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**Maren R. Niehoff, Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography.**  
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the influence of Cynicism or Stoicism on the Roman empire should appear in the general bibliography.

Overall, Fratantuono's edition makes a strong and accessible contribution to the Tacitean scholarship on Book XVI of the *Annals*. The edition contains a helpful 21-page Latin-English glossary after the commentary. This glossary is fuller than the subsequent three-page "Bibliography and Further Reading" section or the index at the end, which confines itself to ancient topics and names, eschewing reference to scholars cited.

*NECJ* 45.2

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Maren R. Niehoff,

*Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography.*

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018. Pp. 336. Cloth

(ISBN 978-0-300-17523-3) \$38.00.

Maren Niehoff's latest book furthers her previous efforts to provide context for the voluminous surviving writings of Philo of Alexandria, illuminating his development as a pioneering thinker both in the realm of Jewish philosophy and among the philosophers of antiquity more generally. Philo's writings are notoriously lean on personal or biographical details, limiting previous attempts to fashion from them the sort of intellectual biography that Niehoff sets out here to achieve. She succeeds in avoiding excessive speculation, grounding her arguments in her intimate familiarity with Philo's works and her extensive knowledge of contemporary philosophical traditions. The result is a persuasive and illuminating sketch of one of antiquity's most fascinating figures.

Rather than narrating Philo's biography in chronological order, Niehoff makes the unexpected but effective choice to begin her study near the end of Philo's life, taking as her point of departure the one event in Philo's *Vita* that can be dated with certainty: his participation in an embassy of leading Alexandrian Jews to the Emperor Gaius Caligula in Rome in 38CE. Niehoff argues forcefully that the im-

pact of Philo's time in Rome has been under-appreciated in previous scholarship, identifying his encounter with Roman literary culture as the key to interpreting Philo's *oeuvre* and understanding his development as a thinker. Building from previous research that has sorted the roughly three dozen works surviving from Philo's pen into five distinct sets of treatises, Niehoff posits a distinct *Sitz im Leben* and intended audience for each set. She argues that three of these groups—the *Exposition of the Law*, the Philosophical Writings, and the Historical Writings—reflect Philo's exposure to ideas and discourses circulating in Rome. Working backwards, she then identifies the two remaining sets of treatises, the *Allegorical Commentary* and the *Questions and Answers*, as reflective of the concerns and controversies present in the young Philo's Alexandrian milieu.

The book is structured in three parts. Part I, "Philo as Ambassador and Author in Rome," demonstrates how Philo's historical and philosophical treatises engage in discourses and debates that occupied the Roman *literati* of the first century. Moving beyond traditional readings of *Against Flaccus* and *On the Embassy to Gaius* that focus on their reliability as historical sources, Niehoff illuminates points of intersection between these texts and the works of Seneca, Josephus, and Lucian of Samosata. She argues that Philo's treatises share with them a common interest in the limits and abuses of political power, as well as a similar authorial self-awareness and sense of irony.

The influence of Philo's time in Rome is also detected in the topics treated by Philo's philosophical treatises. The dialogues *On the Rationality of Animals*, *On Providence*, and *Every Good Man is Free* are read in light of the lively debate on these topics between contemporary Stoics and Platonists. Philo champions Stoic defenses of humanity's exclusive claim to reason, the benevolent involvement of God in human affairs, and the conviction that true freedom is only found in the willing acceptance of one's circumstances while, in *On the Eternity of the World*, Philo falls into the Platonist camp, taking particular offense at the Stoic theory of conflagration. In each of these debates, Philo adopts the position that best aligns with his interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures, whose authority he seeks always to defend.

Part II, "Philo's *Exposition* in a Roman Context," offers a plausible occasion for Philo's composition of the treatises collectively known as the *Exposition of the Law*. This series consists of biographies of Israel's patriarchs followed by writings devoted to the interpretation of the Law of Moses. The *Exposition's* first volume is the treatise *On the Creation*, a fact that has been obscured by its separation from the rest of the *Exposition* in the most frequently read English translation. By restoring *On the Creation* to its rightful place at the outset of the *Exposition*, Niehoff contends, the

purpose and the intended audience of these texts comes more sharply into focus. She attributes the attention paid to the material cosmos in the *Exposition* (in contrast to its near absence in the *Allegorical Commentary*) to Philo's encounter with Stoic philosophy in Rome. According to her reading, Philo "has not simply remained loyal to the biblical creation account, rejecting alternative pagan views, but has instead gone through an intellectual development, exchanging a more transcendent Platonic position for the Stoic approach prevalent in Rome" (101). The influence of Rome is also apparent, Niehoff contends, in the biographies, which "make full use of biographical conventions and themes of Roman Stoicism" (127). Similarly, Philo's portrayals of Biblical women in the *Exposition* conform to Roman models, while Biblical law is shown to be congenial to Stoic ethics. Read as a cohesive whole, the *Exposition* is convincingly shown to be an apologetic introduction to Jewish life composed for a Roman audience unfamiliar with the texts, laws, and practices of Philo's people.

In Part III, "Young Philo among Alexandrian Jews," Niehoff assigns the remaining texts in Philo's corpus to his early years as a scriptural exegete and commentator in Alexandria. The *Allegorical Commentary*, she contends, demonstrates his familiarity with the critical methods of scholarship developed by scholars of Homer at the Museum and reveals Philo to be conversant with other Jewish scriptural commentators. The *Commentary's* philosophical commitments, particularly to the notions of God's transcendence and ultimate unknowability, are decidedly Platonist and reflective of Alexandria's intellectual climate. Niehoff's careful reading culminates in a concluding study of Philo's evolving usage of Stoic concepts and vocabulary, demonstrating Philo's movement from "deep ambivalence to adoption of central Stoic tenets popular in Rome" over the course of his career (241). In so doing, Niehoff makes a strong case for the necessity of a contextual interpretation that resists the temptation to harmonize Philo's works and obscure his development as a thinker (226).

The same commitment to nuance and differentiation is unfortunately not as evident in Niehoff's discussion of Philo's "religion," a term she uses primarily to discuss matters of worship and beliefs about the divine, but that is left under-theorized. As a consequence, her discussion skims over the complicated interplay between ethnicity, citizenship, ethics, cult, and philosophical speculation that characterize this time period and is so evident in Philo's writings. This results in some confusing statements, such as her characterization of Philo as an "advocate of Judaism in Rome," suggesting that his role was to be a religious apologist rather than rather than a diplomat interceding in defense of the rights of his community. Likewise, her contention that Philo presents Judaism as "an apolitical, religious entity" in *On*

*the Life of Moses* (120) confuses me, as Philo attributes many political functions to Moses in this text.

Nevertheless, Niehoff has produced an engaging and highly readable biography that provides a plausible new interpretive framework for approaching Philo's body of work in a holistic manner. This volume would serve well as an introduction to Philo for advanced students of second-temple Judaism, ancient philosophy, and early Christianity, while also providing fresh insights for seasoned readers of his works.

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J. Alison Rosenblitt,  
*E. E. Cummings' Modernism and the Classics: Each Imperishable Stanza.*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. pp. xxiv + 370. Cloth  
(ISBN 978-0-19-876715-2) \$65.00.

In this book, Alison Rosenblitt argues that Cummings' time at Harvard as a Classics student had a profound influence on his poetry. Building upon the earlier work of critics such as Malcolm Cowley and Guy Davenport, she both summarizes former research and adds in new information concerning his views on sexuality from previously unpublished poems of Cummings, which appear in the Appendix. As she states: "[T]his book argues that, by restoring and examining a forgotten classical context, we can fundamentally refocus our current sense of Cummings' work" (4).

The book is divided into five sections: E. E. Cummings as a Classical Poet (Chapters 1-3); Childhood, Harvard and Paganism (Chapters 4-5); The Great War and Beyond (Chapters 6-8); Cummings, Classics and Modernism (Chapters 9-10); and Translations, Further Verse and Prose by E. E. Cummings. Each section is further divided into chapters. All the poems are referred to by their first lines, as Cummings didn't use titles.

In the Foreword, Rosenblitt attributes Cummings' poor spelling, "especially letter reversals and trouble with doubled consonants" (xxii) to dyslexia; this is certainly a new theory to explain the structure of his poems.