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REVIEW–DISCUSSION

JOSEPHUS IN THE FLAVIAN AGE AND BEYOND

Jonathan Davies, *Representing the Dynasty in Flavian Rome: The Case of Josephus' Jewish War*. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. x + 244. Hardback, £70.00. ISBN 978-0-19-888299-2.

No one nowadays can dispute the timeliness of a book about a war sparked by violence against Jews in their homeland, the devastation to infrastructure and mass casualties, and regime change. One such book, *Bellum Judaicum*, was written almost 2,000 years ago by a historian who introduces himself as 'Joseph, son of Matthias, a Hebrew by race, a native of Jerusalem, and a priest'.[1] Joseph had served as a rebel general in this war, was captured and enslaved in 67 CE, then freed two years later by the Roman commander and his son, Vespasian and Titus, who were both acclaimed emperor of Rome (in 69 and 79 CE), thereby forming a new dynasty capped by the younger brother Domitian, whose assassination in 96 CE ended the Flavian family's reign.

Known by his Latinised name Josephus, this Jewish historian provides in his four extant works[2] the most complete historiographic picture of the Early Principate from the first century, yet many classicists and historians who focus on this period have never taken the time to read or study in depth Josephus' works and the scholarship on them produced in the past fifty years. There are interesting exceptions, such as Wiseman's foray into Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* 19.1–273 to produce a text and commentary on the assassination of Caligula,[3] but Josephus generally lingers on the sidelines of current academic study of the history of Roman and imperial Greek literature. Why? Is it because he was a 'traitor', 'turncoat', 'toady', or any other derogatory label that scholars have applied to Josephus, since he survived the war as a captured rebel general, multilingual interpreter, and eventually historian living in the

[1] Joseph. *BJ* 1.3: Ἰώσηπος Ματθίου παῖς [γένει Ἑβραῖος] ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων ἱερεύς (with bracketed om. P Eus.); Hammond (2017) 3. For the most recent modern account, see Strauss (2025).

[2] *BJ* (seven books), *AJ* (twenty books), *Vit.* (an appendix to *AJ* in one book), and *Ap.* (two books).

[3] Wiseman (2013).

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former home of his former master at Rome with a stipend and a swap for the property he owned before the war?[4] Josephus' 'complicated'[5] life story, however, does not explain the academic vitriol, since these same negative labels have not been applied by modern scholars to Polybius with his similar status and career trajectory.[6] But then again, Polybius was a Greek and therefore not subject to latent antisemitism.[7] The Jewishness of Josephus has made him a marginal author in the field of Classics, as seen in the relative dearth of ancient history or classical literature dissertations on Josephus, despite his massive thirty-volume corpus in Greek.[8] Now that war has been raging in the region where Vespasian and Titus went on campaign against Jewish rebels, what better time to study Josephus?

For Classics students and scholars with an open mind, Jonathan Davies' 2023 Oxford monograph provides an introduction to Josephus partially shaped by recent theoretical trends.[9] For background, I would suggest that classicists examine Mason's 2019 chapter on Josephus as a Flavian author and his depiction of Vespasian and Titus in *BJ*, then Davies' monograph, followed by Glas' monograph on Josephus' self-characterisation, Mason's extraordinarily comprehensive 2016 tome on the Jewish War, the *Companion to Josephus*, Goodman's accessible yet scholarly take on *Rome and Jerusalem*, and Rajak's pathbreaking and culturally sensitive monograph on Josephus.[10] In addition,

[4] See Joseph. *Vit.* 422 on his property and the rest for his life story; *Vit.* focuses upon his generalship during the war, fleshing out and retelling events from *BJ*. On Josephus' roles, especially with the Roman army, see den Hollander (2014).

[5] I have used Wilson's (2017) translation of [*ἄνδρα …*] *πολύτροπον* in Hom. *Od.* 1.1; Josephus applies this same Homeric label to a kindred spirit, his dedicatee Epaphroditus, in the preface to his *magnum opus* on Jewish history from Creation to 66 CE at *AJ* 1.8: *Ἐπαφρόδιτος ἀνὴρ … τύχαις πολυτρόποις*. See Wander (2024) 94–100, 'Inscriptions over the Bern Josephus and on the Effigy of M. Mettius Epaphroditus', on the public monuments of the historian and his literary patron.

[6] Both Polybius and Josephus came from elite families, were military commanders who then counselled peace, were taken captive, wrote histories in Greek, and described the Roman army's organisation and destructiveness.

[7] On Josephus' 'self-positioning relative to Rome' akin to Polybius and Strabo, see the conclusion of Kemezis (2016).

[8] Consequently, the vast majority of Classics tenure-track hires end up defining the ancient Mediterranean as non-Jewish and non-*early* Christian, perhaps since these areas reflect other graduate-level disciplines.

[9] Davies provides a prelude to this monograph with 'Convenant and *Pax Deorum*: Polyvalent Prodigies in Josephus' *Jewish War*', *Histos* 13 (2019) 78–96.

[10] Mason (2019) 45–67, not mentioned by Davies; Glas (2024); Mason (2016a); Chapman and Rodgers (2016); Goodman (2008); Rajak (1984); in his Acknowledgements, Davies explains that Goodman was supervisor for both his doctorate and MPhil, and also thanks Rajak for her careful reading and commenting on his dissertation, which became this monograph.

the Brill Josephus Project is an ongoing effort to produce the first translation and commentary of all of Josephus' works in English.[11]

Davies' monograph speaks the theoretical language of current classicists while introducing them to the Flavian dynasty through the text of the Jewish historian Josephus that is relatively unknown to classicists. If one were to imagine Davies' book as a Roman dinner party,[12] Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio are at the *lectus summus*, listening in relative silence[13] while Josephus, the dazzling guest of honour, occupies the *medius* at the *locus consularis*, dominating the conversation well into the evening; meanwhile, Davies as the gracious host provides running commentary for his readers, the guests who may never have met this fascinating, loquacious person from Jerusalem whose Attic Greek works have occupied the shelves of every university library and Classics reading room yet are barely touched by the scholars best equipped to read them.

After his succinct 'Introduction' (1–10) to Josephan scholarship with respect to the Flavian dynasty, Davies in his second chapter, 'Political Expression in Flavian Rome' (11–49), cogently analyses two recent scholarly trends in 'how we understand Josephus and read him as a political communicator', laying the groundwork for examining *BJ* carefully by first setting the general stage for 'political expression in Flavian Rome', with Foucault as an interpretive model in conjunction with the postcolonial theory already applied to Josephus, most notably by Barclay in his Brill translation and commentary on *Contra Apionem*.[14] Theories of censorship come into play, with the ancient approaches examined and modern models differing. In an environment in which the emperors Vespasian and Domitian tried to 'enforce boundaries on political discourse', Davies observes rightly that 'Josephus' decision to write a contemporary history which treats issues as important to the dynasty as the Jewish Revolt and Vespasian's rise to power was thus a more courageous decision than is often recognized' (21–2). There were no set, written rules for what kind of verbal expression could get one in trouble, but through a Foucauldian lens, Davies asserts that 'the literary ideologies and strategies of veridiction both overt and covert did exist in antiquity' (21–2).

[11] Mason (2000–present), though for *BJ* only Books 2 and 4 are available so far; for the Greek texts, see Niese (1885–95), and for the Greek *BJ* with English translation, Thackeray (1927–8) is still the standard. Davies did not have the benefit of using Mason (2022).

[12] Mason (2024) 228 inspires this analogy: 'Ch. 4, "The Flavians in Jewish War 1–6" (74–185) is the main dish and occupies half the table'.

[13] Davies (85–6), however, does provide a Table 1 with 'Manifestations of divine support for Vespasian in the classical historians' (Suetonius, Tacitus, and Dio) separate from Table 2 with 'Manifestations of divine support for Vespasian in Josephus' *Jewish War*' on p. 91; this segregation of Josephus finds redress in Davies' conclusion discussed below.

[14] Barclay (2006).

Parrhēsia and figured speech are examined, as well as how ancient texts and artifacts such as coins communicated the emperor's 'character', especially virtues, and how much say emperors had over specific depictions. These are crucial questions for setting up Josephus' depiction of the Flavian dynasty in *BJ*. Writing contemporary history posed particular challenges, which Davies delves into (42–8) with respect to early imperial literature, focusing especially upon Velleius Paterculus and Nicolaus of Damascus. It might have helped the reader new to Josephus for Davies to note that Nicolaus was 'Herod's court historian and Josephus' source for most of the extensive history of Herod's reign'[15] described in *BJ* 1, since it would demonstrate the transmission of the literary strategies discussed in this chapter. Davies encapsulates his argument in his monograph's conclusion (213):

> Like every other author in Flavian Rome, Josephus takes care when handling dynastic representation in his work, but the *Jewish War* was not written to glorify the house of Vespasian. The *Jewish War* was, in fact, written, as far as was possible and with all appropriate precautions taken, to argue that the Flavians were wrong about a great many topics central to their own narratives of legitimation and self-justification.

Davies devotes three chapters to *BJ*: 'The *Jewish War*: Audience, Structure, and Date' (50–73); 'The Flavians in *Jewish War* 1–6' (74–185); and 'The Flavians in *Jewish War* 7' (186–204).[16] In their recent reviews of Davies' monograph, two leading Josephus scholars, van Henten and Mason, summarise each chapter, noting the length of the central chapter for Davies' argument, countering certain interpretations and representations of scholars' work, and providing additional food for thought.[17] For instance, van Henten supplies insights on Josephus' description of Herod the Great based upon the expansive information that Josephus provides in his later *AJ*.[18] Using previously published scholarship on Herod in *AJ* might have bolstered Davies' argument for *BJ* 7 as a Domitianic addition in Chapter 5, but questions would still remain, as Davies readily admits.

[15] Goodman's note to *BJ* 1.574 in Hammond (2017) 396.

[16] The Oxford University Press website for this monograph provides excellent abstracts for each chapter.

[17] Van Henten (2024) and Mason (2024); J. E. Glas' forthcoming review of Davies in *Mouseion* (2025) adds excellent insights.

[18] Van Henten (2024) suggests, 'The *Antiquities*, for example, may present Herod the Great as a critical mirror-image of Domitian. Some passages are striking parallels of traditions about Domitian that were circulating after the emperor's death. Josephus highlights Herod's murder of the old aristocracy and his ruining or dishonoring of unmarried and married women (*Ant.* 17.307, 309)'; see also van Henten (2013).

As author of a great deal of scholarship on Josephus, a history of the Jewish War, and author of three volumes of the Brill Josephus Project translations and commentaries on Josephus' *Vita*, *BJ* 2 and *BJ* 4, Mason is best positioned in his review of Davies to provide constructive feedback across a wide range of issues, including *BJ*'s structure. Mason's review cites Josephus' own passages attesting to *BJ* as a text that Josephus conceived as a unity,[19] not Books 1–6 as one chunk and Book 7 published during Domitian's reign. Davies sees that Josephus' post-triumph account in the rest of *BJ* 7 undercuts the Flavians' own constructed and 'fictitious' message in their triumph (201), since the latter part of Book 7 focuses upon 'strongholds still in rebel hands in Judaea and trouble spreading to the cities of the Diaspora' (202). *BJ* 7 does, indeed, read differently from Books 2–6 because it no longer has the initial Flavian campaign against the rebellion and Titus' subsequent siege of Jerusalem to describe, but instead demonstrates in a variety of short episodes, as well as the much longer Masada set piece, how Jewish rebels and others reacted to and dealt with Roman hegemony *after* the total destruction of Jerusalem.[20] This final book is meant to be equally vivid and instructional, while wrapping up themes explored in Books 1–6, including how the Roman army stamps out resistance at all costs, how the Flavians lead and rule, how much innocent civilians suffer, how smart opponents choose to submit to the Roman army, as well as how the Jewish God has the ultimate say and cares for his people who follow his laws—most notably Josephus himself at the very end of *BJ* 7. This ending is poetic justice, since it shows that the Jewish God is a better ruler than even Vespasian, as Davies notes (204),[21] by ensuring that Josephus' enemy Catullus suffers a painful death. Josephus then concludes the whole text in two quick sentences on his historiographic aims, since his text cannot end with merely a death any more than a Greek tragedy can. There must be a point to it all, and for Josephus, it is his own accuracy in recounting this contemporary Jewish history that must be emphasised, thereby answering his misgivings expressed in his preface to Book 1.[22] This does not preclude subsequent editing of *BJ* during

[19] Mason (2024) 227: 'Josephus refers often to his *War* as a single, carefully researched and designed history, which he completed while Vespasian lived, before embarking on the *Antiquities* (e.g. *AJ* 1.1–7; *Vit.* 361–367; *Ap.* 1.47–54).' For later manuscript illustrations of Josephus presenting copies of *BJ* to Vespasian and Titus, see Wander (2024) 196 and 199. On dating *BJ*, see below for a discussion comparing with other literature of this era.

[20] Chapman (2007b) on *BJ* 7.

[21] He has already examined the 'theological content of Flavian messaging about Judaea' on pp. 107–8.

[22] Davies mentions O'Rourke (1992) as 'offering a moralistic reading [about Josephus' character] that would have felt right at home in the nineteenth century' (5), but does not note the war reporter O'Rourke perceptively appreciating on p. 102 how Josephus wrote his text: 'Yet *The Jewish War* fascinates. This is history taking the tragic form exactly as

the reign of Domitian, when copies surely continued to be made and sold.[23] In any case, it is possible that multiple ring compositions involving Books 1–6 on the one hand and 1–7 on the other are at play in the text of *War*, instead of only one with its midpoint at the end of Book 3, as Davies shows in a chart.[24] Then both Mason and Davies could be right in their own ways about *BJ*'s structure.

In two recent publications, Mason anticipated arguments in Davies' monograph regarding Josephus' depiction of Vespasian and Titus in *BJ*. In a 2018 chapter on *BJ*'s account of Vespasian's rise to power, Mason asks, 'Was it another predictable voice in the sycophantic chorus or, as Josephus' opening language would suggest, a solo voice with a different score?'[25] Mason argues that Josephus' 'willingness to depart from the Flavian narrative on crucial points, while living in Flavian Rome, makes his work particularly useful for our understanding the Flavians from different perspectives'.[26] For Mason, Josephus' 'description of Vespasian's rise to power overlaps more with Tacitus' cool analysis than with the regime-coddling historiography that both authors decry'.[27] In fact, Josephus departs from 'the Flavian programme in at least four respects' about the recent Roman civil war.[28] In *BJ* 7, Mason asserts, 'Despite the triumph's effort at redirection [towards a "foreign war" in Judaea], Josephus and his audiences know well that internal Roman strife was the main problem from Nero's final years. In sum, Josephus' *War* develops a dialectic between Roman and Judaean (especially Jerusalemite) internal conflict'.[29] For Mason, both Tacitus and Josephus provide 'sceptical, deeply human, and psychologically oriented' accounts that 'are at odds with the simple images disseminated in the Flavian triumph, coins, and monuments, and the flood of pseudo-historical literature they both decry'.[30] Mason's analysis alone should spark more interest in reading *BJ* among historians of the early empire.

Davies, however, does not refer to Mason's 2019 publication on 'The *Fides* of Flavius Josephus', which names the very focus of Davies' monograph by

described by Aristotle in *Poetics*: "… with incidents arousing pity and terror, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions"'.

[23] Davies discusses 'publication' of first-century works (11–13), but does not include here Josephus' remarks in *Ap.* 1.51 about presenting and even selling *BJ*; see below.

[24] See pp. 53 and 59–61 for his explanation of how he differs from Mason (2016b) 99–101, but Davies states on p. 73, 'I will stop short of concluding that Book 7 was definitely a Domitianic-period addition'.

[25] Mason (2023) 54, a reprint of Mason (2018), which Davies addresses.

[26] Mason (2023) 54.

[27] Mason (2023) 60.

[28] Mason (2023) 61.

[29] Mason (2023) 67.

[30] Mason (2023) 78.

examining 'the literary portraits of the Titi Flavii in Josephus' *War*' that 'have not yet been isolated for study'.[31] Mason rightly observes:

> First, the *Judaean War* is not about the Flavians. They take their places in the train of Roman strong men that provides background scenery throughout the work's 250-year journey (ca. 170 BCE–75 CE). But the story does not revolve around the Flavians any more than it does around Pompey, Antony, or Augustus in the earlier parts … The work is nearly half over, therefore, before Vespasian and Titus appear … Titus takes up the baton of Roman commander in books 5 and 6, but *The Judaean War* is not about him either. Its driving tragic score concerns besieged Jerusalem, its holy temple, polluting tyrants, and terrors. Titus' presence adds valuable texture and pathos, but Josephus says much more about the people in Jerusalem, their actions and their mindsets. In Book 7 Domitian makes a diverting appearance, in the west (7.85–8), and Titus figures in a few eastern episodes before he leaves the region for Rome (7.121–62) … Scholars have long recognised that the Flavian claims were political piffle, but they have rarely if ever noticed that Josephus' *War* exposes the sham.[32]

Perhaps Davies could have been discouraged from his purpose by Mason's argument, but that would have been a shame, since different approaches to the same text can yield new insights while still agreeing that *BJ* is not Flavian propaganda.

Throughout *Representing the Dynasty in Flavian Rome*, Davies responds to various conceptions of Josephus' persona attributed by others, which he summarises in his conclusion as: 'Liar', 'Panegyrist', 'Propagandist', 'Dissident', and finally, 'Historian' (205–13). It may, however, help the first-time reader of *BJ* also to consider how Josephus presents *himself* in *BJ*.[33] Though a Roman citizen when he wrote at Rome, Josephus never calls himself 'a Roman', as Goodman points out.[34] In *BJ*, Josephus describes his own social roles as: male,

[31] Mason (2023) 82, a reprint of Mason (2019).

[32] Mason (2023) 83–4.

[33] See Glas (2024) for a complete analysis, including on p. 11, 'Josephus praises his own virtues, capitalizing on his unique experience of fighting Vespasian in Galilee'; Glas shows how this stance gives Josephus authority at Rome, yet the historian also recognises that self-praise requires rhetorical dexterity to avoid odium or ridicule.

[34] Goodman in Hammond (2017) xxvi–xxvii explains about Josephus' self-presentation, 'He tells us in his autobiography that soon after the fall of Jerusalem he was granted Roman citizenship [citing *Vit.* 423], but nowhere in his works does he refer to himself as Roman'; Goodman's note to *BJ* 1.16 ('foreigner that I am') in Hammond (2017) 378 continues, 'Josephus seems deliberately to distinguish himself from Greeks and Romans despite the fact that he was writing in Greek and that, by the time he was writing, he was a Roman

Hebrew/Judaean, a native of Jerusalem, a priest, prominent enough to be named one of two rebel generals sent to Galilee in 66 CE, son and brother of family members trapped in the besieged Jerusalem, and husband of a wife who presumably died during the siege.[35] To these identities, one can add that Josephus resolutely accentuates the fact that he is, when all is said and done, *free*. After being captured at Jotapata in 67 CE, Josephus writes about himself displaying a certain swagger when he predicts that not only Vespasian but also Titus will become emperor, and it pays off because Vespasian decides to keep him alive as a sort of prophetic talisman.[36] His status as a captive slave,[37] however, sinks in and Josephus as author keeps himself as a character from talking for the rest of *BJ* 3 as well as the entire next book. Even after Vespasian is acclaimed emperor by the troops in *BJ* 4 and Titus asks his father to order Josephus' chains severed with an axe to blot out the stain of him ever having been enslaved, Josephus does not speak.[38] Josephus depicts himself suffering social death when he becomes an enslaved war captive, and he keeps himself silent and relatively invisible in the text in this social status with which he never labels himself; he does not want the reader to think of him as a slave.[39] And like Euripides' Alcestis returning from Hades, Josephus remains mute for a

citizen. It is striking that Josephus never used his Roman name ("Flavius Josephus") in any of his extant writings.'

[35] *BJ* 1.3, 5.419; his later *Vit.*, appended to his *AJ* in or after 93 CE (*AJ* 20.266–7), proudly declares his descent from the Hasmonean royal house through his mother (*Vit.* 2) and adds further details about his second and third wives and his three sons by them (*Vit.* 5, 415, and 426–7).

[36] Joseph. *BJ* 3.399–408.

[37] Den Hollander (2014) 81 n. 64 states, 'It is unlikely, however, that Josephus was a slave during his captivity', yet on p. 86 observes that 'Vespasian himself married Flavia Domitilla, who had been enslaved and freed, but was afterward declared a freeborn citizen by a *recuperatorium iudicium*'. Every other character taken as a war captive in *BJ* is made a slave or killed/crucified, unless mercifully released through Josephus's intercession with Titus: *Vit.* 419 in Jerusalem, Josephus' brother, fifty friends, and about 190 close acquaintances; at *Vit.* 420, only one of Josephus' three crucified acquaintances survives. In fact, as den Hollander (2014) 88 shows, Josephus has rebels, such as Eleazar at Masada (*BJ* 7.334, 336, and 386), state they would rather be dead than captured and enslaved by the Romans, but Josephus chooses to live and serve as a messenger from God to Vespasian (*BJ* 3.400); den Hollander (2014) 90–1 sees that Suet. *Vesp.* 5.6 (*et unus ex nobilibus captivis Iosephus*) and Dio 65[66].1.4 (Ἰώσηπος δὲ ἀνὴρ Ἰουδαῖος ἁχθείς τε ὑπ αὐτοῦ πρότερον καὶ δεθεὶς) mention Josephus' status as a 'prisoner-of-war' when he predicts that Vespasian will become emperor.

[38] Joseph. *BJ* 4.588–621 on Vespasian becoming emperor; *BJ* 4.626–9 and *Vit.* 415 on Josephus being made free and, as Titus advises his father, losing 'stigma along with his fetters', transl. Hammond (2017) 252.

[39] See Patterson (1982). Den Hollander (2014) 87 provides references to the *Digest* 49.15.18 and 50.17.209 on captivity's 'strong association with death' and remarks, 'This was no doubt the result of the close relationship between captivity and slavery'.

while as a character restored to life in *BJ* 4, which for him is assured by the axe making him *a free man who was never a slave*. He eventually springs back into word and action in *BJ* 5 by speaking at length as a messenger for Titus when the siege of Jerusalem begins.[40] In *BJ* 6, he has himself say in a speech to the rebel leader John, 'May I never as long as I live be such a captive that I would leave off my race or forget my ancestral traditions'.[41] As an author, too, he attests to maintaining his freedom. In his last work, *Ap.*, Josephus declares that he presented his Greek text of *BJ* to Vespasian and Titus or sold it to many Roman veterans of the Jewish War, as well as Hellenised Jews, among whom were Julius Archelaus, one of the Herods, and King Agrippa II.[42] By Lucian's standard for historians (albeit with tongue in cheek), Josephus is an ἐλεύθερος ἀνήρ as a character in *BJ*, before and after his enslavement that is erased by the axe, and as an author after the war by his own accounts.[43]

The destruction of Jerusalem in *BJ* 6 is the climax of Josephus' account and also the source of scholars' greatest doubts about his veracity, because the Jewish author claims that the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed 'against Caesar's will',[44] while Christian authors three centuries later state that it was ordered by the Roman commander Titus (p. 170). Diverging from his thematic approach to the Flavians in order to discuss the destruction of the Temple, Davies is right to be sceptical of accepting these Christian accounts over Josephus, despite the work of Bernays and others to find the lost works of Antonius Julianus and Tacitus as sources followed by the Christian authors (171–4). We should consider further the 'lost literature'[45] from the Flavian era that dealt with the Jewish War. Josephus cites the first lost text, Vespasian's *commentarii*,[46] as proof that another historian, Justus of Tiberias, has not read these *commentarii* and misrepresented his own war activities in Galilee in a competing historical account of the Jewish War that was published well after Vespasian died, unlike Josephus' own history of the war.[47] Vespasian's *commentarii* did not survive antiquity, but they surely proved useful not only for

[40] Joseph. *BJ* 5.362–419, at approximately the same central point in *BJ* 5 that Josephus speaks in *BJ* 3, and far longer and more impressive than anything the two Flavian commanders are given to say throughout *BJ*.

[41] Joseph. *BJ* 6.107.

[42] Joseph. *Ap.* 1.51; in *Vit.* 362, he only 'presented' copies.

[43] Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 61, where being a free man with outspokenness is contrasted to flattery and slavish behaviour.

[44] Joseph. *BJ* 1.28.

[45] Dewar (2016) 475.

[46] Joseph. *Vit.* 342, 358.

[47] Joseph. *Vit.* 359–60. In *Ap.* 1.50–1, Josephus asserts that he presented his volumes on the war to Vespasian and Titus. This scene adorns frontispieces in medieval manuscripts of *BJ*: see Wander (2024) 195–9.

Josephus but also for Tacitus when writing his *Historiae* and for Suetonius when composing his biographies. Justus' history is also not extant, and Josephus' negative depiction of Justus' text and behaviour could have, in fact, persuaded medieval copyists to ignore this competing Jewish account of the war. There is, however, another compelling reason for why Justus' account did not survive. In the ninth century, Photius said about Justus, 'Suffering from the common fault of the Jews, to which race he belonged, he does not even mention the coming of Christ, the events of His life, or the miracles performed by Him'.[48] Josephus, however, earned the resounding favour of Christians, since his *AJ* mentions Jesus twice as well as his brother James,[49] which certainly helped make the four extant Josephan texts worth reading and preserving from later antiquity onward.[50] Another key reason Christians read and saved *BJ* in particular was that it described in great detail how Jerusalem was destroyed, an event that the synoptic gospels clearly allude to through Jesus' prophecies.[51]

A third lost source, a text by Antonius Julianus, is mentioned in a dialogue written by Minucius Felix almost two centuries after the Jewish War. The Christian speaker Octavius states to a pagan interlocutor that there was a good reason why the God of the Jews let Jerusalem be destroyed:

> Read their Scriptures again, or (should we pass over the old authors) consult the books of Flavius Josephus, or if you prefer Roman writings,[52] Antonius Julianus, about the Jews, and you will find out that due to their wickedness they deserved their misfortune, and that nothing happened which had not been predicted to them before, if they should persevere in their obstinacy. Therefore, you will understand that they deserted God before they were deserted, and that they were not taken captive *with* their God, as you impiously say, but they were given up *by* God as deserters from his teaching.[53]

[48] Phot. *Bibl.* 33, Ὡς δὲ τὰ Ἰουδαίων νοσῶν, Ἰουδαῖος καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπάρχων γένος, τῆς Χριστοῦ παρουσίας καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν τελεσθέντων καὶ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τερατουργηθέντων οὐδὲν ὅλως μνήμην ἐποιήσατο; Freese (1920) 29.

[49] On Jesus: Joseph. *AJ* 18.63–4 (the *Testimonium Flavianum*) and 20.200; on James, *AJ* 20.200–1.

[50] See 'Part IV: Transmission and Reception History' chapters in Chapman and Rodgers (2016).

[51] Mt. 24:1–2, Mk. 13:1–2, Lk. 21:5–6.

[52] See Stern (1974) 460–1 for an accessible explanation why modern editors moved *si Romanis magis gaudes* from before Josephus' name to after it; for the phrase *de Iudaeis*, Stern notes that Antonius Julianus' text was not necessarily *De Iudaeis* but 'could just as well have been a History of the Jewish War', as Davies' remarks (171).

[53] Minuc. Felix, *Octav.* 33: *scripta eorum relege, vel, ut transeamus veteres, Flavi Iosephi, vel, si Romanis magis gaudes, Antoni Iuliani de Iudaeis require: iam scies, nequitia sua hanc eos meruisse fortunam, nec quidquam accidisse quod non sit his, si in contumacia perseverarent, ante praedictum. ita prius*

Here Flavius Josephus and Antonius Julianus are named in the same sentence for providing different texts 'about the Judaeans' at the time of Jerusalem's destruction. When the Christian Octavius charges the Jews with 'obstinacy' (*contumacia*), we should note that he is reflecting the viewpoint and judgment of a *Roman* in power,[54] not the Jewish historian Josephus. If the writer Antonius Julianus was the man by the same name (with the *praenomen* Marcus given by Josephus in *BJ* 6) who served as procurator of Judaea when the siege of Jerusalem occurred,[55] then Antonius Julianus could very well have given such a judgment about the Jews at Jerusalem refusing to surrender to the far superior Roman army. Octavius' charge of obstinacy against the Jews could derive from Antonius Julianus' lost account, since this is not Josephus' explanation for the fall of Jerusalem. Instead, Josephus condemns the insurgent Jewish 'tyrants' who took over Jerusalem and subjected its civilians to famine and siege, while he—and the Roman commander Titus—pitied the general Jewish population of Jerusalem, the tragic victims of these rebel leaders who polluted the Temple that God then chose to abandon.[56]

Yet Octavius does agree with Josephus in his view that God was not 'taken captive' by the Romans during the siege. It would have been impossible for a Christian or Jew to accept that their singular, almighty God could be captured. One can imagine that the Roman author Antonius Julianus wrote that the Jewish God became captive during the siege, since Flavian propaganda and monuments made this very same claim during the Flavian triumph at Rome and afterwards.[57] To counter this claim, Josephus reports in *BJ* 6 that a collective voice was heard on Pentecost in 70 coming from the Temple saying,

eos deseruisse conprehendes quam esse desertos nec, ut impie loqueris, cum deo suo captos, sed a deo ut disciplinae transfugas deditos.

[54] 'Obstinacy' is the same judgment that Pliny the Younger delivers regarding the Christians he interrogated when he was governor in Bithynia forty years later (*Ep.* 10.96: *pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem*); 'obstinacy' as a charge occurs only once in the New Testament, when Paul's letter addressed to the Romans speaks of God's judgment on the day of wrath (Rom. 2.5: *τὴν σκληρότητά σου*)—he chose a fitting audience for the use of such Roman terminology.

[55] Joseph. *BJ* 6.238. On the writer Antonius Julianus as also the procurator, see Bernays (1861) 57, citing Tillemont, 'who was by no means addicted to conjectures' (transl.). Davies considers Antonius Julianus but does not analyse *contumacia* in *Octav.* 33 (169–74).

[56] Joseph. *BJ* 1.9–10, 27, and *passim*, most poignantly as an authorial interjection at *BJ* 5.19. In fact, Josephus writes the demise of the civilian population as if they are actors in a Greek tragedy, going so far as to give dramatic speeches to a desperate mother named Mary who cannibalises her baby during the famine; see Chapman (2007a) 419–26.

[57] Davies, p. 107; Magness (2008).

'We are leaving', demonstrating the freedom of the Jewish God to evacuate before the Roman army burned it down.[58]

It is no wonder, then, that Josephus at the very beginning of his *BJ* rails against other accounts of the war in Judaea. He divides his unnamed literary competitors into two camps: those who were not there in Judaea and those who were. If the writer Antonius Julianus named by Octavius is the same person as the Roman procurator of Judaea in *BJ* 6, then Antonius Julianus could have been in the latter camp. Josephus describes these writers as 'participants [who] distort the facts either to flatter the Romans or out of hatred for the Jews, and in their writings you will find denunciation here, glorification there, but historical accuracy nowhere'.[59]

At the climax of *BJ*, we learn that Marcus Antonius Julianus is present at the Roman commander Titus' meeting of his officers to decide what to do with the Temple.[60] Marcus Antonius Julianus is the only procurator Josephus names among those present, which may indicate that he expressed his own thoughts on the Temple's survival or destruction at that time. Josephus' account of the *consilium* lays out various opinions about what should be done, with 'some' unhesitatingly supporting 'the law of war' to destroy the Temple, and 'others' arguing that the Temple should be preserved—but if used by the rebels as a fortress, it should be destroyed.[61] Piggybacking on this second opinion about the Temple's use as a fortress, Titus presents his own refinement: even if used as a fortress, the Temple is too wondrous a work and 'ornament of the empire' to destroy.[62] Tellingly, Josephus names the three men who came over to Titus' way of thinking: Fronto, Cerealius, and Tiberius Julius Alexander, whose father Alexander had been Alabarch of the Jews in Alexandria and had made a gift to cover nine of the Temple's gates in thick gold and silver plate.[63] It is likely, then, that the only other named member of the *consilium*, Marcus Antonius Julianus, held the opposite opinion and was a staunch supporter of the first option posed: total war against Jerusalem. If the procurator of Judaea Marcus Antonius Julianus did write a text about the Jewish War, his narrative could have included condemnation of the Jews as obstinate, as Octavius says, and argued that they and their Temple deserved

[58] Joseph. *BJ* 6.299; cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13. To align with what Josephus wrote, Octavius would have to say that God had given up on residing in the Temple while the rebel tyrants fuelled civil war in the city and prevented proper worship by making the Temple into a fortress where innocent priests were assassinated; on these themes, see Mason (2003) 79–80 and 93.

[59] Joseph. *BJ* 1.2.

[60] Joseph. *BJ* 6.238; on this *consilium*, see Mason (2023) 455–6 and Brighton (2016) 244–6.

[61] Joseph. *BJ* 6.239–40.

[62] Joseph. *BJ* 6.241.

[63] Joseph. *BJ* 5.201 and 205.

the punishment they received, with the Jewish God taken captive, too.[64] But most importantly, Josephus is demonstrating with the destruction of the Temple that, in Mason's words, 'God remains in control of history, and the Flavians—like all other world rulers—could only ever be pawns in the cosmic drama'.[65]

Davies' conclusion is perhaps his monograph's greatest contribution to the wider field of Classics, because he makes a strong pitch for classicists to read Josephus in spite of their preconceptions, and he imagines possible lines of enquiry for future scholarship.[66] We can take Davies' recommendation to include Josephus in the wider realm of Flavian literature[67] by demonstrating here how other authors of this general era present both the dating of their texts (which may help elucidate the question of dating *BJ*) and the Flavian dynasty.

Dating publications is never as simple as it may appear on the surface. For instance, Frontinus writes at the beginning of his *Aq.* that 'Nerva Augustus' has given him responsibility for the aqueducts.[68] Frontinus, who succeeded Cerealis as *legatus Augusti pro praetore* in Britain until Agricola arrived and may have served under Domitian in Germany in 83 CE,[69] is hardly writing history in the grand sense, despite his references to the history of the aqueduct system in Rome, but he is very clear about which emperor hired him to manage the water system. One might think that any treatise (*commentarius*) on such mundane matters would be straightforward, but Rodgers argues that the text dates from sometime *after* Nerva died in January of 98 and before Trajan arrived at Rome.[70] Furthermore, in the case of at least one other work from this era, Apollodorus Mechanicus' Πολιορκητικά, which addresses an unnamed ruler, we need to reevaluate to whom it was addressed. Whitehead argues strongly for Trajan as the addressee over the more commonly assumed Hadrian, who eventually ordered Apollodorus killed,[71] and suggests that

[64] The gospels also to varying degrees had laid the groundwork for Octavius in the third century to blame the Jews writ large. The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) allow a leap in time from the pending crucifixion of Jesus around 33 CE to the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE by reporting Jesus' prophetic warnings about the city and its Temple shortly before his death. Though these two events had absolutely nothing to do with each other in terms of historical causality, later Christian writers will cast the demise of Jerusalem and its Temple as divine punishment for the death of Jesus.

[65] Mason (2019) 98.

[66] Davies, pp. 205–17. Unlike Mason (2024), I am not puzzled by Davies inviting classicists to read Josephus, since they still rarely do in the United States.

[67] For example, see Jones (2005).

[68] Frontin. *Aq.* 1.

[69] Rodgers (2004) 1–2.

[70] Rodgers (2004) 8.

[71] Dio 69.4.

Apollodorus could have met up with Trajan 'in Damascus in the mid 70s, when Trajan's father and namesake was governor of Syria and his son one of his *tributi militum*'.[72]

We can now look back at examples from the Flavian era. The poet Martial produced his *Spec.* celebrating an unnamed 'Caesar' who is hosting grand games in the Colosseum, which we know was the site of inaugural games that might have lasted 100 days, in 80 CE under Titus. Coleman attempts to pin down *which* Caesar is being addressed by Martial, while building on Buttrey's observations concerning Domitian's coinage, and states:

> We seem to have reached an impasse: the opening trio of epigrams (1–3), the pair celebrating a parade of *delatores* in the amphitheatre (4–5), and the poem celebrating a *naumachia* at Augustus' *stagnum* (34) point to the inauguration of the Flavian amphitheatre under Titus, and general similarities with the recorded spectacles on that occasion are discernible elsewhere in the collection too; yet the pair of epigrams about the exploits of a rhinoceros (11 and 26) point to a date under Domitian.[73]

If we accept that the collection *does* date ultimately to the time of Domitian (perhaps before late 85 CE),[74] it could then be that Martial has blended the *two* Caesars who hosted spectacles at the amphitheatre, Titus and Domitian, into one 'Caesar' addressed in these epigrams. Coleman muses: 'Martial's "Caesar" starts to look almost like an idealised abstraction, above identification'.[75] In any case, Martial's epigrams are not historical accounts, and their artistry is what matters most to poet and audience.

In a history of the Jewish War, however, Josephus could hardly efface Titus' name as Martial does. At the beginning of *BJ* 7, Titus commands his troops to obliterate the city and the Temple, except for the three named towers left standing as a memorial to what they overcame.[76] But by Josephus allowing

[72] Whitehead (2010) 23. Trajan's father was commander of the Tenth Legion in the Jewish War (Joseph. *BJ* 3.289–306, 458, 485; 4.450).

[73] Coleman (2006) lix–lx; the *rhinoceros quadrans* ('a coin whose low denomination guaranteed virtually universal dissemination') of 83–5 CE appears on lv, and on lvii–lviii Coleman outlines three possible publication theories that support a Domitianic date.

[74] For a chart dating the books of Martial's epigrams, see Coleman (2006) xxvi–vii, with the *Spect.* before the appearance of Book 1 of *Epigr.*, which may have come out in late 85/early 86. In *Epigr.* 9.3, the 'Caledonian bear' (*Caledonio … urso*) could be a nod to either Vespasian's success in Britain under Claudius or Agricola's under Domitian; see Coleman (2006) 87–90.

[75] Coleman (2006) lxiv; on allusions to the Jewish War in Martial, see Chapman (2012) 1–23.

[76] Joseph. *BJ* 7.1–4.

his younger brother Domitian to share the glory with his older brother and father in the triumph as he rides in splendid dress with a horse worthy of the spectacle in *BJ* 7, the historian nods to the youngest Flavian as being part of the action (though he never fought in the Jewish War) and riding on a horse (though he far preferred to be carried by litter over walking or riding horseback).[77] In *Ep.* 2.2, published around late 86 or early 87 CE, Martial will give more glory to the current emperor Domitian:

> creta dedit magnum, maius dedit Africa nomen,
> Scipio quod victor quodque Metellus habet;
> nobilius domito tribuit Germania Rheno,
> et puer hoc dignus nomine, Caesar, eras.
> frater Idumaeos meruit cum patre triumphos,
> quae datur ex Chattis laurea, tota tua est.[78]

Triumphs over Idumaea (i.e., Judaea) earned Vespasian (*patre*) and Titus (*frater*) a triumph (in 71 CE), but Domitian (called here both *puer* and *Caesar*) gets his glory—not shared with his father or brother—from victory over the Chatti (from which he took the name Germanicus in 83 CE).

Finally, Valerius Flaccus' *Argon.* has all three Flavians grace the prooemium:

> … versam proles tua pandet Idumen,
> sancte pater, Solymo nigrantem pulvere fratrem
> spargentemque faces et in omni turre furentem.[79]

In his commentary, Kleywegt remarks, 'By stressing the emperor [Vespasian]'s maritime achievements (and the inspiration expected from him), Titus' military successes in the Middle East and Domitian's poetic activities on that subject, V[alerius] F[laccus] adroitly underscores the unity of the Flavian family and later dynasty'.[80] Kleywegt argues, and Zissos agrees, that Valerius Flaccus began the poem under Vespasian and had not finished it when he died around 90 CE.[81]

[77] Joseph. *BJ* 7.152 and Davies, p. 198, where he mentions Domitian's equestrian statue placed in the Forum. In support of the idea that Josephus wrote to mirror, yet undercut, Flavian propaganda, see Suetonius, *Dom.* 19: *laboris impatiens, pedibus per urbem non temere ambulavit, in expeditione et agmine equo rarius, lectica assidue vectus est.*

[78] Mart. *Ep.* 2.2; on the date, see Coleman (2006) xxvii.

[79] Val. Fl. *Arg.* 1.12–14; text from Kleywegt (2005) 15.

[80] Kleywegt (2005) 17.

[81] Kleywegt (2005) xi; Zissos (2008) xv.

Taking this other literature from the Flavian era and shortly thereafter into consideration, one can see the strong probability that Josephus began composing *BJ* under Vespasian, with at least a completed draft of all seven books shown to Vespasian and Titus, and then possibly final edits and additions under Domitian. It is clear from the examples of Frontinus and Apollodorus that dating the publication of texts is not as easy as it first appears. And seeing the pattern of Domitian being injected into the achievements of his father and brother in Martial's books of epigrams, Valerius Flaccus' epic, and Josephus' *BJ*, with all four of his works composed at least in part under the reign of Domitian, we can appreciate the fact that Josephus did not write in a vacuum. Josephus is part of the larger Flavian literary scene and historical moment at Rome, and his significant literary contributions need to be viewed more often in this light.

Four decades ago, Louis Feldman suggested future research topics at the end of his magisterial *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937–1980)*, giving hope that a classicist could investigate Josephus.[82] Classics students can now look likewise at Davies' *Representing the Dynasty in Flavian Rome* and discover not only new, solid interpretations of Josephus' *BJ* throughout but also a new scholarly horizon. Which other Loebs are gathering dust on the shelves of the Classics reading room? The other three Josephan texts in many volumes, including *Ap.* with some sections that remain only in Latin, deserve more attention, especially in light of the theoretical approaches that Davies mentions. As the Brill Josephus Project translations with commentaries of *BJ* reach completion, the first-century historian's works will become even more accessible. Philo surely represents another treasure trove relatively neglected by classicists, and an investigation like Davies' could be done through a postcolonial lens with respect to the Julio-Claudian dynasty described in both Philo and Josephus. Finally, comparative analyses of Flavian literature that include Josephus seamlessly will be a pleasure to read in the future.

With Oxford University Press publishing Davies' monograph on Josephus, we can anticipate that graduate faculty as well as the editorial boards and reviewers for journals and university presses will see this volume's value and become more welcoming of different types of scholarship produced by the next generation of Classics students.[83] In light of rapid changes in academia thanks to online learning and artificial intelligence, declining populations of those enrolling in college in certain regions, shifts in academic budget priorities with reduced full-time and tenured employment in the humanities, closures of

[82] Feldman (1984); Feldman earned his Harvard Ph.D. in philology with a dissertation on Cicero and was the Abraham Wouk Family Professor of Classics and Literature at Yeshiva University, with works including the Loeb volumes of *AJ* 18–19 and 20, Feldman (1965a) and (1965b), as well as the Brill Josephus Project *AJ* 1–4, Feldman (2000).

[83] Cambridge University Press is also publishing Davies (2025), a survey on Josephus.

humanities departments and whole colleges and universities across the United States, and more diverse and inclusive student bodies and attitudes, current and future students will surely seek to cross artificial academic boundaries within ancient Mediterranean studies and ask new questions of the copious materials currently available and yet to be discovered. Davies' fine monograph shines a bright light towards following this path.

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