

Finally, a number of pieces in this collection grapple with Nelson's challenges about how we can know the past. Wendy Davies is the most explicit here, tracing the disappearance of the "Breton nation" as a subject for historical discussion. Other essays analyse early medieval conceptions of their own past. Theo Riches explores how changing narratives of the Carolingian capture of Aachen suggest the development of "national feeling," while Fouracre demonstrates how contemporaries coped with the "time of oblivion" and constructed memories of Dagobert to fill the gaps in their historical records. As Nelson points out, attempts to understand the past must always be a collective intellectual effort. This volume serves as a splendid example of it.

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**Gambetti, Sandra, *The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews: A Historical Reconstruction***

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In 38, the Egyptian prefect, Aulus Avilius Flaccus, ordered that statues of the emperor, Gaius Julius Caesar (Caligula), be erected in Jewish synagogues. Riots broke out in Alexandria; shops were pillaged and destroyed and the Alexandria Jewish community was violently persecuted leading to its ruin. The riots resulted in Flaccus being removed from office and later executed. The only eyewitness account of these events was from the Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, who recorded these events in two works: *In Flaccum*, and *Legatio ad Gaium*. However, these works reveal a degree of ambiguity and do not provide a complete account of the events. In addition, Philo was a prominent member of the Alexandria Jewish community and his accounts cannot be viewed as being without bias. However, the different interpretations of the Alexandrian riots have been affected by the ambiguity between Philo's two accounts of the riots, where in *In Flaccum* he clearly blames Flaccus for the riots, but in the later work, *Legatio ad Gaium*, he accuses Gaius of being the source of the events. The Alexandrian riots are an important part of the larger issue of the rights of Diaspora Jews in the Greco-Roman era.

In Sandra Gambetti's, *The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews: A Historical Reconstruction*, she focuses on Philo's accounts of the riots. Gambetti's interpretation "is based on an inquiring

close-up reading of Philo's text" (7); these texts are compared against the other fragments of evidence that are available and the historical background of the era. She carefully maps out the events that led to the riots of 38 C.E. This includes the important issue of the rights of residence of the Alexandrian Jews. She compares their rights in the Ptolemaic period with the Roman period, demonstrating that the lives of the Alexandrian Jews became increasingly difficult under Roman rule. Flaccus' prefecture is examined with a critical evaluation of Philo's account in *In Flaccum*. The precedent of the riots of 38 is outlined with ancient Greece texts utilised to support the author's interpretation. The events of the year 38 plus the aftermath and the political repercussions of the riots are closely considered. Gambetti concludes that both Gaius and Flaccus shared responsibilities for the events according to their political role; Gaius introduced a new policy and Flaccus enforced Gaius' orders. However, the riots of 38 were not an express reaction to the immediate events of that year, but they were a result of the uncertain and changing rule of the Romans. The ambiguity in Philo's accounts of the riots, *In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*, should be considered in the light of the years they were published. *In Flaccum*, Philo openly accuses Flaccus and not Gaius, while in *Legatio ad Gaium* he accuses Gaius and not Flaccus. *In Flaccum* was written when the emperor was still alive and Flaccus had been arrested, if not executed, while *Legatio ad Gaium* was written after the emperor's death. After Flaccus' arrest in the autumn of 38 nobody was interested in defending him, and while the emperor was still alive nobody would have spoken against him.

The appendices give a greater understanding of the arguments outlined in the book and include a chronology the events leading to the riots; "The Replacement of the Prefect of Egypt and the Emperor's death" outlines the succession of a ruler; "The Topography of Alexandria" provides a map of the city with notes on its topography, and "Ethnics, Patris, and the Case of Alexandreus," outlines the regulation of the riots. *The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews: A Historical Reconstruction* is an engaging and informative book. Gambetti skillfully recreates the historical events of 38. The book is well written, thoroughly researched, an excellent resource and a delight to read.

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