

Herod the Great Intermediary: A Common Portrayal of Herod in *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*

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Herod the Great, King of the Jews, has fascinated the minds of Christians and Jews alike for centuries because of his ruthless portrayals and Pharaoh-like qualities within the Christian tradition. Herod was born around 74 BCE to Antipater, a high-ranking Idumean advisor to the Jewish ethnarch, Hyrcanus II. Although much information can be derived about Herod's life from sources such as Josephus, often his works are overlooked in popular American religious understanding. If Herod is mentioned at all, he is almost singly understood through his portrayal in Matthew 2:1-23. Because of the influence and choices of modern American churches, most Christians would immediately recognize Herod as the baby killer and evil king rivaling Jesus. But is Herod truly this one-dimensional and antagonistic?¹ Does this brief mention in a Christian gospel sum up Herod's reign within the struggles of the emerging Roman Empire?

In order to continue the scholarly conversation around this issue, I want to analyze Josephus's portrayals of Herod the Great in *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* through his comparisons to major Roman figures and uses of Greco-Roman biographical concepts for Herod.² By doing so, we can appreciate more fully the importance of viewing Herod as a king

¹ For a perspective on Herod as fully antagonistic, see Solomon Zeitlin, "Herod: A Malevolent Maniac," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 54 (1963): 1-27.

² Before beginning this study, there are some qualifications I must make. I do not intend to deal with scholarly issues concerning *Quellenkritik* of Josephus's literary works, although this is certainly an influential and worthwhile approach that many scholars have taken. Even though Josephus attributes much of his knowledge to

manipulated by the intentions and literary devices of historians. To Josephus, Herod appears to be important enough in Jewish history to embed his biography within the larger history, writing a biography similar to those of contemporary Roman emperors. I hope to demonstrate how Josephus emphasizes and deemphasizes certain events in Herod's life in order to match his overall agenda for each literary work. As Tamar Landau claims, "the Hellenistic interest in the...development of the genre of biography in Rome may have influenced Josephus' focus on individual characters as part of his historical interpretation, most especially in the Herod narratives."³ To do this, I will examine Josephus's Herod narratives as Greco-Roman biographies,⁴ and view his rhetorical devices and literary objectives within his historical context. Because Josephus stands on a point between three major cultural influences (Jewish, Roman, and Hellenistic), we must accept Josephus's ability to pick literary strategies and devices from any and all of his backgrounds.⁵

Nicolaus of Damascus, Herod's court historian, I am more interested in examining how Josephus selectively used Nicolaus's rather than delve into source criticism. Along with this, I also do not intend to speculate excessively on Herod's emotions and intentions. Because of this, I do not want to assume that I can fully grasp Herod's original intentions through the veils of authors' literary purposes.

³ Tamar Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, (Boston: Brill 2006): 67.

⁴ I chose to view Josephus's Herod narratives within this framework because of how *Jewish War* categorizes Herod's public and private affairs, revealing them to be lengthy virtue/vice lists. I found this structure to be similar to Suetonius's treatment of Octavian in his *Life of Augustus*, along with also matching Plutarch's biographical tendencies. Because Josephus follows contemporary literary structures used by his Greco-Roman counterparts, and because of his portrayal of Herod focusing more on his Greco-Roman qualities rather than Jewish qualities, I will attempt to write through this lens.

⁵ See Byron R. McCane, "Simply Irresistible: Augustus, Herod, and the Empire," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 127 (Society of Biblical Literature 2008): 725-727. McCane summarizes recent Herodian scholarship and its major changes based on an "unprecedented amount of archaeological evidence [which] can now be brought to bear on historical analysis of Herod the Great," and also because "the rehabilitated Herod is considerably more Roman than his older counterpart." Changing perspectives within scholarship of Herod the Great leaves open the opportunity to view Herod's Judeo-Roman relations in Josephus at an even deeper level.

In recent scholarship concerning Herod's role within Josephus's writings, scholars often see a natural dichotomy between the Herod of *War* and the Herod of *Antiquities*.⁶ Generally speaking, Herod is categorized as being a loyal client king for the Roman Empire in *War*, since Josephus is intent on proving the innocence of the Jews as a whole in concern to the Jewish-Roman war of the 60's and 70's CE (*War* 1.9-12).⁷ While in *Antiquities*, Herod is generally described as an example of an immoral Jewish leader and betrayer of Jewish culture because of Josephus's goal: Proving the antiquity and relevance of the Jewish people to the Greco-Roman world through their history.⁸ Often, not enough credit is given to the similarities shared between the Herod characters in *War* and *Antiquities* because of the differing literary goals in the respective writings. As Steve Mason understands the relation between Josephus's writings in their wider context, "Josephus wrote both *War* and *Antiquities* to try to maintain a secure place

⁶ Thackeray, H. St. John, *Josephus: The Man and The Historian*, (New York, NY: Ktav Publishing House, Inc. 1967), 53, 66-67. Thackeray claims that Josephus has broken his Roman ties while writing *Antiquities* so that he can now write with full cruelty toward Herod, but claims that any positive aspects of Herod in *War* came from "his eulogist Nicolas [of Damascus]" (53, cf. p.48). Thackeray does not give credit to Josephus for any change in Herod's character, but instead believes that Josephus's sources changed between *War* and *Antiquities*. See also Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, 82, 116. Unlike Thackeray, Landau admits that "immediate comparisons beg to be made, and further intertextual allusions claim their place. But in fact there are no hints in the later narrative that allude to the earlier account, and we should not assume that Josephus' audience would either remember the early account in detail or aim at a comparative reading when presented with the *AJ* narrative" (118). Landau focuses on both the similarities and differences within Herod's character, and gives credit to Josephus for his ability to keep strains of information naturally throughout both writings. Steve Mason, *Josephus & the New Testament*, (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1992), 72. Mason believes that "Josephus appears to have changed his mind about...Herod the Great and his family" and claims that the thesis of *Antiquities* (divine retribution) drives the differences between the portrayals of Herod, or that Josephus simply has extra space in order to give a more full account of Herod's wrongs (72-73). Although I generally agree with Mason's argument for Herod's differing portrayals, this paper is focusing rather on the similarities between the two Herod characters and must necessarily emphasize the underlying strain of Herod's intermediary role.

⁷ Mason, *Josephus & the New Testament*, 60; For the citation of either *War* or *Antiquities*, I am using the system established in William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete & Unabridged*, (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), in which he categorizes the text: (Title Book.Chapter.Paragraph).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

for his people in the political-religious scene.”⁹ While Herod does have distinct characteristics and portrayals worth noting in both writings, we must examine the binding feature of Josephus’s Herod: his role as a middleman between the Jews and the Romans.

Herod stood between the affairs of Judea and Rome, much like Josephus himself during the Jewish-Roman war of the late first century. One innovation of Herod’s that exposes this duality is the Court of the Gentiles addition to the Temple. As Byron McCane points out, “Herod’s renovated temple thus had a double effect: it changed the way Romans thought about Jews and the way Jews thought about Romans.”¹⁰ The Court of the Gentiles could be a Jewish tourist attraction to the Romans, but also a taste of the Roman Empire for the Jews. Similarly, Herod’s dual national affiliations allow Josephus to portray him as noteworthy for either the Jews or Romans when necessary. For Josephus, his works could act as a literary “Court of the Gentiles,” in order to reconcile the two cultures and their perceptions of each other. We must examine this duality in both *War* and *Antiquities* in order to appreciate Josephus’s overlapping characteristics for Herod the Great.

JEWISH WAR

The *Jewish War* is known as Josephus’s first major work, which describes the Jewish revolts against the Romans up to 75 C.E. Josephus claims that his Greek edition is following an earlier Aramaic edition for the Babylonians and Parthians (*War* 1.1.3, 6). Generally, Josephus scholars believe that *War* was written simply for the sake of Roman propaganda, as Josephus

⁹ Ibid., 70.

¹⁰ McCane, “Simply Irresistible: Augustus, Herod, and the Empire,” 732. For more on Roman understanding of Jewish customs, see Shaye Cohen, “Respect for Judaism by Gentiles According to Josephus,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (Oct., 1987): 409-430.

was kept close to the Flavian courts.¹¹ Although, as Steve Mason points out, scholars have recently considered the Greek edition of *War* to be too complicated and stylistic to be a simple Aramaic translation.¹² This suggests that reconstructing the original Aramaic version and knowing its propagandist tendencies would be near impossible. But the external propagandist purpose of the writing does not necessitate a purely propagandist purpose *in* the writing. Following this line of thought, I will examine *War* as a piece of literature molded and stylized by Josephus's own historiographical authority, as he combines aspects of Greco-Roman historiography with Jewish thought and tradition. I will start by examining Josephus's self-claimed purpose for *War*, then deal with his Herod/Octavian parallel and downplay of the Hasmonean legacy.

Josephus also appears to follow similar patterns as contemporary historians in his construction of Herod's character. As Tamar Landau and others have pointed out, "There is a clear partition between Herod's public and domestic affairs...the two parts are juxtaposed in chapters 430-31, where the narrator contrasts Herod's good fortune in his public career with his grave misfortune concerning his family affairs."¹³ Josephus explicitly classifies the public and the private, the grand and the corrupt, the fortunate and the unfortunate, and deals with these issues in two very distinct sections. But Josephus is not alone in this type of categorization, as Suetonius follows a similar pattern in his *Life of Augustus*. Both of these historians seem to borrow this public/private dichotomy from a larger cultural source. Although Suetonius is clearer concerning his stylistic choices, as he writes, " Having given as it were a summary of his

¹¹ Mason, *Josephus & the New Testament*, 58; St. John H. Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and The Historian*, (New York, NY: KTAV Publishing House, 1967), 27-30.

¹² Mason, *Josephus & the New Testament*, 58-60.

¹³ Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, 70.

life, I shall now take up its various phases one by one, not in chronological order, but by categories, to make the account clearer and more intelligible.”¹⁴ Suetonius relates Augustus’s military victories, public works, legal administration, and general goodwill. He also gives an even more explicit transition: “Now that I have shown how he conducted himself in civil and military positions, and in ruling the State in all parts of the world in peace and in war, I shall next give an account of his private and domestic life, describing his character and his fortune at home...”¹⁵ Augustus’s domestic affairs as generally portrayed more positively than Herod’s, but Suetonius notes that “at the height of his happiness and his confidence in his family and its training, Fortune proved fickle.”¹⁶ The theme of fortune and misfortune, along with the corruption of family, is evident in the Greco-Roman biographies of Suetonius and Josephus.

Although uncommon in ancient historical writings, Josephus prefaces his *War* with the knowledge that he will not write completely without bias, as he claims to lament for the destruction and misery of his country. Josephus gives a third purpose for his writing: that “it was a seditious temper of our own that destroyed it [Judea]; and that there were tyrants among the Jews who brought the Roman power upon us, who unwillingly attacked us, and occasioned the burning of our holy temple” (*War* 1.pr.4).¹⁷ Josephus reveals to his Greco-Roman audience that the majority of Jews were always allies, except for a few rebellious zealots who caused the

¹⁴ Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, 9.1

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.1

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.1

¹⁷ The destruction of the Temple reveals the extreme between Jews and Romans in the late first century, since Augustus had earlier proclaimed that “the Jewish nation has been found well disposed towards the Roman people not only at the present time but also in the past,” and he gave freedom from duty on the Sabbath, as well as protection from stealing of sacred books (*Ant*, 16.6.2)

downfall of Judea.¹⁸ With this purpose of writing in mind, we might expect that Josephus would record certain events that emphasize shared culture and submission to the Romans throughout *War*, which we will look for in his Herod narrative.

I want to specifically analyze the relationship between Herod and Octavian in Josephus's narrative, especially how Herod makes clear his alliance to Rome in any situation. The Herod/Octavian comparison was first made known to me by Tamar Landau, who noticed, "by placing Herod the Judean king and Octavian the Roman emperor opposite each other, Josephus enhances the developing metaphor of Herod as Judea...it is Judea's political interests that he represents, just as Octavian represents Rome."¹⁹ Similarly to Matthew's usage of Herod within a larger literary structure, Josephus manipulates Herod's character in *War* in order to personify Judea within Herod, with all of its economic growth, Hellenization, and internal instability. Because of the authority of ancient kings, literary portrayals of these kings would reveal their representative nature. However, Josephus recognizes his own position among the Hasmoneans (*Ant.* 16.7.1), and would likely understand Herod as the usurper of his royal family. Even though Herod's misfortunes reveal that he is a corrupt non-Hasmonean king, he is still the last independent ruler of Judea before the Romans fully incorporated Judea as a province.²⁰ Herod ends up with a conflicting portrayal because of Josephus's conflicting intentions and beliefs, since Herod and Josephus are both men who stand culturally between

¹⁸ Frederic Raphael points out that Josephus "made no secret of abiding hostility to those belligerent Jews whom he rated as no better than usurping gangsters" (134). See Frederic Raphael, *A Jew Among Romans: The Life and Legacy of Flavius Josephus* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 2013), esp. 133-140.

¹⁹ Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, 85. Byron McCane points out similarities as well in "Simply Irresistible: Augustus, Herod, and the Empire," stating, "Like Augustus, Herod had a father who got him started in politics, and, like Augustus, Herod displayed a gift for navigating the troubled waters of the late republic and early empire" (730). I agree with McCane's comparison of Herod and Augustus's early lives, but I believe that Josephus emphasized their comparative early careers and the generosity of the Roman elite in *War*.

²⁰ Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, 22.

Judea and Rome. Both men were seen as betrayers of Jewish culture in their own time, which could lead Josephus to present Herod as similarly willing to bend to Rome's will in Judea.

Herod's upbringing, as presented by Josephus, has many striking similarities to the early life of Octavian. Both men were raised under their respective guardians (Antipater and Julius Caesar) and gained political and military knowledge from their rearing. Both are accused of extravagance and lust, in the midst of their family issues.²¹ Both leaders deal with issues of civil war and the confusion of succession. Herod originally shared authority in the region as governor of Galilee with his brother, Phaesael, governor of Jerusalem (*War* 1.10.4). Soon after in Rome, Octavian formed the Second Triumvirate with Marcus Lepidus and Marc Antony in 43 C.E, ruling with *imperium maius*. Both men had misfortunes caused later in their rule because of their family (*War* 1.22.1).²² Both appear to hate Cleopatra, and her influence over Marc Antony. Josephus presents Cleopatra as causing Antony to turn against Octavian, and consequently Antony to send Herod against the Arabians. But Josephus is convinced of Cleopatra's power-hungry nature, since she "extended her avaricious humor to the Jews and Arabians, and secretly labored to have Herod and Malichus, the kings of both nations, slain by his [Antony's] order" (*War* 1.18.4).²³ Josephus is able to emphasize Herod and Octavian's similarities for the sake of reconciling the two cultures through their rulers.

Most importantly, by the time of Josephus, Herod and Octavian had both established *pax*, although Octavian's was much longer lasting than Herod's. Octavian claimed Rome to be

²¹ Suet. *Augustus*, 71; mentions of extravagance for Herod usually focus around his spending on foreign temples and the possible addition of a golden eagle outside of the temple, *War*, 1.33.2-4

²² cf. Suet. *Life of Augustus*, 65.1

²³ See Solomon Zeitlin, *The Rise and Fall of the Judean State 2*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969): 19.

under *pax Augusta*, while Josephus reveals Judea as economically and politically stable within the upper classes. (*War* 1.17.6; 1.21) Herod's death was considered the end of peacetime for Judea and Rome, since the balance created by his client kingship quickly disintegrated.²⁴ The *pax* of Rome and the *pax* of Judea might even be interconnected because of Herod's apparent compliance with Roman culture and Octavian's superiority. With the increasing criticism of later emperors and uprising rebellions against the Romans in Judea, Josephus could be using Herod and Octavian as ideal figures of a more prosperous and relatively peaceful time. By the time of Josephus's finalized writing, around 75 C.E., Josephus will have already experienced the threat to *pax Augusta* presented by the so-called "Year of the Four Emperors" in 69 C.E., while simultaneously suffering the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple by 70 C.E. For Josephus and his dual nationality, the Jewish rabble-rousers could be easily connected to the decline of *pax* in both Judea and Rome.

If Josephus intended to personify the two states through their leaders, their interactions and reconciliation with each other would hint at Josephus's purpose for the comparison. The main interaction between Herod and Octavian in *War* is Herod's appeal after the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E., when Antony was defeated by Octavian and Herod's security as King of Judea was threatened for his previous allegiance. The uneasiness of Herod's position is emphasized by dual fights: Herod against Malichus, and Octavian against Antony.²⁵ Josephus

²⁴ Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 20. Josephus seems conflicted on the benefits of Herod's kingship in *War*, since he builds him up as a great king except for his failed domestic affairs, yet then claims that "he had filled the nation with poverty and the most extreme iniquity, against the prosperity and the laws of ancient times. In general, more misfortunes remained for the Jews in a few years from Herod, than how their ancestors suffered in the long time after the return from Babylon during the reign of Xerxes" (*War* 2.6.2). In neither *War* nor *Antiquities* does Josephus give us a one-sided perspective on Herod, but uses whatever portrayal of Herod is necessary at each point in his narrative.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 165-167.

portrays Herod as humble and recognizing his weakness in the situation, as he comes before Octavian with no royal garb, in order to present an honest speech.²⁶ Herod's humility at this point, near the end of the public accomplishment segment of *War*, acts as transfer of authority from Herod, the last Jewish King, to Octavian, the first Roman "King" in a sense. Josephus climaxes the great military and economic accomplishments of Herod at this point, then creates a type of *res gestae* for Herod before shifting to his unfortunate private affairs (*War* 1.21).²⁷ This transfer of power makes sense within Josephus's literary structure, as he diminishes Herod's authority before commenting on domestic issues, which were not ideal or acceptable for a Roman-style ruler.

At this point, Josephus's narrating voice as a mediator breaks through as he forms the Herod/Octavian speech. The bulk of the speech relates directly to Herod's circumstances, as he claims complete allegiance to Antony during the battle at Actium and his desire to dispose of Cleopatra. As Landau also points out, "speeches of seeking (or offering) political alliance are common in Greco-Roman historiography. Usually, though, the alliance is a matter between two states and not between two individuals (representative of states as they are) as is the case here."²⁸ Each speaker speaks for both themselves and for their nations, holding dual purposes. Herod's humble actions and ending of the plea²⁹ shows that Josephus is interested in Herod's role in respect to Rome, as well as Judea's role. By the submission of Herod to Octavian's authority, Judea as well is represented as ideally submitting. But Josephus cleverly placed this

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

²⁷ Josephus lists buildings, temples, construction of cities, gifts given to cities and nations, Herod's love of family, and his prowess in warfare and hunting.

²⁸ Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, 85.

²⁹ "...with his last fortune I have laid aside my diadem, and am come here to you, having my hope's safety in your virtue; and I desire that you will first consider how faithful a friend, and not whose friend, I have been." *War*, 1.20.1

submission at the climax of the Herod narrative, as the end goal and height of Herod's socioeconomic decisions. Josephus historically knows that Judea will not submit, and that the Temple will be destroyed; He subtly uses Herod to represent his desire for Judea to give up hopes of rebelling against Rome. Accordingly, Octavian recognized that "Herod's kingdom was too small for those generous presents he made them," and bestowed him with Cleopatra's former land, Samaria, Gaza, Strato's Tower, and other minor cities and gifts (*War* 1.20.3). By viewing the two rulers as fully representing their nations, one can see that Judea's submission leads to greater reward and additional authority within the Empire.

As many scholars have claimed concerning *War*, Josephus might be writing from the perspective of a Roman propagandist. Whether this is the case or not, Josephus still portrays himself as one who surrenders to the authority of the Romans and intends on pacifying the few revolutionary Jews causing this war. First, this is evident in Josephus's surrender to Vespasian (*War* 3.8.1-9), where he flatters Vespasian by calling him Caesar over Nero, and convinces him as if he was prophesying his future rule (*War* 3.8.9).³⁰ Vespasian justly took control of the Roman Empire and freed Josephus because of his previous prophesy concerning his emperorship (*War* 4.10.7). Second, and most importantly, Josephus's self-portrayal gives us another glimpse into his purpose for *War*. Throughout the speech, Josephus reminds the Jerusalemites that Rome is invincible, and that previous generations of Jews did not always revolt against the Romans, nor did previous Hebrews always revolt against the Egyptians.

³⁰ Josephus claims that Vespasian almost did not believe him, supposing "that Josephus said this as a cunning trick, in order for his own preservation." Yet, since Josephus is our author, it is difficult to discern the truth of the matter through his own bias and belief that it was not a trick. For more information on the capturing of Jopata and surrender of Josephus, see Mireille Hadas-Label, *Flavius Josephus*, trans. Richard Miller, (New York, NY: Macmillan. 1993), 91-115; also see Raphael, *A Jew Among Romans: The Life and Legacy of Flavius Josephus*, 91-104.

Josephus even claims that God Himself has abandoned the Jews and now works for the fortune of the Romans (*War* 5.9.4).³¹ Through his own speech with Vespasian, Josephus shows many of his own issues with the anti-Roman Jews, and how he himself wishes to reconcile the two cultures and accept Rome's superiority in political matters.

Similarly, Herod's character seems to fit into this greater desire of Josephus to prove that the majority of Jews side with the Romans, and that only a few zealous rabble-rousers are causing the issues of war.³² By sorting Herod's reign into public and private affairs, Josephus is able to present clearly Herod's loyalty to the Romans throughout their civil wars. When Herod enters the scene, he takes Cassius and Brutus's side after the murder of Julius Caesar, as they made him procurator of Syria and were offered supplies as they fled from Octavian and Antony (*War* 1.11.4). When Cassius was defeated near Philippi, Herod quickly bought out Antony as an ally; yet immediately transferred his allegiance to Octavian after Actium (*War* 1.12.4; 1.20.1). As is evident, Josephus presents Herod as wavering and insecure in his position of authority, yet he always sides with the Romans in every circumstance. As pointed out earlier, the many Roman friendships lead up to Herod's reinstatement as King of Judea by Octavian, the rhetorical pinnacle for Jewish-Roman relations. Even in Herod's misfortune, Josephus shows that he submits to Augustus in his actions toward his sons, as he awaits approval in order to chastise them (*War* 1.23.5; 1.27.1). Josephus's Herod appears to understand his secondary position to Rome, and rules accordingly in the midst of both fortune and misfortune. Through

³¹ ἐγὼ μὲν φρίττω τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ λέγων εἰς ἀναξίους ἀκοάς: ἀκούετε δ' ὅμως, ἵνα γνῶτε μὴ μόνον Ῥωμαίοις πολεμοῦντες ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ θεῷ. (I indeed tremble saying the deeds of God to those who are unworthy of hearing them; Likewise, listen, that you might know that you not only war against the Romans, but against God.)

³² Mason, *Josephus & the New Testament*, 60-61. This is hinted at in *War*, 1.pr. 4.

Josephus's perspective, so too should Judea submit, like Herod, and save themselves from destruction.

Concerning the debate around Josephus as a propagandist, Thackeray focuses his argument on the rapidity of Josephus's Aramaic version of *War* being sent east, the approval by Titus and Agrippa II, and the Roman perspective within the work's name: Ἰουδαϊκὸς πόλεμος, "War against the Jews."³³ On the other hand, Mason points out Josephus's struggle between two cultures, as he is zealous for the cause of the Jews, yet recognizes the authority of the Romans. Mason claims that Josephus's main thesis, the foolishness of revolutionaries, is a compromise between the two cultures, and an attempt to reconcile Rome and Judea outside of the rabble-rousers. Whether or not Josephus was forced to write *War* as propaganda,³⁴ his emphases and internal speeches show a bias towards Rome's invincibility and the inevitability of God's authority through Rome. Within *War*, it is apparent that Josephus decided to downplay the glory of his ancestors, the Hasmonean rulers, for the sake of emphasizing Herod's willingness to submit to Roman authority.³⁵

One of the most noticeable differences between *War* and *Antiquities* concerning Antigonus is his death. In *Antiquities*, Herod's great fear of Antigonus's freedom and legitimacy

³³ Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and The Historian*, 30.

³⁴ See Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and The Historian*, 23-31; Mason, *Josephus & the New Testament*, 60-64. Thackeray focuses his argument on the rapidity of Josephus's Aramaic version of *War* being sent east, the approval by Titus and Agrippa II, and the Roman perspective within the work's name: Ἰουδαϊκὸς πόλεμος, "War against the Jews." On the other hand, Mason points out Josephus's struggle between two cultures, as he is zealous for the cause of the Jews, yet recognizes the authority of the Romans. Mason claims that Josephus's main thesis, the foolishness of revolutionaries, is a compromise between the two cultures, and an attempt to reconcile Rome and Judea outside of the rabble-rousers.

³⁵ Ironically, some scholars like Frederic Raphael have recognized that the Hasmoneans indirectly caused Rome's interest in Judea, since "Rome's intrusion into Judaea was the result of an unwise invitation from contending Jewish factions: in 63 B.C.E., Pompey the Great...was called in as arbiter during a fraternal feud between Aristobulus (the last king of the Maccabean dynasty) and his ineffectual brother Hyrcanus, the High Priest" (Raphael, *A Jew Among Romans: The Life and Legacy of Flavius Josephus*, 4).

as a blood-line royal led to his execution, yet the execution itself is omitted and followed by a glorious Hasmonean eulogy (*Ant.* 14.16.4). In *War*, Josephus omits Herod's reasoning and the Hasmonean eulogy, but more abruptly presents Antigonus in this way: "Therefore, an axe took him, desiring life until the end through a frigid hope, yet he was worthy for his cowardice" (*War* 1.18.3). The portrayal in *War* gives a much stronger hostility against Antigonus, in the midst of Herod's military successes. Josephus downplayed the Hasmonean dynasty because of their association with zealous rebellion against Rome, which would work against his desire to reconcile the two cultures and reveal commonalities between their rulers.

JEWISH ANTIQUITIES

Josephus's second major work, *Jewish Antiquities*, was written near the end of his life under the reign of Domitian, around 94 C.E. *Antiquities* is written in twenty books, and is treated as more of a universal history of the Jews, from Biblical creation to Josephus's own time. Thackeray believes that Josephus is purposefully creating his *Ἰουδαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία* (*Jewish Archeologies*, the technical name of Josephus's work) by mimicking the twenty-book history of Dionysius of Halicarnassus: *Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία*.³⁶ We might understand Josephus to be competing with Greco-Roman authors to show his historical ability and intellectual prowess as a Jewish author, similar to his jabs of superiority at Herodotus and Thucydides in *War*. Before dealing with the Herod narrative in *Antiquities*, we must first be exposed to the multiple theories of intention set forth by both Josephus and modern scholars. Josephus appears to have multiple desires for his longest work, such as an apology, universal history, patriotic literature, and further Greco-Roman reconciliation.

³⁶ Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and The Historian*, 56.

To begin, Steve Mason makes clear the differing perspectives on the purpose of *Antiquities* in respect to *War*. Some understand *Antiquities* as the necessary apology after betraying the Jews by writing the propagandistic *War*. But Mason asserts, “we should rather understand both works as apologies for Judaism. One deals with the recent revolt, the other with ancient Jewish traditions.”³⁷ Josephus himself claims that his purposes are not mutually exclusive, but that he intended to explain “what fortunes they had been subjected to - and by what legislator they had been instructed in piety...what wars also they had made in remote ages, till they were unwillingly engaged in this last with the Romans” (*Ant.* 1.pr.2). To Josephus, *Antiquities* was an expansion of his earlier ideas, which would contain similar motifs (as I made evident earlier by the public/private dichotomies in both *War*’s Herod and *Antiquities*’s Antigonus). Instead of attempting to reconcile the Jews to the Romans by urging to suppress revolution in *War*, Josephus can attempt to reconcile the Romans to the Jews by explaining his peoples’ customs and history through literature.

Even though Josephus is writing an expansion and history of the Jews, he seems more willing to express personal opinions and criticize those with whom he disagrees through his portrayals.³⁸ This might be because of Josephus’s freedom to write as this point, since he criticizes those who “of necessity and by force are driven to write history” (*Ant.* 1.pr.1). In a typical Greco-Roman style, he identifies himself by negation in claiming that he is not forced to

³⁷ Mason, *Josephus & the New Testament*, 64. This seems to be a direct response to Thackeray, and his belief that “the later [*Antiquities*] was designed to magnify the Jewish race in the eyes of the Graeco-Roman world by a record of their ancient and glorious history,” yet he also believes that being “deprived of his former patrons, he seems finally to sever his connexion with Roman political propaganda, and henceforth figures solely as Jewish historian and apologist.” Although Thackeray’s argument is well-formed, I tend to side with Mason in wanting to view Josephus’s writings outside of a propagandistic context. See Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and The Historian*, 51-52. Also see Eva Matthews Sanford, “Propaganda and Censorship in the Transmission of Josephus,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 66 (1935), 127-145.

³⁸ Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, 116.

write. There was even hesitance on Josephus's part to compose *Antiquities*, because of the time commitment and lack of interest, along with a lack of an Aramaic translation (*Ant.* 1.pr.2-3). These small facts give us insight into Josephus's purpose, as he did not intend *Antiquities* for a strictly Judean audience, but for a man named Epaphroditus (*Ant.* 1.pr.2), along with a desire to educate Greeks interested in Jewish culture. But, as Mason points out, Josephus's argument revolves specifically around Moses as a lawgiver and man of virtue, who Greeks and Romans would perceive as noble.³⁹ In this case, Josephus is appealing even more to his Greco-Roman audience by desiring for them to understand Moses through their own cultural norms. If we follow this one intention (of many Josephus portrays), *Antiquities* might appear just as pro-Roman *and yet* just as pro-Judaic as *War*, emphasizing different aspects of each culture in the work. In doing so, Josephus stays consistent in his desire to find Judea's position within the Greco-Roman world. Josephus presents multiple emphases for *Antiquities*, and attempts to incorporate all of his purposes in order to create a cohesive history of the Jews for the sake of a non-Jewish, yet interested, audience. In this history, Josephus reveals his desire to reconcile Jewish and Roman culture through presenting the history of a people who struggles with their legislation and philosophies.

Antiquities's Herod becomes the antithesis of all Hasmonean and earlier Jewish virtue, and appears to break Jewish law and philosophy dating back to Moses. Because of the nationalistic and philosophical-religious tendencies of *Antiquities*, Herod's character appears to be more autonomous in his actions and cruel in his reign. In order to emphasize the succession

³⁹ Mason, *Josephus & the New Testament*, 65-71. Mason claims that Josephus is attempting to compare Moses to Greek philosophers in order to clear up false stories about the Jews being an Egyptian offshoot or exiles. By making this comparison, Josephus could present Judea as a major world player, having similar mythical lawmakers and traditions as others in the Greco-Roman world.

of uncorrupted leadership through the priesthood and few kings, “*Antiquities*’ thesis of inevitable divine retribution for good and evil conduct invites some changes to the presentation.”⁴⁰ Herod is more highly criticized for his lack of piety, justice, and love for Judea.⁴¹ Josephus presents Herod as a slave to his passions, an opponent of Jewish leaders, and a ruler who brings divine justice upon himself. Rather than being a Greco-Roman, tragic, innocent victim to Fate as in *War*, *Antiquities* is more accusatory concerning Herod’s decisions, forming him as a king who fails to live up to either Greco-Roman or Jewish standards.

Although there are many parallels we could pick from in relation to Herod in *Antiquities*, it is worthwhile to hone in on the similarities between the situations of Herod and Mariamne, and Antony and Cleopatra, in order to understand Josephus’s emphasis on commonalities between the rulers of two cultures. In both cases, it might be helpful to consider Herod and Antony as representing their respective nations, in order to understand their internal passions for their lovers, and also their struggles in relation to alliance to Rome. Even in Herod’s reconciling speech to Octavian in *War*, he makes it obvious that Cleopatra has always been a massive adversary to both men. Josephus’s Herod claims that he gave his best effort in supporting Antony, saying, “I told him that there was but one way of recovering his affairs, and that was to kill Cleopatra...but his affections for Cleopatra stopped his ears, as did God himself also who has bestowed the government on you” (*War* 1.20.1). Even in Josephus’s writing, when

⁴⁰ Mason, *Josephus & the New Testament*, 72.

⁴¹ Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, 128. Landau points out that the first obituary in Herod’s narrative is of his father, Antipater, who showed piety, justice, and devotion for his country (*Ant.* 14.11.4), which “are in many ways mirror-images of the negative traits Herod will later display.”

explicitly attempting to prove Judea's obedience to Rome, he presents Cleopatra as one of the reasons for the downfall of his patron.⁴²

At this point, Josephus begins his parallelism of Herod and Antony's political and personal situations in book 15, as Herod married Mariamne and gave Antigonus to Antony for execution (*Ant.* 14.15.14; 14.16.4). The first major parallel involves royal women and their influences upon the rulers. Just as Herod reclaims Jerusalem, Hyrcanus II is released by the Parthians, and his wives Alexandra and Mariamne urge him to give the high priesthood to their relative, Aristobulus. Similarly to Pompey, Herod deals with issues of high priesthood between a certain Hyrcanus and Aristobulus.⁴³ Herod gives the priesthood to Aristobulus, but almost immediately drowns him (according to Josephus) and gives power to Hananel, a Babylonian priest. Alexandra turns to Cleopatra for retribution, who in turn persuades Antony to turn against Herod. Conveniently, the partners of both Herod and Antony conspire to gain their respective cravings (*Ant.* 15.2.5, 7; 15.3.2; 15.4.1-2). To a Greco-Roman audience, Josephus might be hinting at similar issues that both cultures must deal with, in the form of powerful women grabbing for authority.

Herod avoids persecution by Antony, yet then hears that Joseph, Herod's uncle and procurator of Judea in Herod's absence, has spoken inappropriately to Mariamne, yet "while he

⁴² Although Josephus mentions Cleopatra scarcely in *War*, he portrays Cleopatra as a temptress to Antony in *Antiquities*, having "persuaded him to take those dominions away from their several princes, and bestow them upon her," who also poisoned family members and coveted all (*Ant.* 15.4.1). She appears as a gluttonous tyrant, attempting to wrest Judea and Arabia out of Antony's control, and later "attempted to have criminal conversation with him [Herod]...perhaps she had in some measure a passion of love for him, or rather, what is most probable, she laid a treacherous snare for him" (*Ant.* 15.4.2). Herod is presented as understanding the insatiable lust of Cleopatra, and politely checking her before she was able to cause harm to his reputation or relationship with Antony.

⁴³ Josephus appears to emphasize similar names throughout his writings for dramatic effect. He also uses this rhetorical device with the Herod narrative eulogies, beginning and ending with two different Antipaters. Also, Josephus conveniently names the two sophists who lead the "golden eagle" conspiracy, Judas and Mattathias. Judas and Matthias were two of the earliest members of the Hasmonean family to revolt against Antiochus III.

was in this passion he had like to have killed his wife; but being overborn by his love to her, he restrained this passion" (*Ant.* 15.3.9). Just after the potential affair of Mariamne, Josephus writes his longest section concerning Cleopatra, in which he insults her ridiculous passions and persuasions over Antony. Both men deal with issues of coaxing (*Ant.* 15.2.7; 15.4.1), which Josephus situates back-to-back in order to emphasize the intermingled affairs of Herod and Antony. Both Mariamne and Cleopatra fade from the Herod narrative after *Antiquities* 15.7, since Mariamne was executed and Antony was defeated in the Battle of Actium. As Landau believes, "Antony's emotional weakness may allude here to Herod's similar predilection, one which later in the narrative will become a major cause of the king's misfortune."⁴⁴ Although appeared for about seven chapters out of the three books dedicated to Herod in *Antiquities*, Mariamne (along with Alexandra) and Cleopatra strongly emphasize the similar issues that both the Jewish and Roman leader had to suffer through. To Josephus, these two leaders of distinct cultures who dealt with the same annoyances had similarities worth noting to his pro-Judaic Roman audience, to prove the commonalities of their suffering.

Along with Antony and Herod dealing with women issues at the same time in *Antiquities*, Josephus also portrays both men as warring simultaneously. Josephus narrates that Herod would be merciless toward the Arabian king, although the Battle of Actium between Octavian and Antony allowed Herod to delay his own war and send troops to Antony as auxiliaries (*Ant.* 15.5.1). Simultaneous preparations take place on both the Jewish and Roman ends, and Josephus appears to intentionally build tension by this dual portrayal. By intermingling Actium and Herod's battle against Malichus, Josephus is able to present the two

⁴⁴ Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, 166.

battles as coexisting and equally important to his audience. Although, it is obvious that Josephus is writing a Jewish history, not a Roman one, and therefore uses the Battle of Actium as a cultural comparison and dramatic emphasize. Because of this, Josephus necessarily puts more importance on Herod's battle with Malichus, and portrays Herod's victory in much more detail than Octavian's victory or Antony's loss. For the sake of his Jewish history written for the Rome, Josephus could be arguing by parallelism that the Jewish battles are able to match or even exceed Roman battles in importance. Josephus then adds to these concurrent wars, since the Battle of Actium begins in 31 B.C.E., that "there was an earthquake in Judea, such a one as had not happened at any other time, and which earthquake brought a great destruction upon the cattle in that country" (*Ant.* 15.5.2). In a typical Greco-Roman authorial fashion, Josephus adds natural disasters to the battle scene in order to emphasize the dramatic scene and parallel wars. As Landau explains, "Josephus tends to place accounts of natural disaster in the narrative so that they precede those of human misconduct."⁴⁵ Immediately following the earthquake and Herod's uplifting speech to his troops, Herod acts mercilessly upon both the Arabians and Hyrcanus II. The victory of Herod, ironically, led to the deaths of many prominent Judeans (Hyrcanus, Sohemus, Mariamne, Alexandra, Costobarus). Unlike Antony, Herod is portrayed as the Judean victor who is able to defeat those who oppose his (or Rome's) authority.

CONCLUSION

By examining both *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus was intentional in his portrayals of Herod in each work, and well aware of his ability to write Greco-Roman history from his Jewish perspective. In *War*, Josephus is able to use a Herod/Octavian parallel in order

⁴⁵ Ibid., 156.

to emphasize the transfer of power from Judea to Rome, by personifying the states in their respective leaders. In doing so, Josephus argues that the Jews have always supported Rome, and forcibly downplays the rebellious Hasmoneans to show the common Jews' ability to submit. Whether or not Josephus was forced to write *War* as propaganda under the Flavians, he appears to give warning to those who rebel against the Romans as Judea did in their war. Although Herod remains faithful to the Romans in *War*, misfortune lands upon him and tears him apart through his domestic affairs. Josephus builds Herod in a way that he is an extravagant civil and military leader, who understands the superiority of the Romans. However, Herod and Judea both fall prey to misfortune much larger than their own affairs, and hopes of a temperate king or nation fall apart.

In *Antiquities*, Josephus focuses rather more on the achievements and relevance of the Jewish people in the context of the Roman Empire, and strongly emphasizes issues of Jewish impiety and divine retribution. Unlike the undeserved misfortune of Herod in *War*, *Antiquities* makes clear that Herod brings suffering upon himself by his impiety and lack of care for Judea. Yet even with these negative characteristics, Josephus does not hesitate to flaunt the military ability of Herod in reference to the Romans. Josephus again makes parallels between Herod and another major Roman character, Antony, through their simultaneous struggles with both women and war. While Antony loses the battle of Actium and is overwhelmed by Cleopatra, Herod appears temporarily victorious and very quickly kills his irksome wife, Mariamne. Herod, representing Judea as a whole, is portrayed as more successful than Antony. The superiority of Herod's scenario suggests that Josephus attempts to present Judea as a relevant nation within the Greco-Roman world.

In any case, Josephus is able to portray Herod by emphasizing the parallels between Jewish and Roman rulers. Herod's role in Jewish and Roman culture easily allowed for this portrayal, since client kings were not "a permanent part of the machinery of the Empire. Their rule was intended to be a preparatory stage to the full incorporation of their districts into the provincial system."⁴⁶ In both of his works, Josephus recognizes the potential of Herod's character and utilizes him for his own purposes: whether Josephus viewed himself as a mediator between Judea and Rome, a Flavian propagandist, or a firsthand historian of the Jewish affairs. Herod is the intermediary needed in order to show that Judea, and the larger Jewish community, is able to relate to the larger Greco-Roman world and flourish within the context of the Roman Empire.

⁴⁶ Byron R McCane, "Simply Irresistible: Augustus, Herod, and the Empire," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 127, No. 4: (2008): 731; A.H.M. Jones, *Herod of Judaea*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1938): 66; For information on Roman governors in Judea, see A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1963), 1-23. Coponius became the first Roman procurator of Judea in 6 C.E, with life and death power given by Augustus (Κωπώνιος πέμπεται μέχρι τοῦ κτείνειν λαβὼν παρὰ Καίσαρος ἐξουσίαν, *War*, 2.8.1).