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Book Reviews

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- Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers (eds)**, *A Companion to Josephus.* (Tessa Rajak) 195

The volume is all the more important in light of several volumes that have appeared in recent years, which attempt to summarize the history of ancient Israel. Time and again, I have found that these volumes are either not up to date on the relevant data, are not cutting edge on method and theory, are too entrenched in factional views of the history of ancient Israel (whether conservative or minimalist), and in some cases, when dealing with some topics, what might be seen as attempting to revive long-dead debates.

Thus, in summary, not only do I recommend this volume as text book for college level courses in biblical and ancient near eastern history, I think scholars dealing with the various topics covered in this volume would benefit from reading Grabbe's even handed overviews and assessments for these issues. Perhaps, in the future, this volume can be expanded to a full-scale history of ancient Israel – but in the meantime – I would choose this volume over those currently available.

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Mark Toher, *Nicolaus of Damascus. The Life of Augustus and The Autobiography. Edited with Introduction, Translations, and Historical Commentary.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. xii + 488. £99.99. ISBN: 9781107075610.

Scholar, statesman, apologist, a man so 'sweet' of temperament that he had a type of date named after him, the polymath Nicolaus is one of the more unlikely figures to emerge from the court of Herod the Great. Nicolaus was also one of the more prolific writers from antiquity. The late tenth century encyclopaedia, the *Suda*, lists several works: an extensive *Universal History* in eighty books, a *Life of Caesar* (sc. Augustus), and an *Autobiography*. From elsewhere we know of a work of ethnography and commentaries on Aristotle. Not one of these works has survived intact. What relics we have of Nicolaus' oeuvre are due to the labours of a group of scholars and copyists operating in the court of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. The fragments of the *Life of Caesar* are perhaps the most tantalising of all these remains, providing us with a contemporary portrait of the man who did more than any other to shape the political character of the next three hundred years of the Roman Empire – Augustus.

Toher's edition of the fragments of the *Life of Caesar*, and of Nicolaus' *Autobiography* is a welcome addition to scholarship. Toher, whose distinguished contributions to the study of Nicolaus stretch back thirty years, is the natural candidate to produce such a commentary. The result does not disappoint.

Toher's introduction provides a detailed account of Nicolaus' life and outlines the nature of the two works in question and their textual traditions. Historical and historiographical 'problems', such as the the chronology of Nicolaus' career and the composition of his works are dealt with securely. Most notably, Toher presents a compelling argument for dating the *Life* after Herod's death in 4 B.C.E, and perhaps even as late the last years of Augustus' reign, against Jacoby and others who have dated the *Life of Caesar* to the 20s B.C.E. Structurally, Toher shows how the *Life* owes much to the late-Classical and Hellenistic tradition of encomiastic biography, and offers a stimulating comparison of the *Life* with Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. As one might expect from a historian of the Peripatetic persuasion, Toher demonstrates Nicolaus' affinity with Aristotelean ethical theory. Like his coeval Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Nicolaus' stylistic models were firmly classical, and the commentary brings out numerous linguistic parallels to classical authors. Nicolaus' putative debt to the lost autobiography of Augustus is wisely downplayed.

In what is such a full introduction, it is a pity that Toher's treatment of the *Excerpta Constantiniana* is cursory, and more could have been said about the methods of the excerpters as well as the nature of the project. Here some more recent scholarship has been neglected, which has implications for points of detail as well as interpretation. For example, the Tours Codex of the *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis*, has been cogently dated by Andreas Németh 970s or 980s, rather than to eleventh century as maintained by Toher following the traditional designation.

More seriously, whether we may still dismiss Constantine's project as '*anti-histoire*', as Toher does (following Paul Lemerle), seems more contentious now than it did thirty years ago.

Toher has adopted a sensibly conservative attitude to the Greek text, and has opted to follow (in the main) the text of Nicolaus printed in the *editio maior* of the *Excerpta Constantiniana* by Büttner-Wobst (for the *Excerpta de virtutibus et vitiis*) and de Boor (for the fragments preserved in the *Excerpta de insidiis*), rather than that printed by Jacoby in the *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Textual concordances are given to the most accessible editions of Nicolaus by Jacoby and by Karl Müller (in the venerable *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum*). Toher's translation, which is printed facing the Greek text (with *apparatus criticus*), is clear and accurate, and serves as a crutch for those readers with little or no Greek. Given this feature of the volume, it would perhaps have made sense had the commentary provided *lemmata* in Greek and English, rather than just the Greek.

The commentary, purportedly a 'historical commentary', is in fact far more ambitious than what this descriptor may suggest. Indeed, Toher provides ample consideration of textual and philological points of interest, which some readers may find superfluous. Ultimately, a historical (or historiographical) commentary

should ask two questions of the text: What does this passage tell us about the work of the author? and What does this passage tell us about the subject of the work? Toher's commentary succeeds in addressing these two questions. Moreover, given the importance of Nicolaus' narrative for the events of March 44 B.C.E., this section of Toher's commentary is a highlight and satisfies expectations. However, this reviewer feels that the commentary on the *Life*, as a whole, might have been tighter, and that some of the linguistic points or unexamined stylistic parallels could have been omitted without diminishing the value of the commentary. On very rare occasions there are slips. A subscription by the scribe of the Tours MS directing the reader to the collection *περὶ ἑλληνικῆς ἱστορίας* (pp. 156, 228), is misunderstood as being an erroneous reference to a 'Greek History' by Nicolaus; whereas in fact the excerptor is referring to the (now lost) collection of excerpts 'Concerning *pagan* history'.

The commentary on the *Autobiography* is far sparser, and gives (perhaps the false) impression of being something of an afterthought.

Cambridge University Press has produced a generally handsome volume, although this reviewer did note some typesetting errors, especially in the section dealing with the *Autobiography*, which will hopefully be removed from future printings. Spelling follows the North American convention (e.g. honor, theater), which will doubtless rankle with some of Toher's more sensitive Anglophone readers.

These niggles aside, this is an important and useful contribution to scholarship. In terms of its scope and thoroughness, Toher's endeavour has superseded the previous two English language commentaries and translations of the *Life*. It may be hoped that Toher's volume, like the best commentaries, represents the beginning of a dialogue, rather than the last word on its subject.

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Yosef Garfinkel, Igor Kreimerman and Peter Zilberg, *Debating Khirbet Qeiyafa: A Fortified City from the Time of King David*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2016. Pp. 269. ISBN: 9789652211064.

For anyone wanting to know about the site, this volume is the best introduction, but readers should be aware this is the work of an enthusiast, convinced of his interpretation of the site he has excavated, arguing vigorously against his critics. Although sure Khirbet Qeiyafa was a fortified Judaeon city in the kingdom of