

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Spartans in the ancient Greek novels

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Abstract

Characters in the Greek novels comprise a dizzying array of identities, but one group of people who have received barely any attention are Spartans. They appear only in Chariton of Aphrodisias and Xenophon of Ephesus, where analysis of their presence sheds crucial light on the novels' literary and sociocultural agendas. After an introduction (section I), section II discusses Chaereas' self-characterization as the Spartan Leonidas in book 7 of Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* in the context of Imperial-period Sparta: its institutions (the Leonideia festival), prosopography (the Euryclid dynasty) and reputation for military greatness. I link these elements to the 'kinsman of Brasidas' in book 8, who can be directly connected to an Imperial-period descendant of Brasidas in Plutarch's *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, as well as to Thucydides' Brasidas. Section III explores the Spartan identity of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe, the protagonists of an inset story told to Habrocomes in book 5 of Xenophon's *Ephesiaca*. Details of their lives correspond closely to Spartan cultural phenomena familiar from Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*, especially in connection with marriage customs. This has consequences for the evaluation of Xenophon as a witty and sophisticated novelist, and for his compositional date. Section IV draws out the significant parallels between the depiction of Spartans in Chariton and Xenophon, which form the basis of proposals regarding their literary and chronological relationships.

Keywords: Chariton; Xenophon of Ephesus; Sparta; Leonidas; Brasidas

I. Introduction

One of the distinctive features of the ancient Greek novel is its dizzying geographical expansiveness. Over the course of a narrative characters traverse vast swathes of the *oikoumenē*, be they on missions of love, banditry or war: as far west as Sicily, as far east as Babylon, as far south as Egypt and Ethiopia, as far north as Thule, and a multitude of destinations in between.¹ Composed as they are during the Roman period (I return to the question of dating below), the novels reflect the fact that the world is a large place, populated by a range of ethnicities and identities.

¹ I am thinking here chiefly of Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesiaca*, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* and the fragmentary *Ninus* and *Sesonchosis* novels, Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca* and Antonius Diogenes' *Wonders beyond Thule*. Spatial aspects of the extant novels are well covered by De Temmerman (2012a), (2012b), (2012c) and Morgan (2012a), (2012b), and by the contributions in Paschalis and Frangoulidis (2002); on travel in the novel, see also Morgan (2007); Romm (2008), noting, at 109, that 'this genre relies on a sense of place for its aesthetic effects'. For Rohde (1914), the novels are generically linked to travellers' tales.

Two such novels, whose protagonists wheel vertiginously in and around the Mediterranean basin, are Chariton of Aphrodisias' *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesiaca*. Both have attracted a great deal of scholarly emphasis on the role played by geography and (national) identity, and there are abiding questions over the extent to which peoples and places are invested with specific interpretative potential. Sometimes this is ideological or political, and contemporary resonance is claimed: Chariton's Persians can be read as a refracted version of the Romans, and his rebellious Egyptians as a reflection of Egypt's perennially troublesome posture towards Rome;² and it has likewise been proposed that Chariton's Sicily offers a venue for thinking about Roman imperialism.³ Geography may also contribute to the articulation of a Greek civic identity: 'In the early romances of Xenophon and Chariton, "abroad" functions as an absence or negation of "home"; and, qualitatively speaking, it represents an inversion (geographic, cultural and ethical) of the *patris*.'⁴ Of course, it is not always necessary to read geographical elements ideologically. For example, Anton Bierl psychoanalyses the rapid geographical movement in Xenophon as reflecting a dreamlike (or, rather, nightmarish) condition of erotic separation, and David Konstan suggests that Xenophon's Rhodes functions as an 'erotic' space of reunion prior to the return to the 'civic' space of the protagonists' homeland, Ephesus.⁵ For John Morgan, travel in Chariton and Xenophon is less a function of any sociopolitical self-positioning on the part of the authors than it is a principle of narrative organization;⁶ and Andrea Capra recognizes that Xenophon's geographical comprehensiveness may speak to popular aesthetic principles.⁷

Given that Chariton announces himself as a citizen of Aphrodisias at the beginning of his novel (Χαρίτων Ἀφροδισιεύς, 1.1.1) and that the *Suda* (ξ 50) determines Xenophon to be from Ephesus, there is a large question mark over the extent to which the putative identities of the novelists should be brought to bear on any interpretation;⁸ and indeed whether these putative identities can be called upon to make claims about the novels' relationship with the contemporary, extratextual world.⁹ This issue is further complicated by the lack of consensus regarding the dates at which these novels were composed, as well as their relative chronology: possibilities range from the Neronian to Hadrianic periods for Chariton, and some point in the first to third centuries for Xenophon; and the general (although certainly not universal) consensus is that Xenophon postdates Chariton.¹⁰ I shall

² Persians: Schwartz (2003). Egypt: Alvares (2001); see generally Nimis (2004) on Egyptians in the novels.

³ Connors (2002); Jolowicz (2018b). On Italy and Sicily in Xenophon cf. Sartori (1985); Susanetti (1999).

⁴ Whitmarsh (2011) 45. For Morgan (2017) 389, Chariton and Xenophon 'are engaged with central concerns of the Second Sophistic, in particular that of elite Greek identity'.

⁵ Bierl (2006); Konstan (2012).

⁶ Morgan (2007).

⁷ Capra (2018); cf. Capra (2012).

⁸ On Chariton and Aphrodisias, see Tilg (2010) 24–82 and Jolowicz (2023); Rohde (1914) 520 n.2 suggests that Chariton's name and city are pseudonymous. On the prominence of Aphrodite as it relates to the connection between Aphrodisias and Rome, see Edwards (1991), (1994), (1996) 54–61, (1998). On Chariton's Miletus as a displaced version of contemporary Aphrodisias, see Ruiz-Montero (1989) 126, (1994a) 1032–33; Jones (1992) 162–63; Alvares (2001–2002) 126–27; Whitmarsh (2011) 53. Trzaskoma (2012) connects Chariton's Miletus to the *Anabasis* theme. On Xenophon and Ephesian particularities: Ruiz-Montero (1994b) 1088–91; Kytzler (1996) 345–46; Whitmarsh (2011) 28–29; Tagliabue (2013a), (2013b); O'Sullivan (2014) 47–48.

⁹ Because of his Aphrodisian claim, Chariton is particularly susceptible to readings that harness extratextual realities. In addition to the items listed in the previous note, see also Schwartz (2003), on Persia as Rome, and Jolowicz (2018c), on Roman military apparatus.

¹⁰ A *terminus ante quem* of the mid-second century for Chariton's novel is provided by *P.Mich.* 1. Chariton's date: Ruiz-Montero (1994a) 1008–12; O'Sullivan (1995); Bowie (2002) 54–58; Tilg (2010) 36–78. Xenophon's date: O'Sullivan (1995) 145–70 and (2014) 48, 51–53, famously arguing for Xenophon's priority; Kytzler (1996) 346–48; Rife (2002); Bowie (2002) 56–57; Henderson (2009) 207–10; Tilg (2010) 85–92; Coleman (2011); Lefteratou (2018b); Morgan (2017) 398–99; Tagliabue (2017) 213–15. Whitmarsh (2013) 41–48 addresses the methodological difficulties attending discussions of relative chronology. See also n.46 below.

return to the important (but eternally slippery) problems of absolute dating and relative chronology at the end of section III and in section IV.

It should be clear from the above survey that there are no simple answers to questions raised by geography and cultural identity in these texts, which excite a range of responses and approaches. One group of people in the novels who have received less attention than they deserve are the Spartans. They appear only in Chariton and Xenophon.¹¹ Even here, they are not as prominent as representatives of other cultures, but an analysis of their presence and function sheds crucial new light on various aspects of these texts, with serious ramifications for their literary and sociocultural agendas. Section II discusses Chaereas' self-characterization as the Spartan Leonidas (of Thermopylae fame) in book 7 of Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* in the context of Imperial-period Sparta: its institutions (the Leonideia festival), prosopography and famous personalities (the Euryclid dynasty), and reputation for military greatness. I then link these elements to the 'kinsman of Brasidas' who appears in book 8, and who I likewise suggest is directly connected to the descendant of Brasidas who features in Plutarch's *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, as well as to Thucydides' Brasidas. Section III explores the Spartan identity of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe, the protagonists of an inset story told to Habrocomes in book 5 of Xenophon's *Ephesiaca*. Details of their lives correspond closely to Spartan cultural phenomena familiar from Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*, especially in connection with marriage customs. This has consequences for the evaluation of Xenophon as a witty and sophisticated novelist, and for his compositional date. Section IV draws out the significant parallels between the depiction of Spartans in Chariton and Xenophon, which form the basis of proposals regarding their literary and chronological relationships.

II. Leonidas and Brasidas in Chariton: the Leonideia, the Euryclids and Spartan military strength

i. Introduction

In Chariton, Sparta rears its head in three specific instances. The first is Dionysius' comparison of Callirhoe with Helen, whose husband Menelaus could not keep her safe even 'in respectable Sparta' (ἐν τῇ σὺφροσιν Σπάρτῃ, 5.2.8),¹² the spectre of Helen, that cynosure of Spartan mythology, looms large as an ethical paradigm over the Greek novels, as has been comprehensively established by Anna Lefteratou.¹³ My focus, however, is on two moments in books 7 and 8, both of which occur in the context of Chaereas' military operations at the head of a band of mercenaries employed by the Egyptian pharaoh, who has revolted from the Persian king, Artaxerxes. In what follows, my aim is to excavate the multiple elements of Spartan history, spanning the Classical Greek and Roman Imperial periods, that impinge on the interpretation of these passages and, thereby, on the wider currents of Chariton's novel. Although the novel is set roughly 500 years before the time of its composition, my argument proceeds from the basis that it is not hermetically sealed from the contemporary world (and the Spartan phenomena within it). This necessarily involves a degree of speculation and cumulative argumentation whose rewards, I hope, outweigh the risks.

I shall set out the two episodes here, so that the range of themes is visible from the outset. In the first, the Egyptians, having revolted from Persia, succeed in detaching every

¹¹ Two exceptions: Leucippe's pseudonym 'Lacaena' ('the Spartan woman') in Achilles Tatius (first at 5.17.5); and the mention of the Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus in Heliodorus (*Aeth.* 2.27.1), on whose relevance to Xenophon see section III below.

¹² The adjective 'respectable' alludes to the fact that, as Powell (2001) 232 states, 'the standards of public morality at Sparta were strenuous'; I discuss such matters in connection with Xenophon in section III.

¹³ Lefteratou (2018a) 176–309, with 204–29 on Chariton.

city in Syria and Phoenicia from Persia except for Tyre. In the meantime, Chaereas and his companion Polycharmus, having absconded from Artaxerxes' war train, turn up at the Egyptian camp, and Chaereas is appointed as the pharaoh's advisor (7.2.5), after which he and a hand-picked squadron capture Tyre by guile. The reader learns that he is scrupulous in the recruitment process:

πρῶτον ἀνηρεύνα εἶ τινες εἶεν Ἕλληνες ἐν τῷ στρατοπέδῳ. πλείονες μὲν οὖν εὔρεθῆσαν οἱ μισθοφοροῦντες, ἐξελέξατο δὲ Λακεδαιμονίους καὶ Κορινθίους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους Πελοποννησίους· εὔρε δὲ καὶ ὡς εἴκοσι Σικελιώτας.

He first tried to find out whether there were any Greeks in the camp. Sure enough, a great many were found serving as mercenaries, and from these he selected Spartans and Corinthians and others who were Peloponnesians. He also discovered about twenty Sicilians. (7.3.7)¹⁴

To this band, numbered at 300, he makes a speech of encouragement, in which he emphasizes their shared Dorian extraction, likens himself to historical Spartan commanders who have led contingents of 300 and offers himself as their leader against the Tyrians:

ποιήσας οὖν τριακοσίους τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἔλεξεν ὧδε· “Ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, ἐμοὶ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐξουσίαν παρασχόντος ἐπιλέξασθαι τῆς στρατιᾶς τοὺς ἀρίστους, εἰλόμην ὑμᾶς· καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς Ἕλλην εἰμί, Συρακόσιος, γένος Δωριεύς. δεῖ δὲ ἡμᾶς μὴ μόνον εὐγενεῖα τῶν ἄλλων ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀρετῇ διαφέρειν. μηδεὶς οὖν καταπλαγῆ τὴν πρᾶξιν ἐφ’ ἣν ὑμᾶς παρακαλῶ, καὶ γὰρ δυνατὴν εὐρήσομεν καὶ ῥαδίαν, δόξη μᾶλλον ἢ πείρα δύσκολον. Ἕλληνες ἐν Θερμοπύλαις τοσοῦτοι Ξέρξην ὑπέστησαν. Τύριοι δὲ οὐκ εἰσὶ πεντακόσρια μυριάδες, ἀλλὰ ὀλίγοι καὶ καταφρονήσει μετ’ ἀλαζονείας, οὐ φρονήματι μετ’ εὐβουλίας χρώμενοι. γνώτωσαν οὖν πόσον Ἕλληνες Φοινίκων διαφέρουσιν. ... ἀλλ’ ἐν τε τῷ παρόντι σὺν θεοῖς ἔνδοξοι καὶ περίβλεπτοι γενήσεσθε καὶ πλουσιώτατοι τῶν συμμάχων, εἷς τε τὸ μέλλον ὄνομα καταλείπετε τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀθάνατον καὶ ὡς πάντες ὑμνοῦσι τοὺς μετὰ Ὀθρυάδου¹⁵ ἢ τοὺς μετὰ Λεωνίδου, οὕτω καὶ τοὺς μετὰ Χαιρέου τριακοσίους ἀνευφημήσουσιν.” ἔτι λέγοντος πάντες ἀνέκραγον “ἡγοῦ,” καὶ πάντες ὄρμησαν ἐπὶ τὰ ὄπλα.

Having thus made up a band of 300 men he addressed them as follows: ‘Fellow Greeks, when his Majesty gave me authority to select the best soldiers in the army, I chose you. I am Greek myself, from Syracuse, of Dorian stock. We must show that we surpass the others not only in noble origin but also in courage. No one should be alarmed at the venture which I am asking you to undertake; in fact we shall find it both possible and easy, seeming more difficult than it really is. This same number of Greeks once stood up against Xerxes at Thermopylae. The Tyrians, however, are not 5,000,000 in

¹⁴ The text is that of Reardon (2004); the translation follows Goold (1995), with adaptations.

¹⁵ Here I depart from the text of Reardon (2004), who, following Blake (1938), prints Μιλτιάδου where the MS (F) incorrectly has Μιθριδάτου. In printing Ὀθρυάδου, I follow the *editio princeps* of D’Orville (1750), as well as Molinié (2002) and Goold (1995): both Othryadas (at Thyraei against Argives) and Leonidas (at Thermopylae against Persians) led contingents of 300 Spartans (Hdt. 1.82, 7.204–33). Discussions of this emendation include: Smith (2007) 175 n.45 and Trzaskoma (2011) 27, both of whom prefer Othryadas to Miltiades on the basis that the latter wins an Athenian victory (Marathon), therefore making him less appropriate as an exemplum for an audience of Dorians; and Franchi (2012) and (2013), who argues in favour of Othryadas on the basis that the word τριακοσίους (‘three hundred’) has been transposed from its original position (where it would have clarified as 300 the number of men accompanying both the textually corrupt individual and Leonidas, thus identifying the former as Othryadas beyond doubt), and that the narratives of Othryadas and Leonidas are often conflated, especially in the Imperial period (see n.41 below).

number, but only a few, and they rely upon impudence and bragging, not upon resolution and prudence. Let them realize the difference between Greeks and Phoenicians ... Indeed with the gods' help you shall gain present glory and fame as well as the greatest wealth among the allies, and, for the future, you shall leave behind an undying memory of heroism, and just as all men commemorate the 300 of Othryadas or Leonidas, so they will the 300 of Chaereas'. Before he had finished, all shouted, 'Lead on', and they all rushed for their arms. (7.3.8–11)

The second episode under consideration occurs in book 8. Following the success of Chaereas and his 300 Dorians against Tyre, the Egyptian land forces are defeated by the Persians, and the pharaoh is killed. Chaereas, now admiral of the Egyptian fleet stationed temporarily on Cyprus, gives a despondent speech in which he suggests capitulation to, or flight from, the Persian king (8.2.10–11). A character identified as a kinsman of Brasidas then makes a proposal:

σιωπῆς ἐπὶ τούτοις γενομένης Λακεδαιμόνιος ἀνὴρ, βρασίδου συγγενής, κατὰ μεγάλην ἀνάγκην τῆς Σπάρτης ἐκπεσών, πρῶτος ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν “τί δὲ ζητοῦμεν ποῦ φύγωμεν βασιλέα; ἔχομεν γὰρ θάλασσαν καὶ τριήρεις· ἀμφοτέρωθεν δὲ ἡμᾶς εἰς Σικελίαν ἄγει καὶ Συρακούσας, ὅπου οὐ μόνον Πέρσας οὐκ ἂν δεῖσαμεν, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ Ἀθηναίους”.

That was met with silence until a Spartan, a kinsman of Brasidas who had been exiled from Sparta under severe pressure, was the first to get up the courage to speak. 'Why are we looking for a place where we can escape from the king? We've got sea and ships. Both can take us to Sicily and Syracuse, where we wouldn't have to fear the Persians, or the Athenians for that matter'. (8.2.12)

Chaereas, testing the strength of opinion, momentarily pretends not to agree, before offering his full support to the plan (8.2.13–14). These two episodes should, I suggest, be considered in counterpoint with one another, given their explicit citation of individuals and events related to moments of Spartan history.

As scholars have demonstrated, Chaereas and his squadron of Dorian mercenaries represent a polysemous prospect. In this part of the novel, behind Chaereas himself is said to lie an impressively glittering cast of characters from the annals of Greek literature and history: his speeches and actions recall a variety of Homeric heroes (Achilles, Diomedes, Odysseus and Agamemnon);¹⁶ the dramatic metamorphosis in his character (from suicidal and lovelorn in books 1–6 to accomplished military leader and rhetorical maestro in books 7–8) resembles the Athenian Themistocles;¹⁷ the description of his entry into the harbour at Syracuse seems modelled in part on that of the Athenian Alcibiades from Samos into the Piraeus in 407 BC;¹⁸ Chaereas' military action on behalf of the Egyptians against Persia parallels the activities of the Athenian general Chabrias, who commanded the Egyptian fleet against the Persian territory of Syria in King Tachos' revolt from Artaxerxes II in 360 BC, and whose force also contained Spartan mercenaries;¹⁹ Chaereas likewise plays the role of the Spartan king Agesilaus II, who in 361 BC headed a Spartan mercenary outfit for the Egyptian king, Nectanebo I, against Persia; and Alexander's siege of Tyre in 333/2

¹⁶ De Temmerman (2014) 90–99 offers details.

¹⁷ De Temmerman (2014) 82–114 is a thorough account of Chaereas' character change, with 108–09 on Themistocles.

¹⁸ Hunter (1994) 1058; Smith (2007) 221–25; De Temmerman (2014) 101–02.

¹⁹ Rohde (1914) 523 n.2; Perry (1930) 100 n.11; Bartsch (1934) 5; Salmon (1961); Goold (1995) 12; Smith (2007) 20; Tilg (2010) 48; De Temmerman (2014) 110.

BC provides a model for Chaereas' capture of the same city.²⁰ Finally, his conveyance of Persian spoils back to Syracuse may represent a reversal of the Roman general Marcellus' spoliation of that city in 211 BC.²¹

Analogies pertaining specifically to Sparta have also been canvassed. A group of Greek mercenaries serving in an army in revolt from Persia bears an obvious and significant resemblance to the events of 401–399 BC, as famously narrated in Xenophon of Athens' *Anabasis* and *Hellenica*, when Cyrus the Younger hired 10,000 Greek mercenaries, under the command of a series of Spartan generals and harmosts (Clearchus, Cheirisophus and, later, Thibron),²² as well as Xenophon himself, with the aim of seizing the Persian throne from his brother, Artaxerxes II.²³ Particular elements of these events have clearly influenced Chariton's novel: both Chaereas and Cyrus are explicit in their choice of *Peloponnesian* mercenaries (*An.* 1.1.6);²⁴ speeches made by Clearchus and Xenophon to their men regarding the choice of leader, or by Xenophon to his men before engaging the Persians, are mirrored by that of Chaereas to his Dorians (7.3.10).²⁵ Or, when Chaereas deceptively identifies himself and his men to the Tyrians as Greek mercenaries who have not been paid by the Egyptians (whom, he claims, are plotting to kill the Greeks), they are, according to Stephen Trzaskoma, lodging a 'complaint always on the lips of the Cyreans' and reflecting 'the most famous plot by a monarch of Persia to kill Greek mercenaries', namely that from the *Anabasis*.²⁶ Finally, it is also tempting to detect in Chaereas' negotiation of peace between the Persian king Artaxerxes and the Egyptians in book 8 a hint of the Spartan Antalcidas, who, on behalf of the Athenians, famously engineered the so-called 'King's Peace' (or 'Peace of Antalcidas') with Artaxerxes II in 387/6 BC.²⁷

Such is the medley of historical analogies (predominantly Spartan, but also Athenian, Persian, Macedonian and Roman) that has been proposed for Chaereas and his mercenary band. Chariton is clearly well read in classical historiography, expecting a comparable level of *paideia* from his readers, and his reputation as author of a 'historical novel' is hard earned.²⁸ Yet all the analogies outlined above operate more generally at the structural and thematic levels, and those relating to Sparta in particular, whilst exhibiting certain lexical parallels with Xenophon of Athens, trade chiefly on Sparta's reputation for fielding mercenary forces in the destabilized Greek world of the fourth century BC.²⁹ They do not, however, account for those Spartan personalities who are explicitly cited, in particular Leonidas and Brasidas.

ii. The Leonideia festival

In his pre-battle speech prior to their capture of Tyre, the Syracusan Chaereas explicitly compares himself and his 300 men (comprising Peloponnesians and also 20 Sicilians) to Leonidas and his 300 Spartans, who held the pass at Thermopylae in the face of the Persian

²⁰ Zimmermann (1961) 343; Plepelits (1976) 17; Hunter (1994) 1057; Trzaskoma (2011) 30 n.73. In the fighting that ensues, the phrase 'in this indescribable confusion' (ἐν δὲ τῷ ἀδιηγίτῳ τούτῳ ταραχῶ, 7.4.9) is lifted verbatim from Xen. *Cyr.* 7.1.32.

²¹ Jolowicz (2018b) 140–42. More contemporary Romans have been adduced as influential on Chaereas' character in other parts of the novel: Bowie (2002) 55 on Cassius Chaerea; Perry (1967) 138, Hunter (1994) 1079–82 and Jolowicz (2018a) on Nero (and his false avatars).

²² See Millender (2019) on Spartan commanders in Xenophon's *Anabasis*.

²³ Trzaskoma (2011) is a detailed account of how Chariton's novel tracks the structure and plotline of the account in Xenophon's *Anabasis*. See Trzaskoma (2018) on citations of Xenophon in Chariton.

²⁴ See Trzaskoma (2011) 26.

²⁵ Choice of leader: *An.* 1.3.15 (Clearchus); *An.* 3.1.25, 6.1.29 (Xenophon). Before engaging the Persians: *An.* 3.2.7–32. See Laplace (1997) 51 with n.35; Smith (2007) 173; De Temmerman (2009) 254; Trzaskoma (2011) 26–29.

²⁶ Trzaskoma (2011) 27, citing *An.* 1.4.3.

²⁷ Alvares (2001–2002) 139–40; cf. Plut. *Artax.* 21.5.

²⁸ On this designation, see Hägg (1987); cf. Hunter (1994) 1068 on Chariton's historiographical style.

²⁹ See Millender (2006) on Spartan mercenaries.

advance in 480 BC.³⁰ The parallel is unhappy insofar as Leonidas and all but two of his men die and the Persians take the pass, but Chaereas' point is not necessarily that he and his men will perish,³¹ but to show what a small group of Greeks can do against a large number of non-Greeks,³² and to assure his men of future prestige. Chariton's elaborate and explicit comparison of Chaereas with Leonidas at Thermopylae can, I suggest, be keyed into a number of Imperial-period phenomena: the Leonideia festival, the Spartan Euryclid dynasty and Sparta's role as a paragon of military strength. All of these reflect the symbolic significance and contemporary role (cultural, political, military) of Sparta in the Roman Empire, especially against the backdrop of the commemoration of the Persian Wars.

Commemoration of the Persian Wars became an important component of Rome's ideological arsenal from the Augustan period onwards. Seneca's *Suasoriae* attest to the fact that, at least in the Augustan and Tiberian periods, commemoration of the Spartan hero Leonidas and his actions at Thermopylae was a popular topic for declaimers: *Suasoria* 2.2, entitled 'The 300 Spartans sent against Xerxes deliberate whether they too should retreat following the flight of the contingents of 300 sent from all over Greece', records no fewer than 12 declaimers who spoke on this theme.³³ With encouragement from the imperial centre, such commemoration, usually articulated within an agonistic and festival structure, was central to the creation and maintenance of Greek identity; Athens and Sparta were the principal importers of, and participants in, this ideology.³⁴

Whilst Athens focused its commemorative efforts on Marathon, Salamis, Plataea and Eurymedon,³⁵ Sparta could stake a more obvious claim to pre-eminence at Thermopylae. The annual Spartan festival of the Leonideia is a prime example. The periegete Pausanias, writing in the third quarter of the second century, is informative:

Opposite the theatre are two tombs; the first is that of Pausanias, the general at Plataea, the second is that of Leonidas. Every year they deliver speeches over them, and hold a contest in which none may compete except Spartans. The bones of Leonidas were taken by Pausanias from Thermopylae forty years after the battle. There is set up a slab with the names, and their fathers' names, of those who endured the struggle at Thermopylae against the Persians. (Paus. 3.14.1, tr. Jones and Ormerod (1926))

This is certainly a reference to the Leonideia, a festival honouring the actions of Leonidas and his 300 at Thermopylae. An epigraphic dossier indicates that the festival was reorganized in the Trajanic period by a certain C. Julius Agesilaus, whose endowment allowed for prizes to be doubled in value (IG V 1.18–20). His reorganization was no doubt spurred by Trajan's campaigns against the Dacians and Parthians and the resultant revival of commemoration of the Persian Wars in imperial Rome.³⁶ The festival included athletic

³⁰ Along with 700 Thespians and a number of others; see Hdt. 7.204–33.

³¹ See De Temmerman (2014) 91 on Chaereas' characterization as suicidal in this connection. Cf. Trzaskoma (2011) 27: 'it is a bit surprising ... that none of Chaereas' chosen mercenaries seems to have any hesitation about following a leader who is bent on dying a glorious death'.

³² Chariton rounds down the figure given at Hdt. 7.186 for the number of Persians at Thermopylae (5,283,220). On numbers in this episode, see Cartledge (2002) 175–76.

³³ This is in contrast to the three who, in *Suas.* 2.5, speak on an Athenian topic; see Spawforth (2012) 127.

³⁴ Jung (2006) and Spawforth (2012) 103–41 are comprehensive accounts, the latter observing, at 128, that 'Athens and Sparta were exposed to the full glare of Augustan ideology in a way which was not true of other provincial cities in either the east or, indeed, the west'. See Lafond (2006) on cities in the Peloponnese.

³⁵ See Oudot (2010) on the declamatory topic of Athenian victories amongst second-century sophists. Cic. *Off.* 1.18.61 attests to their earlier prominence in rhetorical schools.

³⁶ Further discussion: Cartledge and Spawforth (2002) 192–93; Spawforth (2012) 124–29. Birley (1997) 239 suggests AD 121, the 600th anniversary of Thermopylae, as a plausible date for Agesilaus' endowment and re-establishment of the festival.

contests (at which victors are attested from as far afield as Sardis and Alexandria, as well as perhaps Thyateira, Sidon and Tarsus)³⁷ and speeches, which probably involved a 'commemoration of the dead by ceremonial oratory'.³⁸ Indeed, that the name Leonidas lived on in Spartan cultural memory of the Roman period is shown by its appearance in a list of *gerontes* of AD 136/7.³⁹

This commemorative impulse can, I suggest, help explain Chaereas' focus on future remembrance: 'in the future (εἰς τε τὸ μέλλον) you shall leave behind an undying memory of heroism (ὄνομα καταλείμετε τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀθάνατον), and just as all men commemorate (ὑμνοῦσι) the 300 of Othryadas or Leonidas, so they will honour (ἀνευφημήσουσιν) the 300 of Chaereas'. Chaereas' analogy and the language in which it is couched constitute a possible awareness, on Chariton's part, of Leonidas as a recipient of cultic honours, a phenomenon institutionalized at Sparta by the establishment of the Leonideia festival. To be sure, it would go beyond the evidence to insist that Chariton's ὑμνοῦσι necessarily implies a specific reference to the Leonideia (as opposed to the more general phenomenon of remembrance of the 300), but it is a reasonable likelihood given the traditional and widespread use of the verb ὑμνέω (and cognates) in connection with athletic winners on the festival circuit and, more specifically, the verb's sense of regularized and repetitive praise (such as that at an annual festival) in Plato and subsequent authors.⁴⁰ Of course, whilst the extended analogy in Chaereas' speech is that between himself and Leonidas at Thermopylae, the addition of Othryadas also points to the Imperial-period tendency to conflate the two heroes (Leonidas and Othryadas) in declamatory, rhetorical and philosophical contexts.⁴¹ But Othryadas is a less relevant paradigm here than Leonidas: textual corruption makes it uncertain that Othryadas is in fact named and, even if he is, he was the sole survivor in a combat (the 'Battle of Champions') between two Greek armies (Spartans and Argives) of equal number (300; Hdt. 1.82); this is in contrast to Leonidas and Chaereas, who fight against non-Greeks of vastly superior number.⁴² Leonidas and his feat at Thermopylae are therefore the more resonant and obvious point of focus.

But why might Chariton, who claims to be from Carian Aphrodisias in Asia Minor, be interested in contemporary Spartan phenomena such as the Leonideia? A general answer relates to the fact that Athens and Sparta were symbolic centrepieces of the Greek world, paradigmatically so, in terms of their opposition during the Peloponnesian War, a major result of which was the Athenian defeat at the hands of the Syracusan Hermocrates (the protagonist Callirhoe's father) in 413 BC. Hence Chariton, or at least his characters, exhibit a sustained aversion to anything Athenian: the pirate Theron avoids Athens and criticizes Athenian society (1.11.6) and the Athenian defeat off Sicily is a repeated frame of reference (1.1.13, 1.11.2, 7.5.8).⁴³ This results in an unsurprising gravitational pull towards Sparta at the level of the dramatic fiction, which is evident from Chariton's manifest interest in personae and events connected with Spartan history. Sparta was not, however, a mere name from the pages of history: it was at the ideological heart of contemporary Greece and of Rome's construction of Greekness (as I shall discuss more fully below).⁴⁴ Chariton's novel cannot be divorced from the context of its production: Aphrodisias' pro-Roman loyalty in

³⁷ See Cartledge and Spawforth (2002), appendix 4.

³⁸ Spawforth (2012) 124.

³⁹ At line 12, Steinhauer (1998).

⁴⁰ On ὑμνος and ὑμνέω, see Brumbaugh (2017), especially 173 on the verb's sense of repetitive praise in Plato and later authors. Cf. the appearance of the verb ὑμνέω in SEG 50.1152, a fragment concerning a festival at Ephesus in the first half of the second century AD.

⁴¹ For example, Sen. *Suas.* 2.2; Luc. *Rhetorum praeceptor* 18; Men. *Rhet.* 3.365.5–9 Spengel; Maximus Tyrius, *Dissertationes* 23.2.55–57, 32.10.182–92 Trapp. See Franchi (2012), (2013) and n.15 above.

⁴² See n.15 above.

⁴³ See Smith (2007), with n.63 below, on the role of Athens in Chariton's novel.

⁴⁴ See especially Rawson (1969) 326–50; Spawforth (2012) 86–100, 117–30.

the Mithridatic and civil wars ensured its continued close ties with, and privileges from, Rome throughout the Imperial period, and indeed scholarship has demonstrated how various strands of Chariton's novel attest to his engagement with Roman power and its implications from an Aphrodisian perspective.⁴⁵ Hence, Chariton's Spartans invite interpretation on the basis of the political and cultural valence of Sparta in the contemporary world.

iii. The Euryclids and the Spartan reputation for military strength

Chariton's Leonidas analogy, and the allusion to the Leonideia that I suggest it constitutes, can be triangulated with two interlinked elements, both central to the Spartan focus in the episode under discussion: the sensationally powerful Spartan Euryclid dynasty and the stereotype, ventilated and encouraged by Rome, of Sparta as a paragon of martial valour. A connection with the Leonideia need not necessitate a *terminus post quem* of the Trajanic period for Chariton's novel:⁴⁶ the original establishment of the Leonideia long predates Agesilaus' endowment and can in fact be linked with a relative degree of certainty to the Spartan dynast C. Julius Eurycles, whose descendants (with Roman support) dominated Peloponnesian affairs until at least the Hadrianic period; indeed, and crucially for my argument, the Euryclids were 'one of the most important families of the Peloponnese and of imperial Greece at large'.⁴⁷ A brief résumé of this family's achievements confirms their importance in the politics and culture of the Imperial Greek world; and, more specifically, it elucidates their role in the Leonideia festival and their contribution to the stereotype of Sparta as a militarily oriented society. Given their position as the most powerful Spartans from the Augustan to Hadrianic periods, the Euryclids are a potentially significant frame of reference for Chariton and his Spartan interests.

In Rome's eyes, Sparta was the darling of the Greek world, a status in large part due to the Euryclids. Warm relations between Sparta and Rome's imperial family can be traced to 42 BC, when 2,000 Spartan auxiliaries died fighting for the triumvirs at Philippi (Plut. *Brut.* 41.4). This was quickly bolstered by Spartan support for Octavian: besides Mantinea, Sparta was the only city in Greece to declare for Octavian in 33 BC (Paus. 8.8.12).⁴⁸ At Actium, Sparta acquitted itself well through the heroic actions of C. Julius Eurycles, who led the Spartan force against Antony; in return, Augustus awarded the city the presidency of the newly refounded Actian Games (Plut. *Ant.* 67.1–4; Strabo 7.7.6).⁴⁹ Strabo comments on the 'special honour' in which Rome held Sparta and on Eurycles' *philia* with Augustus (8.5.5), designating him as *hēgemōn* of the Spartans (8.5.1). He was closely associated with the city's building programme: archaeological work on the Augustan theatre and on the Persian stoa in the agora has shown that both elements played a vital role in Sparta's (revived) commemoration of the Persian Wars.⁵⁰ Antony Spawforth is confident that 'Eurycles, at a

⁴⁵ See especially the items listed in nn.8–9 above. On Aphrodisias' role in the Mithridatic and civil wars, see Reynolds (1982), documents 1–13.

⁴⁶ Although it would satisfy the contentions of a number of scholars with regard to Chariton's date: Hernández-Lara (1994) and Ruiz-Montero (1991) 489, on linguistic grounds; Laplace (2011), on connections between Chariton's Demetrius and Demetrius the Cynic; Jones (1992) and Morgan (2017) 390, on connections between Chariton's Dionysius and the Hadrianic sophist Dionysius of Miletus. See. n.10 above.

⁴⁷ Camia and Kantiréa (2010) 382 (emphasis mine). Useful discussions of, and sources for, the Euryclids include: Bowersock (1961); Bradford (1977) 178–79; Cartledge and Spawforth (2002) 185–95; Balzat (2005); (2008); Kantiréa (2007) 159–66; Steinhauer (2010); Spawforth (2012) 124–29.

⁴⁸ Sparta had also earned Octavian's gratitude by taking Livia (and Tiberius) into safekeeping after the Perusine War, for which kind offices it was awarded the strategically crucial offshore island of Cythera: Suet. *Tib.* 6.2; Cass. Dio 54.7.1–4.

⁴⁹ A marble ship-base from the Augustan theatre at Sparta potentially commemorates Eurycles' role, on which see Spawforth (2012) 122–23.

⁵⁰ See Spawforth (2012) 117–30 with further bibliography.

minimum, refounded this festival and updated its character, if he did not in fact create it from scratch, as part of a larger plan to breathe new life into the Spartan celebration of the Persian Wars'; in doing so, he was 'playing the role of local interpreter of Augustan ideology'.⁵¹ Eurycles is also linked epigraphically to a certain Nicocrates (*SEG* 11.679), probably to be identified with the Nicocrates Lacedaemonius who is found in *Suasoria* 2.2.21 as both 'auditor and discussant of declamations on the theme of Leonidas and Thermopylae'.⁵²

The previous two paragraphs evidence the claim that Leonidas, in both his agonistic and declamatory instantiations, emerges as central to Romano-Spartan relations precisely because of Eurycles, who solidified Sparta's position as one of Rome's favourite cities in the Greek world. He was almost certainly responsible for founding the Caesarea (Sparta's principal festival, associated with the imperial cult), and was unique in being 'the only Greek honoured as *πάτριων* of a Greek city', in this case Epidaurus.⁵³ He also, however, had a reputation for being a troublemaker in the Peloponnese and further east. Josephus offers an uncomplimentary account of his manipulative and destructive involvement in the dynastic squabbles of Herod of Judea and Archelaus of Cappadocia for the purposes of self-aggrandizement (*BJ* 1.513–31; *AJ* 16.300–10). And, at some point between 7 and 2 BC, he ran afoul of Augustus and faced trial: Augustus had freed the Laconian League from Spartan control in 21 BC and renamed it the Eleutherolacones ('Free Laconians'), only for Eurycles to stir up strife in Achaëa, perhaps in a bid to retake control of it (*Strabo* 8.5.5; *Paus.* 3.21.6–7).⁵⁴ Despite this, Eurycles' descendants went from strength to strength. Under Claudius and Nero, his son and grandson, C. Julius Laco and C. Julius Spartiaticus, pursued illustrious procuratorial careers in Corinth, a Roman *colonia* and the capital of the province of Achaëa, holding the duovirate and presidency of the Isthmian 'crown' games; Laco was *flamen Augusti* and Spartiaticus was *flamen diui Iulii* and the first high priest of the imperial cult in the Achaean *koinon*.⁵⁵ More significantly, Spartiaticus held the equestrian post of *tribunus militum* in the Roman army,⁵⁶ and another grandson, C. Julius Argolicus, extended the Euryclid sphere of influence eastwards by marrying into a powerful Mytilenean family of the senator Pompeius Macer.

Tacitus sums up Laco and Spartiaticus as *primores Achaëorum* (*Ann.* 6.18), but the dazzling culmination of the Euryclid dynasty came in the form of C. Julius Eurycles Herculanus L. Vibullius Pius (either grandson or nephew of Spartiaticus). Herculanus was a Roman senator (probably the first person from 'old Greece' to achieve this distinction), quaestor of Achaëa and served in a military capacity as *legatus* of *legio III* (probably *III Gallica*) under Hadrian.⁵⁷ At Sparta, he was eponymous *patronomos* and responsible for the foundation of the Euryclea, named in his (or perhaps his ancestor's) honour, in AD 136/7; this festival produced winners from Sardis and Alexandria, as well as other cities in the Peloponnese

⁵¹ Spawforth (2012) 126–27, also noting, at 94, that 'Sparta under Eurycles unsurprisingly displayed a marked alignment with themes in Augustan ideology'; in arguing thus, he overhauls the earlier view of Bulle (1937) that the festival dates back to Classical times and that, after falling into disuse in the Hellenistic period, it was refounded by Eurycles.

⁵² See Spawforth (2012) 129, whence the quotation, further noting that '[i]n Nicocrates we can recognize the type of the first performers of Persian Wars material in the annual *logoi* at the Leonideia: an event which Nicocrates himself perhaps helped to establish'.

⁵³ Eilers (2002) 195, C7.

⁵⁴ On this complex episode, see Bowersock (1961) 113; (1965) 59–60; Lindsay (1992); Kennell (1999) 201–04; Balzat (2008) n.4, with further bibliography.

⁵⁵ On sources for Laco and Spartiaticus, see Rizakis et al. (2004), LACONIA 468 and 509, respectively. Further discussions include: Spawforth (1994) 218–24; Cartledge and Spawforth (2002) 102–03; Balzat (2008) 336; Camia and Kantiréa (2010).

⁵⁶ Cartledge and Spawforth (2002) 94; Bowie (2014) 51–52.

⁵⁷ Full discussions of Herculanus' career include: Birley (1997) 210–12, 237–45; Bowie (2014) 61–2.

and Asia Minor, and came to be celebrated alongside the Caesarea, as well as being elevated (perhaps by Caracalla) to sacred and thus Panhellenic status (FD 3.1.89).⁵⁸ He moved in the highest echelons of imperial politics and society: he was related to Claudius Atticus (the famous Herodes' father) via the aristocratic Vibullii of Corinth, and was a cousin of Julia Balbilla, the sister of the Commagenian king Philopappus, and a good friend of Hadrian's wife, Sabina. Finally, he is to be identified with the dedicatee of Plutarch's *On the Art of Self-Praise without Incurring Disapproval*.⁵⁹

The Euryclids were therefore an exceptionally powerful and influential Spartan dynasty who could boast military and political distinctions of the highest order both at Sparta and within the mechanisms of provincial and imperial administration of the Peloponnese and beyond. Their fame (or notoriety) earned them a place in the pages of Strabo, Josephus, Plutarch and Pausanias, and even the Roman Tacitus. That Chariton, from the heavily Romanizing city of Aphrodisias (like Sparta, one of Rome's favourites), could be included in this catalogue is possible by analogy, but made all the more so by the author's emphasis on commemoration of Leonidas and his men, a commemoration fulfilled precisely by the Spartan festival of the Leonideia: the event was internationally renowned and the Euryclid dynasty had a special claim on the memory of Leonidas in the Imperial period. What is more, there is clear textual evidence that the Euryclids were on Chariton's radar: as I shall elaborate more fully below (section II.iv) in connection with the 'kinsman of Brasidas', Chariton alludes to an incident (transmitted in Plutarch's *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*) in which a descendant of Brasidas locks horns with C. Julius Eurycles in front of Augustus.

Furthermore, Chariton's Leonidas-exemplum clearly reflects the Spartan reputation, cultivated by Rome, for being the most militarily-minded of the Greeks.⁶⁰ In Seneca's *Suasoria* 2.5, the orator L. Cestius Pius contrasts Spartan reputation for high military capacity (*arma*) with those of Thebes for religion (*sacra*) and of Athens for eloquence (*eloquentia*); and, in the second and third centuries at least, Spartans are recorded as having aided the emperors Marcus and Caracalla in their campaigns against the Parthians.⁶¹ The Euryclids Spartiaticus and Herculanus were rare examples of Greeks with equestrian and senatorial careers in the Roman military,⁶² and thus prominent contemporary representatives of the stereotype of Spartan military achievement. A stake in the Euryclids can in this connection also be explained by Chariton's remarkable preference for Dorian Greeks at the expense of Ionians (especially Athenians): at one level, Chariton's de-centring of Athens in favour of the Dorians is a necessity of the novel's chronotope, being set in the Dorian city of Syracuse following the Syracusan victory over the Athenians in 413 BC; but it also parallels past and present constructions of Greek military prowess, according to which the Dorians were militarily superior to the Ionians, and Sparta itself was the crucible of Dorianism.⁶³ The Euryclids were the most conspicuous *Dorian* example of contemporary Greek power.

⁵⁸ See Cartledge and Spawforth (2002) 110–11, 184–85; Camia and Kantiréa (2010) 383–84.

⁵⁹ Plut. *Mor.* 539–47; see Birley (1997) 216.

⁶⁰ On the Roman role in propagating this reputation, see Spawforth (2012) 59–102. As regards their military capacities, Spartans were the Greeks most akin to the Romans: see Spawforth (2012) 12–14; cf. Hutton (2010) 436–42 on Spartans and Romans as mirroring one another in Pausanias' *Periegesis*.

⁶¹ Bowie (2014) 42–44, with further references. Curious in this connection is the fact that, as the epigraphic evidence shows, Sparta refers to Parthians as 'Persians' (IG V.1 816, 818; SEG 11.486). This is a type of discourse of which Chariton, whose Spartans *are* involved in a war against Persians, may be cognizant: Chariton's Persia resembles contemporary Parthia in a number of aspects (Baslez (1992) 203–04; Whitmarsh (2011) 56), and the city of Aphrodisias had itself resisted the Parthian-backed Labienus in 40 BC.

⁶² Bowie (2014) is a key discussion of this phenomenon.

⁶³ See Alty (1982) on the Classical-period rhetoric of Dorian and Ionian ethnic bias. Chariton's 'pro-Doric bias' is noted by Alvares (2001–2002) 119–20, suggesting regional jealousies against Athens. Sparta as an archetypally Dorian city: Hall (1997) 9. The eclipse of Athens from the narrative has been exhaustively analysed by Smith (2007); cf. Edwards (1996) 165 n.54, who points to the dwindling prestige of Athens under the Flavians.

Chariton is interested in mechanisms of power and their various instantiations. This much is clear from the range of gubernatorial infrastructure on show in the novel: Hermocrates' Syracuse; Dionysius' Miletus; the relationships between the Greek Dionysius, the Persian satraps Mithridates and Pharnaces, and King Artaxerxes.⁶⁴ This helps us to answer why Chariton may have been attracted to the Euryclids as an influence on his own Spartan discourse. Not only were their members centrally involved in a festival commemorating Leonidas and in perpetuating the image of Sparta as an epicentre of Greek military prowess, but, crucially, they also represented the very pinnacle of power possible for members of the Greek elite in the Roman period.⁶⁵ It is therefore tempting to link the Leonidean Chaereas' control of 'Spartans, Corinthians and other Peloponnesians' (Λακεδαιμονίους καὶ Κορινθίους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους Πελοποννησίους, 7.3.7, quoted above) with various forms of Euryclid influence (political, religious, patronal) over the Peloponnese and the Achaean League in particular (of which the Roman *colonia* of Corinth was the capital).⁶⁶

It has been suggested that the spectre of a Greek military force exerting itself against an imperial power (Persia) in this novel 'raises the possibility that Chariton is articulating a response to Roman power on the part of the Greek elite'.⁶⁷ Whilst the precise nature of Chariton's acquaintance with (the reputation of) the Euryclids must remain within the realm of speculation, the notion of Chaereas *qua* Euryclid, facing off against an imperial power, perhaps hints at a gently subversive thrust within Chariton's novel against the contemporary imperial power, Rome. Such a claim must, however, be accompanied by a disclaimer: the Euryclids, in the main, enjoyed friendly support from the imperial capital; and the stereotype of Sparta as militarily pre-eminent was one that Romans were responsible for perpetuating.⁶⁸ Given these accommodationist elements, as well as the fact that the difficulty in dating Chariton's novel means that he cannot be pinned with any certainty to a particular historical moment, any claims of anti-imperial subversive properties within the text must be carefully qualified as operating on a more general level, perhaps as offering an elite Greek readership with a pleasing analogy between their own situation and that of a Greek army scoring points against a non-Greek imperial force.⁶⁹ This ambivalent mixture of simultaneously accommodationist and subversive interpretative avenues no doubt reflects the possibility of diverse audiences: Greek elites, but also Romans.⁷⁰

iv. *The kinsman of Brasidas*

The episode in Chariton involving the 'kinsman of Brasidas' (βρασιίδου συγγενής) provides strong textual evidence for the Euryclid connection I have proposed. We are told that he

⁶⁴ See especially Alvares (2001–2002).

⁶⁵ Plutarch's *Precepts of Statecraft* (*Mor.* 798–825) sets out the generally toothless limits of this power, advising the aspirant Greek statesman, at 814C, against mentioning Greek military victories of the past lest it upset the Romans. See Swain (1996) 135–87; Alcock (2002) 74–86.

⁶⁶ On Roman Corinth, see Engels (1990), especially 8–21, with 196 n.15 for bibliography on the Achaean League; see further Camia and Kantiréa (2010) 389–90.

⁶⁷ Jolowicz (2018c) 132, with 131–33 generally, referring to the argument of Alvares (2001–2002) 140 and (2007) 15–16 that Chaereas' force represents a 'concrete political dream' of Greek freedom, and a subtle indication to the Romans of 'how valuable Greeks could be as friends or dangerous as enemies'.

⁶⁸ See n.60 above.

⁶⁹ I have discussed the mixture of 'subversive' and 'accommodationist' positions within Chariton's text elsewhere: Jolowicz (2018c) 114–18, (2023) 127–29. Fundamental on the complex rhetoric of self-positioning of Imperial Greek texts *vis-à-vis* Rome are Swain (1996); Whitmarsh (2001).

⁷⁰ Greek elite readership: Bowie (1994); Stephens (1994); Morgan (1995). Romans: by analogy with texts of, for example, Plutarch and Lucian that have Roman addressees; see Stadter (2014) 21–44 on these issues as they relate to Plutarch.

has been ‘exiled from Sparta under extreme pressure’ (κατὰ μεγάλην ἀνάγκην τῆς Σπάρτης ἐκπεσών) and that he is the ‘first to dare to speak’ (πρῶτος ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν), successfully suggesting that Chaereas’ army sails to Sicily. The historical Brasidas perished at Amphipolis at the hands of an Athenian army under Cleon in 422 BC, and the presence of his kinsman therefore reminds the reader of the military-historical background of the novel’s chronotope.⁷¹ But the descendants of Brasidas were also an important and powerful presence in Imperial-period Sparta: of Sparta’s two known Roman senators, one was the Euryclid Herculanus (discussed above), and the other was a certain Ti. Claudius Brasidas (probably under Hadrian or Antoninus), whose sons, Ti. Claudius Brasidas and Ti. Claudius Spartiaticus, also became imperial *archiereis*.⁷²

Significantly, an anecdote preserved in Plutarch’s *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* attests to animosity between Eurycles and the descendants of Brasidas during the Augustan period:

τῶν δ’ Εὐρυκλέους κατηγορῶν ἐνὸς ἀφειδῶς καὶ κατακόρως παρρησιαζομένου καὶ προαχθέντος εἰπεῖν τι τοιοῦτον “εἰ ταῦτά σοι, Καῖσαρ, οὐ φαίνεται μεγάλα, κέλευσον αὐτὸν ἀποδοῦναί μοι Θουκυδίδου τὴν ἑβδόμην”, ὀργισθεὶς ἀπάγειν ἐκέλευσε· πυθόνορος δὲ ὅτι τῶν ἀπὸ βρασίδου γεγονότων ὑπόλοιπος οὗτός ἐστι μετεπέμψατο καὶ μέτρια νοθετήσας ἀπέλυσε.

One of the accusers of Eurycles spoke out immoderately and unreasonably, going so far as to say, ‘If these crimes, Caesar, do not seem great to you, command him to recite to me the seventh book of Thucydides’.⁷³ Caesar, being enraged, ordered him hauled to prison. But afterwards, learning that he was descended from Brasidas, he sent for him again, and dismissed him with a moderate rebuke. (*Mor.* 207F, tr. Babbitt (1931), adapted)

The exact source of the animosity is not explicitly stated, but it is almost certain that it derived from envy felt by the ‘old and distinguished’ descendants of Brasidas (who still, in the Augustan period, lacked Roman citizenship) towards the ‘upstart’ Euryclids for their rise to prominence and their acquisition of the franchise.⁷⁴ Their competing claims were on visual show in Sparta, as attested by Pausanias, who observes that the cenotaph of Brasidas was located very close to the tomb of Leonidas (3.14.1).

There is a clear connection between Chariton and Plutarch insofar as both feature relatives of Brasidas (βρασίδου συγγενῆς ~ ἀπὸ βρασίδου γεγονότων) who are characterized as equally outspoken, in Chariton’s case daringly so (ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν), in Plutarch’s case unreasonably so (ἀφειδῶς καὶ κατακόρως παρρησιαζομένου). In Plutarch, the relative of Brasidas directs animosity towards Eurycles; in Chariton, the relative of Brasidas makes a proposal that is approved by a Chaereas explicitly likened to Leonidas and who is thus, as I have suggested, indissociable from the Euryclids. It is difficult to know what to make of this.⁷⁵ One possibility is that Chariton has reversed the

⁷¹ Smith (2007) 96–97. Trzaskoma (2011) 32 n.81 sees him as ‘stand[ing] in for all the Ten Thousand in the novel, but especially for Clearchus, himself an exiled Spartan who dies in a foreign land because of a love of war and his inability to reintegrate into peacetime Sparta’; Laplace (1997) 52 detects elements of Cheirisophus at Xen. *An.* 3.2.1–3.

⁷² Bradford (1977) 91–92 itemizes recorded descendants of Brasidas. On the senator, see Rizakis and Lepenioti (2010), *LACONIA* 274; Birley (1997) 239 n.212; Camia and Kantiréa (2010) 393.

⁷³ The scholia to Thucydides show that, in the original 13-book edition, book 7 included 4.78–135, that is, Brasidas’ Thracian campaign; see Bowersock (1965) 105 n.4.

⁷⁴ Bowersock (1961) 116. On this episode, see further Bowersock (1965) 105; Kennell (1999) 203–04; Spawforth (2012) 111.

⁷⁵ Depending on Chariton’s date, it is possible that he knew of Plutarch’s anecdote from the Greek elite rumour mill, or indeed from (the text of) Plutarch, who knew the Euryclid senator Herculanus personally.

historical animosity between the Euryclids and the descendants of Brasidas, in order to hint at a harmonized realignment of the competing claims of Spartan aristocracy (the Euryclids on the one hand, and the descendants of Brasidas on the other). Within the context of my broader argument, this signals a politically resonant message, namely that elite Greeks are stronger united than they are divided. As above, this could speak to a gently subversive, anti-imperial thrust within Chariton's novel.

Moving from sociopolitical to literary matters, Chariton's 'kinsman of Brasidas' meticulously annotates the first appearance of Brasidas in Thucydides. The historian famously records the successes of Brasidas' Thracian campaign in the 420s BC and his eventual death at Amphipolis in 422.⁷⁶ Posterity has been kind: he is 'the most magnetic character in Thucydides' and indeed one of the Peloponnesian War's 'few outstanding military heroes', a 'man apart, a romantic loner' bearing many hallmarks of Homer's Achilles.⁷⁷ The deeds of Brasidas were so renowned as to be referenced at a trial in front of Augustus (as attested by Plutarch's anecdote, quoted above). As a colourful and militarily successful Spartan, Brasidas makes for a memorable historical persona. This is not lost on Chariton, whom, I suggest, annotates the entrance of the 'kinsman of Brasidas' (βρασιίδου συγγενής) with a specific allusion to Thucydides' introduction of Brasidas. Chariton's kinsman of Brasidas is the 'first' who 'dared' (πρῶτος ἐτόλμησεν) to speak in response to Chaereas' suggestion that they capitulate to the Persian king; he proposes that they sail to Sicily, for which he is 'praised' (ἐπῆνεσον) by everyone. Brasidas' first appearance in Thucydides occurs when he secures Methone against the Athenians in 431 BC, thanks to which 'act of daring' he was the 'first' in Sparta of those to be 'praised' for their war efforts (ἀπὸ τούτου τοῦ τολμήματος πρῶτος τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἐπηνέθη ἐν Σπάρτῃ, 2.25.2). Thus *genealogical* affiliation (a 'kinsman of Brasidas') neatly serves to indicate *literary-historical* affiliation (Thucydides' Brasidas) by means of a close lexical parallel.

Finally, there is also humour in the fact that Chariton's 'kinsman of Brasidas', described as a 'Spartan man' (Λακεδαιμόνιος ἀνὴρ), breaks the 'silence' (σιωπῆς) and 'dared to speak' (ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν). The joke trades on the stereotype of Spartans as a silent or otherwise laconic bunch, a cultural characteristic institutionalized in the *agōgē* from a young age.⁷⁸ This has specific relevance to the historical Brasidas given that Thucydides famously describes him as 'not a bad speaker for a Spartan' (ἦν δὲ οὐδὲ ἀδύνατος, ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος, εἰπεῖν, 4.84.2; litotes for 'an excellent speaker'); for Simon Hornblower, this borders on 'that rare thing, a Thucydidean joke'.⁷⁹ In so doing, Chariton homes in on a moment of Thucydidean humour regarding Brasidas and Spartan *brachulogia* in order to generate a comparable joke about Brasidas' descendant. Chariton thereby bequeaths to his own 'kinsman of Brasidas' elements of the historical Brasidas as depicted by Thucydides.

v. Conclusion

As I hope to have shown in this section, Chariton's Spartans, who appear only twice, are more significant than has been acknowledged. The explicit citation of Leonidas and Brasidas can be fruitfully situated within the context of historical phenomena related to Roman-period Sparta, that is, the period in which Chariton composed his novel. This has serious implications for the political ideology of the novel, for a nuanced appreciation of which Chariton's Spartans and contemporary Sparta are necessary ingredients. I have also

⁷⁶ Hornblower (1996) 38–61 is a comprehensive analysis of Thucydides' presentation of Brasidas.

⁷⁷ Quotations: Lattimore (1998) 257; Hornblower (1996) 39, 53–54, with 38–61 more generally on Brasidas' campaign as an Achillean *aristeia*.

⁷⁸ On the stereotype, see, for example, Hdt. 3.46; Eur. *Or.* 638–39; Thuc. 4.17.2; Xen. *Lac.* 3.4–7; Pl. *Prt.* 342d–343a; Strabo 1.2.30; Plut. *Mor.* 511A, *Lyc.* 19–20; Paus. 4.5.7. Further discussion: Francis (1991–1993); David (1999); Montiglio (2000) 282–83; Powell (2001) 238–34; Zali (2014) 64–77.

⁷⁹ Hornblower (1996) *ad loc.*

suggested that Brasidas has a relevance to the novel beyond its ideological apparatus, insofar as Chariton advertises his literary filiation with the historian Thucydides by closely modelling his ‘kinsman of Brasidas’ on Thucydides’ Brasidas.

III. Aegialeus and Thelxinoe in Xenophon of Ephesus

i. Introduction

This section argues that a particular episode of Xenophon’s narrative, involving Habrocomes’ stay with the old fisherman Aegialeus and his mummified wife Thelxinoe, draws its colour from phenomena specific to Sparta, especially from elements institutionalized in Spartan culture by the legendary lawgiver Lycurgus and known principally from Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus*. This has considerable implications for Xenophon’s reputation as a novelist: at least as it relates to Sparta, Xenophon’s treatment of space and (cultural) identity, far from being stochastic or scattergun,⁸⁰ or indeed a mere function of the contrast between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’, renders a sophisticated, witty and targeted engagement with antiquarian material.⁸¹ This also has a potential bearing on the date of Xenophon’s novel.

The episode under discussion constitutes the sole appearance of Sparta in Xenophon’s novel. Having left Egypt, Habrocomes sails to Italy and thence to Sicily in search of Anthia. Putting in at Syracuse, he is given a kindly reception at the house of a poor, elderly fisherman named Aegialeus, with whom he lodges (5.1.1–3). After learning of Habrocomes’ travails, Aegialeus explains how he himself came to be in Syracuse:

“ἐγὼ” ἔφη, “τέκνον Ἀβροκόμη, οὔτε Σικελιώτης οὐδὲ ἐπιχώριος, ἀλλὰ Σπαρτιάτης Λακεδαιμόνιος τῶν τὰ πρῶτα ἐκεῖ δυναμένων, καὶ περιουσίαν ἔχων πολλήν. νέος δὲ ὢν ἠράσθην ἐν τοῖς ἐφήβοις καταλεγεγμένος κόρης πολιτίδος Θελξινόης τοῦνομα, ἀντερᾶ δὲ μου καὶ ἡ Θελξινόη. καὶ τῇ πόλει παννυχίδος ἀγομένης συνήλθομεν ἀλλήλοις, ἀμφοτέρους ὀδηγοῦντος θεοῦ, καὶ ἀπηλάυσαμεν ὢν ἔνεκα συνήλθομεν. καὶ χρόνῳ τινὶ ἀλλήλοις συνήμεν λανθάνοντες καὶ ὠμόσαμεν ἀλλήλοις πολλάκις ἕξειν καὶ μέχρι θανάτου· ἐνεμέσσηε δὲ τις ἄρα θεῶν. κἀγὼ μὲν ἔτι ἐν τοῖς ἐφήβοις ἦμην, τὴν δὲ Θελξινόην ἐδίδοσαν πρὸς γάμον οἱ πατέρες ἐπιχωρίῳ τινὶ νεανίσκῳ Ἀνδροκλεῖ τοῦνομα· ἤδη δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ ἦρα ὁ Ἀνδροκλῆς. τὰ μὲν οὖν πρῶτα ἡ κόρη πολλὰς προφάσεις ἐποιοεῖτο ἀναβαλλομένη τὸν γάμον· τελευταῖον δὲ δυνηθεῖσα ἐν ταῦτῳ μοι γενέσθαι συντίθεται νύκτωρ ἐξελεθεῖν Λακεδαιμόνος μετ’ ἐμοῦ. καὶ διὴ ἐστεύλαμεν ἑαυτοὺς νεανικῶς ἀπέκειρα δὲ καὶ τὴν κόμην τῆς Θελξινόης. ἐν αὐτῇ οὖν τῇ τῶν γάμων νυκτὶ ἐξεληθόντες τῆς πόλεως ἤειμεν ἐπ’ Ἄργος καὶ Κόρινθον, κἀκεῖθεν ἀναγόμενοι ἐπλεύσαμεν εἰς Σικελίαν. Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ πυθόμενοι τὴν φυγὴν ἡμῶν θάνατον κατεψηφίσαντο. ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐνταῦθα διήγομεν ἀπορία μὲν τῶν ἐπιτηδείων, ἠδόμενοι δὲ καὶ πάντων ἀπολαύειν δοκοῦντες, ὅτι ἦμεν μετ’ ἀλλήλων”.

He said: ‘Habrocomes my boy, I am not a Sicilian Greek and not even a native, but a Spartiate of Laconia, from one of the most powerful families there and very well-to-do. When I was a young man just enrolled in the ephebes, I fell in love with a Spartan girl by the name of Thelxinoe, and Thelxinoe fell in love with me. We met each other during a nightlong festival sponsored by the city, a god was guiding both of us, and we consummated what we desired when we met. For a while we were together secretly, and again and again we pledged to remain together even unto death. But apparently

⁸⁰ See n.108 below and section IV more generally on Xenophon’s reasoning for transporting Aegialeus and Thelxinoe to Sicily.

⁸¹ For a recent attempt to rehabilitate Xenophon from his ‘primitive’ reputation, see Tagliabue (2017), with 1–20 for an overview of the debate.

some god was envious. I was still in the ephebes, and her parents betrothed Thelxinoe to a young Spartan named Androcles, who was also now in love with her. At first the girl made many excuses to postpone the wedding, until finally she managed to meet me and leave with me at night from Laconia. So we both dressed up as young men, and I also cut Thelxinoe's hair, on the very night of the wedding. And so we left town for Argos and Corinth, and from there took a ship to Sicily. When the Spartans discovered our flight they condemned us to death. We had to struggle to make a living here, but we were happy and thought we enjoyed every advantage, since we had each other'. (5.1.4–8)⁸²

This heartwarming story then takes a bizarre turn. Aegialeus continues:

“καὶ τέθνηκεν ἐνταῦθα οὐ πρὸ πολλοῦ Θελεξινόη καὶ τὸ σῶμα οὐ τέθαπται, ἀλλὰ ἔχω γὰρ μετ’ ἐμαυτοῦ καὶ αἰεὶ φιλῶ καὶ σύνειμι”. καὶ ἅμα λέγων εἰσάγει τὸν Ἀβροκόμη εἰς τὸ ἐνδότερον δωμάτιον καὶ δεικνύει τὴν Θελεξινόην, γυναῖκα πρεσβύτιν μὲν ἦδη, καλὴν δὲ φαινομένην ἔτι Αἰγιαλεῖ κόρη· τὸ δὲ σῶμα αὐτῆς ἐτέθαπτο ταφῇ Αἰγυπτία· ἦν γὰρ καὶ τούτων ἐμπειρὸς ὁ γέρον. “ταύτη οὖν” ἔφη, “ὃ τέκνον Ἀβροκόμη, αἰεὶ τε ὡς ζώσῃ λαλῶ καὶ συγκατάκειμαι καὶ συνευχοῦμαι· κἂν ἔλθω ποτὲ ἐκ τῆς ἀλειτουργίας κεκτηκώς, αὐτὴ με παραμυθεῖται βλεπομένη· οὐ γὰρ οἷα νῦν ὄραται σοὶ τοιαύτη φαίνεται ἐμοί· ἀλλὰ ἐννοῶ, τέκνον, οἷα μὲν ἦν ἐν Λακεδαιμόνι, οἷα δὲ ἐν τῇ φυγῇ· τὰς παννυχίδας ἐννοῶ, τὰς συνθήκας ἐννοῶ”. ἔτι λέγοντος τοῦ Αἰγιαλέως ἀνωδύρετο ὁ Ἀβροκόμης “σὲ δὲ” λέγων, “ὃ πασῶν δυστυχεστάτη κόρη, πότε ἀνευρήσω κἂν νεκράν; Αἰγιαλεῖ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ βίου μεγάλη παραμυθία τὸ σῶμα τὸ Θελεξινόης, καὶ νῦν ἀληθῶς μεμάθηκα ὅτι ἔρωσ ἀληθινὸς ὄρον ἡλικίας οὐκ ἔχει”.

‘Thelxinoe died here not long ago and her body is not buried: I keep her with me and am always kissing her and being with her’. As he was speaking he took Habrocomes into the innermost bedroom and showed him Thelxinoe, now an old woman but in Aegialeus’ eyes still a young girl. Her body was embalmed by the Egyptian method, for the old man was also experienced in this. ‘And so, Habrocomes my boy’, he said, ‘this way I can always talk to her as if she were alive, and lie with her and dine with her, and whenever I come home tired from fishing, the sight of her comforts me, for the way you see her now is not the way I see her. My boy, I think of her as she was in Laconia, as she was when we eloped; I think of our festival, I think of our covenant’. While Aegialeus was still speaking Habrocomes broke down. ‘And what about you’, he cried, ‘most unfortunate girl of all? When will I find you again, even as a corpse? Thelxinoe’s body is a great solace in the life of Aegialeus, and now I have truly learnt that true love has no age limit’. (5.1.9–12)

A melancholy note is struck, finally, when Habrocomes later returns to Sicily only to discover that Aegialeus has since died (5.10.3).

The inset story of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe has attracted scholarly commentary from a number of perspectives. It is a paradigm of an enduring and ‘true love’ (ἔρωσ ἀληθινός) that is indifferent to societal pressures, applicable to the narrative of the protagonists and a proleptic indication of their own erotic progression; as such, it serves as educational material from which Habrocomes can ‘truly learn’ (ἀληθῶς μεμάθηκα), and has been described as ‘one of the most explicit fictional moments of learning’ in the novel.⁸³ From a characterological standpoint, Aegialeus fairly earns the epithet of ‘senile lunatic’, the

⁸² The text is that of O’Sullivan (2005); the translation follows Henderson (2009), with adaptations.

⁸³ Paradigm: Tagliabue (2012) 37–40; (2017) 49–52. Erotic durability: Konstan (1994) 48. Learning: Jones (2012) 189–90; Tagliabue (2017) 24, quoting Morgan (1996) 174.

product of ‘delusions wrought by love’ who is ‘neurotically obsessed with replaying his own teen romance’.⁸⁴ But he is also a metafictional principle insofar as he lives in a blissful state of suspended disbelief as a protagonist of his own ‘mini-novella’.⁸⁵ Egyptian lore is prominent: Aegialeus’ mummification of Thelxinoe and the storage of her corpse in the house, as well as his explicitly attested knowledge of Egyptian customs, can be seen as a *Graeca interpretatio* of Egyptian practice;⁸⁶ and the phenomenon of necrophilia heavily implied in this episode, whilst no doubt ‘somewhat grotesque’,⁸⁷ not only serves to reify the possibility of a love that endures beyond death, but also constitutes a ‘macabre variation on the story of Admetus’, who imagines post-mortem relations with a simulacrum of his wife Alcestis in Euripides’ eponymous play.⁸⁸ The episode has, finally, generated observations from those interested in the theory of ‘horror’.⁸⁹

Virtually nothing, however, has been made of the fact that Aegialeus and Thelxinoe are Spartan, an identity that Aegialeus emphatically highlights in his opening words (οὔτε Σικελιώτης οὐδὲ ἐπιχώριος, ἀλλὰ Σπαρτιάτης Λακεδαιμόνιος).⁹⁰ Crucially, a number of elements from the story of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe have a direct relationship with certain Spartan cultural narratives. Most conspicuous of these are the parallel details between the lovers’ meeting in, and elopement from, Sparta, and Lycurgan marriage regulations as reported in Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus*. Several auxiliary features of Aegialeus’ narrative corroborate the Spartan connection: the lovers’ sexual activity at a religious festival recalls the Spartan reputation for sexualized religious festivals, in particular for Artemis Orthia; their nocturnal movements and activities speak to the Spartan reputation for conducting themselves nocturnally; the severe judicial measures administered to the lovers correspond with the Spartan reputation for strict discipline; and Aegialeus’ Egyptian treatment of corpses reflects Lycurgan policy and biography. Additionally, their names are suggestive of Peloponnesian (and specifically Spartan) credentials, not least in the post-Classical period.⁹¹

ii. Spartan marriage customs

The initial relationship between Aegialeus and Thelxinoe, and their subsequent escape from Sparta, can be mapped securely onto Plutarch’s account of Spartan marriage customs. Aegialeus relates how he and Thelxinoe, having met at an all-night festival, fall in love and continue to come together for secret sex (ἀλλήλοις συνῆμεν λανθάνοντες), but disaster strikes when Thelxinoe’s parents engage her to be married to a man called Androcles. In order to escape Thelxinoe’s arranged marriage, they decide to leave Sparta by night (νύκτωρ), and escape by dressing up in men’s clothes and by cutting Thelxinoe’s hair

⁸⁴ Schmeling (1980) 67; Whitmarsh (2011) 2.

⁸⁵ Whitmarsh (2011) 1–3.

⁸⁶ Tagliabue (2017) 133–38; cf. Nimis (2004) 47–48, describing Aegialeus as an ‘Egyptianized Spartan’. On Xenophon and Egypt more generally, see Griffiths (1978); Whitmarsh (2011) 45–50.

⁸⁷ Borg (1997) 27, also citing Lucian, *De luctu* 21 on the connection between Aegialeus’ vocation as a fisherman and the use of salt by fisherman and Egyptian embalmers as a means of preserving the bodies of dead fish and humans, respectively.

⁸⁸ Necrophilia: Nimis (2004) 47–48; Tagliabue (2017) 133–38, especially on the verbs σύνειμι and συγκατάκειμαι; Egyptian embalmers had a reputation for having sex with freshly dead bodies (Hdt. 2.89). Euripides’ *Alcestis* (especially 348–54); Bettini (1999) 45, whence the quotation; Borg (1997) 31 n.15; Alvares (2002) 112–14; Castrucci (2017) 14–18.

⁸⁹ Cueva (2018).

⁹⁰ The reduplication Σπαρτιάτης Λακεδαιμόνιος is non-Classical. On the terminological difference between the two, see, for example, Powell (2001) 251; Cartledge (2002) 128, 217.

⁹¹ At Sparta, ‘Thelxinoos’ is epigraphically attested once and ‘Thelgon’ twice in the first centuries BC and AD, whilst ‘Thelxagoras’ is attested once at Classical Sicyon (LGN s.vv.); ‘Aegialeus’ is the name of a Sicyonian tribe (Hdt. 5.68, 7.94). Cf. Ruiz-Montero (1994b) 1107 n.98; Kanavou (2010) 612; Genter (2020) 20.

(ἔστειλαμεν ἑαυτοὺς νεανικῶς ἀπέκειρα δὲ καὶ τὴν κόμην τῆς Θελξινόης). Notoriously, Spartan marriages were conducted by ‘capture’, in which a bridegroom carried off his bride by force (Plut. *Lyc.* 15.3–9).⁹² In a famous passage of *Life of Lycurgus* describing Spartan nuptial procedures, Plutarch reports how, after the bride has been ‘married by force’ (ἐγάμουσιν δὲ δι’ ἀρπαγῆς), the bridesmaid ‘cut [the bride’s] hair close to the head and dressed her in a man’s cloak and sandals’ (τὴν μὲν κεφαλὴν ἐν χρῶ περιέκειρεν, ἱματίῳ δὲ ἀνδρείῳ καὶ ὑποδήμασιν ἐνσκευάσασα); then the bridesmaid lay the bride down in the dark (ἄνευ φωτός), and the groom, having ‘snuck into’ (παρῆσεισθῶν) her room, deflowered her (15.3). Henceforth, the bridegroom is allowed to visit his bride only discreetly (κρύφα) and they must come together for sex secretly (λανθάνοντες ἀλλήλοισι συμπορεύονται); such surreptitiousness ensured that the couple never saw each other in the daylight, thus preserving the sparks of desire (15.4–5; also at Xen. *Lac.* 1.5).

From this it is clear that Xenophon of Ephesus is engaging with details of Lycurgan marriage customs at the thematic and verbal levels. This much is apparent from three overlapping features in particular (I underline the verbal congruencies): first, both Thelxinoe and the Spartan bride, in an act of transvestism, wear men’s clothes (ἔστειλαμεν ἑαυτοὺς νεανικῶς ~ ἱματίῳ δὲ ἀνδρείῳ ... ἐνσκευάσασα); secondly, both receive haircuts (ἀπέκειρα δὲ καὶ τὴν κόμην ~ τὴν μὲν κεφαλὴν ἐν χρῶ περιέκειρεν); and thirdly, secrecy and discretion are paramount in the unions of both couples (ἀλλήλοισι συνῆμεν λανθάνοντες ~ λανθάνοντες ἀλλήλοισι συμπορεύονται). Whilst the motifs of transvestism and hair-cutting do occur elsewhere in novelistic plots of escape,⁹³ nowhere else do they ever appear in the strikingly bizarre combination that they do in Xenophon of Ephesus and Plutarch. Ritual explanations have been advanced for the transvestism and hair-cutting of Spartan brides, as Sarah Pomeroy explains: ‘The shaving of the head and dressing of the bride as a man ... may have been part of a rite of passage that signalled her entrance into a new life’.⁹⁴

However, no such explanation can be put forward for Aegialeus and Thelxinoe, because the Lycurgan elements of their narrative service a union that is explicitly *not* marital, but rather an escape from Thelxinoe’s legitimate betrothal to Androcles. Herein lies the sophisticated and ironic wit of Xenophon’s allusion to Spartan marriage custom, namely that it functions to *prevent* a Spartan marriage. Aegialeus’ unauthorized removal of Thelxinoe from her legitimate bridegroom also constitutes a romanticized version of Lycurgus’ nuptial procedures that emphasizes reciprocity rather than force.⁹⁵ Xenophon thereby recalibrates the tone of his antiquarian source material better to suit the dynamic of ‘sexual symmetry’ that tends to characterize relations between novelistic protagonists.⁹⁶

⁹² Discussions include: Mitchell (1964) 53–55; MacDowell (1986) 77–82; Ball (1989); Cartledge (2001) 121–23; Pomeroy (2002) 33–49, explaining, at 42, that ‘[t]he “capture” of the bride was a ritual enactment of a prearranged betrothal’; Link (2004). On abduction marriage in antiquity more generally, see Evans-Grubbs (1989).

⁹³ Transvestism: Clitophon (*Ach. Tat.* 6.1–2). Hair-cutting: Leucippe (*Ach. Tat.* 5.17.3–5). The unpublished thesis of Oikonomou (2010) 58 (for which reference I thank Aldo Tagliabue) notes the recurrence of this combination in the Xenophon episode and Plutarch, as well as the proleptic force of Thelxinoe’s haircut with regard to Anthia at Xen. *Eph.* 5.5.4. Genter (2020) 15 links Thelxinoe’s haircut to the strands of capillary discourse running through Xenophon’s novel (for example, Habrocomes, ‘Mr Nice Hair’).

⁹⁴ Pomeroy (2002) 42, continuing, at 43, that ‘[t]he bride’s costume may have also helped to ease the husband’s transition to procreative sex from the homosexual intercourse to which he was accustomed’, with further references at nn.27–28; see also, in a similar vein, Cartledge (2001) 122, who cites as comparanda, at 218 n.102, Xenophon’s Thelxinoe, and, at 218 n.104, Plut. *Mor.* 245F (the donning of false beards by brides at Argos).

⁹⁵ Aegialeus here takes on the role of Damaratus, the Spartan made famous by Herodotus: Damaratus snatches Perkalos, who has been legitimately betrothed to Leotyichidas, and makes her his wife (*Hdt.* 6.65.2, adduced by Rohde (1914) 413 n.3); cf. Link (2004) 8.

⁹⁶ See Konstan (1994) on ‘sexual symmetry’ as a marker of the genre.

iii. Further connections

A cluster of additional elements supports the claims made above. The ‘all-night festival’ (παννυχίδος) at which Aegialeus and Thelxinoe meet and have sex (ἀπηλαύσαμεν ὄν ἕνεκα συνήλθομεν) can be linked to Spartan festival culture, which was known for its highly sexualized environment. Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus* discusses Spartan festivals as opportunities for women to dance and sing in front of the men, and indeed for female nudity to incentivize marriage (14.2, 15.1).⁹⁷ More specifically, in connection with the festival in honour of Spartan Artemis Orthia, a sixth-century BC vase painting from the Orthia sanctuary at Sparta depicts ‘men and women dancing and having intercourse’ during a *kōmos*.⁹⁸ Indeed, a festival for Artemis Orthia would provide a further symmetry with the narrative of the protagonists, Anthia and Habrocomes, who likewise first meet (but do not have sex) at a festival of Artemis (in this case Ephesian Artemis, 1.2.2–9).⁹⁹

The nocturnal elements of Aegialeus’ narrative (the all-night festival; the decision to leave Sparta at night (νύκτωρ)) can be correlated with the Spartan penchant for secrecy and stealth: as already mentioned, the bride is to await her potential husband in the dark (ἄνευ φωτός, Plut. *Lyc.* 15.3); babies are taught not to be scared of the dark (Plut. *Lyc.* 16.3); the *sussitia* meet at night, from which the participants must walk home without the aid of torchlight in order to accustom themselves to travelling at night confidently and fearlessly (Xen. *Lac.* 5.7; Plut. *Instituta Laconica* 3, *Lyc.* 12.7); and admission to the Spartan *krupeteia* involves nighttime (νύκτωρ) slaughter of helots (Plut. *Lyc.* 28.2).¹⁰⁰ Aegialeus is thus a true Spartan in his capacity for nocturnal movement.

Similarly germane to Spartan culture is the reaction of the authorities upon learning of the departure of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe from Sparta, insofar as they sentence them to death (Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ πυθόμενοι τὴν φυγὴν ἡμῶν θάνατον κατεψηφίσαντο). Discipline and regulation of private life in Lycurgan Sparta, especially in the arena of marriage, were notoriously strict,¹⁰¹ and it was a punishable offence for a citizen to depart from Sparta and live abroad (in order to avoid falling into un-Spartan habits, Plut. *Lyc.* 27.3, *Instituta Laconica* 19). Finally, the embalming of Thelxinoe in Egyptian fashion (ἐτέθαπτο ταφῇ Αἰγυπτία) within the house perhaps reflects an extreme extension of the Lycurgan law allowing burial within the city walls (thus removing the superstitions associated with burials and corpses: Plut. *Lyc.* 27.1, *Instituta Laconica* 18);¹⁰² after all, Lycurgus had himself (allegedly) visited Egypt and admired its customs (Plut. *Lyc.* 4.5).

iv. Xenophon’s date

Aegialeus’ inclusion of the details of transvestism, hair-cutting and secrecy may also bear on the dating of Xenophon’s novel. This is because, of the authors who discuss Spartan

⁹⁷ This is not to say that erotic narratives beginning with the couple’s meeting at a festival are uncommon, for example Acontius and Cydippe (Callim. *Aet. fr.* 67.5–6 Pf.) or Chaereas and Callirhoe (Chariton 1.1.5–6). The nocturnal element may also serve to romanticize Menandrian and New Comic rapes that take place at nighttime festivals; see, for example, Bathrellou (2012).

⁹⁸ Pomeroy (2002) 108–09, citing Stibbe (1972) no. 64. On Spartan Artemis Orthia and her fame, see Pomeroy (2002) s.v. There is much debate as to whether the festival envisioned in Alcman’s first *Partheneion* (which evokes cult titles of Artemis: PMG 1.61 (ὀρθρία) and 1.87 (Ἄωτι)) is nocturnal: see Pomeroy (2002) 106; Bowie (2011).

⁹⁹ See n.83 above on symmetries between the story of Habrocomes and Anthia and that of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe.

¹⁰⁰ On these and other elements of the education of Spartan youth, see Kennell (1995); Ducat (2006).

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Plut. *Lyc.* 24.1. On sentences of death and exile in Sparta, see MacDowell (1986) 144–49. Christesen (2016) 328–29 discusses Xenophon of Athens’ view of Spartan strictness.

¹⁰² Cf. Plut. *Ages.* 40.3, where the corpse of King Agesilaus II is embalmed in wax. On Spartan burial customs, see Mitchell (1964) 62–63. [Pl.] *Minos* 315D refers to those ‘of earlier times who used to bury their dead in the house’. Bowie (2002) 56–57 sees in Thelxinoe’s mummification an allusion to Poppaea’s mummification by Nero (Tac. *Ann.* 16.6), which would necessitate a *terminus post quem* of AD 65.

marriage customs, Plutarch is the only one to include these particular elements in his account. This could be because, as Pomeroy explains, these fixtures of Lycurgan Sparta were attributed to Lycurgus later, after Xenophon of Athens had composed his *Constitution of the Spartans*, for example.¹⁰³ As Felix Meister has persuasively argued, however, a stronger conclusion is possible, namely that Plutarch's account has no basis in actual Spartan practice (either past or present) and is in fact a pure confection on his part.¹⁰⁴ If this is the case, and given the lexical similarities between Plutarch and Xenophon of Ephesus, we can identify as a *terminus post quem* for Xenophon's novel the publication of Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*, which can be dated with a reasonable degree of precision to a point between AD 96 and 117.¹⁰⁵

IV. Conclusion: Sparta in Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus compared

Section II suggested that Spartan elements in two specific episodes of Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* can be interpreted within the context of the role of Sparta in the Peloponnesian and wider Mediterranean world during the Imperial period. In particular, I proposed that a network of allusions to Imperial-period Sparta combine to reveal Chariton's engagement with the contemporary world in which he wrote, and which can, with due care to the complexities of this engagement, be read as part of a political commentary on the status of (elite) Greeks under the Roman Empire. I also made the (briefer) case for Chariton's pointed annotation of Thucydides' Brasidas. Section III argued for Xenophon's deployment of Spartan cultural regimens implemented by the lawgiver Lycurgus, most prominently in the case of nuptial procedures as reported by Plutarch. This enables a positive adjudication of Xenophon to the effect that, especially in connection with his use of space and identity, he is sophisticated and witty in a way seldom stated within scholarship.

In comparing the two authors, it is possible to conclude that both are sensitive to the fact that certain spaces and identities (in this instance Sparta and Spartans) are, within the literary tradition, endowed with stereotypical characteristics and traditions (*brachulogia* and peculiar marital customs, for example), and are readily associable with certain personalities (Leonidas, Brasidas, the Euryclids and Lycurgus, for example). There is a crucial difference between Chariton and Xenophon, however. Chariton is interested in *military-political* aspects of the Spartan past and present, mainly because of their ideological and symbolic value in contemporary discourses connected with Sparta. Spartan elements in Xenophon, on the other hand, are more *literary and antiquarian*, and inhabit an inset narrative whose protagonists, Aegialeus and Thelxinoe, reflect a romanticized and novelized product of Lycurgan Sparta as imagined by Plutarch. Both authors' engagement with Sparta can also be filed more generally under the heading of 'imperial Graeco-Roman fascination with Sparta and Dorian history': Plutarch, for instance, composed a number of biographies and treatises on these subjects and Roman-period Sparta was a popular tourist destination.¹⁰⁶

The role of Sparta in Chariton and Xenophon enables further connections to be established between these two novels. In both, Sparta is an agent of exile: directly, in Chariton (the kinsman of Brasidas has been forced into exile: *κατὰ μεγάλην ἀνάγκην τῆς*

¹⁰³ Pomeroy (2002) 40.

¹⁰⁴ Meister (2020).

¹⁰⁵ See Jones (1966), especially 66–70 on the date of Plutarch's *Lycurgus*. For bibliography relating to the date of Xenophon's novel, see n.10 above.

¹⁰⁶ Plutarch's biographies: *Lycurgus*, *Lysander*, *Agis*, *Cleomenes*, *Agessilaus*. Treatises: *Sayings of the Spartans*, *Sayings of Spartan Women*, *Constitution of the Spartans*. Lucchesi (2014) deals with Plutarch's Spartan texts. Tourism: Cairns (2006) 384–85; Spawforth (2012) 100.

Σπάρτης ἐκπεσών); indirectly, in Xenophon (Aegialeus and Thelxinoe voluntarily choose flight, φυγήν, which can also be translated as self-imposed ‘exile’).¹⁰⁷ Likewise in both authors, the Spartans leave their native land and settle in Syracuse;¹⁰⁸ in Chariton, these Spartans are accompanied by other nationalities including Egyptians (8.2.14, 8.3.11–2, 8.8.14), whereas in Xenophon an Egyptian element is present in the form of Aegialeus’ experience (ἔμπειρος) in the practice of mummification.

These parallels (flight from Sparta; resettlement in Syracuse; an Egyptian component), which have Spartans at their centre, are clear enough, and I shall conclude with some tentative and potentially surprising suggestions regarding how they illuminate the literary relationship and relative chronology of the two authors in question.¹⁰⁹ As has been well documented, Aegialeus and Thelxinoe are prominently located in Xenophon’s novel and constitute metafictional and proleptic elements that can be mapped onto the narrative of the protagonists, Habrocomes and Anthia.¹¹⁰ Whilst Aegialeus’ narrative has important functions *within* the semiotic economy of Xenophon’s novel, it also reaches *beyond* these particular confines and encompasses comparable elements in Chariton’s novel, as the parallels in the previous paragraph attest. Frames and inset stories are moments of magnified self-reflexivity and generic self-awareness,¹¹¹ points at which an author might meditate on their relationship with the literary tradition.¹¹² Hence, I suggest that Xenophon uses this opportunity to establish connections not only between the inset narrative and the rest of novel, but also between his novel and other novels, in this instance Chariton.

As such, and to conclude, Xenophon uses the story of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe to reflect on his own status as Chariton’s successor. Chariton’s novel, especially if his is *the first* Greek novel,¹¹³ or at least the composition of someone who graduated valedictorian from an early class of novelists, is a paradigmatic love story set in Syracuse, of which Xenophon’s inset story of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe represents a miniaturized version. It is of course conceivable that the opposite is the case: namely that, instead of Xenophon having miniaturized Chariton’s novel to the size of an inset story, Chariton has expanded Xenophon’s inset story to the size of an entire novel, but I find this less likely because, as suggested, ‘framed’ and ‘inset’ text is often loaded with a self-reflexive and metaliterary charge. On my reading, however, it is as if Habrocomes, on journeying to Syracuse in search of Anthia, momentarily passes through a variant of Chariton’s Syracuse, where Aegialeus’ Spartan identity and knowledge of Egyptian matters constitute a sublimated version of the military personnel (comprising Spartans and Egyptians) settled by Chaereas at the end of Chariton’s novel.

Xenophon’s metaliterary commentary, however, has a dark and witty sting in its tail. In the eyes of Aegialeus, his beloved Thelxinoe, though now dead and mummified, is still the young girl he once knew (γυναῖκα πρεσβύτιν μὲν ἦδη, καλὴν δὲ φαινομένην ἔτι Αἰγιαλεῖ κόρην, 5.1.10): in Xenophon’s miniaturized version of Chariton’s novel, Aegialeus has not moved with the times, but is stuck nostalgically in the past, content to have sex with the corpse of an old woman. This constitutes an amusing competitive gesture on Xenophon’s

¹⁰⁷ LSJ II s.v.

¹⁰⁸ For Morgan (2007) 148, there is no obvious reason why the story of Aegialeus and Thelxinoe is set in Sicily; De Temmerman (2012c) 514 connects their choice of destination with Sicily’s reputation for prosperity. Whitmarsh (2011) 55–56 suggests an ideological reason for Chariton’s choice of Sicily: ‘Centring the world in Sicily involves decentering the Greek mainland, shifting it further towards the barbarian East—a symbolic construction of the world that arguably reflects the Italocentric imperial mapping of Rome more than traditional Greek ideas’.

¹⁰⁹ On the various suggestions for dating and relative chronology, see nn.10, 46 above.

¹¹⁰ See n.83 above.

¹¹¹ See, comparably, Tagliabue (2017) 28–34 on the framing device of the ecphrasis at Xen. Eph. 1.8.2–3.

¹¹² On the power of framing devices in ancient art and texts in this regard, see Platt and Squire (2017).

¹¹³ As argued by Tilg (2010).

part: he wants his readers to know that he, his protagonists and the genre of the Greek novel have all moved on, leaving Chariton in a distant past now populated by mummies and ageing necrophiles.

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