S. BUSSI, *ECONOMIA E DEMOGRAFIA DELLA SCHIAVITÙ IN ASIA MINORE ELLENISTICO-ROMANA*. Milan: Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto, 2001. Pp. 178. ISBN 88-7916-151-2. €15.50.

It may seem surprising to those not working in the field that scholars have to be reminded of the importance of slavery in Hellenistic Asia Minor, especially given the uprising led by Aristonicus in the second century B.C., who was supported by so many slaves that this is sometimes referred to as a slave war. Nevertheless, there has been a trend to underestimate the significance of slavery here, as elsewhere, and Bussi does the subject an enormous favour by her careful examination of the evidence for slavery in this area of the Mediterranean.

It has been suggested that slavery was not very important for the economy away from the coastal regions of Asia Minor. This is in spite of the fact we are told by Strabo 14.1.38 that after being defeated near Smyrna, Aristonicus went inland, Strabo being quite specific in his words at this point, and there he recruited a large number of poor people and slaves. However the current view is that generally in much of Asia Minor in this period, away from the more Hellenised west, the *laoi* did the agricultural work that in Italy, for example, was done by slaves at this time. Quite what this term *laoi* refers to has been the subject of much debate and the few references we have to these people have been scrutinized vigorously. There seems clear enough evidence that they were not slaves, but were they tied to the land, that is were they a type of bonded labour?

B. makes the suggestion that the famous quip from Nicomedes, King of Bithynia, that he could not supply the Romans with troops because the Romans had enslaved all the Bithynians, may refer to these inhabitants of the land; the Romans did not recognize the fine distinction between slaves and *laoi* and considered them to be slaves (117). She deals briefly with these and with *hierodouloi* in her introduction, and at the end she has an appendix on the use of the term *laoi* for people in Egypt, and also a brief overview of slavery in Egypt, another neglected area in her view, but the bulk of this slim book discusses in three main chapters the sources of supply of new slaves, their employment and the role slavery played in the economy, and what difference the presence of the Romans in the area made to the organization of the working of the land.

The work is a timely and most welcome contribution to the debate about the role of slaves in Asia Minor, challenging the consensus in a refreshing way, as well as a reminder about the state of our evidence for this topic. B. would have profited from a more conscientious editor since there is much of interest in the footnotes, which sometimes are extremely long and which could usefully have been incorporated into the main text for a more sustained argument. An index would have been helpful. While no new evidence indicating an abundance of slaves in inland Asia Minor is brought forward, the work is a valuable addition to the study of the region and to the larger debate about the extent of slavery in different parts of the ancient world.

University College Dublin THERESA URBAINCZYK

T. URBAINCZYK, *SPARTACUS* (Ancients in Action Series). Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 2004. Pp. 144. ISBN 1-85399-668-8. £10.99.

The aim of the Ancients in Action series is to introduce 'major figures of the ancient world to the modern general reader, including the essentials of each subject's life, works, and significance for later western civilisation'. Urbainczyk's examination of the gladiator Spartacus has certainly achieved this aim, while it also provides 'enough information for those interested [scholarly readers] to follow up any issues they wish' (18). Indeed, in several places her study is provocative enough to be of serious interest to undergraduates and scholars alike when studying the ancient slave wars.

Following an introduction which provides a short potted history of the 'Spartacus legend', U.'s first chapter briefly surveys the social history of Roman Italy, the evolution of gladiatorial games, and the 'grim' (30) life of the individual gladiator. She discusses the aims of the original rebels, and challenges the idea that the goal of the gladiators was merely to flee captivity, stating 'it is clear that they were aiming for something more than suicide or flight' (35). In the next section U. retraces her steps to examine earlier slave revolts, pointing out that they 'were more common than one might think', and rightly stating that Spartacus' modern fame 'has a tendency to distort our view of the past' (36). U.'s contention that the Spartan helots, who 'took every opportunity to rebel' (37), should be regarded as slaves is much more contentious than she indicates (see Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death*, 1–26, for an influential definition of slavery which would

exclude them). Furthermore, several of the episodes U. cites as slave revolts, such as Aristonicus' rising and T. Vettius Minutius' rebellion, are not really examples of autonomous servile resistance, as they were led by free élites. In fact, the two Sicilian revolts (*c.* 135–32 and *c.* 104–100 B.C.E.) and that of Spartacus (73–71 B.C.E.) are the only clear cases of *large* autonomous slave rebellion in the ancient world. This is actually an impressive record, as the St Domingue revolution (1791–1804) is perhaps the only slave revolt in history comparable in scale. It is also likely that numerous outbreaks of open slave resistance in the Roman Empire went unrecorded in our sources. However, the impression U. gives that rebellion was particularly frequent is not wholly convincing. Open revolt was a hugely risky undertaking, and was only possible when slaves had a relatively *strong* position (because of élite fragmentation, for example). Keith Bradley has demonstrated that 'day-to-day' tactics, such as theft, arson, and flight were much more common (*Slavery and Society at Rome*, 107–31; cf. the work of James Scott, especially *Weapons of the Weak* and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*).

U.'s narrative of the Spartacus revolt itself is lively and clear, and she also discusses 'Slaves after Spartacus'. However, the most interesting and provocative aspect of U.'s study is her section on 'The Creation of a Hero', in which she argues that Plutarch is responsible for the positive image of Spartacus, and his fame in antiquity and later. Describing the way in which the biographer presents a romantic, 'noble' Spartacus, U. believes that Plutarch deliberately created an idealized figure to contrast him with the unsavoury character of Crassus, in whose biography the Spartacan revolt is narrated. In describing Spartacus, Plutarch was thus *actually* writing about Crassus, and the 'original' Spartacus may have been as 'mythological' as his modern incarnation. Her argument is similar to that of Thomas Grünewald (*Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and Reality*, 64–9).

The modern reception of Spartacus has been well-studied in recent years, by Brent Shaw, Maria Wyke, Natalie Davis, Alison Futrell, and Lorna Hardwick. In the light of this, one feels that U. could have gone much further in her discussion of 'Spartacus in the Modern Imagination' (in two concluding chapters), which seems slightly superficial in comparison. In a work aimed at a general audience, the lack of pictures (e.g. stills from the 1960 film) is also regrettable. Indeed, there is probably now scope for a wide-ranging study of the Spartacus myth from its ancient origins to the present day, akin to that undertaken by Stephen Knight in his *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw*.

In her examination of the 'historical' Spartacus in the ancient material, U. has made a real contribution to Spartacan scholarship, even within the limitations of a work aimed at general readership. She is judicious in discussing ancient authors who narrate the Spartacan revolt, recognizing their contrasting outlooks. Her examination of Plutarch's portrayal is interesting and persuasive. However, U.'s explicit identification of Appian as a thoroughgoing 'hostile' source (94–6) is not fully convincing. The author preserves information on the 'noble' Spartacus not found elsewhere, such as his equitable distribution of booty (*BC* 1.116), and, like Plutarch, he grants the slave-leader an honourable death (*BC* 1.120). In fact, even Florus, the author most hostile to the rebels, finds admiration for Spartacus in the manner of his death (2.8.14). Thus, Plutarch cannot be held solely responsible for the positive ancient image of the rebel leader. One extremely important omission, in this respect, is any examination of Sallust's contribution to the ancient image of Spartacus. He is our earliest narrative source for the revolt, and possibly the most important, especially as it is likely that his account influenced later authors such as Plutarch. The *Histories* only survives in fragments, which U. describes as 'very confusing' (93). However, there is enough information in the surviving fragments to suggest that Sallust's portrayal of Spartacus was favourable (3.91; 3.98; 4.41 Maurenbrecher), and that several of the positive qualities attributed to him by Plutarch (strength and spirit, moderation, a heroic death) were contained in Sallust's account. U.'s contention that when Plutarch writes about Spartacus, he is *really* writing about Rome, applies equally to Sallust, who was highly critical of the political culture of his own day. He was hostile to Pompey, and it is highly unlikely that he found Crassus any more admirable. For Sallust, writing during the turbulent time of the Triumvirate, to portray a gladiator as a noble and attractive figure, in contrast to the 'corrupt' Roman aristocracy, would have been a radical ploy indeed.

These criticisms aside, U.'s book provides a very accessible introduction to a figure most people have heard of, but few know much about. A longer treatment, aimed at a more scholarly audience, would need to address the arguments of modern scholars such as Bradley more

explicitly, while it would need to assess the use and limitations of a comparative approach (it would also, as U. admits, require more extensive notes). The participation (or not) of free peasants (which U. argues *for* on p. 25) is an important question which needs readdressing, and U.'s suggestion that 'Italians were happy to allow Rome's enemy passage through their territory' (23) also contains potentially significant implications. The nature of Spartacus' leadership and authority is ambiguous, and in the light of U.'s argument that it made rhetorical sense for Plutarch to portray Spartacus as a 'Roman', it is worth asking whether or not he *actually* appropriated Roman vestiges of power. U. is to be credited for raising these significant issues.

University of Manchester IAN HARRISON

E. CHAMPLIN, *NERO*. Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2003. Pp. 346. ISBN 0-674-011192-9. US$29.95.

'Why was Nero so fascinating?' (236) asks Edward Champlin. The emperor's dossier is familiar ('we all know about Nero' (36)): he slept with and murdered his mother, had one wife (his stepsister Octavia) executed and kicked another (Poppaea) — pregnant — to death, took to the stage, raced chariots in public, fiddled while Rome burned, and built a house that seemed to swallow up the whole city. This briskly argued and crisply written book is not a biography in the traditional sense, but rather an investigation of the manipulation of the image of Nero by prophets and rumour-mongers, historians, and especially the emperor himself. C.'s considerable expertise in the historical and archaeological record and his delight in daring interpretive moves succeed marvellously in articulating the kinds of logic or 'purpose' (237) that might have motivated Nero's otherwise outrageous-seeming actions.

In his first chapter, C. tells in striking and memorable detail the story of Nero's suicide upon the news that Galba was leading a revolt in Spain. Next he explores the subsequent — to modern audiences rather surprising — aftermath of these events: word was that the emperor was not actually dead but had fled to Parthia and would return. Comparing these rumours and prophecies to the folk-motif of the hero who returns to save his people, C. asks, 'how could people look back so fondly on such a monster?' (34). C.'s answer, worked out in a series of thought-provoking studies of Nero's manipulation of the Roman culture of spectacle, is that people have been fascinated by Nero because Nero wanted to fascinate: 'our image of Nero was reworked for eternity by hostile sources and by the popular imagination, but they did not create it. It remains so vivid because it was created by an artist' (237).

To lay the groundwork for his 'Nero wasn't necessarily as mad as he is made out to be' argument, C. points out the anti-Nero bias of the main historical sources for the period — Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio. C. next deduces from the various accounts of Nero's pursuit of musical performance and chariot-racing that Nero was a 'serious' performer (57), displaying 'a real strength of character' and 'passionate determination' (82). Evidence that Nero dealt murderously with various artistic rivals and unilaterally forced élite Romans to be complicit in his performances is characterized as incomplete or unreliable (58, 65). Highlighting reports that Nero performed as the unknowingly incestuous Oedipus, the justified matricide Orestes, Canace (who killed herself when denounced by her father for bearing her brother's child and was wildly mourned by him), and Hercules gone mad (who killed his wife), C. argues that Nero chose these roles to claim mythic precedents for, and innocence in, his murderous dealings with his mother Agrippina and his wife Poppaea. He then goes considerably further out on a limb to say that 'sleeping with his mother and kicking his pregnant wife to death are stories too good to be true'(111), and that Nero chose these particular myths to shape his life on the pattern of the legend of Periander, tyrant of Corinth, who was said to have slept with and killed his mother and kicked his pregnant wife to death. While the notion of comparing Nero's liberation of Greece and plans for cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth to the legend of Periander's improvements in Corinth and his plans for a Corinthian canal is a fascinating one, C. seems perhaps a little too eager to let Nero off the hook for Poppaea's 'fortuitous' (111) death.

C.'s insistence on understanding Nero as cunning rather than crazed opens important perspectives on the manipulation of spectacle and myth that had long been crucial in Roman political life. When Nero races chariots we should not see an emperor scandalously, insanely, slumming it among athletes, but Nero cosmically connecting himself with Apollo and the chariot of the Sun, and extending a practice Augustus had established of associating himself with Apollo