

BOOK REVIEW

Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution. By A. J. S. SPAWFORTH. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. viii + 319. Hardcover, £60.00/\$99.00. ISBN 978-1-107-01211-0.

Spawforth's book is a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion of the Augustan impact on Greece in terms of what we might call cultural politics. Fundamental questions are involved: how did Romans view Greece in the early principate? To what extent is that view different from that of Romans in the late Republic? And what degree of reciprocity existed between Greece and Rome in that area?

Spawforth's contention is that (as in other areas) there was a deliberate Augustan program. At its core was a "re-hellenization" which stressed traditional Greek virtues that were compatible with their Roman equivalents: "The view put forward here is that this discourse could also, at times, shade into active promotion of Roman values by the state and its representatives and that such central promotion, since it could target Greece, was not limited to provinces newly and violently incorporated into the Roman empire" (28). Spawforth well acknowledges the role of "diaspora" Romans (on whom see N. Purcell in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* [2005] 85–105) but goes on to propose: "There is every reason to think that such people fell under the moralizing gaze of the Augustan regime when its leadership [i.e. Augustus and Agrippa] toured the cities of the east" (29).

Well, perhaps not. Spawforth leans heavily on the scholarship of German art historians such as Zanker for positing an almost totalizing Augustan penchant for "classicism" with all its implied moral connotations. Much is ignored in the process. Augustan culture, let alone the construct of the Augustan "program," was a great deal more multi-faceted, including lively aspects of the paradox and marvelous in the arts and literature (see the collection edited by Philip Hardie, *Paradox and the Marvellous in Augustan Literature and Culture* [Oxford, 2009]). Sure, aristocratic residents of the Greek east in particular made all the right noises, but, as Simon Price noted in his study of the imperial cult, "the existence of Roman rule intensified the dominance of Greek culture" (*Rituals and Power* [Cambridge,

1986] 100). The top-down view adopted in this book is somewhat of a throw-back to early notions (Mommsen *et al.*) of “Romanization”; a closer look at recent scholarship on that subject might have pointed the way to the limits of “the state and its representatives” as apostles of Roman morals and to a more nuanced assessment of multiple, reciprocal interactions. As for the arts and literature, the Augustan spectrum of Greek adaptations ranges from the archaic to the Hellenistic, an eclecticism that reflects the Alexandrian/Augustan *oikumenê* across the Mediterranean.

For that reason, too, Spawforth’s emphasis on Salamis being refurbished as an anti-barbarian proto-Actium seems to me too absolute. Actium and its resonances had many layers. Prominently among them, as Barbara Kellum has recently demonstrated, was the use of Actian motifs in the art of freedmen, a class that made substantial gains in civic recognition and involvement under Augustus—“his victory had indeed been theirs” (Kellum in B. Breed *et al.*, *Citizens of Discord* [Oxford, 2011] 201). No anti-barbarian message there; rather, the point is social status. And why would the descendants of Aeneas, who came from Asiatic Troy, want to demonize all easterners as barbarians? The many ways this theme is played out in Vergil’s *Aeneid* alone stand in the way of stereotyping. Or, to give another example, the inner sanctum of the Temple of Mars Ultor, and especially its color scheme, may have appropriated quite a bit of orientalism amid all the borrowings for the Forum Augustum from Greek architecture and architectural decoration, including buildings on the Athenian acropolis (J. Ganzert, *Im Allerheiligsten des Augustusforums: Fokus “oikumenischer Akkulturation”* [Mainz, 2000]).

There is much useful material in this book especially in terms of epigraphy. Spawforth offers many acute comments, too, on the (re)construction of buildings and cults not just in Athens and Sparta, but also, for instance, in Messene. These are areas of expertise where he is truly at home. As Susan Alcock has shown, such undertakings, so far from following a program scripted by Rome, were also rooted in the desire to revive, if not invent, indigenous traditions amid the overlay of imperial identities. The subject is rich and Spawforth extends it to the time of Hadrian. There is much to be gained from consulting his book.

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