Spartacus Mythistoricus: Winning Spartacus into the Mythical

by

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I. Spartacus: Winning Over Into The Mythical

The phrase 'winning over into the mythical' is illuminating. It suggests the transformation which begins to steal over all events from the moment of their occurrence, unless they are arrested and pinned down in writing by an alert and trained observer. Even then some selection cannot be avoided—a selection, moreover, determined by irrelevant psychological factors, by the accidents of interest and attention. Moment by moment the whole fabric of events dissolves in ruins and melts into the past; and all that survives of the thing done passes into the custody of a shifting, capricious, imperfect, human memory. Nor is the mutilated fragment allowed to rest there, as on a shelf in a museum; imagination seizes on it and builds it with other fragments into some ideal construction, which may have a plan and outline laid out long before this fresh bit of material came to the craftsman's hand to be worked into it, as the drums of fallen columns are built into the rampart of an Acropolis. Add to this the cumulative effects of oral tradition. One ideal edifice falls into ruin; pieces of it, conglomerates of those ill-assorted and haphazard fragments, are carried to another site and worked into a structure of, perhaps, a quite different model. Thus fact shifts into legend, and legend into myth. The facts work loose; they are detached from their roots in time and space and shaped into a story. The story is moulded [sic] and remoulded by imagination, by passion and prejudice, by religious preconception or aesthetic instinct, by the delight in the marvellous [sic], by the itch for a moral, by the love of a good story; and the thing becomes a legend. A few irreducible facts will remain; no more, perhaps, than the names of persons and places... The history has now all but won over into the mythical. Change the names, and every trace of literal fact will have vanished; the story will have escaped from time into eternity.¹

The quotation above is from *Thucydides Mythistoricus* by the early 20th-century Classical scholar Francis Cornford. *Thucydides Mythistoricus* deals with the transformation of historical facts into the stuff of legend and, more importantly, myth. Although the passage perhaps dramatizes the transformation of history into legend and legend into myth, it nevertheless provides a background for a problem that has plagued historiography for several decades: how do historical facts and figures take on symbolism, and why do they do so? One figure that has taken on

¹ *Thucydides Mythistoricus*. Cornford, Francis MacDonald. London: Edward Arnold, 1907. 130.
such symbolism is Spartacus, a now-famous figure from antiquity whose story now works on loose facts and operates on the level of the legendary and, sometimes, the mythical. My project is to trace the process by which the elements of the Spartacus story have shifted from historical fact into the legendary, almost mythical substance that we know about Spartacus today.

The Spartacus that most people see in the 21st century is on a television or movie screen, whether through *Spartacus*, the film produced by Kirk Douglas, or *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*, a new television show that is produced by the “Starz Network.” These representations of the “historical” Spartacus feature him as a hero who battles corruption, slavery, and Roman villains, all while experiencing inner turmoil from the loss of his family and his status as a rebellious slave. Along the way, there are numerous sexual encounters, lots of spurting blood, and several instances of brutal gladiatorial combat. The Spartacus represented in these media is not the same Spartacus that the ancient sources wrote about. The representation of Spartacus’ history has changed dramatically over the course of time and has, in fact, “won over into the mythical.”

Let us first define some of the terms that Cornford uses. When I discuss Spartacus and others as historical figures, I am referring to the representation of Spartacus as provided by the ancient authors of historical texts. Of course, Spartacus is depicted as a “historical figure” in all the media that I will discuss in this project,
but whenever I use the term, I am referring to the ancient sources that I will discuss in the next chapter. Next, we need to define what a legend is. “Legend” and “the legendary” are terms that refer to the stories that have been attached to the heroes of history. Thus, when we talk about the Third Servile Revolt, we are discussing the legend of Spartacus and his accomplishments. This type of narrative significantly differs from that of myth, which attempts to explain the world and its inner workings, such as law, morality, and humanity, through the actions of its heroes as metaphors. Thus, when historical figures are given the status of “hero” by authors and are incorporated into a national myth (i.e. a narrative that is used to define the cultural values of a nation), they take on elements of the mythical in that the actions of historical figures are used to explain or justify certain human behaviors.

Spartacus evolves from historical figure, into legend, and starts taking on properties of the mythical hero. My thesis will trace the genealogy of this transformation. I start with the ancient sources in Chapter 2, where I show how the ancient historians depict Spartacus as a historical figure. The histories of the ancient authors, while all slightly different, tell similar stories. Spartacus served as a gladiatorial slave, revolted against his master, and led an uprising of slaves that ravaged the Italian peninsula for about three years (73-71 BCE). This revolt is referred to as the Third Servile Revolt in 21st century history books. For the most part, there is little description of judgment of Spartacus' character in the texts of the
ancient authors. They only tell us that Spartacus dared to reject the social order and standards that Roman politicians and citizens made, and as such was a threat to established Roman society despite his feats of heroism.

After a long disappearance from the historical canon, Spartacus' name returns in the 18th century, when he starts appearing in philosophical and literary texts. Famous philosophers and writers like Voltaire and Marx begin to cite him in letters and books, discussing the implications of Spartacus' actions against the institution of slavery. Soon afterward, Spartacus' story appears in French and Italian drama. Spartacus' image is radically changed by these authors, and his actions become metaphors for political and social crises in early modern Europe. These are the subjects for Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 also discusses Spartacus' first appearance in American culture. Spartacus appears as a character in Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* (1831), one of the most famous plays in 19th century American theater. In *The Gladiator*, Spartacus becomes more of a war hero and a family man. This chapter will discuss how Spartacus came to be “romanticized,” meaning, how Spartacus' character was molded to fit the literary characteristics of the Romantic era in literature. The Romantic era was a time when the emotions and instincts of characters were apparent in heroes and villains because of a new fixation on learning psychological motivations of the actions of man. As a result, Spartacus gained new emotional
motives for his revolt against the Romans. The political situation of America at the time that *The Gladiator* was written also plays a role on how to interpret Spartacus' role in the work.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I move on to discuss how Spartacus' character appeared in 20th and 21st century media. I mostly discuss *Spartacus*, a novel written by Howard Fast in 1951, and *Spartacus*, the movie produced by Kirk Douglas (1960). After the Spartacus' character underwent dramatic changes in order to fit the political and literary situations of the 18th and 19th centuries, we will again find that the character of Spartacus takes on a new focus and enters a political story once again, this time reflecting the communist ideologies of Fast, Douglas, and Dalton Trumbo, the screenwriter of Douglas’ film. At the same time, we will find that the character of Spartacus takes on stereotypical “American” traits, which Fast and Douglas exploit in order to appeal to a wider audience. My final chapter will discuss the evolution of the Spartacus story in the 21st century, namely how the story of Spartacus has figured into the film the new television show, *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*.

Over the course of time, Spartacus has evolved from a historical to a legendary/mythical figure. I will use Spartacus as an example of historical “fact” lending itself to the creation of legend and myth. One question that runs through the thesis is why such a violent, brutal story has been repackaged to fit various
political ideologies. Why did communists, capitalists, and Romantics alike adapt the Spartacus story to their political and literary aims, and how have these aims changed since the ancient authors wrote? I seek to answer these questions in the pages that follow.
II. The Ancient Sources

The purpose of this section is to present the events of the Third Servile Revolt, otherwise known as the Spartacus Wars. My project does not specifically treat the historical aspects of Spartacus and his campaign against the Romans in extreme detail because the topic of this project is the representation and reinterpretation of the Spartacus legend in American mass media. I do believe, however, that a brief summary of the ancient accounts of the Spartacus Wars will be helpful as a background for the film, books, and plays that I will describe in this project.

It is important to note that most of the ancient sources were not written at the time of the Spartacus Wars. The earliest extant writings on Spartacus are in Sallust's *Histories*, a book that describes the events of numerous wars including the Third Servile Revolt. It was written some decades after the Spartacus Wars, although its precise publication date is unknown. Along with Sallust, the major historical sources for the Third Servile Revolt are Appian, Plutarch, Florus and Orosius. Besides Sallust, however, none of these writers were born before the Third Servile Revolt—Appian was the next closest (born ca. 95 CE) and the last was Orosius, who wrote in the fifth century CE. What follows is the generally accepted narrative of the Spartacus Wars, as well as a detailed analysis of the context in which each individual
account was written; each author will be cited as the events are recounted.\(^2\)

Plutarch places the beginning of the Spartacus Wars sometime during the summer of 73 BCE.\(^3\) After being sold to a lanista\(^4\) in Capua by the name of Lentulus Batiatus, Spartacus and two of his comrades, Crixus and Oenomaus, revolted against Batiatus, defeated the soldiers of the city, took the soldiers' arms, and set up camp on nearby Mount Vesuvius after a march that lasted until late autumn.\(^5\) Initially, the army led by Spartacus was a band of 78 of his fellow gladiators, although Florus claims that the army soon swelled to 10,000 fugitive slaves.\(^6\)

As winter approached, the Romans sent legions to crush the revolt and surrounded Spartacus' camp on Mount Vesuvius. The first general sent against Spartacus' army was Clodius, a praetor who led several legions of Roman soldiers (approximately three thousand men).\(^7\) In a surprising reversal, however, Spartacus was able to use the rugged terrain of Mount Vesuvius to surprise Clodius' troops at

\(^2\) For further reading on strategies, resource management, speeches, and more, I suggest reading *The Spartacus Wars: a Brief History with Documents* by Brent D. Shaw (2001). Shaw provides the ancient documents that account for most of the narrative below.

\(^3\) For future reference, Plutarch narrative on Spartacus is found in *The Life of Crassus*, Books VIII – XI.

\(^4\) *Lanista* is the technical term for one who owns and runs a *ludus*, the Latin name for a school of gladiatorial training. *Lanistas* were typically viewed as men with bad repute, which is reflected in the etymology of the term. *Leno* is the term for pimp.


\(^6\) Florus claims in his *Epitome of Roman History* (specifically, Epitome 2.8) that Spartacus began his march with the intent of facing Rome in combat. Thus, Florus' numbers may have been exaggerated so that a march on Rome might seem possible. It is important to note that the numbers presented by Florus are not supported by any other ancient source.

\(^7\) There is no known praenomen for “Clodius the praetor,” as Plutarch calls him. The other accounts do not mention this Clodius, though for the sake of the inclusion of Plutarch narrative, he is mentioned here. Plutarch mentions Clodius in *The Life of Crassus*, 9.1.
night and defeat them, gaining weapons and money by looting the Roman camp.

Two other praetors, Varinius Glaber and Publius Valerius, soon came to aid Clodius, but Spartacus and his army defeated them as well (Plutarch 9.3). With news of Spartacus' victories becoming widespread throughout the Campanian countryside, nearby slaves escaped from their masters and joined the revolt. By the end of 73 BCE, Spartacus' army swelled to 70,000 rebels (Appian 1.116). The ancient authors claim that at this point, Spartacus' forces were purported to have killed over 40,000 Romans – 10,000 by those under the command of Crixus and 30,000 by Spartacus' Oenomaus had already died by the winter of 73 BCE.  

With an influx of new slave recruits armed with weapons seized from the fallen Roman legions, Spartacus soon felt confident enough to plunder the countryside surrounding Mount Vesuvius. He was eventually confronted by the consuls of Rome – L. Publicola and G. Clodianus. Spartacus defeated the legions of both consuls, though Crixus and his unit of three thousand soldiers died during the battle. As a sign of respect (and as a token of revenge), Spartacus sacrificed three hundred prisoners in honor of Crixus – ironically, the sacrifices were done in the fashion of gladiatorial spectacle (Orosius 5.24.11). According to Appian, the death of Crixus marked a change in course for Spartacus' march. With a remaining force of

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8 Orosius, Seven Books of Histories Against the Pagans. Book V, Chapter 23.2. These numbers cannot be verified.
9 Appian only mentions that consuls were sent against Spartacus – Dr. Nic Fields, in his work entitled Spartacus and the Slave War: A Gladiator Rebels Against Rome (2009), identifies L. Publicola and G. Clodianus as the consuls in 72 BCE (19). Also see Appian, 1.116.
120,000 soldiers, he shifted direction from the northern border of Italy and started marching towards Rome.\textsuperscript{10} He managed to capture the towns of Thurii and Picenum along the way. As a result, Spartacus' forces gained additional wealth and weapons (Appian 1.117). Meanwhile, Spartacus was desperate to return to his homeland of Thrace and tried to convince his soldiers to march north and return to their respective homes. Spartacus' plea, however, went unheard by his comrades who were tempted by the idea of looting the bountiful estates of southern Italy. Driven by greed and arrogance from their recent victories, Spartacus' forces went as far as Apulia to loot and pillage (Plutarch 9.3).

By 71 BCE, many Roman senators were worried about the Roman countryside because of the difficulty in controlling the slave revolt. Spartacus' army lived by plundering, and so rural estates in southern Italy were in grave danger. The Senate charged L. Crassus with the duty of crushing the revolt and sent him south with six of his own legions and two consular legions (Appian 1.117). Crassus implemented a strategy that had not been used previously in disciplining Roman soldiers during the revolt – scaring the troops into obedience. He used the ancient punishment of decimation (i.e. the random selection and execution of one out of ten soldiers) for those who had previously shown themselves to be cowards in battle. According to Appian, fear motivated Crassus' legions to become better soldiers, and as a result

\textsuperscript{10} The claim that Spartacus attempted to march on Rome is only made by Appian; it does not appear in the other ancient sources.
Spartacus began experiencing numerous defeats. At the time, Spartacus and his forces were still in southern Italy (Appian 1.117). However, as Crassus started marching towards the south, Spartacus and his troops started looking for ways to escape from the Italian peninsula. The island of Sicily, being so close, seemed to be the most logical route of escape. He hired Cilician pirates to transport his forces across the Straits of Messina, into Sicily, and towards freedom (Plutarch 11.1).

Unfortunately for Spartacus, the pirates of Sicily did not honor their deal. Spartacus was then trapped between Crassus' eight legions and the approaching legions of Lucullus, another Roman general who had landed in southeastern Italy only days before the Cilician pirate broke their contract with Spartacus (Appian 1.118). Several accounts detail Spartacus' attempt to defeat these legions. He was killed in battle with Roman forces in 71 BCE, and the surviving rebels were sentenced to crucifixion. Their hanging corpses lined the Appian Way from Capua all the way to the city of Rome, a stretch of road that is over 190 kilometers long.

A closer look at the contexts in which the ancient authors wrote provides useful information about their construction of the Spartacus story. As noted, all the

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11 Interestingly, Florus describes this as a fitting way for a gladiator to die (Epitome 2.8). This demonstrates that, rather than imagining Spartacus as a free general, authors still considered him a slave at the time of his death. Florus' choice to describe Spartacus as a “gladiator” assigns him to a lower social stratum – to still be considered a gladiator was to still be considered a slave. Plutarch, Chapter 11.2.

12 It is important to note that this differs significantly from Spartacus' death in the film by Kirk Douglas. In the film, Spartacus is crucified along with his fellow gladiators, an image that juxtaposed Spartacus' death with that of several religious martyrs. A further analysis of the two different stories of Spartacus' death will be provided in the coming chapters. Appian, 1.120.
ancient authors wrote at different times in Roman history, spanning from the Civil Wars of the late republic (documented by Sallust) to the fifth century *Histories* of Orosius. Each of these authors was writing for audiences with different understandings of, and fears about, slave revolts. In what follows, I will examine the historical and social concerns of the time period in which each author wrote. This examination will reveal several similarities among the authors, such as their common conception of the nature of slaves and slavery, as well as their shared belief in the greatness of Rome and its moral values. The differences among these authors, however, are extremely important in seeing how the story of Spartacus was reshaped for moral and political purposes since ancient times. The differing portrayals of Spartacus also show that Spartacus is a figure that can represent a multitude of ideas that embodied (or offended) the ideals of Roman morality.

Sallust was the first to write about Spartacus, and so should be considered the most important source in determining the authenticity of other histories. Sallust's importance does not necessarily stem from his accuracy on his subject matter; he is important because his original work provided the grounds upon which other historians could base their works. Historian Brent Shaw cites the numerous references that the other ancient sources make to Sallust's account, meaning that it served as a primary source for those who were writing about Spartacus during the
imperial era, all the way to the 5th century CE. Unfortunately, all that has survived of Sallust’s Histories are fragments of each of its books. Sallust’s account of the Spartacus Wars is especially fragmentary. Nevertheless, some of Sallust’s characterizations of Spartacus and the revolt survive, and the remaining fragments hint at his opinion of the major characters of the Servile Wars (namely, Spartacus and Crassus). For example, Sallust always presents Spartacus as a leader whose personal characteristics are more admirable than those of his allies or his rivals. He simultaneously praises Spartacus as a competent general and bemoans the damage he could have done to the state of Rome.

“Spirit” is the most important element that Sallust discerns in Spartacus’ character. Although Sallust's precise definition of spirit is difficult to pin down, it is safe to assume that this spirit is what carried Spartacus through the war. Although Sallust describes Spartacus as having “immense bodily strength,” his great spirit matters more to Sallust. Even if the aims of the war were detestable to Sallust, it was led by a man with the essential characteristics of Roman leadership, such as bravery, morality, and individual greatness. The Roman forces he faced were well armed and had the best military training known to the Mediterranean world. In addition, Roman forces heavily outnumbered those of Spartacus. For Sallust, Spartacus would

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13 Shaw, 145.
14 The Latin word is virtus, typically meaning strength, excellence, manliness, and sometimes, virtue.
15 Trans. in Spartacus and the Slave Wars. Shaw, 145.
never have become a threat if not for his spirit.

Sallust thus differentiates Spartacus from those he led in three ways. According to Sallust, Spartacus always acted with the good of his cause in mind (although his ideas did not always materialize); he was almost always able to inspire others for his cause with the greatness of his spirit; and finally, he was better and more skilled than his opponents at the art of war. He was defeated only because of his allies' betrayal and his subordinates' inability to support the rebellion. The slave troops wanted to pillage southern Italy against the wishes of Spartacus, and they lost their war because they could not see the consequences of rejecting Spartacus' leadership. If the revolt had indeed crossed the northern border of Italy before Crassus and Lucullus were sent out with their legions, Spartacus might have escaped.

Sallust's narrative is also important because it influenced many other ancient authors and informed their own versions of the Spartacus myth. His portrayal of Spartacus as an icon of rebellion (i.e. the moralistic fighter with a cause) persists in Appian's and Orosius' renditions of Spartacus' rise to power. The one exception\(^\text{16}\) is Plutarch's retelling of Spartacus' story in *The Life of Crassus*, especially in chapters VIII-XI. Plutarch characterizes Spartacus as “a man not only of high spirit and valiant, but in understanding, also, and in gentleness, superior to his condition, and more of

\(^{16}\) Plutarch’s position on Spartacus diverged from Sallust’s own telling of the story, which makes the originality of his writing likely. However, one must also consider the fact that Plutarch wrote many years after the Third Servile Revolt, and as a result, probably used Sallust as a source for factual knowledge, such as dates, places, names, etc.
a Grecian than the people of his country usually are” (Plutarch 8.2.). Plutarch then proceeds to produce a representation of Spartacus that is different from Sallust's, in that he elevates Spartacus' status from spirited freedom fighter to a noble man, “superior to his condition” as a slave.\textsuperscript{17} Spartacus was not a mere slave like those whom he led – he took on the characteristics of great Roman leaders, which Plutarch establishes at the beginning of his work on the Life of Crassus. Plutarch’s account of Spartacus’ life appears in his anthology of Parallel Lives, a collection of biographies of famous Roman and Greek citizens, including figures such as Pompey the Great and Solon.\textsuperscript{18}

Marcus Licinius Crassus was also one of Plutarch’s subjects. According to Plutarch, Crassus was driven by desire for status and wealth: “People were wont to say that the many virtues of Crassus were darkened by the one vice of avarice, and indeed he seemed to have no other but that; for it being the most predominant, obscured others to which he was inclined” (Plutarch 2.1). Also important in explaining Crassus’ actions is his jealous nature. When Pompey the Great becomes involved in Crassus’ affairs, for example, Crassus always attempts to prove his own

\textsuperscript{17} Sallust and Plutarch do this for different reasons. Plutarch, as discussed below, has ambivalence towards Spartacus that can be explained by prevailing attitudes towards slaves during the time he wrote.

\textsuperscript{18} Plutarch Lives come in pairs, with one life of a Roman matching with that of a Greek. For this reason, Plutarch also published a set of direct comparisons, which is why his texts are also known as the Parallel Lives. Crassus came in such a pair with Nicias, a famous figure from Greek history. The Parallel Lives were published during Plutarch’s life-time, though an exact date is not known. They were most likely published between 66 and 69 CE.
worth by inflating the importance of his own actions in comparison to Pompey's.\(^\text{19}\)

In contrast, Plutarch never ascribes any of these vices to Spartacus; on the contrary, Spartacus appears to be more kind, generous, and virtuous than Crassus.

Spartacus serves as Crassus' opposite in *The Life of Crassus*. Whereas Crassus is greedy and fights for his own glory, Spartacus fights for liberty, his own and that of his followers. The motive for the conflict between Spartacus and Crassus thus transcends the political or the military and instead becomes moral: avarice versus liberty, vice versus virtue. As a result, Spartacus serves as a political and critical purpose in two political statements that Plutarch makes in his biography about Crassus: that Roman politicians, such as Crassus, were too involved in their own affairs to attend to the needs of the Roman republic and ended up fighting wars for the wrong reasons, and that the readers' attitudes towards the revolt and Spartacus should be one of admiration and support.

Despite the fact that Plutarch seems to admire Spartacus and his plight, Plutarch is still unable to overlook the limitations that come with the status of "slave." Plutarch continuously refers to Spartacus' comrades as "barbarous" and "dishonorable" (Plutarch 9.1). By the end of Plutarch's narrative, Spartacus is never able to restrain his troops' appetite for wealth. Even if Spartacus tried to direct his

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\(^{19}\) Plutarch shows this best during his narrative on Spartacus; when Pompey arrives in Italy to help Crassus quash the rebellion, Crassus scrambles to defeat Spartacus on his own before reinforcements arrive. Crassus does try to conquer the slaves so that he can claim a triumph by himself, and not have to suffer a shared triumph or a mere ovation.
soldiers to go home instead of remain in Italy since he “he could not expect to overcome the Roman power” (Plutarch 2.5). His inability to discipline others seemed to be what was lacking in his handling of assault on Rome. In contrast, Crassus was capable of controlling his soldiers—even if the punishment was harsh. Therefore the message of Plutarch's telling of Spartacus' story is somewhat confused. Spartacus lost the war because he allowed his soldiers to run rampant, but Crassus' legion won the war despite the horribly demoralizing treatment of his soldiers.

Plutarch does not only attack the selfish nature of Roman politicians in The Life of Crassus, but he also seems to comment on the bleak future of Rome by critiquing Roman reactions to the Servile Wars. Plutarch shows how the power of one individual was able to shake the Roman Republic during its era of political instability, and how this one individual almost succeeded despite his status as a slave. Unlike Sallust, however, Plutarch does not question the political and military competence of Roman leaders, but rather asks the reader to consider motivations behind political and military decisions. Crassus was not fighting only for the sake of Rome: he wanted wealth and glory. In viewing Spartacus as a representative of a movement against the oppression of the many by the few, Plutarch is suggesting that Crassus represents the opposite: tyranny, wielding power at the expense of the

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20 The punishment that Plutarch mentions in The Life of Crassus is decimation, the name for condemning one out of every ten soldiers punished to death. Not only does this serve to frighten the living soldiers, but also provides an example for those who had not yet offended the general. Plutarch goes into further detail in Chapter 10.2.
The Epitomes of Roman History by Publius Annius Florus (commonly referred to as Florus) provides a different portrait of the Third Servile Revolt. Florus wrote during the era of the Five Good Roman Emperors\textsuperscript{21}, an era commonly referred to as the Roman Silver Age (ca. 96 CE – 180 CE). Not only were there continuous peace and growing prosperity in the Roman Empire, but literature, art, and architecture were also thriving. The booming economy of Rome also allowed for massive expansion under the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. Unlike the preceding authors, Florus wrote for a Roman audience that was living without political or military strife, and so his account of the Spartacus wars is much more ambivalent.\textsuperscript{22} Florus' initial perception of Spartacus seems confused, first stating that he “may support...the dishonor of a war with slaves...for though they are subjected to all kinds of treatment they are yet, as it were, a second class of men, and may be admitted to the enjoyment of liberty with ourselves” (Florus 2.8). From the outset, Florus seems to sympathize with the slaves and to admit that they ought to be free. Florus, however, also says that Spartacus and his forces, “not being content merely with escape, wished to take vengeance upon their masters,” (Florus 2.8). As Florus continues his short account of the war, he also takes care to describe how Spartacus

\textsuperscript{21} The age of the Five Good Roman Emperors spans from the beginning of Nerva's reign in 96 CE until the end of Marcus Aurelius’ rule in 180 CE. Florus' works date from Trajan’s and Hadrian’s reigns, specifically from 110 – 125 BCE.

\textsuperscript{22} Florus specifically writes about the Spartacus Wars in a short section of Epitomes of Roman History, namely section VIII of Book II.
brutally ravaged the Italian countryside, noting that Marcus Licinius Crassus
“avenged the honor of Rome, by whom the enemies (I am ashamed to call them so)
being routed and put to flight, betook themselves to the furthest parts of Italy”
(Florus 2.8). Florus thus portrays Spartacus as a shameful enemy for the Romans,
despite the fact that Spartacus' war had honorable aims. Florus' position here is
notable for its balanced view of slavery as an institution rather than simply
classifying Spartacus and his revolt as inherently dishonorable. Nevertheless,
Spartacus should be considered a legitimate opponent even if it means admitting
that a slave could challenge the power of Rome.

Florus then confuses his position on slavery even more by stating that
Spartacus' comrades were “ravenous monsters,” though he describes Spartacus as
“meeting a death worthy of men” while “fighting bravely at the front ranks” of his
final battle (2.8) Like the other ancient authors, Florus presents Spartacus as a slave
more worthy of being considered a “brave man” than those whom he was leading.
Florus adds that Spartacus was first a “mercenary, then a soldier, then a deserter, a
highwayman, and finally, a gladiator” (2.8) The trajectory of Spartacus' career implies
a moral judgment of his character. Florus considered the people that held such
occupations to be among “the meanest” of men. As a soldier, however, Spartacus
does maintain some nobility. The placement of the term gladiator at the end of this
list does, however, hold some significance, if only because it denotes a special kind of
training and courage that is not given to the ordinary Roman soldier.

How can Florus, then, see Spartacus both as a slave and a brave man, a general and a mercenary, a gladiator and a revolutionary? Florus comes to terms with Spartacus' contradictory character by carefully showing the reader how Spartacus is not Roman despite some of his Roman traits (bravery, leadership, and virtue). Spartacus does not hold himself to the standard of Roman social order that the Roman generals do, and he is not able to restrain his troops like Crassus can.

Most importantly, however, Florus maintains that Spartacus' slave status persists despite his lack of militaristic tendencies. Even if he led a successful revolt, he was unable to match up to the skill of Crassus because of his inferior status, which is why Florus stated that he was embarrassed to call Spartacus a legitimate opponent (see quote above). Beyond Spartacus' lack of militarism, however, the superb handling of military tactics that Spartacus exercised during the war was, according to Florus, a result of his experiences as a mercenary for the Roman army, where he fought with "the utmost of bravery." This comment, made at the beginning of Florus' telling of the Spartacus story, deflates our perceptions of Spartacus' natural ability. Florus suggests that the only reason for Spartacus' military prowess was Roman military training; without Rome, there would be no successful attack against Rome. Florus also blames faulty leadership on the Roman side of the war for Spartacus' successes

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23 Note that this is the only text that claims that Spartacus was a part of the Roman army before the revolt.
in the revolt (2.8). The only one who was able to have a complete command over his troops was Crassus, though he was only able to do so after decimating his own legions. Of course, the idea that slaves cannot lead successful wars is contradictory when considering the results of Spartacus' uprising, leaving Florus' telling of the Spartacus story extremely confusing.

After other Roman armies lost to Spartacus' rebel army, Crassus had to defeat Spartacus in order to “vindicate Roman honor.” The reader must then ask: if Spartacus waged a war in which Roman honor had to be vindicated, did Spartacus deserve honor for his successes during the revolt? Spartacus, according to Florus, can be considered honorable because of his Roman characteristics. He ascribes characteristics of Roman military prowess to Spartacus and names him as a “brave” general. The attribution of honor to the leader of a slave revolt must have been embarrassing for Florus, who called gladiators men of the “worst character” (2.8). In giving Spartacus honor, Rome would necessarily suffer because the state lost battles to Spartacus on numerous occasions.

By treating Spartacus as a general, Florus also implies that he exhibits the characteristics of other Roman generals. Spartacus is a man who, like Crassus, is powerful, wise, and brave. Important to note once again, however, is the significance of the differing time frames in which the ancient authors wrote. Since the Roman Empire was in a time of prosperity and peace, any type of rebellion
would seem unlikely to the Romans reading Florus' *Epitome*. The city of Rome had not been attacked for a long time, and as stable as politics were during the Silver Age, there was no cause for concern for rebellion within the boundaries of the Roman world. At the same time, however, Florus provides a good warning for the citizens of Rome: Romans must be aware that injustices like slavery could turn against the Romans themselves. In the end, however, Florus’ attitude towards the revolt seems to be ambivalent. Like the other ancient authors, he was upset that Roman order was upset by Spartacus’ revolt, but was nevertheless impressed by Spartacus’ actions. If Spartacus had not been a slave, Florus would have probably thought that the war was less embarrassing for the Romans; they would not have almost submitted to a slave.

Appianus of Alexandria (commonly known as Appian) was another historian who wrote during the Silver Age. As his name implies, however, he was writing from an Egyptian perspective. The approach he takes is different from that of the other ancient authors who write about Spartacus. Appian believed that Spartacus’ original plan was to march against Rome in order to overturn the institution of slavery itself. While both ancient authors and modern historians reject the idea that

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24 Alexandria was the capital of the Egyptian province at this time.
25 The entirety of Appian's treatment of Spartacus is included in his work on *The Civil Wars*, Book I, sections 116 through 120. The only available dating of this work is that it was published after 165 CE. His corpus was written in Greek, and survives almost entirely, although there are a few fragments.
Appian would include this detail in his history when his sources did not. In saying that the slaves intended to march upon Rome, he endows the revolt of Spartacus with a moralistic purpose and shows Spartacus fighting valiantly against the morally reprehensible institution of slavery. Appian portrays Spartacus as honorable because he “risked his life for freedom rather than for exhibition as a spectacle.”

Spartacus therefore occupies a higher moral ground than his Roman opponents, because he is a noble slave fighting for the same ideals Romans hold for themselves, liberty and virtue. At the same time, it is important to recognize that Appian was neither pro-slave nor anti-Roman. He, like his fellow educated authors, probably still held a negative view of slaves and those who worked within the slavery institution. But unlike these other authors, Appian depicts Spartacus transcending his status as a mere slave and becoming great – he becomes a general and a conqueror for his own people.

Appian’s narrative, like that of Florus, is short, although he takes great care to characterize Spartacus as a leader. Unlike the other authors, Appian writes about Crixus and Oenomaus as “subordinates,” rather than co-leaders with Spartacus (Appian 1.117). Appian differentiates between the moral and military decisions of Spartacus, and, like the other ancient authors, notes some of the poor decisions that Spartacus made. For example, Appian comments on the stupidity of Spartacus’

invitation to Crassus for the purpose of negotiation when, “Spartacus himself, thinking to anticipate Pompey, invited Crassus to come to terms with him,” though Crassus would obviously react “in scorn” (1.119). Appian also thought that Spartacus did not command his troops well enough. Even if Spartacus was not the greatest commander, the Roman generalship seemed to be lacking as well. Spartacus’ revolt was taken seriously only after defeating several consular legions, previously having been “laughed-at and regarded as trivial because it [the war] was against gladiators” (1.117). Crassus changes the way that the Roman military approaches the Third Servile Revolt.

Appian also addresses the same audience as Florus does, although this time Appian presents the character of Spartacus as a moral exemplar. Like Sallust, Appian describes Crassus' punishment (decimation) in gruesome detail. Appian uses this episode, however, to show how cruel and immoral Crassus was, showing how Crassus only did it out of a desire to win the war for his own glory. The Romans only want to avoid punishment at the hands of Crassus, while the gladiators fight to free themselves from the oppressive system of Roman slavery.

Orosius wrote his version of the Spartacus story during the 4th and 5th centuries CE while studying with Saint Augustine of Hippo, shortly before the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410. Orosius recounts The Spartacus Wars in his Seven
Books of Histories Against the Pagans. His account is unique in two ways: not only does he provide an account that is affected by his beliefs in Christianity, but he was also writing during a particularly uncertain time in Roman history. Rome's borders were shrinking, the state was putting down numerous rebellions, and princely power was being claimed by more than a dozen Romans at a time. Orosius' retelling of the Spartacus story, therefore, does not show Spartacus as the hero that the classical authors made him out to be. Instead, he compares Spartacus to the rebellion leaders of the fourth and fifth centuries. The fact that rebellion was a problem during Orosius' time would explain why he refers to Spartacus by name only twice in his Histories, calling him the “fugitive” at all other times, while also comparing Spartacus and his forces to Hannibal and his army. Orosius goes as far to call the Third Servile Revolt (“the war against gladiators”) as one of the most dangerous wars of its era, comparing it to the war against Mithridates of the East (5.24.11). Orosius' comparison of Spartacus, Mithridates, and Hannibal is important because Hannibal and Mithridates were almost universally considered Rome's greatest opponents. By implying that Spartacus was similar to them, Orosius suggests that Spartacus is one of the greatest villains of Roman history. This is a bold claim, though it makes sense

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27 The narrative of the book discusses events until 417 CE, which is supposed to be the date that Orosius stopped writing. There is no way to know for sure that this is the definitive date of publication, however.
29 Book V, Chapter 24.5. Hannibal is the famous general that led Carthaginian forces against Rome in the Second Punic War. Hannibal was famous for his cruel treatment of his soldiers and his characterization as a savage.
when considering the devastating effects that the rebellions of 5th century had on the state.

Orosius' work conveys the anxiety of the Romans as their city was about to be crushed by an assault by the Visigoths. Intruders and rebellions are judged extremely harshly in Orosius' account of the Third Servile Revolt as a result of the threat of invasion in his time, with the actions taken by the slave army as “defilements, slaughterings, conflagrations, and plunderings” (5.24.3). Orosius' depicts insurgency and slavery as major threats to the order and structure of Roman society during the republic and early empire. Orosius nevertheless seems surprised by Spartacus' audacity, claiming that this type of slave rebellion would seem impossible to him if the war had not actually occurred (5.24.13).

Orosius' Christian perspective is also important in considering the Histories. In future depictions of Spartacus, artists will depict Spartacus as a Christ-like figure. In Orosius' view, however, Spartacus was not such a savior. Instead, Orosius includes him in a compendium of pagans as a figure that fought against the structure and order of Roman law. Orosius also describes the terrible actions of Spartacus and his cohort, but never comments on the bravery of Spartacus or the oppression that forced him to start the revolt in the first place. Spartacus’ placement in the “pagan history” thus makes sense; Orosius did not attempt to place Spartacus within a more Christianized narrative because he did not belong. Instead, he fought against the
established order that God had created for the Romans.

To conclude, I wish to synthesize the sources of Spartacus as analyzed here. The ancient authors tend to characterize Spartacus in similar ways: he is a man who fought with a cause against slavery, led well at times, led badly at others, and at all times fought bravely against Rome. He also is also contrasted with Crassus numerous times and is shown to have several qualities that make him similar or even morally superior to the Roman generals he fought – he is brave, virtuous, and handles military affairs decently. Spartacus, however, refuses to submit to his status as a slave, which makes him both Roman and anti-Roman at the same time; though Roman social order made slavery a part of its systematic conquering of other men, Romans are never submissive. Therefore Spartacus occupies an awkward space between being Roman-like and non-Roman, at least according to these authors. In the forthcoming chapters, Spartacus’ position as the “anti-Roman” will become much clearer.

So ends the narrative of Spartacus. Despite his defeat, Spartacus accomplished what seemed impossible to do at the time of his revolt: he rose up and fought against the dominant Roman slave owners. Moreover, according to some of the ancient authors, Spartacus was intent on abolishing slavery throughout Rome, though this idea has been rejected by modern historians. Spartacus does not reappear until the emergence of the early modern period in Western Europe, and
when he does, his story is radically revised. The ancient sources, as we shall see, do not have much relation to the Spartacus that most people of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century know.
III. The Return of Spartacus: The Early Modern Period

Despite the fact that Spartacus garnered the attention of historians during the Roman Empire, his fame there soon faded. From the fifth century CE onwards, Spartacus received no mention in any text or work of art, until European authors started referring to his story in the 18th century. Long before modern films, books, and television shows about gladiators, Spartacus appeared in political and theoretical discussion. His image began to be associated with grand political and social ideologies such as romanticism, Marxism, and socialism among others. This chapter will discuss how Spartacus and his story came to embody European and American social and political ideologies during the early modern era. How did Spartacus become involved in the restructuring of systems of thought in this tumultuous time, and how did the characterization of Spartacus during this era differ from that of the ancient sources?

Several passing references to Spartacus were made during the French Enlightenment when historians and philosophers like Voltaire began evoking the Spartacus wars as an example of justified rebellion. In one of Voltaire's public essays concerning the legitimacy of armed resistance against unjust oppression (dated 1769), he was among the first to call the Third Servile Revolt “a just war, indeed the
only just war in history.” Voltaire's comments came shortly after a play written in 1760 by Bernard Saurin, *Spartacus: A Tragedy in Five Acts*. The timing of these representations of Spartacus is significant in that Spartacus was employed as a character whose actions justify revolution. The French Revolution would occur at the turn of the century, and at the time Saurin and Voltaire were writing about Spartacus, several French colonies in the New World were already in a state of rebellion. For Saurin, Spartacus served “as a symbol of the age's assertion of the individual citizen's freedoms” (Shaw 20). Saurin's version of the Spartacus story differs greatly from that of the ancient sources that depict him as a fugitive who endangered Roman citizens.

Some thinkers believed that the ancient struggle between master and slave seemed to be recurring in 18th Century France, although now it took the form of a struggle between the aristocratic elites of French society and all other social orders in the political system now known as the *ancien regime*. In the comparison between the struggle of Spartacus and that of the citizens of the *ancien regime*, both the slave and the lower-class citizenry demanded certain rights, both felt that they were suffering injustice, and both the slave and the lower classes felt (at least

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31 A famous example of a slave revolt harkening back to Spartacus is that of Toussaint L'Ouverture in Haiti, 1791; he likened himself to a Spartacus of the New World. Shaw, Brent D. *Spartacus and the Slave Wars: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. 20.

according to Saurin) that equality was necessary for the preservation of justice. The motto of the French Revolution (*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*) also applied to the struggles of Spartacus: he, too, was fighting for the rights of men. Saurin said of his own play that Spartacus, in representing the slave population, was “a great man...who would combine the brilliant qualities of the heroic men of justice and humanity...a man who was great for the good of men and not for the evil that they suffered...whose real aim was the abolition of slavery.”

Saurin equates the brilliance and the heroic nature of Spartacus with his desire to break the yoke of slavery, yet this interpretation contradicts the general sentiments of the ancient sources towards Spartacus. The person that Saurin describes as a “great man” was described as a villain by numerous ancient authors, such as Orosius, Appian, and Florus. It is only in Plutarch's *Life of Crassus* that Spartacus appears heroic, although even Plutarch’s comparison is only by contrast with Crassus.

Spartacus' next major appearance in popular culture comes in the form of a novel titled *Spartaco*, which Rafaello Giovagnoli published in 1874 shortly after the Italian Risorgimento. Just as Saurin and Voltaire sought to “make Spartacus an exemplar for the natural equality of human beings...in contrast to contemporary

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34 The Risorgimento was a unification movement led by Giuseppe Garibaldi in the mid 1800s. The purpose of the movement was to unify all of the states in the Italian peninsula as a single nation. Garibaldi’s fiercest opposition came from the Papal States, which asserted religious, military, and monetary dominion over the other Italian states – hence the reason why Garibaldi considered the Risorgimento as a freedom movement.
examples of absolutist monarchy,” Italian revolutionaries were seeking iconic figures that could provide moral and historical grounding for their cause. In short, they wanted to make “Spartacus a 'contemporary hero' in ancient clothing, battling for the equality of man in the political sphere” (Futrell 85). Giovagnoli was among the 19th century authors who “were provoked to take notice of Spartacus primarily because of the drive for political freedom in Europe,” and did so by portraying Spartacus as a model for Italian revolutionaries. His novel, which came with a preface written by Giuseppe Garibaldi (the leader of the Risorgimento), sought to reflect the ideals that originally drove the war for Italian reunification by adopting the story of Spartacus and claiming it as a precursor to their own struggles (Shaw 14). *Spartaco* was the first Italian novel that equated Spartacus' political aims with those of European radicals by presenting a Spartacus who embodied the ideals of political equality. In his preface, Garibaldi praises Spartacus' leadership and heroism in the Third Servile Revolt, claiming that Spartacus was like “Christ the Redeemer...serving the sacred cause of freedom.”

But why Spartacus? Spartacus was particularly important for Italian readers because of their Roman heritage. Garibaldi states that he is proud that “they lived

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37 Translation by Shaw, found in *Spartacus Before Marx*. 14.
on the same soil where the bones of those heroes of the past now rested, a land where there are no longer any gladiators and, least of all, any slave masters.”

Besides the link of Italian blood, however, other aspects of Spartacus' character made him attractive to historians and readers who saw in him a combination of courage and determination. Spartacus is thus distinguished amongst historical Roman figures as morally upstanding. Although there are other popular Roman figures that embody the type of virtue that Garibaldi praises (such as Augustus or Cato), none seemed to stand up to the moral corruption of Rome the way that Spartacus did. In popular depictions of Rome from the 18th century on, Roman politics and society are characterized by “excess, material decadence, sexual deviance... [and the ability to] purchase power, death, and pleasure in dizzying amounts” (Joshel 8).

None of the ancient sources, however, present Spartacus as a fully rounded character. The ancient sources credit Spartacus with greatness of mind and spirit despite his status as a slave, but readers never hear anything about Spartacus' personal traits besides his courage and determination, nor do the ancient authors comment on Spartacus' private life. The 19th century writers' need for a “contemporary hero” of European political revolutions resulted in their transforming

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38 Shaw, 14-15.
39 Paradoxically, Spartacus' historical character had no Italian blood – he was Thracian. This is one example of myth making for the purposes of state building, though this will be discussed later.
Spartacus into a romantic figure. Of course, problems arise with such a 
reconfiguration of Spartacus' character. Despite the fact that he also romanticized 
Spartacus, Giovagnoli directly addresses this problem in his later writings, criticizing 
others for allowing elements of romanticism to seep into what was supposed to be 
well documented and balanced historical literature.\textsuperscript{40} 

Romanticism is defined as “a literary, artistic, and philosophical movement 
originating in the 18th century, characterized chiefly by a reaction against 
neoclassicism and an emphasis on the imagination and emotions, and marked 
especially in English literature by sensibility and the use of autobiographical material, 
an exaltation of the primitive and the common man, and an appreciation of external 
nature.”\textsuperscript{41} All the elements of the foregoing definition are relevant to Spartacus' 
position in political discourse. Figures like Spartacus, who could be viewed as 
primitive and as revolutionary, are able to elicit emotional responses from readers 
whose political lives deal with new questions of political ethics. Moreover, Voltaire, 
Saurin, and Giovangoli all portray Spartacus as a man who battled Roman oppression 
by forming a new society, which existed outside of the Roman city and was based on 
the ideal that all men would live as political and social equals. Perhaps the most 
important aspect of the Romantic Spartacus is that his story is told with 
“biographical material.” The 19\textsuperscript{th} Century renditions of the legend of Spartacus do

\textsuperscript{40} Giovagnoli, Rafaello. \textit{Il Romanticismo nella Storia del Risorgimento Italiano}. 
\textsuperscript{41} Merriam Webster English Dictionary. 10\textsuperscript{th} Ed. 1998.
not focus strictly on historical events, but they depict his personal life as partially responsible for the direction of his revolt. The “personal side” of Spartacus is what made Spartacus accessible to revolutionary masses in 19th-century Europe and contributes to his growth as a legendary figure into the 20th century. Shaw claims that *Spartaco* became a primary source for most modern literature and film concerning Spartacus. The result of “romanticizing” the character of Spartacus was that he became a new type of person who had a family to care for and was part of a general movement to have his rights recognized.

Giovangoli’s “romantic element” would turn out to be important in the transformation of the Spartacus story. Once Giovangoli attributed personal traits (i.e. personal history, dreams, desires, and emotions) to Spartacus, he became a more concrete character that people could relate to. Giovagnoli, for example, talked about Spartacus’ family and his concern for their safety – readers are able to sympathize with Spartacus there. Like any other leader, Spartacus cannot thrive or even survive in captivity. He must be free to accomplish his goals: namely, that of raising a family to honor him and to succeed him. Spartacus’s concern for the fate of others plays a huge role in the narratives of Spartacus, from Giovagnoli on. There are two scenes in Giovagnoli’s work where this is especially evident. After Spartacus and Crixus face off in the arena, Spartacus wins, though he later spares him. The second

\[42\] Shaw. 20.
depicts Spartacus killing his own horse before his final battle with Crassus in order to spare it from the swords of the Roman legions.  

Spartacus also attains the status of hero, and not just for the slaves of antiquity. By making Spartacus more approachable and sensitive, the Romantic authors dramatically alter his character. He is not the bloodthirsty, vengeful predator that Appian describes as sacrificing 300 prisoners for the sake of his friend, Crixus. Spartacus instead saves Crixus and the other slaves from the fate imposed on them by the Roman elite. Because Spartacus is the savior of his family and friends, his other actions become justified, and he becomes a hero.

The ancient sources agree that Spartacus, while perhaps a hero for his own people, was not considered a hero by Roman standards. In order for Spartacus to defeat the Romans, he would have had to become Roman in character and fight with Roman military strategy and values (Futrell 82). Although Enlightenment writers depict Spartacus as a rebel that fought against the Romans on moral grounds, the ancient authors took pains to depict him and his victories as the result of failure on the part of the Roman generals and the Roman characteristics of Spartacus' leadership. The authors of the Enlightenment embrace this difference by putting the aims of the Roman Empire in an immoral, tyrannical, and oppressive light.

Nevertheless Enlightenment writers could use his struggle against Roman oppressors

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43 Trans. Found in Shaw, Pages 22 and 123.
for a critique of the *ancien regime* and the Papal rule of Italy by equating Roman rule with contemporary political problems. His role as a hero in the Enlightenment, however, is also based on what the ancient authors considered his Roman characteristics: his refusal to be corrupted, his faith in his cause, and his courage.

One of the most famous references to Spartacus' courage appears in a letter written by Karl Marx to Frederick Engels, co-author of *The Communist Manifesto*. In a passing mention of Spartacus, Marx describes the slave leader as an exemplar of an “ancient proletariat” that modern communists should follow: “...Spartacus emerges as one of the best characters in the whole of ancient history. A great general (unlike Garibaldi), a noble character, *a genuine representative of the ancient proletariat.*”

Literary and political figures like Voltaire and Marx suggested that the power of the proletariat was a force that could contend with the power of the elites. Despite Spartacus' disappearance from the European stage after the 19th century, his role as a motivator for the public to react to oppression really did, as Garibaldi suggested, “serves the sacred cause of freedom,” and would continue to do so after World War II in a German communist fringe group known as “The Spartacists.” In addition Spartacus' role in literary works continues through the 20th and 21st centuries, but on the other side of the Atlantic, in America.

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Spartacus and American Thought

Spartacus' first popular appearance in America was on the stage in 1831. He is the central character in Robert Montgomery Bird's play *The Gladiator*, considered by many historians to be one of the most popular American dramas of the 19th century. The play recounts the Spartacus Wars as told by the ancient sources, although it romanticizes Spartacus and his story as do the European renditions of the Spartacus story. For example, Spartacus' personal life is the primary dramatic element of the play. We meet Spartacus' brother before we meet Spartacus himself, and along the way we meet Spartacus' wife, other members of his family, and his friends.

Act I begins with a meeting of gladiators outside the house of Bracchius in Rome. He is a local *lanista*, but he does not stop his gladiators from discussing political revolution and the overthrow of Roman tyrants. Aenomaiis, one of the gladiators, talks about how he would like to kill some Roman aristocrats he considers tyrants, such as Crassus, Caesar, Pompey, and Metellus (Bird 173). Phasarius, the *pater* of gladiators in the *ludus*, starts designing a plot in the same scene, claiming that “...since the day I tasted of Roman blood, I have had no desire to kill poor slaves

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46 A *pater* is a Latin word that is typically translated as “father.” In gladiatorial terms, however, it also refers to the leader of the gladiators in any *ludus*. There was usually one man who was considered to be above the rest in status and gladiatorial ability, and this man was considered the *pater*. See *The Roman Games: A Sourcebook* by Alison Futrell for further information.
Bracchius enters the scene and the gladiators leave. He meets with Lentulus, a trader in house slaves and gladiators, and decides to buy Spartacus from him because he is not only “the most desperate, unconquerable, and indeed, skilful [sic] barbarian in the province,” but also because he killed some of the best swordsmen in Rome (177). Lentulus warns Bracchius that Spartacus cannot be tamed, but Bracchius buys him anyway, along with a gang of Capuan gladiators. Bracchius tries to subdue Spartacus and make him swear loyalty to the ludus, but all Spartacus says is “Misery” (179). Upon learning that he is in Rome, however, he decries the city’s greatness. He asks, “How many myriads of people were slain like the beasts of the field, so that Rome might fatten upon their blood and become great?” (179).

Bracchius soon tames Spartacus, however, by showing him that he owns his wife, Sedona, and their child. This is a landmark in literature about Spartacus; nowhere else has his wife ever been described or named, nor was he ever given a child. Spartacus is about to kill Bracchius, who then threatens Spartacus' wife and so Spartacus finally gives him the title of Master. Act I ends with Spartacus being chained and taken into the ludus to be branded and trained in the ludus. This segment of the play is essential in giving Spartacus his romantic characterization, as he sacrifices his freedom and dignity for the sake of his family.

Act II resumes in the home of Crassus, who is threatening a slave's life if his
master does not deliver to Crassus some overdue money. Jovius, Crassus' friend, approves of the gesture, claiming that “Wealth is the key to office, here in Rome” (184). Florus, one of Bracchius' freedmen, also comes by the home and asks for Crassus' daughter in marriage. Florus is refused, however, because of his lineage and low social class. After he is sent away, Crassus' daughter Julia appears on stage begging not to be sent away from Rome. Crassus claims it is necessary to rid Julia of the love that she holds for Florus; otherwise, the wealth of the family line cannot continue. Julia contends that she does not care about the money, but she is sent from Rome that very day because of her insolence.

In the next scene we see Florus return to the ludus, where he acts as a trainer for some of Bracchius' gladiators. Spartacus defeats Crixus in a sparring match, but pledges not to fight any more when he learns that he must kill his opponent if the spectators at the arena do not grant mercy to the loser. Crixus explains to Spartacus, “being slaves, we care not much for life, and think it better to die in the arena than on the cross” (190). Spartacus then begins to imagine his freedom, and tells the other gladiators of the ludus that he is coming up with a plan.

Crassus soon arrives at the ludus of Bracchius, however, and asks Bracchius to put on a gladiatorial fight, and he specifically demands Spartacus. Spartacus initially refuses, but when the lives of his family members are threatened again, he willingly fights and kills another gladiator. Spartacus is given a break before meeting his next
opponent, Phasarius. In the break, the two learn that they are brothers. Spartacus and Phasarius refuse to fight each other sat first, but when led to the arena, they are threatened with crucifixion. Phasarius raises the cry, “Freedom for gladiators! Death to all their masters!” and the gladiators overwhelm the guards of the *ludus*. Spartacus encourages them, shouting “Kill and spare not -- For wrath and liberty! Freedom for bondmen -- freedom and revenge!” (Bird 198).

The next act starts in Crassus’ home. Spartacus is currently fighting a consular army, already having defeated a proconsular army and numerous legions that the Romans set to defeat him. Crassus refuses to believe that “A scurvy gladiator, with no brains, an ignorant savage” could defeat him in battle, so Crassus prepares to march on Spartacus and the numerous slaves that have flocked to him (198). The scene changes, and Spartacus, Crixus, and Phasarius meet in their community on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius after a victory over the consular army. Crixus insists on taking his German forces and raid more of the Italian countryside, and though Phasarius claims that Crixus is committing mutiny, Spartacus lets him go in order “to teach him a humbling lesson” (204). Phasarius claims that they needed Crixus to stay and help them sack the city of Rome, but Spartacus is concentrated on getting Senona back from Bracchius (who still has her in captivity).

The next scene is in Crassus’ Campanian Villa, where Julia and Florus meet. Spartacus, Aenomaiis, and Phasarius burst into the villa, and take Julia and Florus as
hostages to be exchanged for Senona. The scene jumps to Senona and Gellius, the leader of the next attack against Spartacus. The scene does not last long, however, because Gellius’ camp is besieged by the slaves. Spartacus, Phasarius, and Aenomaiis come to the rescue of Senona and take her back with them. Spartacus tells Senona, “Look, I have found you in a noble hour: when last met I was a slave: and now in a Consul’s camp I stand a conqueror!” (210).

Act IV opens in Crassus’ camp while he is on the march, right after he learns that the slaves have taken his daughter. The point of view immediately switches to Spartacus’ camp, where Julia and Florus are frantically begging for their lives. Spartacus and Phasarius enter, and at first Spartacus intends to kill Julia. However, word comes that Crassus has disowned her so that he will not have to bargain with the slaves. Phasarius, on the other hand, still wants to “lay claim” to her virginity (215). Despite Spartacus’ pleas and Julia’s new status as orphan, Phasarius still demands to sleep with her as a prize for capturing her. When Spartacus refuses, Phasarius issues an ultimatum -- either march on Rome, or give him the girl. Spartacus, refusing to give in to the demands, is betrayed by Phasarius who takes fifty thousand troops and goes to march on Rome after calling Spartacus’ actions “tyrannical.” Upon learning that the rebel army has split, Crassus sends a representative to Spartacus to negotiate for Julia. The representative offers Senona, though Spartacus already has her in his camp. As a result, Crassus declares all-out
war on the camp and begins marching on the remnants of Spartacus’ forces, now numbering a mere seven thousand.

Act V opens and Crixus’ forces have been defeated by Crassus in the interior of the Italian peninsula. Phasarius’ forces have also fallen, though Phasarius himself makes it beyond enemy lines and finds Spartacus. He begs Spartacus for forgiveness, but before Spartacus can say anything Aenomaiis returns with news that their plan for escape, boarding the boats of Cilician pirates, has failed. The only choice is to fight Crassus’ army, even though Crassus’ forces outnumber his ten to one. Spartacus offers a term of forgiveness to Phasarius -- if he safely takes Senona beyond enemy lines and to safety, Spartacus will forgive him. The next scene takes place before Crassus’ tent, where one of the six thousand prisoners taken from his battle with Phasarius is being crucified. Crassus is still trying to figure out how to save Julia, but decides to march on Spartacus’ camp because he learns that Pompey’s forces are approaching to claim victory over Spartacus.

Before the final battle, Crassus sends a last envoy to try reasoning with Spartacus. The envoy offers Spartacus pardon, Roman citizenship, and martial honors if Spartacus releases Julia. Spartacus threatens to kill Julia and Florus if Crassus marches on them, and the envoy flees. Phasarius returns, wounded, with news that the enemy wounded him and killed Senona and Spartacus’ child. Spartacus kneels and cries, “What, is he dead? All dead? And I alone, upon the flinty earth? No wife,
no child, no brother, all slain by the Romans?...I will have vengeance!” (237).

Spartacus reveals that he has captured Bracchius, and then cuts his throat on stage.

Spartacus releases Julia, Florus, and the envoy, and prepares for battle.

The final scene opens with the vestiges of Spartacus’ troops being flanked by the troops of Pompey, though the viewer observes the action along with Crassus from the safety of his camp. Spartacus struggles to the front of the battle and reaches Crassus’ camp, wounded. He raises his knife to kill Crassus, but dies before he is able to land the killing blow. Crassus, Julia, and their entourage exit the stage while Spartacus lies there, dead.

Bird wrote this play during the antebellum period of American history, when slavery was a hotly debated political, social, and moral issue. The plot of The Gladiator uses powerful imagery to articulate the moral stigma of slavery, namely through the tribulations of the slaves before they revolted. Despite the fact that Robert Montgomery Bird was not an abolitionist, he was nervous that his play could produce (and could be read as instigating) the type of rebellion that Spartacus glorifies in The Gladiator. Bird feared that “Some adventurous director might still produce this play, set it on a plantation, and a point could be made” (Richards 148). We must consider how this play’s implicit message about revolution resonated with American audiences.

The play could be interpreted as an allegory for the general revolutionary
nature of the United States. The American Revolution had taken place only a few
generations ago, and so the spirit of the rebellion against Britain was still fresh in the
minds of those who went to view the play. The only way to assess the reactions of
contemporary viewers of *The Gladiator* is to examine editorials written by
contemporary critics, of which there are few despite the play's popularity. Notably,
however, Walt Whitman was one such critic, who claimed that the play was
“calculated to make the hearts of the masses [responsive] to all those nobler, manlier
aspirations in behalf of mortal freedom!” (Richards 168). Edwin Forrest, the chief
actor in Bird's *Gladiator*, viewed the message of Bird's play similarly, and so he
emphasized his role in the play as being that of a freedom fighter. The historian
Jeffrey Richards closely associates Forrest with the New York b’hoys, the young,
working-class urban men who were “drawn to the actor's roles of oppressed men of
the people” (Richards 167). Clearly, then, *The Gladiator* resonated with those who
believed in freedom for oppressed members of society, or at least those who
sympathized with the oppressed classes in American culture.

The popularity of *The Gladiator* in its own time indicates that it had some
social relevance, especially since it garnered attention and support from the poorer
classes and abolitionists that Whitman and Forrest supported. The play's treatment
of oppression and slavery also appealed to an American public that was drawn to the
ideal of “a man's world, where matters of honor and freedom are dealt with in terms
of male combat and provocative talk” (169). The possibility of overcoming status and overturning an oppressive society would appeal to a generation with the American revolution in the near past and the civil war in the near future. This is especially true when considering the play's appeal to the lower class at a time when the ideologies of communism were beginning to stir amongst members of the lower classes. Revolution was becoming a very concrete reality.

Despite the violence inherent in Spartacus' revolution, the characterization of Spartacus in *The Gladiator* is also romantic in that he embodies the ethic of the “primitive” man once again, which, as stated in the definition of romanticism above, is a trait common to romantic characters. Spartacus' character in the play is also endowed with the capacity to empathize with others and, most importantly, display love and affection. The ability to show love is important in helping the audience identify with Bird's representation of the character, especially because romanticism was still the dominant mode of literature at the time that this play was put on. Spartacus' character is thus brought to life in a way that he never has before *The Gladiator* was written. The character undergoes emotional transformation, is sympathetic in his desire to free himself and his family, and displays numerous bouts of inner turmoil that appeal to the sensibilities of romantics concerned with the expression of emotion. This makes Spartacus a great character to convey the themes that are expressed through the action and the plot of the play, especially since
Spartacus' character is historicized and politicized in *The Gladiator*. By having Spartacus' personality become more empathetic, the messages of the play are more easily spread to viewers who like the character.

Spartacus also becomes a multidimensional character, however, because he also embodies the characteristics of epic heroes: bravery, strength, virtue, and empathy. Spartacus is also presented as the only man capable of rising against a seemingly insurmountable force of evil in *The Gladiator*. He thus becomes not only an identifiable character, but one that provides hope for the b'hoys struggling against the social and economic atrocities committed against the working population in the 19th century because he appealed to the troubles of oppressed classes. In this sense, Spartacus' could be said to have an American character. Spartacus is not only brave, virtuous, and courageous, but also wishes to free his people from oppression and help them be equal to their oppressors. This sentiment is matched by the Marxist underpinnings of the time, as well as the rising of labor unions and workers' rights, which was also happening at the time in America. Spartacus' character could thus be constructed as a representative of the American working-class.

The American character of Spartacus is most likely a contributing factor to the widespread popularity of *The Gladiator*. Though this question of “American characterization” will be dealt with later on in the thesis, it is important to begin explaining how American audiences identified with the rebellious nature of
Spartacus' personality (as described in American media) and the anti-aristocratic attitude that Spartacus represents. The b'hoys were only one part of the audience, so why did *The Gladiator* appeal to a greater audience beyond the likes of Walt Whitman and Edwin Forrest? What about those that did not have to struggle with oppression? The answer lies in the elements of Spartacus' character that appeal to the tendencies nationalistic thought, specifically in the battles and violence which Spartacus initiates under the flag of freedom. We must remember that the debut of *The Gladiator* was sandwiched between the two of the most formative wars of American history (the Revolutionary War and the Civil War). Again, the appeal to violence was a product of the fighting that marked the era.

By taking the historical Spartacus, who was presented by ancient authors without much background or characterization, and applying fictional nationalistic motives to his character, writers and intellectuals were able to appropriate his story for the purposes of political commentary and spread messages throughout audiences with a likeable character. The analysis of *The Gladiator* above shows how dynamic Spartacus' character is and how the narrative of his revolt can fit numerous purposes as a metaphor for other events. For example, Bird's play can be read as an allegory for revolution on plantations or against European colonial powers; one can imagine Americans as either the slave-drivers or the slave owners. Spartacus' loyalty and passion for his cause could be used in any country, and his story was indeed used
widely across the Western intellectual tradition: France, Italy, and the United States are some examples.

Spartacus is thus a flexible character in the nationalistic discourses of numerous Western countries. The setting and plot of the Spartacus story could be (and has been) changed to reflect whatever is necessary in portraying certain characters. As a character, however, Spartacus remains almost the same in each of his narratives. His loyalty, courage, and virtue are recognizable across national borders, as are the romantic elements of his personality. The appeal of Spartacus as a person is that he reaches out to anyone who feels like they have ever been oppressed or that there is something worth fighting for, thus making him appear like the ideal romantic man to anyone. His connections with nature and the “simpler” times of the past grant his story some authenticity, if only because the ancients were generally viewed as wise and capable men and because his love of the soil and the Earth give his personality the sense of actually being organic itself.

It thus becomes necessary to discuss the elements of Spartacus’ opposition in his narrative. In contrast to the brotherhood and unity of Spartacus’ commune after his enslavement, Rome (the oppressor) is depicted as a corrupt state. If the audience identifies itself with Spartacus (the protector and general of the people against the aristocratic elite), then the Roman political system becomes its enemy. This type of dichotomy functions by presenting Spartacus as a political and romantic hero, as is
demonstrated above, while authors present the politicians of Rome as the antithesis or enemy of Spartacus through their vices, including greed, violence, and corruption. Spartacus, like the b’hoys and the rest of the public of the “man’s world”, is an individual simply trying to live his life on his own terms – Rome is the force that keeps him from doing so, and thus becomes an oppressor of the rights and freedom of the plebian multitude. Rome also becomes an oppressor by focusing more on its establishment as a culturally and militarily dominant power than on its moral roots and the lives of its common citizens. Phasarius’ (Spartacus’ brother) bemoans the Roman state of affairs in his initial monologue, claiming that Crassus (the praetor) is “a miserable rich man…that, by traffic in human flesh has turned a patrimony of a hundred talents into a hundred thousand!” (Richards 173). At the same time, according to Phasarius, “Rome has sent forth her general to conquer the world, and left nothing but her name for the protection of her citizens” (173). The Roman republic is thus using the power of the plebs to generate its own political dominance while refusing rights or protection to those same citizens. This is the case for Spartacus when he fights for the amusement of Roman politicians. While his life becomes monetized and depersonalized, the Romans are making money with disregard to the ethical ramifications of their actions.

In investigating the political context in which Robert Montgomery Bird wrote *The Gladiator*, it becomes apparent that the states of slavery and monarchy in
ancient Rome and the antebellum United States are comparable. Not only were slaves and working men politically, economically, and socially oppressed during the age of American industrialization, but the forces that caused the oppressive state for working-class men like the b’hoys seemed insurmountable. The b’hoys had no prospects of escaping their assigned position, and slaves had absolutely no chance of overturning any established social order without the type of opportunity for rebellion that Spartacus obtained. In both cases, the oppression is systematic, meaning that the conditions of slaves and the working class men were produced by the higher class’ conceptions of lower class peoples. Since oppression was so ingrained in the cultural imaginations of both the Romans and Americans, it would naturally seem impossible to overturn such a system in either country. Spartacus thus provides inspiration because he was one of the first slaves to rebel and be somewhat successful; even if he did not win, he managed to make historical texts.

For Americans, however, rebellion was already a part of their cultural heritage – the American Revolution proved to be successful, so the possibility of a functional rebellion for 1831 was feasible. In portraying Spartacus, then, Edwin Forrest might have given hope to the working-class with his fierce, individualistic portrayal of the hero. By doing so, Spartacus’ character is formed with both romantic devices and “ostensibly Jacksonian politics; not only is there love interest, but Spartacus also pastoralizes his lost home of Thrace. Such romanticizing...is a dominant trend of
drama in this period” (169). Thus, Spartacus is reintroduced into American thought
with a common, attractive aesthetic and a familiar structure, but a radical message
that garners support: that the state of Rome (a metaphor for America) ought to
respect the autonomy and moral liberties of all its citizens, whether enslaved,
oppressed, or privileged (which is what Spartacus demands as a moral authority);
that rebellion is a solution for political and social problems; and that the romantic
elements of a story, like freedom, love, or people like wives or brothers, are worth
fighting for.
IV. Placating America: Communism, Spartacus, and Fiction

Spartacus reappears in 1951 in *Spartacus*, a novel written by Howard Fast. Fast wrote his novel during the Red Scare, a period in which anti-Communist ideologies were dominating policymakers' attention in the American congress. Since communism was sweeping throughout Eastern Europe and Asia after World War II, certain members of the United States government became committed to ridding its political system of all its suspected communists. They feared that communism could overpower American capitalism, or at least cause tension in American society. The Red Scare was also instigated in part by the Soviet Union, which many believed could become a stronger political and military superpower than the United States. There arose a movement to stop communist thought from penetrating the educational, political, and economic systems of the United States. The leaders of this movement were the infamous Joseph McCarthy, a Republican senator from Wisconsin, and HUAC (The House Un-American Activities Committee), which McCarthy created and later led. The original purpose of HUAC was to investigate the political affiliations of senators, representatives, judges, attorneys, and other policymakers to ensure that communist ideology would not influence the American political system.

In the early 1950s, however, HUAC expanded the scope of its investigation and began interrogating those who had influence over mass communications and media, such as news executives, political pundits, actors, and authors. Famous actors and writers, such as Arthur Miller and Charlie Chaplin, were brought to
Washington D.C. to be questioned by McCarthy and his colleagues. Like the politicians and attorneys questioned before them, these actors and authors were asked about any affiliation with the political agenda of the communist party, as well as anyone they knew who they thought might be communist sympathizers. Such investigations ended poorly for those who were not compliant with the demands of HUAC, and this was especially true for those who worked in the entertainment industry. Entertainers who refused to aid HUAC in their hunt for communists often suffered blacklisting, which meant that they were routinely denied employment in performance or publishing.

Many authors, playwrights, actors, directors, and journalists found the power that HUAC wielded intolerable. Not only was the attempt to arrest communist sympathizers on the basis of their political opinions unconstitutional, but the blacklisting of uncooperative entertainers seemed unethical. Was it right to bar entertainers from doing their jobs if they decided to keep quiet about the political affiliations of their colleagues? Did HUAC have a right to ruin careers on the basis of "suspicions" about someone's political affiliation? The term "Red Scare" eventually came to have two meanings: both the fear that communism was about to undermine American capitalist ideology, and the career-ruining and devastating effect of HUAC's activities.

Howard Fast was one among many authors who were blacklisted after being interrogated by HUAC, although Fast stood apart from his fellow writers. He was
actually convicted of contempt because of his admitted ties to numerous communist organizations, and he served one year in prison because he refused to tell HUAC the names of any other communists that he knew. After he left prison, however, Fast immediately began writing. His first post-prison work was Spartacus, a novel about the ancient hero that would, in ten years, provide Dalton Trumbo with material for the screenplay of the Kirk Douglas film. Although Fast was unable to obtain a publisher for his new novel, he was not discouraged – he decided to self-publish until the Red Scare was over, and by the 1960s, Crown Publishers in New York decided to mass-produce the novel.

Spartacus opens with an introduction to its major characters: Caius Crassus, his two companions, Helena (his sister) and her friend, Claudia Marius [sic]. They are walking down the Appian Way, from Rome to Capua, and along the way they see the bodies of crucified rebel slaves. The Third Servile Revolt had just ended, and the surviving rebels were sentenced to death. The trio eventually finds itself at the Villa Salaria, the home of Caius' uncle, Antoninus Caius. There, they meet some of Antoninus' friends: Crassus, Cicero, and Gracchus, famous figures from Roman history who also appear in earlier renditions of the Spartacus narrative. The group starts talking about the revolt, and the scene shifts into Spartacus' point of view for the first time.

We see that Spartacus is working in the mines in Egypt, one of the many

47 Futrell, 85.
48 Typically, the praenomen and cognomen reflect the gender of the person who is named. Fast, being inexperienced with Latin, used numerous Latin terms incorrectly. This mistake is one example.
slaves forced to drag marble out of the deep caverns. Spartacus appears haggard; he has a beard, long, dirty hair, and is covered in bruises and cuts. We do not hear much interior monologue, or even dialogue, at first. Spartacus and his fellow slaves cannot think in such an environment: “You make men like beasts and they don't think of anything like angels” (Fast 71). Soon, however, Batiatus makes his first appearance. He is a lanista looking for some hardy slaves. He comes to the mines because the best fighters are found there: “to them, the latifundia⁴⁹ seem like paradise and they will do anything if you simply break off their chains after some time” (Fast 65). Batiatus then decides that Spartacus seems strong enough and sends him across the ocean and to his ludus in Capua.

The scene cuts back to Crassus and Caius Crassus. The readers learn that Crassus was telling the story right after the two had sexual intercourse, which is an important point in the novel. Readers must remember that this novel was produced in an era of social conservatism: homosexual behaviors were looked upon as perverted, disgusting, and immoral. Fast contrasts Spartacus’ moral and familial commitments with the sexual promiscuity that Crassus and Caius Crassus enjoy. Fast's juxtaposition of these two scenes contributes to the theme of purity, which Fast further develops later in the novel (the pure, innocent slaves against the vile Romans). From here, Fast starts to develop a polarizing moral dichotomy between Spartacus and the Romans: the slaves are moral while the Romans are not, especially

⁴⁹ “Latifundia” is a Latin term that refers to the fields or estates of wealthy Romans. The slaves that worked in the latifundia could either work as house servants or farmers/farm hands.
when indulging in sex acts and gluttony.

Crassus' and Caius Crassus' sexual encounter is contrasted with the morality of Spartacus, who takes on the role of patriarch of his band of Thracian slaves.50 Spartacus' comrades, even those who are his own age, start calling him “father” on the way from Egypt (80). He even introduces himself to Batiatus as “father,” thus laying claim to his role as patriarch before he even imagines his revolt against slavery (Fast 80). Spartacus helps his fellow slaves when they need help with their work or need some comfort. Here Fast begins to draw an allegory between the Spartacus story and the political situation of 1950's America here; as we shall see, the decadent, immoral Romans will come to be identified with the politicians of HUAC, while the fugitive slaves will symbolize those who suffer under the rule of such politicians. Just as Spartacus and his comrades suffered under the yoke of their masters, Fast and his fellow entertainers and communists were oppressed by the immoral policies of HUAC.

In the novel, we then see Spartacus start training at Batiatus' ludus. First, he is bathed, shaved, has his hair cut, and then is branded with the signet of Batiatus' ludus. The gladiators do not talk much because, as Spartacus soon realizes, they would have to kill each other if they ever met in the arena. Before long, however, Spartacus is forced to do battle in Batiatus' ludus. Caius Crassus and his lover at the time, Marcus Bracus, come to the ludus and ask for a personal viewing of two fights.

50 When I say that Spartacus had a patriarchal relationship to the other slaves, I mean that he served as a father figure for them in a moral capacity. He had no control over his comrades' actions or decisions; he merely provided guidance for them. Spartacus was thus a “first among equals.”
Spartacus is paired against one Draba, and although Spartacus is prepared for combat, Draba says that he would “rather [Spartacus] kill me, my friend. I am tired of living, and I am sick of living” (124). When Spartacus tells Draba that gladiators should have no friends, Draba sighs and tells him that, even if he is a slave, he still has a heart (124). The moment that they set foot in the arena, however, Draba lunges for Marcus Bracus with his trident. The guards spear him before he has the chance to hurt anyone. Draba’s body is then hung up on display in the ludus as a warning for the other gladiators: death is the punishment for rebellion (127).

Shortly after the curtailed fight, Varinia and Spartacus meet for the first time when Batiatus “lends” her to him for sexual intercourse (135). Although he is upset that Draba is dead and strung up in the arena, he loves her at first sight, not because of her beauty or wit but because of her virtue. As they talk later into the night, Varinia falls in love with Spartacus as well. Soon after their encounter, however, Varinia is put up for sale. Spartacus suddenly becomes enraged and tells his fellow slaves that they need to escape, and then makes a speech: “Are you my people? ...Now we must be comrades and all together like one person...when we go out to fight, we go with our own good will, not as the Romans went, but with our good will” (154). The revolt then begins when Spartacus’ fellow gladiators kill the guards, tear down the walls of the ludus, and escape into the countryside outside Capua.

The death of Draba and Spartacus’ encounter with Varinia are the primary motivators for Spartacus’ revolt; both experiences teach Spartacus that he is worth
more than slavery. Draba taught Spartacus that slaves are not machines, but are men with emotions and interpersonal connections. Draba sacrifices himself because of this sentiment; he is “sick of living” in a world where he is not allowed to feel anything. Varinia, on the other hand, is the first woman that Spartacus ever held as his “own,” as well as the first person that he loved. Spartacus wanted to be with her all the time and start a family with her (145), but would not be able to do so if he was enslaved. Spartacus thus had to claim his freedom if he was to live his new dream.

The now-fugitive slaves escape to make their own camp on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius. There, Spartacus discusses how they “…will not do what the Romans do. We will not obey Roman law. We will make our own law,” which Spartacus means as, “Whatever we take, we hold in common, and no man shall own anything but his own weapons and his clothing. It shall be as it was in old times” (166). The only other law that Spartacus made for the new society was that the gladiators would “take no woman, except as wife. Nor shall any man hold more than one wife. Justice will be equal between them, and if they cannot live in peace, they must part. But no man may lie with any woman...who is not his lawful wife” (167).

This small addition of a law pertaining to the ownership of women and the ideology of monogamy might seem trivial, but it is important in understanding Fast’s work. His audience was, after all, another participant in the Red Scare, in which conservative social values (the nuclear family, heteronormative sexuality, etc.) were
hyper-idealized. Alison Futrell, in her article on “Seeing Red: Spartacus as Domestic Economist,” denotes the importance of proper marriage and chastity as bases for comparison against the immoral standards of Rome, which is tinged with the sins of sexual decadence. According to Futrell, “...in the anti-civilization of Rome, women 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” (Futrell 95). In contrast to the Romans' apathy towards suffering, Varinia serves as a “passive conduit for Spartacanism...thus she is a mother of life, not death” (Futrell 95). The community of slaves and its “father and mother” willingly accepts anyone who would fight for the right to a better life. The contrast of Roman promiscuity to the rebels' chastity thus furthers the moral allegory of Fast's novel: because the rebels live within a morally acceptable framework (i.e. since slaves follow the “natural” hierarchy of traditional gender roles), readers are encouraged to view the rebels as morally superior to the Romans.

As the rebels continue to scour the land for resources, which they only take from the wealthy (Fast 174), the narrative picks up from Gracchus' perspective. He discusses his perspective on Roman politics and makes it seem like a game – one that Gracchus played well since he was 19 years old, having reached the senate before turning forty (175). He talks about the initial attempts to put down the slave revolt, as well as his attempt at ruining Crassus' reputation in the senate by sending his
protégé down to Capua to defeat the slaves. The two senators were mortal enemies, and Gracchus knew that Glabrus would lose – which he did.

The next day, Cicero (who also happened to be at the Villa Salaria at the time that Caius Crassus showed up) and Gracchus make their farewells and take the road back to Rome. Meanwhile, Crassus takes Caius, Helena, and Claudia into the city of Capua to go to some gladiatorial games that were being performed there. These games were to celebrate the end of the revolt, and so they were munera sine missione.\(^5\) Crassus here recalls his own memory of Spartacus and how he made him fight to the death with one of the men with whom Spartacus had grown closest: David, the Jewish gladiator who gave Spartacus knowledge of God.

Once again, Fast uses the parallel plotting technique with which he juxtaposes the story of Spartacus and David with that of the gladiatorial fights that Crassus, Caius Crassus, and his friends are watching. On one side, the reader sees Spartacus and David, one of the Jewish slaves who escaped from the ludus of Batiatus with Spartacus. David tells Spartacus of his god, both merciful and vengeful, who has adopted policies of damnation and salvation for those who are evil and those who are good (278, 279). Spartacus seems interested in the concept of a God who promises mercy. These scenes are placed between accounts of Crassus observing the ongoing crucifixion of the victor of the munera sine missione, with details of the interest of the crowd and the pain that the gladiator suffered (279).

\(^5\) “Munera,” as opposed to ludum, is the correct term for a set of gladiatorial games.
The next scene cuts to Spartacus talking with David and Varinia, soon after the Cilician pirates who promised him escape from Italy back out on their deal. Spartacus gravely tells his camp of the battles ahead, for both Crassus and Pompey are approaching with huge legionary armies. Despite this news, Spartacus is pleased with what he accomplished. Varinia has told him that they would soon have a son. He has also held off the Romans for two years, an astonishing feat. Spartacus says that even if he died at that moment, he at least left a mark on Roman history, and that would be enough (294). The revelation comes shortly before the final battle.

The narrative of Spartacus' defeat is interwoven with images of Crassus as an amoral businessman willing to do anything to gain a profit. Crassus is concerned with having his slaves “turning themselves into gold, as opposed to slaves who eat your food and die” (297). Unlike Spartacus, who actually cared for his comrades, Crassus want to use his slaves solely for gaining wealth and political power. The allegory in Fast's novel is clear at this point: Fast, like Spartacus, cared about his cause and cared about the people that it would affect. Fast, in a word, identified himself with Spartacus.

The narrative continues with Cicero's and Gracchus' journey back to Rome. Gracchus, in a twist of character, reveals his anger at Crassus for refusing to sell him one of his trophies from the war: Varinia, the famous wife of Spartacus. Even at two million sesterces, Crassus refuses to sell her to him.

At the same time, Fast endows Varinia with a sense of love, which would not
be expected by conservative Roman aristocrats like Crassus. Varinia even states that Crassus “can talk any way you please to me...you own me,” but threatening her life or the child that she bore just before the final battle “won't make me love you” (328, 329). Crassus fails to understand the love between the two slaves because he, as a Roman aristocrat, could not understand what Spartacus was able to give to Varinia. Unlike other Romans who seek out sexual pleasure, Varinia wants the love and support that Spartacus provided to her and to the rebel community. She wants Spartacus the teacher, the “noble leader,” “the best and noblest man that ever lived” (334).

Here, perhaps, is the most politically charged segment of the novel, the meeting between the Roman and the slave, the aristocrat and the commoner. For Varinia, Spartacus' love prevails over Crassus' wealth because “Spartacus told me that all the bad things men do, they do because they are afraid. He showed me how men could change and become fine and beautiful, if only they lived in brotherhood and shared all they had among them. I saw this. I lived through it” (337). Unlike these bad men, Varinia and Spartacus were not afraid to do what they had to, and Varinia does not regret that. Varinia maintains that the rebels' actions were “pure,” unlike Roman desires. Spartacus himself was the purest because of his desire for unadulterated virtue and justice for all. This is, of course, the opposite of the Romans – to Varinia, Roman justice is justice for one's own desires and not the needs of other citizens (338).
Hearing about Varinia’s situation, Gracchus again attempts to buy her for two million sesterces, an exorbitant payment for a slave. Crassus refuses to sell her to Gracchus, and so Gracchus hatches a plot to steal her from Crassus’ home. When Varinia and her child are brought to Gracchus, Varinia refuses to sleep with Gracchus (the reason he took her in the first place). She tells him that because she hates Rome, she cannot willingly sleep with a Roman. She, along with Spartacus, dreamed of “taking from Rome what was good and beautiful. We would build cities without walls, and all men would live in peace and brotherhood, and there would be no more war and no more misery and no more suffering...what is good for the people is right. What hurts them is wrong” (347).

Gracchus lets Varinia go, accompanied by one of his own slaves, to find her freedom and then kills himself in order to prevent Crassus from jailing him – it was either die with dignity, or be humiliatingly executed for stealing a slave. Crassus soon breaks into Gracchus’ home and finds him dead. The book then moves on to its final section, in which Gracchus’ slave leaves Rome with Varinia and heads north towards Cisalpine Gaul with her and her child. They pass the crucified bodies of men along the way, but cannot tell if Spartacus is among them. Varinia soon arrives at a village, where she lives out the rest of her days and raises Spartacus, her son. After Varinia dies, the Romans invade the area around the village, and Young Spartacus takes up the reigns of his father and institutes a revolt along with the other young people of the village. The novel ends with a prophecy: “And so long as men labored, and other
men took and used the fruit of those who labored, the name of Spartacus would be remembered, whispered sometimes and shouted loud and clear at other times (363).

Why did Fast adopt the story of Spartacus for his first work after leaving prison? Spartacus had not been part of American popular culture since the last staging of *The Gladiator* in the late 19th century. With the growing threat of a communist superpower during the Cold War period, however, images and representations of American virtue and the capitalist sentiment of “freedom” became important to justify American militarism and capitalist ideology. Spartacus’ role in Fast’s novel could be said to represent such ideas: freedom, after all, is what Spartacus fights for. Nevertheless, we must ask: where does Fast’s representation of Spartacus belong on a political spectrum? Which political agenda does he represent, if any at all?

As I have suggested, Fast’s *Spartacus* is an allegory, which uses the famous Third Servile Revolt and its major players as symbols for the struggles of the ordinary citizens of the United States against HUAC. Fast, who represents himself as Spartacus in the novel, presents himself as a freedom fighter because of his refusal to submit to HUAC and keep his political beliefs out of his writing. In his novel, he uses Spartacus and his comrades to demonstrate communism in action. The Romans, on the other hand, are supposed to be identified with the oppressive forces of HUAC. The “message” of this novel is thus: that communism provides care and support for the members of the commune (as Spartacus and Varinia do for their comrades), that the
Romans/HUAC act to destroy this community because it upsets established socio-political norms, and that the norms that the Romans/HUAC are trying to preserve are inadequate for the living of a free, happy life.

The symbolism, again, is not deep. The Romans, like HUAC, attempt to perpetuate the capitalist ideology that keeps them in power at the expense of the rights of slaves. As Crassus states at the end of Fast's novel, slaves are meant to produce power and wealth, and that is all that they are good for. Spartacus (Fast) must rise up in revolt - by writing this novel and explaining his political beliefs - if he and his comrades are to exist the way they want to. Spartacus creates a community with Varinia and his fellow slaves in which they all can live freely. Spartacus can exist peacefully with his wife and, most of all, is able to live peacefully alongside the other fugitive slaves. In Rome, however, conventional morality has lost its clout because of the corruption of its leaders. Gracchus and Crassus, like other Roman politicians, want power and money, not the safety of their people. This is precisely the argument that communism sets forth against capitalism. The production of wealth causes people to exploit others for their labor.

The question of morality also becomes important in Fast's novel. In the allegory in Spartacus, Fast shows that the slave community is far more moral than the established Roman society. For example, Spartacus claims that the slaves need to free themselves to live with “good will...not that of the Romans, but with [real] good will” (154). The slaves then enjoy their freedom from the Roman society, with the
only rules being communal property and respect for women. The Romans have no such moral standards. Rather, they are greedy and will do whatever it takes to bring them power and pleasure, especially when it comes to women (see Gracchus). Fast needed to convince his readers that Spartacus and his comrades were admirable characters.

Spartacus appeal to his readers was establishing Spartacus as both patriarch and “first among equals.” Spartacus becomes a hero in his new slave-culture by serving as a patriarch within a brotherhood. Each member of the new society works for the sake of the whole, not only for himself. This desire to help the whole community is especially true of Spartacus, who founded the revolt on the basis that they could all have their freedoms and help each other live their lives. Most importantly, however, Spartacus would have the freedom to protect and raise his family. Futrell asserts that these familial values are what made Spartacus such an ideal “domestic economist” in the culture of the 1950s and the McCarthy era. As such, readers were predisposed to liking Spartacus because of his identification with 1950's social values (Futrell 94).

Fast's Spartacus is also characterized by his imagination and his expression of emotion. The intellectual, emotional, and creative aspects of his character are revealed in his desire for freedom and domestic security, which also appears in the 18th and 19th century representations of Spartacus. Robert Montgomery Bird's hero longed for freedom mostly because he wanted to raise his family. Fast's hero,
however, is more focused on helping the community than himself or own family. In short, Fast's Spartacus cares for the well being of all of his comrades. For Fast the commune is always able to support itself better when everyone, including its “first among equals,” is invested in supporting everyone else.

Fast's novel thus continues and builds upon the traditional use of Spartacus as a character, hero, and icon that was crafted during the European Enlightenment. Above all else, Fast's focus on the commune adds to the Spartacus story; his concern for others makes him easier for readers to identify with, while at the same time, he fights in the name of freedom. We must remember, however, that Fast's portrayal of Spartacus differs significantly from the ancient accounts. None of the ancient authors wrote about a brotherhood of fugitive slave comrades, and none of them touched on Spartacus' empathy for his fellow slaves. At best, Plutarch commented on Spartacus' wisdom and the righteousness of his cause by stating that he had a “Grecian” nature. The ancient authors focused most of their energies on documenting the horrors of Spartacus' revolt and how they upset the social structure of the Roman republic.

By the time that Fast wrote, Spartacus was “won over into the mythical.” The historical background provided by the ancient sources had long since given way to the stories told by the authors of the Enlightenment and their successors. Spartacus' character, of course, had to change in order for Fast's novel to be successful with an American readership. The hero had to take on more “American” characteristics
alongside his change in political view. He had to become more of a “domestic economist,” while still maintaining the masculinity that had made the story so popular in Bird's time. The heroism that Spartacus displays in *Spartacus* goes beyond the archetypal display of strength and saving the “damsel in distress” because now freedom can mean living the type of life sanctioned by the cultural values of 1950's

Since ancient times, Spartacus' character has evolved to reflect different socio-political attitudes in different eras. Spartacus has been portrayed as fighting for the right to be free (the Enlightenment), the right for his family to be free (19th century), and the right for his community to be free (20th century). We see the Spartacus narrative take on another characteristic of mythical narrative: it is malleable, adapting to the needs of those who retell it.

The next chapter will deal with *Spartacus*, the Kirk Douglas film. While Fast's novel was instrumental in providing material for the screenplay, the film is perhaps the greatest reason that the legend of Spartacus has become so well known. From the eponymous shout (“I am Spartacus!”) to the famous director (Stanley Kubrick), there are several reasons explaining why this movie has such renown. There are even more reasons, however, explaining how Spartacus became such a popular symbol for Rome and the long-lived fight against tyranny.
V. “I'll Be Millions:” Spartacus at the Movies

The Spartacus narrative finally made its way onto the big screen during 1960, after years of production and effort to get it into theaters. McCarthyism was still in force at the time and so the film had to pass through various levels of political censorship before it could be released. It was produced at the end of an era during which historical films were in vogue; twelve Roman epic films were released between 1945 and 1960, with subjects ranging from the exploits of Cleopatra, to the crazed rule of Emperor Nero, and even to the fall of the Roman Empire itself. These films typically featured popular actors and multimillion dollar budgets, with plots based on the most popular episodes and spectacles from Roman history.

The screenplay for *Spartacus* was written by Dalton Trumbo, a blacklisted screenwriter who had been out of work since he was interrogated by the HUAC in 1950. Trumbo was approached by Kirk Douglas, the producer and star of the film, and told him that he wanted to adapt the screenplay from *Spartacus* by Howard Fast. Douglas’ choice of screenwriter came as a big surprise for many people in the entertainment industry, because Trumbo would be the first blacklisted writer listed in the credits of a film since the beginning of the Red Scare.² The film, as a result, would come to be identified with two things: firstly, conservative political groups

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² Trumbo wrote screenplays while black listed, though he was forced to use pseudonyms to keep his identity secret.
throughout the country saw it as a possible resurgence of communism in the United States. The entertainment industry, however, viewed it as demonstrating the waning influence of the terror politics of the HUAC. Douglas had to be careful in his presentation of the political issues in the film.

Before getting into the film’s political statements or its production process, we must examine the narrative of the film. Since the screenplay of *Spartacus* is based on Howard Fast’s novel, the narrative of the film is very similar to that of the book. There are, however, a few key differences between them. The film does not use the same narrative technique that Fast does; there is no telling of the story by aristocrats, and the narrative is told in the present tense. The movie is more conspicuously framed from the slaves’ point of view from the very beginning.

The film begins in the Egyptian mines, which is where the book too begins. Spartacus (played by Kirk Douglas) has worked in the mines since childhood. He is eventually taken from the mines, when Batiatus arrives at the cataracts to find recruits for his *ludus* in Capua. As in Fast’s book, Batiatus says that the best place to find good gladiatorial recruits is in the mines, a place where the *latifundia* seems like paradise. Batiatus (played by Peter Ustinov) takes Spartacus back to the *ludus*. The night before he is to begin training, he is branded with the mark of Batiatus' *ludus*.

The audience sees Spartacus going through his first round of training
exercises first thing in the morning after having his beard shaved off. The doctor (named Marcellus, played by Charles McGraw) approaches Spartacus and is hostile towards him immediately. When Spartacus first enters the ludus, he is whipped and savagely beaten by Marcellus. Enraged by the brutality of the ludus, Spartacus attempts to befriend the other gladiators for some support. Draba responds with the sentiment of the entire ludus: “Gladiators don’t make friends. If I see you in the arena, I'll have to kill you.”

In the next scene, Batiatus brings slave women into his ludus for his gladiators to have sex with for the night. He claims that gladiators are men, and as such, they must have their sexual needs filled – if they do not, they will become useless in the arena. They must be “pampered, bathed, oiled...a gladiator without his head is no good in the arena.” Batiatus assigns a Germanic woman, Varinia, to Spartacus' cell. When she enters, Spartacus marvels at her beauty and tells her that he's never “had” a woman of his own. Before he is able to do anything, however, he realizes that Marcellus and Batiatus are peeking into his cell from a grate. Spartacus, ashamed, shouts at them: “I'm not an animal!” As Batiatus and Marcellus turn away laughing, Varinia tells him that she is “not an animal either.” He falls in love with Varinia, and instead of sleeping with her, they talk late into the night. Varinia and Spartacus are

53 Doctor is a Latin term for “teacher.” In the gladiatorial setting, the term refers to the gladiatorial trainer. The doctor was typically a gladiator that won his freedom from the ludus and returned to work for his master. For further reading, see Alison Futrell, The Roman Games Source Book or Blood in the Arena. Note that this is the first time that the doctor has been featured in the Spartacus narrative.
kept separate from that point on, however, because Batiatus does not want attachment between any of his slaves.

Crassus soon arrives at Batiatus' *ludus* with two female friends and asks Batiatus for a personal viewing of two pairs of gladiators. When he tells Batiatus that he wants them to fight to the death, Batiatus is hesitant; when Crassus offers him 20,000 sesterces, however, Batiatus readily agrees. As the first pair (Crixus and Galliano) starts fighting, Spartacus (paired with Draba) looks desperately through the slats of the wooden fence that separate him and Draba from the arena. Crixus soon slays Galliano, and Spartacus and Draba prepare for battle as Galliano's blood is mixed into the sand of the arena. The two start fighting, but within minutes Draba captures Spartacus in his net and prepares to stab him with his trident. Suddenly, however, Draba decides to hurl his trident at the spectators' box and starts climbing towards the spectator box where Crassus and Batiatus are sitting. Crassus is able to stab and kill Draba before he can cause any harm, however, and demands that Draba's body be hung up in the *ludus* as punishment. Batiatus decides to hang his body in the *ludus* as a reminder to the other gladiators (Figure 1).

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54 Gladiators were typically separated into different classes, each of which had different weaponry. Spartacus was armed like a “Thracian” gladiator, which meant that he typically held a short sword and small shield. Draba was a *retiarius*, a trident fighter who also held a net. Typically, *retiarii* and Thracians were never paired because the *retiarius* holds a huge advantage. For more information see *The Roman Games Source Book* by Alison Futrell.
Draba's death evokes the struggles of the American civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's. Woody Strode, the actor who played Draba, was able to add element of authenticity to the scene just by being there – he had appeared in many films during the 1950s, and almost always portrayed the role of the oppressed black male. With Strode, Spartacus became linked to images of oppression in other films, as well as to events of the modern day. This is the film's first attempt to draw parallels between the situation of the ancient slaves and those of enslaved/oppressed peoples in American culture.

Draba's death is also important, however, because it serves as one of the catalysts for the revolt that ensues. Though Howard Fast successfully links the death of Draba as a cause for the rebellion of Spartacus, the medium of film is able to show the connection much more clearly. The ludus, already a dark and solemn place, becomes a quieter place after Draba's death. After Draba is put on display, the gladiators' faces are much more sullen, and every time they see Draba's body, they
expresses fear and hatred (See Figure 1).

After a few more days, Varinia is sold to Crassus as a house slave. When
Spartacus learns that Varinia is gone, he shouts at Marcellus and asks him where she
is. Marcellus slaps him and tells him to keep quiet. Enraged, Spartacus grabs
Marcellus by his hair and shoves his head into a pot of boiling soup in the kitchens.
After he drowns, the other slaves (both gladiators and house slaves), following
Spartacus' lead, grab weapons from the armory and kill off all of the ludus guards
before they escape into Capua. The gladiators fan out into the city and plunder,
taking food and weapons as they make their way out into the Campanian
countryside and towards the slopes of Mount Vesuvius.

The scene cuts to the curia, the Senate House, in Rome, where Cato speaks
about the horrors of the revolt. He claims that the Roman senate must end the
revolt before it gets out of hand. Gracchus (played by Charles Laughton) then walks
into the senate and immediately proposes that the Roman garrison should be sent
to crush the revolt and recommends that Glabrus, Crassus' protégé, be sent to do
the job. Glabrus accepts, but Caesar, one of Gracchus' friends, asks him why he
recommended Glabrus. Gracchus claims that Crassus and Glabrus are dangerous
together, and that separating them would be beneficial to his own political career.
Caesar then proposes to praise the Roman gods for Gracchus' success, though

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55 This is one example of historical inaccuracy in the film. If the film is referring to either of the
Gracchi brothers, it is woefully out of date; the Gracchi died thirty years before the slave revolt.
Moreover, there was no such garrison in Rome at the time.
Gracchus laughs at him and claims that “privately, neither of us really believe in the gods. Publicly, we believe in them all.” The film-makers use Gracchus’s cynicism as another sign of the corruption of the Roman elite. Not only is Gracchus irreligious, but he lies about his spirituality to the public in order to rally their support under the state religion.

The next scene is at Crassus' villa outside of Rome. We meet Antoninus, a “singer of songs” from Sicily. Crassus purchases him as his new “body slave,” and Crassus immediately puts him to work by making him draw a bath. Before Crassus is able to take his bath, however, Glabrus appears and tells Crassus of his new appointment as the commander of the garrison. Crassus is shocked and tells Glabrus that this is a ploy concocted by Gracchus; if anything were to happen to Glabrus, Crassus would look like a fool for having him as his protégé like him. Glabrus dismisses Crassus' concerns, telling him that he has nothing to fear in a battle against slaves.

The scene immediately cuts to Spartacus' comrades ravaging a city near Capua. Meanwhile, Spartacus returns to the remnants of Batiatus' ludi to search for Varinia, to no avail. After he searches the cell blocks, however, he hears the courtyard buzzing with men. He finds his men, who have condemned two guards of Capua to fight to the death in the arena as if they were gladiators. Spartacus stops the fight and swears that, after seeing what happened to Draba, he will never again
bear the sight of two men fighting to the death.

The scene then cuts to the countryside outside of Capua, where Spartacus' comrades release local *latifundia* slaves from their masters and invite them to join Spartacus' commune on Mount Vesuvius. During these scenes, we see Varinia being freed from one of the *latifundia*; Spartacus finds her, they kiss, and they profess their love for each other. The scene cuts back to them laying down in a meadow, presumably after having made love. They talk about the gods, about Spartacus' lack of belief and Varinia's faithfulness in her gods. Spartacus states that he never had a reason to believe in the gods because they had only brought him misfortune since the time of his birth. Varinia tells him that he ought to give reverence to the gods because she can feel that they are planning great things for Spartacus. The film-makers use this scene to establish the beginning of Spartacus' religiosity, which will develop later on in the film. Whereas the Romans are cynical and faithless, the slaves ponder higher powers and the origins of morality.

The narrative cuts back to a meeting between Batiatus and Gracchus. Batiatus comments on Gracchus' generosity in offering him a place to stay while on business in Rome, and that he is particularly envious of his vices. Gracchus feigns confusion, although the camera shows that all of his servants are scantily-clothed females. Gracchus claims that it is because of his “goodness” that he decides to

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56 Varinia's mention of “great and terrible” things appears in Plutarch's *Life of Crassus*, as well as the first episode of *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*, which will be discussed in the Epilogue.
house all of these “divine women” in one place, though the statement is obviously meant in jest. Nevertheless, Gracchus does have a purpose in meeting with Batiatus. If Varinia was to be captured from the field and returned to Batiatus, Gracchus wanted to get the first pick for Varinia over Crassus; he would pay Batiatus to keep Varinia from being auctioned off.

The next scene shows Crassus in his villa, being scrubbed down by Antoninus in the bath. Crassus rests a few moments before he gets out of the bath and asks Antoninus to get him dressed. Crassus asks Antoninus about his sexuality, about his sexual preference for males or females. Antoninus is slow to answer, so Crassus asks Antoninus if he would ever judge anyone's personality on their preference for “snails or oysters.” Antoninus says no, and Crassus says that a judgment on sexuality would, like a judgment on shellfish, be foolish. He motions Antoninus to look out at the skyline of Rome before them. He says, “There, boy, is Rome. There is the might, the majesty, the terror of Rome...No man can withstand Rome, no nation can withstand her...There's only one way to deal with Rome, Antoninus: you must serve her...you must – love her.” The sexual nature of Crassus' monologue is obvious. Crassus turns around expecting to find Antoninus, but he is surprised to find that he ran away.

57 The term “snails or oysters,” for those who do not know, is actually a slang term, meaning “fellatio or cunnilingus.” Note that this scene was originally censored out of the movie; it was put back in when the movie was remastered in 1993.
The scene cuts to the slopes of Mount Vesuvius, where the gladiators are training other slaves from the *latifundia* of Campania in battle tactics and the handling of weaponry. Among them we see Antoninus, newly escaped from Crassus' estate outside of Rome. As a singer of songs, Antoninus is among the least likely to be able to do battle even if he wants to fight. Antoninus is assigned to entertain the troops and keep morale high. That night, he sings “The Song of the Meadowlark,” his favorite song about Sicily. As he tells it, the camera pans around the mountain and shows ex-slave families and their children huddling up and enjoying their time outside of their slavery. Spartacus, inspired by Antoninus, walks into the forest with Varinia, claiming that he wants to learn how to read and sing songs, and perhaps he could read about the gods some day. Varinia promises to teach him how to read.

These two scenes (the one on Mount Vesuvius and the one in Crassus' villa) are, again, contrasting the moral traits of Crassus with those of Spartacus and his comrades. While the 1960's were notable for cultural changes and rebellion against
heteronormative sexuality, *Spartacus* was produced when cultural values were still conservative. The purpose of this comparison, however, is to show how Crassus is immoral and perverse, whereas the monogamous relationship that Spartacus has with Varinia is tender and moral. When Douglas produced *Spartacus*, homosexuality was still considered to be disgusting and perverse. Crassus' attempt to have sex with Antoninus is contrasted with the innocence of Spartacus' pursuits. He and his comrades sing songs about freedom, and Spartacus expresses a desire to learn more about spirituality. The allegory between Spartacus' commune and the moral behaviors of communists thus continues; unlike the capitalist society of the Romans, which produces a thirst for power, hypersexuality, and violence against slaves, the community of slaves wishes to become more moral.

In the next scene, Spartacus approaches the Cilician pirates because he needs a way to escape from the Italian peninsula to Sicily. Spartacus offers the pirates' representative a chest filled with loot as a down payment for the escape, and the pirate assures Spartacus that their escape will be arranged if they can survive a battle with the oncoming Roman garrison. Spartacus, surprised to hear that the Romans were sending soldiers, gets prepared for a night raid on the Roman camp.

The scene changes to the Roman camp at night, set aflame and filled with Spartacus' soldiers. Spartacus eventually finds Glabrus in the camp, and sends him back to Rome. Spartacus takes off with all the loot his army can carry, while Glabrus
returns to Rome and reports that the slaves attacked his unguarded garrison. When asked why he left the camp with walls he says, “Well...they were only slaves!” Both Crassus and Glabrus are humiliated by the defeat, and they both resign from the senate, although Crassus knows that the senate will eventually ask him to crush Spartacus' rebellion.

Along the way to meet the Cilician pirates, the march takes its toll on Spartacus' forces; we see large numbers collapsing from exhaustion, and even some parents burying children who died on the march. The scene shows the conviction of the rebels; they are willing to do anything to gain their freedom (see Figures 3 and 4 below). Despite the desperate conditions, Spartacus maintains hope: Varinia is expecting a child. Back in Rome, Gracchus promotes Caesar to be the commander of the garrison. Caesar gets the approval for the job, though not in time to prevent the city of Metapontum from getting sacked.

Figure 3. The rebels march through rough terrain to reach their goal. None of them give up along the way.
Spartacus and his forces finally arrive at the spot where the ships are to pick them up. He learns, however, that the pirates are not coming to help the rebels escape Italy. Spartacus declines an invitation from the pirate representative to get himself, his family, and his closest friend (Antoninus) out of Italy because he could not leave his “brothers and sisters” behind. To boost morale, Spartacus then delivers the famous “Sermon On the Mount” speech, in which Spartacus tells the army that a battle with the consular army of Rome is imminent. (Figure 5) In his speech, he tells his fellow fugitive slaves that he could have left, but he would rather be with his slave “brothers and sisters” than be the richest Roman citizen, surrounded by slaves. Spartacus’ “sermon” given while the camera takes shots of the hopeful faces of the crowd, all people who decide to go and march on Rome with Spartacus (Figure 6). For them, the only way to victory is to “free all slaves in Italy.”
The “sermon on the mount” is intercut with a speech delivered by Crassus, who accepts the role of consul and the responsibility of “restoring order and justice to the Roman republic.” He promises to deliver Spartacus body and subject it to any punishment that the republic sees fit, especially because Spartacus himself was able to upset Roman justice. The Roman senate and his legions salute him before taking off to confront the forces of the slave revolt. (Figure 7)

The “sermon on the mount” scene is particularly important in Spartacus. Not only does it show the full extent to which the rebel army has grown, but it also shows the audience how unified the fugitives are. Meanwhile, Spartacus himself stands as a Christ-like figure, with his followers looking upon him with awe (Figure 6). In the Bible (Gospel of Matthew), Christ himself does the exact same thing that Spartacus does here – he delivers a sermon on the mount, declaring the tenets of Christianity. The image above suggests that we should look at Spartacus as a type of
messiah who tried to lead his people to safety and happiness, someone like Moses or Christ. Unlike Crassus or his soldiers, the rebels seem like the common people – an attempt to get the audience to identify with the slaves and their cause.

Figure 6: The faces of the slaves as they listen to Spartacus' sermon

Figure 7: Crassus dressed in consular garb, leading his forces into march with the blessing of the Roman senate.

The juxtaposition of the two speeches is used to show the differing moral positions of the Romans and the rebels. Do we support the community of rebels, or
do we support the power-hungry Romans? We have already seen that the “social order” that Crassus talks about is not necessarily good. It encourages slavery and human suffering for the benefit of the wealthy aristocrats, including Crassus. He thus wages this war for honor and glory, not simply for the sake of Roman survival.

The political allegory is extremely apparent here – the capitalist leanings of HUAC create the type of oppression that has attempted to silence people like Dalton Trumbo. The commune of Spartacus, however, exists to fight for the freedom of all.

The next day, the two forces meet and Spartacus' army is quickly routed. Crassus rounds up the survivors and tells them that they all shall live and gain Roman citizenship if Spartacus identifies himself. As Spartacus stands to accept his fate, Antoninus stands with him shouts, “I am Spartacus!” The cry is shouted by all the men who are taken prisoner, and Spartacus, in tears, realizes that their fate has been sealed; they are all to be crucified along the Appian Way. As the slaves are bound and raised and crosses, Spartacus and Antoninus realize that they are being saved for last. Crassus recognizes them both, and also recognizes the special bond between them. He forces them to fight to the death, and both of them actively participate in the battle; neither wants the other to be crucified. Spartacus ends up killing Antoninus and is raised upon the cross (Figure 8).
Crassus eventually finds Varinia in the piles of dead slaves, although she is still alive and with her newly born child. After driving Batiatus out of the camp, he takes her back to his home in Rome, where he attempts to seduce her but fails. We then see Gracchus arranging for the taking of Varinia from Crassus’ home, which Batiatus is supposed to help with. At night, he returns with Varinia and Gracchus gives Batiatus his entire fortune and commands him to lead Varinia to safety. After the two make their exit, Caesar bangs at the door – he has come to arrest Gracchus under the command of Crassus. Gracchus excuses himself to his bathroom, where he commits suicide.

On her way out of the city, Varinia sees Spartacus hanging from the cross. She reaches out to him with their child in her arms. She tells him that she will tell their son about him, who he was, and what he fought for. She tells him that “Spartacus will indeed rise again if need be,” and that she will make sure that he
grows up with the values that Spartacus would have wanted him to have. As Spartacus takes his last breath, Batiatus makes his way towards Cisalpine Gaul, Varinia's ancestral home.

**The Production of Spartacus: Mythical Cinema**

*Spartacus* has been called the “king” of the Roman epic genre because it was the most popular and successful film of its kind released in the 1960s. At first, the producers and actors of *Spartacus* had trouble agreeing on an interpretation of the story. The production of *Spartacus* was marked with scores of changes and shuffling of scenes and lines, mostly due to artistic differences between Dalton Trumbo, Kirk Douglas, Anthony Mann (the original director of the film) and Stanley Kubrick (the final director).

The film was produced by Kirk Douglas, who initially wanted to make *Spartacus* because it could easily be read as an allegory for Zionism. Douglas, who was Jewish, was inspired by the deeds of the ancient Roman slaves:

“\[I\] was intrigued with the story of Spartacus the slave, dreaming of the death of slavery, driving into the armor of Rome the wedge that would eventually destroy her...I'm always astounded by the impact, the extent of the Roman empire...How did the Romans get to so many places?...It always amazed me how they did that, how much they did. Looking at these [Roman] ruins...I wince. I see thousands and thousands of slaves carrying rocks, beaten, starved, crushed, dying. I identify with them. As it says in the Torah: 'Slaves were we unto Egypt.' I come from a race of slaves. That would have been my family, me.\"\"58

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Douglas did have some trouble with his ideas, however, especially when consulting his directors. Anthony Mann was the original director of *Spartacus*, and some of his ideas still mark the film: the opening sequence is all his work and the screen directions were “followed faithfully right up until the slaves escape.” The two came to argue over how to best deliver the “message” of the film, which Mann took to be the display of the “full horror of slavery” (Missiaen, 19). He was fired after three weeks of filming, and replaced by the renowned Stanley Kubrick. Kubrick, however, also ran into troubles with Douglas because “*Spartacus...was* the only film that I did not have control over, and which...was not enhanced by that fact...Within the weakness of the story, I tried to do the best I could, but now the only film [of mine] that I don’t like is *Spartacus.*”

We must not, however, forget contributions of Dalton Trumbo, the screenwriter. Like Fast, he wanted to contrast the American political situation of the Red Scare to the story of Spartacus. Trumbo, like Fast, was interrogated by HUAC because he was a suspected communist, and then was blacklisted by Hollywood as a result, and so he felt some resentment towards the politicians of HUAC. Trumbo relied heavily on Fast's *Spartacus* for his own screenplay because he wanted to get the same allegory into the film: large oppressive forces, like the Romans of HUAC,

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could be overcome with a small group of individuals that acted for the common good (i.e. Spartacus, Fast, Trumbo, and other communists) (Ahl 61). Like Fast, Trumbo also wanted to focus on the communal aspect of Spartacus' life as much as possible. By doing so, Trumbo would (hopefully) convey the sense that communism produced happier, more moral citizens than capitalism (ancient Rome/America) could.

Consequently, Douglas chose Trumbo's screenplay over one written by Arthur Koestler, a man who wrote a novel about Spartacus himself. Koestler's screenplay (based on his own novel) was similar to Fast's in a number of ways, though there is one extreme difference: the cause for Spartacus' failure in Koestler's novel/screenplay was not that the Romans were insurmountable, but rather, that the slaves were unable to cooperate enough to overcome Crassus' huge legions. Douglas' choice for Trumbo's screenplay came down to a desire to show a hero that could be considered a martyr. If Spartacus' revolt broke down because of personal differences, he would not have been able to paint the idealistic portrait of the commune as a peaceful, utopian society that fought for the sake of good (Ahl 65).

The legend of Spartacus was thus linked to two different modern stories. Fast's novel includes the image of a perfect commune, with Spartacus serving as a first among equals and the comrades living in total harmony. The medium of film

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I chose not to analyze Koestler's novel because it had little to no impact on the evolution of the Spartacus legend as it is known today. It provides a completely different take on the Spartacus story, and as such, was not chosen by Douglas and other producers as representative of the story they wanted to put out.
added to the beauty of the idea: the commune was surrounded by pristine forests and meadows, the rebels were unified at almost all times, and most of all, the morality of the community is apparent from the moment that we see the commune come together.

There is also the Zionist narrative, which Kirk Douglas wanted to portray in 
*Spartacus*. He wanted to show the pain and suffering that slavery inflicted on those who were subjected to oppression. *Spartacus* provided a perfect vehicle. As has been noted, the historical film genre was popular at the time the Douglas produced *Spartacus*. There were already several films about Christianity and Judaism in antiquity (such as *The Robe*, *Quo Vadis?*, etc.), but Douglas could approach the religious aspects of his film in a new way: through allegory and imagery. The other religious films were more direct with their subject matter. *Spartacus* provided the perfect story to convey the story of the suffering of slaves while still having a messianic figure: Spartacus.

If there was any doubt that Douglas intended to portray Spartacus as a messiah, one only needs to look at the crucifixion of Spartacus (Figure 8). The punishment that Spartacus endures illustrates both his desire to share the pain that his comrades are suffering, as well as his position as martyr. As he states while on the cross, Crassus has lost: Spartacus will “return...and I'll be millions!” Spartacus' work is only the beginning of the destruction of slavery. Like Spartacus, others would
discover that freedom was worth fighting for, which is, of course, the “message” of
the film. The only question is why Douglas included such classical Christian imagery
in his film. Douglas himself has never answered questions about this, but one
reading is that Spartacus could be viewed as a messiah before Christ, whose image
would appeal to both Christians and Jews.

The political side of the allegory is just as clear in this film as it is in Fast’s
novel. For Trumbo, “Rome is clearly an allegory of the United States, and Crassus...is
symbolic of American political power...Trumbo sees the film not so much as
Spartacus’ struggle for freedom as the struggle of the imperial republic to prevent
Spartacus and others from achieving freedom” (Ahl 82). The foregoing quotation
shows clearly that Trumbo thought HUAC was impinging upon American freedoms.
The term “freedom” itself, however, was what drove up the publicity and popularity
of Spartacus: “freedom” was exactly what Trumbo hoped would get people to the
box office to see the movie he helped create.62 Trumbo, in his hatred for the HUAC
and the oppressive politics of the American legal system at the time, hoped that
Spartacus could be “the historical proof that these people (the poor and oppressed)
could rise and menace any society which had wealthy employers and mistreated
employees, even if his rebellion was crushed” (Ahl 77).

The combination of these two ideological messages did end up attracting the

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62 Smith, Jeffrey P. ‘A Good Business Proposition:’ Dalton Trumbo, Spartacus, and the End of the
viewing public to the box office. Trumbo’s political mythology was in line with the shifting paradigms of American politics of the early 1960s, as evinced by the famous Inaugural Address delivered by John F. Kennedy in 1961, only four months after the release of the film. As one scholar notes, the speech “contains several statements and expressions that, with only minimal adjustments, could have come straight from the mouth of Spartacus himself.” In the opening sentence of his speech, Kennedy called the occasion of the address a celebration of freedoms. In line with the message of *Spartacus*, Kennedy stated that he wanted to “Let every nation know...that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, and oppose any for, in order to ensure the survival and success of liberty” (Winkler 187).

“Freedom” then was, as it remains today, the “buzzword” that brought any issues forward and made them American – anything that America could do to ensure freedom, it would do. HUAC was dissolved shortly after the inauguration of Kennedy, which ensured some measure of freedom of speech and political affiliation. Spartacus was a hero that embodied such American ideology. One scene in particular strikes the audience in this way; on the tip of the Italian peninsula, Antoninus is asking Spartacus about their chances in the upcoming battle. Spartacus turns to Antoninus, and with the camera angled directly at his face, he says to both

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Antoninus and the audience, “I do know that we're brothers, and I know that we're free.”
VI. Epilogue/Conclusion

Spartacus and his legend seemed to have faded after Kirk Douglas released his film. The historical film genre, which was highly popular at the time that *Spartacus* was released, had fallen out of fashion. The last Roman epic film of the 20th century was *The Fall of the Roman Empire* by Anthony Mann (1967). Since the turn of the millennium, however, novels, films, and even television shows have been using episodes from classical antiquity as their subjects. Ridley Scott’s *Gladiator* (2000) was the first major film since 1967 to use Rome as its setting, and it was received well; it earned five Academy Awards, including best picture of the year. Over 300 novels set in ancient Rome have been published since 1999. Spartacus’ legend has been featured in two television series as well: *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* and *Spartacus: Gods of the Arena*, both released in 2010 by the Starz Network. Critics have said that “There’s no denying that stylized decapitations are entertaining, especially when accompanied by a generous helping of soft porn,” or that “the trappings up front are so over the top that to say you watch Spartacus to see a contemporary reworking of a cinema classic is like saying you go to Hooters for the food.”

The new adaptors of the Spartacus legend have taken a very different direction from the writers of the past. David Hinckley, a television critic for *The New
York Daily News, says it best in his review of the first season of *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*:

“Spartacus is eventually purchased by Batiatus, who with his wife, Lucretia, splendidly illustrates the amoral decadence of Roman aristocracy. How decadent was it? Try this. When Batiatus and Lucretia feel like a little marital fun, they don't retire to their room. They get comfortable on opposite sides of a public room and let a couple of designated slaves warm them up. Scenes like that, and there are many, make the point. Thing is, they don't make it any more effectively than a discreet "Masterpiece Theatre" would have done. Just more graphically. Likewise, having soldiers shout four-letter words may underscore the primal brutality of combat, and having geyseres of blood gush from the bodies of the newly dead may remind the viewer that war is hell. But the violence, like the sex and language, goes so far beyond dramatic necessity, it becomes its own separate attraction. Lest anyone miss that point, every blood spurt is filmed in slow motion and stop-action, presumably to maximize the pleasure of watching someone's legs severed or skull crushed. The battle scenes use the same quasi-animation technology as the film '300,' meaning they have just enough of a cartoon veneer so a graphic decapitation becomes a special effect, not a snuff moment. And, oh yeah, underneath all this, 'Spartacus: Blood and Sand' tells an actual story about repression, courage, morality, freedom and defiance.”

The “oh yeah” at the end of Hinckley's review shows how the focus of the Spartacus story has changed dramatically since Kirk Douglas' *Spartacus*. While the film has several scenes with blood and gore, there has never been such graphic material in the Spartacus story until now. Figures 9 and 10 (below) demonstrate the graphic violence and sex that Hinckley discusses in his review.
Figure 9. Spartacus (played here by Andy Whitfield) in Episode Four of *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* (The Thing in the Pit). To help Batiatus, his lanista, gain more money, he participates in “no holds barred” combat in “the pits,” a place where gamblers bet on fighters. Spartacus gouges out his opponent’s eyes, and the blood splatters on Spartacus’ face and on the screen (left corner).

Figure 10. Spartacus is commanded to make love with a woman who makes a deal with Batiatus. They wear masks to keep their identities secret, though the woman, Ilythia (played by Viva Bianca) and Spartacus are mortal enemies. This scene will eventually devolve into more blood and gore.
It should be noted here that the each show begins with a warning, that the show is intended for “mature” audiences only. The reason for the warning, the show's editors claim, is that they are attempting to depict Rome as it really was.

What has caused this dramatic shift in the interpretation of Spartacus' story? What has changed in the minds of artists and producers? Until now, Spartacus had undergone an evolution as a legend, though the general message of his story has essentially stayed the same, at least since the 18th century. Spartacus' story was one focused on family, heroism, loyalty, courage, and most of all, freedom. *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* and *Spartacus: Gods of the Arena* take the story in a completely different direction: no longer is Spartacus driven by the need to be free, but is instead infused with a desire for revenge (Batiatus killed his wife) and a need to “kill them all.” Sex and violence are the major themes in these shows, while Spartacus' character and his virtue “bubble underneath the surface” (as Hinckley claims in his review).

Let us first briefly examine the evolution of Spartacus' story. Since the ancient authors had written their accounts of the Third Servile Revolt, the Spartacus story has always appeared at a time of moral or political crisis. Firstly, Spartacus first reappeared in the 18th century, where notions of the liberty, equality, and fraternity of all men were brewing in nations that were in political turmoil. Revolution was
about to take hold in France and America, while Voltaire and Saurin were claiming that the war of Spartacus exemplified their own causes and that Spartacus' war was among the most just revolutions in all of history. Spartacus then appears in one of Marx's letters to Engels, and is described as a leader of the ancient proletariat. Bird and Giovagnoli then write about Spartacus, with Garibaldi claiming (in the preface to Giovagnoli's novel) that Spartacus is a Christ-like figure. These texts arose during times of political turmoil in America and Italy, the approach of the Civil War and the Risorgimento, respectively. Since then, Fast, Trumbo, and Douglas have all told their versions of the story as allegories for the virtues of communism and the fraternity of man. The lessons of the Spartacus story have thus evolved from “do not obstruct the power and order of Rome,” (Appian, Sallust) to “freedom is an essential quality of man, the need for which is displayed by Romans and slaves, our forefathers,” (Bird) to “freedom is necessary in all aspects of our lives, and the only way to achieve it is through brotherhood and unity of men,” (Fast, Douglas).

Spartacus' story tends to be retold in times of political turmoil because the narrative has “won over into the mythical.” The “facts” that the ancient authors wrote about Spartacus are no longer what people know about him. Instead, writers have been able to take the story of Spartacus and use it allegorically, with subtle changes in the narrative to reflect their points of view. Along the way, the Spartacus legend acquired and retained a few key characteristics, such as Spartacus' family,
the greedy *lanista*, and the community of slaves that Spartacus sets up on Mount Vesuvius. None of these things are actually in the ancient texts, but viewers and readers of plays, novels, and films about Spartacus view this as history. Cornford's theory that the “historical is won over into the mythical” proves true here.

Nevertheless, the “mythical” aspects of the Spartacus legend were crafted with the intent of making the Spartacus story an allegory. In each of the narratives that we have examined (aside from *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*), Spartacus is the symbol for the courageous individual who is able to serve as a leader for his fellow citizens (the rebels) and challenge the immoral, tyrannical authority (Crassus and the Romans). To many, this plot line would seem generic. The point is, however, that the Spartacus story can be used whenever necessary to draw connections between Spartacus and the rebels (the force of good), and Crassus and the Romans (forces of evil).

Why has the narrative now changed completely? While Spartacus remains the hero, the message does not stay the same: while present, the story about courage, love, and morality, comes second to the stylized gore and sex enhanced by special effects. Any film or television show can be viewed simply as entertainment, and nothing beyond that. In this way, the viewers of *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* are just like the corrupt Romans. If Romans watched gladiatorial spectacle for the
“pleasure of a good kill” (as Batiatus puts it in Douglas’ Spartacus), then are we not watching Gladiator for exactly the same thing? We, as American film viewers, could say that there is a lot that distinguishes us from the opulent, corrupt Romans, such as a real republican system, restrictions of violence in entertainment, and different social values. However, the arguments of Gracchus in Gladiator would still hold true: “All the people need to keep them happy is a game and some bread.” If viewers choose not to explore the deeper meaning of Gladiator, they are subscribing to a philosophy in which it is okay to be entertained by gruesome violence, opulence, and corruption – just like the Romans.

The other way to look at these two media is to see the glorification of violence and sex as indicative of some cultural shift, perhaps one that has risen since the time of Douglas and Fast. Since the 1960s, there has been a dramatic increase in films that feature graphic violence or sex. Novels, comic books, and even the news have become more graphic. After Douglas produced his film in 1960, much has changed in mass media as well; color television and television series have evolved, as have special effects and, most importantly, cultural norms. American culture has become more sensitized to depictions of sex acts on television and movie screens. The culmination of Spartacus: Blood and Sand is not shocking to anyone, but rather, seems like the next logical extreme in a television series that appeals to an audience that is desensitized to graphic description to violence.
Spartacus' narrative is going to continue to win over into the mythical. The time has passed, however, for Spartacus as a moral exemplar. While *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* might retain some vestige of the original legend, its purpose is not to teach us how *Rome really was*, despite its claim to do so. The show appeals to viewer sensibilities, and succeeds: it ranks among the most popular shows produced by the Starz Network. Unfortunately, for many who have not explored the history behind the legend of Spartacus, this is what Spartacus actually was. The brave, courageous, moral Spartacus of Kirk Douglas lies somewhere deep in Andy Whitfield's character, though it is too far away for us to hear it shouting, “I Am Spartacus!”
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Notes on References

There are several references that I used throughout this project as bases for general knowledge. The topics range from gladiatorial classes, to the Red Scare, general knowledge about Spartacus, and historiographical and film theory. They are listed below for the reader's convenience and for acknowledgment.

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