

Athens Begins its Era “Under the Shade” - A Few Perspectives on the Opportunities, Traumas and Successes that Changed an Ancient (Authentic) Polis into an (Ancient) “Destination City”

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The re-invention (sometimes the evolution or devolution) of the schools of Athens as it internationalized in the late Roman Republic assumed beneath it the story of the re-invention of the town – in the case of Athens the ‘definitive’ town in a culture where ‘town’ (polis) meant something far more radically independent and hyper-competitive (both inside and outside the walls) than anything we normally mean by such a term today. An authentic, aboriginal, organic “polis” should not have been able to contemplate, much less do, the “destination city” thing. Both the idea of a ‘service city’ for passers-through and that of a ‘destination city’ – an urban community aimed beyond its locals so it might survive in part by tourists, students, ‘satellite’ working groups and families of distant businesses, localized ex-patriates of other cultures, and simply as a seller of ‘culture’ in some way. These were foreign, even as yet un-invented ideas (though Alexandria, Pergamon, Antioch and even Naples would eventually compete in the same field). Some aspects of Athens’ re-invention I have pursued in the “schools” articles in the ATINER journals (see bibliography, and on ResearchGate), and in the article on the ‘leveraging’ of Philip V to pull the western power into the East (and hopefully, at the time, to tell it what to do).¹ The study here adds some notes, stories of focus, and some perspective to those works in this particular aspect. DPW, 2024.²

It was the year 45/44 of the old era. Julius Caesar was back in Rome, finishing off the last whirlwind of popular legislation in his career, his assassination looming. The Republic was poised to tear itself apart, permanently it must have seemed at the time. An ancient snapshot of the Roman students happening to study in Athens

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1. This short study is a follow-on to, and was suggested by, some of the conclusions to the trio of studies I have published previously in The Athens Journal of History on the later stories of the famous Athenian schools during the years when the city and the fledgling business of education were re-inventing themselves to deal with the new worlds created by the cultural spray-painting of the nearer East by Alexander (the koiné Greek revolution) and by the spread of the Roman Republic in the west.

2. For the run-up to this episode (and the context in which the Athenian civic dilemma was of its own making) please see Wick, David P. It Seemed Like Such a Good Idea at the Time - Expected and Unexpected Consequences when Athens & Other Major Greek City States Leveraged Philip V to Draw Rome into the Eastern Mediterranean, *Athens Journal of History* - Volume 9, Issue 4, October 2023 – Pages 299-310

that year, if your imagination might allow one, could have included a great many identifiable names penciled across it. Some of the faces would even have been famous. Think of urban, and collegiate-urban, photo essays of last moments before catastrophic wars in our own era – Oxford, Heidelberg, Vienna, Basel, Paris, Tokyo, Athens, Harvard, but far longer ago.³

Cicero's son Marcus was there, drinking and spending enough to make his father worried.⁴ He was twenty. The young Horace was also twenty, though he failed (as Marcus Cicero's father worried his son might) to finish his classes. The fond, embarrassed wistfulness of the quotations I'll close with (written many years later) suggest how much he missed the place. There were also in the student community there the last surviving grandson of Cato the Younger, as well as the future general Valerius Messalla Corvinus, who would serve Brutus, Antony, and Augustus, and die an ex-consular patron of the arts under the Principate. Among others we can only name were two of the Manlii – a Manlius Acidinus and Manlius Torquatus. Not one in this entire list would be there a year later.⁵ Marcus Brutus would arrive shortly. He is the classic example of one sort of Roman 'tourist' examined in this study, a political player or criminal (depending on one's momentary politics at the time) seeking refuge in the aftermath of the Ides of March by studying with celebrity professors, like the Stoic celebrity Cratippus or the windy, rhetorical courtroom dramatist Theomnestus.⁶ He was also readying himself quietly for war. When he at last left Athens for the showdown at Philippi, he took every Roman student and business-family son he could recruit with him, including all in the list above.

This was one of the last times the winds of political importance and danger would sweep briefly through Athens before the collapse of the classical Roman world several centuries later. Of Brutus's prominent recruits, none we know of returned to their studies, though some survived. Not long after Brutus, the headstrong triumvir Antony arrived. Athens did not again host a "safe" generation of students until that of Ovid and Pomponius Macer in the 20's, a decade after the Battle of Actium had cemented the new empire, and even then the city was still in jeopardy, awaiting the final verdict of Augustus for her enforced flirtation with his, and his adoptive father's, enemies.

So, to the setting of the 'civic re-boot,' and some reasons why the word may be fitting. Athens after its troubled misadventures in the Hellenistic era,⁷ experienced

3. The caveat being that in each case it must come from that last late 'Indian summer' of quietness before the particular great war that changed, in each case, that city forever.

4. Cicero, *Ad Familiares*. xvi, 21 is the letter by his son disclaiming any trouble. J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London, 1969), p. 235, n. 51. Elizabeth Rawson, *Cicero: a Portrait* (London, 1975), pp. 250 ff.

5. Cicero, *Ad Atticus*. XII, xxxii, 3. Quintilian XII, vi, 6f. Cf. Plutarch, *Brutus*, 24 f.

6. Plutarch, *Brutus*, 24, 332. Quintilian X, vi, 4.

7. Simply for starting points the reader might keep a memory of the disastrous end of Demosthenes' career (in civic terms), the failed revolts against Alexander (and their reprisals),

a run of fairly quiet years in the last, increasingly Romanized, decades of the second century. It kept its old Hellenistic ties with Delphi, and profited from what today might be called the pilgrimage trade. A Roman grant making the city business manager of the international island port of Delos allowed it to reinvest much of the business and banking expertise learned there back into its own marketplaces,⁸ and allowed an increasingly internationalist crowd of young Romans (and Asians) into its schools and even its own city school, or *ephebeia*. It had for a long time educated the serious students and the royal children of the Hellenistic east. It now instructed whole generations of young aristocracy from the east, and especially from the west.⁹ They arrived, they complained about the oddity of "*graecia capta*," they studied, they contributed to the library, they drank, they visited the old sites, and they went home – some changed, and most at least marked by a fondness for the place they could not shake, and which they could not adequately explain.

So, awkward as it was for an ancient *polis*, in Athens the long-entrenched barriers facing foreigners (retirees, students, long-term resident tourists) who wished to become in some sense 'Athenian' grew more porous. Athenian citizenship, which had once been such an exclusive thing, and then had been used very briefly as a weapon of expansion during the post-classical era, was now reforged as one of the city's tools of survival. Roman officials and envoys had by the second century been eligible if they spent money in the city (as *euergetae*) for special treatment and receptions when passing through town.¹⁰ They, and a small host of other Romans – businessmen (*negotiatores*) intending to settle in the east and daunted by the shadow of Mithridates, Roman exiles, even the occasional Greek-loving retiree – found themselves offered the citizenship of Athens.¹¹ T. Albius, who had "gone Greek" early in his career, retired here in this era (after being condemned for

the dalliance with Demetrius Poliorketes (which involved a pictured relationship of citizens to power that contradicted the teachings of near all the Athenians schools), and the attempts to draw Egypt into the central Mediterranean as a counterweight to the threat of the Seleukids. (And specifically see the article referenced in the frontnote).

8. This is the topic of an upcoming study I intend in this series, but the primary starting sources are Polybius, XXX, xx, and in Walbank's Commentary on Polybius (Oxford, 1957-79) p. 444, and Habicht, C. Athens from Alexander to Antony, (Cambridge, 1997), p. 249, with the entire discussion in chap. 10.

9. See my articles on the various Athenian schools in the bibliography – from a series in the Athens Journal of History. Only this, despite the irony of Socrates' fate, saved the city from bankruptcy and kept it a relevant and competitive *polis* after Alexander.

10. On divine honors for Roman visitors, Inscriptiones Graecae (vol. II), 551.94; 930.46. That any Roman visitor might address the people from the Stoa of Attalus seems likely, but not certain, from Athenaeus v, 212F and the case of Cato. The porticoed Romeion was available to lodge official guests if they wished it (Inscriptiones Graecae (vol. II), 446.29), though many (like Cicero in 51) will have preferred staying with a wealthy host; both parties might benefit from the association.

11. Cicero, *Pro Balb.* 30.

extortion as a provincial governor) producing an Epicurean poem before he died.¹² C. Memmius accepted an exile here in 52 B.C., where a perfectly sound Epicurean interest in comfort nearly led him to demolish Epicurus' own house.¹³ The businessmen deserve an examination of their own case; but the citizenship enticed many of them, though Cicero thought those who accepted the gift of twinned-citizenship were making a dangerous legal mistake. The exiles and retirees also need consideration in detail in another study; but their importance to the economy of Athens' survival should not be ignored. They were in Athens in part because of the safety of banks in a *civitas libera*, and in a city that now made a great show of its sacred status. They gave a feel of refuge or neutral asylum to Athens which added to its aura of old, even antique intellect, and of verbal freedom.

The picture in Cicero's *Pro Balbo* (xii, 30) of Romans accepting Athenian citizenship seems at first sight very odd, both from a Roman and a Greek point of view. Some of these outsiders began to hold the civic chairs of Athens as well by this time. It may help one's sheer sense of the *seclusion*, the smallness and privateness of old Athenian things dwarfed by the size of the new world to picture foreigners holding the *prytaneis* regularly in the early first century, a good number of them Roman *equites* who had moved their banks and trading businesses to the shelter of the old Athenian inner town after Mithridates routed them out of Delos in 88.¹⁴ All these needed badly to be sold the idea of Athenian-ness if the city were to retain its character. For these, as for the newly arriving class of Roman tourists and students – who were after all customers after the same product in different forms – Athens seemed to be supporting and naturalizing her living (her living newcomers as well as her authentic or traditional citizens) by means of her "dead".¹⁵

Most of the new buildings and restorations which contributed to this atmosphere, and many of the dedicated statues, were now by Romans or foreign client-kings. The tax-farmers, restricted as they were by favored Greek legal status

12. Lucilius 75-84 (Marx edtn). Cicero, *Brutus*, 131; *de Finibus* i, 8-10; *Orator* 149; *Tusculans* v, 108.

13. Catullus x, 9-13. Cicero, *Brutus* 247; *Ad Fam.* xiii, 1; *Ad Att.* V, xi, 6. Lucretius i, 24-27 and 42; v, 8.

14. E. van't Dack, *Riezen, expedities en emigratie uit Italie naar Ptolemaïsch Egypte* (Brussels, 1980), who argues that Delos until the sack by Mithridates in 88 B.C. was the center for Italian and Roman trade with Alexandria and that this, not the Aegean "hub," was its most important asset. The most vivid ancient account is Pausanias III, xxiii, 2-6. Though the Italian marketplace was rebuilt after the war, and Romans in declining numbers continued to try trading at Delos until about 50 B.C., the business community seems to have found in Athens the same sort of "Swiss" seclusion it had hoped for on the old Greek island of sanctuary. Cf. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, pp. 12-13, 16; Gruen, *Hellenistic World*, pp. 299, 311-312, 737-738.

15. A reference to the dismissive comment of Sulla when he 'spared' (after largely destroying) the city from full extermination following his siege during the Mithridatic War. See Wick, "Students in the (Ancient) Streets," *Athens Journal of History*, and Plutarch, *Sulla*, 14.

to a fraction of what they squeezed from Anatolians, still had made it very hard for Greeks to afford such things.¹⁶ Athens was in fact becoming something like Lausanne or Geneva: the libraries, classrooms and banks all owed something of their quiet and safety to the same “suburban” shade. Athens was a ‘suburb’ of Rome, in the same sense that the Swiss cities became protected suburbs of 20th Century Europe.

Athens continued most importantly to be ‘Athens’ in the sense useful to its Roman rulers: an “outward and visible sign” that Greekness could settle comfortably into the world of Rome. The ‘inward and spiritual grace’ (if one wishes to press the sacramental metaphor) was the sense that Roman-Hellenistic internationalism could find a quieter, deeper texture of life, one that helped the spirit ride out the chaos, to momentarily ignore the world that was convulsing itself to death in the public sphere. If Athens had not succeeded so well in becoming a very attractive ‘Roman Athens’ before the rise of Mithridates, the Pontic king would not have needed to abuse it so badly in the 80’s of that old era. Its docks were good, but hardly essential to a Black Sea king relying on the vagabond fleets of pirates. The eloquence of its existence as a definition of what it meant to be Greek was irreplaceable.

What were Romans doing in Athens then? Why were so many of them ‘going Greek [*graeculus*]?’ A great many came to study, as we have seen, some of them carrying away until their deaths an almost heartbreaking fondness for the time and thought they had invested in the town, in the classrooms, cafes, shops and shade. But a careful study would also show that they were not the “serious” students. Only very rarely did the Roman moneyed classes produce what could be honestly called a professional philosopher. A young Quintus Sextius, who in this era makes one very solitary exception, refused a political appointment from Julius Caesar and embarked instead for some university town in the East (one story puts him in Athens) where he tried to develop a uniquely “Roman” philosophy.¹⁷ This was serious business to him, leading to near suicide when at first he thought he might fail as a philosopher, and one remembers that the depressing effect of constant political turmoil had helped create philosophers rather frequently in fourth-century Athens.¹⁸ But Sextius finally took his “Roman philosophy” – perhaps equal parts Pythagorean and Stoic – back to Rome. There would be no “Roman School of Philosophy at Athens.”

Nor, though they sometimes came to treasure the culture, did Romans head

16. See for example W.S. Meritt & J.S. Traill, *The Athenian Agora XV: Inscriptions: The Athenian Councilors*, (Princeton, 1974); also, Traill, “Greek Inscriptions from the Athenian Agora,” *Hesperia* (1978), pp. 213 ff. Cf. E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Republic* (London, 1985), p. 17 f. See for examples of dedications by foreign monarchs Pausanias I, v, 5 f.; and I, xxv, 2. Herodes Atticus was, under the Empire, to become the most famous of the “expatriate” builders, though it is an understatement to add that the Emperor Hadrian also sponsored considerable work round the Agora.

17. I. Lana, *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica*, vol. I (1953), p. 209.

18. Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, pp. 94-95.

for the "defining" city of Hellas in hopes of replacing the local patrons and making brilliant "Greekling" reputations for themselves. For patrons of the old style Athens was dependent, as she had been in the fourth century, on wealthy "locals," but Romans were moving in, competing with them. We have already followed the one thread of political safety: Athens as a free city stood ready to welcome refugees from the Roman world, both exiles and those who had merely found themselves politically inconvenient. The mix of these is interesting; a moment ago here, it included both the philhellene ex-governor Albius and Caius Memmius – anything but a philhellene, the culturally illiterate devotee of Cato the Elder who had bulldozed the city of Corinth – and both got the offer of a free home in Athens. We met Memmius, now an exile for political crimes but welcomed in Athens as a job at its ruined commercial rival, attempting to build himself a modern townhouse by demolishing Epicurus' old home. Both, however different, were examples of this displacement or political diaspora as the Republic tore itself apart – Athens (though she got Cicero to stop Memmius) obviously did not require any extreme or authentic Greekness of her new immigrants.¹⁹

The economic changes this 'melting pot' project forced into the city's life were not obvious except to the arriving Roman merchant families, who were not the same sort of diaspora. I hope to follow both those families and the economic changes in a future set of studies, the point here is that a transformation to a travelers', students', tourists', cultural refugees' city was not something ancient *poleis* did. This was new ground in more ways than a modern is likely to realize. But immigrant *negotiatories* were not the only ones who felt and stamped in place forever the changed flavor of the city. It was instead the private and sheltered flavor of her civic life that mattered when giving haven to such of the lost or disillusioned men of the failing Republic, whether a Brutus seeking political asylum (and emotional anesthesia) or an Atticus taking a deep breath and relaxing into cultural asylum. That is likely why the socializing value of her Epicurean "school" was so important. Though Athens never trusted the Epicureans enough to let them loose among her *ephebeia* (they hired under-used faculty from the Aristotelian *Lykeion* to teach their civic 'high school'), the 'Garden' proved with its round of commemorative banquets and cult of the personal life to be an excellent quiet coterie into which exiled Romans might meld. C. Aurelius Cotta, convicted during the first heat of Rome's Social War (under the *quaestio Varia*) for over-liberal and activist "allied sympathies," settled when he reached Athens into the fellowship of the Garden and spent his time listening to Zeno of Sidon rather than stirring trouble, and this is remarkable, as it was an Athenian advertising mission by the *Akademe* head Carneades two generations earlier that had really inflamed the issue from recurring political headache to open war.²⁰

19. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens*, pp. 43, 51.

20. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, pp. 90, 403 and materials on the *Quaestio Variarum* collected in n. 6. For the mission of Carneades (and the resulting chaos) see DP Wick, 'Plato's

So, Athens worked to retain her “Swiss” neutrality with surprising success. Some key elements of city life dissolved under the Empire; this stayed. On his way eastward to his unauthorized but popular, and finally tragic, visit to Alexandria in 18 of the new era, Germanicus (the obvious heir of Tiberius, and a grandson of Mark Antony) stayed in Athens with an honor guard of only a single lictor.²¹ When Tiberius’s henchman Piso came through a few months afterward (on his way, as it turned out, toward the murder of Germanicus)²², he pressed the Athenians to overturn the conviction of one of his own cronies for forgery. They refused, and rode out his anger undeterred.²³ Piso left, furious and ineffectual, berating them openly as the “dregs of the earth.”²⁴

Athenians similarly maintained a reputation for freedom of speech (only a little tarnished by the flattering use they made of it during Antony’s heyday). This image was especially valuable for a university town. One might discuss anything, rambling as the later friends of Aulus Gellius did in the *Noctes Atticae* without fear of being taken too seriously; but one could do it now only *because* Athens had retired as a real political center.

Horace echoed the opinion of Cicero (and perhaps his tinge of wistfulness as well) when he said that Athenian verbal license (*parrhesia*) would never go across in Rome.²⁵ Dio Chrysostom and Lucian later drew out the contrast in sharp detail: whatever one said within the city limits of Rome was “unfair game,” one’s words swirling at once into the petty, vicious, back-biting world of social climbers that no one of any consequence could really avoid – especially at the morning *salutatio* and the dinner parties.²⁶ Lucian’s *Nigrinus* followed the imaginary flight of a Roman property-owner to Athens for just those reasons.²⁷ Such refugees could of course expect scant sympathy from players proud of remaining mired in the game of flattery and power-politics at Rome. Seneca smiled with an odd superiority at the brief fashion for toleration of free speech Augustus had allowed, both in Rome and abroad in (the potentially more dangerous) university towns: why waste worry on

Academy and the “Roman Market”: A Case Study in “Humanities Education” During Times of Crisis or Recession’ Athens Journal of History - Volume 9, Issue 3, July 2023 – pp. 249-260.

21. Tacitus, *Annals* II, iv. Cf. Oliver, *Civic Tradition*, p. 101.

22. The context of his travels is the same in the ancient accounts whether (following authoritarian modern attempts to rehabilitate Tiberius and his entourage) one believes the murder did not involve Piso’s direct agency, or that it did.

23. Tacitus, *Annals* II, iv, 2.

24. Tacitus, *Annals* II, liii, 3; II, iv, 1 f.

25. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* XIII, xii, 2. Seneca the Elder, *Controversies* II, iv, 13. Cf. Chester Starr, *Civilization and the Caesars: The Intellectual Revolution in the Roman Empire*, (New York, 1965), pp. 12, 86.

26. Dio Chrysostom, *Ath. Orat.* 13. Cf. Balsdon *ibid.*

27. Lucian, *Nigrinus* 3, 17, 26.

those foolish enough to "prefer to lose their heads rather than lose a *bon mot*."²⁸

It was the ability to accept and love such refuge, and to give up a game so addictive and self-destructive, that separated Romans like Cicero (who could never more than rest in Athens) from those like his friend Atticus who could truly settle there. Cicero pronounced himself "delighted with the place and its buildings"²⁹ when he visited; his descriptions or reminiscences momentarily becoming soft and nostalgic though always chafing a little that the city was too quiet.³⁰ His letters to Atticus from Italian venues are, for instance, full of new fashions in architecture. Atticus replied to them (so far as we can tell) with an antiquarian and modestly-scaled taste – part inherited from an old-fashioned and scholarly equestrian family, and part the product of his settlement in the southeastern quarter of Athens.³¹ Atticus disliked extravagance, whether in building, collecting, or display. The statue he (and his business colleague Saufeius) dedicated to the Epicurean teacher Phaedrus was, according to Cicero, a matter of personal friendship.³² His tastes, if Cicero is worth anything as a guide, ran to the untechnical and private side of philosophy: their correspondence was (compared, say, to Cicero's with Cassius) very free of intellectual jargon, and Cicero dedicated to him only the simple and reflective essays on old age and friendship.³³ When Atticus tried to coax work out of Cicero, it was generally along the lines of history or geography.³⁴ His letters to Octavian give no hint of political ambition, or of that windy fondness for giving advice which inflates the correspondence of Cicero. Atticus, even when writing to a future emperor, tended toward personal reflections on poetry (and he never praised the poetry of Cicero).³⁵

He is thus very important to us, being one of the very few naturalized Roman-Athenians about whom we can discover many details, and he follows the pattern developed by earlier "Atheno-Romans" in this study very closely. When Athens found itself in financial trouble Atticus lent money to it at no interest, and seems to have accepted no honor from it except an unpretentious statue.³⁶ His library there

28. Seneca the Elder, *Controversies* II, iv, 13.

29. Cicero, *Ad Att.* V, x, 5.

30. Cicero, *Ad Att.* V, x; V, ii, 3; V, xi, 1. Cf. Rawson, *Cicero*, p. 166 f.

31. Nepos, *Atticus* 1. Cicero, *Ad Att.* I, xvi, 15; IV, ix, 1; VI, i, 13.

32. Cicero, *De Finibus* v, 3; cf. i, 16; *Ad Fam.* XIII, i, 5; *Ad Att.* I, xiv, 3; *Brutus* 20, 99, 244, 252-261, 269, 293-297.

33. For the letters to Cassius, Cicero *Ad Fam.* XV, xvi-xviii. For Atticus' intellectual preferences, *Ad Att.* XV, ii, 4; XV, iv, 2-3; XIII, xxxix, 2; XII, xiv, 3. He did keep a bust of Aristotle in his study (*Ad Att.* IV, x, 1).

34. On Atticus as a scholar, Nepos, *Atticus* 18. Cicero *Ad Att.* XIII: xxx, 2; xxxiii, 3; vi, 4; iv, 1; v, 1; xii, 5b. On history, *De Legibus* I, ii, 8; *De Finibus* i, 11; *Ad Att.* XVI, xiii, 1. On geography, *Ad Att.* II: iv, 1; vi, 1; vii, 1. He dated his letters very carefully (III, xxiii, 1). I owe much of this information to Rawson, *Intellectual Life*, esp. pp. 101-103.

35. Nepos, *Atticus* xx, 2.

36. Warde Fowler, W. *Social Life in the Age of Cicero*, (New York, 1915), pp. 62-64.

seems to have been heavily historical, not philosophical or political. Varro (who may have benefited from it) dedicated two antiquarian works to him: a *De Vita Populi Romani*, and a “logistoricus” called *Atticus de Numeris*, which may have traced the roots either of poetic meter or music.³⁷ Nepos says that the Greek Atticus spoke, at least to Italian or Roman ears, sounded “Athenian.”

As with Atticus, the threads of modest and elegant life, of free and quiet speech, of a shade of privacy round all these, wove together and made the cord which drew Romans to Athens in dangerous or merely exhausting times. Cicero may have been unable himself to exist outside the limelight of power-politics for very long, but as we have seen he sent his son to study in the quiet of Attica as soon as he plausibly could. A Roman father might have thought Athens safely ‘away from the front’ (at least until he learned that Brutus was also in Athens, and beginning to recruit).

Augustus, after the war, trying to remake a working Roman world in the wake of Actium, was very careful about this. Athens had gone embarrassingly (if perhaps unavoidably) wrong by guessing in favor of Antony at first, its carefully garnered “cultural capital” flown away chasing the losing bet. Yet Augustus, rather than denouncing or ‘canceling’ that cultural capital, re-gathered it and used it; he laid the foundations of his famous “settlement” in Rome during the early 20’s, then arrived to do the same in Greece in 21. There, at some time in the next two years, he sent a message to Athens: until the city recognized for itself that he was the new “order” in the Mediterranean, and adopted a calm and traditional government in his preferred, conservative style, he would not set foot in it. His retinue stopped at Aegina, waiting. Athens submitted, placing in power families that had not been implicated in the euphoria over Antony, and awaiting (no doubt with great anxiety) any plans the Emperor might have for reorganizing her institutions. Augustus then arrived at the Piraeus, entered her gates, and announced his plans.³⁸

These were mercifully subtle (at least for those Greeks who could accept some compromise, some fading in the perception of their ancient autonomy). Candidates for Athenian office would be chosen from among a smaller pool of Attic property-owners, those whose families (if at all possible) could be traced back to the primeval legends of the city. They could co-opt into their number the most stable of the new Roman or Hellenistic settlers;³⁹ they would not, from then on, allow the ancient and

37. See note 55.

38. Oliver, James H. *The Civic Tradition and Roman Athens* (Baltimore, 1983) pp. 98-100, and notes 6 and 7. Christian Habicht recently noted what might perhaps have been a deciding element in Augustus’ hesitation over the tendencies in Athenian loyalty – a reputed request by the beaten Antony in the immediate aftermath of Actium to be allowed refuge in Athens as a private exile if Egypt turned against him. Though sometimes doubted (and not often remarked today), the appearance of this tale in Plutarch is at least evidence of its currency among the educated in Greece in later generations, and is relevant to the image of Athens as a place of retreat. Plutarch, *Antony*, lxxii, 1. C. Habicht, *Athens from Alexander to Antony* (Harvard, 1997), p. 365.

39. Oliver, *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

defining prestige of the city to be bandied about at the whim of the public assembly.⁴⁰ Athens lost two of its last external holdings (Aegina and Eretria), but would retain, so long as it kept house quietly and in order, its status as a "free city."⁴¹

The pill went down, and Athens survived. She was now in precise and precarious truth tucked up under the "walls" of Rome – a sort of privileged experiment by the Augustan regime which thrived, and did so keeping much of its urban character (as the examples from the age of Tiberius a few pages earlier show), though our era this has called up significant abuse from historians. The re-invented *polis* educated emperors (as visitors traveling up Syggrou today are reminded when they pass the little 'Arch of Hadrian'), it gained an enormous new Augustan market north of the acropolis as the old trading Agora became a 'campus quad,' replete with cafes, groves, bookshops, a performance hall and a small forest of sculpted art. The countryside and shipping lanes became safer, food in lean years easier to acquire, civic unrest rarer...

Today, a historian's politics tend to decide whether all this was good or bad, but, as we are talking about 're-invention,' I suggest a Greek-friendly Roman voice for the finishing words here ...

"A genius chooses for his retreat quiet Athens,
There he devotes seven years to study,
And grows grey over his books and literary cares;
Usually, when forth he walks,
He is more mute than a statue,
And the people shake with laughter..."

(Horace, *Epist.* II, 2, 81-84)

"Kindly Athens gave me a little more learning ...
That I might be minded to distinguish right from wrong,
And to hunt for truth in Academus' groves.
But the hard times tore me from that pleasant spot ..."

(the same, 44-46)*

40. Dio Cassius LIV, vii; LI, ii.

41. P. Graindor, *Athènes sous Auguste* (Cairo, 1927). John Day, *An Economic History of Athens under Roman Domination*, (New York, 1942), cap. 4. G.W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*. (Oxford, 1965), p. 114

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