Gnuse, Robert Karl.

*Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Traditio-Historical Analysis*

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Gnuse has been working on ancient Mediterranean-world dream texts for over a decade and a half; this volume constitutes a kind of culmination to that lengthy study. After an introduction, the work unfolds in four chapters. Chapter One surveys the life and writings of Josephus and reviews the scholarly discussion of Josephus’s conceptions of dreams and prophecy and the connection between them. In his second chapter Gnuse surveys ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greco-Roman dream reports, endeavoring to identify the literary forms employed for these. Chapter Three is the heart of Gnuse’s study. Here he works through the Josephan corpus, discussing over fifty texts as likely examples of dream reports with particular attention to their genres (auditory message dream, visual symbolic dream, dream image appearance). Gnuse’s fourth chapter takes up the traditio-historical analysis of five “non-biblical” Josephan dream reports with a view to discerning their possible roots in both Jewish and Greco-Roman tradition. His very brief conclusion (in which, e.g., he affirms that Josephus’s emphasis on dream reports is part of his effort at portraying himself as a prophet) is followed by an extensive bibliography and a series of indexes.

I found much to appreciate in this monograph. Gnuse’s presentation is well-organized, clearly written, and evidences occasional humorous touches. He is refreshingly ready to admit that his proposals on various points are “speculative” or “subjective,” and sometimes even that he has no answer to this or that problem. In bringing together so much primary material (and a good deal of the relevant secondary literature), Gnuse has created a synthesis that will provide inquirers in many fields of study with a solid point of departure. His systematic survey of the whole body of Josephus’s dream reports fills a significant lacuna in Josephan scholarship. He demonstrates the possibilities of the self-conscious application of the methods of form- and tradition-criticism to Josephus’s writings and makes clear both the need to attend to both components of Josephus’s heritage, that is, the Jewish and the Greco-Roman (although Gnuse holds to the primacy of the former in the historian’s thought-world).
There are also problems with Gnuse’s work. Inevitably, its character as a synthesis does not allow it to do full justice to the materials surveyed, and many questions about individual texts are left unaddressed. Thus, Gnuse makes little attempt to contextualize a dream report within Josephus’s overall treatment of the dream’s recipient; some initial statement on the historian’s portrait of dream recipient “x” would have been helpful (and potentially illuminating for his subsequent discussion of the report itself). I would also like to have seen justification of the decision to treat Josephus’s dream reports in the chronological order of his four books—all the more so since Gnuse does so little with the context of the individual dream reports. *Prima facie* it would seem to make more sense to group the reports by literary form and to treat those reports common to the *War* and *Antiquities* synoptically rather than separately. The latest works in Gnuse’s bibliography seem to date from 1992-1993. Given the proliferation of Josephus studies in the intervening years, his volume is already bibliographically outdated. In addition, Gnuse fails to make use of a whole series of articles by L. H. Feldman that appeared in the years 1992-1993 and that are directly relevant to his topic, that is, Feldman’s discussions of the figures of Gideon, Samuel, and Daniel. The reviewer could only wonder as well why Gnuse makes no reference to any of his own writings on Josephus, for example, C. T. Begg, “The ‘Classical Prophets’ in Josephus’ *Antiquities,*” *Louvain Studies* 13 (1988) 341-57. Gnuse likewise refers repeatedly to Josephus taking or being given the name “Flavius” (see pp. 5, 29, 31), although nowhere in the Josephan corpus itself is there mention of this happening. Finally, Gnuse’s work has its share of typos, misspellings, and faulty citations. (E.g., p. 41, n. 51 1971 should be 1991; p. 81, n. 180 Rudolph should be Rodolf; p. 83, n. 183 Gressman should be Gressmann; p. 103, n. 269 Bouch-Leclerq should be Bouche-Leclerq, and “Bruxelles” is not a publisher but the city Brussels; p. 171 1 Samuel 18, 1-9 should read 8,1-9; p. 194, line 26 Josephus should be Joseph; and p. 199, n. 162 and in the bibliography, p. 282, Nieuwn should be Nieuwe.

In his introduction Gnuse modestly calls himself “an amateur in Josephan scholarship.” As a fellow such amateur I would like to conclude this review by expressing the hope that Gnuse will continue his study of Josephus’s writings, the riches of which are still very far from having been exhausted.