to authoritative command in the earlier texts but to polite encouragement of (correctly exercised, of course) local autonomy in the later.

The book has its origin in a doctoral thesis of the University of Bologna. It was a very good thesis, in which B. learned a great deal by working thoroughly on a limited but well-chosen body of material and on issues which arise from the study of that material, and has become an accomplished scholar. It will certainly be useful to anybody interested in the texts she has studied and the questions she has investigated; but, although it is paper-bound and cheaply priced, and although it includes a translation of each of the texts studied, it is a severely academic book which takes a good deal of background knowledge for granted, and it is not likely to appeal to a wide range of readers.

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ALEXANDRIA

A. Hirst, M. Silk (edd.): *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*. (Centre for Hellenic Studies, King's College London, Publications 5.) Pp. xxx + 401, ills. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. Cased, £55. ISBN: 0-7546-3890-1.

'What is resumed in the word Alexandria? In a flash my mind's eye shows me a thousand dust tormented streets. Flies and beggars own it today—and those who enjoy an intermediate existence between either.' The opening of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* is far from the glamorous city of the Ptolemies, now submerged beneath sea and a modern city. Only in recent years have advances in underwater archaeology in particular begun to reveal a little what has been lost of Alexandria.

The present volume of essays, some slighter than others, has its origins in a conference held at King's College London in 1997, though it is clear that the contributors have had a chance to develop their papers since then. The range of essays is broad indeed, from Ptolemaic scholarship to Cavafy, from Athenaeus to the cafes of the nineteenth century, from Alexander to Muhammad Ali. The editors, Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk, have chosen to highlight the tension between the real and the imagined in the title they have given to the collection, as the essays uncover a multiplicity of Alexandrias. Inevitably the imagined is prominent in literary accounts; there is Michael Trapp's illuminating essay on images of Alexandria in the Second Sophistic which interestingly argues that the classicizing mentality of these writers tended to play down Alexandria just as it did the rest of the post-classical world. More modern literary figures are featured strongly in the latter half of the book: the Greek Cavafy (David Ricks, Khaled Fahmy), the Egyptians Ahmad Shawqi, Edwar al-Kharrat and the Nobel-prizewinning Naguib Mahfouz (Azza Kararah), and the British residents Durrell and E. M. Forster (David Roessel). Reality enters most sharply in George Contis's essay on health and disease; schistosomiasis, a disease caused by a parasitic canal-dwelling worm, has attacked the inhabitants of the Nile Delta from Pharaonic times to the present day, leaving its traces in mummies as far back as the Twentieth Dynasty.

The title is at once evocative and sufficiently loose to encompass almost anything

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about Alexandria. For me, however, what links this, in many ways disparate, collection is the recurring theme of Alexandria as a meeting-place of cultures, interacting, clashing and combining, a city multi-cultural from its very beginnings. The Alexandria of Ptolemaic Egypt was a city of Greeks, Macedonians, Jews, and Egyptians—on one estimate Jews making up a third of the population. The revitalized nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century city may have been predominantly Egyptian, but at times around one-fifth of the population was non-Egyptian, a distinction marked out in the Egyptian mode of address to the foreigner (Robert Mabro). Even during its post-antique decline, with its population shrinking dramatically in the face of the rise of Cairo, its rôle as a port still made it a Mediterranean focal point, written about by Venetian and other European visitors (Giovanni Curatola, Anne Wolff).

Under the Ptolemies Alexandria was home to a Greco-Macedonian court ruling an Egyptian kingdom. How much these two cultures overlapped in Alexandria is still very much under debate. It is clear that the Ptolemies presented themselves as Pharaohs to the Egyptian population beyond Alexandria but the recent discovery of Egyptian-style representations of the Ptolemies in the city itself suggests that Alexandria may not have been as resolutely Greek as once thought. Sally-Ann Ashton offers a valuable survey of the Pharaonic-style sculptural material found there from the Hellenistic period and argues that it was aimed at Alexandria's Egyptian population but also notes the way in which the artistic traditions merged. Recent excavations also underpin Anne-Marie Guimier-Sorbet's essay, which looks at a Macedonian artistic influence, the introduction of mosaic work into the new city, recalling the impressive floor decorations of Pella and Vergina. In an essay co-written with Mervat Seif el-Din, Guimier-Sorbet also explores the union of Greek and Egyptian traditions of the afterlife in the tombs of Kawm al-Shuqafa. The cultural status of the famous Library provokes further scholarly controversy. Herwig Maehler sees it as narrowly Greek, a fortress of Greek culture in an alien land; Mostafa El-Abbadi, on the other hand, presents 'the first universal library in history'. It may be right to see it as universalist, but that universalism is itself a part of Greek cultural imperialism as the Ptolemies appropriate and organize the Greek and non-Greek worlds (cf. A. Erskine, *Greece and Rome*, 42 [1995], pp. 38–48).

A city with such an ethnic mix could also be a place of conflict. Jane Rowlandson and Andrew Harker's chapter uses the *Acta Alexandrinorum*, sometimes known as the *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*, to examine the complex tensions between Greeks, Egyptians, Jews, and Romans at a time when Egypt was part of the Roman empire. The gradual alienation of the Jewish population in Roman Alexandria is treated by James Carleton Paget. In contrast, the vanished multi-ethnic Alexandria of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was remarkable for its tolerance and is the subject of two fascinating chapters by Khaled Fahmy, the first exploring the cosmopolitan culture celebrated by the literary élite, the second using police records to gain an insight into the often neglected Arabic-speaking population, although of course such records will give only a very partial picture.

The diversity of Alexandria, ancient and modern, has been well captured in the multi-disciplinary approach of this beautifully produced and impeccably edited volume.

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