

are available. At the same time, the unrepresentativeness of the surviving data makes Hellie's interpretation of Muscovite slavery as a system of "welfare" more plausible than it might otherwise be. (The data on slaves' ages in table 13.8 really do not address my main concern.)

Third, I am still unconvinced by the reasons which Hellie gives to explain why Muscovite Russians enslaved members of their own ethnos. If Finley's "social scientific law" is generally valid, Muscovites clearly did not perceive slaves in the way in which they were viewed in other slave-owning societies. I would like to suggest two alternative—and admittedly vague—hypotheses to explain this apparent anomaly. Before serfdom, the rulers of Russia found slavery the most convenient legal category for retainers and domestics. Indeed, it is hard to see, in functional or occupational terms, how Muscovite slaves differed from later household serfs or from poorly paid "free" domestics in other societies. For whatever reason, there is nothing strange about having serfs or hiring domestics of the same ethnos as oneself. Perhaps, moreover, enslaving their domestics was easy for Muscovite nobles because they did not regard lower class people as full members of the same human community.

Finally, I agree with Hellie that the length of a book and the amount of detail with which the author supports his argument are matters of personal taste.

#### TO THE EDITOR:

Robert O. Crummey's review of Richard Hellie's *Slavery in Russia* is characteristically well done. In one aside, however, which is actually a paraphrase of Hellie's position, Crummey comments that American Negro slavery was "a case of extreme harshness on the spectrum of slave societies." This view was standard until the mid-1960s among scholars of this subject, but today historians have concluded that American slavery, despite its indubitably negative qualities, was nowhere near as harsh as Caribbean and other Spanish American slaveries.

Readers of the *Slavic Review* who would like to confirm that Hellie's and Crummey's view is outdated may wish to dip into the immense literature on the subject with the following: C. Vann Woodward, "Southern Slaves in the World of Thomas Malthus," in Woodward's *American Counterpoint*, pp. 78–106; or David Brion Davis, "Slavery and the Post-World War II Historians," in Sidney W. Mintz, ed., *Slavery, Colonialism, and Racism*, pp. 1–16. An excellent brief summary of the present state of slavery scholarship in the United States is in John Boles, *Black Southerners 1619–1869* (University of Kentucky Press, 1984).

GALE STOKES  
Rice University