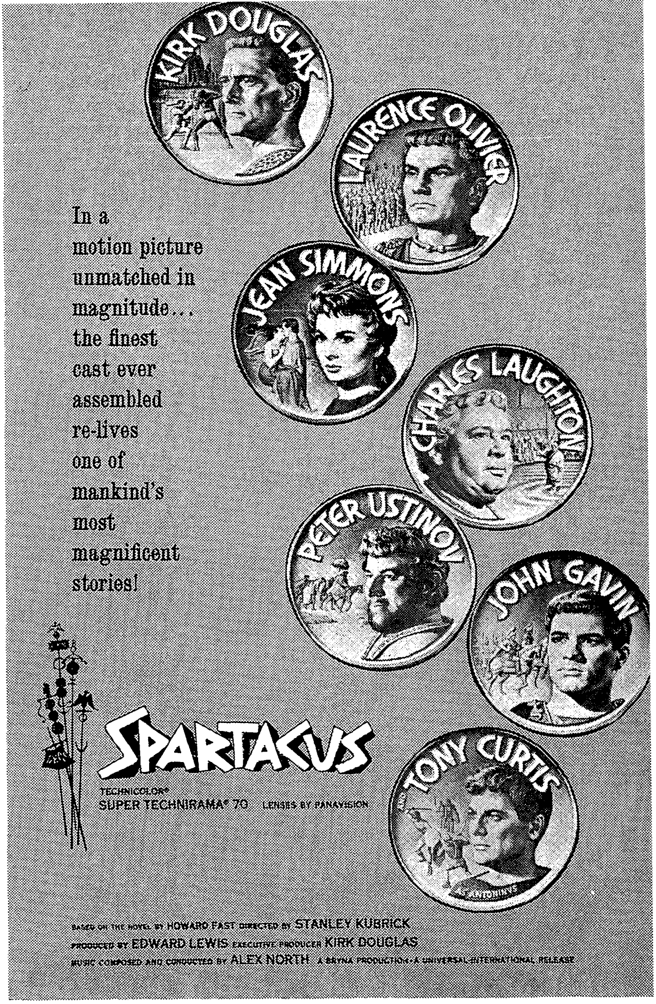

KIRK DOUGLAS
LAURENCE OLIVIER
In a motion picture unmatched in magnitude... the finest cast ever assembled re-lives one of mankind's most magnificent stories!
JEAN SIMMONS
CHARLES LAUGHTON
PETER USTINOV
JOHN GAVIN
SPARTACUS
TONY CURTIS
AS ANTONINUS
TECHNICOLOR®
SUPER TECHNIRAMA® 70 LENSES BY PANAVISION
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY HOWARD FAST DIRECTED BY STANLEY KUBRICK
PRODUCED BY EDWARD LEWIS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER KIRK DOUGLAS
MUSIC COMPOSED AND CONDUCTED BY ALEX NORTH A BRYNA PRODUCTION · A UNIVERSAL-INTERNATIONAL RELEASE

through the disciplines with spartacus

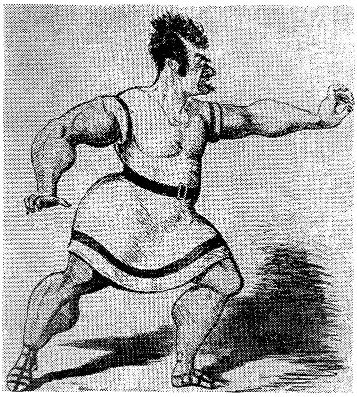
the uses of a hero in history and the media

richard g. lillard

One evening in late 1846 young Walt Whitman, sitting in a crowded Manhattan theater, watched Edwin Forrest play the role of Spartacus in Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator.* Next day he wrote in the *Brooklyn Eagle*: "This play is as full of 'Abolitionism' as an egg is of meat. . . . Running o'er with sentiments of liberty—with eloquent disclaimers of the right of the Romans to hold human beings in bondage—it is a play . . . calculated to make the hearts of the masses swell responsively to all those nobler manlier aspirations in behalf of mortal freedom!"[1]

i

Like the audience for which he spoke, Whitman was a child of the Spirit of '76, of frontier and rural self-reliance, of Jacksonian democracy and of romantic confidence in individualism and humanitarian crusading. He was responding to the clear political implications of a popular play. It was one of the lasting successes for Forrest, who from 1831 on gave it hundreds of times, and for Tommaso Salvini, John McCullough and other actors. Forrest filled "the inflated soliloquies" and gave "the savage cry" threatening to make Rome howl, and McCullough had "splendid poise and demeanor, fine intelligence, gentleness of spirit beneath a rugged exterior . . . ; the grand repose of essential manlihood. . . ."[2] In 1853 *The Gladiator* was performed for the thousandth time. No other play in English had been given so many times during the author's lifetime.



FIGURES ONE AND TWO: TWO NINETEENTH CENTURY PERFORMERS AS SPARTACUS. ABOVE, a cartoon of Edwin Forrest (found in Montrose J. Moses, **The Fabulous Forrest: The Record of an American Actor,** Boston, 1929, 328); BELOW, a portrait of John McCullough, (found in William Winter, **Other Days: Being Chronicles and Memories of the Stage,** Moffat, Yard & Co., 1908). In 1884 John Foster Kirk remembered Forrest's Spartacus: ". . . the legs curved bandywise, with the bent knees wide apart, the left arm akimbo and the head leaning to that side, the sword in the right hand held horizontally, with upturned edge, above the head . . ." (in "Shakespeare's Tragedies on the Stage," **Lippincott's Magazine,** June, 1884, 605).

As late as 1918, according to Clement Foust, thousands of elderly Americans remembered the excitement of the play. Generations had caught the revolutionary and respectable import of a drama directed against chattel slavery and ruthless exploitation of labor. The social system of ancient Rome clearly paralleled the Southern slaveocracy with its pretensions to Grecian civilization. Bird's play about Spartacus was part of the liberal movement that produced plays celebrating heroes fighting for liberty and equality. In John A. Stone's *Metamora* (1829), for instance, the son of Massasoit leads the Wampanoag rebellion against the British. In Bird's own *Oralloosa* (1832) the Inca chieftan and his people turn against the Spanish, and in Robert T. Conrad's *Jack Cade* (1835) the Kentish insurrectionist of 1450 directs the countryside uprising against the English.

Bird's Spartacus hopes for "earth's disenthralment" and urges the gladiators to strike out:

> Death to the Roman fiends,
> that make their mirth
> Out of the groans of
> bleeding misery!
> Ho, slaves, arise! it is your
> hour to kill!
> Kill and spare not—For wrath
> and liberty!—
> Freedom for bondmen—
> freedom and revenge!—[3]

Bird based his play on scattered data for the years 73-71 BC in Latin and Greek sources known to schoolboys and college men of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Florus, Livy, Eutropius, Tacitus, Paterculus, and notably Sallust, Appian and Plutarch, plus histories of Rome by Englishmen and Americans. Roman historians had made Spartacus a villain, but in most American eyes during the nineteenth century he acted as a European leader in the best, finest, cleanest military and oratorical tradition. It was proper for white people to be anti-imperialist and pro-national in sentiments, though it was not fashionable to support any of the black slave rebellions like Nat Turner's or any Indian uprisings like Black Hawk's. Praise for national revolution was as legitimate as revolution itself if directed at kings or emperors or oligarchies. President Monroe had declared in favor of the Greeks opposing Turkey. President Jackson had approved of the French Revolution of 1830. In 1848 President Polk would send to Congress a message that included praise for the European revolutions of the year, and a resolution by Congress congratulating French revolutionists would be signed by both Congressman Abraham Lincoln and Senator Jefferson Davis. President Taylor would support Leo Kossuth's Hungarian revolution and—after Kossuth lost—receive him at a reception in Washington.

The literate Americans who took *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* had at hand in 1836 "The War of Spartacus," which drew on the Roman sources, cited historical parallels like Wat Tyler's rebellion and quoted a speech that Sallust attributes to Spartacus. The writer, aware of what Walter Scott had done for great clashes in the past, anticipated a score of literary works when he said, "We give . . . the crude materials for high-wrought fancy to deal with, and to mould and to build up into splendid historic fiction."[4]

The same materials the *Blackwood's* writer and Dr. Bird drew on served soon to produce a brief, very successful work that reached millions of Americans young and old during the era of elocutionary recitations. In 1842 Elijah Kellogg, a graduate of Bowdoin College and now a student at Andover Theological Seminary, wrote a prescribed rhetorical exercise for a declamation contest. He called his piece "Spartacus to the Gladiators at Capua." It was at once a success with the listeners and won first place. A few years later a classmate recited it at Harvard College and won the Boylston Prize speaking. Epes Sargent, one of the judges, included it in 1852 in his anthology *The Standard Speaker.* In the preface Sargent said that the speech was now published for the first time.[5]

Kellogg's "Spartacus" is a set piece that rings with idealism and martial valor like scores of other pieces in *The Standard Speaker,* such as "Spartacus to the Roman Envoys in Etruria," "Leonidas to His Three Hundred," "Regulus to the Roman Senate," "Richard to the Princes of the Crusade," speeches by Achilles, Napoleon, General Wolfe, Black Hawk—all by aristocrats, rulers or chiefs. There were also speeches attributed to common men, to Wat Tyler, Winkelried the Swiss, a Scotch soldier and several Greek patriots of the 1820's, but unlike any of the other fifty-five such items in Sargent, Kellogg's came from the mouth of a non-citizen, a non-person—a slave.

Kellogg's declamation, under a thousand words long, begins with a short descriptive paragraph about quiet nighttime after a day of lethal gladiatorial fighting in Capua's amphitheater. Then for three paragraphs that rise in emotional intensity Spartacus addresses fellow slaves, "their muscles still knotted with the agony of conflict, the foam upon their lips, the scowl of battle yet lingering on their brows. . . ." He tells of his boyhood, pastoral until slavers kidnapped him, and of combats like today's when he had to kill a friend. Then he appeals for revolution:

> If ye are *men,*—follow me! Strike down yon guard, gain the mountain passes, and there do bloody work, as did your sires at Old Thermopylae! Is Sparta dead? Is the old Grecian spirit frozen in your veins, that you do crouch and cower like a belabored hound beneath his master's lash? O, comrades! warriors! Thracians!—if we must fight, let us fight for *ourselves!* If we must slaughter, let us slaughter our *oppressors!* If we must die, let it be under the clear sky, by the bright waters, in noble, honorable battle![6]

The piece was pure fiction, only loosely related to surviving facts about the housing of gladiators and their varied ethnic origins, but the message was clear and could be loud. The Sargent book, reprinted dozens of times, and other editors' reprints from 1871 to 1921 (often without the opening paragraph) in collections of readings and recitations, or of choice selections, spread the exhortation through the states and territories. The piece was "popular." It became a speech "which every American schoolboy had learned at one time or another."[7] It was so likely to win in oratorical contests that some contestants objected to its use in a competition. Not only was it in the speech style then esteemed, but in its heroics and message, in days with North and South in confrontation, it worked like a keynote address, endorsing the popular paradox that fighting and killing were the means to freedom, democracy and peace. Clearly, even after the Civil War it aroused favorite or familiar emotions. It was referred to, for instance, by Terence Powderly, Pennsylvania labor leader; Ruby Berkley, Goodwin, Illinois black writer; Willa Cather the novelist, in one of her early Nebraska play reviews; and Bill Nye the Western literary comedian, who burlesqued Kellogg in one of his lamest speeches, painful to read in the 1970's.

In the 1840's Senator John Parker Hale of New Hampshire lectured widely on "The Last Gladiatorial Combat in Rome." Hale suggested to large audiences "an argument that if men wished to get rid of slavery in our country they must be ready to sacrifice themselves if need be."[8] Roman parallels to the impending civil war were explicit in a learned article, "Spartacus," in the first volume of the *Atlantic Monthly.* "The treatment of their slaves by the Romans was not unlike that which slaves now experience."[9] Two sculptors of the day used their medium to commemorate the subject. In 1843 Hiram Powers created "The Greek Slave," a statue that was in itself revolutionary in the United States, since it

From Bill Nye's "Speech of Spartacus

If there be one among you who can say that ever in public fight or private brawl my actions did belie my words, let him stand forth and say it, and I will spread him around over the arena till the Coroner will have to gather him up with a blotting-paper.

* * *

If ye are brutes, then stand here like fat oxen waiting for the butcher's knife. If ye are men, arise and follow me. Strike down the warden and the turnkey, overpower the police, and cut for the tall timber. We will break through the city gate, capture the war-horse of the drunken Roman, flee away to the lava beds, and there do bloody work, as did our sires at old Thermopylae, scalp the western-bound emigrant, and make the hen-roosts around Capua look sick.

The entire speech occupies pp. 126-130 in Paul M. Person, comp. and ed., *The Humorous Speaker: A Book of Humorous Selections for Reading and Speaking* (Barnes and Noble, 1909, 1925, 1928). It is a clutter of anachronisms, flat exaggerations and topical allusions as to George Francis Train and Sitting Bull.

showed a maiden wholly nude except for her chains. In 1861 William Rimmer used bronze for "The Falling Gladiator."

The Mexican War and the long series of wars against Indian nations did not strike North Americans as being imperialist, for the rationalization called Manifest Destiny turned Mexicans and aborigines into oppressors and killers of freedom-seeking and freedom-spreading Northerners and Southerners. Spartacus continued to serve Americans as a vigorous spokesman in the struggle to throw off tyranny, reform institutions and lift the downtrodden. He represented typical nationalist aspirations like those of the Americas and Europe. In the introduction to *The Standard Speaker* Epes Sargent theorized that Grecian eloquence, as in Demosthenes, "was coëval with Grecian liberty [and] declined with the decay of the latter." Developing this thesis Sargent noted a lack of oratory under military Rome, the French kings, Charles I of England and the rulers of the Spain, Italy and Portugal of his contemporary 1852. He alluded, in contrast, to the great oratory during the eras of Oliver Cromwell, Patrick Henry, Georges Danton and Daniel Webster. Sargent regretted that in his day the Press spread one's ideas and that "it is often more important . . . to be *read* than *heard,*" for "it is a bad sign for a republic when oratory is slighted or undervalued."[10]

But by the time the United States had conquered portions of the Spanish Empire, political oratory and rhetorical drama had begun to lose their appeal. An unattributed review in the clipping collection of Los Angeles Public Library condemns a local revival about 1900 of *The Gladiator.* It is an old-style unrealistic "literary play," long on bombast and inflated diction and short on action. It is "too long-winded, too garrulously heroic, for this disrespectful age."

Spartacus and other non-American revolutionaries had lost their symbolic pull on the emotions of the great American middle class, now safe and relatively well off, and on many labor-union families concerned with job security. Established Americans, rich or poor, confronted the "new" immigration from southern and eastern Europe with its polyglot, polyreligious population and its sprinkling of anarchists, Marxists, rioters and assassins. Nativism, Anglo-Saxonism, a longing for the old-time America and ambiguous fears for the future—these led to political agitation for restriction on immigration and economic agitation by corporation executives and official militarists for out-and-out imperialist war.

After taking the Philippines Americans could not continue their enthusiasm for Kellogg's or anyone else's Spartacus. If so, how could they justify sending General Funston to crush Aguinaldo, whose role in the American Philippines was similar to that of Spartacus in the Roman Italy? Then came World War I, popular in America as an effort of allies to defeat Caesarism, which came accompanied by the Russian Revolution, unpopular in America though it was a civil war against Tsarism. America turned away from revolutionists except for those revered by the D.A.R. It was time for the Palmer raids and the decades when Americans feared Bolsheviks and saw them much as Crassus saw the survivors of Spartacus' army. Spartacus—the rebel—had ceased to be a good American.

ii

Sargent's correlation of oratory and liberty has clear support in the presentation of Spartacus in European literature, where the ancient Thracian, champion of agricultural and gladiatorial slaves, or his name alone, is a perennial symbol of opposition to the establishment. For two centuries Old World writers have manipulated his biography and put speeches in his mouth, but they have never changed his role as a nobody who rose to be the greatest internal challenge to the greatest of ancient empires. His name and example have helped in the name of the people or the masses to shake modern history.

Voltaire is quoted as saying, "The War of Spartacus and the Slaves was the most just war in History; perhaps the only just war in History."[11] A friend of Voltaire in the French pre-Revolutionary group, Bernard Joseph Saurin, wrote his tragedy *Spartacus,* he said, to create a positive hero, "un homme qui joignit aux qualités brillantes des héros la justice et l'humanité, d'un homme en un mot qui fût grand pour le bien des hommes, et non pour leur malheur."[12] Saurin's hero, son of a German chief, is a slave who seizes the opportunity to speak out against Roman conditions parallel to those under Louis VX—vice, luxury, moral decay. Rome, now the scourge of the world, will be punished. Cities will be destroyed and farming lands ravaged, but health and virtue will again become dominant. Voltaire thought Saurin's alexandrines had been hammered out on the anvil of the great Corneille, and the play won applause for more than forty years, though today it makes for tepid reading. More long lasting is one of the passive, neo-classical statutes in Le Jardin des Tuileries: "Le Serment de Spartacus."

In 1822 appeared the anonymous *Spartacus: A Roman Story,* now attributed to an Englishwoman who was then nineteen years old, Susannah Strickland, later Susannah Moodie. Although the tale was slim, refined and flaccid, it was timely, with a pre-Marxist allusion to shackles when Spartacus says, "Awake, my brethren, and let all present turn their chains to arms, and crush the oppressor who dared to enslave his fellow-men!"[13]

Moodie's anemic *Spartacus* appeared at the moment when patriots were struggling for national independence in Greece, Belgium, Poland and Spanish colonies from Mexico to the Argentine. Near midcentury an English wood engraver, William J. Linton, an international patriot and a friend of Guiseppe Mazzini, carried the first congratulatory addresses of English workmen to the French provisional government. Using the name Spartacus he wrote in the *Dublin Nation* of his support for the European revolutions in 1848.

More important, an enduring production, was *Spartaco: Racconto Storico del Secolo VII Dell'Era Romano* by Raffaele Giovagnoli, published in 1874. This plump, pretentious novel, crammed with historical background—a total of 906 pages of text and woodcuts—left Guiseppe Garibaldi electrified ("elettrizzato"). As an experienced leader of rebellions in Savoy, Brazil, Uruguay and Italy, Garibaldi saw the novel as serving "the sacred cause of liberty."[14] Since 1950 translations of Giovagnoli's book have appeared in Hebrew and Russian, and writers in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Germany, France and England have written novels or non-fiction about Spartacus. A thin fiction by Arthur W. Cunningham, *Espartaco,* appeared in Spanish in Argentina.[15]

iii

Clearly, since the 1840's the proletarian left in Europe has exploited the name of Spartacus. When solid scientific historians reconstructed Roman history, with due attention to the series of Servile wars, Roman parallels gave an aura to the European imperial establishments, notably the Hohenzollern dynasty with its kaisers. The parallels also handed Socialists and Communists a contrasting eponym for their cause. Consequently, historians of Germany before and after 1920 have had to include much on the radical wing of the Social Democrats, which called itself the Spartacists or the Spartakusbund. It was the beginning of the German Communist Party, led by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Franz Mehring, who opposed the Kaiser's war, took the position of Lenin and the Bolsheviks and inspired outbreaks in Germany, Austria and Hungary. They did not use Spartacus in the patriotic American way as a national liberator; they used him as a Marxist leader in a class war. Leftists in Stockholm and Vienna wrote under the pseudonym Spartacus.

In France during the 1940's left-of-center writers published *Spartacus: Cahiers Mensuels,* a series of pamphlets. A decade later a British economist calling himself Spartacus criticized the "slavery" of fashionable ideas in public policy, and students at Oxford University published *Spartacus: A Socialist Magazine.* Albert Camus, a veteran of the underground resistance to the Nazis, wrote in *The Rebel* that he saw Spartacus as illustrating the idea that "a principle of equality, life for life . . . will always be found in the purest manifestations of the revolutionary spirit. . . ." Spartacus had no new idea of equality, as in the distribution of land. He only helped the slaves in their "brutal desire for justice."[16]

In the United States, as the several post-war generations ignored Dr. Bird's play and Rev. Kellogg's recitation, Communists and their associates made similar use of the slave who threatened Rome more than Hannibal ever did, though their accomplishments were minor against the capitalist establishment. In 1931-35 a Trotskyite group, the National Youth Committee of the Communist League of America published a periodical *Young Spartacus.* In a short poem, "Spartacus 1938," Joy Davidman protested against German concentration camps, where a dead prisoner, Ernst Thaelmann, the important Stalinist Communist, was analogous to Spartacus and the oppressive enemy included Nazis, Father Coughlin and General Francisco Franco. Davidman's anti-fascist verses appeared in a collection of contemporary poets who, according to the editor, wanted "to cry out; to resist; to resume the great tradition of poetry as a sword against evil."[17] In 1947 at a Southern church conference a Methodist minister said that agricultural unions were over two millenia old and that "the great Spartacus" was one of the historic leaders of "the ranks of the oppressed."[18]

In New York City in 1964 the Socialist Workers Party began publishing *Spartacist,* with a central concern for "proletarian leadership" and international and interracial revolution. American red hunters found the word *Spartacus,* as in earlier days, a clue to activities alleged to be subversive. In 1967, for instance, the Louisiana Joint Legislative Committee on un-American Activities was investigating the Spartacist League in southern Louisiana.

IV

While the Thracian shepherd of the first century BC has inspired Communist factions in Western Europe and in America, he has continued to reach readers in the majority. Eric Houghton's slight and conventional children's book, *They Marched with Spartacus* (1963), a story of a slave searching for his mother, can be mentioned and forgotten, but no such oblivion can be granted to three novels: Arthur Koestler's *The Gladiator,*[19] widely read in hardcover and paperback editions, which appeared in 1939 and had relevance during the struggles against Hitler's government; Howard Fast's *Spartacus,*[20] published personally by the author at a time when he was being blacklisted; and the third, least known, the *Arena*[21] of Maurice Ghnassia. It carries the endorsement of Jérôme Carcopino, historian in the Academie Française. Unlike the Koestler and Fast books the sometimes stodgy *Arena* presumes to be unslanted and historical. Ghnassia served in the French Resistance and lived among runaways and guerrillas and then later served in Algeria and Indo-China on the oppressor's side, but he takes a humanitarian point of view.

All three novels rework history to suit the author's thesis, to provide a coherent story or to appeal to present-day readers. All invent a love story. Koestler has Spartacus briefly set up an ideal commune, Sun City, in the tradition of the pre-Christian brotherhood of the Essenes. The book ends with physical defeat but with the suggestion of a Jesus-like resurrection of the faith that Spartacus fought for. Fast, author of numerous successful novels about American history, has Spartacus speak in ways that suggest to a reader the United States context of immigration, welfare, oppression of women and merciless exploitation of laborers. Says Spartacus: "The whole world will hear the voice of the tool—and to the slaves of the world, we will cry out, Rise up and cast off your chains!"[22] The novel ends with total defeat for Spartacus and his followers in the Caesarian counter-revolution but, with a flickering of hope, an author's promise of what would go on after 71 BC: "a flame which burned high and low but never went out—and the name of Spartacus did not perish. It was not a question of descent through blood, but descent through common struggle."[23]

It was with a similar touch of rhetoric that the composer, Aram Il'ich Khachaturian, speaks of the central figure in his ballet *Spartak.* "I think that the heroic personality of Spartacus is in many respects close to the struggle . . . the oppressed colonial peoples of today are waging for their rights." In the preface to the printed volumes of the ballet suites, I. Strazhenkova finds that the music "offers the most perfect and mature embodiment" of the composer's "optimistic outlook."[24] In 1959 the Soviet Union awarded the Lenin Prize to the ballet with Khachaturian's music and the libretto of Nikolai Volkov, who based the plot on his adaptation of the events of 73-71 BC, this time with the hero's woman named Phrygia. Americans listen to the three suites as music, often splashy but not anticolonial. A lavish, uneven production of the ballet drew big audiences in London in 1974,[25] and during the following year productions of the ballet, because of its music and dancing, not because of its message, drew big crowds in the United States from coast to coast.

V

To date the most extravagant presentation of Spartacus belongs to the United States in a Hollywood spectacle designed to be colossal. It is

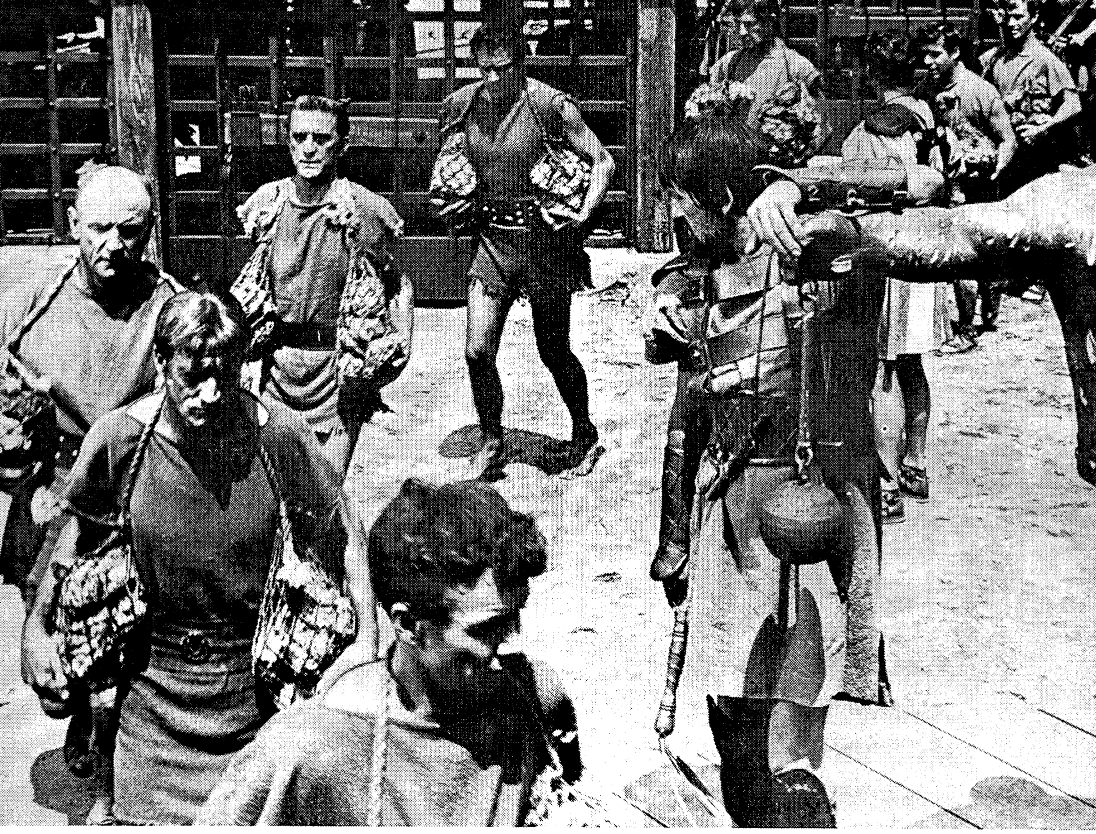


FIGURE THREE: GLADIATORS IN TRAINING at the gladiatorial school in Capua carry back-breaking loads of stones. The fourth in line is Kirk Douglas. Behind him is John Ireland. Charles McGraw has his arm on a training model. (**Spartacus,** 1960. A Byrna Production. Courtesy Universal-International.)

the work of acknowledged leftists who shaped it to entertain the comfortable, ticket-buying, non-rebellious American public.

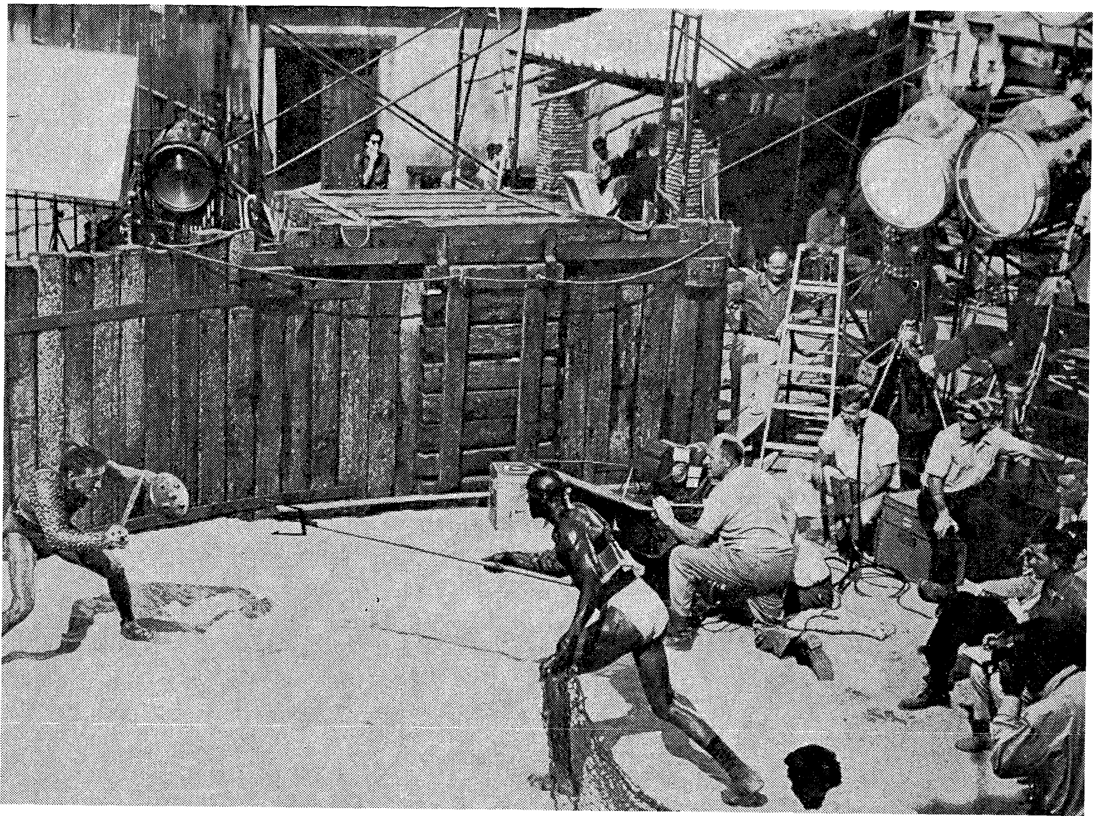
On October 19, 1960, crowds packed the bleachers outside Pantages Theater on Hollywood Boulevard near Vine Street for the world premier of "reputedly the most expensive film ever made in Hollywood,"[26] an artifact of Bryna Productions and a Universal-International release. The director was young Stanley Kubrick, not yet well known, but the cast included actors more famous then than the historic persons they represented: Lawrence Olivier as the patrician Crassus, Peter Ustinov as the Capuan slave dealer Batiatus, Charles Laughton as the republican Gracchus and Kirk Douglas as Spartacus. Spartacus's woman, here named Varinia, was embodied by Jean Simmons. Hundreds of General Franco's fascist soldiers, maneuvering in Roman formations on a Spanish plain appeared in scenes of the climactic battle between Crassus and Spartacus, put by historians in southern Italy.

The night before the battle at Brundusium begins, the film's Spartacus comes as near as he ever does to making an exhortation in the grand style that Epes Sargent says goes with forward-looking, unrepressed times. The brief speech is cut up visually by cross shots (here indicated by suspension points) of other persons talking in other places. Spartacus says that the only way to end the war is to free every slave in the country. "I'd rather be here . . . a free man among brothers . . . facing a long march and a hard fight . . . than to be the richest citizen . . . of Rome! Fat with food he didn't work . . . for, and surrounded by slaves!" Spartacus ends by saying, ". . . we must fight again . . . Maybe there's no peace in this world . . . for us . . . or for anyone . . . else. I don't know . . . but I do know. I do know that as long as we live we must stay true to ourselves! I do know that we're brothers! And I know that we're free! . . ."[27]

The Spartacus of Douglas is physically active in front of the camera and audience as he labors at a mine, trains to be a gladiator, fights to the death with his fellow athletes or with Roman soldiers or drowns an enemy in a tub of soup, deeds not called for in the plays of the past. In speech he is a contrast to the Spartacus of Forrest, McCullough or Salvini with their theatrical gestures, stentorian tones and oratorical turns of phrase. The Hollywood rebel is soft and slow spoken, modestly conversational. The stagey, deeply breathed elocution of Kellogg's day has given way to the ad-libbed, off-hand speech, casually articulated and picked up and amplified by a microphone. The periodic sentence of the Age of Webster has become the hesitant syntax of the Age of Eisenhower.

The most revolutionary thing about this film was the credits that boldly attributed to Dalton Trumbo the screenplay, based on the novel by Howard Fast. Since the so-called red hunts of the period right after

FIGURE FOUR: FILMING THE FIGHT between Spartacus and a black gladiator (Woody Strode), who uses a trident and net. (**Spartacus,** 1960. A Byrna Production. Courtesy Universal-International.)



World War II and the proscription of the Hollywood Ten, the names of Trumbo and Fast had been among those on the blacklist and employment, at least openly, had been taboo.

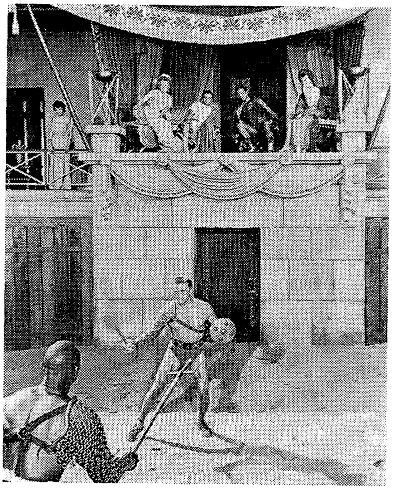
Reviewers duly noted the alleged cost ($12 million), the cast (10,500 persons), the length (3 hours, 15 minutes), the carefully researched Hollywood sets, the use of location of Hearst's Castle, Death Valley and Spain and the splendor of wide-screen, full-color Super-Technirama 70—data and adjectives all supplied in the souvenir booklet sold in theaters.[28] Like the audiences, most critics found the story satisfying, perhaps harmlessly unbelievable and did not care that it "plays fast and loose with the historical facts."[29] Few took any particular notice of the theme, since the Eisenhower years called for entertainment, not crusading, or of clear hints that Spartacus foreshadowed Jesus. The *New Republic* found the theme too overt and obvious and the total production only "a first-rate circus,"[30] but *Time* granted that Trumbo and the others had caught "a passion for freedom and the men who live and die for it," and *Commonweal* said that Crassus killed Spartacus but not the Spartacus legend, for the film is "an epical hymn of praise to the slaves who proved themselves men in their struggle for liberty."[31]

Unlike *The Gladiator* as Whitman saw it, the film does not stir an audience to sympathize with a cause—or to approve of suppressive counter measures. It is a big show. It does put slavery in a bad light, though it does not know what to propose as a way to end slavery except to remember Spartacus and struggle on. It puts Spartacus in a good light, partly because of the story, which emphasizes whites in rebellion against a decadent society, and partly because Kirk Douglas, a popular actor, handsome, with a chin dimple deep as a gash, makes Spartacus seem healthy, wholesome, dedicated, certainly modest in speech, in the clean tradition of the heroes in American Westerns. In contrast, an earlier film about a slave rebellion, *The Santa Fe Trail* (1940), the work of a commercial writer of Errol Flynn adventure stories, puts the revolutionary John Brown in a discreditable light and turns black slaves into conventional movie stereotypes. The pro-Southern bias is all too evident.

It remained for Spartacus to conquer the ultimate American forum, commercial television. The twelve-million-dollar movie about exploited and crucified slaves, duly licensed for broadcasting, appeared on certain channels in November, 1974, in two parts, on successive nights. Seemingly it had not been cut, and it was too merely cinematic to require censorship, but it was damaged esthetically by intrusions of the usual enthusiastic advertisements for slide projectors, automobiles, jewelry, bed sheets, airlines, Jersey milk, root beer and household gas.

Q.E.D. The historic story of the Thracian peasant boy who grew up to be a humanitarian leader and a military tactician, who defied the Roman Senate and its legions, and who advocated a new society has infiltrated the art forms and become a permanent part of legend and literature on both sides of the Atlantic. For a century and a half, Spartacus has figured in the American imagination, either in the newer, minority leftist tradition with roots in the *Communist Manifesto* or in the older liberal tradition rooted in the *Declaration of Independence,* the revolutionary statement that remains the clue to majority American idealism in action.

California State University—Los Angeles



(Courtesy Universal-International)

footnotes

1. "The Gladiator—Mr. Forrest—Acting," *Brooklyn Eagle,* Dec. 26, 1846, in Montrose J. Moses and John Mason Brown, eds., *The American Theatre As Seen by Its Critics* (New York, 1934), 69.
2. William Winter, *The Wallet of Time* (Freeport, N.Y., 1969—a reprint of the 1913 edition), I, 271-73.
3. Clement E. Foust, *The Life and Dramatic Works of Robert Montgomery Bird* (N.Y., 1919), 354-55.
4. Vol. 40 (Sept., 1836), 377. A century later Bernard DeVoto developed the same idea in "Fiction and the Everlasting *If,*" *Harper's,* Vol. 177 (June 1938), 42-49.
5. Epes Sargent, *The Standard Speaker: Exercises in Prose and Poetry for Declamation in Schools, Academies, Lyceums, College. . .* (Philadelphia, 1852), iv. Wilmot Brookings Mitchell, ed., *Elijah Kellogg: The Man and His Work, Chapters from His Life and Selections from his Writings* (Boston, 1904), 116, says the Kellogg piece appeared in Sargent's *School Reader* of 1846; "W.B.M—l." repeats the same datum in his article on Kellogg in *Dictionary of American Biography* (1933), but neither the Library of Congress nor the libraries at Bowdoin College and Andover Newton Theological School hold such a book.
6. Sargent, 124.
7. Appleton's *Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1888), III, 505; *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York, 1921), II, 497.
8. Andrew D. White, *Autobiography of Andrew D. White* (New York, 1905), I, 55.
9. *The Atlantic Monthly* (January, 1858), I, 288.
10. Sargent, 15-16.
11. Epigraph on the title page of Francis A. Ridley, *Spartacus: The Leader of the Roman Slaves* (Kenardington: F. Maitland, 1963). Robert Graves claims that Spartacus influenced major reforms in Roman treatment of slaves. "It Was a Stable World," *Occupation: Writer* (N.Y., 1950), 237-8.
12. M. Petitot, ed., *Reppertoire du Theatre Francois . . .* (Paris: 1803), Vol. 4, 218. The play was first published in 1760.
13. London, 1822, 12-13. In its entry for Mrs. Moodie the *Dictionary of National Biography* makes no reference to a book on Spartacus.
14. Raffaelo Giovagnoli, *Spartaco* (Milano, 1874), 5.

15. Buenos Aires, 1959.
16. New York, 1954, 80-81.
17. Thomas Yoseloff, ed., *Seven Poets in Search of an Answer* (N.Y., 1944), 8.
18. *Farm Labor News,* Memphis, II, No. 5 (May, 1947), 2.
19. Translated from the German by Edith Simon (N.Y., 1939).
20. N.Y., 1951; London, 1952; later in translations and paperback editions.
21. Translated from the French (N.Y., 1969).
22. Fast, London edition, 222.
23. *Ibid.,* 367.
24. *Spartacus Suite No. 1* (Moscow, 1960), 4.
25. *The Nation,* September 14, 1974, 221-22.
26. *Los Angeles Mirror,* October 20, 1960, Part 2, 11. The claim to the superlative is identical to that in the producer's leaflet announcing tickets for sale.
27. Universal-International "Spartacus," Picture 1888: Continuity and Dialogue, Part 19, Reel 10A, 2-3.
28. Stan Margulies, *Spartacus: The Illustrated Story of the Motion Picture* (Los Angeles, 1960).
29. *Time,* October 24, 1960, 102.
30. *The New Republic,* November 14, 1960, 20.
31. *Commonweal,* October 28, 1960, 124.