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SPARTA

Ancient Greek Sparta was the chief city-state of the Peloponnesus in the archaic and classical ages. Inspired by the Dorian ancestral hero Heracles, who loved Iolaus and taught him to hunt and fight, Spartans developed the strongest Hellenic society under the Eunomia (good order), laws given by an oracle to the semi-mythical regent Lycurgus, but actually promulgated just after the Second Messenian War. Victorious under its peculiar constitution that early provided for two hereditary kings but evolved during the First (735-715 B.C.) and Second (635-615 B.C.) Messenian Wars, Sparta enslaved its neighbors, assigning a certain number of these helots to work the 9,000 cleroi (plots of land), each assigned to a Spartan. Thus relieved of work, each male citizen devoted his days from six to sixty to gymnastics and military training to become a perfect hoplite, as the new-style warrior for the phalanx was called.

Pederasty. The semilegendary Lycurgus banned money except for iron spits and ordered periodic redistribution of cleroi. Faced with the need to limit the population of "equals" so that each would possess a cleros, the reformers after 615 B.C. imported the Cretan customs of de-

layed marriages for men, training nude in *gymnasia*, common messes for citizens, and *pederasty*. Provided only with one rude cloak annually, boys roved in herds (*agelai*), as in Crete, each under an older boy—an "ciren" of 20-22—slept outdoors, stole food from helots and harassed and even murdered them. If caught stealing they were flogged publicly, not infrequently to death in order to teach them to steal more craftily and to endure greater physical hardship. At 12 each boy was taken by a 22-year-old "inspirer," who trained him for the next eight years. Then, as the "listener" began to sprout facial and body hair, he went on active full-time military duty and was assigned to a barracks where he had to sleep until he was 30, continuing to return to dine with his messmates until the age of 60. At 30 the inspirer married a girl of 18, who on her wedding night lay face down in a dark room in boy's attire with close-cropped hair, and henceforth he slept at home. Eighteen- to 20-year-old epebes and 20- to 22-year-old eirens, being constantly together, made the transition from "listeners" to "inspirers."

That Lycurgus borrowed Cretan institutions is attested not only by Ephorus, Herodotus, Plato, and Plutarch, who state that he traveled in Crete to study its constitution, but also by the fact that common messes in Sparta were at first called by the Cretan term *andreaia* (men's house) before it became the classical *syssitia*. The Spartan *gymnasia* and *palestra*, from which, as in Crete, helots were excluded and citizens trained nude, were modeled on Cretan *dromoi*, running tracks. Also Thaletas, the Cretan musician (devotee of the Muses, hence poet and scholar) and disciple of the Cretan Onomacritus, who had institutionalized pederasty on Crete ca. 650, came at Lycurgus' request to help improve the Spartan constitution and introduced there from Crete the Dance of the Naked Youths. After institutionalizing pederasty and the related reforms, neither Sparta nor

Crete sent out any colonists, unlike the other *poleis*.

The Spartan Apogee. After implementing the eunomia, Spartans became the greatest warriors and athletes in Greece. Their earlier poets, like Tyrtaeus (fl. ca. 630), had not described pederasty (nor had any other earlier surviving authors) but afterwards other Greeks, except those in the most backward areas such as Macedonia, quickly adapted Spartan institutions though in a less severe form. Solon, for example, with the help of the Cretan musician Epimenides, institutionalized pederasty in Athens.

All famous Spartans personally practiced pederasty, but much debate raged in antiquity as in modern times over whether inspirers physically loved their boys. Defenders of the so-called "pure" Dorian form (because Cretans and Spartans were the most famous branch of the Dorians, they and other modern scholars assumed pederasty to be a prehistoric institution common to the "Dorian race") of pederasty range from Xenophon to Karl Otfried Müller (1797–1840) and the contemporary Harald Patzer. The majority, however, adhere to the skepticism of Cicero: "Only a thin veil [the tunic separating the lovers who reclined side by side on a couch at *symposia*] preserves their virtue" (*De Republica* IV, 4). Many charged the Spartans with homosexual and/or even heterosexual promiscuity because Spartans secluded their women far less than did other Greeks, even letting them exercise nude in public as the males did and not marrying them until they were 18 whereas most other Greeks of 30 took brides of 15. Aristotle accused the Spartans, like the Celts and other "warlike" races, of being dominated by their women and given to pederasty. Alcman's *Partheneia* indicates that corcrasty (love of maidens) was practiced between women and girls, both classes of the population less restricted than elsewhere and, according to Aristotle, women owned two-fifths of the property in Sparta as a result

of inheritance from warriors slain in its constant wars.

As the Spartans heroically led in repelling the Persians in 480–479 B.C., their reputation soared. Even at their maritime rival Athens, a pro-Laconian, anti-democratic party, mainly composed of aristocrats, existed during the bitter Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.), pitting Sparta's Peloponnesian League against Athens' Delian League. Socrates' most famous pupils allied en masse with him in praise of Sparta: Alcibiades, Critias, who had headed the "Thirty Tyrants" installed by the Spartans after their victory to control Athens, Plato, and Xenophon. This factor plus his questioning the wisdom of the war and the existence of the gods led an Athenian jury to condemn Socrates to death.

Decline. After Sparta's victory, its commanders and harmosts (governors) often became corrupt, taking bribes and ravishing boys in the territories they controlled. Great inequality of wealth resulted from such plunder as well as from inheritances and many unable to contribute as required to *syssitia* lost their status as equals. At battles in 371 and 362 B.C. Thebans led by the "Sacred Band" of lovers organized by Epaminondas overthrew Spartan hegemony and liberated Messenia, slaying so many Spartan warriors that the city never fully recovered, hampered, some say, by a low birth rate caused by pederasty. Two pederastic kings, Agis III (244–241 B.C.) and Cleomenes III (235–219 B.C.), revived the old constitution, redistributing wealth and restoring discipline, but they were defeated by the Romans, in alliance with the Achaean League, in 222 B.C.

Conclusion. The Spartan system of education discouraged intellectual development and fostered "Laconic" brevity of speech. But when the mercantile societies of Ionia, the Aegean Islands, and Athens, following Sparta's lead, copied and intellectualized pederasty, it became the driving force of the Greek miracle.

Each boy *eromenos* had as a distinguished private tutor his *erastes* or lover.

Sparta was to the Greeks themselves and remains the eternal model of an aristocratic warrior society whose unwritten law combined male bonding with an especially virile, austere form of homosexuality. Neglecting the cultural endeavor that was the particular glory of Athens, Sparta nonetheless made its own contribution to the Greek miracle. Inspired by man-boy love, the heroism of Spartan warriors shielded nascent Hellenic civilization from the menace of Persian despotism.

See also Greece, Ancient.

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SPICER, JACK (JOHN LESTER; 1925-1965)

American poet. Stemming from a Minnesota family, Spicer spent most of his life in California. As a freshman at the University of Redlands (1944) Spicer became interested in Calvinism; later he took a Ph.D. in linguistics. Glimpses of his personal life are found in his letters, whose whimsical style attests his keen sense of language, and in recollections of friends.

The earliest published verses date from 1946, when poems appeared in *Occident*, the Berkeley student magazine. In later years Spicer repudiated his early verses, calling them "beautiful but dumb." They are tender and lyrical, qualities attributable to Spicer's study of Yeats.

For the poet Robin Blaser, his close friend and literary executor, Spicer's poetic career actually begins in 1957 with the appearance of *After Lorca*. This is the first of the books written after he changed

his approach to creativity and accepted the notion of "divine poetic infusion," a method he traced to the Greek writer Longinus. Blaser writes, "It is indicative of a new consciousness of the power and violence of language, and in Jack's work, it becomes an insistent argument for the performance of the real by way of poetry." With the publication of *After Lorca* in 1957, Spicer began a steady production of verse in his new style. During this creative phase Spicer exercised a charismatic sway over his San Francisco circle. Among the poets he influenced are Robin Blaser, Harold Dull, Robert Duncan, and Richard Tagett.

The dozen volumes he wrote are gathered in the posthumous *Collected Books* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1975). Uncollected items appear in *One Night Stand and Other Poems* (San Francisco: Grey Fox, 1980). His 1965 Vancouver lectures remain unpublished.

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George Klawitter

SPORTS

See Athletics.

STEIN, GERTRUDE (1874-1946)

American writer. Born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, Stein spent much of her youth in Oakland, California, where her father had business interests. As an undergraduate at Harvard's Radcliffe College she was influenced by the psychology classes of William James. She then pursued medical studies in Baltimore, where she had an affair with a woman named May Bookstaver. This experience provided the basis for the novel *Q.E.D.*, the only work in which Stein wrote explicitly of a lesbian relationship; she did not allow the book to be published during her lifetime.

In 1903 Gertrude Stein left for Europe, in due course settling into a Paris apartment with her brother Leo. The two