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Flavius Josephus' Self-Characterization in First-Century Rome

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Propositions to accompany the PhD thesis

Flavius Josephus' Self-Characterization in Flavian Rome: A Literary Analysis of the Autobiographical Passages in the Bellum Judaicum

By Jacob Evert (Eelco) Glas

1. Josephus adopts a wide variety of Graeco-Roman political-moralizing themes, rhetorical techniques, and structures to delineate individual characters in the *Bellum Judaicum*. He creatively adapts these to suit his own literary aims and interests (esp. §2.4.3).
2. Fashioning himself as an ideal general in Graeco-Roman fashion in the *Bellum Judaicum*, Josephus exploited his experiences of fighting Vespasian to boost his fame and create a public persona according to the tastes of his audience in Rome (esp. §3.3.2.3).
3. Josephus wrote the obituary of Ananus (*BJ* 4.318–21) with his own achievements in mind (§5.3.4).
4. In accordance with Graeco-Roman conventions of self-praise (§4.3), Josephus used apologetic motifs to moderate his self-praise (§5.4.1, 3).
5. Josephus presents Jeremiah as an archaic version of himself, not the other way around (§5.4.4).
6. It is impossible to study the meaning of ancient texts without examining their structures, themes, biases, and rhetoric (§5.4.1).
7. To obtain a better understanding of the richness and complexity of intellectual life in the first centuries BC and AD, it is necessary to overcome traditional disciplinary boundaries and include Judaeans (and Christian) authors such as Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus into the literary canon of Classics and Ancient History.
8. Studying the literary and rhetorical features of ancient texts allows us to critically reflect on the composition and persuasive power of contemporary speeches and texts.
9. Josephus' *succès de scandale* was inspired by the phrase “there’s no such thing as bad publicity,” allegedly coined by the 19th century American showman P.T. Barnum.