# ALEXANDREA AD AEGYPTVM
# THE LEGACY OF MULTICULTURALISM IN ANTIQUITY

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# FESTIVE ALEXANDRIA – MOBILITY, LEISURE, AND ART IN THE HELLENISTIC AGE

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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 status[1] – 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-

(line 90), and who go out to participate in the festival in honour of Adonis. The dramatic date of *Idyll XV*, also known as «The Syracusan Women» or «The Women at the Adonia», is probably 272 B.C.[2] during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Arsinoe II, a time when the cult of Adonis in Alexandria included magnificent celebrations promoted by the queen herself, as the poem illustrates[3].

The well-known dialogue between the two Syracusan friends, performed in April 2005 by the Instituto de Estudos Clássicos of the University of Coimbra's Thiasos theatre group, under Carla Braz and Carlos Martins de Jesus very successful stage direction[4], may be considered one of the most significant testimonies of the experience of leisure and even of what we might call «religious tourism» in the Hellenistic Age. In fact, the first group of characters constituted by Gorgo, Praxinoa and their servants have to face some difficulties in dealing with the crowd of spectators who seem to be watching a military parade (lines 5-6, 51-53); however, their destination is Ptolemy's palace, where, according to what Gorgo had heard, «a fine show» (line 24) in honour of Adonis can be enjoyed[5]. After they get through the mob the reader finds the two women inside the royal house admiring and, with an attitude of irreverence and disrespect also characteristic of contemporary tourists, making comments in a loud voice on the magnificent tapestries (line 78 *ta poikila*, line 83 *enyphanta*) that represent Adonis, the youth loved by the gods (lines 78-86). But soon does the most anticipated moment of the celebrations begin: a recital by a famous Argive woman singer who performs the song about Aphrodite and Adonis's love, his death and subsequent resurrection (lines 100-144)[6].

The two women's brief excursion comes to its end when practical-minded Gorgo, worried about her husband's dinner, announces that it is time for her to go back home (lines 147-148). Although they appear to be more autonomous that the Athenian women of the Classical Period, the two housewives, who live in Hellenistic Alexandria, are perfectly aware of their gender roles and tasks: Praxinoa was wise enough to leave her son at home for fear that it might not be safe for a child to be outside on the bustling city streets (lines 40-42, 55) and although she could not resist her friend's invitation she does not wish to stay out too long. Before going back, Praxinoa complains about her husband, accusing him of creating

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donia, were considered signs of high social status. Only after the 2nd century B.C. did the elite start to generally identify with the city of Alexandria («Town and Country in Ptolemaic Egypt», in ERSKINE 2003: 253). Whitehorne 1995 analyses in detail the elements that help the readers understand both Gorgo and Praxinoa's economic power and their social status. Cf. DUBOIS, 2007: 50-51.

[2] GOW, 1965b: 265, cf. MONTEIL, 1968: 143-144.

[3] For an analysis of the political context, as well as the allusions to Ptolemy and most especially to Arsinoe, see GRIFFITHS, 1981. As concerns the Adonis cult rituals and the documental value of Theocritus' *Idyll XV*, see REED, 2000: 319-351.

[4] See JESUS, FERREIRA, 2010: 96-97.

[5] Quotations from Theocritus' *Idyll XV* are transcribed from A. S. F. Gow's translation (1965a: 108-121).

[6] On the nature of the cult and the songs in honour of Adonis, see MONTEIL, 1968: 144-145; G. LAMBIN, 1992: 345-347; BURKERT, 1985: 176-177.

obstacles to her going out with her girl friend, of his not being able to choose a good home (lines 8-10) and of lacking the ability to manage it (lines 15-17). Such complaints are echoed by Gorgo, whose husband she defines as a foolish spendthrift (lines 18-20). We understand that Praxinoa is free to manage the family budget and does not have to ask permission to leave the house, but her household management decisions are quite sensible[7].

In sum, in *Idyll XV* Theocritus composes a picturesque portrait of the young and lively city of Alexandria, of its multiethnic people and especially of the two housewives, who enjoy their modest leisure, seeming much freer than the female characters portrayed in Aristophanes' theatre[8].

Of the festivities watched by Gorgo and Praxinoa, the first to be mentioned is the military parade, implicit in the reference to the presence of a large number of soldiers outside on the streets (lines 5-6) and the exhibition of the king's war horses (lines 51-53)[9]. Military parades, which still take place in official commemorations of both democratic and autocratic States, had a long tradition in ancient Greece. An example, dating back to the Archaic Age, is Sappho's famous fragment 16 Lobel-Pag, in which the poet from Lesbos reflects on the variety of human tastes, to conclude with a contrast emphasizing female beauty between the disciplined, refulgent march of the Lydian chariots and armed infantry and the lovely walk and bright sparkle of a maiden named Anactoria (lines 17-20).

In the second part of their outing, the tapestries exhibited in Ptolemy's palace catch the protagonists' attention. Their motifs can be deduced from Praxinoa's description, in which the following passage can be read (lines 80-86):

> *Lady Athena, what workers they must have been that made them, and what artists that drew the lines so true! The figures stand and turn so naturally they're alive not woven. What a clever thing is man! And look at him; how marvellous he is, lying in his silver chair with the first down spreading from the temples, thrice-loved Adonis, loved even in death*[10].

According to the catalogue published in 1981 in vol. 1 of *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (LIMC)*, compiled by Brigitte Servais-Soyez, the representation of

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[7] WHITEHORNE, 1995 shows that the items Gorgo and Praxinoa ask their respective husbands to buy for them (lines 15-20) were to be used for dyeing textiles, a domestic chore that was women's responsibility in the Greek world.

[8] Whereas some authors such as POMEROY, 1975: 148 and FANTHAM *et al.*, 1994: 141 consider that Theocritus' poem can illustrate the evolution of women's social status in the Hellenistic Age, others, like GRIFFITHS, 1981: 253-259, maintain that, on the contrary, Gorgo and Praxinoa's character and behavior are a rather traditional representation of the female gender. Cf. WHITEHORNE, 1995 and note 7.

[9] GOW, 1965b: 268, 281-282 dismisses this reading, considering that the horses are not part of a procession but they are being taken to the hippodrome, where the quadriga races will be taking place. Cf. LEGRAND, 1946: 123 («Chevaux de parade plutôt que de guerre»), MONTEIL, 1968: 154 n. ad 51.

[10] The song performed by the Argive woman in honor of Adonis (lines 100-144 of *Idyll XV*) also mentions the motifs represented in the tapestries. For an interpretation of that passage, see GOW, 1965b: 286-289.

Adonis in Greek iconography goes back to the 5th century B.C. and Aphrodite's passion for the youth can be counted among the favourite themes found in the oldest Greek monuments. However, the first representations of Adonis's death date back to the Hellenistic Age and are present in Etruscan and Roman monuments and works of art.[11] Centuries later both themes, together with the representation of Aphrodite trying to keep the young man from hunting or sorrowing over his dying body will be amply portrayed in western art, especially in Renaissance and Baroque painting, most probably through the influence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (10.519-559, 708-739)[12].

The public exhibition of works of art – sculpture, painting, or tapestry as in Theocritus' poem – is not a new practice in the Hellenistic Age. The main Greek sanctuaries, with their temples and treasures, ostentatiously decorated with spoils of war and large quantities of votive offerings, boasting famous statues of the divinities such as Pheidias' statue of Zeus at Olympia (ca. 430 B.C.) or statues of victorious athletes, had become not only valued pilgrimage destinations but also important tourist attractions[13]. In Athens, during the second quarter of the 5th century B.C., the *Stoa Poikile* or Painted Porch, which is mostly known through literary sources, was built for political, religious and social purposes, although it served also as a public art gallery[14], for it was decorated inside with paintings by Polygnotos of Thasos, Micon of Athens, and Panaenus, brother of Pheidias, depicting the Battle of Marathon, the Taking of Troy as well as the famous motif of the battles between Greeks and Amazons[15].

However, it is in the Hellenistic Age that mobility motivated by the desire to see monuments, works of art and other wonders «with one's own eyes» (*autopsia*) becomes a common practice[16]. As Gorgo says to convince her friend to go out with her, «[w]hat you've seen you can talk about, when you've seen it and another hasn't» (line 25).

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[11] SERVAIS-SOYEZ, 1981: 229. See, e.g., the Etruscan funerary monument, made of clay, decorated with dying Adonis (3rd/2nd cent. B.C., Vatican, Museo Gregoriano, *LIMC* n. 33) and the Roman fresco in the so-called House of Adonis, Pompeii, representing the wounded youth leaning on Venus (1st cent. A.D., Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, *LIMC* n. 35, reproduced also in GOW, 1965b: Plate XI).

[12] On the reception of the Adonis theme in European art, see REID, 1993, 25-40; DOMMERMUTH-GUDRICH, 2004: 26-31; DE RYNCK, 2009: 338-339.

[13] See the numerous examples cited by CASSON, 1994: 238-252 in his chapter «Museums».

[14] Although not really a novelty, spaces both public and private (such as porches) dedicated to hosting and exhibiting works of art, especially paintings, as well as the building of collections became more common since the Hellenistic Age, notably among the Romans (*pinacothecae*), as can be read in different sources (e.g. Petronius, *Satyricon* 83.1-7; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 35.84, 114, 126, 132, 139). See VAN BUREN, 1938: 70-81; LEHMANN, 1945: 259-269; BERGMANN, 1995: 79-120, esp. 98-102.

[15] The identification of the fourth theme, supposedly the Battle of Oenoe, fought between Athenians and Lacedaemonians, on which there is not much information available, has been an object of discussion. Of the famous building, situated in the Athenian Agora, there remain but the foundations and some fragments of the paintings, mentioned in Plutarch, *Cimon* 4.5-6; Arrianus, *Anabasis* 7.13.5; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.15.1-3; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.1.5; *The Suda*, s.v. *Poikile*; see RODRIGUES, 2007a: 336-337.

[16] For travelling and the tourism experience in the Hellenistic world, see CHAMOUX, 1981: 394-403; ANDRÉ, BASLEZ, 1993: 43-76, especially; CASSON, 1994: 227-329.

Theocritus' poem distinguishes itself precisely because it develops the concept thoroughly. Upon arriving at the royal palace, Gorgo and Praxinoa do not view the tapestries as elements included in the festival organized in homage of Adonis, but rather emphasize their high level of artistic execution, the perfection of the traces, the accuracy of the figures and their movements. Theocritus is therefore interested in the aesthetic effect of the pieces on the visitors, who admire them more as works of art than as objects of cult[17].

*Idyll XV* includes a number of sources that illustrate the close relationship between the three concepts discussed in this essay – mobility, leisure, and art. Those sources include references to the beauty and reputation of Praxiteles' statue of Aphrodite, circa 350 B.C., which probably made Cnidus one of the most visited cities in the Hellenistic Age[18], and also periegetic literature, notably the *Description of Greece* written by Heraclides Creticus in the 3rd century B.C.[19], and also the lists and accounts of the Seven Wonders, such as the opuscule supposedly authored by Philo of Byzantium[20]. Given the variety of those sources, my analysis will be focused on yet another testimony which has a number of affinities with Theocritus' *Idyll XV*: the *Mime IV* of Herodas, who apparently also pursued his writing career during the first half of the 3rd century B.C.[21].

In Herodas' poem there is also a dialogue between two women of the people, two mothers, Kynno and Kokkale[22], who are heading to a sanctuary of Asklepios, possibly, as some scholars have claimed, the one situated in the island of Kos[23], much missed and praised in line 2, with the aim of offering a sacrifice (the immolation of a cock) and making a thank-offering[24], in gratitude for the cure performed by the god (lines 11-19). Their offerings are modest for, as opposed to Gorgo and Praxinoa, the two Herodas characters are women of humble means (lines 14-18), but their low level of education proves to be no hin-

[17] On this complex issue, see BURTON, 1995, ZANKER 2004: 82-86, and PLATT, 2010, especially 201-208.

[18] See RODRIGUES, 2007b: 61-71.

[19] GARZÓN DÍAZ, 2008: 193.

[20] FERREIRA, 2009.

[21] Considering the references to the children of Praxiteles, the sculptor (lines 23, 25-26) and to Apelles the painter (lines 72-78), CUNNINGHAM (1966: 117-118, 1971: 128) suggests that Herodas' poem may have been written between ca. 280 and 265 B.C. Cf. WALDSTEIN, 1892: 135. As for the possible sources common to both texts, supposedly based on the verses of Epicharmus, the comic poet, and on Sophron's mimes (both Sicilian poets of the 5th century B.C.), see SKINNER, 2001: 204-205.

[22] Neither the speeches identification nor the protagonists' names have been established with certainty. CUNNINGHAM, 1971: 127 claims that the second woman is called Phile and that Kokkale is the name of one of the slaves. In this respect, we follow KNOX, 1922 and NAIRN, LALOY, 1928.

[23] CHAMOUX, 1981: 424-425; ESPOSITO, 2010: 276.

[24] The word used by the poet is *pinax* (pl. *pinakes*), which can mean both a votive tablet with inscriptions on it and a painted wooden panel. Sacrificing a cock was quite a common practice in the cult of Asklepios (cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 118). The scenery imagined by Herodas, a sacred space filled with votive offerings both inside and outside the temple, is plausible and it does indeed match the findings of archaeological excavations of the sanctuaries built in honour of the god of Medicine (Epidaurus, Athens, Corinth, Kos), where pilgrims used to leave numerous gifts. See DIGNAS, 2007: 163-177, especially p. 168-169.

drance to their appreciating the images they find in the sacred precinct, just like the two Syracusan Women.

As they wait outside for the temple door to open, Kokkale expresses her wonder at the beautiful votive offerings, some of them made by famous sculptors like Kephisodotos and Thimarchos, Praxiteles' sons. Kokkale is delighted with the representation of a little girl looking at an apple, of an old man, of a little boy strangling a goose's neck, and she is especially fascinated by a characteristic common to all the pieces exhibited: realism. As Kokkale herself exclaims: «Why, one would say the sculpture would talk, that is if it were not stone when one gets close. *La!* in time men will be able to put life into stones» (lines 32-34)[25].

However the sanctuary boasts other wonders which Kynno, the other woman friend, knows quite well. As soon as the temple door opens and as the two women wait for the priest to complete the sacrifice, they use their time to contemplate the pictures inside the temple. Again, Kokkale is much attracted to the pictures' realism as her friend explains that all that wealth is the work of a great master of truth, the famous Apelles (line 72), born in Asia Minor, and who supposedly was Alexander the Great's favourite painter[26].

Both in the first part of the poem, when the two friends admire the statues outside, and later when they comment on the pictures exhibited inside, what catches the attention and provokes delight in the pious visitors is the close similitude between the works and reality. In Theocritus' *Idyll XV* the very same aspect is praised by Praxinoa when she describes the Adonis tapestries (lines 81-83)[27]. As is widely recognized, realism is one of the

[25] Quotations from Herodas' *Mime IV* are taken from A. D. Knox's translation (1922: 166-173).

[26] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 7.125. Apelles was born in Colophon, being awarded also the citizenship of Ephesus, where he studied and to where he often returned. He died in Kos towards the end of the 4th century or the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. Pliny the Elder, who is one of the main sources on the artist (cf. *Nat.* 35.79-97), situates the *floruit* in the 112nd Olympiads (c. 332-329 B.C., *Nat.* 35.79). Among the artist's many talents, the author emphasizes the «grace» (*uenustas*/*charis, Nat.* 35.79) of his paintings as a specific trait of his work as well as his ability to portray his figures with an outstanding level of verisimilitude (*Imagines adeo similitudinis indiscretae pinxit, Nat.* 35.88; cf. 35.94, 95). Apelles's works, like those of other painters, did not survive, and therefore we can rely only on literary testimonies. Besides those by Herodas, Pliny the Elder, Plutarch (*Aratus* 13.1), Claudius Aelianus (*Varia Historia* 12.34), and the *Palatine Anthology* (16.178-182, about the famous *Anadyomene* or *Aphrodite rising from the sea*), amongst others, a special mention must be made of Lucian of Samosata (*Calumniae non temere credendum* 2-5), whose description of a painting entitled *Calumny* did inspire a number of Renaissance painters such as Sandro Botticelli (*La calumnia*, 1495; Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi), and other later artists. On this aspect, see LYDAKIS, 2004: 157-171; concerning the work of Apelles, notably his portrait of Alexander the Great, see ROBERTSON, 1981: 179-180; POLLITT, 1986: 22-23, 1990: 158-163 (sources).

[27] From the literary viewpoint, GOLDHILL, 1994: 222-223 and SKINNER, 2001 claim that both poems share the same motif, probably dating back to the original sources, particularly Sophron, i.e., describing and commenting on works of art – Ekphrasis being a favorite process among Hellenistic poets albeit with a long tradition in Greek literature dating back to the Homeric Poems – by female protagonists who are housewives playing the role of critical spectators and making sophisticated aesthetical judgments for the entertainment and delight of an educated public. SKINNER, 2001 sees the use of this literary motif as a possibly parodic allusion to the ekphrastic verses of women poets of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., notably Erinna, Anyte and Nossis. In his analysis of Skinner's arguments, GOLDHILL, 2007: 8-15 rejects her hypothesis that there might have existed a «feminine ekphrastic tradition» in Hellenistic poetry which would have provided the model for the female «art critics» portrayed by Theocritus and Herodas. Cf. BURTON, 1995; ZANKER, 2004: 82-83; DUBOIS, 2007: 47-54; PLATT, 2010: 205.

basic characteristics of art in the Hellenistic Age, present also in literary production as both poems illustrate or even mean to demonstrate, for the way how the two protagonists, two curious and lively women of the people, talk and behave could not be an inch closer to their the daily, familiar register, in spite of the erudite character of the texts that compose them[28].

Therefore, if the dominant note in the art of the period is realism, Herodas' poem provides some hints as to what the age's favourite themes might have been. In fact, Kokkale particularly notices the depiction of children both in statue thank-offerings and in the paintings inside the temple. The theme is in fact documented in Greek art since the Bronze Age[29], although it seems to have gained a special vitality during the Hellenistic Age judging by the statuettes and sculptures that have survived, which were often Roman copies of Greek originals. Rather than a testimony of the development of children's status in the social and political domains[30], this should be regarded principally as a manifestation of the artists' taste in this period with their depiction of hitherto less valued themes such as childhood and old age, which have such a prominent place in Herodas' poem (cf. lines 27-28, 30-31, 59-62). It is nonetheless clear that children's anatomy, gestures and postures are now being represented with much accuracy and attention to detail[31], as is illustrated by the famous statue of Sleeping Eros depicting a young winged child. Several marble copies of it have survived, as has one in bronze, which is exhibited at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and is considered to be the best example of this type of theme[32].

One of the votive offerings commented on by Herodas' character – the statue of a boy strangling a goose's neck (line 31) – seems in fact to illustrate a theme that was probably quite popular during the Hellenistic Age and of which there are numerous literary examples and art pieces. In an article published in 1885, Ernest A. Gardner identified fifty-two pieces which he divided into six main types. So now after our brief excursion to Alexandria and our visit to the temple of Asklepios, the last part of this essay will consist of an analysis of five Roman marble copies of a Greek original which may have been the one mentioned in Herodas' poem.

If we consider Kokkale's comment: «Ah, in the Fates' name, see how the boy is strangling the goose» (lines 30-31), of the several different existing statues the one that seems to

[28] Cf. LEGRAND, 1946: 117; ESPOSITO, 2010: 277. For an analysis of the contrast between the interest in «real life» and the forms of erudite expression of Hellenistic literature translated for instance in the choice of common people characters who use a sophisticated language, see HUNTER, 2003: 477-493.

[29] A discussion of this can be found in my article «Crianças na arte grega. Representações sociais e convenções artísticas», in SOARES, CALERO SECALL, FIALHO, 2011: 59-91. Among the most important books on the theme are KLEIN, 1932; HIRSCH-DYCZEK, 1983; NEILS, OAKLEY, 2003; COHEN, RUTTER, 2007.

[30] This was discussed by GOLDEN, 1997: 176-191.

[31] For the representation of children in Hellenistic art, see ROBERTSON, 1981: 203-204; POLLITT, 1986: 128-130; FOWLER, 1989: 50-52, 126-127; BEAUMONT, 2003: 78-81.

better correspond to her description shows a male child probably aged between two and five, standing naked and playing or fighting with a strong goose that reacts violently. Positioned in front of the bird, the child holds it forcibly by the back, as can be deduced from their postures and semi-open mouths (the boy leans back, supporting himself on his flexed legs while the animal has a slightly raised chest) and, from a technical point of view, the group has a pyramidal shape. In accordance with Hellenistic aesthetics the artist captured the instant when the child is ready to strangle the bird, which seems to match the liveliness and the dynamism much admired by Kokkale in the votive offering the two friends saw at the temple of Asklepios.

The five Roman statues I shall now proceed to describe belong to the Louvre Museum, to the Glyptothek, in Munich, to the Vatican and Capitolin Museums, and to the National Museum of Rome. The pieces are between 84 and 93 cm of height and have been extensively restored[33].

The Paris, Munich and Vatican pieces were discovered in the late 18th century at the Villa Quintiliana, situated near the Appian Way in Rome, and are quite similar. Although clearly featuring the same theme, the other two pieces have more obvious differences, particularly in what concerns the child's attitude, which is clearly less aggressive, and the position of the bird's neck, which is contorted in the opposite direction to the little boy's face. The identification of the animal as a goose is in fact somewhat problematic, especially as concerns the National Museum of Rome's copy, in which the bird rather looks like a swan. Ernest A. Gardner[34] rightly observes that in this type of depiction the identification of the bird as a goose must be understood *latu sensu* for, as in the case discussed, it often looks more like a swan, or even, as is the case of yet other representations, like a duck. Considering the place where they were found, the fact that the five sculptures have more or less obvious differences, which gives the set an important degree of diversity, suggests that they may

[32] The Metropolitan Museum of Art (43.11.4). There is a discussion about whether this 85,24 cm sculpture is a 3rd century B.C. Hellenistic original or a Roman copy of the beginning of the 1st century A.D. See BEAZLEY, ASHMOLE, 1966: 84, figs. 183 and 184; ROBERTSON, 1981: 202-203, fig. 287; POLLITT, 1986: 129-130, fig. 135; RICHTER, 1987: 177, fig. 238; BEAUMONT, 2003: 81, fig. 20; SORABELLA, 2007: 353-370; «Statue of Eros sleeping [Greek or Roman] (43.11.4)», in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/43.11.4> (1/09/2011).

[33] Paris, Musée du Louvre (Ma 40; alt.: 92,7 cm); see <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Child_goose_Louvre_Ma40_n2.jpg> (1/09/2011); Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlung und Glyptothek (268; alt.: 84 cm); see SMITH, 1991: 136, fig. 170; BEARD and HENDERSON, 2001: 143, fig. 98b; BEAUMONT, 2003: 79, fig. 15; <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Child_goose_Glyptothek_Munich_268.jpg> (1/09/2011); Vatican, Museo Pio-Clementino, Galleria dei Candelabri (2655); see <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Child_goose_Vatican_Inv2655.jpg> (1/09/2011); Rome, Museii Capitolini, Palazzo Nuovo (238; alt.: 85 cm); see HIRSCH-DYCZEK, 1983: 35, fig. 43; POLLITT, 1986: 128, fig. 132; FOWLER, 1989: 14, fig. 10; BEARD, HENDERSON, 2001: 143, fig. 98a; <http://www.flickr.com/photos/rosscads/4140714085/> (1/09/2011); Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps (8565bis); see <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Child_goose_Altemps_Inv8565bis.jpg> (1/09/2011).

[34] GARDNER, 1885: 3.

have been part of the decoration of a larger monument such as a fountain[35], although there is no indication that they belonged to the sanctuary of Asklepios.

The association of the votive offering that caused Kokkale's exclamation with the Greek original that seems to have inspired the Roman copies is by no means consensual as is true also of the identification of the animal mentioned in Herodas' text. In the passage quoted, the poet uses the name *chenalopex*, which has been understood by many authors as a reference to the so-called Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiacus*)[36]. Assuming that the interpretation is correct, the description, according to a contemporary guide, refers to a robust bird which is normally between 63 and 73 cm in length (from the tip of the beak to the end of the tail), slightly larger than Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), which it sometimes tends to be mistaken for. Although its dimensions are smaller than those of other species of geese (for example, the Greylag Goose, *Anser anser*, which are between 74 and 84 cm in length[37]), this in itself does not seem to support, as has been proposed, the identification of the work mentioned in Herodas' poem with a statue of which there is a Roman copy in Vienna (Austria) representing a much younger boy sitting on the floor, his right arm raised as if he were trying to call someone, and his left arm leaning on the back of a small goose[38].

Representing children with animals, especially birds such as doves, ducks and geese, which were kept as pets in Greece and in Rome[39], is a frequent practice in Greek art, notably in vase painting and in the funerary sculpture of Classical Athens[40]. However, unlike these works, that depict the child peacefully coexisting with the pet, the statue of the boy and the goose is striking due to the (un)balance of forces at play. How old might the boy in fact be? As was mentioned before, the forms, masterfully portrayed by the artist, seem to indicate an extremely young child; the goose's height is in fact similar to the little boy's, and it is quite evident that the bird is offering some resistance. Could it be that more than a mere depiction of an everyday situation – a mischievous child, almost a baby, playing with his pet[41] – this confrontation might have a symbolic or even a religious meaning that could explain the presence of a sculptured group like this in a sanctuary dedicated to the god of medicine? Or could it be, as has also been suggested, a parody of the athletic scenes which

[35] Cf. GARDNER, 1885: 14.

[36] Cf. THOMPSON, 1936: 330-331; POLLARD, 1977: 644 and n. 8.

[37] Data collected from SVENSSON, GRANT, 2003: 40-47; ARNOTT, 2000: 18, writes (ad line 31), «the Egyptian goose is in fact larger than most other geese».

[38] Kunsthistorisches Museum, Antikensammlung. This is a 55 cm replica of a Greek original that was a decorative piece in the vestibule of the Ephesus gymnasium. See POLLITT, 1986: 128-129, 140-141, fig. 133; FOWLER, 1989: 51-52, fig. 36; LAISNÉ, 1995: 177. See also ZANKER, 2004: 40, 103-105 for a different interpretation.

[39] Cf. GARDNER, 1885: 11.

[40] See KLEIN, 1932: 10-13; LAZEMBY, 1949: 299-307; RIDGWAY, 2006: 646, n. 11 compiles a significant number of references on the representation of children or youths with birds.

[41] Cf. GARDNER, 1885: 10; BEAZLEY, ASHMOLE, 1966: 84-85.

had been so popular in the previous centuries, or even a parodic evocation of Herakles, who even as a baby in his cradle did strangle the serpents sent by Hera[42]? The possibility, examined by Brunilde S. Ridgway[43], of the statue group of a child fighting with a goose being the result of a Greek classical plastic concept albeit with an Egyptian-inspired mythological and religious meaning is also plausible. That would mean that we are in the presence of a symbolic representation of Horus the child (or Horpakhered-Harpokrates), the divine and solar being born of the union of Isis and Osiris to triumph over the Chaos created by his uncle Seth. Although the composition under analysis is significantly different from the conventional iconography of the Egyptian god, usually identified by the braided hair hanging at the right side of his head and the fourth finger of his right hand pointing to his mouth, the presence of a bird associated with Egypt[44], the child's nudity, and the hair pulled up in a curl on the top of his forehead (which is more evident in the Louvre, Munich Glyptothek, and Vatican Museums copies) seem to support the hypothesis. As a matter of fact, the figuration is similar to the images of Harpokrates disseminated during the Roman Period, amongst which may be mentioned the Herculaneum fresco in which the god is standing by a serpent coiled around an altar (kept at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale from Naples), and the marble statue from Villa Adriana, Tivoli, kept in the Palazzo Nuovo of the Capitoline Museums, Rome. As noted also by Ridgway[45], it is possible that the religious meaning of the original was lost in the Roman Period, when the piece became popular as a decorative element in gardens and fountains.

Having mentioned some of the interpretations that have been advanced on the statue, it is certainly undeniable that, irrespective of what the correct answer may be, the mischievous boy and his poor goose still captivate us for their grace and humour as they certainly did in the past. There is also no doubt that, in spite of all possible interpretations, these two beings provide a realistic and lively evocation of the childhood universe. The fact that the statue was indeed popular is confirmed not only by Herodas' mention of it in his poem and by the existence of a number of Roman copies of the sculptured group, but also by the fact that Pliny the Elder attributed a piece that seems to correspond to the statue's description to an artist called Boethos[46]. However, that attribution raises some doubts for the most famous sculptor known as Boethos was born in Kalchedon, a town in Asia Minor, and his

[42] Cf. FOWLER, 1989: 52, BEARD, HENDERSON 2001: 143-144. In his analysis of the sculpted group, SMITH, 1991: 136 writes: «The boy is formally close to the Sleeping Eros in both head and body, and the elaborate pyramidal composition seems to echo heroic groups. This is an anecdotal subject treated in the ideal manner».

[43] RIDGWAY, 2006: 646-648.

[44] The goose is a sacred animal in Egyptian religion, a symbol of god (the Earth), the father of Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Neftis.

[45] RIDGWAY, 2006: 648.

[46] *Nat.* 34.84. The passage is corrupted. As established by Karl Mayhoof for the Teuber edition, it should read: *Boëthi, quamquam argento melioris, infans eximium anserem strangulat.* («Although he is better known for his silver work, Boethos is supposedly the author of a child strangling a singular goose»).

career developed in mid 2nd century B.C.[47]. Therefore, the comment by the Roman writer corroborates at least the idea that the representation of a little boy strangling a goose became, like the Sleeping Eros statue, a model that was widely copied.

To conclude, Theocritus' and Herodas' poems are witnesses to a new social context where a woman seems to have had some degree of autonomy, being free to visit a sacred place by herself on her own free will without it being seen as neglecting her traditional roles and duties. However, these texts are also a sign of the importance of different artistic expressions during the Hellenistic Age and of the way they were appreciated by the common people, irrespective of whether their appreciation might or might not reflect those of the authors[48]. They also are fundamental documents for a study of the complex relationship between religious rituals, the experience of tourism, leisure, and artistic heritage. Finally, my brief analysis of the statue of the mischievous boy and the unhappy goose, even if we cannot be certain that it could indeed correspond to the work mentioned by Herodas, had the purpose of showing that Kokkale was in fact right to marvel at the votive offerings in the temple of Asklepios.

[47] Cf. POLLITT, 1990: 115-116. On Boethos' artistic career, see also POLLITT, 1986: 128, 140-141. GARDNER, 1885: 12-15 discusses the possibility of Pliny the Elder referring to a Hellenistic silver statuette representing a boy and a goose, found in a grave near Alexandria and kept in the British Museum. Cf. RIDGWAY, 2006: 644-646.

[48] CUNNINGHAM, 1971: 128; ESPOSITO, 2010: 277.