

place in Britain, Mauretania, Gaul and Noricum, evidenced in the adoption of Augustan iconography in coinage and of items of material culture such as buildings, food and ceramics. He infers that, like Herod, the local rulers of these regions 'found common purpose with the elite in Rome, and ... helped fashion new social identities for themselves' (379).

Finally, in the only article in the section 'Religion under Augustus and Herod', Daniel R. Schwartz ('One Temple and Many Synagogues: On Religion and State in Herodian Judaea and Augustan Rome', 385-98) construes Herod's control of the High Priests as the subjection of religion to the state, a situation which remained in force under the Roman governors of Judaea. More important, his magnificent Temple became the focus of the Jewish-Roman conflict. In 66 CE, the suspension of the daily 'loyalty sacrifices' (*War* 2.409-17) touched off the Jewish rebellion. Thus, contrary to his intentions, Herod laid the foundation for the fatal Jewish-Roman confrontation, ending with the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem.

In the introduction the editors claim that 'whereas previous research has tended to focus on the life and deeds of Herod the Great as a separate phenomenon within the context of the Holy Land, it is becoming increasingly clear that Herod's ambitious building projects reflected those of Augustus' (9). The first part of this claim does not do justice, at least, to A. Schalit's consideration of Herod's career and accomplishments within the context of the Hellenistic-Roman world.⁸ As for the question whether Herod's deeds reflected Augustus' activities, several contributors (Toher, Ariel, Geiger, Barrett, Saddington and Creighton) indeed give considerable weight to the Roman perspective; however, a few (Gruen and Lichtenberger) prefer to lay emphasis on the Hellenistic background, others (Galinsky, Netzer, Patrich, Burrell, Rozenberg, Hershkovitz and Schmid) delineate the mixture of Greek, Roman and local influences, and the contributions of some participants (Sievers, Bahat, Goodblatt and Schwartz) are rather of little relevance to the Augustan aspect of Herod's policy. All in all, this collection of articles contains a good number of acute observations and innovative ideas, but is marked by a traditional rather than a revolutionary approach to the "Herodian phenomenon".

Israel Shatzman

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Ryan S. Olson, *Tragedy, Authority and Trickery: The Poetics of Embedded Letters in Josephus*, Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2010. xiv + 254 pp. ISBN 978-0-674-05337-3.

This book is less a focused study of embedded letters in Josephus than a comparative study of that phenomenon in all Greek historiography, with Josephus as the central exhibit. The term 'embedded letters' reveals Olson's narratological approach (without much of the verbiage attending Narratology). By 'embedded' he means letters which are mentioned, summarized or directly quoted, as an integral part of complex action, motivating the characters and advancing the narrative itself. Josephus' massive *oeuvre* contains many instances of this technique (over 300 by Olson's count), and Olson not only examines in detail the main and most revealing cases, but compares them extensively to parallel uses of embedded letters in the Greek historians before him. The main claim is that Josephus uses letters in a 'meta-textual' manner to comment on the thoughts, intentions and actions of historical characters, and to provide the reader with the opportunity to reach independent judgment regarding individual cases. While letters are quoted by the first historians, Herodotus and Thucydides, and also by later historians (Xenophon, Polybius, Diodorus and Dionysius receive detailed treatment), those writers used embedded letters more for

⁸ A. Schalit, *König Herod: der Mann und sein Werk*, Berlin 1969.

authentication, verification or development of plot and character, whereas Josephus' meta-textual use of letters to comment meta-historically on the actors and the action, is 'unique'.

In four compact but slightly out-of-focus chapters, Olson describes epistolary practice in antiquity (1-49), attempts to establish a 'poetics of embedded letters' (51-97), analyzes the functions of letters in literary texts (99-162), and assesses the 'reliability', i.e. the degree of credibility, of letters in texts (163-205); a concluding chapter (207-19) tries to make sense of the results of the investigation. What Olson does *not* do much of is source analysis, namely, he does not try to determine where and how Josephus found the letters he quotes. This is refreshing both because Josephan *Quellenforschung* can be aporetic and very tedious, and conversely there is still much to do in illuminating Josephus' qualities as a serious historian and writer. Here Olson has attempted to locate Josephus in ancient epistolary culture and historiographical tradition by extended analyses of epistolary episodes in texts Josephus probably knew, and his Greek and Roman readers (if there were any) most certainly knew, so that we gain insight into famous passages such as the confrontation of Popilius and Antiochus in several sources (92-97), Demaratus in Herodotus (100-102), Amasis and Polycrates in Herodotus and Diodorus (114-17), Postumius and the Voscians in Dionysius (178-81), and many more. I must confess, however, that I have not understood the purpose of the expansive analysis of Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* (155-62), which Olson himself admits has no direct bearing on Josephus' writing; it seems of questionable relevance. The book also loses focus in its comparative analyses of embedded epistles told twice by Josephus, in *BJ* and *AJ*. The long analyses tend to run aground examining every slight difference and nuance in the parallel (competing?) narratives without reaching clear conclusions: here, sharper attention to the old question of the different purposes of each work — which will continue to be debated as long as Josephus is read — may have helped Olson stay on track.

The cases of embedded letters in Josephus, analyzed so extensively by Olson, do not as a group reveal any pattern. That is, so far as this book can show, there is no particular narrative or historiographical situation which *calls for* an embedded letter as a plot device. It would be interesting to find such a pattern, which would indicate a real measure of narrative control and vision by the historian. As it is, the embedded letters in Josephus tend to cluster around kings: Herod, Antiochus, David. Josephus did not choose *when* to embed letters so much as he decided how to use them when they occurred in his sources. Yet this is perhaps all that can be asked of him, and does not necessarily diminish his art.

Finally, for a provocative but imperfectly proved thesis, the claims made for its implications may aim a bit high: Josephus 'promoted peace, long a quality of Jewish history, as shown in the numerous epistolary exchanges already described, by demonstrating the Jews' quality as a partner in cultural exchange' (208). Crucial to this belief is the assumption that Josephus wrote for the Roman society of his day. If so, no one seemed to be listening.

Jonathan Price

Tel Aviv University

H. M. Cotton, R. G. Hoyland, J.J. Price, D.J. Wasserstein (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 512 pp. ISBN: 978-0-521-87581-3.

The eighteen contributions published in this volume are divided into five thematic sections and deal with various aspects of the cultural, linguistic and social history of the Roman, late Roman and early Islamic Near East. Some contributions originated as lectures delivered at the conference 'Epigraphy and Beyond: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Near East from Hellenism to Islam', held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2003. The word 'Epigraphy' is absent from