

## BOOK REVIEW

*Sparta in Modern Thought: Politics, History and Culture*. Edited by STEPHEN HODKINSON and IAN MACGREGOR MORRIS. Swansea and London: The Classical Press of Wales, 2012. Distributed in the United States by David Brown Book Company. Pp. xxvi + 462. £60.00/\$120.00. ISBN 978-1-905125-47-0.

This fine collection of essays on the reception of Sparta adds greater depth and detail to the picture established by Elizabeth Rawson's remarkable 1969 monograph *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* and subsequently refined by further research, in particular on the eighteenth-century image of Sparta (e.g. in Chantal Grell's extensive *Le dix-huitième siècle et l'antiquité en France, 1680–1789* (1995)).

One way in which this volume takes Rawson's research further is by covering the period since her work was published. Rawson herself concluded with the reflection that it would be inappropriate to draw any conclusion from the history of the Spartan tradition, "for the reason that it has surely not yet come to an end." The final three chapters (forming Part IV: Cold War Politics and Contemporary Popular Culture) confirm that she was right—while also showing that the Spartan tradition has taken turns of which she could not have dreamt. Gideon Nisbet's typically lively contribution, "'This is Cake-Town!': 300 (2006) and the Death of Allegory," discusses a number of receptions of the film *300* published on the YouTube website (the chapter follows nicely from Lynn S. Fotheringham's discussion of the original graphic novel *300*). Nisbet defines these modern responses through the trope of negation: "There is no Cold War here, no Nazis, no socialists, no paladins or public-school mottos. Unsurprisingly, no-one is quoting Plutarch"—or reading Rawson, by the sound of it. Rather, YouTube is engagingly figured as a new Sparta where actions speak louder than words.

There is plenty of Cold War, by contrast, in Stephen Hodkinson's meticulous and fascinating survey of "Sparta and the Soviet Union in the U.S. Cold War Foreign Policy and Intelligence Analysis." Hodkinson argues here that there is no evidence before the late 1960s for specific analogies between Sparta and the Soviet Union in U.S. foreign policy discussions (as opposed to much looser generic

perceptions of the contemporary relevance of the Peloponnesian War). A great strength of his analysis is the way he looks at the relations between practices in the U.S. intelligence service and academia (with a particular focus on the influence of Donald Kagan's teaching at Yale). Hodkinson's discussion of the historical shifts in the use of the Sparta/Soviet analogy is compelling: provocatively he suggests that W. R. Connor's recollection (in the introduction to his 1984 book on Thucydides) of readings of the Peloponnesian War in the 1950s in which "totalitarian, land-based" Sparta was made to stand for the Soviet Union reflects better the terms of the analogy at the time when Connor himself was writing. It will be interesting to see if Hodkinson's picture is modified by investigation of any archival material that Hodkinson's extensive research has not uncovered.

The countries and periods that receive greatest attention in this volume are Enlightenment to Post-Revolutionary France (Part II) and Germany: From Literary Hellenism to National Socialism (Part III). These sections contain valuable essays on themes already treated more briefly by Rawson, but they are slightly marred by a certain amount of repetition that could have been avoided with stronger editorial guidance. The degree of repetition is less of a problem in Part III, which in addition to a broad survey of "The Spartan Tradition in Germany, 1870–1945" (Volker Losemann) has essays focusing on Hölderlin (Uta Degner) and Nazi education (Helen Roche); rich material here includes discussion of "Sparta" as a brand-name for German sun-tan lotions (a topic more at home in the field of Classical Reception as currently configured than in the study of the Classical Tradition as generally practiced in Rawson's time). In Part II, by contrast, Haydn Mason's survey of "Sparta and the French Enlightenment" picks up some themes from the second essay in Part I, Kostas Vlassopoulos' excellent study of "Sparta and Rome in Early Modern Thought" while also covering some of the same ground as Michael Winston's "Spartans and Savages" and Paul Christesen's "Treatments of Spartan Land Tenure in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century France." This element of repetition is a shame, as these last two are valuable essays which do also contain extensive discussion of new material. Christesen's concluding focus on the political context of nineteenth-century French scholarship on Spartan land-tenure is particularly interesting given, as he notes, its continuing presence in modern scholarship.

The most substantial contribution to our knowledge of periods covered by Rawson is found in Ian Macgregor Morris' illuminating discussion of "Lycurgus in Late Medieval Political Culture." Rawson includes a brief chapter on "The Middle Ages" followed by a chapter entitled "Sparta Rediviva." Readers of Mac-

gregor Morris' detailed chapter will wonder whether rumors of Sparta's death were exaggerated (Macgregor Morris also promises a monograph on Sparta in medieval political culture). This is not to criticize Rawson's pioneering work: after all, the uses of antiquity in the Middle Ages is still a rather marginal area in the field of Classical Reception. (Indeed, Macgregor Morris' chapter seems rather an interloper in a volume on Sparta in modern thought.)

This book makes an important contribution, then, to the study of Spartan reception, particularly in relation to political thought. The one criticism I would have (apart from the slight repetition noted above) is that the fragmented nature of the contributions means that the background to two important shifts remains under-developed: the shift from the Sparta–Rome polarity discussed by Vlassopoulos to the dominant Sparta–Athens polarity and the (partial but related) shift from Plutarch to Thucydides as lens for viewing the Spartan mirage.

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