Xenophon's philosophical writing has featured strongly in his recent renaissance, and provides the theme for the second chapter. There are many questions about Xenophon's portrayal of Socrates and the extent of their interactions, and the veracity of the conversations reported in the *Memorabilia* and *Symposium*. Hobden hedges her bets on these questions (56), but usefully connects the Socratic works to the rest of the corpus.

Recent scholarship has placed a particular emphasis on Xenophon's interest in political organization and leadership, and connected it to a continuing commitment to Athens as well as to a systematic programme. In 'Rethinking the Polis', Hobden draws together narratives from the histories with discussions from the Socratic works, and integrates them with Xenophon's treatment of monarchical Sparta (*Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*), and tyrannical Syracuse (*Hiero*), as well as his advice to Athens (*Poroi*).

The interest in Xenophon's political thinking has tended to get in the way of perception of him as an ethicist. Hobden's fourth chapter, 'Living the Good Life', positions Xenophon within the mainstream of Greek ethical thought of his time, as a writer concerned with the achievement of the good life through 'personal morality and public service' (87), and consistent thought on how to achieve it. As she properly notes, Xenophon accords moral agency to human actors beyond male citizens more readily than some ancient thinkers do, distinguishing him from near contemporaries such as Aristotle, although the main examples here, including Ischomachus (*Oeconomicus*), Cyrus and Agesilaus, do not illustrate that claimin any straightforward way.

It seems impossible to condense the complexities of Xenophon's reception history from antiquity to the present day into a short chapter, given the sheer variety of works and authors he has influenced. In 'Thinking through Xenophon', Hobden outlines Xenophon's role as a supplier of exemplars to moralists of later antiquity, with a strong account of his influence on Roman thought, and the inspiration he provided to authors such as Arrian. She gives a good summary of Machiavelli's reading of him, on which more recent political-theoretical readings depend. The account of more recent receptions is necessarily selective.

This book achieves its aims as an introduction; it provides an excellent orientation to Xenophon and his work. Hobden crams in plenty of useful detail into its 129 pages of text, much of it carefully referenced to Xenophon's writing. One might wish that there had been more space for quotation and close reading of some of the key passages to which she refers, and more sense of both the charm and style of Xenophon's prose. But the case for Xenophon as a systematic and influential thinker is well made.

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KULESZ (R.) and SEKUNDA (N.) (eds) **Studies on Ancient Sparta** (Monograph series Akanthina 14). Gdańsk: Gdańsk University Press, 2020. Pp. 302. zł.39.99. 9788378659457.
doi:10.1017/S0075426922000726

This estimable but not easily accessible publication adds to the growing swell of Sparta-related research volumes that have been enhancing the ancient Greek historical field since Anton Powell's beautifully judged two-volume Wiley-Blackwell *A Companion to Sparta* (Hoboken 2017–2018). It has been very well edited by two notable Poland-based Spartan scholars. For each chapter there are both bibliographies and a Polish summary, and for the collection as a whole there are – a great boon – indexes both *locorum* and *nominum et rerum*.

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Space constraints prevents anything more than a listing of the topics of most of the 13 essays: the famed or notorious 'black broth', μέλας ζωμός (Maciej Kokoszko); was the transition from Xenophon's fight for the cheeses to the Hellenistic-Roman contest of endurance a revolution or an evolution? (Jacek Rzepka); Laconian female hunting hounds (Sebastian Rajewicz); intergenerational interactions (Magdalena Myszkowska-Kaszuba); marriage and the family as seen from the viewpoint of wives, mothers, grandmothers and daughters (Anna M. Kruszyńska); Amyklai: rituals, traditions and the origins of the Spartan state (Mait Kõiv); Brasidas, Perdiccas II and Chalcidian *poleis* in the Thracian campaign of 424–423 BC (Alexander A. Sinitsyn); Agesilaus' cavalry tactics at Narthacion and Coroneia (394 BC) (Marek Jan Olbrycht); and the Battle of Naxos and Sparta's Aegean naval campaign of 376 BC (Wojciech Duszyński). A veritable salmagundi or gallimaufry.

That leaves just the four essays singled out for rather more detailed discussion, the guiding theme of three of which is the absolutely fundamental and indispensable first task of all serious Spartan ancient historiography, that of counterposing the proposed myth with the supposed reality. Aleksander Wolicki's 'Women and sport in classical Sparta – myth and reality' tackles a theme already very well handled by Thomas Scanlon in *Eros in Greek Athletics* (Oxford 2002). But he does so from a different angle, by entering the snake pit of the ongoing debate between those historians who seek to minimize Spartan 'exceptionalism' and those who seek to give it credence and substance, the issue between the two sides being precisely how to evaluate François Ollier's 'Spartan mirage' (*Le mirage spartiate*, 2 vols (Paris 1933–1943)). Wolicki, rightly in the view of this reviewer, points the finger at Athenian propaganda ('all roads lead to Athens') and believes there is no smoke without fire: Sparta really was seriously different.

Ryszard Kulesza has a powerful track record in Spartan studies extending back at least to 2002; more recently he has published on Spartan gerontocracy ('The Spartan Gerontocracy?' *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 57 (2013), 25–36). In 'Leonidas. Myth and reality', he correctly highlights the possibly literally murderous rivalry both between and within the two royal houses in the first quarter of the fifth century. He is even prepared to give some credence to David Harvey's bold but ultimately unprovable hypothesis that the usually revered Leonidas may have been a regicide. The chapter's other strong suit is the attention paid to the somewhat neglected topic of the return from Thermopylae to Sparta of what was purported to be the mortal remains of the Agiad king.

In 334, following his opening major victory at the Granikos river, Alexander – not yet Great – had sent back to his ally Athens a suite of 300 hoplite panoplies as a dedication on behalf of himself and the (other) Greeks 'except the Lacedaemonians', so Arrian records. Alexandrian poet C.P. Cavafy was quick to pour ironic scorn on that 'except the Lacedaemonians' ('In 200 B.C.'); Krzysztof Nawotka in his 'Alexander the Great, Sparta, and Ps.-Callisthenes' paints a far broader canvas of relations between the Macedonian king and Sparta, even to the extent of giving credence to the tenuous evidence of the much later *Alexander Romance* (Ps.-Callisthenes) for an otherwise unrecorded defeat of Sparta on Spartan territory by Philip II and – *ex hypothesi* – Alexander.

I have left to the end the most substantial and original article of them all, Nicholas Sekunda's 'Pausanias and the murder of the Helots (Thuc. 4.80.3–4)'. So key is this passage of Thucydides, a historian who admitted himself baffled and irritated by 'the secrecy of the state (*or* constitution)', τό κρυπτόν τῆς πολιτείας (5.68.2), to our modern understanding of what really made ancient Sparta the way it was that it has been fiercely controverted in respect of its very authenticity and historicity. Did the Spartans really ever carry out such a brutally duplicitous massacre of so many (some 2,000) Helots, and in such a way that no one (apart from the perpetrators) knew how 'each one of them' (a chilling phrase fastened upon by Pierre Vidal-Naquet in his *Assassins of Memory* (New York 1992), from a holocaust-eliminationist perspective) had been killed? And (not a unique Thucydidean problem, this)

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how should the possibly ambiguous phrase about 'security' be translated or read: was it Thucydides' claim that the entirety of the Spartan polity's rationale was security against the Helots? Or was it rather that, so far as the state's attitude to the Helots went, the prime consideration was security?

These are deep waters, and in a way, Prof. Sekunda was wise to steer clear of them. At any rate, for one such as myself, who finds it impossible to believe Thucydides should have allowed himself to be conned into reporting mere fake news, I am content to adopt Sekunda's own problematic: not whether, but when, in what historical context, were the Spartans prompted to adopt this surely extremely cruel and unusual measure. Alert readers will already have inferred from the chapter's very title that Sekunda does not accept what is probably the most widespread view: 'some time around 425/4', that is, in reaction to the Pylos affair, which is the context in which Thucydides himself relates it. Rather, it should be seen as part and parcel of 'the (Regent) Pausanias affair' of the 460s. That suggestion is at the very least arguable, and Sekunda argues his case very plausibly.

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BAYLISS (A.J.) **The Spartans**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. X + 166, illus. £10.99/$13.95. 9780198853084.
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Bayliss's volume is charmingly fitted to its subjects' reputation for brevity, from its laconic title to its size: a tight 166 pages in a frame measuring about thirteen by eighteen centimetres. Similarly apt is the choice to colour the dust jacket red, like the distinctive cloaks of the Spartans, and decorate it with a spear appearing to cut a slash forming a lambda, the Greek letter popularly imagined as appearing on Spartan shields. These affectations are likely to amuse if noticed and they show the attention to detail paid by the author and press, but never rise to an intrusive level.

The volume is divided into seven chapters. For the most part, the chapters thematically divide aspects of Spartan society, covering 'Sparta's Civic Structure', 'The Spartan Lifestyle', 'Raising a Spartan', 'Spartan Women', 'Helots' and 'The Later Reception of Sparta'. The first chapter, 'Go Tell the Spartans', is something of an exception, providing a historical focus on the battle of Thermopylae. The choice is clever, as many, perhaps most, readers will be coming to an interest in Sparta from an introduction through that battle. Much of the volume is pitched as drawing back the curtain on Sparta for novices, moving beyond the heroism of Leonidas to consider the polis' good, bad and ugly aspects.

Indeed, the book is clearly aimed at a popular audience: it eschews foot- and endnotes, transliterates Greek text, translates all foreign-language material into English and speaks in a slightly elevated but non-specialist register. In this way, it may be compared to Myke Cole's recent Osprey Press monograph *The Bronze Lie* (Oxford 2021), which, much like *The Spartans*, aims to introduce a general audience to something more closely approaching the state of scholarship on various Spartan questions. The most notable differences between the works are size and author: *The Bronze Lie* is over 450 pages, and unlike Bayliss, who is a trained academic, Cole is an enthusiast, albeit one who extensively reads scholarship and consults with experts. It is clear that Bayliss, too, is in frequent communication with today's experts on Sparta, and his book, in a way that will be familiar to readers of Plutarch and Herodotus, often lays out multiple scholarly positions on a subject, only sometimes venturing to give the author's own opinion.

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