Alexandria endures in our imagination as the first model of cultural interaction – of cosmopolitanism, to use both classical and contemporary terminology – and as the cultural and intellectual capital of the ancient world. The intermingling of races and beliefs, and the exchange of ideas, undoubtedly produced the knowledge that modern scholarship still celebrates.

This book is a testimony that the value embodied by Alexandria and its Library continue to inspire noble-minded scholars whose pursuit for knowledge transcends boundaries and time. The breadth and scope of the papers presented do credit to the spirit of Alexandria – its multiculturalism, and its passion for science and scholarship. The book in our hands confirm that the multiculturalism of the Ancient World, rippling out from Alexandria to extend throughout the Hellenistic period and beyond, is as valid now as it was then – perhaps more so today, when globalization has given a new meaning to the internationalism envisioned by Alexander the Great centuries ago. Now, with the “clash of civilizations” dominating our discourse, it is pertinent to remember the lesson Alexandria ad Aegyptum taught us: that the interaction between cultures can only lead to the betterment of the human condition and carry us to heights unimagined.

Ismail Serageldin
Librarian of Alexandria

The excellent contributions gathered in this book dedicated to the city of books, Alexandria, are undoubtedly traced along the lines of Amr and John’s dialogue. Intolerance, which is borne almost always out of ignorance, threatens continuously the peaceful meeting and coexistence of peoples and cultures nowadays. Alexandria, its people and books remind us that the search for dialogue, the reflection on the forms of unity in diversity are at the same time our greatest heritage and the most dramatically pressing agenda.

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Abstract: The development of a culture of mobility and leisure, principally motivated by the architectural and artistic enhancement of religious sites, can be traced back to the Hellenistic Age. That development becomes clear in the affirmation of periegetic literature as well as in the emergence of lists and accounts of the Seven Wonders, texts which combine the function of travel guides with notes on history, mythology, religion, and art. Other literary works testify to that process. This paper aims to discuss Theocritus’ Idyll XV and Herodas’ Mime IV as sources that illustrate the close relationship between religion and art, and its role in the development of the experience of tourism and leisure in Hellenistic Greece, especially as concerns women. In the last part of the paper the sculpture of a boy and a goose, mentioned in Herodas’ poem, will be analysed.

One of the most famous and interesting poems in the Theocritian corpus is the one that takes us to cosmopolitan Alexandria in the beginning of the 3rd century B.C., through the spontaneous dialogue between two women – women of the people, albeit affluent and enjoying relatively high social status¹ – who, like the poet, originally come from Syracuse.

¹ Besides mentioning several women servants (Eunoa, Phrygia, Eutychis), the passage where Gorgo notices Praxinoa’s tunic, which had cost a fortune (lines 34-38), is also illustrative of that. The two women seem to be defending their higher social status when, inside the palace, a stranger tells them to be quiet and, feeling vexed, they mention both their Corinthian origins and the Dorian way of talking (lines 91-93). According to J. Rowlandson, a study by W. Clarysse published in 1998 confirms that in the early Ptolemaic Period the identity and the accent associated with one of the ancient Greek cities, or with Mace-