Drama and History in Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum**

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I

Josephus's historical writing, from his first published work, the *Bellum Judaicum* (*BJ*), was strongly influenced by tragedy. The dramatic elements in his writing have a double source, namely, the long tradition of dramatic history which Polybius had criticized so harshly,[1] and the prevalence of theater and spectacle in Roman society of his time. Although Josephus was heavily influenced by Polybius,[2] he had respectable precedents for dramatically structuring parts of an historical narrative. Indeed, in the first scene in the first full narrative work of Greek history, Herodotus relates as a staged drama the murder of Candaules by Gyges (1.6-12) — 'a play in two acts, each consisting of a dialogue followed by a dramatic bedroom scene', in the words of T.P. Wiseman.[3] The last of Gyges' descendants, Croesus, also merits narration in a series of acts (1.34ff.), leading Fornara to comment that the first historians 'visualized episodes as if they formed the scenes of a play'.[4] This habit did not disappear from later historical writers, and there is no doubt that it deeply impressed Josephus.

Dramatic influences on Josephus have long been recognized,[5] but only recently has research advanced beyond using the echoes from classical drama merely as a gauge of Josephus' own reading and of the extent to which he relied on learned assistants, especially in *BJ*. In her 1998 dissertation, Honora Chapman shows how whole episodes in the historical narrative of *BJ* are constructed as tragic scenes — primarily the siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple and the collapse of Masada — and she argues that the elements of spectacle and tragedy serve *inter alia* to limit the blame for the revolt and stress the tragedy of the fall of Jerusalem.[6] In another study published in the same year, L.H. Feldman presented Josephus as an enthusiastic student of Greek

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1 Even though Polybius himself was capable of the very thing he condemned; examples and discussion in F. Walbank, 'History and Tragedy', *Historia* 9 (1960), 216-34 = *Selected Papers* (1985), 224-41, and *id.*, *Polybius* (1972), 34-8.

2 S.J.D. Cohen, 'Josephus, Jeremiah and Polybius', *History and Theory* 21 (1982), 366-81.

3 *Roman Drama and Roman History* (1998), 56.

4 C.W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (1983), 171. Note also the theory (not universally accepted) by F.M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (1907) that Thucydides wrote the history of the Peloponnesian War as a tragedy.

5 H.St.J. Thackeray, *Josephus, the Man and the Historian* (1929), 116ff., and see already B. Niese, 'Der jüdische Historiker Josephus', *HZ* 76 (1896), 193-237.

6 'Spectacle and Theater in Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*', Ph.D. diss. Stanford University 1998. The authors wish to thank Dr. Chapman for providing us with a copy of her work. And see now *eadem*, 'A Myth for the World: Early Christian Reception of Cannibalism in Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* 6.199-219', *SBL Seminar Papers* 2000, 359-78.

dramatic poetry who, in accord with another respected tradition in Greek historiography, inserted dramatic elements into his historical accounts.[7] Thus the examination of Josephus' historical style and technique has advanced beyond the mere search for echoes and imitations of classical literature, but now focuses on matters involving creative choices and subtle arrangement and control of his material.

It is in this vein that we examine here the dramatic technique, language and even structure of *BJ*'s narrative of the fatal intrigues in Herod's court, particularly in one episode involving the foreigner Eurycles which functions as a kind of self-contained act within the larger drama. Next we shall suggest that Josephus' use of the words ὑποκρίνεσθαι/ ὑποκριτής/ ὑπόκρισις in the whole Herodian drama, but particularly in the Eurycles episode, to mean 'act' as well as 'deceive', reflects recent developments in those words arising from changes in theatrical tastes and histrionic techniques of the time. Finally, we conclude that the dramatic structure and language of the Herodian domestic narrative involved creative choices so far-reaching that they could only have been the product of Josephus' own artistic decisions and control over the material; his notorious 'assistants' are thus pushed to the periphery.

II

In *BJ*, the story of Herod's rise and fall (*BJ* 1.204-673) is sharply divided into two parts, one containing his military and political exploits and building projects, and the other the troubles inside his family and court; 1.431 is the dividing point between these two large narrative blocks. Items regarding Herod's domestic situation, if chronologically they belong to the first part, are recalled in the second part or even postponed to the place where they are needed, so that the narrative of Herod's domestic life is as full and continuous as possible. Thus the sordid tale of the struggle for succession within his court reads as an unbroken narrative occupying more than a third of Book I (1.431-673).

Already in the fourth century CE, Eusebius, taking his cue from Josephus himself (cf. *AJ* 17.168-70), wrote that the horrors of Herod's court 'overshadow every tragic drama' (τραγικὴν ἅπασαν δραματουργίαν ἐπισκιαζούσης τῆς περὶ αὐτῶν [= Herod's family] ὑποθέσεως, Eus. *Hist. Ecc.* 1.8.4). And indeed Josephus planted enough clues for us to read the entire section in this manner. Antipater, the primary schemer in Herod's court, is described as a stage-manager (δραματουργῶν, *BJ* 1.471), and just as he is about to achieve his desired end — the murder of his two half-brothers — the 'audience', i.e. all of Syria and Jews everywhere, is said to be in suspense, waiting for 'the outcome of the drama' (τὸ τέλος τοῦ δράματος, 543). The Spartan Eurycles, in a scene which we shall presently examine in detail, is referred to as 'the destroyer of the house and the stage-manager of the whole abomination' (τὸν δὲ λυμεῶνα τῆς οἰκίας καὶ δραματουργὸν ὅλου τοῦ μύσους, 530).

Moreover, right after Herod enters the *History* for the first time as a dazzlingly successful youth, Josephus declares that 'in prosperity it is impossible to escape envy' (Ἀμήχανον δ' ἐν εὐπραγίαις φθόνον διαφυγεῖν, 1.208), and the first sentence of the domestic narrative (1.431) declares that 'fortune bore a grudge' (ἡ τύχη ...

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7 'The Influence of the Greek Tragedians on Josephus', in *Hellenic and Jewish Arts: Interaction, Tradition and Renewal*, ed. A. Ovadiah (1998), 51-80.

ἐνεμέσησεν) against Herod's public successes and in retribution brought troubles on his house, so that he was afflicted with misfortune (κακοδαιμονεῖν). These three elements, jealous fortune, *nemesis* and a malignant spirit bringing misfortune, immediately set the context as the tragic stage and remind the reader of the famous afflicted houses of Greek tragedy; Josephus then uses these themes to highlight and explain the action as the drama unfolds.[8] Herod himself complains of the 'angry demon' (σκυθρωπὸς δαίμων, 556, 628) which torments him. Herod's son Alexander by the Hasmonean princess Mariamme expresses the wish to 'avenge the spirits' (τιμωρήσειν ... δαίμοσιν, 521) of his mother and great-grandfather, the king's brother Pheroras fears an 'avenger' (ἀλάστωρ, 596), the spirits (δαίμονες, 599, 607) of Alexander and his brother Aristobulus, both murdered on Herod's orders, are said to haunt the house, and finally Antipater himself is said to be guided by his own evil genius (δαιμόνιον, 613).

These themes and language are not so prominent in the rest of the *BJ* but are repeated in the Herod narrative to emphasize that Herod's house was cursed; Josephus even says explicitly that Herod's house was afflicted by a 'storm' (χειμών, 488) and a pollution (μύσος, 530, 638).

The action of the drama proper begins in the year 14 BCE (1.448ff.), when Antipater, recalled by his father, arrives on the scene and initiates a series of complicated, murderous plots in order to secure succession for himself. Just before this, there is a kind of prelude (431-448) in which Josephus recounts, in rapid succession, important events which preceded the main action: the dismissal of Herod's first wife Doris and the banishment of her son Antipater, the king's marriage to the Hasmonean princess Mariamme and his previous murders of her grandfather Hyrcanus (who was 'lured' to his death, δέλεαρ δ' αὐτῳ θανάτου τῆς υἱωνῆς ὁ γαμος κατέστη, 534) and her brother Jonathan, the remnants of the Hasmonean dynasty and the main object of his jealousy which led to paranoia; next the murders of his beloved Mariamme and Herod's own brother Joseph, both victims of malicious court plots and the king's jealous rage. Finally we are told that Mariamme's two sons 'inherited' their mother's anger and contempt for Herod (445), and the seething resentment and rash character of both brothers led Herod to recall Antipater as a defensive measure (ἐπιτείχισμα, 448). The function of a prologue is thus admirably fulfilled: the background history is sketched in, the emotional setting is defined, the action is ready to begin.

The first two episodes are presented as staged scenes before specific audiences. The first is set as a trial before Augustus in Rome, a kind of theater in the round in which Herod brings accusations against his son Alexander. At the trial's conclusion, Alexander moves his entire audience to tears and the emperor acquits him (452-4). The next scene is set on a much larger stage, the whole city of Jerusalem,[9] where Herod, with his sons by his side, gives a grandiose speech to the assembled people; then, with the people as audience, he addresses his sons, bidding them to live in harmony; this scene ends with a public embrace of father and sons (457-66). Josephus presents both these instances quite explicitly as spectacles; the reader is a permanent audience, a spectator watching both the spectacle and the local audience.

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8 See Thackeray's remarks in his introduction to the Loeb edition of *BJ*, pp. xvi-xvii.

9 On the city as stage *par excellence*, see Chapman (above, n. 6).

From this point to the end of the drama, the entire action subverts these two initial scenes of reconciliation. In elaborate and often lurid detail the reader is audience to scenes of scheming and counter-scheming, disinformation and slander, passion, jealousy, betrayal. In the midst of all this sits the king, reacting with rage and fury to each new accusation and fear. He is the unwitting agent of schemes devised by others, the victim not only of their plots but also of his own angry, suspicious and violent disposition. The reader watches in fascinated horror as Herod is driven by false report and his own uncontrollable passion to slay his family members one by one. At the end, the king himself, consumed with remorse, dies from a gruesome disease, a fate which not only the reader, but Herod himself feels is justified.[10]

The plotters are many, but Antipater is the master. He achieves one of his main aims, the deaths of his two half-brothers, Alexander and Aristobulus, who are executed by Herod, and he nearly succeeds in his second purpose, the murder of his father the king to secure his own accession to the throne; but Herod finally acknowledges the awful truth about his son and has him killed. Antipater is quite deliberately depicted as the arch-schemer, the fabricator of tales (λογοποιῶν, 450), the one who, scurrying between rooms in the palace, unseen by Herod, orchestrates most of what happens in the court. To secure the demise of his two brothers he devises a variety of slanders against them (διαβολὰς... ποικίλας ἐνσκευαζόμενος, 450), and

> by adroit staging and utmost skill he prepared the path by which the slanders could reach Herod's ears; he himself wore the mask of the (devoted) brother while he sent others off to inform against Alexander, and when anything was said against him, Antipater appeared before his father and played his part (of devoted brother) ...
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> πάντα δὲ περιεσκεμμένως δραματουργῶν τὰς πρὸς Ἡρώδην ὁδοὺς ταῖς διαβολαῖς ἐποιεῖτο τεχνικωτάτας, αὐτὸς μὲν ἀδελφοῦ προσωπεῖον ἐπικείμενος, καθιεὶς δὲ μηνυτὰς ἑτέρους. κἀπειδὰν ἀπαγγελθείη τι κατ' Ἀλεξάνδρου, παρελθὼν ὑπεκρίνετο ... (1.471)

Antipater poses (ὑπεκρίνετο) as a caring brother devoted to defending Alexander, while in reality undermining him. The word ὑπεκρίνετο suggests that Antipater is putting on the mask of an actor — ὑποκριτής — in his own drama. We shall have more to say about this word below.

Until his own destruction, the only setback Antipater's scheming suffers is from someone outside the court, Archelaus, king of Cappadocia and Alexander's father-in-law, who arrives to extricate Alexander from the traps laid for him (499-512). Yet Archelaus accomplishes this only by successfully using Antipater's own techniques of prevarication and role-playing, deception and tricks.[11] He only temporarily saves Alexander from Herod's wrath, for his protective scheme dissolves on his departure, after which Antipater regains the field exclusively for himself.

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10 On Herod's death see D.J. Ladouceur, 'The Death of Herod the Great', *CP* 76 (1981), 25-34.

11 τέχνη, στρατήγημα, 499, 502, 511; σκέμμα (= speculation, question, reflection, cf. σκοπέω, σκέπτομαι), which in post-classical times acquired the meaning of 'plan, design' (as in 1.486, 2.635, 4.209), is used here (500) and here only in the derogatory sense of 'scheme, plot'.

The Archelaus scene is followed by a very tightly organized and controlled episode, so self-contained that it almost functions as a discrete act in the larger dramatic structure; it has its own definite beginning, middle and end, with the parts clearly marked out. The passage invites close scrutiny because of the concentration of dramatic language and techniques Josephus employs in it.

A Spartan noble by the name of Eurycles[12] visits Herod's court, manipulates the family's inner struggles to his own benefit, wreaks havoc and then leaves abruptly. The action is preceded, appropriately, by a kind of prologue (514-15) which introduces the action to be told — the downfall of Alexander and Aristobulus — Eurycles as the main agent of destruction, his motive (greed) and his chief qualification for the part, i.e. his mastery of strategems (ἀνὴρ πολὺ τῶν 'Αρχελάου στρατηγημάτων δυνατώτερος). We are told that he brought splendid gifts as a snare to entrap Herod (λαμπρὰ δ' Ἡρώδῃ δῶρα προσενεγκών, δέλεαρ ὧν ἐθηρᾶτο, 514), using his power of speech and flattery and adeptly playing on Herod's vulnerabilities to infiltrate the king's inner circle.

The action starts (516) as Eurycles assiduously sets about exploiting rifts in the house of Herod, ingratiating himself to everyone by acting out different parts. Although an old guest-friend of Antipater, he pretends a friendship with Alexander (ὑποκρίνεται ψευσάμενος) and assumes a different character vis à vis each person in court. Josephus' way of describing this — πάντων δ' ἀποπειραθεὶς τῶν προσώπων ἄλλον ἄλλως ὑπῄει 'experienced in playing all the parts he insinuated himself into the confidence of each one in a different way' (517) — creates the impression of an actor running on and off the stage switching personae as different characters are called for by the plot. Eurycles knows what to say in each situation, for he knows what is in the heart of each. Antipater, Herod's eldest son, nurtures a grievance against the Hasmonean princes who were thwarting his aspirations for the throne. Alexander succumbs to the blandishments of the wily Spartan, who under the 'fiction of friendship' (φιλίαν πλασάμενος, 518) induces the naïve Alexander to pour his heart out to him and thereby incriminate himself. Eurycles encourages this by, again, feigning sympathy — ὑπεκρίνετο (518) — putting on an act, making a show of one thing while concealing his true intentions. He sets the same snare (δελεάσας, 519) for Aristobulus, whose confessed grievances Eurycles joins with Alexander's, adding false embellishments of his own (προσεπιψεύδεται, 519). Thus by psychological skill and deception, Eurycles induces the two Hasmonean brothers Alexander and Aristobulus, of whom Herod was pathologically suspicious, to unburden their grievances against their step-brother Antipater and their father, and then he uses these confidences to gain the trusting ear of Antipater and, finally, of King Herod himself. Eurycles collects his due reward from Antipater, in the form of a large payment, before proceeding to the next stage in his scheme.

The next scene is given generous room to develop (520-6). Eurycles goes to Herod and tells him 'that he had come to grant him life in exchange for his benefactions and

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12 A colorful figure who achieved both fame and notoriety in an eventful life, attested in literary, epigraphic and numismatic sources (although Josephus is the source for the Herodian episode) collected in *Der Kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike* II (1979), 453; recent bibliography (but incomplete ancient citations) in *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* IV, 299; still fundamental is G.W. Bowersock, 'Eurycles of Sparta', *JRS* 51 (1961), 112-18.

light of day as recompense for his hospitality' (520). Eurycles spins an elaborately embellished and monstrous tale (τερατευσάμενος, 526) of growing resentment, planned murder and flight on the part of the two brothers.[13] Eurycles avows that he *feigned* partnership with Alexander (συνεργεῖν ὑποκριθείς, 520) in order to extract the story; at the same time Antipater, the real villain in the family, is praised to the skies. This web of half-truths and complete fabrications condemns Alexander and his brother.

Eurycles' words hit their mark, sending the king into a fit of savage fury (εἰς ἀνήκεστον ὀργὴν ἐξαγριοῦται, 526) which boils over (ὑπεραγανακτήσας, 527) when Antipater concocts a report that the two brothers had secretly been meeting two demoted officers, Jucundus and Tyrannus; but the consequent torture of that pair fails to produce evidence of treachery. A letter is found, in which Alexander asks the commander of the fortress Alexandrion to provide them refuge after they murder their father. Alexander pronounces it a clever forgery (τέχνασμα, 529) by the royal secretary Diophantus, who is bold and skilful in the art of imitating handwriting (τολμηρὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ δεινὸς μιμήσασθαι πάσης χειρὸς γράμματα, 529). Torture of both the commander and the secretary produces nothing. Eurycles, a master of timing and 'the stage-manager of this whole abominable business' (δραματουργὸς ὅλου τοῦ μύσους, 530; here δραματουργός means not only stage-manager but also contriver). receives his rich reward and then promptly flees to Cappadocia 'before an accurate report got out' of his doings in Judaea. Josephus tells us that Eurycles subsequently extorted money there from Archelaus, and continued his schemes in Greece, 'where he employed his ill-gotten gains on equally criminal objects', until finally caught and exiled; 'thus he finally paid the penalty for his betrayal of Alexander and Aristobulus' (531). The labelling of Eurycles as δραματουργός ensures that the episode is perceived as a staged production, and also indicates that the drama is about to shift as Eurycles departs the scene.

The episode does not end with the removal of the scoundrel from the stage. In a kind of postlude (532-3), another Greek, Euarestus of Cos, an intimate friend of Alexander, arrives and tries to put all the false stories to rest. The expectations of the reader/spectator are raised: perhaps the sordid affair will end well. Euarestus speaks the truth, but his appearance 'on stage' is designed only to highlight for the reader that the situation is beyond recovery. Herod will not be appeased since he is disposed to hearing only evil report. The brief appearance of Euarestus contrasts with that of Eurycles, and serves as an *antithesis* to the foregoing scenes.

Eurycles' deeds — or misdeeds — hasten the end of the two Hasmonean brothers. After his departure, the king's sister Salome discloses a treacherous communication from Aristobulus, driving the king to imprison both the Hasmonean brothers and, after consulting Augustus, staging a trial in Beirut — a trial for which Eurycles' machinations had prepared the way. In Josephus' colorful language, again borrowed from drama, 'it was as if this were the final hurricane to submerge the storm-tossed young men' (τοῦθ' ὥσπερ τελευταία θύελλα χειμαζομένους τοὺς νεανίσκους ἐπεβάπτισεν, 535; cf. Soph. *OC* 1659-60, *OT* 101; Eur. *Supp.* 269, *Ion* 966). The procedure of the trial is strictly controlled by Herod, who delivers a tirade producing the result he wants:

[13] Actually, Alexander is the main focus; Aristobulus, although he makes an occasional appearance and obviously is implicated in the unfolding plot, is oddly absent throughout the episode.

conviction. After the sentence is delivered, 'all Syria and the Jews waited in suspense for the end of the drama' (μετέωρος ἥ τε Συρία πᾶσα καὶ τὸ Ἰουδαϊκὸν ἦν ἐκδεχομένων τὸ τέλος τοῦ δράματος, 543). While Herod is mulling over how to execute his sons, two strange incidents occur. An old soldier Tiro, whose son is a close friend of Alexander, bursts into a bitter denunciation of Herod, and this is followed by a court barber, Trypho, spontaneously confessing that Tiro had tried to persuade him to cut Herod's throat. The soldier, the soldier's son and the barber are all tortured and killed, after which the two brothers, Alexander and Aristobulus, are finally executed. The executions bring this act of the tragedy to a close. The final act (552ff.), which we shall not analyze here, concerns the slow ensnarement of Antipater and Herod's final illness.

III

From the time of the late Republic, theater was becoming increasingly important in the social and cultural life of the empire. The first permanent stone theaters were built in Rome only two generations before Josephus, and in his lifetime they were built in large numbers in the capital and throughout the provinces. The number of stone theaters in Palestine alone — which lay on the cultural periphery of the empire — is remarkable.[14] Moreover, the number of festival days which included staged entertainment in Rome kept increasing so that in Josephus' day the number was between fifty and one hundred per year,[15] averaging more than one a week, although of course performances were concentrated in the successive days of the festivals.

There is no doubt that Josephus' educated Roman and Greek readers would have easily recognized the dramatic structures and language in the Herodian narrative. Formal tragedy and comedy — both revivals and new productions — continued to be produced through at least the second century CE,[16] so that Josephus' readers would not only have read the great Greek tragedies but may even have seen some of them — or plays inspired by them — produced on stage. Moreover, a particularly Roman dramatic form, the *fabulae praetextae* or plays on historical themes, while a Republican tradition,

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14 See the survey in A. Segal, *Theaters in Roman Palestine and Provincia Arabia* (1995); and for a more thorough study, Z. Weiss, *Games and Spectacles in Roman Palestine and their Reflection in Talmudic Literature*, Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1994) (Hebrew). On the development of the permanent theater structure in the Roman world, see now H. Dodge, 'Amusing the Masses: Buildings for Entertainment and Leisure in the Roman World', in D. Potter and D.J. Mattingly (eds.), *Life, Death, and Entertainment in the Roman Empire* (1999), 205-55, at 208-24.

15 E.J. Jory, 'Continuity and Change in the Roman Theatre', in *Studies in Honour of T.B.L. Webster* (1986), 143-52 at p. 144.

16 R.C. Beacham, *Spectacle Entertainments in Early Imperial* Rome (1999), 4-11, 135-47, 233-7. On theater in the late Republic see E. Rawson, 'Theatrical Life in Republican Rome and Italy', *PBSR* 53 (1985), 97-113 = *Roman Culture and Society. Collected Papers* (1991), 468-87. C.P. Jones, 'Greek Drama in the Roman Empire', in *Theater and Society in the Classical World*, ed. R. Scodel (1993), 39-52 combines literary and epigraphical evidence to demonstrate that Greek tragedy and comedy, both revivals of classical drama and entirely new plays, were produced well into the second century.

endured well into the period of the Principate (witness the *Octavia*), providing a convincing context for Josephus' dramatic historical writing.[17] Alongside these classical forms, other kinds of theatrical entertainment, in particular mime, pantomime and farce (*fabula Atellana*), occupied an ever more prominent place on the Roman stage empire-wide. Although the evidence is far from full and decisive, it has seemed that 'the two principal forms of drama that dominated the public stage in imperial times, and were important also in private performance, were mime and pantomime'.[18] The *fabula Atellana* as well, which died out only in the second or third century, was still a thriving form of scenic entertainment in Josephus' time.[19] Mimes and farces could be staged not only independently, but also as parts of the performances of tragedies and comedies; mimes are usually mentioned as interludes (ἐμβόλια[20]) and *Atellanae* as *exodia* or finales. Plots of *Atellanae* could even mock tragedy, such as the suggestive title of the play by Pomponius, *The Fake Agamemnon*. Both farce and mime gained a high enough degree of respectability for known literary personalities to try their hands at writing them.[21]

Not surprisingly, Josephus shows familiarity with the many dramatic forms prevalent in his day. He not only quotes extensively from classical tragedy, but he knew the details of the mime production at which the emperor Caligula was assassinated (*AJ* 19.94-5), and he was personally acquainted with a *mimologos* named Aliturus, a Jew and personal favorite of Nero (Vita 16). This knowledge seems to have influenced his writing of the Eurycles interlude. Just as actors had to be highly versatile and play many parts, sometimes in rapid succesion within one scene, so Eurycles adopts rapidly changing poses or masks[22] as he spins his plot around the two unfortunate Hasmonean brothers. The wily Spartan, an outsider whose sole motive is greed, gains nearly

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17 See Wiseman, *Roman Drama* (n. 3), who argues that the *fabulae praetextae* were crucial in preserving and shaping the historical traditions of Rome. See also H.I. Flower, '*Fabulae Praetextae* in Context: When were Plays on Contemporary Subjects Performed in Republican Rome', *CQ* 45 (1995), 170-90, arguing for the 'ephemeral' and *ad hoc* nature of the productions themselves

18 E. Csapo and W.J. Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama* (1995), 369, and cf. 373-8 for literary and epigraphic sources on mimes. See in general R.C. Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience* (1991), 117-53, and cf. 127; Weiss (n. 14), 106-28; D. Potter, 'Entertainers in the Roman Empire', in Potter and Mattingly, *Life, Death, and Entertainment* (n. 14), 256-325, at 263-71, 272-6. Pantomime dance was introduced into Rome during the reign of Augustus, according to E.J. Jory, 'Literary Evidence for the Beginnings of Imperial Pantomime', *BICS* 28 (1981), 147-61. On mime, pantomime and farce, see further W. Beare, *The Roman Stage* (1968), 137-58 and G.E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy: A Study in Popular Entertainment* (1971), 10-17.

19 See Beacham (n. 18), 128-9 and Beare (n. 18), 238. Beare thought that 'in the life of the common people, from early times to the end of the Roman Empire, popular farce played a greater part than all the literary forms of Roman drama put together' (p. 137).

20 Cic. *Q.F.* 3.1.7, *Sest.* 116, cf. Schol. Bob. 304; cf. Ar. *Poet.* 1456a, τὰ ἐμβόλιμα; *RE* s.v. *embolium*.

21 Beare (n. 18), 143-8; E. Fantham, 'Mime: The Missing Link in Roman Literary History', *CW* 82 (1989), 153-6, whose 'missing link', however, is not literary but street mime.

22 *Atellanae* were usually based on a written text and played by actors wearing masks whereas mimes were mostly improvised and played without masks. See Beacham (n. 18), 183ff.

complete control of the action in the court and functions as both author and actor, director and producer, changing roles at the same rapid pace at which the scenes themselves change (recall Josephus' description of him, quoted above: πάντων δ' ἀποπειραθεὶς τῶν προσώπων ἄλλον ἄλλως ὑπῄει, *BJ* 1.517); he is a living example of a πολυπρόσωπον δρᾶμα to which Lucian compares life itself (*Nicr.* 20). Moreover, the failings of the central figure of the drama, Herod himself, are especially prominent, even exaggerated, in the Eurycles 'act'. The king lacks heroic stature, and his impulsive behavior lacks tragic greatness. He reacts to, rather than controls, the things which are done to him, and his reactions are usually wrong: he is pathologically suspicious and cannot distinguish between truth and untruth, he is caught in a web of lies and a network of traps, he cannot control the outbursts of his temper and he acts and reacts in a highly exaggerated manner. Despite the linguistic clues comparing his house to the plagued houses of the Greek tragic tradition, his character resembles in some degree the stock characters familiar from comedy, mime and farce; we may mention here, as relevant to the present investigation, the Bad-tempered (*morosus*), the Suspicious (*suspiciosus*), the Fool (*stultus*) and the jealous husband (*zelotypos*). By the same token the schemers Eurycles and Antipater recall the farcical greedy character known as Dossennus who is usually described as a buffoon but may also have been a crafty schemer.[23] It could also be that Eurycles' presentation of Herod in Alexander's eyes as 'implacable' (ἀμείλικτος, 523) towards him and 'loving and tender' (φιλόστοργος, 523) towards Antipater was meant by Josephus to recall two stock father-figures from comedy, just as Antipater is represented by Eurycles as a φιλοπάτωρ son (526); all of these stock roles are subverted by reality.

Josephus' purpose was not therefore to probe the psychological interiors of heroic temperament and quandary, but to stage a pageant, with the trappings of both tragedy and comedy, of a royal house succumbing to the treacherous plots of an outsider, and in the end collapsing on its inhabitants. Josephus did not set out to write a tragedy or comedy *per se*, but the resemblances to those forms help bring out the dangers and treachery of the plots orchestrated by Eurycles, and the true nature of the characters involved. (In the end, the 'bad character' Eurycles gets away, even though Josephus is careful to note that he received his just penalty in another setting, off-stage as it were.) The narrative is enhanced by hunting metaphors (514, 519), which in turn bring out the brutality and the motif of deception running through the drama, for a successful hunter is one who lures and outsmarts his prey. There is something improvisational about Eurycles' many-faceted acting, which is nonetheless carefully thought out. Deception and trickery lie at the heart of the plot. These elements are especially brought out by the concentration of vocabulary signifying deception and scheming, acting/prevarication (ὑποκρίνεσθαι) and stage production (δραματουργεῖν), which suggest that Josephus had some specific purpose and effect in mind. It is to this that we now turn our attention.

IV

Eurycles is the δραματουργός (530), the stage-manager, when he is present at Herod's court; Antipater, the second main schemer, also stage-manages (δραματουργῶν, 471)

23 Fantham (n. 21), and cf. Cic. *de Or.* 2.251.

with some skill until the flow of the action turns against him. Surprisingly, these two words are encountered in extant Greek literature here for the first time. In classical Greek, τραγῳδοδιδάσκαλος, κωμῳδοδιδάσκαλος, τραγῳδοποιός, κωμῳδοποιός and the like, were the words used to describe the producer of the play, who was the author as well. The appearance of δραματουργεῖν and related words[24] coincides chronologically with the rising popularity of the mimes, pantomimes and Atellan farces, for which the old terms related to tragedy and comedy did not apply; and this coincidence may not be accidental. One may see in the term δραματουργεῖν the reflection of an historical development, the independent travelling companies of actors[25] who circulated throughout the empire and put on their productions for hire.

While it cannot be said that Josephus coined the expression δραματουργός — the amount of lost Greek literature is too large for such a determination — he certainly was attuned to current linguistic usages, and chose the expression to characterize Eurycles and the episode in which he is involved. Eurycles and Antipater did not just put on 'stage productions'; their 'plays' involved dissimulation and treachery. In Josephus' day, a new word, δραματουργεῖν, developed to denote not only widespread theatrical productions which were neither formal tragedy nor classical comedy, but also the new kind of *acting*, which involved less high art and more dissembling, pretending, agility in changing roles quickly and adroitly — which is, of course, exactly what Eurycles and Antipater both do. It is instructive that, somewhat later, Hesychius defines δραματουργεῖν as πανουργεῖν — the connotation of *false* play-acting, of knavery, is present in Josephus' use of the word.

Both of the dissemblers/actors in Josephus' play are also said explicitly to be practiced in feigning — ὑποκρίνεσθαι (471, 516, 518, 520, 569, cf. 628, 630). This word has an interesting history which is relevant to the interpretation of the passage in question.[26] Its original, basic meaning is to reply or answer (in its Ionic form; the regular Attic word was ἀποκρίνεσθαι), and it also had the meaning 'to interpret, to expound' (a meaning it retained through the Roman period). In Attic drama the verb developed from its simple meaning of 'respond' to signify responding in a dialogue, probably at first a responsive dialogue between the chorus-leader and the chorus but soon applied more

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24 The word δραματουργία appears a bit before Josephus, in Strabo 1.2.27, and in the writings of Josephus' Christian contemporary, Clemens Romanus, *Epistula de Virginitate* 2.10.

25 On their organization see E. Jory, 'Associations of Actors in Rome', *Hermes* 98 (1970), 224-53, and note esp. p. 252 for epigraphic attestations of associations of mime-actors.

26 The following discussion is based on the examples from classical literature cited in *RE Suppl.* VIII (1956), 187ff., and on later examples, particularly in Josephus' time, cited in G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* VIII, ed. G. Friedrich (1969), 558-71 (= *TWNT* here), from whose conclusions, however, we depart on significant points. See now J. Barr, 'The Hebrew/Aramaic Background of 'Hypocrisy' in the Gospels', in P.R. Davies and R.T. White (eds.), *A Tribute to Geza Vermes. Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History*, JSOT Supplement Series 100 (1990), 307-26, which illuminates the developments of the Hebrew terms for deceit and hypocrisy but, contrary to our argument, denies that the developments in the word ὑποκριτής derive from changes in the Roman theater. The purpose here is not polemical, but it must be pointed out that W. Albright and C.S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible Matthew* (1971), cxv-cxxxiii, arguing for ὑποκριτής to mean exclusively 'interpreter', seem way off the mark.

generally to responsive dialogue between actors and to acting itself. The word then took on the meaning of 'to declaim', that is, an orator's profession (cf. Dem. *de Cor.* 15). In rhetorical settings the verb quite naturally acquired the overtone of 'exaggerate, speak histrionically', for orators stretched the truth and somewhat overacted in order to win a point. In a further and, so far as this investigation is concerned, final stage, the meaning of the verb ὑποκρίνεσθαι extended metaphorically from 'exaggerate' to 'feign, pretend, dissemble', indeed to 'play a part', but in a way quite different from the manner of a formal actor, whose art does not encompass the kind of 'pretending' which a 'hypocrite' engages in.[27] The derivative nouns ὑποκριτής and ὑπόκρισις show parallel development. In Aristotle and Plato, the words ὑποκριτής and ὑποκρίνεσθαι do not mean 'pretend', but 'act' in the formal sense (e.g., Plat. *Rep.* 373b). But by the period of the late Republic and early Principate a ὑποκριτής was an actor in the world of mime and farce who put on many faces (πρόσωπα) during the course of his act, and these faces were stock, rough-hewn personalities engaged in crude plots, instead of the refined characters we find in traditional drama. Of course, ὑποκριτής continued to mean 'actor' in its original, neutral sense through the Roman period. Plutarch, for example, frequently uses ὑποκριτής to mean simply actor (e.g., *Dem.* 1.2 *et al.*), but he also uses it to mean one who pretends or deceives, as in his phrase ὑποκριταὶ φιλίας at *Mor.* 13B, which is similar to Josephus' phrase ὑποκριτὴς φιλανθρωπίας at *BJ* 2.587. We may recall as well Epictetus' vexing sentence: τί ἐξαπατᾷς τοὺς πολλούς, τί ὑποκρίνῃ Ἰουδαῖον ὢν Ἕλλην; (*Diss.* 2.9.19, cf. 20: οὐκ ἔστιν Ἰουδαῖος, ἀλλ' ὑποκρίνεται). Similarly, ὑπόκρισις came to mean deception, dissembling, as Herod himself denounces Antipater's τὸ πανοῦργον ... καὶ τὴν ὑπόκρισιν, 'villainy and hypocrisy' (*BJ* 1.628, cf. 630). Significantly, as in the appearance of the word δραματουργεῖν, we see this last meaning of ὑποκρίνεσθαι/ ὑποκριτής/ ὑπόκρισις emerge at just the time when mimes, pantomimes and Atellan farces were spreading and increasing in popularity throughout the Roman empire, i.e., in the late Republic and early Principate.

It has now become commonplace to recognize the close cultural contacts between Jews and Greeks in the Palestine of the first century. An interesting aspect of this connection is established in a brief but important study by Haiim Rosén, who examines certain shared *topoi* and linguistic patterns in New Comedy and the New Testament, concluding that 'Jesus was using dramatic *loci communes*' which required no explanation, as they would have been immediately understood by his audience; '... since New Comedy is cosmopolitan, its associations could be readily understood'.[28] Yet we should not forget the distinctly Roman setting in which these exchanges took place, as well, and the contribution of Roman culture, particularly in the areas of theater, oratory and commerce. In fact, the Roman orators excelled in injecting dramatic figures and language

27 Cf. II Macc. 5:25, 6:21, 24, 25. As *TWNT* 561-2 points out, this meaning is already in 'Hippocrates' *de Victu* 24.8-11 and Dem. 31.8, but 'ὑποκρίνομαι ist jedoch im gesamten klassischen Sprachgebrauch nie ein moralisch negativ qualifizierendes Wort geworden, und ὑποκριτής kann alleinstehend nie den 'Heuchler' bezeichnen, sondern es bleibt eine vox media'.

28 H. Rosén, 'Motifs and ΤΟΠΟΙ from the New Comedy in the New Testament?', lecture delivered at the Catholic University of Leuven on 13 March, 1972, in *East and West: Selected Writings in Linguistics* I (1982), 476-88 at p. 481.

into their speeches. One need only think of the σύγκρισις of the severe and the indulgent father used by Cicero to great effect in *Pro Caelio* (37-8) to get an idea of the possible uses of dramatic tropes in Roman oratory. Thus Rosén's conclusion applies *a fortiori* to mime and the kind of dramatic productions of which the Eurycles scenes in Josephus' *BJ* are reminiscent. We recall *BJ* 1.471 — πάντα δὲ περιεσκεμμένως δραματουργῶν ... αὐτὸς μὲν ἀδελφοῦ προσωπεῖον ἐπικείμενος ... ὑπεκρίνετο — which clearly associates theater with the kind of acting which is the equivalent of dissembling.

In Greek literature associated with Palestine, the most outstanding use of ὑποκριτής in the sense of our English 'hypocrite' is of course to be found in the New Testament, in the famous admonishment: Οὐαὶ δὲ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ ὑποκριταί (Matt. 23: 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29, etc.). Again, it appears that the New Testament authors were using this word in a way which had developed not too long before their time. The *TWNT* tries to derive the 'negative' usage from Jewish tradition, but the more likely source is the changing form of theater in the wider Roman world.[29] The Septuagint uses ὑποκριτής only twice, in different verses in Job (34:30 and 36:13), to translate the Hebrew word *chanef* (חנף), yet that translation appears *only* in Theodotion's translation in the Hexapla, so therefore might be as late as the second or third century CE.[30] In the rest of the Septuagint as we have it, *chanef* is translated variously, e.g., ἀσεβής (Job 8:13, 15:34; Prov. 11:9; Is. 33:14), παράνομος (Job 17:8, 20:5), δόλιος (Job 13:16) and ἄνομος (Is. 10:6). Yet the second-century translations of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, when preserved by the Hexapla, render these same instances of *chanef* as ὑποκριτής, so that 'the later Greek translators seem to show an almost exact correspondence between Hebrew חנף and Greek ὑποκριτής, ὑπόκρισις'.[31] We may add that Jerome in his Latin translation of the Bible consistently renders *chanef* as *hypocrita* (in every instance cited above except for Is. 10:6, because of a variation in the Hebrew), using a Greek word which had the meaning he wished, and of course taking his cue from the New Testament as well.

Thus we see that the word ὑποκριτής gained the meaning of 'pretender, prevaricator, dissembler' (with the theological overtone 'godless') precisely between the time of the Septuagint and the second-century CE translators, and was well established by the time of Jerome. We have suggested that the change in the word derived in part from the changing forms dominant in theater. When Josephus uses the word ὑποκρίνεσθαι for Eurycles and Antipater he can benefit from the dual meaning of the word in its theatrical context: the two schemers were both prevaricators, manipulating others by practiced hypocrisy; and both were also actors in a violent drama, each taking several roles in an improvisatory performance, for each had to deceive several people at once.

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29 Cf. R.A. Batey, 'Jesus and the Theatre', *NTS* 30 (1984), 563-74.

30 Barr (n. 26), 314.

31 Ibid., 314-15.

V

Despite a few linguistic similarities in the parallel account in *AJ* (16.301-10), the main features we have pointed out in *BJ*'s narrative of Herod's court are absent from *AJ*.[32] The dramatic language, character portrayal and narrative structure, all reminiscent of the theater, are unique to the *BJ* account, and indeed, in the *AJ* the entire affair of Eurycles is told in abbreviated, colorless form. This raises an old vexing question: are the dramatic structure of the Herodian domestic narrative in *BJ* and the dramatic descriptions and language the products of Josephus' own creative choice and control, or signs of the hidden hands of his Greek assistants?

Long ago, Thackeray set the terms of the debate by proposing that not only quotations from classical literature, but the touches of literary flair, are the work of Josephus' assistants.[33] In the most extensive (but far from comprehensive) commentary on *BJ* to date, Michel and Bauernfeind, in their comment on 1.431, assume that the language and themes of tragedy came from Josephus' Greek assistants; in this they are only following Ricciotti.[34] It has seemed reasonable to think, especially in light of the rather duller character of the language and style of the *AJ*, that Josephus was neither capable of, nor interested in, attempting the kind of literary polish and flourish which characterize (although not consistently!) the *BJ*. In one of the most recent studies of the issue, Daniel Schwartz[35] has examined the parallel passages *BJ* 1.225-73 and *AJ* 14.280-369, and on the basis of the more 'dramatic' character of the *BJ* section concludes that *AJ* stays closer to the sources (mostly Nicolaus of Damascus) and that the literary flourishes in *BJ* are due to Josephus' assistants. 'I suspect very much that Josephus was not capable of producing such a work himself', he writes (p. 126).

Now, what Schwartz means by 'dramatic' is different from the phenomenon investigated here. For while he focuses on literary spice and flair, we have pointed out the incorporation of structures, techniques, tropes, characters and language of drama produced in the theater. What we have described underpins the whole composition of the narrative, and far exceeds mere additions and embellishment. To attribute the pervasive dramatic elements to assistants rather than to the author would require us to suppose that the assistants produced an original composition themselves, working with little more than notes and raw material provided by Josephus and making rather far-reaching creative choices with at best the acquiescence of the author. Moreover, since Josephus was certainly himself capable of mannered and melodramatic writing, and even of

32 Note τύχη (*AJ* 16.300), Eurycles ὑπεκρίνατο (303). The classic (but problematic) comparison of *BJ* and *AJ* is R. Laqueur, *Der jüdische Historiker Flavius Josephus* (1929), who however does not discuss our passage.

33 Thackeray, *Josephus* (n. 5), 104ff.; cf. his introduction to the Loeb translation of *BJ*, pp. xv-xix. For a summary of criticism of Thackeray, S. Mason, *Flavius Josephus and the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study* (1991), 48-51. It should be noted that the assistants are called πρὸς τὴν Ἑλληνίδα φωνὴν συνεργοί (*CA* 1.50) an expression which leaves vague the extent of the contribution of these 'assistants' to the composition of the work; their exact function is therefore uncertain and cannot be simply guessed from the *BJ* text.

34 O. Michel and O. Bauernfeind, *Flavius Josephus, De Bello Judaico* I (1959), 419 n. 206. Cf. G. Ricciotti, *Flavio Giuseppe Tradotto e Commentato* II, 2 ed. (1949), 123 n.

35 'On Drama and Authenticity in Philo and Josephus', *SCI* 10 (1989/90), 113-29.

eloquence, both of which are evident in the *CA* and the *Vita*, we need not attribute every literary excellence or sign of originality in the *BJ* to someone else; in fact it would be difficult to assign the features examined here to anyone other than the historian who claims credit for the work. Schwartz admits that he 'makes Josephus' assistants largely responsible for dramatic departures from their sources and Josephus himself more a faithful compiler when his sources are publishable as is' (p. 126). This conclusion is not really any less speculative, nor does it require any less imaginative reconstruction, than its opposite, i.e., supposing that Josephus was not an automaton and had not only native intelligence and critical powers but also literary ambitions. Josephus after all tells us that he steeped himself in classical learning after arriving in Rome (*AJ* 20.263); many of the authors who had an impact on him have been identified in his other works. Moreover, although we know nothing about his tastes in drama or propensity for attending the theater, we have already seen that he was familiar with the Roman theater, especially mime (as is clearly indicated by the description of a mime in *AJ* 19.94, and his acquaintance with a *mimologos* in Rome, *Vita* 16, see discussion above in section 3), and given his literary ambitions he must have participated to the extent possible in the rich cultural life of the imperial capital.

It is true that *AJ* is of a wholly different character from *BJ*, but Josephus' announced purpose was also quite different in that later work.[36] Moreover, Schwartz himself pertinently suggests that *AJ* as we have it is little more than a compilation of sources and notes, a sketch which would serve as the basis for a more polished work. 'It may be that Josephus planned to do more, and decided to publish the work in this form when he found himself getting old or otherwise busy. But it could also be that he considered the book simply something of a dossier of materials in support of his claim concerning the antiquity of the Jews' (p. 128). Either of these will do: Josephus approached the composition of *BJ* and *AJ* differently. He composed the *BJ* but merely (for the most part) compiled the *AJ*.[37]

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36 Cf. Schwartz's citations, 126-7 — but he draws an opposite conclusion from the one offered here.

37 At the end of *AJ* he sums up his task: πάντα γὰρ οἶμαι μετ' ἀκριβείας ἁπάσης συντεταχέναι, using a word with the connotation 'arrange material'. By contrast, he uses the word συγγράφειν to describe the composition of the *BJ*: Ἰώσηπος ὁ ταῦτα συγγραψάμενος (*BJ* 7.448), τὸν πόλεμον συνέγραφον (*AJ* 1.6), cf. Thuc. 1.1.1. In *BJ* 1.1-3, Josephus says he intends to narrate (ἀφηγήσασθαι, compare *AJ* 1.4 describing the writing of *BJ* with the word ἐκδιηγήσασθαι) the facts of the war by translating (μεταβαλών) the account he had previously compiled (συντάξας) in Aramaic; here the the word συντάξας probably means that Josephus assembled and arranged information rather than producing a smooth rhetorically finished composition. About the projected composition of other (unwritten) works Josephus uses the word συγγράφειν (*AJ* 1.29, 20.268), but about the writing of the *AJ*, Josephus says that he undertook it, or perhaps tried his hand at it (ἐγκεχείρισμαι, *AJ* 1.5; προεγκεχείρισμαι in mss. SPL), in implicit contrast to those who wish to write history (τοῖς τὰς ἱστορίας συγγράφειν βουλομένοις, *AJ* 1.1); at *AJ* 14.3 he includes himself in the class of συγγραφεῖς. But the distinction between συντάσσειν and συγγράφειν should not be pushed too far, as Polybius seems to use συντάσσειν and συντάσσεσθαι to mean 'compose' (1.3.8, 2.40.4, 9.2.2, etc.),

We should add that a stylometric analysis of precisely the passage in *BJ* which Schwartz examines suggests that while the *AJ* parallel seems to bear closer resemblances to Nicolaus than Josephus, the *BJ* passage is authentic Josephus. That is, while Schwartz may be right that *AJ* 14.280-369 was incorporated from the source (Nicolaus) without much change or original literary additions, the *BJ* passage bears authorial markings identical to those in comparable passages in *BJ*, *Vita* and even *AJ* 20. 'It appears that at least some function words are used in *BJ* 1.225-273 in ways that are consistent with characteristic Josephan usages. Thus it appears that Josephus, using Nicolaus, wrote all or most of the passage himself'.[38]

We conclude that Josephus is to be credited with the artistic and creative decision to compose Herod's domestic troubles as a drama with elements from both tragedy and comedy, not only employing language and other techniques of the theater, but giving the entire narrative a dramatic structure. If so, we may ask what his purpose was. Here we are confined to the realm of hypothesis and speculation, but we may note that by employing tragic forms and at the same time distorting them with distinctly and uniformly unheroic and exaggerated characters, Josephus could take a sophisticated distance from the subject of his narrative. The forms in which his characters are placed emphasize just how unheroic they really were. Josephus found an effective way to offer a poignant authorial comment on the historical actors, while avoiding a too-obvious judgement on their abject state.

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38 D. Williams, 'On Josephus' Use of Nicolaus of Damascus: A Stylometric Analysis of *BJ* 1.225-273 and *AJ* 14.280-369', *SCI* 12 (1993), 176-87. See also D. Williams, 'Josephus and the Authorship of *War* 2.119-161 (on the Essenes)', *JSJ* 25 (1994) 207-21, concluding that the passage is authentic Josephus. Williams rules out Greek assistants for *AJ* books 15-19 in 'Thackeray's Assistant Hypothesis: A Stylometric Evaluation', *JSJ* 48 (1997), 262-75.