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"Just as Fragments are Part of a Vessel": A Translation into Medieval Occitan of the Life of Alexander the Great*

Catherine Léglu

This article examines the Occitan prose life of Alexander the Great in the *Abreujamen de las estorias*, a translation of fragments of a late antique Latin life of Alexander that was not usually put into the vernacular.[1] Those who selected and translated part of Justin's *Epitome* of the *Historiae Philippicae* of Pompeius Trogus had little knowledge of pagan Latin materials and used non-literary forms of Occitan. Their work involved more than just linguistic transposition; they omitted fantastical lore as well as pagan religious practices. It is in effect a work of what John Milton has called "trans-creation," especially in their imaginative selection of other sources concerning Alexander to either fill gaps or to resolve problems that they were encountering in Justin.[2]

Medieval lives of Alexander the Great are an invaluable source of knowledge about the ways in which classical and medieval texts were apprehended, appropriated, rejected, and reassembled. The texts are invariably translations of

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1 See Botana, "The Making of *L'Abreujamen*"; Ibarz, "The Provenance of the *Abreujamens*"; and Léglu, "A Genealogy."

2 Milton, "Between the Cat and the Devil," 53, 57.

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translations: their earliest source, the original Life written in Greek by Pseudo-Callisthenes, has been lost for centuries. The Alexander the Great tradition is polyphonic and can be studied across a wide range of versions.[3] Its development in the later Middle Ages, when classical works were rendered in the vernacular with a new concern for adhering to the source, is especially interesting.[4] Editors and critics can be optimistic about encountering an example of Walter Benjamin's famous vision of translation as archaeological reconstruction:

> a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel.[5]

The Alexander tradition, multilingual and multifaceted as it is, can be thus conceived of as the many fragments of a single vessel. Language plays an important but sometimes overlooked part in this work of reconstruction. Many versions mean many interpretations and reinterpretations of the language of the source (although the Greek of Pseudo-Callisthenes is lost).

Medieval translations and adaptations can be problematic for anyone who wishes to apply Benjamin's ideal of translating with an eye to preserving the text's original integrity, in order to allow the original text to be both known and respected on its own terms:

> A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully.[6]

Benjamin proposes that the translator should strive to allow the new text to work in a clear and open dialogue with its source, not in terms of the style but in terms of the sense. Benjamin's redefinition of the task of the translator can be brought into dialogue with a recent attempt by Gary Bortolotti and Linda

3 For general studies of this tradition, see Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*; Gosman, *La légende d'Alexandre*; Gaullier-Bougassas, *Les Romans d'Alexandre*. See also Léglu, "The Child of Babylon."

4 For Latin-vernacular exchange in this period, see Lusignan, *Parler vulgairement*; Kelly, "The *Fidus interpres*"; Long, "Medieval Literature." Related issues are explored in Léglu, "Translating Lucretia."

5 Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 78. See also the discussion by Gilbert, "The Task of the *Dérimeur*."

6 Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 79.

Hutcheon to define a relationship between biological adaptation and the creation of multiple new adaptations of a canonical text. Bortolotti and Hutcheon reject the evaluative criterion of fidelity to the source text in favour of a focus on process: "both organisms and stories 'evolve' — that is, replicate and change."[7] Thus, the degree to which a given work replicates its 'ancestor' with any exactitude (in the sense that this textual source can be understood as providing a blueprint for its 'descendants') is not of primary importance; rather, in this context, it is essential to think in terms of the diversity and energy inherent in 'lineages of descent,' and to value, precisely, both that energy and that diversity when analysing versions that carry what might be termed mutations. No matter whether it is regarded as a filter for a fixed original or as one of the innovative, diverse descendants of that original, the Occitan text offers glimpses of transformative processes of selection and omission. There are some risks involved in ascribing intentionality to such processes, as they are often determined by numerous factors, not least the quality of the sources available.

The *Abreujamen de las estorias* is the main part of a compilation of translations into Occitan that now survives in two manuscripts (hereafter L^1 and L^2; see *Table 1*). It is an illustrated, diagrammatic world history from Creation to the early 1320s. Its Latin equivalent is the Franciscan friar Paolino Veneto's *Compendium gestarum rerum regnorumque originem*, *c*.1321-1326 (hereafter M).[8] Paolino Veneto was involved personally in the creation of the Occitan *Abreujamen de las estorias* between 1321 and 1324, probably while in the entourage of Pope John XXII, where he served as an apostolic penitentiary. Both M and L^1 were illustrated in Avignon. While the *Abreujamen* itself can be attributed to Paolino as its instigator, both it and its companion translations were produced by several contributors.[9] Paolino's close connection with his fellow Venetian and crusading propagandist Marino Sanudo il Vecchio dates from this time (he was part of a papal commission that examined his book, the *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis*, in the spring of 1321), but the *Abreujamen* does not share the anti-Islamic

7 Bortolotti and Hutcheon, "On the Origin of Adaptations," 446.

8 For general studies of Paolino Veneto and his works, see Ghinato, *Fr. Paolino da Venezia*; Degenhart and Schmitt, "Marino Sanudo und Paolino Veneto"; Heullant-Donat, "Entrer dans l'histoire." See also Heullant-Donat's unpublished doctoral dissertation "Ab Origine Mundi."

9 Botana, "The Making of *L'Abreujamen*," and Ibarz, "The Provenance of the *Abreujamens*."

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content of Paolino's works in Latin.[10] The contents of the vernacular and Latin codices were structured differently:

British Library, Egerton MS 1500 (L^1)
Item 1:
L'Abreujamen de las estorias
Includes a genealogy of the pagan gods, the *Historia Alexandri*, and a history of the crusades

British Library, Add. MS 17920 (L^2, originally part of L^1)
Item 1:
Dels miracles de Sainhta Maria Vergena (Marian miracles)
Item 2:
"The Marriage of the Seven Daughters of the Devil"
Item 3:
Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle[11]
Item 4:
The Marvels of Ireland[12]

British Library, MS Egerton 1500 (L^1)
fols. 61-65:
Provinciale romanum in Occitan

Venice, Bibl. Marciana, cod. Z latino 399 (=1610) (M)
Item 1:
Paolino Veneto, *Compendium gestarum rerum regnorumque originem*
Item 2:
Provinciale romanum
The manuscript includes sketches and drafts of parts of Paolino's later work, the *Satyrica Historia* (*c*.1335-1339).

Table 1. The manuscript context of the *Abreujamen de las estorias*.

The *Abreujamen* is a chronology of the world, but it also contains a handful of independent treatises, including a short prose life of Alexander the Great entitled the *Historia Alexandri – La istoria dalixandre*. The *Historia* takes up two facing folios, in addition to part of the preceding recto and the following

10 On Paolino's anti-Islamic texts, see Morosini, "Boccaccio 'secundum venetum'."
11 Léglu, "The Devil's Daughters"; Ricketts, "Deux textes en occitan médiéval"; Piccat, ed., *La versione occitana dello Pseudo Turpino*.
12 Ricketts and Hershon, "Las Merevilhas de la terra de Ybernia."

verso (L^1, fols. 13r-14v). Its relationship with the Latin text of M does not follow the usual model of Latin source / vernacular translation. In M, the life of Alexander the Great is embedded within a series of notes concerning conflict between Persia and Macedon and concerning the reigns of Syria, Egypt, and Persia (M, fols. 15r-16v). It is similar to the *Historia Alexandri* but longer and more diffuse and is evidently based on shared sources, but it is not identical to it. For clarity's sake, this article discusses only the text that appears in the *Abreujamen*.

The earliest surviving fragment of the Old French *Roman d'Alexandre*, written in a southern French dialect, is copied into the margin of a ninth-century manuscript of Quintus Curtius. It places the vernacular verse tradition in the margins of a Latin prose work that was not translated into French until the fifteenth century.[13] As Humanism emerged in papal Avignon and in various regions of fourteenth-century Italy, the works of the pagan classical authors were caught in a complicated process of translation, non-translation, and exegesis, marked by deference to the letter of the text.[14] Latin *auctores* were also valued increasingly for the intrinsic linguistic and historical interest of their works. As will be shown below, the version of the life of Alexander the Great that appears in the *Abreujamen de las estorias* is both attentive to the letter of its classical Latin source and departs from it by inserting fragments of the medieval Alexander tradition. It is simultaneously transparent, in the sense that it allows the alert reader to detect the Latin text that it renders, and opaque as a result of the translators' process of omission and selection. It confects a vessel from multiple fragments, but it makes little effort either to indicate its multiple and conflicting sources or to smooth over the cracks. It does, however, betray an ideological agenda in that it downplays the pagan aspects of the legend.

As Lynne Long suggests, "It is easy to assume or assign a motive retrospectively for the act of translation to suit the commentator's own historical perspective, whereas in fact the translator's primary motive for translating and the strategies employed often confronted a quite different and more complex reality."[15] The following sections therefore devote some attention both to traces of an intended reader and to the hypothesis that Paolino and his colleagues worked from a copy of Justin's work rather than from a digest.

13 See *MFRA* 3:2-8, 37-60. Bossuat, "Vasque de Lucene."
14 Griffin, "Translation and Transformation."
15 Long, "Medieval Literature," 63.

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The Choice of Justin's *Epitome* of Pompeius Trogus

In any study of translation, the source is the key. This *Historia Alexandri* is chiefly an abbreviated version of Justin's abbreviation of Pompeius Trogus's *Philippic History* (Orosius called Justin the *breviator* of Trogus).[16] Justin's *Epitome*, produced *c*. 200 C.E. from a text dating from the first century B.C.E., was widely read in the Middle Ages as a universal history. According to Alonso-Núñez, it was also "the only world history written in Latin by a pagan."[17] Diodorus Siculus and Nicolaus of Damascus had written their world histories in Greek, and, in the early fifth century, Orosius composed a Christian world history in Latin, as Eusebius had done a century earlier. Trogus also innovated in his concern for the Parthian Empire, descended from the Scythians, as a valid rival to the Roman Empire (Books XLI-XLII). Following Trogus, Justin provides a detailed history of the kingdom of Macedon and of the successor kingdoms to Alexander's empire, specifically in terms of the reigns of Antiochus and his descendants. Again according to Alonso-Núñez, Justin was distinctive in applying a synchronic approach to historical events based on *translatio imperii* (from Assyria to Media and Persia, and thence to Macedon and ultimately to Rome), an approach that was adopted by Eusebius-Jerome, albeit with a cruder grasp of both geography and chronology.[18] However, despite its importance for the medieval understanding of the history of the lands that lay beyond Europe, Justin's *Epitome* is usually a minor source for lives of Alexander the Great, being overshadowed both by the legendary tradition and by Orosius.[19] In the early twelfth century, the so-called J2 redaction of the *Historia de preliis* (J1) was produced with substantial borrowings from Orosius. This text may have been the work of Guido da Pisa, and it certainly proved popular in the Italian peninsula.[20]

16 All quotations from the Latin text are taken from the online edition by Arnaud-Lindet, ed. and trans., Justin, *Abrégé des 'Histoires Philippiques' de Trogue Pompée*, available at <http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/justin/index.html>, 2003 and Biblioteca Augustana, 2004. For the meaning of the term *epitome*, see Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, vol. 1, *Books 11-12: Alexander the Great*, trans. Yardley, commentary by Heckel, 15-19.

17 Alonso-Núñez, "An Augustan World History," 57. Syme, "The Date of Justin."

18 Alonso-Núñez, "An Augustan World History," 62-63.

19 Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 17.

20 Campopiano, "Parcours de la légende d'Alexandre en Italie," 68-71.

Over two hundred manuscripts of Justin's text survive. Several copies were made in Verona in the late thirteenth century, coinciding with Paolino's education and early career in the Veneto and the Marca Trevigiana.[21] Paolino drew on Justin for the origins and descent of the Scythians, among them the Amazons (Books I and II). Given the evidence that full copies of Justin's *Epitome* were available, it must be assumed that both Paolino and the translators worked directly from a Latin source and that they preferred to turn to Peter Comestor rather than to the 'legendary' tradition for supplementary episodes. It is helpful in this respect to note that the papal library at Avignon, which was assembled during the reign of John XXII, held a copy of Justin's work (now Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 264).[22] Another very important manuscript, Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, MS Vat. Lat. 1860, includes a copy of Justin's *Epitome* — the only one to provide his full name and to give his work the title *Epitome* — which is part of a compilation of Roman histories of the first half of the fourteenth century (one text is internally dated to 1313). This manuscript is based in part on an exemplar that was at Montecassino, and it is also associated with both the court of Naples and the Franciscan order (thus bringing it close to Paolino's milieu).[23] While the use of an epitome of Justin's *Epitome* should not be discounted, it seems more likely that the quotations which survive in M and L^1 are taken directly from a full copy.[24]

A vernacular work such as the *Abreujamen* must be placed in relation to the best-known medieval Latin source, the *Historia de preliis*.[25] A cleric would have been familiar from his schooling with Walter of Châtillon's epic poem, the *Alexandreis*, which had long been used as a textbook by students of the *trivium*, sometimes with glosses appended that sought to teach biblical history.[26] In Italy, the popular thirteenth-century poem by Quilichinus of Spoleto (1236),

21 Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 17. Reynolds, "Justinus," 197-99.

22 My thanks to Stella Panayotova and Nicholas Robinson of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, for allowing me access to this very damaged manuscript.

23 Reynolds, "Justinus," 199. See the revised dating proposed by Billanovich, *Lezioni*, 67-75. The importance of this manuscript is stressed by Arnaud-Lindet, ed., *Abrégé*; see her Class III, at <http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/justin/introduction.html#4>.

24 Ross, *Alexander Historiatus*, 76-77.

25 All references to the *Historia de preliis* are taken from *The Romances of Alexander*, trans. Kratz.

26 Walter of Châtillon, *The Alexandreis*. For schoolroom use, see Townsend, ed., *An Epitome of Biblical History*.

based on the *Historia de preliis* J3, was translated into Italian *ottava rima* by Domenico Scolari (the only surviving manuscript dates from 1355).[27] As a Venetian from a privileged family, Paolino Veneto may have known the Venice manuscript of the medieval French *Roman d'Alexandre,* as well as other versions in French.[28]

In addition to Justin, the text of the *Abreujamen* includes a handful of interpolations that are traceable to the *Historia de preliis* as well as to Comestor, to Augustine's *City of God*, and to the first book of Maccabees (the latter also perhaps via Comestor). Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale* also bases its lengthy biography of Alexander on Justin, but it includes many other sources as well; the text grew over successive redactions to make up the whole of the fourth book. George Cary describes Vincent's biography as "an incoherent series of contradictory statements borrowed from conflicting authors, each excerpt preceded by an acknowledgement of its origin."[29] This is not at all the approach adopted in the *Abreujamen*. It is implausible that Paolino and his assistants used Vincent of Beauvais, as they would have had to whittle their selection down to extracts from Justin and Comestor.[30] The early thirteenth-century *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César* must also be rejected as a source, as it draws heavily on Orosius and Comestor but also inserts material from a number of Old French *romans d'antiquité* as well as from Geoffrey of Monmouth. So must the French translation of the *Speculum Historiale*, the *Miroir historial* by Jean de Vignay (*c*.1328-1333).[31] The rubric "Historia Alexandri" is the title of the biography in the *Abreujamen* (on fol. 14ra), but it is unlikely to echo the use of that title by Vincent of Beauvais, who is referring to the 'Zacher Epitome,' not to Justin.[32] To sum up, the *Abreujamen* ignores the bulk of the 'legendary' Alexander material and omits the most popular 'historical' source of its time, Vincent of Beauvais, in favour of much older texts.

27 Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, 53. Campopiano, "Parcours de la légende d'Alexandre en Italie," 77-78.

28 For the Venice text, see *MFRA* 1. For Paolino's strong links with Venice's patriarcate, see Ghinato, *Fr. Paolino da Venezia*, 15-25.

29 Voorbij, "The *Speculum Historiale*." Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 73-74.

30 Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 25-26.

31 Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 37; Gosman, "The Life of Alexander."

32 Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 25-26, 74.

Although the text of the *Abreujamen* is very condensed, individual sentences are direct translations from Justin (many of the corresponding passages from Justin are cited verbatim in M). For example, Alexander explains that "ni ges no auia demandat lo cors de Dari, mas lo regne" (he did not request the body of Darius, but rather his kingdom), a straightforward rendering of Justin's "nec se corpus, sed regnum Darii petisse" (L^1, fol. 14; Justin, XII.3.3). Much of the translation aims to render the core idea of a particular passage in Justin in terms that would have been comprehensible to the reader without losing its syntactical structure:

Adunato deinde exercitu naues onerat, unde conspecta Asia incredibili ardore mentis accensus duodecim aras deorum in belli uota statuit.	Quant ac reguardada Azia, lo seu coratge fo escalfatz.
Patrimonium omne suum, quod in Macedonia Europaque habebat, amicis diuidit, sibi Asiam sufficere praefatus. (Justin, XI.5.4-5)	E deuis a sos amics lo patremoni que auia en Europa, dizens que a lhuy auondaua Azia. (*Abreujamen*, L^1, fol.13v, col. 2; transcription by Ibarz)[33]
[Having assembled his troops, he put them on board ship, on which (incredibly excited by the sight of Asia) he erected altars to the twelve gods in order to pray for military success. He divided up among his friends every bit of the property that he had in Macedonia and the rest of Europe, saying that Asia would suffice him.]	[When he had looked upon Asia, his desire was ignited, and he divided his European inheritance up among his friends, saying that Asia was enough for him.]

The Occitan *coratge* ('desire,' 'of the heart') is not a literal equivalent of the Latin "ardore mentis," but it is faithful to the key image of Alexander's excitement as he gazes on the lands that he wishes to conquer. Alexander's idolatry is omitted here, as it is throughout the translation. Having established Paolino's choice of a

33 All quotations from *L'Abreujamen* are taken from the unpublished transcription by Alexander Ibarz.

late-classical, pagan writer, it is necessary to turn to what he and his associates chose to omit as they compiled the *Historia Alexandri*.

Omissions and Interpolations

Given its scrupulous concern for clarity with respect to the classical source, the omissions of content in the *Abreujamen* are eloquent. Queen Candace appears, but she is not said to have borne a son, and thus the vernacular *Vengeance Alexandre* tradition is omitted. Also missing are Alexander's proto-scientific flight into the air and his journey under the sea. The most puzzling omission concerns Alexander's encounters with extraordinary human and semi-human peoples. All have been left out, with the exception of his encounter with the Amazons (Justin, Books I and II), who appear elsewhere in the *Abreujamen* as important figures in the early history of the world. Furthermore, the *Historia Alexandri* does not include Alexander's disputed paternity, a major theme in the Old French vernacular tradition that was reproduced without demur by Vincent of Beauvais. The *Abreujamen* ignores the tradition that Alexander the Great was the illegitimate son of the exiled pharaoh Nectanebus, who had disguised himself as the ram-headed god Ammon to seduce Olympias, the wife of Philip of Macedon. Needless to say, the text also omits Alexander's murder of his biological father.

The result is a history of Alexander the Great on a human scale. It strips the king of his superhuman dimension and empties his world of fantastical races and beasts. Justin's account of Alexander is one of the Stoic-influenced condemnations of the king for his idolatry, his greed, and his desire to turn himself into a god. As will be described below, the translation works hard to erase some of these criticisms from the narrative. This raises the further question why it chooses to exploit Justin as its chief source if the text is inimical to its ideological purpose.[34]

The *Historia Alexandri* sidesteps the issue of Alexander's paternity by starting with his accession to the throne of Macedon after Philip's assassination. He is his father's avenger:

34 Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 80, 99, 110-12, 290-91.

> Phelip fo ausis per lo fort noble jouencel Pauzania el temps del Rey Arges quar no fazia complimen de drechura az aquel que auia prees dampnatge. E lo filh Alixandre succedic lhy, lo qual fe ausire sobre lo tombel del payre aquels que ero estatz cossentens de la sua mort.
>
> E lo filh Alixandre succedic lhy, lo qual fe ausire sobre lo tombel del payre aquels *que* ero estatz cossente*n*s de la sua mort.
>
> (L^1, fol. 13v, col. 1)

> [Philip was murdered by the most noble youth Pausanias in the time of King Arges, because he had not ensured that justice was done on behalf of the one who had been harmed.
>
> His son Alexander succeeded him; he had those men killed on his father's tomb who had agreed to his murder.]

This brief account of the king's death is a condensation of Justin IX.6.1-8. According to Justin, Philip II of Macedon was murdered by Pausanias of Orestis during a wedding feast. Justin's text states that Pausanias was avenging a long-felt injustice, for he had been assaulted by Attalus, one of the king's men, and subsequently been mocked by him in public. Philip had ridiculed his grievance and made Attalus a general. The *Abreujamen* appears to use only the last sentence of Justin's chapter: "iram in ipsum Philippum uertit ultionemque, quam ab aduersario non poterat, ab iniquo iudice exegit" (Justin, IX.6.8: he turned his rage against Philip in person and inflicted on him as an unjust judge, the revenge that he could not inflict on him as his enemy). Philip's murder thus appears to result from his lack of a king's concern for justice. The next sentence adapts a segment of text that occurs two books later: "Prima illi cura paternarum exequiarum fuit, in quibus ante omnia caedis conscios ad tumulum patris occidi iussit" (Justin, XI.2.1: His first concern was with his father's funeral, where he had all those who had been implicated in his murder put to death at his father's tomb). Alexander's revenge is retained, but the sentence has lost the information that the executions took place at Philip's funeral and that they included the elimination of a rival claimant. The passage thus condenses several independent segments into a simple exemplum: Philip loses his life for his failure to maintain justice in his realm, and his successor's first act is to ensure that justice is done. Justin does not mention Alexander's disputed legitimacy nor does the translation, but it also elides Justin's inclusion of rival claimants to the throne.

Many lacunae may thus reflect deliberate choices rather than gaps in the source material.

The translation follows the chronological structure of its source (Justin) systematically, and its interpolations are framed by Justin's text. For example, the siege of Tyre is taken from Justin XI.10, rendered as a single statement: "El pres la cyotat Tyre" (he seized the city of Tyre). This is followed by a famous episode from the *Historia de preliis*, Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and his meeting with the High Priest Jaddus:[35]

> E autreget a Sarabala que bastis lo temple el puech Guarizi. E quant anaua cochozamen destrure Jeruzalem e ui lauesque Jadus en las uestimentas auesquals, el dishendet del caual, e dihs que el auia uist ental semblansa nostre senhor en Licia, cyotat de Macedonia, prometen a lhuy lo regne de Azia. E segon que lo prestre lhy mostret el proferc ostias. (L^1, fol.14r, col.1)
>
> [He agreed that Sanballat would build a temple on the hill of Gaza. When he was rushing off to destroy Jerusalem, he saw Bishop Jaddus in bishop's clothing. He dismounted and said that he had seen our Lord in such a guise in Lycia, the city of Macedon, when he had promised him the kingdom of Asia. And, with the guidance of the priest, he made offerings.]

The segment of text closes with a sentence that translates Justin XI.11.1 and 11.13:

Inde Rhodum Alexander Aegyptum Ciliciam sine certamine recepit. [. . .] Reuersus ab Hammone Alexandream condidit et coloniam Macedonum caput esse Aegypti iubet. (Justin, XI.11.1 & XI.11.13)	Aprop ayso el receup senes batalha Rodas e Egipte, e Cilicia, e bastic en Egipte Alexandria. (L^1, fol.14r, col.1)

35 *Historia de preliis*, trans. Kratz, *The Romances of Alexander*, 15. Josephus, *Antiquities*, vol. 4, 11.302-47. See Cohen, "Alexander the Great and Jaddus the High Priest." The name 'Saraballa' for Sanballat is attested in vernacular texts; see Ross, *Illustrated Medieval Alexander Books*, 34. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 127-30.

[Next, Alexander of Egypt seized Rhodes, Egypt, and Cilicia without a struggle. [. . .] Returned from the temple of Ammon, he founded the city of Alexandria and ordered that this Macedonian colony should be the chief city of Egypt.]	[Thereupon he received — without any battles — Rhodes, Egypt, and Cilicia, and he built Alexandria in Egypt.]

The text has neatly omitted Alexander's visit to the Temple of Ammon, where he pretends to enquire after his own birth and into his future in order to erase the shame of his disputed paternity by being proclaimed a demi-god by the priests. This episode is treated by Justin as the moment when Alexander, inflamed by excessive pride, forgets his Greek education and Macedonian values (Justin, XI.11.2-12). Alexander's meeting in Jerusalem with Jaddus and his sacrifice within the Temple were a popular episode in medieval Alexander books because it implied his conversion.[36] Here, the translation continues to erase both Alexander's paganism and his irregular birth: the Jerusalem episode is inserted in the *Historia Alexandri* exactly at the point where, in Justin's version of the narrative, Alexander proclaims his own divinity as the son of the Egyptian god Ammon. In the *Historia Alexandri*, the Jerusalem episode replaces these events.

A similar wish to make Alexander less pagan is indicated by changes in the language used to describe the libations to the ocean which Alexander makes in the hope of returning home safely, after he has used a plant shown to him in a dream to cure his men of the injuries inflicted by poisoned arrows (Justin, XII.10.4). The poisoned arrows and the miraculous cure after the siege of the city of King Ambiger are left out (Justin, XII.10.2). The *libamenta* in Justin (offerings to the gods) are rendered *sacrifici* (sacrifices), and the annotator or corrector has also scored out one mention of sacrifice in favour of an interlinear note that explains that a pagan sacrifice would entail killing animals:

36 Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, 127-30.

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Expugnata deinde urbe reuersus in nauem Oceano libamenta dedit, prosperum in patriam reditum precatus. (Justin, XII.10.4)	E q*ua*nt ac batalhada la cyotat del Rey Ambyger, e fo detornatz en la mar, el preguet la mar <*id est* fetz sac*ri*fici ha la mar sac*ri*ficando animal*i*> quel layshes tornar en son pays ~~eper/so felhy sacrifizis~~. (L[1], fol. 14r, col. 2)
[Then, after seizing the city, once he was back on his ship, he made libations to Oceanus, praying for a good return to his homeland].	[When he had fought the city of King Ambiger and turned away onto the sea, he prayed to the sea <i.e., he made a sacrifice to the sea, sacrificing animals> that it might allow him to return to his country ~~and because of this, he made a sacrifice~~.]

The pattern of omissions and interpolations in this section of the *Historia Alexandri* adds up to the erasure of Alexander's pagan religion. More broadly, the text betrays a reluctance to include the pre-Christian aspects of Justin's *Epitome*.

The translators' work of selection seems to orient their text towards an intended reader. Several marginal notes in the manuscript (L[1]-L[2]) give advice on further reading to an unnamed reader who is addressed as "vos senher" (your lordship).[37] Some of the interlinear glosses can be viewed either as attempts to clarify the Occitan to someone who is unable to comprehend fine points of vocabulary, or as attempts to translate the Occitan into Latin. For example, the following passage, taken from the *Historia de preliis,* elicits the insertion of two interlinear Latin glosses into the Occitan text:

> ado*n*c moric Bucefa <id est equ*u*s Alexandri> lo caual d'Alixandre. Quar Porre l'ausis. E en la segonda batalha, quant la batalha Reyal era doptoza longuame*n*, adonc Porre se reuiret als seus que fazio mazan <id est clamore*m*>, e adonc Alixandre trauquet lho. (L[1], fol.14r, col. 1)

37 See Ibarz, "The Provenance of the *Abreujamens*," 5-6; and Léglu, "A Genealogy," 19-20.

> [Then Bucephalus died <i.e., *equus Alexandri*>, the horse of Alexander, because Porus killed it. In the second battle, when the combat of the kings lasted for a long time, then Porus turned towards his men who were making a racket <i.e., *clamorem*>, and then Alexander killed him.]

Were the translators unable to trust the linguistic competence of their intended reader, or was the vernacular meant as a useful springboard for basic Latin instruction? If so, does the very close rendering of individual phrases from Justin point to the use of the Latin text less as a source than as a book that could be consulted later or alongside the text?

Whereas the *Historia Alexandri* generally avoids references to pagan religion, a few marvels are preserved. The famous scenes of the crossing of the desert into India and of the encounter with the Trees of the Sun and the Moon are retained, described in the rubric as "merauilhas" (marvels). (In M, the corresponding rubric reads *de uariis monstris*, 'diverse wonders.')[38] As they cross the desert, Alexander's men are tormented by thirst. In the *Historia de preliis*, they find a pool with sweet water and set up camp, but at night they are attacked by the beasts that come to drink at the pool: scorpions, "snakes and serpents of incredible size and different colors [. . .] white lions larger than bulls," enormous boars, a three-horned beast larger than an elephant called the odontotyrannus, mice as big as wolves that ate the dead, and "Bats as big as pigeons" that bit off men's noses. These animals also appear in the *Abreujamen*:[39]

> E q*ua*nt l'aygua fon trobada, sobreuenc gran copia de escorpios aprop una gr*an* forsa d'unas serpens apeladas Ceraustas, g*ran*[40] re de serpe*n*s de diuersas colors, e serpe*n*s crestas e am .ij. caps, e am .iij. caps, e leos blancs coma taurs, e porcs singlars sobregrans, e soyritz caluas <id est rata *pe*nada> grandas coma colombas, e lobas seruieas. Aprop uenc una bestia maior que elefan armada de .iij. corns. Aprop uengro ratz grans coma uolp, que ausizio los cau*als*. (L[1], fol.14r, col. 2)

38 *Historia de preliis*, trans. Kratz, *The Romances of Alexander*, 48-68.
39 *Historia de preliis*, trans. Kratz, *The Romances of Alexander*, 50-51.
40 Emendation *gran* for *guan*.

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> [When the water had been found, there came over a great many scorpions, along with an army of snakes called Ceraustas, many serpents of many colours, snakes with crests and with two heads, and with three heads, white bull-like lions, huge wild boars, and 'bald mice' <i.e., bats> as big as pigeons, and lynxes. Along came a beast bigger than an elephant, armed with three horns. Along came rats as big as foxes that killed the horses.]

The bats as big as pigeons cause no such problem in M, where they are named as "uespertilic*e*n*s* magnitudinis columbarum." There may therefore have been a dispute over the correct vernacular word for "bat" (*vespertilio* in Latin). *Rata penada* was the correct noun in Occitan. *Soritz calva* is a comparatively rare Gallicism, calqued on the French *chauve-souris*.[41] For quite different reasons, the Latinate name of the unfamiliar odontotyrannus has been discarded in favour of its description as a three-horned beast. Should the simplification of the text — along with the omission of Alexander's disputed paternity, his deification, and his illegitimate son — be viewed as censorship? It is ill advised to speculate on the basis of absence, but in this instance, it is unlikely that the translators worked with an incomplete text that limited their base material. Rather, the disagreement over an everyday noun such as "bat," the absence of some of the best-loved anecdotes of the *Historia de preliis*, and, above all, the gloss that explains that Bucephalus is the name of Alexander's horse indicate that there was more at stake in the Avignonese workshop than a desire to render a sense of the Latinity of the sources.

Conclusion

The *Historia Alexandri* is a condensed version of well-known material, but its chief interest lies in being both an incomplete rendering of the medieval tradition and a remarkably faithful translation of a classical pagan source. It presents a serious attempt to translate individual sentences and phrases closely, possibly with the unstated intention of enabling its designated reader ("vos senher") to devise his own Latin renderings of the deeds of the king. The text also reflects

41 See "Vespertiliones calves sorices" in the Reichenau glossary, in *Anciens glossaires romans*, ed. Diez, 9, 47, 116.

several conscious lexical decisions on the part of its compilers and translators, who sought to erase Alexander's illegitimacy, to replace his idolatry with a narrative of conversion, and to ignore the monstrous races. Their reasons for doing so must remain obscure, but these changes draw attention to the fact that the *Abreujamen* was created in an ecclesiastical, mendicant milieu, one that also fostered the earliest humanist works, such as Nicholas Trevet's commentaries on Seneca's tragedies or the moralizations of Ovid by Pierre Bersuire and others.[42] Indeed, the manuscript mentioned in the introduction as a plausible source for Justin's *Epitome*, MS Vat. Lat. 1860, combines its exceptional collection of classical histories with the Franciscan John of Wales's *Breviloquium* (*c*.1275), a series of exempla of the virtuous acts of rulers, drawn from classical sources. According to Diem and Verweij, this copy of the *Breviloquium* was revised in order to claim (wholly contrary to John of Wales's argument) that pagan rulers were incapable of the same kind of virtuous deeds as their Christian successors.[43] Therefore, the *Abreujamen*'s anxious treatment of pagan subject-matter can be traced to the debates of its time concerning the moral and moralizing value of non-Christian texts.

To return to Benjamin's archaeological metaphor, the Occitan *Historia Alexandri* stands as a fragment of a broken vessel, that of the Alexander tradition. It is one of the minor fragments of that vast and often multifaceted corpus, but one that informs us about the way in which medieval translators approached their task, in a context where classical texts were beginning to be read in a more historicizing light. It also draws attention to the workings of ideology in a process of cultural as well as textual adaptation that is present in the Avignonese milieu of the 1320s. However, it is not a work that is easy to read, and in terms of Benjamin's definition, it is not "a real translation," in the sense that such a work should be "transparent."[44] Rather, the Occitan *Historia Alexandri* is a thing of gaps, uncertainties, possibly as a result of censorship. Paolino's prologue to the *Abreujamen* (which also appears in its Latin form in M) is striking for its formulation of this fragmentary, gap-filled text as evidence of an approach that stresses the value of the fragment and its relationship to the whole:

42 Botana, "Images of the Pagan Gods in *L'Abreujamen de las estorias*."

43 See the detailed study and editions of the relevant passages by Diem and Verweij, "*Virtus est via ad gloriam*."

44 Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," 78-79.

> Enayshi com negus regardamens ne pren ni perceb la beutat del cors huma*n*al regardada tan solamen una partida, tot en aquesta manyera no perceb ni pre*n* lo decorremen de tot lo mon, regardada tan solamen una partida. Mas adonc la perceb quan conprehen e enten la beutat de quascunas partidas e enten la beutat de quascunas partidas en lor e l'ajustamen en lo tot e la proportio entre lor. (L^1, fol. 3r, col. 1)
>
> [Just as no gaze may grasp or perceive the beauty of the human body by looking only at one part of it, so in the same way the events in the world cannot be perceived or grasped if only one part of them is looked at. However, they are perceived when one grasps and understands the beauty of all its parts, and understands the beauty of all the parts in themselves, as well as the way that the whole is set out, and the relationship between all of them.]

In this instance, several shards of the broken vessel are reassembled, but without any effort to present a seamless artefact, in a context that was developing a greater sense of the cultural distinctiveness of the pagan classical past. The *Abreujamen* invites the reader to examine each of the discrete elements that make up the whole, all the better to grasp the beauty of that whole. It does not aim to be exhaustive, and it does not aim to tell the truth. Rather, its stated aim is aesthetic: it is a translation that intends to please its reader. From the perspective of a literary historian rather than a medieval reader, what makes the text innovative is the fact that its classical source material is written in the Occitan vernacular, with little use of the Old French Alexander tradition. Its very existence as a vernacular translation of Justin makes it a new and interesting work for its time.

The *Abreujamen* reveals the choices made by these medieval translators of various infidelities that can be termed "trans-creative." Changes were made as a function of their readership and context rather than the product of constraint. They omitted difficult sections, introduced elements of popular lore, and altered the vocabulary to make it more accessible.[45] They did this, however, with an eye to a more learned reader, by paying scrupulous attention to the shape, the textual skeleton, of Justin's *Epitome*, which was itself an adaptation and condensation of an older work. The result is rich in significance for our knowledge of the process of vernacular translation in the later Middle Ages.

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45 Milton, "Between the Cat and the Devil," 53, 57.

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