

period, on the one hand, and his open criticism of Alexander the Great (for example, he picks the most critical version of the story of Alexander and Calanus), the importance of which, as Niehoff rightly insists, can hardly be overestimated, and Greek philosophical culture, on the other. In particular, he assimilates individual Greek writers, notably Pythagoras, Plato and Zeno, into Jewish ethnicity. They are said to have derived their ideas from Scripture or to have reached the same insights as Moses. Where they do not agree with Jewish attitudes, he criticizes them, for example, Plato and Xenophon in their *Symposia* (pp. 148-50). As Niehoff (p. 182) points out, Philo felt that the encyclical studies naturally led to Jewish commitment because the best of Greek philosophy is nothing but an imitation of the Torah.

An important contribution by Niehoff is her explanation of Philo's concept of Divine language (pp. 188-202), which, he says, is natural and without grammar and which serves as the archetype for human language, and which, she rightly says, represents a considerable philosophical achievement. In remarking that the Divine word functions like a seal, leaving both written signs in Moses' mind and structuring patterns on the material realm, Philo applied this image, which he borrowed from Alexandrian Middle Platonism, for the first time to language and literary creativity.

Niehoff's meticulous analysis of parables in Philo (pp. 210-46), the existence of which had previously been overlooked or even denied, is an important original contribution, especially her comparison of Philo's parables with those in the Gospels and in rabbinic literature and with figures of comparison in Graeco-Roman literature. If her analysis is correct, as there is reason to believe that it is, Philo could potentially play a role similar to that of the Gospel of Thomas in elucidating the origins of early Christianity. Additionally, her analysis of rabbinic king parables indicates, most importantly, unmistakable Philonic traces.

Finally, Niehoff (pp. 247-66), pursuing Geertz's theory that religions strive to objectivize their moral and aesthetic preferences 'by depicting them as the imposed conditions of life implicit in a world with a particular structure', presents an important and original discussion of Philo's connection between nature and the Jewish way of life, analyzing Philo's arguments inscribing into nature Jewish customs that preserve health and that reflect the objective structure of the universe.

In sum, this is a ground-breaking work, representing creative and responsible scholarship in the best sense, that opens up a new dimension to the study of both Philo and Alexandrian Jewry.

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Tessa Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction*, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums* 18, Leiden: Brill, 2001 xix + 579 pp.

For more than two decades Tessa Rajak has been one of the most prolific and influential scholars of the Jewish interaction with the Greco-Roman world. In addition to her indispensable book, *Josephus: The Historian and his Society* (1983), she has produced a raft of important articles that give insight into the relationships of Jewish texts, traditions, and history to the wider society of the Greeks and the Romans in the Second Temple and early rabbinic periods. The present volume constitutes a collection of twenty-seven articles, three of them new, illustrating Rajak's breadth of interests and contributions. The assemblage is most welcome, an inspired idea, and a boon for scholars and students of this subject.

The pieces fall under four headings. In Part I, six essays treat various aspects of the interconnections between Hellenism and Judaism in a broad sense. Josephus serves to unite the nine articles in Part II that cover matters ranging from his political thought to his use of Parthian source material. Part III gathers some of Rajak's most significant publications (nine of them) on Jewish

diaspora communities, their organization and adaptation, a segment that draws heavily on epigraphic and archaeological, as well as literary, evidence. Three final pieces, all written very recently, form an 'epilogue' that reaches out beyond the classical world and extends even into the 19th century constructs of Jew and Greek. A review must be selective. But it can give some sense of the richness and diversity contained in this volume.

The book opens with a new composition, 'Judaism and Hellenism Revisited'. It serves as an introduction to Rajak's broad theme in Part I and also to summarize current thinking on the inter-relationships of those two concepts. Rajak observes that the rigid dichotomy no longer prevails in modern scholarship. The depth of the Hellenic impact even in Palestine is now widely acknowledged as a consequence of Hengel's influential work. But uniquely Jewish characteristics persisted. Rajak rightly advocates the striking of a balance in future studies that takes account of the shifting blend of Jewish tradition with the culture of the classical world (pp. 3-9). That theme runs through almost all of the volume.

It emerges clearly in Rajak's essay on 'The Sense of History in Jewish Intertestamental Writing' (1986). Her discussion of Hellenistic-Jewish historians like Demetrius, Eupolemus, Artapanus, and the authors of I and II Maccabees weaves a path between those who see the works as apologetic and those who regard them as playing a strictly internal role within Judaic culture. The readership was surely Jewish for the most part, but the genre employed, fundamentally Hellenic, had as its aim the setting of Jews into a wider framework (pp. 23-32). Her conclusion, however, that there was a 'school of Judaeo-Hellenistic historiography' (p. 35), may take the argument too far. There is a world of difference between the sober chronography of Demetrius and the fanciful creations of Artapanus.

Rajak shifts ground slightly on this subject in her 'The Hasmoneans and the Uses of Hellenism' (1990). She makes a compelling case for the Hellenistic elements in Hasmonean kingship, adumbrated already even by Judas Maccabaeus (pp. 68-75). And she quite plausibly traces the notion of Jewish hostility to Greek communities in their environs to the era of the later Hasmoneans, a plain construct (pp. 76-8). But she seems to forget this when treating the interpretations of II Maccabees, whose sharp differentiation of Hellenism from Judaism is taken as reflecting the realities of the early 2nd century rather than the perception of the late 2nd century (pp. 62-3).

In many ways the best article in this section is Rajak's 'Dying for the Law: The Martyr's Portrait in Jewish-Greek Literature' (1997). Here she takes on the idea that martyr tales are largely a product of Christianity and that their manifestations in Jewish writings should be seen as precursors or anticipations of the Christian genre. Rajak's careful examination shows the theme in manifold modes, not just in II and IV Maccabees but in a wide range of texts that blend repeated Jewish motifs with Greek forms, thus establishing martyrology as a Hellenistic-Jewish literary tradition that requires examination in its own light, not through the lens of Christianity (pp. 103-30). The section as a whole has the great merit of setting the absorption of Hellenic culture into a firm Jewish context.

The nine essays in the Josephus segment of the book address a wider variety of topics. Rajak has produced one new piece to open this portion, on 'Ethnic Identities in Josephus'. She brings out very well the ambiguities and complexities with which Josephus uses labels to designate non-Jews and the overlapping, even inconsistent, character of the categories that allowed Jews to be represented both as 'Greeks' and as 'barbarians' depending on the conceptualisation that suited the purpose (pp. 138-44). This is done most effectively. Yet it is unclear on what basis she draws the inference that Palestinian Jewry in the late Second Temple period, in Josephus' perception, was more comfortable with Greek culture than it had been at the dawn of Hellenism (pp. 144-5). The supposed discomfort at the outset is not demonstrated.

The inclusion of 'The *Against Apion* and the Continuities in Josephus' Political Thought' (1998) is indeed welcome. Political thinking in Josephus rarely receives treatment, and Rajak's discussion is a particularly acute one. She makes the important point that, despite Josephus' own claims about his audience, the readership will have consisted as much of Hellenized Jews as of

Greeks or Romans (p. 197). Her detailed analysis of Josephus' use of *politeia*, in shifting fashion through his corpus, shows a blend of the conventional and the novel. Josephus borrowed Greek ideology, applying it to his presentation of political virtues, law-making, and the superiority of an aristocratic system (pp. 204-14). At the same time, he added his own twists with the concept of 'theocracy' and the location of aristocratic rule in a priestly class (pp. 201-4, 208-11). Rajak neatly ties these threads together through tracing the evolution of Josephus' thought in the course of his several writings.

Perhaps the pivotal article in the Josephus section is 'Josephus and the "Archaeology" of the Jews' (1982). Although published twenty years ago, it remains a contribution of the first order. Rajak examines Josephus' *Antiquities* in light of Greek historiographical traditions, noting in particular the parallels that can be discovered in writers like Dionysius, Diodorus, and Varro who grappled with the issue of where 'myth' leaves off and 'history' begins (pp. 241-5). Yet, despite all the similarities, Rajak exposes the even more fundamental differences that give Josephus' work a peculiarly Jewish character, including adherence to a text (however many changes he makes in it), rather than the collecting and sifting of data, which distinguishes his work from the Greeks, and the concept of an exact recreation of that text, an idea closer to Near Eastern writers like Manetho and Berossus, but distinct even from them in its focus on a single work (pp. 245-54). Rajak successfully outlines the importance of Hellenistic forms for Josephus' project on the one hand, and the distinctiveness of its Jewish features on the other.

Rajak includes two essays on matters ostensibly marginal to Josephus' main mission in the *Antiquities*, yet engrossing and enlightening as to his materials and methods. The first, 'Moses in Ethiopia: Legend and Literature' (1978), deals with a major digression on Moses' military expedition against the Ethiopians, an event nowhere recorded in Scripture but elaborately embellished in Josephus' version. Rajak teases out of the text important conclusions regarding the availability of Jewish legends framed in the genre of Hellenistic historiography and ethnographic traditions (pp. 260-71). The argument illuminates a revealing dimension of Josephus' scholarship: this was no mere irrelevant and entertaining excursus on his part, but reflects the growing picture of Moses developed by Alexandrian-Jewish writers, expanding but in no way questioning the biblical narrative. Twenty years later, 'The Parthians in Josephus' (1998) dealt with a closely comparable subject, Josephus' conveyance of two lengthy tales treating Jewish themes in the setting of the Parthian empire: the legend of two Jews who rose to prominence at the Parthian court, only to end in catastrophe, and the story of the conversion of the ruling dynasty of Adiabene to Judaism. Rajak systematically explores both narratives in light of other Parthian material in Josephus, analyses their significance for historical reconstruction, and, most importantly, considers their implications for the conception of Jewish diaspora identity in sources available to Josephus (pp. 278-96). The digressions provide a window not only on the manipulation of traditional Jewish motifs (e.g. the Jew in the foreign court) but on the interweaving of tales (and historical information) stemming from Iranian material. Both of these essays disclose Rajak's sensitivity to literary themes and their relation to historiographical questions.

In Part III Rajak addresses herself largely to realia. Nine articles exploit documentary evidence, both literary and epigraphic, and archaeological testimony to build up a picture of Jewish experience in diaspora communities. Some of Rajak's most influential contributions fall under this heading.

A case in point is 'Was there a Roman Charter for the Jews?' (1984). Here Rajak definitively demolishes the previous paradigm that interpreted Roman affirmation of Jewish privileges as deriving from a general imperial policy and conferring special legal status upon the Jews. Her close scrutiny of the relevant documents, most of them transmitted by Josephus, shows that they consisted of ad hoc pronouncements tied to particular circumstances and represent no overall Roman stance regarding Jewish rights in the empire (pp. 304-26). This lucid and forceful argument has carried the day for all subsequent interpretations. The only challenge that might be brought to her conclusion is that she does not take the case far enough. Rajak recognizes clearly

the piecemeal character of Roman interventions in the affairs of Greek cities with significant Jewish populations. But she infers too readily that these reflect a general alienation of Jews from their neighbors in diaspora communities (pp. 322, 324, 329), and an overall Hellenic hostility toward the monotheistic religion and the peculiar people in their midst (pp. 330-1). A different dissection of the documents would suggest that the summons to Roman authority came in unusual circumstances, tied closely to local situations at particular times, and need not imply deep-rooted or long-standing animosity between diaspora Jews and their neighbors.

Similarly influential is Rajak's article '*Archisynagogoi*: Office, Title, and Social Status in the Greco-Roman Synagogue' (1993), composed in collaboration with David Noy. Rajak here too convincingly undermined a hitherto prevailing notion: that the ubiquitous title, *archisynagogos*, disclosed an elaborate hierarchical system of Jewish officialdom with specific tasks in a carefully organized synagogue structure. A most valuable appendix collects all of the instances of the term in literary and epigraphical texts (pp. 421-9). They reveal, as the article's discussion demonstrates, that the honorific character of this title prevails and that its significance lies more in the acknowledgment of social status than in official function. The designation of persons as *archisynagogoi* speaks primarily to their role as patrons, benefactors, or community honorees (many were not Jewish) rather than as synagogue administrators (pp. 410-8). This fruitful approach allows Rajak and Noy to tie the Jewish community into the larger social scene and conventional practices of Hellenistic and Roman cities.

The theme of interaction and mutual impact between diaspora Jews and Greco-Roman society pervades all the essays in this part of the volume. The particular point made concerning *archisynagogoi* is set at a broader level in 'The Jewish Community and its Boundaries' (1992). Rajak discusses movement across boundaries between Jew and gentile, the spectrum of relationships that encompassed proselytes and 'god-fearers', and the practice of *euergetism* that linked the Jewish world to the patronal system of classical antiquity (pp. 346-52). At the same time, she underscores the fact of boundaries, however permeable. Jewish adherence to Sabbath regulations and dietary laws, even though observance may have varied in intensity from place to place, maintained a sense of identity in the diaspora and a connection with Palestine reflected in a continuing link with rabbinic authority (pp. 337-46).

The subject of *euergetism* receives fuller treatment in 'Benefactors in the Greco-Jewish Diaspora' (1996). Rajak sets the scene by outlining conventional practices and institutions in the Hellenistic world, and then skilfully shows that Jews both participated in civic *euergetism* and incorporated it into their own structures, while drawing certain limits in order to retain their special distinctiveness. Benefactor inscriptions from Berenice and Acmonia exhibit the Jewish connection with Greek *euergetistic* patterns (pp. 382-4). But a closer look at other testimony, deftly marshalled by Rajak, reveals interesting modifications: lists of donors who gave modest sums or supported small structures, and epigraphic assertions that the gifts derive from God or from the divine *pronoia* (pp. 384-6). In Rajak's view, Jews employed such means to operate both inside and outside the standard *euergetistic* conventions — an acute and plausible interpretation.

'The Synagogue in the Greco-Roman City' (1999) moves along similar lines. It examines more fully the Julia Severa inscription from Acmonia and a comparable honorific decree for Tation in Phocaea. Rajak argues that the operations of the synagogal communities in those cities of Asia Minor fit into the broader civic context, separate entities but closely associated with wealthy female (pagan) donors who could be honored by them in standard Hellenic fashion (pp. 463-76). The range of events that occurred in the synagogue set it outside a strictly religious environment and made it more readily adaptable to its pagan surroundings. But this did not mean the collapse of boundaries: no statues or human imagery existed in the synagogues — no matter how generous the benefactor (pp. 476-7).

A new essay, 'Jews, Pagans, and Christians in Late Antique Sardis: Models of Interaction', explores the same subject in some detail with regard to the rich information from the synagogue in Sardis. Rajak makes particularly good use of the epigraphic corpus compiled by Jack Kroll,

unpublished when she composed the article but now available. The material, among other things, illustrates the more general point made in the previous article: benefactions spread out among numerous donors, most with modest contributions, and credit often given to divine *pronoia* suggest that Jews placed their own spin on this Greek practice (pp. 456-61). The study represents a useful critique of recent scholarship that has stressed the blending of Sardian pagans and Jews. Rajak notes that Jewish civic officials in the city may have obtained their posts when they had become less desirable because of financial burdens and that the contiguity of the gymnasium complex to the synagogue may disguise chronological distinctions, i.e. that the synagogue came into its own only when the gymnasium had become marginal (pp. 453-6). Whatever one makes of these conjectures (they are far from definitive), Rajak has succeeded in redressing the balance and drawing out the more distinctively Jewish features of the Sardian community. Jews appear to have functioned quite successfully within the larger civic space, without compromising the sanctity of their synagogue.

The book concludes with a fascinating glimpse at the issue of Jew and Greek as perceived by certain key late 18th and 19th century thinkers. The piece, 'Jews and Greeks: The Invention and Exploitation of Polarities in the Nineteenth Century' (1999), focuses primarily on Herder, Heine, Renan, and Matthew Arnold. Rajak's starting point is Martin Bernal's celebrated exposure of 19th century Hellenism as the construct of European colonial and racist 'Orientalism' (p. 535). She accepts the basic thesis but properly complicates the polarity of 'Hebrew' and 'Hellene' by showing the involved, intricate, diverse, and often inconsistent attitudes held toward these concepts by the intellectuals whom she discusses. The dichotomy was complicated by interpretations of Christianity, producing some problematic and paradoxical opinions by no means to be reduced to a simplistic superiority of Greeks over Jews (pp. 540-55). This illuminating essay might better have come at the beginning, rather than at the end of the book. But in either place it provides an instructive, perhaps even wry, perspective upon current debates on the subject of Jews and Hellenic culture to which Tessa Rajak has contributed so much — and which this book will do much to advance.

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Jane Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001, 224 pp., maps. ISBN 1 86064 508 9.

This book is a paean, in prose and photographs, to the Nabataeans. The prose is sparkling and exuberant, and the photographs, most of them taken by the author herself, are gorgeous. The title is oddly chosen, for the book covers the entire sweep of Nabataean history and culture and devotes only one chapter exclusively to the magnificent capital city Petra; and the Nabataean kingdom is 'lost' in that it has ceased to exist, like all ancient kingdoms, although here Taylor may mean that much about the Nabataeans remains obscure and mysterious, and therefore 'lost' to the historical record. We are especially in the dark about the Nabataeans' religious beliefs and practices (apparently highly syncretistic), and their social and political organization and structures. In Petra we find remarkable buildings — temples, tombs, a splendid theater, political and commercial structures — but relatively little information about what was done in them. Most of what is known, or presumed, has been carefully considered by Taylor and assembled for a general audience in a well-informed and beautifully produced book, with the avowed purpose of bringing 'this brilliant but neglected people, long known to scholars, into a wider beam of light 2000 years after their heyday'.

The structure of the book is simple and logical: the first four chapters survey the chronological history of the Nabataeans from their first emergence in the written historical record (Diodorus