

**"That Noble and Famous Jew":
Josephus and His Writings in the Renaissance Italian Imagination**

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[Dear Workshop Participants,

My sincere apologies for both the lateness and length of this contribution. For those who do not have the time to read the piece in its entirety, I suggest skipping part 1 and proceeding directly to part 2, p. 11. I look forward to meeting with you all in early 2013! Thanks for your patience and happy new year.

Sincerely,
Daniel Stein Kokin]

Introduction: Josephus, Everywhere and Nowhere

In assessing the reception of Flavius Josephus in the Italian Renaissance, we are confronted straightaway by a paradox. On one hand, the continued popularity of the ancient Jewish historian in fourteenth- through sixteenth-century Italy is well-known, the dissemination of his writings at this time amply charted. Manuscripts of Josephus were zealously sought out by and exchanged among humanist scholars¹ and Josephus, after Tacitus, was the most frequently translated ancient historian, published more often than any of his Greek counterparts.² On the other, however, we actually know quite little as to what Josephus the historical figure meant in this period or how his writings were used and why.³ Even with regard to the *Testimonium Flavianum* (TF), the much-controverted reference in book eighteen of the *Jewish Antiquities* to Jesus⁴--the subject of Alice Whealey's recent, ground-breaking study, *Josephus on Jesus*--we do not yet have a full sense of the availability and discussion of this passage in the Italian Renaissance.

To some degree, this state of affairs may reflect the nature of one of the central components of his corpus, the retelling of biblical history that is the *Antiquities*. Precisely

¹ The various writings of Remigio Sabbadini contain much useful information concerning the dissemination of manuscripts of Josephus in the Italian Renaissance. See, especially, his *Le Scoperte dei codici latini e greci nei secoli XIV e XV* (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1967).

² Alice Whealey, *Josephus on Jesus: The Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 75-6. Whealey writes: "The impact of the translation of Josephus' works into multiple vernacular languages on the intellectual development of the early modern West has probably been underestimated."

³ One important exception to this statement is "Riccardo Fubini, "L'ebraismo nei riflessi della cultura umanistica" in *ibid.*, *Storiografia dell'umanesimo in Italia da Leonardo Bruni ad Annio da Viterbo* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2003), pp. 291-334, where the role of Josephus for the Etruscan forgeries of Annio di Viterbo is emphasized.

⁴ As translated by William Whiston, the *Testimonium Flavianum* (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18:63-64) reads as follows:

"Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."

because this work recapitulates and was read alongside the Bible, it may not always attain the explicit visibility that one would expect from such a popular work. In addition, because Josephus' terrain is shared by other Hellenistic and patristic authors who became popular in the Renaissance, especially Philo and Eusebius, it is often difficult to tease out to what degree an author was influenced directly by any one of these writers. Finally, as Josephus was that rare ancient writer who did not need a "Renaissance," it is perhaps in the end not so surprising that scholarship on this period has shown so little interest in him. Whatever its cause or explanation, from the perspective of our current understanding, Josephus is at once everywhere and nowhere in the Renaissance.

In this essay, I shall attempt in preliminary fashion to tease out the position and significance of Josephus and his writings in the humanist imagination. An initial section will consider possible cases of implicit use of Josephus' writings and will be followed by a more substantial examination of Josephus' Renaissance career as an explicit source.

Among the many questions to be considered in this second section are: When is Josephus mentioned in humanist writings and why? How is he described? To what degree and in what contexts does he serve as a historical or religious authority, or as a literary, or even personal, model? To what degree is Josephus seen to be a unique historical figure, or to what extent is he placed alongside or in association with other figures (e.g. Philo)? What influence or role does his dual Jewish and Hellenistic identity have for his exemplary status? What use is made of the alleged Hebrew writings of Josephus (the *Josippon* tradition) alongside the authentic Greek texts and Latin translations thereof? And, finally, how important in the Renaissance is Josephus, via the *Testimonium Flavianum*, as a witness for Christianity?

What seems clear is that the Renaissance took great interest in Josephus as a figure who straddled the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds, and attempted to make broad use of his legacy in the service of Christianity, including in the advancement of humanist engagement with Hebrew sources.

Part 1: Josephan Traces?

In this first part of the paper, I would like to explore sources in which Josephus' writings, albeit uncited, have arguably left their mark. Admittedly it is speculative to "find" Josephus where he is not explicitly mentioned. But even if absolute certainty on this front is

elusive, the wide presence of Josephus's texts justifies the effort to seek out their unspecified influence. Indeed, we can even suggest instances in which Josephus's writings may ironically have contributed to the advancement of positions entirely at odds with his own intention.

For example, in a 1442 letter opposing the humanist study of Hebrew, the renowned Florentine humanist Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) links his negative attitude toward the language to the alleged deficiency of Jewish literary attainment:

What is there in common between the erudition of the Greeks and the crudity of the Jews? Greek is the language of philosophy, and for the sake of other disciplines, too, is worth learning. Together with Latin it offers the complete range of all branches of literature. They [Latin and Greek] seem to have a common origin, the same foundation, and almost the same figures of speech. With Hebrew there can be no such inducement. Among the Hebrews no philosophers, no poets, no orators are to be found; they differ in language and figures of speech so far from us that they even write in the opposite direction.⁵

Bruni's charge echoes common Latin stereotypes at the time regarding the Greeks, raising the possibility that in the service of the Greco-Latin synthesis he promoted the humanist transferred such critiques to Hebrew and the Jews. Yet there is an additional intriguing possibility. Bruni's assertion closely echoes a statement attributed to the Alexandrian grammarian and sophist Apion (20s BCE-c. 45 CE) in Flavius Josephus's eponymous work *Contra Apionem* ("Against Apion"). Might Bruni then to some degree have modeled his opposition to Hebrew study on this text written in defense of Judaism? For Apion is quoted there as charging that the Jews "have not produced remarkable men, such as inventors in the arts or exceptional intellectuals,"⁶ before proceeding to cite Socrates, Zeno, and Cleanthes as examples of such figures.

There are, in fact, rather striking parallels in the origins and respective achievements of Bruni and Apion: both were outsiders who strove to achieve recognition and renown in their adopted cities. Born in rural Egypt, Apion attained prominence as a scholar and was granted Alexandrian citizenship, eventually settling--or at least spending a great deal of time--in Rome.⁷

⁵ Leonardo Bruni, *Epistolarum libri VIII*, ed. L. Mehus (Florence, 1741), Vol. 9, part 12, p. 160. Translation adapted from that of Gordon Griffiths in Griffiths, James Hankins, and David Thompson, eds., *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts* (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), pp. 335-6 and that of Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, volume 2 (London: Constable and Company, 1970), p. 580. Bruni's Latin reads here as follows: "Quid simile habet Graecorum eruditio cum Iudaeorum ruditate? Graeca enim lingua Philosophiae caeterarumque disciplinarum gratia addiscitur. Confert latinis ad perfectionem litterarum. Eadem quippe origo videtur eademque institutio, ac eadem pene litterarum figurae. Apud Hebraeos autem nullum tale invitamentum esse potest. Nulli enim illis Philosophi, nulli Poetae, nulli Oratores reperiuntur; lingua vera ac figuris litterarum sic abhorrent a nostris ut etiam in scribendo contrariam viam incedant quam nos incedamus.

⁶ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. and comm. John M. G. Barclay (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2.12.135; p. 238.

⁷ This understanding is based on *Against Apion*, 2.3.32 ("But the noble Apion seems to want to present his slander of us to the Alexandrians as a kind of payment for the citizenship given to him. Knowing their hatred of

Bruni transcended his humble origins in the Tuscan backwater of Arezzo to become a leading Florentine citizen but was always regarded as “a self-made man of modest social origin from a provincial town”.⁸ Precisely their underlying insecurity as to their origins and ultimate belonging rendered them, it can be suggested, particularly intolerant of the outsiders *par excellence*, namely the Jews.

In addition, one wonders if Bruni's encounter with *Against Apion* might have helped turn him away from his earlier openness to the patristic notion of the derivation of Greek wisdom from the Bible. In the preface to his 1404-05 translation of Plato's *Phaedo*, Bruni noted that “many believed Plato had known the Old Testament prophetic tradition, either directly from Jeremiah in Egypt, or from the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament.” Though he already then rejected this view on chronological grounds (as he proceeded to make clear), he did not find it objectionable *per se*. Nearly forty years later, however, he clearly had a much firmer conception of the essential cultural antipathy between Hebrew and Greek. If Apion's views had something to do with this shift, it would represent a striking instance of the backfiring of Josephus's aims, of how his text unwittingly preserved for posterity the very anti-Jewish rhetoric it sought to refute.

But did Bruni know the *Contra Apionem*? It is certainly possible. We know, for example, that Bruni's colleague Giannozzo Manetti was in possession of this text from 1440 on⁹; it is therefore not at all inconceivable that Bruni would have had access to it as well. It is furthermore reported that the noted antiquarian Cyriac of Ancona (c. 1391-c. 1455) saw this “excellent book of Flavius Josephus on Jewish antiquity,” at the time known as *On the Antiquity of the Judeans*,¹⁰ in a Carthusian monastery located just outside of Florence. Indeed, in his biography of Cyriac, Francesco Scalamonti notes this find just after reporting that Cyriac explored antiquities in Florence with his good friend Leonardo Bruni. Since this encounter with

the Judeans who live among them in Alexandria, he sets out to insult those Judeans, and to include all the rest...”). See *ibid.*, pp. 184-5. For an extensive discussion concerning the degree to which Josephus can be trusted here, see *ibid.*, n. 104. There is at least a strong likelihood that Apion was in fact born outside of Alexandria and only later attained its citizenship, even if his cultural background was in fact primarily Greek and not Egyptian. For general information on Apion, see *ibid.*, pp. 170-1, n. 7.

⁸ *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, p. 21.

⁹ Paul Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti and Desiderius Erasmus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 106, n. 183.

¹⁰ Not to be confused with Josephus' much longer *Jewish Antiquities*, this name for the *Contra Apion* stems at least as far back as Eusebius, who referred to it as $\pi \epsilon \rho \iota \tau \eta \varsigma \tau \omega \nu \iota \omicron \upsilon \delta \alpha \iota \omega \nu \alpha \rho \chi \alpha \iota \omicron \tau \eta \tau \omicron \varsigma$. On this, see Josephus, *Against Apion*, pp. xxix-xxx. This is also how Manetti refers to the work.

the Josephan legacy seems to have been one of the highlights of this visit, it is quite likely that the Florentine chancellor would have heard about it.¹¹

But even if Bruni's attitude towards Hebrew does not in the end reflect his exposure to Josephus, it at least presents us with a fascinating historical parallel between Apion and Bruni and their respective attitudes towards Jewish learning.

An additional possible instance is found in a 1450 dialogue, the *Secunda disceptatio convivalis*, which debates the relative superiority of law and medicine.¹² Written by the renowned humanist Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459), this text draws in one passage on an ancient trope concerning how "the first lawgivers, including Moses, attached a numinous authority to their laws so that the people would obey them."¹³ Just a year earlier Poggio had prepared a translation (typically referred to as the *Historia Prisca*) of the opening five books of Diodorus of Sicily's *Library of History*, a locus classicus for this tradition.¹⁴ Comparison of the relevant sections of the two texts reveals that their respective lists of lawgivers and deities are nearly identical, save for the addition of a Roman example in the case of the dialogue, as befits the good Roman humanist that Poggio was.¹⁵

A more significant contrast emerges, however, when one examines how Moses is treated in the two cases. For Poggio distinguishes the biblical hero slightly but unmistakably from his peers, asking: "Did not *our Moses* show, *as was true*, that he had received his laws, which he

11 See Francesco Scalomonti, *Vita Kyriaci* in G. Colucci, *Antichità picene* XV (1792), p. xcii.

12 On this text, see Frederick Krantz, "Between Bruni and Machiavelli: History, Law, and Historicism in Poggio Bracciolini," in *Politics and Culture in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Phyllis Mack and Margaret C. Jacob (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 119-151, esp. pp. 143-151.

13¹ As paraphrased by Arthur Field in his *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 145.

14¹ Diodorus of Sicily, *The Library of History*, edited and translated by C. H. Oldfather (London: Heinemann Ltd, 1933), I:94, pp. 319-320. Strabo also wrote in this vein. See Menahem Stern, ed., *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-1984), vol. 1, p. 301 (Strabo, *Geographica*, 16.2.38-39).

15¹ Here are the two passages:

1) "Quemadmodum apud graecos aiunt in creta quidem Minoem: apud lacedaemonios ligurgum fecisse: quorum alter iovem: alter Apollinem suarum legum auctorem extitisse dixit: plures quoque nationes eodem modo traduntur leges suscepisse: quae obtemperantibus multorum bonorum causa fuere. Arianeis namque scribunt zaratsten simulato numine dedisse leges. Getis eodem modo zamolxis vestam proferens leges tulit. Apud iudeos Moyses ab iao quem deum vocant acceptas leges dare prae se ferebat: sive putantes rem mirandam ac divinam maximeque mortalibus utilem leges esse: sive ut citius populi ob rei excellentiam deum timore legibus obtemperarent." Poggio Bracciolini, *Diodori Siculi Historiarum priscarum* (Venice: per Andrea[m] Iacobi Kathare[n]sem, 1477), p. 30b.

2) "Eodem modo Minoem in Creta, apud Lacedaemones Licurgum legimus fecisse, quorum alter Iovem, alter Apollinem suarum legum auctores tradidere. Quod et in pluribus contigit nationibus. Nam Zoroastres Aricineis simulato numine leges imposuit. Setis Zamolxis Vestam deam praeferebat leges dedit. Nonne Moses noster leges suas ut verum erat a Deo se accepisse ostendit, quas repugnanti plebi imponeret? Quis ignorat Numam pompilium legum ab se Romanis datarum Nymphae Aegeriae auctoritatem, ac numine quo eas populo suaderet interposuisse? At istis figmentis minime fuisset opus, si eas sibi aut utiles, aut necessarias, aut suis rebus accommodatas homines iudicavissent." Poggio Bracciolini, *Utra artium, medicinae, an iuris civilis praestent, secunda convivalis disceptatio* in Poggio Bracciolini, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Riccardo Fubini (Turin: Erasmo, 1964-69), pp. 47-48.

imposed upon an unwilling people, from God?"¹⁶ The suggestion that "our Moses" (alone in the case of Moses does Poggio assert such cultural ownership) had in fact ("ut verum erat") received his laws from God, unlike the other lawgivers, seems to reflect an unwillingness on Poggio's part, even indirectly via his interlocutor in the dialogue, to apply the full implications of the ancient understanding to bear on his Christian readers. In this he appears to follow the example of Josephus, who in the *Contra Apionem* similarly negotiates this lawgiver trope most deftly, at once including and distinguishing Moses among his ancient peers:

"With such noble aspirations and such a record of successful achievements, he had good reason for thinking that he had God for his guide and counselor. Having first persuaded himself that God's will governed all his actions and all his thoughts, he regarded it as his primary duty to impress that idea upon the community; for to those who believe that their lives are under the eye of God all sin is intolerable. Such was **our legislator**; no charlatan or impostor, as slanderers unjustly call him, but one such as the Greeks boast of having had in Minos and later legislators. For among these some attributed their laws to Zeus, others traced them to Apollo and his oracle at Delphi, either believing this to be the fact, or hoping in this way to facilitate their acceptance. But the question, who was the most successful legislator, and who attained to the truest conception of God, may be answered by contrasting the laws themselves with those of others, and to these I must now turn."¹⁷

There are furthermore strong indications that Poggio did in fact have access to Josephus' writings, rendering it quite possible that the *Against Apion* influenced Poggio's presentation of Moses in his dialogue.¹⁸

A further possible example takes us outside the Italian orbit and concerns the German humanist and Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522). In a 1510 epistle he noted that, upon reading Hebrew, "I seem to see God Himself speaking when I think that this is the language in which God and the angels have told their minds to man from on high. And so I tremble in dread and in terror, not, however, without some unspeakable joy."¹⁹ This is rather reminiscent of Josephus' description of Moses in the *Jewish Antiquities*, specifically the claim that "in all

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 48, "Nonne Moses noster leges suas ut verum erat a Deo se accepisse ostendit, quas repugnanti plebi imponeret?"

¹⁷ Josephus, *Against Apion* in ibid., *The Life/Against Apion*, ed. and trans. H. ST. J. Thackeray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2:160-163; p. 357.

¹⁸ We know, for example, that Poggio as early as 1429 expected to obtain possession of a text of Josephus. On this, see B. L. Ullman, *Origin and Development of Humanistic Script* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1960), p. 87. And in addition, Poggio's associate, the Florentine humanist Niccolò Niccoli (1364-1437) had copies of Josephus. On this, see Christine Smith and Joseph F. O' Connor, *Building the Kingdom: Giannozzo Manetti on the Material and Spiritual Edifice* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies; Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006.), p. 96. Further study is however needed concerning Poggio's exact use of Josephus.

¹⁹ Johannes Reuchlin, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Ludwig Geiger (Tübingen, 1875), no. 115, p. 123; cited in Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1983), p. 73.

his utterances one seemed to hear the speech of God Himself."²⁰ To be sure, what Josephus specifically associated with Moses' speech, Reuchlin now ascribes to Hebrew text in general. This adjustment however is hardly a surprising for the age of print and heyday of Christian Hebraism. In addition, Reuchlin's reference to those to whom "God and the angles have told their minds...from on high," would seem to evoke Moses more than any other figure.

One further wonders if Reuchlin's self-understanding as a Pythagoras reincarnate at all stemmed from Josephus' assertion in *Contra Apionem* that this figure was responsible for bringing Judaic doctrine into Greek philosophy.²¹ To be sure, interest in Pythagoras was widespread in this period: Ficino, too, saw himself in his early career in the role of a "Pythagorean holy man and was for a time at least accepted in this self-defined role."²² Nonetheless, Josephus' description of Pythagoras' legacy appears especially suited to Reuchlin's activity as a facilitator of the Christian reception of the Hebrew language and, especially, of Kabbalah. Indeed, in his *De arte cabbalistica*, Reuchlin refers frequently to interaction between Pythagoras and Pythagoreans and Kabbalists. As Giulio Busi and Saverio Campanini summarize in their edition of this work, according to Reuchlin, "Pitagora fece derivare il proprio fiume 'dal mare infinito dei cabbalisti."²³ In searching for historical precedent for this undertaking, it is not surprising that Reuchlin would have settled upon Pythagoras.²⁴

A final example concerns the possible relevance of Josephus's description of the headgear of the Jewish High Priest (including in the temple) for the unprecedented prominence the three-tiered papal tiara assumed beginning during the papacy of Paul II (1464-1471). Paul broke with long-standing precedent in commissioning ornate, bejeweled tiaras, donning them in liturgical contexts, and in emphasizing the tiara on the papal seal and on coins and medals.²⁵

In the context of his lengthy description of the high priest's attire in the *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus notes that atop the cap shared by him with all other priests, "another, embroidered with hyacinth, was sewn together; and a golden crown, forged in a threefold row,

²⁰ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 4.329; p. 635.

²¹ Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. Barclay, 1.22.165; p. 97 ("For that man (i.e. Pythagoras) is correctly said to have adopted many of the Judeans' rules for his philosophy").

²² Christopher S. Celenza, *Piety and Pythagoras in Renaissance Florence: The "Symbolum Nesianum"* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), pp. 21-22.

²³ Johannes Reuchlin, *De Arte Cabalistica*, ed. and trans. Giulio Busi and Saverio Campanini (Florence: Opus Libri, 1995), p. XIII.

²⁴ On Reuchlin and Pythagoras, see especially Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Geschichte der christlichen Kabbala, Band 1: 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog Verlag, 2012), pp. 11-12.

²⁵ Charles Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 215-6.

went around it."²⁶ In the *Jewish War* he additionally refers to the head covering of the high priest as the "tiara" (BJ 5.5.7). Whatever the actual origin of the papal tiara, early Medieval writers such as Venerable Bede, Hrabanus Maurus, and the anonymous author of the tenth-century *In divinis officiis* associated this headgear with that of the Jewish high priest as described by Josephus, mentioning the historian explicitly in this connection.²⁷ And while Josephus seems to fall out of later medieval accounts--he is not mentioned, for example, in Arnold von Bonneval (d. 1156) and Pope Innocent III's discussions of papal attire²⁸--he clearly returns in the early modern context: the French Jesuit and exegete Cornelius de Lapide (1567-1637) once again bringing Josephus's account of the triple crown to bear on his discussion of the papal tiara.²⁹ Charles Stinger implies that Josephus' description of the high priest played a role in justifying the tiara's new visibility in the High Renaissance.³⁰ And indeed, on the basis of Josephus' popularity in the Renaissance and his earlier and later association with the papal tiara it is hard to believe that he was not drawn upon in papal circles to promote the tiara's supposed deep biblical, priestly roots. Yet I have yet to identify a primary source which confirms this.³¹ Subsequent research may well demonstrate that Josephus did in fact play such a role.

Part 2: Josephus's Presence in Humanist Texts

There are of course frequent explicit references to Josephus in humanist writings and other cases in which we can be well-nigh certain that Josephus is a writer's source, even if this is not specifically mentioned. Proceeding for the most part chronologically, this section will explore Josephus's presence in Petrarch, Manetti, Ficino, Pico, Galatino, focusing on how Josephus is described, the nature of his authority, and his role in the Christian-Jewish debate. A final segment will suggest that Flavius Mithridates modeled himself after Flavius Josephus. Given the widespread presence of Josephus in several of his writings, Manetti constitutes the centerpiece of this discussion.

²⁶ *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. and comm. Louis Feldman (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 3.172; p. 277.

²⁷ Bernhard Sirch, *Der Ursprung der bischöflichen Mitra und päpstlichen Tiara* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1975), pp. 13, 23-4, 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 40.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.

³⁰ Stinger, *ibid.*

³¹ None of the sources Stinger cites in this connection make this point explicitly.

A. *Petrarch*:

We know that Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) was in possession of Latin copies of the *Jewish Antiquities* and the *Jewish War*,³² and in his *De otio religioso* (after 1347), he references Josephus' account of the fall of Jerusalem in order to advance his anti-Jewish polemic. The destruction of the city was so great ("cuius quanta fuerit ruina"), the number of dead so unbelievable ("omnem similitudinem veri excedit") such that a pious man can hardly doubt that the cause of such evils was Jewish impiety and the failure to recognize Christ. Proof for these calamities comes from the historians of that time, and from none more so ("precipue") than Josephus--"a man of no little authority who was present in that war" ("virum non mediocris autoritatis qui ei bello interfuit").³³ Here Petrarch implicitly enlists Josephus's critique against his fellow Jews over their rebellion against Rome for his own theological agenda, of course making use of the traditional Christian claim that the destruction of Jerusalem signaled God's displeasure with, and abandonment of, them. The citation of Josephus thus adds the weight of authority to Petrarch's arguments, reflecting at the same time his deep connectedness to medieval culture: aside from the *Testimonium Flavianum*, the passages of Josephus most cited in antiquity and the Middle Ages are those recounting the horrors of Jerusalem's fall.³⁴

It is striking, however, that he makes no reference to Josephus's own Jewishness. Perhaps Petrarch prefers here to cast Josephus simply in the role of ancient historian, without referencing his problematic and potentially embarrassing religious identity. Or perhaps he simply takes that identity for granted, precisely for that reason choosing to mention him alone in this passage, despite his opening reference here to numerous popular histories ("historie vulgate"). Petrarch's turn to Josephus is unfortunately too fleeting to enable any further comment, but it nicely raises the issue of the Renaissance reception of Josephus' hybrid status: as Greek, by virtue of the language in which he wrote; as historian, by virtue of the genre of his texts; and as Jew, by virtue of his religion. When and why is he described as Greek, as historian, or as Jew?

³² Sabbadini, *Le Scoperte*, p. 28.

³³ Giuseppe Rotondi, *Il "De otio religioso" di Francesco Petrarca*, Studi e Testi 195 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1958), p. 23. For an English translation of this work, see Petrarch, *On Religious Leisure*, ed. and trans. Susan S. Schearer (New York: Italica Press, 2002).

³⁴ Whealey, p. 54, on the basis of Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter* (Leiden: Brill, 1972) and *ibid.*, *Rezeptionsgeschichtliche und textkritische Untersuchung zu Flavius Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

A brief examination of a number of Renaissance-era authors suggests a wide degree of variety on this front. For example, in his *Heptaplus*, Pico della Mirandola casts Josephus as one of many Greek Church fathers who commented on the Genesis creation story.³⁵ For the Florentine academician Giambattista Gelli (1498-1563), he is but a Greek historian. As such, Gelli could give Josephus a taste of his own medicine and present him in his 1544 *Dell' Origine di Firenze* as one of many such writers who had lied about history, neglecting the ancient Etruscan culture Gelli sought to celebrate on behalf of the new Medici-ruled Duchy of Florence.³⁶

By contrast, though he on one hand describes Josephus as simply the "most dependable historian" ("historico fidelissimo"), the humanist Aurelio Brandolini also notes on the other that he was the most learned man among the Jews.³⁷ Josephus's Jewishness seems here only to confirm his status as a reliable authority, for Brandolini proceeds to present his *Jewish Antiquities* (alongside the Bible) as the major source for his literary re-telling of Scripture, *On the Sacred History of the Hebrews*, written at the papal curia under either Pope Sixtus IV or Innocent VIII.³⁸ Indeed, noting that the Bible and Josephus diverge on many points and yet finding himself unable to distinguish which of them is more accurate, Brandolini decides to include both accounts in such cases.

Finally, for Giannozzo Manetti Josephus represents a model Jew (and historian) thanks to his cultural position as both proficient in Greek and Hebrew, while Pietro Galatino similarly idealizes him, positioning him as one of many first-century Jews who recognized Jesus' messiahship.

B. Giannozzo Manetti:

In Giannozzo Manetti (1396-1459), we encounter one of the most significant receptions of Josephus' legacy and writings in quattrocento Italy. For starters, we know more concerning his access to, and eventual ownership of, Josephus' works than we do in the case of any other

³⁵ Trinkaus, p. 794, n. 12.

³⁶ Giambattista Gelli, *Dell' Origine di Firenze*, ed. Alessandro d' Alessandro, in *Atti e Memorie dell' Accademia Toscana di scienze e di scienze e lettere La Colombaria* 44, p. 84. Fubini similarly suggests that in Annus "l' apologetica di Giuseppe e ritorta contro se medesima," Fubini, "L'ebraismo," p. 309.

³⁷ Trinkaus, pp. 601, 605.

³⁸ This work is discussed by Trinkaus (pp. 601 ff.). Though Trinkaus suggests that Brandolini draws only sparingly upon Josephus (ibid., p. 602), my cursory glance at this work (preserved in BAV Vat. Cod. Ottob. 438) indicates that this is by no means the case: Josephus is in fact referenced and made use of on a regular basis. Subsequent research should examine more carefully the exact nature of this use and attempt to assess the degree to which Josephus influenced Brandolini's attitude towards Scripture and historical inquiry into the biblical past.

humanist. Already by the 1430s, Josephus was a major interest of Manetti's, likely due in large measure to the influence of his teacher, the Camaldolese monk and patristic scholar Ambrogio Traversari (1386-1439). And he may well have been exposed in this period to copies of Josephus owned by the Florentine humanist Niccolò Niccoli.³⁹ Certainly by 1438 he owned a Latin copy of the *Jewish Antiquities*, prepared especially for him.⁴⁰ To this codex, independent manuscripts of the *Jewish War* and *Against Apion*⁴¹--also in his possession--were added at an indeterminate point in time.⁴² In addition, a second copy of the *Jewish War* was completed for him in late 1447.⁴³

Finally, Manetti also owned a copy of the Hebrew-language condensation, amalgamation, and rewriting of Josephus' s *Jewish Antiquities* and the *De excidio Hierosolymitano* of Pseudo-Hegesippus known as the *Sefer Josippon* (literally the "Book of Josippon," a Jewish-Greek version of the name Josephus), compiled in southern Italy in the tenth century.⁴⁴ According to its colophon, this manuscript was prepared for him in Fano by an Elijah ben Moshe in late 1443.⁴⁵

As we shall see, Josephus served as a significant source for Manetti's exploration of biblical history, his celebration of human dignity, his conception--and critique--of Jewish culture, and his defense of biblical translation. And yet despite his extensive access to, and engagement with, Josephus, there are indications that Manetti only really scratched the surface of the materials he had at his disposal. Though, as we shall suggest, his exposure to the supposed "Hebrew" Josephus appears to have influenced his understanding of Josephus's own literary activity, he never seems to have noted the discrepancies between the *Sefer Josippon* and

39 Smith and O' Connor, p. 96.

40 BAV Pal. Lat. 815. Cf. Smith and O' Connor, p. 96, who date his exposure to this work to 1452 at the latest. On Manetti's library of Latin texts see Giuseppe M. Cagni, "I codici Vaticani Palatino-Latini appartenuti alla biblioteca di Giannozzo Manetti," *La Bibliofilia* 62 (1960). For his Latin copies of Josephus's works, see especially p. 32. The colophon for this work, on fol. 243v, reads as follows: "Explicit liber Vigesima Flavii Josephi Antiquitatis Iudaice Completus per me Thomam Iacobi Tani Iannoçio Mihi Legente Anno AD CCCXXXVIII die XXVIII Februarii." In other words, it appears that Manetti himself (Iannoçio) dictated the work to the scribe.

41 As indicated above, this work was known to him as *De Vetustate Judeorum* ("On the Antiquity of the Jews").

42¹ The colophon of the *Jewish War* indicates that this copy of the work was completed in 1413 (BAV Pal. Lat. 815, f. 337v).

43¹ BAV Pal. Lat. 816. See note 76 below for more on this text.

44¹ On the sources and composition of the *Sefer Josippon*, see Whealey, p. 58. Manetti's copy of this work is BAV Vat. Heb. 408. In his edition of the text, David Flusser argues that this version is at times close to version A, at other times to version B (as printed in Mantua in 1480). This is noted in *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library Catalogue*, ed. Benjamin Richler (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008), p. 354. The online catalogue of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library of Israel implies, somewhat differently, that this manuscript is identical to version B.

45¹ Vat. Heb. 408, f. 153r (cited in *ibid.*).

Josephus, nor does he ever even appear to mention the former text explicitly. Even more striking, there is no clear indication that Manetti was aware of or made use of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, even though he had a stand-alone copy of it in his possession and despite his engagement in anti-Jewish polemic and disputation. It can of course be assumed that our knowledge of Manetti's engagement with Josephus is incomplete. Nonetheless, there are good reasons to believe that amidst Manetti's feverish activity as a merchant, diplomat, and scholar, his reception of Josephus--extensive as it was--was by no means comprehensive.

A particularly revealing indication of Josephus's importance for Manetti can be found in his 1452 treatise *On the Dignity and Excellence of Man*. "Josephus, the native historian of the Jews" is in fact the first authority referenced in this work--indeed he is mentioned in the very first sentence of the first book--as a source and explanation for the origin of the name Adam.⁴⁶ And while this initial reference is merely cosmetic, towards the close of the fourth book Josephus actually plays a more substantial role in buttressing Manetti's positive conception of the nature of man. In this portion of the text, Manetti's eagerness to refute opposing views brings him to the early thirteenth-century treatise *On the Misery of the Human Condition* of Lotario de' Conti di Segni, the future Pope Innocent III. Innocent had rooted his despair of human life in the fact that babies cry when they enter the world:

We are all born wailing that we might express the misery of our nature. For the newborn male says "ha" and the female "he" —all who are born of Eva saying "he" or "ha". And what is "Eva" but "he" "ha"? In either case, the interjection expresses the depth of the sufferer's pain. Hence she, who before her sin, was called "virago" (i.e. made of man), deserved to be called Eva after her sin.⁴⁷

Here Innocent draws on the fact that Adam's naming of his wife Eve takes place right after the fall—whereas previously she had been referred to only as woman.

In his response, Manetti rejects Innocent's account of the change of Adam's wife's name, explicitly citing Josephus' explanation in the *Jewish Antiquities* that the Hebrew *'isha* (corresponding to the Latin *virago*) is a generic term for woman, and that the first woman was named Hava (related to the Hebrew word for life) or Eve (or Eva), because she was the mother

46 Giannozzo Manetti, *Über die Würde und Erhabenheit des Menschen*, trans. Hartmut Leppin; ed. August Buck (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990), p. 7. The Latin is "Iosepho vernaculo iudeorum historico," cited from Ianotii Manetti, *De Dignitate et Excellentia Hominis*, ed. Elizabeth Leonard (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1975), p. 5.

47 Manetti here cites from Innocent III, *De Miseri humanis conditionis* I.6.1.

of all living, as Genesis 3:20 in fact tells us.⁴⁸ He then proceeds vehemently to scold his predecessor: “Having thus shown in the clearest light the initial error of our Innocent, an error which occurs at the very foundation of his work, what must we think concerning that which was erected upon it?... This is an egregious error; an error into which he would never have fallen had he not been completely ignorant of the Hebrew tongue.” From this we can see that the important concept of human dignity for Manetti is both largely informed by and justified on scriptural and indeed, Hebraist grounds. Hebrew thus has an important role to play in buttressing Manetti’s specific humanistic outlook, yet it is a Hebrew that seems always closely bound up with, and even dependent upon, the Greek heritage, specifically Josephus. What is striking in this episode is not that Josephus offers any important information or insight--indeed, he does not say anything that cannot already be found or discerned in the biblical text--but rather that he represents a critical authority enabling Manetti's refutation of a former pope. In other words, in Manetti's treatise the ancient Jewish historian trumps the Medieval Christian theologian.

Shortly thereafter, Manetti once again has recourse to Josephus, this time in response to Innocent's despair that human longevity has declined from its earlier heights of approximately 900 years as reported in the Bible to the painfully short life spans which we must now endure.⁴⁹ For Manetti, however, this shift in fact redounds to the wisdom and appropriateness of the divine plan, which recognized the need for greater longevity initially in order to enable the emergence of civilization: “For if humans at the outset enjoyed but a brief duration of life, human nature could not have propagated itself; humanity could not have erected buildings; and discovered the various sciences and the arts.”⁵⁰ Thereafter, the human life span gradually declined to the present levels which, “if one likes, can be described as short.” In confirmation of this line of reasoning, Manetti invokes Josephus, his clear source.

Indeed, after noting that Noah had lived 950 years, Josephus continues in the *Jewish Antiquities* in the passage that appears to have inspired Manetti:

Nor let the reader, comparing the life of the ancients with our own and the brevity of its years, imagine that what is recorded of them is false; let him not infer that, because no life is so prolonged to-day, they too never reached such a span of

⁴⁸ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.2.36; p. 19.

⁴⁹ Manetti, *Über die Würde*, p. 129.

⁵⁰ Manetti, *On the Dignity of Man in Two Views of Man*, ed. Bernard Murchland (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Company, 1966), p. 93.

existence. For, in the first place, they were beloved of God and the creatures of God Himself; their diet too was more conducive to longevity: it was then natural that they should live so long. Again, alike for their merits and to promote the utility of their discoveries in astronomy and geometry, God would accord them a longer life; for they could have predicted nothing with certainty had they not lived for 600 years, that being the complete period of the great year.⁵¹

It should be noted that Manetti does not here follow Josephus slavishly, but rather adapts him for his specific needs. Whereas Josephus specifically emphasized the contribution of early human longevity for the development of the sciences of astronomy and geometry, in that it specifically enabled the observation within one human lifetime of the full rotation of the heavenly bodies, Manetti, in true humanist spirit, shows greater interest for how it contributed to the advancement of human life and human activities on earth.

With regard to the gradual diminution of human life, Manetti then explicitly cites Josephus's comment upon the death of Terah, who lived to be only 250, "for the life of man was already, by degrees diminished, and became shorter than before, till the birth of Moses; after whom the term of human life was 120 years, God determining it to the length that Moses happened to live."⁵² Thus, with regard to both its emergence at birth and demise at death, Josephus proves to be a significant source in contributing to Manetti's more positive conception of human life.

If Josephus is only mentioned explicitly in two passages of *On the Dignity and Excellence of Man*, Josephus's footprint in the *Contra Judeos et Gentes*, written between 1448⁵³ and 1459 (Manetti died before the work was complete), appears to be significantly more extensive. To be sure, the initial sections of what is in the first book largely a retelling of early biblical history depend most heavily upon Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica* and perhaps upon Philo's writings as well.⁵⁴ However, once one comes to the Moses narrative, the influence of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* becomes paramount (even if he appears never explicitly to mention him). Indeed, it would not be far off the mark to regard this portion of Manetti's text as an

51¹ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.9.104-6; p. 51.

52¹ *Ibid.*, 1.152.

53¹ There is some uncertainty as to whether Manetti undertook work on this project in this year or in 1454. Though he seems to have first indicated his plans for such a text in the earlier year, he may have only commenced the actual writing in the second.

54 For example, Manetti's observation that Moses preceded Cadmus: "quem Moyse posteriorem extitisse manifestum est" (Manetti, *Contra Iudeos et Gentes*, BAV Urb. Lat. 154, f. 5v) is taken directly from Eusebius. See Eusèbe de Césarée, *La Préparation Évangélique*, ed. and trans. Édouard des Places (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976) II.56.1; p. 57. In other cases, however, it cannot be ascertained whence exactly Manetti obtained certain information. For example, while he may also have been exposed to the notion that Moses lived seven generations after Abraham through Eusebius (*Pr. Év.* 9.29.2), he could have encountered this in Josephus just as well (2.229). He himself makes this point at Urb. Lat. 154, f. 11v.

abridgement of Josephus's: dispensing with much of the detail of the latter, he holds to the structure and arrangement of the storyline. For example, Manetti streamlines Josephus' account of the three-year old Moses' exceptional size and beauty. Josephus reports that "When [Moses] had attained the age of three years God gave him wondrous increase of his stature...," continuing on that "it happened that many people who happened to meet him as he was borne along the road turned back at the sight of the child and left aside their serious affairs and used their time to view him."⁵⁵ For Manetti, by contrast, "omnipotens deus staturam suam triennem ita extulerit: ut omnes pretereuntes ipsum admirabundi ad intuendum converterentur."⁵⁶

Likewise, Manetti follows Josephus in dispensing with God's injunction to Moses in the Bible (Numbers 17:1-5) to bid the Israelites to collect staffs from the twelve tribes and thereafter to write their respective names on each one. Instead, both writers cut directly to Moses' request for "the names of the tribes inscribed on the staffs" or "...mandatum est ut Moyses ipse singulas virgas ex quibuscumque duodecim tribuum principibus nominibus superimpositis acciperet."⁵⁷ In both cases, this episode of Aaron's sprouting staff--which confirms the legitimacy of his priesthood--directly follows the indication that sedition against Moses has continued despite the miraculous destruction of Korah and his band, and is in turn directly followed by discussion of the special exemptions granted to the Levites.

Manetti's dependence upon Josephus in this work is thus clear. What remains, however, to be seen, is to what degree, if any, Josephus's understanding of the biblical text or biblical religion influenced that of Manetti. For now it strikes me that Manetti, despite his continual borrowing from Josephus, had a rather different conception of the purpose of his text, and specifically of biblical history.

In accounting for Moses's decision to preface his introduction of the laws with the stories that comprise the book of Genesis, Manetti emphasizes the potential impact of the lives and mores of our ancestors ("maiorum nostrorum") in exhorting subsequent generations to embrace virtue and flee from vice.⁵⁸ Josephus, by contrast, focuses instead on the importance of the human contemplation of God and the universe: "Since Moyses desired to teach this lesson to his fellow-citizens, he did not begin the arrangement of the laws with contracts and the rights

⁵⁵ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 2.230-1; p. 197.

⁵⁶ Manetti, *Contra Iudeos*, ff. 15r-16v.

⁵⁷ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 4.63; Manetti, *Contra Iudeos*, f. 15r.

⁵⁸ Manetti, *Contra Iudeos*, f. 11r. See also Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, p. 730.

of people with one another...but he led their thoughts up to God and the structure of the universe. He persuaded them that we human beings are the fairest of God's deeds upon earth. When he succeeded in getting them to submit to a life of piety, he soon easily persuaded them with regard to everything else."⁵⁹ Just as we saw in the context of Manetti's treatise on human dignity, Josephus's orientation thus appears to veer more in the direction of a God-centered approach, while Manetti's places the human being in the center.

In approximately the same years in which Manetti was engaged in the writing of the *Contra Iudeos et Gentes*, he also undertook a new translation of the Psalter (1455). In defense of his translation activity he also composed in these same years his *Apologeticus* (1455-6). Though mentioned or evoked on several occasions in this work, Josephus's significance for Manetti's overarching argument comes primarily across in two passages, one which bears directly on the legitimacy of Bible translation, the other of which is most instructive concerning the author's understanding of Jewish culture.

In the first passage, Josephus is initially mentioned in the context of a citation from Jerome's *Preface to the Pentateuch* concerning the preparation of the Septuagint translation, where the Church father complains, "I do not know what author in his falsehood first constructed the seventy cells at Alexandria, divided into which [the seventy translators] are supposed to have written. Since Aristeas...and Josephus (in a much later time) reported no such thing, but wrote that, gathered into one basilica, they came into contact with one another, not that they prophesied. For it is one thing to be a prophet, another to be a translator."⁶⁰ Jerome is entirely correct that Josephus says nothing about separate cells for the translators, reporting only that they met "in a house which...was excellently fitted for the consideration of serious matters because it was so quiet there."⁶¹ For Jerome this means that translation is a practical rather than a prophetic task and therefore that his translation enterprise, undertaken on his own initiative, is legitimate. In quoting Jerome, whose own credentials on this front were of course incontrovertible, Manetti aims to justify his own activity as translator.

Manetti may agree with Jerome that translators are not prophets, but he does believe they are heroes, worthy of commemoration in perpetuity. He is thus quite disturbed that both

⁵⁹ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.21; p. 9.

⁶⁰ Cited in Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, p. 589. I have slightly modified Trinkaus's translation.

⁶¹ Josephus, *JA*, 12.103-4.

Josephus and Eusebius did not deem it worthwhile to mention their names, thereby consigning them to obscurity.⁶² Here again we sense an important difference between Josephus and Manetti, the former championing the translation over the translator, the latter eager to champion the translator at least as much as the text he has produced.

The second passage of note comes in the context of Manetti's consideration of the cultural situation of the Jews in both antiquity and his own time. He asserts, in all likelihood basing himself on *Against Apion*, that the Jews “alone used to pride themselves on [their Scriptures] to the highest degree, when the other nations exceedingly despised them.” In this work, Josephus takes extraordinary pride in the Jewish Scriptures, seeing in them a clear sign of superiority over Greek culture, despite the frequent calumnies hurled by the Greeks against the Jews.⁶³ Thereafter, according to Manetti's analysis, the Christian seizure (“arripimus”) of Scripture led the Jews to retreat to focusing solely on knowledge of Hebrew, such that “that none of the Hebrews or certainly very few of them seem to have had any knowledge of Greek or Latin letters after Philo and Josephus, those two noble and famous Jews, simultaneously proficient in both the Hebrew and Greek language.”⁶⁴

In this statement, Manetti reveals how Josephus, alongside Philo, represents a cultural model--as “a noble and famous Jew”--and serves as a foil against which contemporary Jews can be criticized. For it emerges that the Jews' (alleged) failure to know foreign languages also has grave consequences for their mastery of Hebrew:

Whence it happens that from this ignorance of foreign languages itself they not only cannot know that which is rightly and that which is wrongly contained, if such there are, in Christian translations, **but they are unable perfectly to know and understand their own language and vernacular, as well.** For it is never possible to perceive and know one language perfectly as it is constituted in rules, canons, and norms, without some, or at least a little, knowledge of excellent foreign idioms⁶⁵...therefore, [the Jews], content with their own alone and seeking no other, have long lacked foreign languages, also know their own [language] and vernacular wrongly. For this reason they are deprived of the poets and historians and orators and mathematicians and dialecticians and natural philosophers and moral philosophers and seem to have entirely lacked a certain knowledge of all the liberal arts. Thence long conditioned by a crass and supine ignorance of all things, they lie moribund, like

⁶² Giannozzo Manetti, *Apologeticus*, ed. Alfonso de Petris (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1981), 2.51-2; pp. 44-5.

⁶³ See, for example, *Contra Apionem*, 1, 1-23.

⁶⁴ *Apologeticus* II:66-7, “Ad hec accedit quod nulli Hebreorum vel certe admodum pauci ullam vel grecarum vel latinarum litterarum cognitionem post Philonem ac Iosephum, duos illos nobiles celebresque Iudeos hebree simul ac grece lingue peritissimos,...habuisse videntur.”

⁶⁵ This was a standard trope of humanist culture as applied to Latin and Greek, i.e. knowledge of Greek is necessary in order to fully appreciate Latin literature. What is striking is how Manetti transforms this particular cultural strategy into a full-fledged language principle.

unclean swine in mud, and in this way they are buried alive in their own perfidy as if in a sepulcher.⁶⁶

Ironically, Manetti's emphasis on the present lowly state of Hebrew culture is built on an exaggerated conception of its past. Manetti highlights the ancient Greek-Hebrew synthesis reflected in writers such as Philo and Josephus, but the historical reality is in fact far less helpful than Manetti would have liked. In suggesting that Josephus wrote in both Greek and Hebrew Manetti presumably has his copy of *Josippon* in mind⁶⁷; as for Philo's Hebrew, he presumably assumes that as a Jew he must have known the language. In short, Manetti recreates both figures in accordance with his linguistic theory and ideal.

In an additional irony, it is possible that Manetti's assertion and critique of Jewish monolingualism stems from his encounter with Josephus, who blames his own deficient Greek pronunciation on "the tradition of my people...For they do not approve of those who have acquired the languages of many nations..."⁶⁸ Finally, one wonders if he too might have based his highly critical evaluation of the state of Jewish culture--more extreme even than that of Bruni considered above--on the same anti-Jewish statements of Apion, as preserved by Josephus, which we suggested influenced his elder humanist contemporary.

One of the especially puzzling aspects of this harsh passage is its specific insistence on defective Jewish knowledge of the vernacular. Manetti seems here to operate under the assumption that each language has its associated vernacular. He and his fellow learned Italians enjoy mastery of both Latin and one of the Italian dialects while the Jews, he appears to imply, possess only shoddy knowledge in both cases ("propriam [linguam] quoque ac vernaculam"). While it is impossible to determine Manetti's meaning here with complete certainty, quite probably he conceives of Aramaic as the Jewish vernacular. From the *Apologeticus* we learn that he was aware of the Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible known as Targum Onkelos and Targum Jonathan.⁶⁹ In addition, Manetti was in possession of a "Lexicon hebraicum e

66 *Apologeticus*, II:70, cited in Trinkaus, *ibid.*, p. 592. "Iandiu peregrinis linguis caruere, et propriam quoque ac vernaculam perperam intellexere. Quocirca et poetis et historicis et oratoribus et mathematicis et dialecticis et physicis et moralibus ac metaphysicis privati, certa quadam omnium liberalium artium cognitione penitus ac omnino caruisse videntur. Proinde in crassa ac supina cunctarum rerum ignoratione diutius versati, quasi immunde sues in ceno moribundi iacent."

67¹ This is reasonable since his copy accords either with version B or is a composite of versions A and B (see f. 44, above). Version B eliminates all reference to Josephus as the source upon which the author of *Josippon* drew, thus creating the impression (albeit not stating this explicitly) that Josephus was himself the author of the text (Whealey, p. 59).

68¹ Cited in Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, Second Edition (London: Duckworth, 2002), p. 50

69¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-7.

aramaicum.”⁷⁰ And he may well have come upon the notion of Aramaic as the Hebrew vernacular from Josephus. Writing near the outset of his *Jewish War*, which--again--we know Manetti possessed, Josephus indicates that the foregoing work represents his “[translation] into Greek [of] the account which I previously composed in my vernacular tongue and sent to the barbarians in the interior.”⁷¹ Though this original text is no longer extant (if it ever even did exist), it is clear that its language must have been Aramaic, in light of Josephus’ subsequent clarification as to the identity of these “barbarians,” namely “the Parthians, and the Babylonians, and the remotest Arabians, and those of our nation (i.e. Jews) beyond Euphrates, with the Adiabeni.”⁷² Certainly it is hard to imagine that Manetti would have considered this language to have been Hebrew given the wide range of Josephus’ clearly intended original audience. And yet the reference to “vernacular” (or “national,” as the Greek $\pi \alpha \tau \rho \acute{\iota} \omega$ (patrio) can also be translated) possibly could have inclined Manetti to the view that Aramaic constituted the vernacular equivalent of Hebrew.

From the foregoing it is clear that Josephus functioned as a model for Manetti of the ability of the Hebrew and Greek languages to complement and reinforce one another. Thus, in a new, albeit implicit, form of supercessionism, Manetti--and not the contemporary Jews with whom he came into contact--represents the true heir of the ancient historian. It is furthermore possible that he even regarded Josephus as a model for his activity as translator. After all, Josephus himself presented the preparation of the Septuagint as a model for his own quasi-"translation" of Scripture--the *Jewish Antiquities*, just as, as we have seen, Manetti did as well.⁷³

As indicated above, one of the most puzzling aspects of Manetti's reception of Josephus is his apparent failure to take note of or make use of the *Testimonium Flavianum*. Manetti's copy of this most famous and controversial of Josephus passages appears not in Book 18 of the *Jewish Antiquities*, where it is typically found, but at the end of one of his two copies of the *Jewish War*.⁷⁴ It is thus hard to imagine that he would have missed this text or been unaware of it. And given his engagement in controversy and conversion of Jews, it is tempting to surmise

⁷⁰ BAV Vat. Heb. 8; *Apologeticus*, p. xi, n. 22.

⁷¹ Josephus Flavius, *Josephus II: The Jewish War, Books I-III*, edited and translated by H. ST. J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 2-5.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Josephus, *JA* 1.12; p. 6.

⁷⁴ Pal. Lat. 816, fol. 92v.

that he would have made use of it. In Vespasiano da Bisticci's biography of Manetti we read that in debates with Jews Manetti “would always say to his opponent, ‘Put yourself on guard, with your arms ready, for I will only attack you with your own weapons.’”⁷⁵ The *TF* would seem to fit perfectly into this scheme.

Even more suggestive, the colophon which marks the conclusion of the *Testimonium* and thus of this manuscript as a whole indicates that it was prepared between October and December of 1447.⁷⁶ In this same year Manetti participated in a religious disputation with Jews in Rimini at the court of Sigismondo Malatesta.⁷⁷ A clear desideratum for future research is thus to determine the precise date of this controversy and to see if any further information as to what transpired there might be forthcoming.⁷⁸ Might it have taken place at the close of 1447? If so, might Manetti in fact have made use of this supposed testimony of Josephus? And if this was the case, was he aware, like so many Christians both before and after him, that the *Testimonium* was not to be found in the Hebrew *Sefer Josippon*?⁷⁹ Even if the disputation took place prior to the completion of this manuscript, one wonders if there still might be some connection between them, for example, a desire on Manetti's part to obtain a copy of the *TF* in its aftermath. For it was in the following year, in a letter to Pope Nicholas V, that Manetti gave his first indication of writing his *Contra Iudeos et Gentes*.⁸⁰ One naturally wonders therefore about the possible linkages between these three pieces of data—exposure to the *Testimonium Flavianum* through a manuscript prepared for him, participation in a seemingly successful religious disputation (so far as we know, the only time Manetti did so), and the first beginnings of a work of at least some polemical quality (though more than anything this massive text is a retelling of biblical history supplemented by a collection of biographies of worthy personages).

75 Vespasiano da Bisticci, *The Vespasiano Memoirs: Lives of Illustrious Men of the Fifteenth Century*, trans. William George and Emily Waters (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 372; Ludovico Frati, ed., *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV scritte da Vespasiano da Bisticci* (Bologna: Romagnoli-Dall'Acqua, 1892-3), p. 34 (“Quando egli disputava con un giudeo, ch'egli diceva loro: mettetevi in punto, e trovate l' arme vostre, ch' io non vi voglio offendere, se non con l' arme vostre medesime.”).

76 BAV Pal. Lat. 816 fol. 92v, “Scripsit Nicolaus absolutique quarto Kalendas decembris a Quinto (V^{to}) Nonas Octobris 1447.” In his discussion of Manetti's Latin manuscripts Cagni notes that a later hand added “V^{to} Nonas octobris 1447.” See Giuseppe M. Cagni, “I codici Vaticani Palatino-Latini appartenuti alla biblioteca di Giannozzo Manetti,” *La Bibliofilia* 62 (1960). Actually, the “V” was already there and the allegedly subsequent hand appears to be the same. What is striking though is that the addition is in the same black ink as the rest of the actual text of the *TF*, in contrast to the colophon which is written in a colored ink. It thus seems quite possible that the scribe simply ran out of space on the line and reverted back to the same ink which he had used for the text as a whole for the remaining text he needed to squeeze in.

77¹ Umberto Cassuto, *The Jews in Florence in the Age of the Renaissance* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1967), p. 216 (Hebrew).

78¹ The precise identity of the Nicolaus who copied this text should also be determined.

79¹ On this point, see Whealey, pp. 61, 79, 82-4.

80¹ Smith and O'Connor, *Building the Kingdom*, p. 100.

In addition, the specific codicological character of the last page of this manuscript is also worthy of further exploration. It is striking that the *TF* is placed at the end of the *Jewish War* to round out the text as a whole. Why was this done? Are there other examples of this phenomenon among Josephus manuscripts? Was this a means of further Christianizing Josephus, much as a crucifix might be added to a Roman antiquity? Was the point to offer a Christian supercessionist post-script to what had been a Jewish story, i.e. the Jewish War ends with the destruction of the Jerusalem, the Temple, and the last scant traces of Jewish independence, but "the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day" ? In this way, the *Jewish War* could be rendered as Christian as the *Jewish Antiquities*. Or is the reason for the *TF*'s placement here more mundane? To conclude this section, what is rather maddening in the case of Manetti is that all the pieces seem to be in place for direct engagement with the *Testimonium Flavianum* and yet there is no explicit evidence that this ever took place.

C. Marsilio Ficino:

If Manetti appears to have overlooked the *TF*, the case of the Florentine philosopher Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) is vastly different. Trinkaus notes concerning Ficino's *De religione christiana* (1473?) that the author "cites Jewish writers aside from Josephus,⁸¹" which suggests that the presence of Josephus is simply to be expected and unremarkable. In fact, Ficino mentions Josephus repeatedly throughout the approximate first three-fifths of the work, more than in any other Renaissance text of which I am aware up to this point. Like Manetti and Jerome before him, Ficino recommends the *Letter of Aristeas* and Josephus--"and no one else"--as sources concerning the preparation of the Septuagint.⁸² Addressing the Jewish claim that the tribe of Judah had lost its scepter some one hundred years before Jesus during the Hasmonean period, Ficino notes Josephus's report that "Jesus was born in the time of Herod, who is said to have followed upon the Maccabees."⁸³

⁸¹ Trinkaus, 743.

⁸² Marsilio Ficino, *De religione christiana* in *ibid.*, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Oskar Kristeller and Mario Sancipriano (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1959), p. 30: "Cur innumerabilibus pene muneribus eam traductione Ptolemaeus emit? cur tanto honore translatores et Pontificem, postquam traduxerunt, affecit? **qui hoc ambigit, Aristaeum legat et Iosephum. Nihil supra.**"

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 32. I am not certain as to the basis upon which Ficino makes this claim concerning Josephus. The argument here revolves around Gen. 49:10 ("The scepter shall not depart from Judah...until Shiloh comes"), long a flashpoint of Christian-Jewish polemic. Since the reference to the obscure "Shiloh" was frequently interpreted messianically, Christians were wont to argue that the end of Jewish sovereignty in the early first century CE corresponded to the coming of the Messiah, i.e. Jesus. Thus Jesus represented the fulfillment of the patriarch Jacob's prophecy. Jews, by contrast, tried to refute this, arguing either that Judah still held the scepter (i.e. that the Jews still maintained some form of sovereignty) or, as Ficino suggests here, by disrupting a clear linkage between

He further relies upon Josephus's account of an earthquake of unprecedented force in the time of Herod to imply that the messianic prophecies of Haggai have already transpired.⁸⁴ In order to strengthen his proof that the age of Herod and Jesus was truly transformative theologically, he again refers to Josephus's indication that after Herod the priestly succession no longer occurred in accordance with the law of Moses.⁸⁵ And noting the great similarity between the predictions of Jesus and the history reported by Josephus concerning the fall of Jerusalem, he avers that "should anyone compare between the two, he will not be able to have any doubts concerning the divinity of Christ."⁸⁶

Like Petrarch before him, Ficino emphasizes Josephus as a source for the tremendous punishment suffered by the Jews⁸⁷; unlike Petrarch, however, he is pleased to play directly upon Josephus's own Jewishness, speaking on at least two occasions (both on the same page) to his imagined Jewish audience about "your Josephus" ("Josephus vester").⁸⁸ The first case concerns the death by stoning of James, the brother of Jesus, at the hands of the Sanhedrin⁸⁹; in the second he urges the "delirious" and "insane" Jews to at least recognize John the Baptist, on the basis of "your" Josephus's testimony.⁹⁰ Given that Ficino turns directly thereafter to the *Testimonium Flavianum*, it appears that the deployment of "vester Josephus" is intended to up the polemical ante on the verge of the presentation of this most central piece of evidence from the historian. Indeed, it can be suggested that all the previous references to Josephus serve as a quasi-*praeparatio* for the *TF*; for, in its aftermath, there is but one passing reference to him in the nearly twenty pages remaining in the book.⁹¹

the moment of the scepter's departure and the life of Jesus. This particular argument relies on the fact that the Maccabees who restored Jewish sovereignty in the second century BCE, and the Hasmonean dynasty which descended from them, were not Judeans (i.e. members of the tribe of Judah), but rather priests. Ficino's response is to argue that Jesus' birth occurred in the immediate aftermath of the demise of Maccabean rule. He implicitly still counts the Maccabees as Judeans, insofar as they were Jews.

84¹ Ibid., p. 33. At *JA* 15.5.2, Josephus reports an earthquake in the seventh year of Herod's reign "such...as had not happened at any other time." Haggai prophecies a destructive earthquake at 2:6 and 2:21. The logic of Ficino's argumentation appears to be that since Josephus describes this tremor as unprecedented in ferocity, it must be that which Haggai predicted.

85¹ Ibid., p. 34: "Certe ut testatur Iosephus, post Herodem sacerdotes nequaquam ex successione sacerdotia generis, vel perpetuitate vitae secundum legem Mosis constituebantur."

86¹ Ibid., p. 53.

87¹ Ibid.: "Atque tam miraculose punivit ut nihil miserabilius, vel unquam fuisse, vel fore tam Christus praedixerit, quam Iosephus confirmaverit."

88¹ Ibid., p. 56.

89¹ Ibid., p. 56. This incident is discussed in *JA*, 20.200.

90¹ Ibid., p. 56. In *JA*, 18.116-119, Josephus refers to John the Baptist sympathetically and reports that "some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and was a very just punishment for [having had him killed]."

91¹ Ibid., p. 73.

D. Pico della Mirandola:

Josephus does not appear to have been a major concern of the Florentine philosopher Pico della Mirandola. Nonetheless, the single reference of his of which I am aware to both the *Testimonium* and *Sefer Josippon* bears, for all its brevity, initial signs of critical engagement with these texts. At issue here is a 1486 letter to an unidentified friend who had apparently requested some information about Josephus, including the Jewish reception of him:

As for what you ask concerning Josephus, you should know that the true Josephus is not to be found among the Jews, but merely "the epitome of Josephus," that is, a certain abridgement, in which many things are fabricated. And as for what is read there concerning the ten tribes, who after the Babylonian captivity did not return by the right of return, many among the Jews acknowledged to me that these things are fake and forged. On account of which, confidence in these matters is in no way at all to be ascribed to Josephus. In the Greek Josephus I know that there are certain (passages) which make reference to Christ in both a trustworthy and respectful manner. But I would not have asserted that these matters truly accord with what is read in the Latin texts (of Josephus) had I not recently read a Greek copy...⁹²

In this passage, Pico first of all distinguishes clearly between Josephus's authentic writings and the *Sefer Josippon*. What might appear to be and indeed sometimes attempts to pass itself off as a Hebrew text written by the historian, is in fact nothing but of the sort. Instead it is a mere abridgement--and a most unreliable one at that. This is the earliest case of which I am aware of such a decisive contrast between the two kinds of works.⁹³ In addition, it is interesting that Pico refers to discussions with Jews as at least in part the source for his dismissive attitude towards the *Josippon* ("many among the Jews acknowledged to me..."). Both before and after Pico, Christian scholars complained of Jewish perfidy in distorting the text of this work.⁹⁴ Pico's understanding of the text seems to be party to this same view--but with an interesting twist. For it is now Jews themselves who acknowledge the unreliability of this work, implying a certain

92¹ Pico della Mirandola, *Epistolae non piae minus quam elegantes* (s.l. s.n. 1529), p. 41 ("Quod petis de Iosepho, scias iustum Iosephum apud Hebraeos non reperiri, sed Iosephi epitoma, id est breviarium quoddam, in quo et multa sunt commentitia: et quae de decem tribubus ibi leguntur, quae post Babyloniam captivitatem, postliminio non redierunt, ea esse notha et adulterina, ex Hebraeis mihi plures confessi sunt. Qua propter illorum Iosepho nulla omnino fides adhibenda. In Iosepho graeco scio esse quaedam, quae de Christo et fidam et honorificam faciant mentionem. Sed eadem esse penitus cum his, quae in latinis codicibus leguntur, non assererem, nisi exemplar graecum, cuius hic mihi nulla est copia, recens legerim.").

93 The earliest such case offered by Whealey, by contrast, is that of Sebastian Lepusculus (1501-1576). See Whealey, p. 83. Even here, however, he has merely determined that "the Josippon...is composed of various writers" albeit "chiefly of Josephus from whom he differs not even by a nail's breadth." Ibid., b. 79. When compared with Lepusculus--or even more so with Sebastian Münster (1488-1553), who deemed the work authentic to Josephus (Whealey, p. 83)--Pico's skepticism regarding the Josippon appears quite remarkable, especially considering his readiness to accept the antiquity of the kabbalistic writings, the subject he proceeds straightaway thereafter to treat in the above-cited letter.

94¹ For examples, see Whealey, pp. 61, 82.

openness toward Jewish culture on Pico's part and a less monolithic and stereotyped conception of how it functions.

How reliable is his Pico's testimony? This is hard to say, though Pico certainly had a number of close Jewish, or formerly Jewish collaborators. It is also at least worth noting that there is a degree of overlap between what Pico reports in the name of his Jewish informants and the admission a generation later of Isaac Abravanel. In his commentary on the book of Daniel, published in 1512, the great Spanish/Italian scholar noted that Josephus "has written a great deal, but not all of it is true."⁹⁵ Here at least is another Jew from approximately the same point in time with a skeptical attitude towards the legacy of Josephus.⁹⁶

Finally, Pico's regard for the *Josippon* is so scant that he does not even pause to consider whether some version of the *Testimonium Flavianum* is to be found in it. He is, however, careful to confirm that the Greek and Latin traditions of this text line up with each other before making any assumptions to this effect or concerning the *TF* itself. Thus, while Pico does not come anywhere close to questioning the authenticity of the *TF*, he does anticipate lines of inquiry that will lead to this in a century's time.⁹⁷

E. Pietro Galatino:

In his brief discussion, Pico did not comment in any way upon the historical context of Josephus or his writings. By contrast, this subject looms large in the Franciscan Pietro Galatino's (1480-1539) treatment of him. Born in Puglia, Galatino spent much of his adult in Rome and was deeply invested in demonstrating the Christian truths allegedly lodged in Jewish sources, as in his best-known work, the *De Arcanis Catholicae Veritatis* (first published in 1518 in Ortona). Galatino's approving quotation of the *Testimonium Flavianum* in this work thus comes as no surprise. Of much greater interest is how he uses Josephus (as in Manetti, alongside Philo) to represent a particular kind of Jew:

“[The *TF* is] from Josephus, whom the Jews esteem greatly. These two excellent men (“viri tam excellentes”) [i.e. Philo and Josephus], though they wrote in Greek, were both Jews and avid emulators of their fathers’ traditions, and would

⁹⁵ Whealey, p. 76.

⁹⁶ Though, to be sure, his skepticism is asserted here with regard to the *Testimonium Flavianum*. One wonders, therefore, how extensive and rigorous it in fact is.

⁹⁷ According to Whealey, "the authenticity of the *Testimonium* was first openly challenged in works by Christian scholars in the late sixteenth century" (Whealey, p. 204).

not have had such an opinion of Christ,⁹⁸ nor would they have reported so truthfully those things they said about him unless they had rightfully understood that these things had been predicted about the Messiah by the prophets. For this reason, there can be no doubt that if they wrote such things in Greek, they must have written *much more* [longa plura] (emphasis mine-DSK) in Hebrew, explicating the law and prophets. For they both were skilled in letters and initiated into scriptures from the very cradle. For this reason, it seems reasonable to believe that aside from them, there must have been many others at that time who had the proper opinion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and wrote truthfully about him, drawing from the law and the prophets.”

Whealey quotes this passage in her study of the controversy surrounding the *Testimonium Flavianum*,⁹⁹ having earlier noted that “[Galatino seems] to imply that simply because Josephus was well-educated both in Greek and in the Jewish scriptures,...he would naturally write favorably about Jesus...”¹⁰⁰ While this may be true (though on my reading the above passage focuses rather conventionally upon their proper understanding of the prophets), what seems most relevant is simply Galatino's assumption of the authenticity of the *TF*.¹⁰¹ Indeed, I do not see that Greek learning plays much of a role at all, except as a foil for the assumed more substantial Hebrew learning. For even more striking, following upon our earlier discussion of Manetti's reception of Philo and Josephus, is how these two again come to stand for a certain model position in ancient Judaism. If for Manetti, however, this stature was more cultural in character, indicative of a "noble" kind of Jew, for Galatino it is more religious in nature. Nonetheless, the approach to Josephus is largely the same. If Manetti had earlier assumed that Philo must have known Hebrew, thus enabling him to stand for the synthesis of the Greek and Hebraic, Galatino now assumes that both figures must have not only written much more in Hebrew, but in fact written--as it seems--many more passages like the *TF* in that language.

In pronouncing this expectation of "much more" Hebrew writing, we can suggest that Galatino is attempting conveniently to evade the fact that the Hebrew version of Josephus, the

98 Eusebius had claimed that Philo knew the Evangelist Mark in Egypt while a parallel tradition claimed that Philo heard Peter preach during his mission to Rome during the reign of emperor Claudius. Such views were revived in Renaissance Rome in the context of Lilio Tifernate's Latin translations of Philo for Pope Sixtus IV in the years 1477-1485. On this see Charles Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, pp. 213-4. In addition, among the texts invented by Anniius of Viterbo was the *Breviarum de temporibus* which he ascribed to Philo. For reasons which he does not specify, Fubini suggests that for Anniius, on Philo "dipendeva la credibilità stessa della fede in Cristo messia." On this see Fubini, "L'ebraismo," p. 323. There thus appears to be ample precedent for Galatino's Christianized Philo.

99¹ Whealey, pp. 145-6.

100¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

101¹ Whealey also emphasizes Galatino's uniqueness in assuming that many other Jews in Josephus' time held similarly positive views regarding Jews. This view "is exceptional for the early modern period" (p. 82) among Christians and Jews who debated the status of the *Testimonium* and indeed "almost modern" (p. 146) in character. And yet, as she herself shows (pp. 26, 31), ancient writers such as Pseudo-Hegesippus and Eusebius had themselves made such arguments. Galatino was thus in good, if not necessarily contemporary, company.

Sefer Josippon, lacks any comparable passage to the *TF*. Galatino does not appear to have any particular argument as to why the *TF* is absent there, indeed he does not even mention the work anywhere so far as I can see. Yet given how well known the text was in this period--it had been published for the first time by Abraham Conant in Mantua in 1480--it is hard to imagine that he was not aware of it. Asserting that Josephus wrote "much more" in Hebrew than the *TF* preserved in Greek enabled him (albeit somewhat awkwardly) to evade this issue.¹⁰²

In short, if Whealey links Galatino's attitude to the "early Christian humanists' confidence in the power both of Greek and Hebrew education to support Christianity rather than undermine it,"¹⁰³ we can somewhat differently stress that Galatino was especially concerned to establish (in however problematic a manner) the plausibility of a Hebrew parallel to the *TF* in the Josephan corpus. What was at stake for him in the *De arcanis* was the value of Hebrew source material for the promotion of Christianity--the work was after all written to defend Johannes Reuchlin against charges of Judaizing on account of his Hebrew studies. Taken at face value, the case of Josephus and the *TF* in fact seemed to suggest the opposite, since here was an ancient Greek Jewish source with no known Hebrew equivalent. Luckily, Josephus himself offered some assistance in solving this problem: at the very close of the *Jewish Antiquities* he announces his plan to compose a four-volume work on, among other topics, "the opinions that we Jews hold concerning God and His essence."¹⁰⁴ Riccardo Fubini notes that this announcement helped spur Annius of Viterbo's fertile imagination in filling in the holes in early Etruscan history; there is thus no reason not to think that it might have helped inspire Galatino's above claim concerning Josephus' Hebrew writings.¹⁰⁵

Despite the basic parallel between Manetti and Galatino's respective idealizations of Philo and Josephus, there is one further key difference: unlike Manetti, for whom these two figures were more or less *sui generis*, Galatino presents them as standing for an entire class of Jews in their time. And the manner in which he develops this possibility seems to bear traces of

¹⁰² Indeed, it is interesting to note that it was just a few years before Galatino published this claim that Abravanel had asserted that even if Josephus had written the *TF*, "we do not accept it from him, for he has written a great deal, but not all of it is true" (Whealey, p. 76, cites this from Robert Eisler; the passage is not discussed in the context of Galatino.). Thus, around the same time that the Christian Galatino was expanding the Josephan corpus, the Jew Abravanel was minimizing that corpus's reliability.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁴ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. L. Feldman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 20.268; pp. 143-5.

¹⁰⁵ Fubini, p. 323. Fubini is however incorrect when he states that Josephus claimed to have composed such a work ("dichiarava di aver composto..."), since he merely indicated his intention to do so.

Josephus's famous *tri-fold* classification of the Jews in his day among Pharisees, Saducees, and Essenes.¹⁰⁶ For Galatino claims that "after the resurrection of the Lord the Jews were divided into *three* types,"¹⁰⁷ placing Josephus in the category of those who acknowledged Jesus' messiahship but did not wish to abandon the Mosaic law.

With one final note we can conclude our discussion of Galatino's partial Christianization of Josephus. Though there are absolutely no known biographical indications to this effect, for reasons which Whealey describes as "unclear," later scholars such as William Whiston (1667-1725) and Carolus Daubuz (ca. 1670-ca.1740) presented Galatino as a Jewish convert to Christianity.¹⁰⁸ How might this have arisen? Whiston, in particular, argues that Josephus was a Nazarene or Ebionite Jewish Christian and praises "the converted Jew Galatinus" for alone "among all our learned Men, who have of late considered these Testimonies...[not missing] such an obvious and natural observation."¹⁰⁹ From Whiston's perspective, an interesting parallel thus arises between Josephus and Galatino: they both turn out to be Jews who came to accept Jesus' messiahship. Given the rareness of Galatino's understanding of Josephus, it can be suggested that the assumption that he himself was a convert could explain why he alone had achieved this insight. In short, my suggestion is that a particular understanding of Josephus' religiosity led to Galatino being re-formed by certain authors in a similar light.

F. Flavius Mithridates:

If the foregoing examples indicate how Josephus was perceived and received by humanists, I would like to conclude with perhaps the most powerful and personal evocation of Josephus's liminal status in this period. For this we turn to the Sicilian Jewish-convert most frequently, though hardly exclusively, referred to as Flavius Mithridates.¹¹⁰ Born in Caltabellotta as Shmu'el ben Nissim Abulfaraj, upon conversion to Christianity in ca. 1466, this notorious scholar, best known for his Latin translations of Jewish--especially Kabbalistic--texts, took on the name Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada after his godfather.¹¹¹ After a failed tour as Hebrew

¹⁰⁶ Josephus, *BJ*, 2.119-166; also, *JA*, 13.171-3.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Whealey, p. 146 from Galatinus, *De arcanis*, Book 1, Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁸ Whealey, p. 145.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ On "The Names of Mithridates," see Flavius Mithridates, *Sermo de Passione Domini*, ed. Chaim Wirszubski (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1963), pp. 48-9.

¹¹¹ On this figure, see *ibid* and now, Mauro Perani, ed., *Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada alias Flavio Mitridate: un ebreo convertito siciliano* (Palermo: Officina di studi medievali, 2008).

instructor of the university circuit in Germany (e.g. at Cologne and Tübingen), Moncada ended up in 1477 in Rome, where he remained for at least six years, delivering in 1481 his Good Friday *Sermo de passione domini* before a papal audience. It is on this occasion that he appears for the first time to have taken on the name *Flavius*, identifying himself at both the beginning and end of the sermon's autograph as Flavius Willelmus [sic] Ramundus Monchates.¹¹² The name Mithridates appears to have been adopted somewhat later, in any case by 1484.¹¹³

Moncada's assumption of this name on the occasion of the composition and delivery in Rome of a christological sermon rooted in Jewish sources is striking. But how should it be interpreted? Chaim Wirszubski was the first to note this juxtaposition, but does not appear to have subjected it to any further investigation. Kristen Lippincott and David Pingree ascribe it to Moncada's "recognition of his own Jewish ancestry,"¹¹⁴ but do not pause to consider how Josephus obtained the name Flavius in the first place or what it might specifically have meant to Moncada. Most recently, Saverio Campanini has offered the most extensive analysis known to me of the name Flavius Mithridates, albeit focusing primarily on its second component. He does note with regard to Flavius that the name "était donc un bon choix pour un juif converti au christianisme romain mais poursuivant avant tout des rêves de carrière et désirant s'imposer par son habileté et ses connaissances dans les milieux humanistes et universitaires."¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, Campanini does not here note the precise circumstances of Moncada's choice, thus somewhat diluting the force of his important observation.¹¹⁶

Synthesizing and supplementing the above insights we can suggest that precisely during his stay in Rome Moncada came to see in Josephus a model and critical precedent for his own negotiation of the Roman and Hebraic, Christian and Jewish. Like Josephus, Moncada had in essence switched sides; like Josephus, Moncada was the beneficiary of Roman patronage; and like Josephus, Moncada functioned as a mediator between his two worlds, in his case focusing primarily on the translation and explication of Jewish texts as opposed to the presentation of

112¹ Wirszubski, pp. 79, 127. The first name is abbreviated on both occasions as FL, but there can be no doubt that this is short for Flavius. See Adriano Capelli, *Lexicon Abbreviaturarum* (Milan: Editore Ulrico Hoepli, 2001), p. 139.

113¹ Wirszubski, p. 48.

114 Kristen Lippincott and David Pingree, "Ibn Al-Hatim on the Talismans of the Lunar Mansions" *JWCI* 50 (1987), p. 59, n. 18.

115 Saverio Campanini, "Mithridates Redivivus: Traduire la Cabale à la Renaissance" *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance: travaux et documents* 70 (2008), p. 437.

116¹ He notes that Moncada began to use the name Flavius Mithridates after the commencement of Innocent VIII's papacy in 1484, but does not date the earlier appearance of the name Flavius.

Judaism and Jewish history. In interpreting Jewish sources in a christological light, Moncada flattered his Roman patrons,¹¹⁷ just as his ancient predecessor had done in offering Jewish support and justification for Roman domination.

Josephus is in fact mentioned explicitly on one occasion in the *Sermo*,¹¹⁸ and appears to have been made use of there on at least three other occasions.¹¹⁹ There can thus be no doubt that Moncada had him in mind.

Seen from this perspective, Moncada's subsequent adoption of the name Mithridates has, I would like further to suggest, to be seen in part as a response to Josephus. What does it mean to style yourself Flavius Mithridates as opposed to Flavius Josephus? Or, since he often appears to use only the later name, what does it mean to switch from being Flavius to being Mithridates?

In his discussion, Campanini stresses Moncada's clear evocation of the Anatolian monarch Mithridates VI Eupator (134-63 BCE), known both for his deep-seated antipathy to Rome (he killed himself so as not to fall into the hands of Pompey) and vast linguistic expertise--according to legend he was the master of twenty-two languages. Though primarily focusing on the linguistic affinity between the two characters--Moncada was proficient in Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic (Chaldean), Greek, and Latin--Campanini also raises the interesting possibility that Moncada's turn to and appropriation of this figure was motivated by his own resistance to the Christianity he had adopted, i.e. by his "proto-marranism".¹²⁰ Fascinating as this suggestion is, I am skeptical that we know enough concerning Moncada's true religious convictions to draw such a conclusion. Certainly Moncada seems closer in this regard to Josephus, who willingly entered into Roman service, than to Mithridates, who killed himself in order to avoid having to do so. Linguistically and culturally, however, Moncada's choice could be seen to reflect an improvement over Josephus and thus nicely to accord with the diverse character of his scholarly activity. Unlike the ancient historian, Moncada also facilitated Christian access to non-Jewish traditions, for example through his partial translation of the

117ⁱ Wirszubski, p. 41, where he notes Moncada's interest in fostering belief ("in his own erudition and usefulness") and p. 43 ("Mithridates...was conscious that his knowledge, especially his knowledge of Hebrew, was his main claim to consideration").

118ⁱ He is mentioned as a source for the alleged purchase of the high priesthood by Caiaphas. On this, see Wirszubski, p. 101 (105v). As it happens, Josephus does not actually state this, though there appears to have been a tradition to this effect, as discussed by *ibid.*, p. 31.

119ⁱ *Ibid.*, p. 99 n.9, 106 n.2 (ff. 109-10), 111 n.1, 115 n.5.

120ⁱ Campanini, p. 438.

Koran and of some Arabic scientific writings. It therefore seems possible to surmise that in adopting the name Flavius (and/or) Mithridates, he wished to present himself as someone who though certainly cognizant of his Jewish background and of the precedent of Josephus for his own role in history, had at the same time transcended them both.

Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to offer an initial survey of the humanist reception of Josephus in Renaissance Italy, focusing in particular upon the exemplary character of Josephus himself, whether used in the service of Christian polemical positions (Petrarch, Ficino, Pico, and Galatino), on behalf of humanist translation or rhetoric concerning human dignity (Manetti), or as a model for how a former Jew who comes to work for Rome can make sense of himself (Flavius Mithridates).

Not surprisingly the *Testimonium Flavianum* emerged as a major concern for a number of writers in this period: Ficino, Pico, and Galatino. In this regard it is hoped that my piece can serve as a useful supplement to Alice Whealey's monograph on the subject, which treated the Italian Renaissance only fleetingly. Though Josephus was well-known and available throughout the period, the discussion here points nonetheless to a deepening engagement with Josephus across the fifteenth and into the early sixteenth century. For example, Ficino's 1473 *De religione christiana* appears to be the first humanist text to refer to the *Testimonium*--which was considered with relative frequency thereafter--even though both Petrarch and Manetti were in possession of the *Jewish Antiquities*. Is it possible that awareness of the existence of the *TF* only gradually emerged in the humanist consciousness? In light of the substantial ancient and medieval discussion of this passage, this would seem most unlikely. It is thus entirely possible that the situation presented here reflects more the incomplete state of my or our knowledge than a period of time in which this text was neglected or indeed forgotten.

This is but one of many questions that subsequent research on Josephus in the Italian Renaissance will need to address. For example: what role did Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* play vis-à-vis the Bible? Did this work serve merely as a supplement or did it contribute in any form to a more radical reassessment of the status and dependability of Scripture? Were episodes

in Josephus used as literary models for Renaissance Italian works, even those not bearing upon biblical themes? What significance did Josephus have for Italian humanist political thought? Can one discern changing conceptions of Josephus's significance as a historical figure in the course of this period? And can one classify different ways in which Josephus served as a model figure or author?

One major task which will contribute to answers for at least some of these questions is to integrate the use of Josephus by Annius of Viterbo (as treated by Fubini) and his followers (e.g. Giambattista Gelli) into the above discussion. For in contrast to the more syncretistic approach of both Manetti and Galatino, whereby a basic accord between Hebrew and Greek sources is stressed and Josephus is integrated into the larger framework of humanist discourse, for figures such as Annius and Gelli, Josephus seems to represent an invitation to engage in counter-history, counter-history that can even be directed against Josephus himself.