

BOOK REVIEW

A Companion to Josephus. Edited by HONORA HOWELL CHAPMAN and ZULEIKA RODGERS. Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016. Pp. xvi + 466. Hardcover, \$195.00. ISBN 978-1-4443-3533-0.

For as many social spaces as Flavius Josephus occupied in antiquity—Jewish general, ‘Greek’ author, ‘Roman’ aristocrat—he has occupied just as many in recent scholarship: historiographical champion for Christian New Testament scholars, de facto Second Temple Jewish historian, awkward misfit for classicists. Only recently has “Josephan studies” become a recognized subdiscipline, Josephus’ corpus an object of study in itself. This volume illustrates the front edge of that trend, joining historians and archaeologists, religionists and classicists, medievalists and scholars of antiquity—prominent and less-published scholars—to provide a current, broad-spectrum tool for the scholar and beginning student of Josephus.

Part One constitutes perhaps the best overview of Josephus’ corpus to date. Mason’s *Judean War* chapter helps balance Josephus’ sources (written *and oral*) against his rhetoric, and recognizes Josephus’ increasingly apparent engagement with multiple ancient generic and rhetorical conventions. Statistical analysis comprises another helpful feature of Mason’s work, taking account of book length and episode placement (“Judean War”, chapter 1), and using the halfway point in Josephus’ biography to demonstrate that work’s narrative fulcrum (*Life of Josephus*, chapter 3). Schwartz (“Jewish Antiquities”) provides a well-organized overview of Josephus’ use of sources in his *magnum opus*, and Barclay’s treatment of Josephus’ deft cultural maneuvering in *Against Apion* is both thorough and succinct.

Part Two situates Josephus’ corpus within various literary contexts: Roman history and biography (Mason), Greek imperial literature (Almagor), biblical texts (Spilsbury), Philo’s corpus (Niehoff), and the New Testament (Bond). Interesting ideas abound, like Almagor’s that Josephus betrays in his writing nascent hope for a *post*-Roman (divinely sanctioned) world kingdom, Parthia. One also find hints herein at areas scholarship needs to develop, such as Josephus’ relationship to the Greek, Hebrew (and Aramaic?) biblical texts he consulted (Spilsbury, 128). Many such necessarily condensed chapters only whet the interested

scholar's appetite, and while this section's chapters are helpful, such comparative, contextualizing studies could expand indefinitely: Josephus' work could easily bear chapter-long fruit, for example, situated vis-à-vis Greek historiography, tragedy/history genre blending (e.g. in Thucydides, or Seneca), or another great Greek-writing historian, roughly Josephus' contemporary, Plutarch. But one volume can do so much, and genuinely "comprehensive" work is the luxury of a past age.

Part Three is exciting and diverse, incorporating numerous Josephus-related subjects: Galilean archaeology (Weiss), military history (Roth), women (Ilan), Hasmoneans (Gruen), Herod the Great (van Henten), Herod's Temple (Kaden), Jewish sects (Baumgarten), Jewish priesthood (McLaren), Halakha (Nakman), and Rabbinic literature (Kalmin). Many of these chapters only scrape the surface of projects largely untitled, such as Josephus' relationship to the Dead Sea Scrolls. Others perpetuate perennial debates, such as "whether the term 'sect' is appropriate" for the *haireseis* Josephus famously discusses (Baumgarten, 262). These chapters distill into manageable pieces crucial information for historically comprehending Josephus.

Part Four highlights Josephus' understudied literary afterlives by examining his transmission/reception in Greek and Latin manuscripts (Leoni), ancient Latin translations (Levenson & Martin), "patristic" literature (Inowlocki), late antique/Middle Ages Christianity (Kletter), the Hebrew *Sefer Yosippon* (Dönitz), the Slavonic *Jewish War* (Leeming), Renaissance Italy (Castelli), and English translations (Hata). Here also are treatments of Josephus' impact on twentieth-century Hebrew scholarship (Schwartz) and on *Monty Python's Life of Brian* and *History of the World, Part I* (Chapman), and of course the obligatory chapter treating Josephus' (in)famous mention of Jesus: the 'Testimonium Flavianum' (Whealey). Particularly notable is the Latin Josephus tradition examined by Leoni and Levenson & Martin, a textual tradition "immensely important," "virtually inaccessible," and often at odds with the Greek tradition (Levenson & Martin, 322), yet one essentially unreferenced in Josephus scholarship! This section more than any other presages the burgeoning scholarship treating Josephus' diverse historical receptions, and more developments are yet to come. For example, Yonatan Binyam's forthcoming dissertation will be essentially the *only* extant scholarly treatment of an enormous 'version' of Josephus' history: the Ge'ez (Ethiopic) version of *Sefer Yosippon*.

This volume's strength lies in compendious, diverse treatments of virtually every major area of Josephus studies. Weaknesses are usually local, but never damning, and citing any here at length would seem gratuitous. One might note, however, that Roth's chapter on Josephus qua military historian proffers vague solutions to certain issues, such as the historicity of Josephus' "starvation" and "suicide" episodes in the *Judean War* (these are "*topoi*," but that alone should not be used to question their historicity; 202) and the value of Josephus' "eyewitness" war stories (their vividness could reflect "rhetorical influence," but they may be "eyewitness accounts" nevertheless; 203). We may note also that Ilan, in her chapter on "Josephus on Women," somewhat carelessly argues for "how closely [Josephus] follows [the Hebrew Bible's] major contours and how seldom he deviates from them" (211), which both ignores which "Bible(s)" Josephus consulted and trivializes his many and major departures therefrom. Regardless of such problems, this volume is a trustworthy and impressive conglomerate of scholarly expertise.

Overall, this *Companion* is coherent and compelling. Differences between chapters are noticeable—the editors allow authors to translate *Ioudaios* as "Jewish" or "Judean" as each sees fit, and authors cite variously Thackeray's translation or their own—but unproblematic. A text index that encompassed the volume would enhance its utility as a quick-reference tool. One noticeable (and inevitable) feature of the volume is its breadth of disciplinary encompassment; most readers—whether trained in classics, religion, history, or Jewish studies—will find their competence strained in some chapters of this far-reaching work. The tone and trajectory of the book presage exciting developments in Josephus scholarship. As we await—and hopefully encourage—scholarship on Josephus, this volume will serve as an easily-wielded tool making Josephus intelligible to students, and more interesting to scholars.

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