us, however, as an allegation only, unsupported by any known action on the part of Spartacus. On the whole, the revolt of Spartacus is presented as notably lacking in formality, with an apparent absence of efforts to construct an alternative to the Roman system.

The gladiators, Spartacus especially, are thus represented as *nearly* Roman; in the Roman accounts, they possess the same standard of values as their owners and strive toward even greater similarity: to escape not merely from physical confinement but from their shameful status as gladiators. As quasi-Romans, their initial success against local garrisons becomes more comprehensible to an elite Roman reader. But they are not *really* Romans. They, therefore, could not hold out for long against an empire the ancient authors knew was destined to rule the world and was believed by them to be blessed by the gods with the character and virtue necessary to do so.

Roman accounts of the Spartacan War presented the story in ways that reflected imperial interests, all the more so because the revolt occurred at a volatile moment in Roman history. Added to the critical timing of the Spartacan War was the symbolic value of the gladiators and the political prominence of Crassus. Following hard on the heels of the war between Rome and her Italian allies and the coup spearheaded by Sulla, the Spartacan War once more involved Italy in bloody conflict that endangered Roman hegemony. This was a period of transition for Roman rule, a time when the senate's corporate control of the Roman government was gradually giving way to what would become a more monarchical structure under the Roman emperors. M. Licinius Crassus was an agent of this transformation, and used his success at crushing the uprising to fuel his extraordinary political career. The prominence of gladiators in the rebellion also would have captured the Roman imagination. This was a time when gladiatorial combat was becoming much more popular in Rome. It became highly politicized and identified with the ideology of Roman imperialism because of its close association with the cult of Roman power (Futrell 1997.29–33). The political potential of Roman leaders was evaluated by their ability to manipulate gladiatorial action in spectacles of Roman authority. Paradoxically, the actual performers in those games, the gladiators, were very low on the ladder of social status. Many of them were enslaved prisoners of war, living examples of the effects of Roman expansionism. The symbolic value of the gladiators may have intensified Rome's fear: Appian, Plutarch, and Florus

all refer to the heightened terror generated by Spartacus (*Civil Wars* 1.9.118; *Crassus* 9.6, 11.1; *Abridgement* 2.8.11). Even discounting the gladiatorial mystique, as soon as he took up arms, Spartacus would be considered in rebellion against Roman imperial policy, which demanded that such a betrayal of Roman control be crushed with the harshest of measures.

The War of Spartacus was the last really dangerous slave revolt in antiquity, although Romans would be ever vigilant in their concern for security and protection from their slaves (Bradley 1987). At the same time, Rome was the most generous of the ancient empires in the rehabilitation of slaves: manumitted slaves, and there were a number of them, had access to Roman citizenship (Hopkins 1978.133–71). This generosity is relative, however; the freedman was heavily embedded in a web of obligations that imposed a severe penalty on those who tested, or even seemed to test, the Roman hierarchy.

These factors interacted to guarantee that the Spartacan Rebellion would loom threateningly in the Roman memory. The characters involved were freighted with meaning, representing the processes of empire and potentially negative ramifications of those processes. Dramatic changes in the distribution of power contemporary with the revolt associated it with patterns of internal social dissent. The flavor of civil war was compounded by the intimacy of the bonds between slaves and slaveowners, between slaves and citizens in the Roman world.

An Acquired Taste for Red? The Development of the Spartacus Icon

Rome's value as a site of contemporary meaning underwent a shift during the eighteenth century. The iconographic status of Spartacus saw a new upsurge at the time of the Enlightenment, when assumptions about human potential and its reflection in the organization of society and politics were being analyzed and challenged.[3] Although the use of antiquity as a source of paradigms for contemporary issues was hardly new, Enlightenment thinkers and writers selected new images from the ancient past to fit their arguments about the individual's relationship to power (Finley 1980.18–19). Classical figures of resistance, like Brutus, Sertorius, and Spartacus, were overlaid with contemporary social meaning and used to question and critique the achievement of classical civilization and, by implication, the *ancien régime*.[4]

Popular representations of Spartacus endow him with a private side that threatens to overwhelm the public but also nuances and comments

on the political ideology attributed to the ancient gladiator. This is clearly demonstrated in Bernard-Joseph Saurin's 1760 dramatic production of *Spartacus*, a major European hit that combined the presentation of an "epic" moment in history with the ideology of freedom in human society.[5] Although Saurin's Spartacus is driven by his passion for natural law and the natural rights of man, he is also "domesticated." The emotional appeal of the story is enhanced by an emphasis on Spartacus's personal life, the private side of the public hero. Indeed, Saurin's version condenses the rebellion of Spartacus into a series of choices between the public and private aspects of Spartacus's character, and his vacillation between domestic security and political leadership provides the chief dramatic tension of the play. Saurin's Spartacus regularly conflates the personal and the political conflict into a single war.[6]

The domestic side entails the apocryphal creation of a mother and a love-interest for Spartacus. The mother is a courageous woman whose constancy and tenderness sustain Spartacus emotionally even as she inspires him with "hatred for tyrants and love of virtue" (Saurin 1821.I sc. ii, p. 81). Captured and tortured by the Romans for her son's sake, Spartacus's mother finally takes her own life specifically to promote her son's cause: he vows vengeance on the dagger flecked with his mother's blood. Spartacus discovers that his beloved, Émilie, is the daughter of the enemy commander, Crassus. As his mother's body provides a catalyst for Spartacus's renewed resolution, Émilie's position as a character broadens the nature of political decision-making for Spartacus.

Spartacus's romantic relationship is treated as incompatible with his political stance. Initially, his unwillingness to kill Émilie, now held captive by the rebels, brings the slave army to the verge of mutiny, which only Spartacus's charisma manages to defuse. Spartacus is then asked to consider an unusual proposition: Crassus offers to make the slaves Roman citizens and Spartacus a senator, and to welcome the rebel leader into his family as his daughter's husband, should the gladiator army give up its opposition to Rome. Spartacus rejects this offer; to become Roman would be disgraceful, shameful, as it would mean the renunciation of "the liberty of the world" for the sake of his individual desire to establish a household (Saurin 1821.IV sc. iii, p. 119).[7] Spartacus thus enunciates the ideological priorities of the slave rebellion. Free status is not the "freedom" for which they fight, nor do they desire the rights and protections of citizens within the Roman system. For Spartacus, to become a senator of Rome would tacitly support a corrupt tyranny and Rome's customary disregard of human rights and decency, which the gladiators characterize as "barbarism."[8] Thus Spartacus rejects the offer of domestic reconciliation and renews his struggle against Rome on behalf, it is implied, of all mankind.

Driven by her love for Spartacus, Émilie makes her way through the final battleground to plead with him to reconsider her father's offer. She points to the beneficial quality of Rome's pacification of warring peoples of the world, who try to oppress one another as they ravage the earth. Émilie even suggests that Spartacus could take his final vengeance on Rome by working from within the system to improve it (Saurin 1821.V sc. v, pp. 124–25).[9] Although Spartacus agonizes over his decision still more, he finally claims that the peoples of the world have placed their trust in him to destroy Rome and ensure their freedom. The failure of the rebel army and Spartacus's capture decide the issue. Rather than suffer the humiliation of Crassus's triumphal parade, Spartacus destroys himself. Émilie here leads the way; although her choice of suicide alongside her lover indicates that she prefers Spartacus to all else, she is the first to take up the dagger. The two die in one another's arms. On the verge of eternity, Spartacus declares himself a free man, one not without glory, who dared to take on mighty Rome. Nevertheless, in Saurin's play, Spartacus's inner turmoil, his calamitous relationship with Émilie, rather than the doomed rebellion, provides the real tragic element. Indeed, Émilie dominates the final act of the play, her agonized efforts to reconcile father with lover earning the audience's sympathy. Once more, it is over the corpse of a woman, blood-spattered dagger in hand, that Spartacus articulates his commitment to freedom. Far more memorable than Spartacus's ideology is the imagery of ruined households, families torn asunder, and the dying lovers, over which political rhetoric washes like the faintest of patinas.

Saurin's play was extremely popular, not just in France but outside it as well, which helped make Spartacus an exemplar for the natural equality of all human beings—in contrast to contemporary examples of absolutist monarchy. The eighteenth century thus makes Spartacus a "contemporary" hero in ancient clothing, battling for the equality of man in the political sphere. Major figures such as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, one of the great dramatist/philosophers of the later eighteenth century, took up the theme of Spartacus.[10] Citing Lessing as an influence, August Gottlieb Meissner wrote a laudatory biography of Spartacus in 1793 (1800). Both emphasize Spartacus's challenge to the concept of class-based access to political privilege, suggesting that the capacities of the individual, his "spirit," should be the factor that determines "greatness."

The Spartacus motif was also put to specifically anti-slavery usages. The Abbé G. T. F. Raynal, in his multi-volume, anti-colonial, anti-slavery work of 1770, called for a "new Spartacus" to bring down the slave system (1770). The slave rebellion on Martinique appeared to some to be the uprising of the Black Spartacus; Toussaint L'Ouverture too, leader of Haiti's successful slave revolution, was linked with the Spartacus legend (Freeman 1988).

In the nineteenth century, a shift toward configuring identity along national lines overshadows the emphasis on the individual. In this period, we see the projection of Spartacus in popular media configured by nationalism. The Spartacan plan for the return of the gladiators to their European homes is reoriented, and a slave rebellion is transformed into a war to establish the homeland as a sovereign state in the face of Roman imperialist domination. The divergent origins of the gladiators are collapsed, and Spartacus becomes a fighter for national independence.

Franz Grillparzer, one of Austria's most acclaimed writers of the nineteenth century, turned, somewhat abortively, to the Spartacus uprising.[11] At the age of nineteen, he composed *Spartakus*, a one-act play that may have been inspired by his sympathy for the rebellion led by Andreas Hoffer in the Tyrol against Napoleon in 1810 (Stanev 1981.99–100). Grillparzer's Spartacus and his freedom-fighters do not articulate a dedication to the natural rights of man; they are early nationalists, battling Roman imperialist aggression as patriots. The freedom of the individual has been conflated with the right of the community to self-determination. The gladiators long for what is presented as the natural aspirations of a people: a fatherland and comradeship.[12] For this, they are punished by Rome, "a curse-filled land . . . which fattens itself on the blood of the people and builds its greatness on their ruins" (Grillparzer 1892.143). Spartacus is called "the hope of the Fatherland," a savior amid misfortune, who has roused the gladiators to fight for their freedom as a people (Grillparzer 1892.146, 133).

The unfinished play is also overlaid by Romantic elements. Set mostly in an Italian wilderness, it refers often both to the shadowy wilds of nature and to gloomy stretches of interior landscape. In his first scene, for example, Spartacus bursts into a poetic, melancholy reverie: his heart wanders through forest and meadow, over chasm and mountain, overcome by passion for Cornelia, the daughter of Crassus.[13] Spartacus's moody obsession with Cornelia represents a danger to the movement: Crixus, Spartacus's comrade, tries to remind him of his patriotic priorities, his twin resolutions of freedom and hatred for Rome, and his sworn

commitment to the liberation of the world, vowed by starlight on a Thracian mountaintop (Grillparzer 1892.146). To no avail. Spartacus foregoes his political goals to make another moonlit visit to Cornelia's rooms, only to be taken captive by her father. The play ends at this point, it lacks a final resolution of both the relationship and the rebellion.[14] It appears, however, that this Spartacus is ultimately dominated more by his sensibility than by his sense of duty to his people; his domestic relationship and his Romantic focus on the interior self both conflict with and ultimately betray his political ideology. Indeed, Grillparzer's Spartacus articulates only the Romantic and romantic impulses within him; although characters refer to his past capacity for activist rhetoric, on stage, he speaks only of nature and Cornelia.

Nationalism also shapes a vigorous American Spartacus; Robert Montgomery Bird's 1831 play, *The Gladiator*, became one of the most popular American plays of the nineteenth century.[15] Produced in a climate of cultural nationalism, the play belongs to a widespread effort to encourage art and literature that express the "spirit of America." Bird created his Spartacus specifically as an entry in the actor Edwin Forrest's annual competition to write a five-act "American" tragedy in which the hero or protagonist was "an original of this country" (Foust 1919.36–37). How Forrest interpreted this latter phrase is revealing: of the nine plays awarded prizes, the majority featured heroes outside the American context. "American-ness" was thus defined not by country of origin, nor by ethnic heritage, nor even by chronology, but rather by the expression of an "American spirit." The perception that Bird's Spartacus was quintessentially American comes through in contemporary reactions to the play: the *New York Standard Review* noted "with pride and satisfaction" its appropriateness "to the genius, to the taste, and to the literary enterprise of the American people."[16]

In an American setting, Rome's imperial power is deployed as a metaphor for British imperialism, while the rebels are analogues for the American colonists who had fought to ensure their political independence from Britain and now were trying to free themselves from cultural domination.[17] Such an identification affects the characterization of Bird's rebels: these are very sassy gladiators. The Romans approve of this impudence, finding in it a clear indication of a fighting spirit; Crassus says he likes this "fearless taunting" (Bird 1919.343). Nevertheless, mere feistiness is insufficient motivation for revolution: the revolt of Bird's gladiators is inspired not by the abstract goal of freedom but by Spartacus's determination to recover and to preserve his family.

Spartacus's domesticity precedes and shapes his political efforts; Spartacus's family is now firmly situated outside the Roman social hierarchy, which lessens the conflict between personal happiness and political goals that we have seen in earlier versions. Spartacus is from the outset distinguished by his attachment to the domestic sphere and defined by his ties to home and family. His first appearance shows him dejected, pining, refusing to take the oath of a gladiator. His priorities are clarified by his first lines: he asks how far it is to his homeland, and whether the Romans have fathers, wives, and children (Bird 1919.314). The reunion with his wife and son and the opportunity to fight for their freedom are the only things that compel Spartacus into the arena; he expresses his willingness to give everything for his wife and child (Bird 1919.319). Spartacus's domesticity now encompasses not only a wife but also a son and even a long-lost brother, Phasarius. Spartacus and Phasarius discover each other in the arena, an event that implicitly suggests the brotherhood of all who suffer under Rome. Together, the brothers rouse the gladiatorial bands to rebel against Roman imperialism and to fight for the liberty of all who are oppressed by Roman subjection. The gladiators seek to create a new union of nations: states united by their common hatred of the Roman overlords and their desire to overthrow the yoke of tyranny (Bird 1919.392). Just as the revolt is catalyzed by a family reunion, so its defeat is predicated upon the destruction of the family bond. The fatal flaw in the revolution is a disagreement among the brothers that divides the troops and weakens the revolution. The death of his family drives Spartacus to despair and defeat; as he lies dying, however, he anticipates the return homeward that death promises. Bird's Spartacan rebellion is thus founded upon notions of "home" that predicate community membership upon the family.

Another turn in the process of projecting meaning upon the story of Spartacus can be seen in the later nineteenth century, when Spartacus was connected with the growing workers movement. The Spartacus uprising was presented as a great social conflict that damaged the economic structure of the Roman world. The nineteenth century saw a number of such risings, accompanied by the development of an economic theory that organized the development of human society around shifts in economic organization. Here too, the ancient past was mined as a source of evidence for the eventual development of modern structures, modern movements.[18] Spartacus's rising visibility as a symbol of resistance to Roman oppression made available a specifically non-elite and non-Christian icon from the ancient past. Not surprisingly, Spartacus became one

of the touchstones for socialists.[19] Karl Marx, for example, expressed his particular appreciation for Spartacus in an 1861 letter to Frederick Engels: "Spartacus comes across as the most excellent fellow in the whole history of antiquity, a great general . . . of noble character, a real representative of the proletariat of ancient times" (Marx 1975.41.264–65).[20]

Spartacus was known to labor leaders in the United States as well, notably to Cyrenus Osborne Ward, an activist and pamphleteer of the period after the Civil War.[21] In *The Ancient Lowly* (1888), Ward attempts to correlate all the uprisings of oppressed laborers in western antiquity as demonstrations of the same impulse, viewing them through the lens of socialist theory and evangelical Christianity. Using highly emotive descriptions, Ward's monograph represents the ruling classes of the ancient world as uniformly corrupt and evil. This stance informs his depiction of Spartacus; Ward's Romans, at the gladiatorial games, exhibit their "inhuman passion . . . for beholding atrocities of this ghastly nature while they wallowed in inebriate and lascivious beastliness" (Ward 1888.1.237). In contrast, Ward's ancient rebels are witnesses for truth, with distinctly Christian overtones. Although their rebellions were put down, they "did not lose, but won martyrdom, nobler and happier than their life, to which death was a relief, and by their martyrdom taught a lesson to an inexperienced world" (Ward 1888.1.xii). Ward arranges and codifies his material using labels from the contemporary labor movement, conflating ancient slave rebellions with labor union activity.[22] Spartacus, whom Ward calls "the last emancipator," not only proclaims the freedom of all slaves, he also represents the best hope of the ancient working man for political and social representation: "The humane management of Spartacus . . . might have resulted in a permanent recognition of the honor and merit of human labor."[23]

Perhaps the best-known example of the use of Spartacus as a symbol of Communist uprising is Berlin's Spartakusbund, which mounted a coup in January 1919. This offshoot of the SPD, the German Social Democrat party, was headed by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who saw the SPD's support of the German war effort as a betrayal of the internationalism of the workers movement.[24] The Spartakusbund's active efforts to claim control of the German government came during the chaotic struggle for political ascendance in Germany after World War I. Luxemburg described the political left as facing a choice between two poles: good and evil. On the side of evil stood the politics of the right, characterized by Luxemburg in the *Junius Pamphlet* of April 1915 as "the triumph of imperialism and the destruction of all culture and, as in an-

cient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a vast cemetery."[25] Again, Rome is represented as "barbaric" in opposition to a Spartacus identified with the socialist movement, a man who "throws the sword of revolutionary struggle with manly resolution upon the scales . . . to cast off slavery to *the* ruling classes, to become *the* lord of his own destiny." During the coup, Karl Liebknecht articulated the meaning of the ancient icon in emotive ideological terms: "Then Spartacus—by which I mean fire and spirit, I mean soul and heart, I mean *will* and action for the revolution of the proletariat. And Spartacus—by which I mean all need and yearning for happiness, all resolution for battle of the class-conscious proletariat. Then Spartacus, by which I mean socialism and world revolution."[26] The failure of the Spartakusbund and the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg added resonance to the value of Spartacus as an icon. Howard Fast strongly identified both with Luxemburg and with her ancient avatar, finding in them a source of strength in the "struggle against oppression and wrong" (Fast 1951, dedication).

Writing Red: Howard Fast and Spartacus

From the publication of his first novel in 1933, Howard Fast (1914–) has been a critically acclaimed and best-selling author in the United States, one whose domestic success was mirrored by record sales overseas. By the time he wrote *Spartacus*, he had already published fourteen major novels as well as a number of short stories, extended articles, and non-fiction books in less than twenty years. Beyond this professional dedication, Fast is notable as well for his public stance. Long an activist in leftist and labor causes, Fast was a vigorous member of the Communist Party of the United States from 1943 to 1957, writing on the staff of *The Daily Worker*, serving as a delegate to a number of world congresses and participating in public protests, always a vocal advocate of working-class issues.[27]

It is generally acknowledged that Fast's creative works reflect his politics, focusing as they do on the "common man," that is, the proletarian, and his resistance to the oppression endemic in a world controlled by the wealth of the bourgeoisie.[28] Fast may have been particularly sensitized to these issues in his works of historical fiction; his choice of the past as a setting for his creative work was criticized by one of his first friends in the Party, who pushed him to find his working-class voice.[29] The novels serve as a platform for Fast's revelation of self, but Fast apparently also believed that a public good was served by his recreations of the historical past: the uncovering of a "truth" that had been suppressed by the dominant (capitalist) authority, a truth whose power may inspire modern action.[30]

Howard Fast's creation of a literary Spartacus is intimately connected to his experience of Communism, both as an active member of the Party and as someone whose convictions had prompted public opprobrium and personal suffering. Fast was convicted of contempt of Congress during the first phase of the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings in 1947.[31] The novel began to germinate while he was imprisoned at Mill Point, West Virginia, in 1950. He approached the novel, therefore, with strong sympathies for the political empowerment of the working class, but these were sympathies that had recently been the cause of personal trauma. As he put it, this was the time when he "began more deeply than ever before to comprehend the full agony and hopelessness of the underclass" (Fast 1990.269).

Inspiration for a new project, in which this newly acute identification with class suffering would be expressed, came from a visit to the prison library. Reading about Germany after World War I, Fast came across new insights concerning Rosa Luxemburg; her work seemed to speak to his current situation, to his willingness to serve time for the preservation of a political conscience. Initially, Fast thought that Luxemburg's life, particularly her leadership in the Spartakusbund, would be excellent material for a new work. This plan was soon discarded, however, and Fast turned his attention instead to the figure of Spartacus, to a projection that had served Luxemburg as inspiration—a fountainhead, perhaps, for Fast's present political sentiments.[32]

Research for the novel took Fast back to an earlier phase of his membership in the Communist Party. A major source for him was C. O. Ward's *The Ancient Lowly*, which he had received as a gift to commemorate his completion of what Fast called "the training school." Shortly after World War II, the Party leadership expressed some concern lest Fast's material success as an author sway him from his ideals. An intensive three-week workshop was recommended to renew his commitment to the brotherhood of man and to reawaken Fast's former identification with "the best type of revolutionary working-class intellectual."[33] Fast's overt linkage between the story of Spartacus and leftist activism was thus reinforced by his selection of material to use as historical background for the novel, material that resonated with his ideological commitment, both in content and in personal context.

The "specter of Communism" hangs over *Spartacus*. Fast's fictive Rome is shaped by popular Marxism, in which the ideology of a primi-

tive workers movement is the spirit of progress relieving the otherwise unrelentingly negative presentation of the Roman past. From the outset, Rome is established as a hostile environment, a superficially elegant society whose innate malevolence can never command admiration or sympathy from the reader. The basis of this hostile system is exploitative labor practices: Rome's economics constitute the "meaning" of Rome. Fast presents the Roman world as a simplified class structure with heavy moral overtones; the "Romans," that is, the proto-bourgeois overlords, are evil, while the working classes, including slaves, free workers, common soldiers, peasants (displaced and otherwise), and the poor, are good. Fast's Rome is overwhelmingly powerful but ultimately doomed to be succeeded by a system more closely approximating that envisioned by the slaves, one in which the labor collective controls production for the whole, all property is held in common, and peace and tranquility reign. Echoing the Communist Manifesto's climactic rallying cry, Fast's Spartacus issues a summons to his new society: "To the slaves of the world: Rise up and cast off your chains!"[34]

Transforming the truism into narrative, Fast leads his reader to Rome along her roads, those much-praised emblems of Roman imperial achievement (MacDonald 1996.87–88). Fast characterizes the roads as arteries of empire, through which the Roman heartbeat pumps blood. Rapidly, however, the reader realizes it is not lifeblood but the dying gush of arterial fluid that washes the roads of Rome (Fast 1951.11–13). Fast's descriptions of such "typical" elements of Roman culture constitute a major portion of his invective against Rome, his effort to reveal the "true" nature of the Roman achievement.[35] The paradigmatic status of Roman civilization is acknowledged and undermined simultaneously. Rome, fountainhead of Western culture, is depicted as an unnatural civilization, whose development of a warped economic structure has likewise warped her at the basic level of human existence. Romans, for example, have a destructive relationship with food; for them, the staff of life becomes the stuff of death.[36] Fast introduces this recurring motif early on, with repeated references to crucified gladiators as "meat" to be used for the production of sausage for export. This literalization of Rome's consumption of human resources serves as a gruesome indictment of Roman taste on a quite graphic level. Fast extends the food-corruption-death association in repeated descriptions of Roman eating habits, especially their snacking on/at gladiatorial bouts and their banquets to celebrate mayhem (Fast 1951.127, 133, 232, 310, 329). In contrast, the slaves husband the simple foodstuffs they are allotted. This

stance is embodied particularly by Spartacus, who knows that "all food must be honored": carelessness or dishonoring of food results in death (Fast 1951.74). The maxim is proven by the example of Rome; flagrantly dishonoring food, the Romans are mired in death. Romans have become "bags of death" (Fast 1951.48); they are in love with death; they take delight in death, living on the bones and blood of slaves (Fast 1951.118, 126, 144, 245). The fixation on death is built into the system; Roman hierarchy commands death.

Fast pays scant attention to exploring the development of Rome's imperial system. The most extensive analysis comes from Gracchus, the old, corrupt politician, who explains the "truth" of Rome to Cicero, the ruthless young politician.[37] The analysis, markedly modern in tenor, focuses again on Rome's economy, on the unequal distribution of wealth in a system that acts to perpetuate this inequality and thus deprives Rome's people of their humanity. Gracchus sees an increasing gap between Rome's haves and have-nots. Politicians lie to the people, telling them they are the only free people in the world in order to inspire them to offer up their very lives to protect the property of the wealthy. In "fact," Rome's proletariat is on the dole, as Roman elites bust unions and pay slave wages to imported workers (Fast 1951.294).[38]

The capitalist nature of the Roman system is primarily revealed through an utter devotion to commodification: Romans "[assess] everything in terms of money" (Fast 1951.55). Fast's Romans purchase power, death, and pleasure in dizzying amounts and can themselves be bought as well. Capitalist ventures demonstrate the inherent corruption of the Roman system and reveal the seeds of destruction that flourish in morally-bankrupt economic practices. The consumable industry of gladiatorial combat, a chief representative of economic evil, is presented as a cause of even more deterioration in Roman society. Fast describes how scheming vulgar men gain wealth for political bribery through investment in such ventures, through this pandering to base Roman desires. Another form of lucrative investment is in perfume factories, although Fast points out that the sickening sweetness of manufactured scent fails to mask the stench of rotting Rome (Fast 1951.13, 293). Crassus, the wealthiest man in Rome, owns such a factory in Capua; his profit margin grows ever larger because he is not obliged to feed or shelter his imported workers, who are nothing less than wage slaves. The Roman elites do perceive the potential for a workers revolution in such primitive factories, but only at the subconscious level, which, for them, takes the form of a lingering sense of unease (Fast 1951.295–97).[39]

In stark contrast to the greed and debauchery of the Romans shines the dream of the slave rebels. The "good" of the slaves, addressed in ethical terms, is explicitly housed in the domestic virtues: "Home and family and honor and virtue and all that was good and noble was defended by the slaves and owned by the slaves . . . because their masters had turned over to them all that was sacred" (Fast 1951.179). By depriving their slaves of property rights, the Romans have granted them access to a higher, basic *truth*: the absence of individual possessions allows men to realize *their* brotherhood, to *realize that* they all are part of *each* other (Fast 1951.334–35).

This dissolution of interpersonal barriers is symbolized by the gladiators' need to communicate with each other, to create a community. Inversely, Roman suppression is made manifest in attempts to restrict interaction among the slaves. By establishing a group discourse, the gladiators establish their own system of social ties (Fast 1951.263–64). Thus the intent to rebel is formed when the gladiators Spartacus, Crixus, and Gannicus call each other "friend," and direct action against their Roman guards is catalyzed by Spartacus's statement: "I want to stand up and speak. I want to open my heart" (Fast 1951.144–45, 151–52).

The slaves seek the disruption of the Roman world to form a new society, modeled on an earlier Golden Age, that avoids the corruption of contemporary Rome (Fast 1951.303). The new world order will be based on quasi-tribal bonds, in which a quasi-familial connection between individuals is perceived as a shared, inborn identity. Just as the social ties constructed by the gladiators are idealized as an outgrowth of their sympathy for one another, so Spartacus's leadership takes on an emotionally charged quality: he is the "father" of the community "in the old tribal way" (Fast 1951.76).

Spartacus, the embodiment of the rebellion, time and again is described as a father to his community and as a patriarch of the movement. He is unlike Roman fathers in the generosity of his fatherhood, and his leadership is linked to his desire to give to others. Spartacus, despite his artless humanity, has thoroughly transcendent personal qualities. He is a legend, touched by the gods, godlike himself, with a destiny written in the stars (Fast 1951.120, 163, 169). Spartacus is the tool of fate, of larger forces at work in the universe (Fast 1951.139). He is timeless, deathless, inseparable from his vision that sees the endless yearning of humanity, stretching back to the time when the first slave was put in chains, stretching forward "for ages unknown and unborn," beginning anew with every generation (Fast 1951.88, 139, 143, 145, 149, 158, 273, 289).

The new tribe of man will replace Roman law with a new, simple law, that expresses the essence of the collective: "What is taken is held in common" (Fast 1951.166–67, 268). Inherent in this law, however, is its exclusion of women, who are placed in the category of property as the sole exception to the rule of commonality. Women are possessed *only* personally and *only* as wives. The male possession of women is meant to represent the rule of morality in the slave society. Not for them the shallow promiscuity of the Romans: sex takes place only within marriage. It is on this basis that Fast characterizes the slave women as the only "real women" in the anti-civilization of Rome; their Roman counterparts surrendered some essential femininity when they took on promiscuity, which, for them, is connected to their indifference to human suffering and is even identified as a necessary consequence of Roman imperial domination (Fast 1951.9, 25, 235–36). Female chastity is thus a basic element of the slaves' creation of the family unit, the original economic structure, as the basis of the new community. Hierarchy is preserved within the family unit, but it is depicted as a natural one, based on natural distinctions of gender.

Accordingly, the narrative role of Spartacus's wife Varinia plays out the domestic ideology of the rebellion: where Spartacus is the father of the movement, Varinia is its mother. The traditional roles of wife and mother make Varinia a passive conduit for Spartacanism, which she passes on to the next generation as the mother of Spartacus's son (Fast 1951.103).[40] Varinia serves as the emblem of an ideology in her interactions with the Roman leaders Gracchus and Crassus, rather than an activist herself. The politician Gracchus falls in love with the idea of Varinia, long before he meets her, because she, as the wife of Spartacus, is a "real" woman (Fast 1951.300–01, 337).[41] Gracchus sees Varinia as the antithesis of Rome, a dichotomy expressed in familial terms. Rome is Gracchus's mother, but she is an unnatural mother, supremely uncaring, a whore whose love is purchased (Fast 1951.318, 347, 353). In contrast, Varinia is no whore but a wife; she is a mother not of death but of life. Varinia's symbolic value places her beyond Gracchus's existence: she represents life and the freedom waiting in humanity's future, while Gracchus, as a doomed Roman, can truly comprehend neither life nor freedom (Fast 1951.347–49). Transformed by this realization, Gracchus, in his "single act of love" helps Varinia to escape and then commits suicide (Fast 1951.345).

Crassus, the leader of the quintessentially evil empire, embodies its destructive, invalid authority. Crassus is a bad father, a patriarch whose

household is a sink of jealousy, hatred, and frustration. His own son despises him, and his absent wife would like nothing better than to see his throat cut (Fast 1951.316, 325). Crassus's negative governance of his household is paralleled by his political leadership. Despite his being reared on legends of Roman simplicity and selflessness, Crassus no longer has any real sense of ethics, of justice. He has reoriented his moral center around the maintenance of Rome's system of economic exploitation; justice, for Crassus, is defined primarily by the maintenance of wealth and thus of power (Fast 1951.246–47). His military command against Spartacus is likewise a negation of Roman ethical traditions; no legends will be crafted around Crassus's achievement (Fast 1951.32). Gracchus can intuit the transformative quality of Varinia's love and wants access to that creation of a new self. Crassus, however, sees a loving relationship with Varinia as a chance to "rule the world"; this misappropriation reveals Crassus's perception of love as power.[42] His victory over Spartacus would be incomplete without the creation of a new domestic hierarchy, represented by Varinia's willing surrender or "love" for him. Varinia's passivity, her essentialized status as the wife of Spartacus, here constitutes resistance to Crassus's Rome. She is impervious to emasculated Roman command (Fast 1951.330).[43] Crassus's inability to comprehend the true affective bonds of the family dooms his personal agenda as his political ambitions are stymied by the ultimate failure of Fast's Rome.

Fast's Spartacan rebels explicitly reject the Roman system on economic grounds; they embrace an ideology that foregrounds the family as an ethical paradigm and the domestic economy as the basis of a new society. As we have seen, the relative value of domesticity has undergone a shift in popular projections of the story of Spartacus. Saurin and Grillparzer created an ancient rebel whose personal desires were in conflict with his political aims, whose private longings for domestic bliss presented an obstacle to victory, located as they were in love interests identified as Roman and therefore inherently hostile to Spartacus's goals. Unable or unwilling to choose a private life, these versions of Spartacus fling themselves into their public duty and promptly fail. With Bird's staging of Spartacus, we see a coalescence of the patriarch and the statesman, in which the essential status of the former is fundamental to the creation of the latter. Conversely, the loss of the family fatally undermines the rebellion for Bird's Spartacus. For Howard Fast, the connection between the family and the polity of the rebels is more than seamless: the two are identical. The meaning of the rebellion has shifted. As we have seen, Spartacus's opposition to Roman authority has been identified with individualism, with nationalism, with socialism. How then are these options handled in the film version of the Spartacan rebellion? What did Spartacus mean in Hollywood?

Seeing Red: *Spartacus* as Film

The dominant creative force behind the movie *Spartacus* was Kirk Douglas, who was head of Bryna Productions, the company responsible for the making of the film. In late 1957, Douglas read Howard Fast's novel and was intrigued by the story, especially because, as he later explained in his autobiography, it seemed to tell a hidden truth that had been suppressed for years by an embarrassed Rome and then by historians (Douglas 1988.303–04). Douglas was also moved by the "grandeur of Rome," by Rome's achievement measured by its capacity to alter such a large territory. For him, the impact of Rome is as visible in its physical ruins as it is in written history. Douglas, however, also saw in these monuments their implied antitheses. Just as the silence of the texts tells us about Roman fear and shame regarding Spartacus, so the monuments of powerful Rome speak of those who suffered under her rule: "Looking at these ruins . . . I wince. I see thousands and thousands of slaves carrying rocks, beaten, starved, crushed, dying. I identify with them" (Douglas 1988.304). *Spartacus* thus represented to Douglas the opportunity to give voice to those who had been silenced, to show the "true" grandeur of resistance to systematic oppression.[44]

The making of *Spartacus* took place against the backdrop of McCarthyism in Hollywood, what Dalton Trumbo called the "time of the toad" (1949). From the time of its incorporation in 1955, Bryna Productions made extensive use of blacklisted screenwriters, a practice that became more and more an open secret in other studios.[45] The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was forced to address the issue in February 1957, when an organizational bylaw mandated that any blacklistee be ineligible for an Oscar (Smith 1989.81–82).[46] The conservative effort to maintain the appearance of compliance with the goals of HUAC was a failing one: again in 1957, "Robert Rich," a pseudonym for Dalton Trumbo, won the best screenplay award for *The Brave One*.[47] The furor caused by the award led to greater visibility for Trumbo and to greater public questioning of the red ban as a whole.[48]

In that same year, Bryna Productions began making arrangements for their film version of *Spartacus*.[49] Bryna distinguished itself in its efforts to use *Spartacus* to undermine the restrictions of McCarthyism. As

early as December of 1957, discussions at Bryna centered on the open use of a blacklisted writer, and by March of 1958, the company had contracted for a professional assessment of potential audience reaction to Dalton Trumbo as credited screenwriter.[50] In June 1958, Kirk Douglas met with Vice President Richard Nixon to gauge the Eisenhower administration's reaction to the public use of blacklisted professionals in Hollywood.[51]

Production, therefore, took place in a volatile atmosphere. Despite Bryna Productions' apparent commitment to breaking the blacklist, this was still a very controversial issue, and powerful groups were interested in maintaining a hard line against leftist participation in film. The American Legion, the most active, kept up pressure on the studios to hold to the Waldorf Statement. The Legion's resistance to an easing of the blacklist prompted Bryna to keep a close watch for signs of an imminent hostile action against *Spartacus*. On the one hand, there were many highly vocal opponents of Communism threatening to back up HUAC at the box office; there were also rumors concerning a new round of congressional hearings. On the other hand, the blacklist was being publicly denounced by a number of public figures, including Harry Truman, under whose administration the current witch-hunts had begun (*Variety*, 8 April 1959). Universal International was in the hot-seat; the studio would invest twelve million dollars in *Spartacus*: a production handled by an independent film company, using a relatively unknown director, a controversial screenwriter, and a best-selling novel that many considered a Marxist parable. The situation was risky, to say the least, and sparked much disagreement over how best to minimize the risk while retaining the artistic vision.[52]

But what was the artistic vision, the "meaning" of *Spartacus*? This too was a source of controversy. Kirk Douglas had linked the Spartacan War to the eventual disruption of evil institutions, specifically Rome and slavery. Dalton Trumbo, the screenwriter, largely agreed, emphasizing both the moral quality of Spartacus's leadership and the major impact the rebellion had on Rome (Trumbo 1991). Director Stanley Kubrick's vision differed: he wanted to explore the "real" intent of Spartacus, by injecting some ambiguity into the motivation of the gladiators, suggesting internal conflict within the rebellion. Kubrick also felt that ideological discourse simply did not come across effectively in the primarily visual medium of cinema; meaning was transmitted better through actions than through words, which, he felt, should be kept to a minimum.[53] Added to the dispute was an unusually active interest on the part of

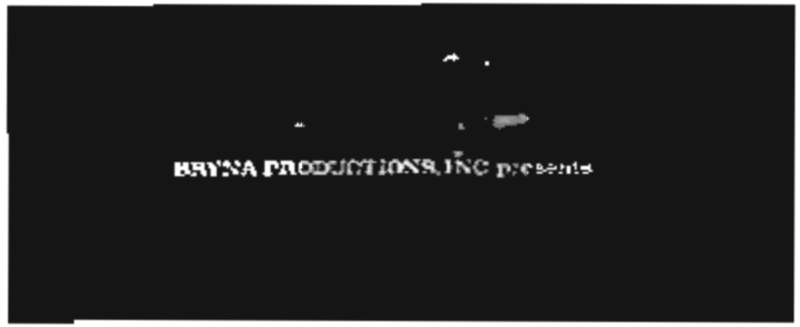

Figure 3.2 Left-pointing hand from the title sequence of *Spartacus*.

the upper echelon of Universal Studios; its head, Ed Muhl, wanted to maximize the profit-making potential of the film by downplaying "deep ideas" in order to enhance its popular appeal (Cooper 1996). The mix of all these various motivations had a tremendous influence on the production process; complete reconsiderations of the entire presentation were performed with some frequency, culminating in a final energetic bout of re-editing in the summer of 1960 just before release of the film.

The resulting project avoids the overt leftist politicization of Fast's novel by leaving the ideology of the gladiators largely unarticulated. The context of meaningful interaction is configured along domestic lines, as is consistent with the popular tradition of Spartacus. While the film version retains the familial nature of the rebel society, the ideology is dealt with only implicitly. Instead, the community of the Spartacans is emphasized using more subtle means; the rhetoric of appropriate power relations is demonstrated through action, character, and imagery. This process begins with the opening credits, which start off with a hand pointing toward the left, suggesting delicately, at most, a left-of-center orientation for the production to follow (fig. 3.2).[54]

Following the titles, the establishing scene of the narrative is devoid of almost all overt cinematic signs of Rome: we see no columned city, no baths, no banquets. Instead we see a single Roman legionary: the point of his upright spear parallels the jagged peaks of the mountains in the background and the pointed stakes of a palisade that contains a mining camp in Libya. Rome's presence in the world is thus reduced to its basic impact: containment through force. Here slaves are worked to death in a hostile and barren environment, a physical manifestation of the institution of slavery. A voice-over asserts the connection between state and

domestic politics by comparing "the age of the dictator" to the dictatorial status of the slaveowner who profits from the fecundity of his female slave, Spartacus's mother. The particular is then aggrandized and universalized: Spartacus's pride and rebelliousness are characterized as the dream of the "death of slavery two thousand years before it finally would die."[55] Implicitly, his actions are no longer limited to his personal grievances, nor even to the Roman social system; rather they belong to the universal struggle for self-determination.

Spartacus begins his community-building efforts in the gladiatorial school or *ludus*, working from the moment of his arrival to establish a network of relations that does not depend on Rome. Active efforts toward this end get underway when first we see the gladiators gathered together in their subterranean barracks, after a sequence of scenes of vigorous, brutal training. Alone for the first time, the slaves engage in quiet conversation as they wash the sweat from their bodies. As in Fast's novel, the self-expression of the gladiators constitutes resistance; in hushed, furtive discussion of their suffering, they share their stories of endurance and controlled hostility to Rome. Through a grate overhead, the Roman trainer Marcellus barks out an order for quiet, an effort to suppress their interaction through enforced silence. The discussion continues quietly, as the slaves try to balance their hatred of Rome and their need to resist Rome's oppressive control with the need for self-protection. They reject overt, reckless opposition because of the risk to the group. Spartacus enters the discussion cautiously, aware of the Romans above; bending down to the gladiator Draba's level, he asks his name, thus engaging in overt community-building, establishing a group identity as a collective of individuals. Draba rejects the overture: "You don't want to know my name. I don't want to know your name." Spartacus persists, attributing a friendly quality to his question, implying that, contrary to the prevailing ideology, slaves can be agents within a social nexus of their own creation. Draba's response is that, "Gladiators don't make friends. If we're ever matched in the arena together, I'll have to kill you." The prevailing system holds that there can be no community of gladiators as long as gladiators are contained within the Roman power structure. Spartacus will defy this containment, both by making friends among his fellow gladiators as well as outside his own collective, and by claiming the capacity to choose life instead of death in the arena.

The slave girl Varinia is the first to help Spartacus create community, to join her individuality to his through the sharing of names. This occurs when a powerful effort to co-opt Spartacus into the Roman system backfires. Batiatus, the owner of the school, has disrupted the usual distribution of women to cooperative gladiators in order to divert one to Spartacus. Varinia joins Spartacus in his barren cell, and the love theme plays as the two hesitantly reach out to one another. As they discover, this intimate setting is also intended as a performance arena: Marcellus and Batiatus watch and try to direct the sexual spectacle through a ventilation grate in the ceiling. Spartacus resists their control, yelling at these spectators to go away, trying to exclude Rome from this relationship. Marcellus and Batiatus refuse in a parody of communalism, telling Spartacus that, "We must learn to share our pleasures." Spartacus lunges at the grate, lashing out at the dehumanizing treatment by asserting, over and over, that despite his confinement to this cage, he is *not* an animal. His resistance seems to awaken the political sense of Varinia; she snaps that she is not an animal either. Spartacus is clearly taken aback by her action; it may not have occurred to him, in the primarily male bastions of mine and *ludus*, that women, too, are participants in the human community. He acknowledges her claim, incorporating it into his worldview by asking her name. "Varinia," she answers, asserting an individual identity that transcends the dehumanizing process of slavery. This assertion is the foundation of the gladiatorial community on which Spartacus's freedom is predicated. Although it begins with a woman, this will be a community constructed primarily as a series of male family relationships: the gladiators become brothers, fathers, sons, and husbands.

Unification of the gladiatorial community is galvanized by the circumstances and consequences of their first combat, the fighting of pairs ordered by Crassus and his self-indulgent Roman friends. In celebration of a marriage, "a mating of eagles," the visitors insist on being presented with, "two pairs to the death. Surely you don't think we came all the way to Capua for . . . gymnastics." Overriding Batiatus's scruples about cost and the negative impact on the school's morale, Claudia and Helena, the Roman women, select "beautiful" and "impertinent" gladiators for their viewing pleasure. The combat between "beautiful" Draba and "impertinent" Spartacus promises the women relief, albeit temporarily, from the monotony of their jaded lives. When Spartacus is disarmed and pinned against the wall, Claudia and Helena turn thumbs down, then urge, "Kill him! Kill him!" increasingly stridently when Draba hesitates. Draba then chooses death, but not for Spartacus. In a doomed attempt to usurp Roman control, Draba turns his weapons against the Roman spectators. Draba's subsequent death brings the gladiators together, a merging demonstrated visually by the next scene. The camera scans

down the body of Draba, suspended upside down. In the visual field on either side of the body, two lines of gladiators walk slowly toward the stairs leading down to their quarters, stairs that parallel the inverted body. The movement of the gladiators takes Draba as its focal point; the gladiators are unified in pace and in the direction of their gaze as they head toward the axis of the inverted body. The gladiators meet at Draba's body and join, never again to part.

The actual revolt is instigated by the removal of Varinia. The slave girl had caught the eye of Crassus during the deadly combat and was purchased for his own household. Varinia's departure constitutes the disruption of Spartacus's primary social bond, and Varinia's loss is exacerbated by the more stringent controls on the gladiators introduced after the death of Draba. A renewed suppression of communication further tears at the building blocks of the fledgling gladiatorial community. In contrast to the Fast novel in which a speaking Spartacus signals revolt, forced silence is the film's catalyst for the outbreak, as silent gladiators slaughter their oppressive keepers and take over the school. The primacy of the community is reiterated in the scene showing Spartacus's return to the *ludus* after the outbreak. He returns to the locations of greatest significance, visually relives the moment of unity in the barracks, retracing the coalescence of gladiators around and through Draba, then he returns to his own cell, where he first bonded with Varinia; the soundtrack's love theme plays to clarify the connection for the viewer.

Into his quiet reverie intrude the howls of the as-yet lawless gladiators, and Spartacus responds by organizing the rebels into a movement. Spartacus condemns the current efforts of the rebels to simply invert the hierarchy of power yet leave the system itself fundamentally intact. He asks them, "What are we becoming? Romans? Have we learned nothing?" Calling upon the symbol of Draba as a unifying icon, Spartacus urges the gladiators to hunt bread instead of wine, to seek the staff of life instead of the lassitude of drunkenness. This is one of the few verbal expressions of the gladiator's ideology. Here, as elsewhere, its simplicity and its lack of an explicit statement of goals and values make this a "code" rather than a doctrine, a code that emphasizes the brotherhood of the rebels, in implicit contrast to the Roman hierarchy.[56]

Varinia's role in the community makes clear that this is a "brotherhood," that male relationships are prioritized by the rebels; as in the Fast novel, Varinia does not participate in the revolt on the same level as Spartacus and the gladiators. She fights no battles, nor does she plan attacks or even arrange for supplies. Instead we see her engaged in the actions

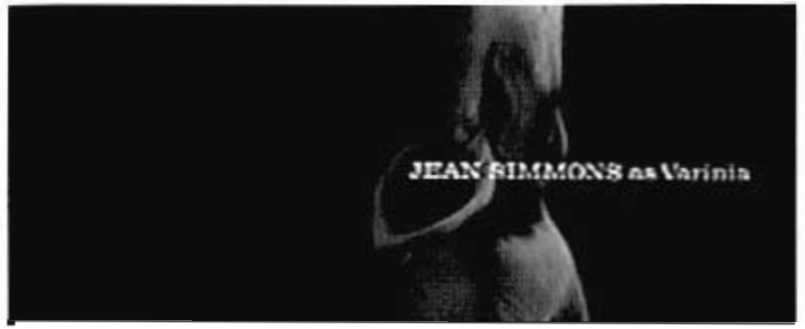

Figure 3.3 Varinia's jug from the title sequence of *Spartacus*.

of a wife and mother. She is a tool of sociopolitical development, a receptacle for another's action: this role is emphasized by the repeated presence of her attribute, the jar, which appears in the title sequence, in her arms, and even in her environment: in one scene she stands in a field of buried *pithoi* (fig. 3.3). Varinia is a container of meaning but isolated from the ideological process; her location outside the political contest continues throughout the film.[57] She is a home-front supporter of the rebellion, providing food and comfort, even though the film develops her character as lucid, articulate, literate, more innately intelligent than Spartacus and thus as capable of political perception. Her rebellion is conducted along gendered lines and is peripheral to the battlefield struggle on which the film focuses. Varinia's resistance to Rome is couched (in all senses of the term) as an issue of love—love as loyalty to a man and, indirectly, to what he may represent ideologically.

This is clarified in the reunion scene between Varinia and Spartacus shortly after the rebellion gets underway. The importance of this scene is emphasized by its highly formalized structure: three sets of thrice-repeated statements begin with an assertion of the rights of the individual to self-determination, as, in a laughing sing-song, Spartacus and Varinia take turns reassuring each other that never again can anyone sell them, or give them away, or make them stay with anybody. The chanting pattern is broken by Varinia, who giggles, "Oh, I love you Spartacus." Her mood shifts abruptly to seriousness as she repeats her assertion three times. Spartacus answers her avowal with, "I still can't believe it," an ambiguous declaration that commands further commitment on her part. She obliges, undercutting her previous statements of independence by urging Spartacus, "Forbid me ever to leave you." Spartacus becomes serious and formally assertive; he leans forward and grasps her shoulders

Figure 3.4 Spartacus forbids Varinia to leave him. *Spartacus.*

as he declares, "I do forbid you," a proclamation of authority that he repeats three times (fig. 3.4). Thus, even in an avowedly egalitarian revolution, certain gendered notions of authority prevail; love invites submission and mastery, the "natural" hierarchy of gender relations is preserved. The seal of approval is set on their relationship through the use of a cinematic trope borrowed from the western: the two ride off into the sunset, their joined silhouette moving left across the westering sky. This scene is the first of three that foreground sexual relationships as the means of demonstrating and evaluating social models. The positioning of the Spartacus-Varinia scene in the triad privileges it, making it fulfill a normative function, establishing expectations for the audience.

The following scene between Batiatus and Gracchus, the cynical populist politician, offers a second evaluation of power relationships, domestic and political. Gracchus has offered refuge to Batiatus, who fled the uprising of the gladiators. The two commiserate over a feast, and, in the course of their discussion, we witness their verbal rejection of pair-bonding and their embrace, instead, of narcissistic hedonism based on their mutual ability to exploit female slaves, the exchange of whom, for pleasure and profit, forms the foundation of their friendship. So stark an outlook is softened by an implicit comparison to the narcissism of a child: the bodies of Ustinov and Laughton each display the chubby roundness of a toddler.[58] The two assume childish postures as well, sitting before seemingly oversized food served up by a crew of nurturing, smiling women (fig. 3.5). Gracchus claims to have embraced the Roman value system, paradoxically, by avoiding the foundation of Roman ethics: marriage and the family.[59] He then proceeds to devalue the system in its entirety, claiming a causal link between Roman morality and virtue and "stealing two-thirds of the world from its rightful own-

Figure 3.5 Gracchus and Batiatus commiserate. *Spartacus.*

Figure 3.6 Crassus and Antoninus in the bath. *Spartacus.*

ers," between aristocratic promiscuity and political rapacity and the lip service the Romans pay to marriage and family. In the facile sophistry of a Roman intellectual, Gracchus casts aside such inherently warped behavioral systems, claiming he does so as "the most virtuous man in Rome."

The next scene, the last of the trio, takes place at patrician Crassus's palatial home. A slave, Antoninus, Crassus's new body servant, is active with towel and sponge; the camera parts the veil of the bath as the viewer witnesses an intimate moment for master and slave (fig. 3.6).[60] Crassus quizzes his servant as Antoninus helps him wash, towel dry, and dress. More so even than in the earlier two scenes, here we have social dictates presented in the form of a dialogue; in a series of highly directed yes-no responses, Antoninus participates in the development of a Roman ethical catalog. Clearly immoral are the vices of theft, dishonesty, and impiety. Antoninus is then coached by Crassus to assign morally neutral status to the eating of snails and oysters, here coded references to sex; these

are matters of taste, not appetite, and thus their assignation to an ethical category is inappropriate.[61] From this Crassus moves to more overt forms of aggression against his slave. Crassus leads Antoninus to a balcony, commanding him to look at Rome's garrison marching to crush slave resistance, to see, from Crassus's boudoir, "the might, the majesty, the terror of Rome . . . No man can withstand Rome, no nation can withstand her—how much less a boy, hm?" He thus dictates a linkage between himself as domineering partner and Rome's capacity to dominate the world: what Rome is in public, Crassus is in private. Crassus adds to his catalog of ethics a definition of love, as demonstrated daily by the proper response to Rome: to love Rome, "you must serve her, you must abase yourself before her, you must grovel at her feet." As an analogue of Rome, Crassus expects the same treatment, the serving, the abasing, the groveling, in his personal relationships.[62]

This overt demonstration of unequal power relations does not by itself invalidate this part of the triad; controller and controllee are just as clearly marked in the exchange between Spartacus and Varinia. The transgressive nature of the relationship lies in elision of difference, an elision that is a marker of disorder. Crassus does not distinguish between genders in his couplings, he refuses to categorize desire in a system of ethics, and he identifies himself with Rome, which he repeatedly refers to with female pronouns. The permeability of gender roles and the negation of ethical categories are points of inversion when compared to the ideals and practices of the rebel community.

Spartacus also uses the natural landscape to distance the rebels from Roman city dwellers and to elide the imagery of communalism with the quintessentially American symbology of the western. Throughout the film, long shots of western landscape are taken from a raised perspective, a type of cinematic visual that has been characterized as the "master of all I survey" image (Wexman 1993.78–81, Wood 1977). From this point of view, the landscape appears as territory discovered and claimed in the same action. In westerns, the protagonist shares the viewpoint with the camera, thus becoming the proprietor of the vast and empty wilderness; his gaze/ownership gives it meaning and purpose, connecting it to "civilization" understood as the site of the homestead and the home base for the patriarchal family structure. The landscape also offers scope for expansion, the *Lebensraum* necessary for progress. By using this visual language, *Spartacus* extends dominion over territory depicted as an analogue to the American frontier, expressing a perspective that is distanced from the land subject to ownership and control.

Figure 3.7 Burying a baby. *Spartacus*.

At the same time, cinematic technique encourages the viewer to identify the gladiators *with* nature; truly salt of the earth, they live in man's original state. Establishing long shots of landscape that close in to reveal the rebels within make the rebels seem part of nature. This pattern is initiated after the first organizational meeting of the rebels with a long shot of the hills surrounding Vesuvius. In the center of the visual field, the gladiator army swarms over these hills, erupting out of nature. In the rebel camp, the mounted gladiators follow the lines of landscape, a surging flow along the gullies of the outstretched plains. A Copland-esque soundtrack is laid over the image of the gladiators. The connection is also given verbal form. As the gladiators sit around a campfire at day's end, their new volunteer, Antoninus, composes a song conflating the glories of the natural world—sunset, mountains, sea, and meadow—with the gladiators' sense of home and family. As the song has it, "I turn home. Through blue shadow and purple woods. I turn home. I turn to the place that I was born. To the mother who bore me and the father who taught me. Long ago, long ago, long ago."[63] It is thus in connection with the landscape that the rebels reconstruct their original, primal community. The rebel movement builds as the gladiators move through the landscape. Silent vignettes show family groups among the rebels, families dominated by adult males, who carry children, assist the elderly, and are wracked with pain over the burial of an infant, returning its tiny body to the earth/mother who bore them all (fig. 3.7). The growth of the army is thus paralleled by the growth of the family unit; the rebels reach Brundisium swollen in number, swollen like Varinia's pregnant body, and bristling with weaponry.

The gladiators' connection to the earth is reinforced by pairs of posed shots that shift repeatedly between Rome and the rebel camp out-

Figure 3.8 Spartacus's pre-battle speech to the rebels. *Spartacus.*

side Brundisium before the final battle. The massed forces of the gladiator army dissolve into landscape (fig. 3.8). In simple phrases, Spartacus verbalizes the "code" of the gladiatorial community: their essential brotherhood, their shared life experience, and the essential value of labor, all set in opposition to Rome's exploitative system. The imagery reiterates his message: as they listen to Spartacus, the rebels merge with each other, with hill and sea; the use of a soft focus blurring the boundaries between them.

This is intercut with, and thus explicitly contrasted to, the recreation of the Roman regime that surrounds Crassus's pre-battle speech. Amid pure white classical architecture, a prestigious emblem of elitism, Crassus dictates the "New Order" to a regimented assembly of legionaries and, in the background, a gaggle of senators (fig. 3.9). Crassus promises, "the destruction of the slave army [and] the living body of Spartacus for whatever punishment you may deem fit," swearing by his dead ancestors in the temple of their bones. These repeated references to death and destruction are fundamental to Crassus's concept of order, based on the "cleansing" of Rome and the return to tradition that he vows throughout the film. The "people" and nature and life have been purged from Rome by Crassus's "cleansing" suppression of Gracchus; populists are conflated with Spartacans in Crassus's roundups of the "rabble" and his McCarthyesque compilations of "lists of the disloyal."

The visual presentation of the battle's aftermath is configured using these primary themes, presenting the family of rebellious gladiators as a natural community. The overview of the battlefield transposes humans into nature, as the seamless movement of the camera transforms heaped masses of undifferentiated dead into the blue shadows and purple woods of Antoninus's song. Touched by twilight, the slaughtered rebels have

Figure 3.9 Crassus's pre-battle speech to the Romans. *Spartacus.*

Figure 3.10 Rebel dead as part of the natural world. *Spartacus.*

come "home" (fig. 3.10). The surviving gladiators, when asked to betray Spartacus to save their individual lives, respond by affirming their group loyalty. Just as the community began by sharing names and identities, so does the movement triumph over defeat as, one after another, each stands to declare, "I am Spartacus!" The movement has thus come full circle, as now they share a single identity, a single name: Spartacus. The collective identity transcends the individual. The final combat, ordered, like the first, by Crassus, confirms the affective, familial bonds of the Spartacan community. The last surviving rebels, Spartacus and Antoninus, have been saved from crucifixion by Crassus until the gates of Rome. In rage and frustration at their silent resistance to him, he demands a duel to the death as "a test of this myth of slave brotherhood." The combat between Spartacus and Antoninus validates the relationship: this is no "myth" but rather a revealed truth. As Antoninus dies in Spartacus's arms, the two affirm their familial love, the father-son relationship constructed within the community (fig. 3.11). Spartacus's final words claim that the

Figure 3.11 Antoninus and Spartacus as father and son, *Spartacus*.

establishment of this bond, independent of Rome and based on deeper truths beyond Roman understanding, constitutes the real victory of the rebels. Spartacus rejects the death of Antoninus, declaring in a voice made rough by the intensity of his emotion: "He'll come back. He'll come back and he'll be millions." The final scene points to this future freedom as well. Varinia tells a dying Spartacus that his son will know his dream, will know his father, and thus will know a freedom profoundly shaped by the experience of the rebel community. Upon this goal, it is implied, Varinia will focus her entire existence; her love and her life, which began with Spartacus, will die with Spartacus. The film ends on an unsettling note.

Projecting *Spartacus* was a challenge in the highly charged anti-Communist atmosphere of the 1950s. *Spartacus* needed to retain an inspirational quality as a symbol of the eternal human capacity for self-determination, yet it could not blatantly call for the unification of the working class in revolution. By downplaying the explicit political rhetoric of Spartacus's rebellion, his revolution can be viewed as one that is at heart conservative in its ordering of society into traditional family units. And indeed, the strong interest in the private side of the public man has been shared by popular representations of Spartacus since the eighteenth century.[64] *Spartacus* is a complex film, however, and the lack of resolution in the ending distinguishes it from earlier treatments of the story. Destruction of the family had previously been presented as a reflection or even as a cause of the crushing of the rebels' political dreams. But, in the film, Varinia and her son survive, to be escorted to a new home by the newly protective, even fatherly, Batiatus. *Spartacus* presents an ambiguous version of the "age-old fight for freedom," one in which hope and resistance coalesce in the crucifixion of the father and the flight of the son. The grim resolution of the final scene is only partially offset by the verbal references to future freedom. It is an uneasy reconciliation, appropriate perhaps to a film mired in controversy and vicious dispute throughout its production, a film that went on, nevertheless, to be the major box office success for 1960.

Notes

1. Margulies 1960, frontispiece by Howard Fast quoted here, illustrations by Tom Van Sant. On press books and epic film see Sobchack 1990.24–49.

2. Events of the Spartacan War were recorded by a number of ancient authors, including Livy *Summaries* 95–97, Sallust *Histories* 4.20–41, Florus *Abridgement of All the Wars Over 1200 Years* 2.8, Eutropius *Digest* 6.7, Frontinus *Stratagems* 2.5.34, Appian *Civil Wars* 1.9.116–20, Plutarch *Crassus* 8–11, and Diodorus Siculus *Library* 39.21. The secondary bibliography on this subject is quite large. Bradley 1989 offers an overview; see also Vogt 1974. On Roman slavery see Bradley 1994 and Dumont 1987.

3. The two major works on the theme of Spartacus are those of Müller 1905 and Muszkat-Muszkowski 1909, with a shorter piece by Olivova 1980.89–99, who offers insight into Spartacus's influence on the Czech novel. Wyke 1997b.34–72 also presents an intriguing overview of the popular treatment of Spartacus. Extremely useful on the reworking of the theme of classical slave uprisings is Rubinsohn 1993; less so is Stanev 1981.95–101.

4. Diderot and Voltaire are representative of the revised view of Spartacus. The article on slavery in Diderot's *Encyclopedia* refers to "natural law," asserting that all men were born free. Diderot goes on to undermine the achievements of classical civilization as a whole because they were all predicated on this ancient injustice. He draws a connection between the slave wars and Rome's decline, claiming that Rome's own inhumanity to slaves would rebound to shake the empire to its foundations. Spartacus's efforts are thus justified; Diderot characterized Spartacus as a man of courage and skill, facing adversity without flinching, whose army was prepared to sacrifice everything for the sake of freedom. See Diderot 1779–82.12.959–67. Voltaire's emphasis on the meaning of history for all men at all times laid the groundwork for a new focus on the slave rebellions of antiquity, to which he himself gave legitimacy; he articulated the moral worth of the Spartacus uprising in particular, as the most justified, if not the only justified, war in history. See Voltaire 1974-118.389 (letter # D15572).

5. By the end of 1760, Saurin was invited to become a member of the Académie Française, joining the ranks of the *philosophe* dramaturges. Even so, today his work receives little attention. A brief assessment of Saurin can be found in Truchet 1974.2.1405–11; see also Stanev 1981.99–100, Rubinsohn 1993.30–31, Muszkat-Muszkowski 1909.19–24, Olivova 1980.90.

6. An example of this conflation can be found in *Spartacus*, II sc. ii, p. 94:

"Ma mère, les Romains, et ma haine et ma flamme, tout combat à la fois, tout déchire mon coeur" (My mother and the Romans, both my hatred and my passion, every battle at the same time, it all tears at my heart).

7. The linkage between domesticity and universal freedom is made earlier by Spartacus's mother, whose dying words include a request that he avenge his mother by liberating the world (Saurin 1821, I sc. iii, p. 84).

8. Both sides accuse the other of "barbarism", the label seems to stick more securely to the Romans, as Saurin is careful to emphasize Roman brutality. See, for example, Spartacus's elaboration of the term at III sc. iv, pp. 103–05, V sc. xii, p. 133, and Crassus's use of it, V sc. xiii, p. 134.

9. Émilie's argument is lucid and convincing, against which Spartacus sighs and suffers and stubbornly insists on holding the course. Indeed, for all of Spartacus's vaunted heroism and leadership, Émilie is fully his equal in the strength of her convictions and her devotion to father, fatherland, and lover.

10. Only Lessing's notes survive to suggest his intentions for the unfinished work. Lessing's brief comments point to the political focus of the work, as the representation of a last, desperate battle against tyranny by men who were plain and simple and yet, or perhaps because of this, extraordinary human beings, Spartacus pre-eminent among them. Spartacus fights for the equality of all mankind, undermining Roman claims to political achievement through pointed speeches and questions aimed at the relatively inarticulate Roman characters. See Batley 1990. The text of the Spartacus material can be found in Lessing 1970.2.574–77, 788–89. Comments in Olivova 1980.90–92 and Muszkat-Muszkowski 1909. 13–53.

11. For a general non-specialist treatment of Grillparzer's life and work, see Thompson 1981. The text of the play can be found in Grillparzer 1892.11. 127–56. This play is rarely analyzed as part of the Grillparzer corpus or even as part of his "classical" group of works. Part of the reason for this neglect may be *Spartakus*'s incompleteness and the fact that it was not published during its author's lifetime.

12. Grillparzer 1892.155: ". . . was andern Tugend ist, all uns Verbrechen! Vaterlandes, Freundesliebe, die Rom am Römer lohnt mit Ehrensäulen, es wird gestraft am Gladiator. O, wann wird ein Retter kommen unserm Unglück!" (What is to others a virtue is for us a crime! Fatherland, love of friends, that for which Rome rewards Romans with a commemorative monument is a punishable offense for the gladiator. Oh, when will a savior come for our misfortune!).

13. Like Saurin's Émilie, Grillparzer's Cornelia is an apocryphal love interest. The wandering poet is seen best in Grillparzer 1892.139.

14. Olivova 1980.95 notes that, ten years later, Grillparzer did go back to the theme of Roman history, but he concentrated then on Crassus, the man who crushed the slave uprising.

15. *The Gladiator* set new records for production; by 1854, it had been performed over one thousand times by the noted actor Edwin Forrest alone. The role of Spartacus became Forrest's signature piece. See Bird 1919, commentary by Foust, pp. 28–49, text of play, pp. 297–440. See also Dahl 1963.56–61 on *The Gladiator*. Bird is today perhaps best remembered for his later novel, *Nick of the Woods* (1837), a major effort in the construction of the frontier/expansion *topos* within American literature.

16. Comments on the first performance of September 26, 1831. Quoted in Foust 1919.42. Bird himself likewise described an "American" feeling in the packed house at the Philadelphia opening of the play on October 24, what with the American performers, American author, and American play. See Harris 1959 passim.

17. Spartacus's humble origins may likewise have struck a chord as an ancient analogue to Andrew Jackson, then president of the United States, whose public image played upon his frontier background and upon his rise to leadership from rustic obscurity. See McConachie 1992.97–104. Maria Wyke 1997b.56–60 points to *The Gladiator*'s meaning for contemporary class conflict: the tension between public personae, like Forrest and Jackson, identified with a working or frontier non-elite, and the established, moneyed class.

18. See, importantly, Bücher 1874.114–15, who suggests that Roman slave wars were evidence for social movements in antiquity, perhaps aiming at some form of socialism.

19. Industrial oppression is likewise read into the so-called toga plays of this period in which the long-suffering, persecuted Christians, as members of a class, are encoded as victims of bourgeois exploitation. See Mayer 1994.10–11, 13.

20. Marx's enthusiasm, originally generated by reading Appian for relaxation, still lingered with him four years later when filling out a list of likes and dislikes for his daughters Jenny and Laura in which he says his personal heroes are Spartacus and Johannes Keppler. See "Confession" of 1 April 1875, Marx 1975.42.567–78.

21. See comments of Rubinsohn 1993.57–58.

22. Ward 1888.2.90 claims these are "more dignified" labels for what is, really, the same thing. In the case of Spartacus, Ward interprets legislation against *collegia* of 58 B.C.E. as the last in a long line of union-busting efforts on the part of the Romans. His treatment of the Spartacus rebellion is in 1.235–94, with specific attention to the labor/*collegia* identification on pp. 243–45, 252.

23. Spartacus is portrayed as an emancipator, complete with proclamation, in Ward 1888.1.257, 264, 291. Spartacus is presented as the leader of some sort of labor coalition on p. 279.

24. The classic Luxemburg biography is Nettl 1966. Her favored status as a martyred female socialist activist has produced numerous brief, popular summaries of her life, including Abraham 1989. For Liebknecht see Trotnow 1980.

25. *Die Krise der Sozialdemokratie*, a.k.a. the *Junius Pamphlet*, can be found in Luxemburg 1974.4.62. The *Junius Pamphlet* has repeated references throughout to imperialism as barbarism.

26. From "Trotz Alledem!" an article that originally appeared in *Die Rote Fahne*, the paper of the Spartakusbund, collected in Liebknecht 1968.9.678–79.

27. Fast resigned from the Communist Party in 1957 in a very public fashion, giving numerous interviews and writing a number of papers explaining his dissatisfaction with the Party. The lengthiest of these was published in book form as *The Naked God: The Writer and the Communist Party* (1957). The territory was explored again more recently in his autobiography (Fast 1990), in which he traces his career and personal life as intimately connected to his politics. Skepticism over Fast's motivations in 1957 and the role played by self-interest therein is expressed by Meyer 1958. Murolo 1984.22–31, esp. 23, also points to the advantages accrued by Fast's public "rehabilitation" following his public departure from Communism. The caliber of the leftist sympathies in his pre-1957 work comes under scrutiny in Wald 1992.

28. Daniel Traister 1995.530 notes that "it would be . . . difficult to overestimate the effect of such [leftist political] commitments upon his work as a writer of imaginative fictions." See also MacDonald 1996.2–3, 6. This is acknowledged by Fast 1950, when he draws connections between his own public and artistic stance. Fast's articulation of political theory in fiction would draw fire from the left, however, due to its relative lack of sophistication and its clear subordination to plotline.

29. Fast 1990.65. The friend in question was Sarah Kunitz. This is noted as a "watershed event" by MacDonald 1996.12.

30. He claims this in various essays about his work as well, including Fast 1944.7–9, where he refers to stories of "great and splendid forgotten men" being "traduced and falsified" by "scoundrels." The theme of suppression and revisionism in history recurs in his novels; for examples in *Spartacus* see 1951.9, 150, 333.

31. At issue was Fast's participation in channeling funds for leftist groups in Spain resisting Franco.

32. Fast 1990.275–76. Fast claims he decided not to write on Luxemburg because the Holocaust was too recent; presumably Germany's earlier silencing of Luxemburg, who was born to a Jewish family in Poland, might prove too sensitive a focus for popular historical fiction. See below, however, for Fast's dichotomized treatment of women in *Spartacus*.

33. This goal is specified by the inscription on the flyleaf of Fast's own copy of *The Ancient Lowly*, written by Hy Gordon, one of the workshop leaders. See Fast 1990.276; the training school is described on pp. 136–38.

34. Fast 1951.215, 284. Fast does put a certain amount of economic theorizing into the mouths of his characters, but the thrust of the didactic value of the work is Fast's connection of Roman symbols, characters, and landscape with politico-economic evil. Nevertheless, the work was perceived as Marxist "polemics" in Melville Heath's review of the novel in the *New York Times*, 3 February 1952.22.

35. Fast 1951.250 lists the escalating "benefits" of Roman "civilization": crucifixion, the plantation system, gladiatorial combat, contempt for human life, and the hunger to derive profit from the blood and sweat of the underclass.

36. They also have "bad sex," which is, perhaps, a more obvious symbol of Roman decadence. Caius, a young elite male (non-historical) character, is one of the chief practitioners of Roman corruption in this regard; interestingly, his corruption comes in paired loci of disruption, either food-and-sex (1951.40, 47) or sex-and-death (1951.5, 96–98).

37. Fast 1951.304–06. Cicero is arguably the most irredeemably negative character in the novel, a treatment that may be anchored in Ward's assessment of Cicero as "the most terrible enemy of the working classes" (Ward 1888.1.244).

38. Although Gracchus does refer to the nobility, wisdom, and greatness of the senate, it is in a passage laden with irony: Fast 1951.187.

39. The Capuan perfume factory episode provides one of the clearest connections between Fast's novel and Ward 1888.1.252. Indeed, Ward claims that the presence of such factories is prime evidence for his reconstruction of the existence of ancient trade unions and concomitant Roman union-busting. His reasoning is as follows: there was a huge demand for perfume, ergo the industry in Capua must have been huge, to supply it. There must therefore have been large numbers of laborers, who must have organized into groups or *collegia* specifically to improve their working conditions, leading to the known historical event of Roman legislation against *collegia* by the *senatusconsultum* of 64 B.C.E., for which see Cicero *Against Piso* 8.

40. Varinia is always referred to as Spartacus's "wife"; see Fast 1951.109, 163, 336. "Motherhood" is her "beauty," a constant quality expressed by Varinia as an ethical stance: 1951.350, 361.

41. The nature of the attraction is never clarified directly, but it is associated with Gracchus's recognition that here is a "real" woman, a woman who is not less than a human being, unlike the corrupted women of Rome.

42. Indeed, Fast repeatedly conflates Crassus's desire for Varinia with his desire for domination; see, for example, 1951.333 and 346, where Varinia appears as a prefiguration of Cleopatra.

43. The affinity between sexual conquest and imperial control plays a relatively small role in the politics of Fast's *Spartacus*. Beyond Crassus's desire for Varinia, it crops up only once, during Cicero's "conquest" of Helena. Midway through his physical possession of her, Cicero suddenly perceives himself as the embodiment of Roman territorial acquisition and the humbling of Spartacus. The metaphor is immediately undermined when the external viewpoint of the narrator intrudes to particularize the feeling as, on the one hand, Cicero's hatred and cruelty, and, on the other, Helena's fear and self-loathing. The episode thus becomes an example of Roman corruption in the distortion of human intimacy.

44. Douglas was also committed to the "love story" of Spartacus: the connection between the rebel gladiator and Varinia. Tony Curtis claimed this focus

on romance was a major cause of disagreement during the filming of *Spartacus* and a key element in the dismissal of Anthony Mann as director. While the love story as a major plotline is typical in Hollywood cinema, one should not disregard the strong transformative quality of Varinia's love in the Fast novel. For dominance of the love story in Hollywood cinema, see Wexman 1993.3–16 and Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson 1985.5, 16–17; both affirm that some 85% of classical Hollywood films present a heterosexual romantic relationship as the chief plot line.

45. Sam Norton, at the time the consulting lawyer for Bryna, advised that this practice made good economic sense in that Bryna could thus gain access to known talent at a discount. Apparently Bryna took him at his word; personnel records document that in March of 1959, *only* blacklistees were employed as screenwriters by Bryna. See Smith 1989.84.

46. The Academy's effort had been galvanized by the concern that *Friendly Persuasion* might win a screenplay Oscar for blacklistee Michael Wilson; this despite the fact that Wilson had written his draft of the screenplay in 1946, before the issuance of the Waldorf Statement banning the employment of Communists by the major studios.

47. The relative obscurity of *The Brave One* has led some to suggest that knowledge of Trumbo's involvement was in fact key to the decision of the voting members of the Academy and that the award was intended to be a statement of support for blacklistees, opening the door to the removal of any constraints on their employment in Hollywood. See Smith 1989.83.

48. Trumbo, as early as April 3, 1957 (following the Academy Awards presentation on March 27), was called upon by *Variety* for comment. On May 4, an article by Trumbo appeared in *The Nation* discussing the permeability of the ban and the creation of a black market for blacklisted talent in Hollywood.

49. Another Spartacus movie based on the Arthur Koestler novel, *The Gladiators*, starring Anthony Quinn and Yul Brynner, was underway at United Artists at the same time. Spurred by the spirit of competition, Douglas and his group sped up their production process and successfully wooed a trio of acclaimed British actors (Olivier, Ustinov, and Laughton) to commit to the Bryna film, with the result that the UA project was abandoned. See Douglas 1988.304–13. Interestingly, the UA project also involved blacklistees in its formative stages: the script was to be written by Abe Polonsky, who had perhaps the strongest background in labor activism and the Communist Party of all the initial victims of the Waldorf Statement. See Ceplair and Englund 1979.191–92.

50. Documentation of Bryna's activism comes primarily from Dalton Trumbo. Note especially a letter from him, dated March 30, 1958, on how Bryna Productions was developing ways of crediting Trumbo openly for his work as screenwriter, a development taking place with the full knowledge of Lew Wasserman, head of MCA. This letter refers as well to Bryna's use of a public relations firm to explore public reaction to this. See Manfull 1970.414–17.

51. A letter of Trumbo to Edward Lewis, dated May 31, 1958, acknowledges his preparation of supplementary information for Douglas to use at this meeting: see Manfull 1970.424–25. This whole process goes unacknowledged by Douglas in his autobiography. Instead, he presents *Spartacus*'s breaking of the blacklist as a spontaneous action, motivated chiefly by his own revulsion at Stanley Kubrick's egomaniacal eagerness to take credit for Trumbo's creative efforts. In disgust, Douglas issued a studio pass to Trumbo, legitimizing his presence on the set of *Spartacus*. The breaking of the blacklist in this reconstruction thus becomes an act of personal integrity. Douglas, perhaps disingenuously, disclaims any notion of the significance of his decision, let alone any idea of heroism at the time. See Douglas 1988.322–24.

52. Duncan Cooper emphasizes the cautious attitude of UA studio personnel concerning the political content of the film, alleging that they were particularly motivated to remove scenes of military success by the slave army, in order to keep "this film's explosive historical content . . . within the confines of the implicitly established . . . limits of acceptable political discourse" (Cooper 1996).

53. In this he may have been in basic agreement with Douglas, who rejected Howard Fast's original script because of its "talking heads" sort of style, its emphasis on speech-making at the expense of drama. See Douglas 1988.307. Trumbo profoundly disagreed with Kubrick's approach in this case, suspecting him of inciting disagreement on the set in order to impose his vision and thus decrease the ideological content of the film. Entering this fray were the different visions of the major actors, particularly Ustinov, who rewrote all of his scenes with Charles Laughton. The result was to emphasize an often inappropriate comedic element and detract from the overall narrative. Peter Ustinov 1977.301–02 claims he was ordered by "management" to soothe Laughton's sulks and competitiveness toward Olivier by doing these rewrites. There is a critique of Ustinov in Trumbo 1991.33. Olivier, who was initially interested in playing the title character, perceived Spartacus as a man with a divine aura, as a patriarch/father figure among the slaves, based on his reading of the novel. Douglas says this interpretation of the character was completely different from his own; Douglas thought Spartacus was transformed by the rebellion, starting out as an illiterate animal, then reacting against his circumstances, and finally beginning to shape his own circumstances to conform with a self-generated ideology. This capacity to drive and to affect others Douglas saw as key to Spartacus as a leader (1988.310).

54. One could see this approach as characteristic of the epic film as a genre, in which signal events of the human past are explained through the actions of individuals, especially the romantic actions. See Babington and Evans 1993.12. Title credits for *Spartacus* were designed by Saul Bass.

55. The prologue was composed and inserted in post-production as part of the controversial, late re-editing.

56. Analogous to the code given laconic expression by heroes in western

genre films; see Wright 1974. Zaniello 1996.226–27 finds here and elsewhere in the film the representation of an idealized labor union.

57. The deliberate isolation of Varinia was planned in preproduction: the original casting in the part of Sabina Bethmann, a German actress, was meant to distinguish her by accent from all other characters, to set her apart as an anomaly. See Douglas 1988.314. For the trope of good women and their jars see Babington and Evans 1993.188–89.

58. Both actors had previously played the role of the quintessential ancient narcissist: the emperor Nero. Laughton was Nero in *The Sign of the Cross* (1932) and Ustinov won a Golden Globe (and was nominated for an Oscar) for his Nero in *Quo Vadis* (1951). For Nero as a cultural icon see Elsner and Masters 1994.

59. It may be that the infantilism in imagery is reflected by Gracchus's ethico-political stance, his rejection of adult responsibilities in favor of a childish egocentrism.

60. This is the notorious snails-and-oysters scene, cut in the very last reediting immediately prior to release and restored in 1990. The charged content of the scene was an open secret in film circles even prior to its restoration, providing food for commentary by Russo 1987.119–22, Hark 1993.166–67, Babington and Evans 1993.190, and Elley 1984.111. For Douglas's pre-restoration commentary see 1988.319–322, in which he characterizes this as a "gentle, ironic inquisition" and "just another way Romans abused the slaves." Kubrick essentially agrees: in crafting the restoration of the film in 1990, he describes the scene as a parody of Socratic dialogue. See the text of a fax from Kubrick, quoted by Robert Harris in Cooper and Crowdus 1991.28–29.

61. Are theft, dishonesty, and impiety, then, matters of appetite? Antoninus clearly recognizes the manipulation of semantic meanings by Crassus, with his cautious, "It could be argued so, master."

62. Douglas acknowledges that when Crassus is talking about Roman power, "he is speaking of himself" (1988.322). The scene ends with another triplet: Crassus requests confirmation of these truths from his slave, but his three repetitions of "Antoninus?" are left unanswered.

63. More or less explicit references to the Song of Antoninus, as a sort of anthem for the movement, are made by Varinia in her bath scene and in the final assessment of the rebellion by Spartacus and Antoninus outside the gates of Rome, where Spartacus says that the rebels' victory was located in their capacity to "storm the mountains, shouting . . . [to] sing along the plains."

64. By foregrounding the family as a fundamental unit of the gladiatorial collective, the makers of *Spartacus* participated in the prevalent presentation of the family in Hollywood as antithetical to Communism. See discussion of *My Son John* in Whitfield 1991.136–40.

4

I, Claudius

Projection and Imperial Soap Opera

Sandra R. Joshel

> Based on Robert Graves's best-selling novels about dirty work in ancient Rome, the Mobil-funded PBS series lavishly depicts the orgiastic society of the all-powerful Claudians, the family whose business was ruling the world.—*Masterpiece Theatre Promotional Material*

> The material wealth portrayed is hard for the British actor to understand because we're a poor country now. Of course there are great differences, but America is the only place you could relate ancient Rome to.—*Brian Blessed (Augustus)*, New York Post, *4 November 1977*

Through the 1960s, Hollywood films like *Quo Vadis*, *Spartacus*, *Ben-Hur*, and *Cleopatra* nourished popular sensibilities about ancient Roman corruption and decadence (Wyke 1997b). As Peter Bondanella observes, imperial Rome offered opportunities for spectacular lessons on the "perils of overreaching power" and for cinematic exploitation of an "ever present prurient interest in Roman decadence and in corruption produced by supreme power and unbridled sensuality" (1987.210). It might be more correct to say that Hollywood shaped American prurience from 1925 through 1978. In the Rome of the emperors, directors found and produced extremes of imperial dimensions: political power, material life, and sexuality. Hollywood films offered a recurrent vision of Roman history: ancient Romans were tyrants or lived under them, consumed lavishly, and indulged in excessive and often deviant sexual activities (Winkler, Fitzgerald, and Futrell in this volume).

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and Donald T. McGuire, Jr.

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