

READING WALTER OF CHÂTILLON'S *ALEXANDREIS* IN MEDIEVAL ANTHOLOGIES*

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THE *Alexandreis* of Walter of Châtillon became an instant classic when it was first circulated, most probably in the spring of 1180.¹ It inspired a bitter rebuke from Alan of Lille in his *Anticlaudianus* (1182–83), potentially owing to envy at its success, and was used as a model not only by that irascible cleric despite his strictures, but also by the contemporary poets John of Hauville and Joseph of Exeter.² These successes of the 1180s were cemented by the poem's ubiquitous presence in schools in the thirteenth century, when the philosopher Henry of Ghent complained it was beginning to usurp classical texts from curricula.³ In modern times, the *Alexandreis* has experienced if

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¹ The dating of the poem has been a matter of debate over the last two decades. Here I follow Neil Adkin's latest article, "The Date of Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis* Once Again," *Classica et mediaevalia* 59 (2008): 201–11, based on David A. Traill, "Walter of Châtillon's Prosimetron *In Domino Confido* (W.3): Where and When was it Performed?" in *Poesia latina medieval (siglos V–XV): Actas del IV Congreso del "Internationales Mittellateinerkomitee," Santiago de Compostela, 12–15 de septiembre de 2002*, ed. Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz and José M. Díaz de Bustamante (Florence, 2005), 851–62, at 860–61. For an overview of the debate prior to 1990, see A. C. Dionisotti, "Walter of Châtillon and the Greeks," in *Latin Poetry and the Classical Tradition*, ed. Peter Godman and Oswyn Murray (Oxford, 1990), 73–96, at 90–96.

² Alan criticizes Walter at *Anticlaudianus* 1.167 as "daring to incline his mute mouth to the heavens" ("in celos audens os ponere mutum"); Neil Adkin, "Alan of Lille on Walter of Châtillon: *Anticlaudianus* 1,167–170," *Classica et mediaevalia* 43 (1992): 287–315, at 307–14, has suggested that this was due to Alan feeling that Walter had pre-empted him in praise of Philip II Augustus of France. John of Hauville's *Architrenius* and Joseph of Exeter's *Ylias* also explicitly refer to the *Alexandreis* as a model: John's poem uses an acrostic technique to name his patron borrowed from the *Alexandreis*, and the *Ylias* contains many textual imitations of that poem (see Geoffrey Blundell Riddehough, "The Text of Joseph of Exeter's *Bellum Troianum*" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard, 1951), 199–221).

³ Henry's irritation is cited in Corinna Killermann, "Die mittelalterliche Kommentierung der *Alexandreis* Walters von Châtillon als Fall von Interdependenz und Selbstkonstituierung," in *Alexanderdichtungen im Mittelalter: Kulturelle Selbstbestimmung im Kontext literarischer*

not a full-blown renaissance then at least a revival of scholarly interest. Ph.D. theses, articles, and a monograph have all appeared in number from the 1990s, mostly engaging with the poem as it relates to its acknowledged classical models, Lucan, Virgil, and Statius, and with the question of the work's dating.⁴ Despite this welcome resurgence of interest in the mechanics of the *Alexandreis*, however, the subject of its later reception has not been taken up in detail. What happened to the poem after the twelfth century? How was it read, and why? An intriguing medieval starting point is Henry of Ghent's complaint, which indicates that the poem was not universally loved, although it was undoubtedly influential.⁵ Henry's disapproving view implies that the *Alexandreis* may have had varied receptions which are currently invisible, buried beneath the weight of the many extant witnesses and the poem's assumed "popularity."⁶ Peter Dronke's idea that the poem is "a continual embodiment of ... *sic et non*" aids this view from a modern perspective, since it embeds the possibility of multiple responses within the text itself.⁷ Taking Henry's view as an early sign of potentially plural opinions, then, this article will examine a number of different witnesses to see how they present and interpret the *Alexandreis*, aiming to start to increase what is known about the poem's manuscripts and also understanding of its reception histories.

As part of this examination, the article discusses the issue of anthologizing, which is an ongoing and critical debate in medieval English manuscript studies.⁸ Anthologies are particularly important for the *Alexandreis*'s later recep-

Beziehungen, ed. Jan Cölln, Susanne Friede und Hartmut Wulfram (Göttingen, 2000), 299–331, at 299.

⁴ The monograph is by Maura K. Lafferty, *Walter of Châtillon's "Alexandreis": Epic and the Problem of Historical Understanding*, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 2 (Turnhout, 1998). Interpretative articles are (among others) Maura K. Lafferty, "Nature and an Unnatural Man: Lucan's Influence on Walter of Châtillon's Concept of Nature," *Classica et medievalia* 46 (1995): 285–300, and David Townsend, "'Michi barbaries incognita linguae': Other Voices and Other Visions in Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*," *Allegorica* 13 (1992): 21–37. Several articles have been published on the dating of the poem, as mentioned in n. 1 above. A much-needed new edition of Walter's short poems by David A. Traill has been published as *The Shorter Poems: Christmas Hymns, Love Lyrics, and Moral-Satirical Verse*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 2013).

⁵ See, for example, *Galeri de Castellione Alexandreis*, ed. Marvin L. Colker (Padua, 1978), xix–xx, where Colker describes the "host of mediaeval authors" whom the poem influenced (xix).

⁶ There are over 200 extant; see the list, *ibid.*, xxxiii–xxxviii.

⁷ Peter Dronke, "Peter of Blois and Poetry at the Court of Henry II," *Mediaeval Studies* 38 (1976): 185–235, at 189.

⁸ John Scahill discusses modern uses of the term "anthology" in "Trilingualism in Early Middle English Miscellanies: Languages and Literature," *Yearbook of English Studies* 33

tion, since the poem's textual travelling companions may provide greater insights into its history than single copies of the work can do alone. Medieval habits of anthologizing, however, are notoriously difficult to interpret, and the identification of a manuscript as an anthology rather than a miscellany can be a question of perspective: one reader's anthology is another's miscellany and vice versa, since the distinction depends on perceiving what Julia Boffey has called a "governing principle" (or its absence).⁹ The temptation of the critic to locate such a principle, to make order out of chaos, is naturally strong, leading potentially to methodological bias. Anthologizing is therefore as much about the modern reader/critic as about the medieval scribe/compiler, a point emphasized by Derek Pearsall. He warns that the search for a governing principle risks finding "subtle strategies of organization that turn an apparent miscellany into a continuing thematic meta-narrative," which in turn can "overestimate the activity of the controlling or guiding intelligence of the scribe-compiler."¹⁰ Bearing this observation in mind, this study argues that examining the structure of an anthology does not always have to mean locating a single thematic meta-narrative, but can involve identifying various impulses behind its compilation, impulses that do not necessarily interact. It also claims that readers' inevitable involvement in this process renders any binary distinction between "anthology" and "miscellany" problematic. In other words, anthologizing, like reception history, also reflects plural processes of reading and responding, processes that are especially plausible with regard to a complex text such as the *Alexandreis*.

The point about the *Alexandreis* as a complex and pluralist text in itself, highlighted in 1976 by Peter Dronke,¹¹ has been made in the most recent scholarship on the poem's manuscripts, which otherwise have received little

(2003): 18–32, at 18 n.2, referring to the essay collection *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo, Mich., 2000). The journal volume as a whole gives a helpful overview of different aspects of the issue.

⁹ Boffey's definition considers an anthology to be "a number of items brought together according to some governing principle" and a miscellany "the fruit of more random incorporation" ("Short Texts in Manuscript Anthologies: The Minor Poems of John Lydgate in Two Fifteenth-Century Collections," in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel [Ann Arbor, Mich., 1996], 69–82, at 73). Derek Pearsall, rather more specifically, defines this principle as "a single purpose" that has to be "specific, direct and fairly obvious to the imagined contemporary reader" ("The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and their Modern Interpreters," in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson [Turnhout, 2005], 17–29, at 21).

¹⁰ Pearsall, "Whole Book," in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Kelly and Thompson, 18 and 29.

¹¹ Dronke, "Peter of Blois and Poetry," 189.

attention from scholars. The exception to this neglect, David Townsend's 2012 valuable study of the poem's paratexts, rightly views the poem as "marked ... by a dialogic complexity."¹² He goes on to argue that the poem's early paratextual commentaries, dating from the end of the twelfth century, reflect this complexity, but at the end of his study he implies that responses to the *Alexandreis* become less fluid from the thirteenth century:

The juxtapositional, dialogic open-endedness of an early paratext of Walter's poem, itself a recapitulation of the readerly free play of the work itself ... comes to be domesticated in manuscripts of later generations bent on the monologic final determinations of later scholastic synthesis.¹³

This claim of "domestication" or "monologic final determinations" is made in the immediate context of a contrast with the "open-endedness" of the paratexts, but its implications resonate beyond this sphere. The perception of "domestication," if extended beyond the paratexts (as Townsend implies here), could challenge the idea that the poem's later history is a plural one, both in terms of its interpretation and its related manuscript history. As Townsend's study focuses on the poem's "dialogic complexity," this insistence on a contrasting "domestication" is rather a final flourish than an entrenched intellectual position, but nonetheless it opens up an intriguing question about the *Alexandreis*'s subsequent reception. Townsend goes on to use the phrase "a rage for order" in describing the *Alexandreis*'s thirteenth-century history,¹⁴ vivid language that also neatly describes the modern hunt (of which Pearsall is suspicious) for a thematic "guiding principle" behind an anthology. Both demonstrate this "rage for order," a concern that in both cases desires a single meta-narrative and thus by implication is troubled by variety. The final function of this article is therefore to engage with the concept of "a rage for order" in the study of the *Alexandreis*'s later history. This *sic et non* approach, looking at plural and singular narratives together, allows space for each within the poem's reception history as it is revealed within a selection of anthologies.

The article examines four thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts in which the *Alexandreis* is found as part of a collection of texts. The witnesses are Oxford, Bodleian Library Auct. F.2.16 and Add. A.208, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 406, and London, British Library (BL) Additional 20009. Between them they represent common transmissions and receptions of

¹² David Townsend, "Paratext, Ambiguity, and Interpretative Foreclosure in Manuscripts of Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*," *New Medieval Literatures* 14 (2012): 21–61, at 25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

medieval texts (including classical works copied in the Middle Ages) in educational contexts, since one is a *florilegium* (Bodleian Library Add. A. 208), one a now-composite manuscript of a classical author (Bodleian Library Auct. F. 2. 16), one a collection of twelfth-century works read in schools (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 406), and one an assortment of texts relevant to the monastic life (BL Additional 20009). They are therefore anthologies rather than miscellanies since they appear to exhibit a governing principle within Boffey's schema, although as discussed above the distinction between these can be a blurred one; this is relevant for BL Additional 20009 in particular, which is a monastic anthology in a broad sense. This variety, however, should warn us against assuming that a work often found in an educational setting, as is the *Alexandreis*, is always experienced in the same way, not just in terms of its accompanying material but also in terms of its completeness: in both the *florilegium* and the monastic compilation the *Alexandreis* appears excerpted. In the case of the monastic compilation this happens at one further remove, since it is glosses on the text upon which this manuscript concentrates, the actual poetic words (where present) being found immersed within this paratext. This textual variety gives a concrete example in support of the idea that a number of differing impulses behind the poem's anthologizing can be present, even within a single manuscript. This simple observation confirms again that it is problematic to apply a single hermeneutic to the Protean types of witnesses encompassed within the term "anthology."

THE *ALEXANDREIS*: CONTEXT

Written in a Latin that in many ways is much closer to the language of the classical literary greats it is said to have routed than to the florid and verbose style of contemporaries such as Alan of Lille, the *Alexandreis*, in ten books of hexameters, is an epic version of the life of Alexander the Great based on the history of Quintus Curtius Rufus. It was probably composed during the 1170s in northern France and started to circulate, as mentioned above, in the spring of 1180. Its author, Walter of Châtillon, was in the employ of the archbishop of Reims, William of Champagne, who was uncle to the young king of France, Philip Augustus.¹⁵ In his prologue, Walter deliberately sets up com-

¹⁵ For an overview of William's history, see Jules Mathorez, *Guillaume aux Blanches-Mains, évêque de Chartres* (Chartres, 1911); and Ludwig Falkenstein, "Guillaume aux Blanches Mains, archevêque de Reims et légat du siège apostolique (1176–1202)," *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 91 (2005): 5–25.

parisons between his work and classical literary figures such as Virgil;¹⁶ this is a standard medieval proceeding, but Walter is unusually successful in his imitation, both in terms of style and of content. For example, he goes to some lengths to avoid anachronisms in both areas, except when he wants to use them to make a point, in contrast with contemporary authors of both Latin and vernacular works.¹⁷ This seeming authenticity is probably one reason that the poem ended up on school curricula alongside genuine classical texts, which may also account for its popularity in terms of manuscript numbers. The fact that Walter bases his work on the more historicist account of Curtius Rufus, rather than the ancient Greek romance tradition that focuses on Alexander's travels in the East, may also be a factor in the poem's popularity in pedagogical contexts, since Walter's poem does not describe any of the conqueror's exotic and mythical adventures; sadly it contains no submarine trips or riding on griffons, but is a relatively sober and relatively historical account.¹⁸

This relative sobriety is matched by the manuscripts. In contrast to the often illustrated versions of romance-language Alexander texts, such as the *Roman de toute chevalerie* of ca. 1175,¹⁹ *Alexandreis* witnesses are usually plain and undecorated, in single- or sometimes double-column format with lots of room for glosses or more extended commentary, although some are what Townsend calls "library" copies,²⁰ with more lavish use of colour (such as at the start of each of the ten books). In other words, they bear clear traces of their pedagogical functions; the "dialogic complexity" observed by Townsend in textual terms is not immediately apparent from these generally workaday productions. Yet simply because a text or manuscript is a pedagogical production does not make it monolithic in its interpretation. Schools were individual in-

¹⁶ "Non enim arbitror me esse/meliorem Mantuano uate" ("I do not consider myself to be more skilled than the bard of Mantua," Prologue, 19–20).

¹⁷ Joseph of Exeter deliberately introduces pagan gods into his *Ylias*, partly in order to criticize (anachronistically) non-Christian belief: see Hugh C. Parker, "The Pagan Gods in Joseph of Exeter's *De bello Troiano*," *Medium Aevum* 64 (1995): 273–78; and A. G. Rigg, "Joseph of Exeter's Pagan Gods Again," *Medium Aevum* 70 (2001): 19–28.

¹⁸ The Greek Alexander romance, dating from antiquity, spawned many later Latin and ultimately vernacular versions. Contemporary French romances like the compendious *Roman d'Alexandre*, which does feature such exotic adventures, hence differ greatly from the *Alexandreis* in terms of such content.

¹⁹ The *Roman de toute chevalerie* exists in five manuscripts, only three of which are complete (or nearly so). Two of them—Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France fr. 24364 and Cambridge, Trinity College O.9.34 (1446)—contain a cycle of miniatures inspired by the *Roman d'Alexandre*. See *The Anglo-Norman Alexander* (Le Roman de Toute Chevalerie by Thomas of Kent), ed. Brian Foster and Ian Short, 2 vols., Anglo-Norman Text Society 29–33 (London, 1976–77), 2:2.

²⁰ Townsend, "Paratext, Ambiguity, and Interpretative Foreclosure," 30.

stitutions with particular interests and specialities, which could lead to different approaches to their material; even within a single intellectual centre there was no guarantee of a unified approach, as schools (especially the most prestigious ones) could be places of debate as well as grammar learning.²¹ This multiplicity is of course particularly relevant for the *Alexandreis* when it is found in anthologies.

OXFORD, BODLEIAN LIBRARY AUCT. F. 2. 16

This first anthology proffers several open-ended responses to the *Alexandreis*, exemplifying the multiplicity just described. The now-composite manuscript was written in England around 1200.²² It is one of the witnesses that Townsend describes as a “library copy,” with a greater use of colour than in other manuscripts, as seen in the large floriated initials and the use of gold on the first folio of the *Alexandreis*. The current codex consists of two manuscripts of similar date, possibly copied by the same scribe: the first contains works of the fourth-century poet Claudian, beginning with his epic *De raptu Proserpine*, and the second contains the *Alexandreis* and the same works of Claudian in almost identical order, but this time with the Proserpine epic at the end of the book.²³ The *Alexandreis* occupies what are now fols. 105r to

²¹ A good twelfth-century example is the so-called “school of Chartres,” the individuals who may have been part of it, and its influence, which is still debated; see Peter Dronke, “New Approaches to the School of Chartres,” in *Intellectuals and Poets in Medieval Europe*, Storia e letteratura: raccolta di studi e testi 183 (Rome, 1992), 15–40. Dronke disagrees with Richard Southern’s assessment that the importance of Chartres as an intellectual centre has been overrated; see the latter’s chapter “The Schools of Paris and the School of Chartres,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson, Giles Constable, and Carol D. Lanham (Oxford, 1982), 113–37, as well as *Platonism, Scholastic Method, and the School of Chartres*, Stenton Lecture 1978 (Reading, 1979).

²² This is Colker’s dating (*Alexandreis*, xxxiv). The Summary Catalogue says that it was written in the thirteenth century (*A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, ed. Falconer Madan et al., 7 vols. in 8 [Oxford, 1895–1953], 2:198, no. 2077), and Townsend claims early thirteenth century (“Paratext, Ambiguity and Interpretative Foreclosure,” 26).

²³ The following list of contents is based on the *Summary Catalogue* 2:198–99, no. 2077.

A (fols. 1–104):

1. *Claudianus opera*, with marginal notes: a) *De raptu Proserpine*; b) *In Rufinum*; c) *De bello Gildonico*; d) *In Eutropium*; e) *De nuptiis Honorii, Fescennina et Epithalamium*; f) *De tertio consulatu Honorii*; g) *De quarto consulatu Honorii*; h) *Panegyricus Manlii*, with lines 601–11 of j added; i) *De laudibus Stilichonis*; j) *De sexto consulatu Honorii*; k) *De bello Getico*; “Explicit Claudianus magnus.”

B (fols. 105–272):

167v, and the darkening on its first folio indicates that the two manuscripts, despite their similar date of copying, were not bound together for some time. They were almost certainly juxtaposed by 1590, however, since there are notes throughout both witnesses in a hand that dates itself to that year on the second flyleaf. Given the likelihood that both original manuscripts came from the same scriptorium, it is probable that they were bound together in the later medieval period.

It seems therefore plausible that this composite manuscript is a witness to late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century English interest in the *Alexandreis*. Townsend uses this witness to demonstrate the prose argumenta's status as an "approved supplement to the text,"²⁴ which suggests that by this early point the poem was the subject of academic study (and thus potentially of "domestication"). Yet the juxtaposing of the two original manuscripts indicates that views of the *Alexandreis* may have changed in the later Middle Ages, raising the possibility that the text's interpretation(s) shifted over time. In analyzing the relationships between Claudian's works and the *Alexandreis*, then, Bodleian Library Auct. F. 2. 16 may highlight a variety of approaches to the latter text.

In the manuscript's current state, the *Alexandreis* is sandwiched between Claudian's poems. The compilation order creates almost a mirror image, with the epic *De raptu Proserpine* beginning and ending the texts and the *Alexandreis* in the middle, surrounded by Claudian's poems on fourth-century political figures (*De tertio consulatu Honorii*, *De laudibus Stilichonis*, *De bello Getico*, *In Rufinum*). The *Alexandreis* acts as the generic link between the two sets of Claudian works, with the historical works diverging from it in both directions towards the mythologically inspired epic. The poems create a narrative that moves from myth to history and back again, with the Alexander text mediating between historical and mythological material. Since epic poetry could be read as both history and mythology, such a narrative is logical.²⁵

2. *Alexandreis* (fols. 105r–167v).

3. *Claudian opera*, with a few notes: a) *In Rufinum*; b) *De bello Gildonico*; c) *In Eutropium*, missing folio at end; d) *Epithalamium*, missing beginning; e) *De tertio consulatu Honorii*; f) *De quarto consulatu Honorii*; g) *Panegyricus Manlii*, with added lines; h) *De laudibus Stilichonis*, missing folio at end; i) *De sexto consulatu Honorii*, missing beginning; j) *De bello Getico*; k) *Carmina minora*, nos. 32, 1–31, 33–51, 53 in the 1893 Teubner edition, missing end; l) *De raptu Proserpine*, missing beginning and end.

²⁴ Townsend, "Paratext, Ambiguity and Interpretative Foreclosure," 30.

²⁵ Lafferty helpfully sums up this perspective: "Epics were, however, *historiae* with licence to mix *facta* with *facta*" (*Epic and the Problem of Historical Understanding*, 36–37). She also cites the *Aeneid* commentator Servius's definition of the *metrum heroicum* as "quod con-

Seeing it as a deliberate choice made by a later medieval author, however, is a leap of faith, since we do not know why the originally separate manuscripts were bound together. It is possible that the binder simply intended to create an anthology of Claudian's works, without being aware either of the *Alexandreis*'s presence (or different authorship) or of the fact that the two separate manuscripts are virtually identical in their Claudian contents. If this is the case, then not only has the *Alexandreis* effectively been subsumed within Claudian's corpus, aligning it with his works, but the only "guiding principle" present in the manuscripts' juxtaposition is the creation of an authorial canon in a broad (and here inaccurate) sense. In this interpretation of compilatory intention, the *Alexandreis* is irrelevant. Another broad possibility is that the poem was thought to be another late antique production like those of Claudian; here any connections between the works are simply that they are both viewed as being by classical *auctores* (in the canonical sense). There is no individual relationship at a more detailed textual level.

This would seem to support the idea that Auct. F. 2. 16 as a whole is an accidental rather than a planned anthology, placing it in an indeterminate area between an anthology and a miscellany. Yet, despite this lack of definable intention, the manuscript as it now exists does possess a functional meta-narrative, since it moves the reader from myth to history and back again, with the *Alexandreis* as the linking text between *res ficta* (in which non-historical truth might still reside) and *res vera* (factual evidence). The modern reader is left with a witness that is partly an anthology and partly a miscellany, depending on his or her perspective: anthologizing in this instance depends on a retrospective reader response. The complicating factor here is that this composite witness is a product of the later medieval era, raising the question as to whether there is a clearer sense of compilatory intention earlier, when the two manuscripts were separate. Interestingly, a similarly complex relationship is evident in the manuscript containing the *Alexandreis* in its early thirteenth-century incarnation. At that moment, the Latin epic was the first text at the start of what is now the second part of the manuscript, preceding and introducing the "historical" works of Claudian, which end with *De raptu*. In one interpretation of this, the *Alexandreis* appears to have been seen as history, but it could also be argued that the *Alexandreis* and the *De raptu Proserpine* frame the historical works of Claudian in implicit contrast to the latter. In other words, the same difficulty of interpretation that appears in the later juxtaposed manuscripts is apparent in the single manuscript: the inter-

stat ex divinis humanisque personis, continens vera cum fictis" (37 n. 14, citing *Serviani in Vergilii carmina Commentarii* 2:4, *In Verg. Aen.* 1 praef.).

actions between historical and more fictional texts can be seen in a variety of ways, and any precise compilatory intention is not recoverable (if ever present). Once again the reader is faced with a conundrum.

In both its context ca. 1200 and its later medieval context as part of the composite manuscript, the *Alexandreis* in Auct. F. 2. 16 in effect mediates between history and fiction in a way that creates textual dialogue. As an answer to the perpetual medieval question about how to read epic secular poetry, this witness creates several possibilities. Yet these are possibilities of reception, not intention; we do not know what connections the scribe and the later medieval compiler actually perceived between the different texts. Far from being controlled by any totalizing interpretation, Auct. F. 2. 16 occupies indeterminate hermeneutic territory, in which the various impulses behind the phases of its existence seem to pull in different directions. Whether these impulses represent a desire to “domesticate” the poem or not, the results are open-ended and multiple responses to a complex text and witness.

OXFORD, BODLEIAN LIBRARY ADD. A. 208

In contrast to Bodleian Library Auct. F. 2. 16, Bodleian Library Add. A. 208’s *compilatio* exemplifies a strong ethical hermeneutic and thus a clear thematic meta-narrative (to use Pearsall’s terms). As the following analysis aims to show, however, Add. A. 208’s textual presentation in fact leads to a different kind of indeterminacy and openness. It is a *florilegium* dating from the second half of the thirteenth century and also circulating in England.²⁶ As a *florilegium* it naturally does not contain the complete poetic text of the *Alexandreis*, but rather extracts. Despite this major difference between the two Oxford manuscripts, there is a key similarity: in neither is the *Alexandreis* differentiated from its classical and late antique predecessors in chronological terms. In Auct. F. 2. 16 it is found without comment alongside Claudian’s works, and in Add. A. 208 extracts from the poem are accompanied by lines from the *Aeneid*, Ovid’s works, the *Consolation of Philosophy*, Lucan’s *De bello civili* or *Pharsalia*, and the works of Horace and Juvenal, among oth-

²⁶ Helen Leith Spencer includes it briefly in her *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), 395 n. 31, implying it was used in an English context, although Mary A. Rouse and Richard H. Rouse claim it was written in France in the first half of the thirteenth century in “*Florilegia* and Latin Classical Authors in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Orléans,” in *Authentic Witnesses: Approaches to Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, *Publications in Medieval Studies* 17 (Notre Dame, Ind., 1991), 153–88, at 181.

ers.²⁷ The lines from the *Alexandreis* are copied as a single extract on fol. 38v, headed simply “de Alexandro,” with no further attribution to a specific text or author. They are not continuous text, however, but rather a conglomeration of individual lines drawn from books 1 and 2 of the poem, as illustrated here:²⁸

¶ Non eget exterius qui moribus intus habundat.
Nobilitas sola est animum que moribus ornat (1.103–4).

¶ Si lis inciderit te iudice, dirige libram
Iudicii. nec flectat amor nec munera palpent
Nec moueat stabilem personae acceptio mentem (1.105–7).

[He who abounds in good qualities internally does not need external possessions. That alone is true nobility which furnishes the mind with good manners. If a dispute arises and you are the judge, weigh your judgement carefully. Let not love deflect you nor gifts seduce you. Neither let regard for a person change your mind.]

Each quotation is marked out by paraps, despite being presented as continuous verse. As this example shows, the quotations were chosen for their sentential appeal, since all of them are concerned with moral injunctions.²⁹ The same treatment is applied to the *Aeneid* and the other works in the manuscript, which was carefully copied by a single hand as a planned collection of deliberately chosen extracts.

In this context, the *Alexandreis*, along with its classical forbears, is co-opted into the explicitly ethical universe encouraged by the idea of secular classical poetry as justified by its moral teachings, so often found in thirteenth-century *accessus* defined by the phrase “ethice supponitur,” or “it pertains to ethics.”³⁰ This is achieved by the wholesale omission of the major-

²⁷ See the brief description in the *Summary Catalogue* (5:589–90, no. 29224, also online at <<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/medieval/additional/additional-a.html>> [accessed 16 December 2013]).

²⁸ The lines are 1.83, 85–93, 99–100, 103–4, 105–7, 115, 146–63 (omitting 150–51 and 159–62), 180–83, 341–42, 497–99; 2.23 and 175–78. These lines seem likely to have been popular with *florilegia* compilers, since many of the same lines are found in another thirteenth-century example, Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson C. 552 (fol. 4r). This suggests that circulating exemplars for *florilegia* compilers are also a part of the *Alexandreis*'s textual history.

²⁹ They are drawn from the episodes of Aristotle's advice to Alexander and Darius's letter to the young king.

³⁰ Alastair Minnis states this philosophy of ethical poetry succinctly in A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott with David Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c.1100–c.1375: The Commentary Tradition*, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1991), 14: “Grammar ... was an art of living as well as an art of language, and the single method of instruction was the explication of the poets (*enarratio poetarum*).”

ity of the poem's contents, which makes the poem as a work about Alexander, or as an epic, virtually unrecognizable. Its anonymity is increased by the lack of authorial ascription or title in the *florilegium*; the individual lines are connected only by juxtaposition and the external ethical hermeneutic imposed by the manuscript's *compilatio*. Given this, and the fact that all the other extracts are from classical or late antique authors, the compiler or copyist may have been unaware that the *Alexandreis* was a medieval, rather than a classical, work; arguably this would have been irrelevant to him, since here all historicity is elided to focus on moral content. This witness provides a different medieval perspective on the question of the *Alexandreis*'s interpretation and use within an educational context: instead of the indeterminacy seen in Auct. F. 2. 16, in Add. A. 208 the poem is clearly transformed into a collection of moral *sententiae* by the elimination of the majority of its text, in a common medieval proceeding. In contrast to Auct. F. 2. 16, this manuscript provides a very clear answer as to the *Alexandreis*'s interpretation, as it is defined by an ethical guiding principle with no sign of any hermeneutic indeterminacy. Yet of course this anthologizing intention results in the entire loss of the poem's narrative. The totalizing ethical principle that dominates the manuscript results in the lines' source being difficult to identify, leading to the question as to whether they count as part of the *Alexandreis* at all: can we talk about this *florilegium*'s extracts as in any way representative of "the poem"? This question of identity is important. If medieval readers did not know they were reading part of a medieval Latin epic, they could easily assume given the rest of the manuscript's classical focus that they were encountering lines derived from classical or late antique philosophy, akin to the ubiquitous *Distichs of Cato* (also composed in hexameters). In other words, the strong ethical focus of this anthology paradoxically leads to textual indeterminacy, in contrast to Auct. F. 2. 16, where the guiding principle is not recoverable but the text is a coherent and single whole. What both the manuscripts share, however, is a generic desire to classify the *Alexandreis* alongside classical works, albeit in different ways, suggesting that Henry of Ghent's concern about the poem's invasion of classical territory was justified.

CAMBRIDGE, CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE 406

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 406 is an intriguing collection that like Oxford, Bodleian Library Add. A. 208 appears to demonstrate a seemingly definite anthologizing principle. On closer study, however, it becomes clear that this anthologizing principle is not singular but plural, making Corpus Christi 406 another witness to variety within anthologies. The manu-

script is another early thirteenth-century anthology, certainly post-dating 1210 since it includes the *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf composed at that date. R. H. Rouse and A. C. de la Mare thought it was “an Oxford school book,” and R. M. Thomson claimed that it was at Bury St. Edmunds before ca. 1250–75.³¹ It is another composite manuscript, written in “several small early thirteenth century bookhands,” but its component booklets were probably united early in its history and are likely to have been copied in the same scriptorium as a planned collection.³² It is thus another witness to English interest in the *Alexandreis* early in its history. The manuscript has been studied by modern scholars mostly because it contains what is probably the earliest English *A* text of Seneca's *Tragedies*, which begins the volume;³³ it is not one of the witnesses used by Colker in his edition of the *Alexandreis*. It is, however, an important manuscript for the *Alexandreis*'s history despite this, since the poem is found alongside works with which it travels *en masse* in no other book. The contents are as follows:

1. Seneca, *Tragedies* (fols. 1ra–39vc)
2. John of Hauville, *Architrenius* (fols. 41ra–64vd)
3. Bernard Silvestris, *Cosmographia* (fols. 65ra–74ra)
4. Joseph of Exeter, *Ylias* (fols. 74vb–86va)
5. Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus* (fols. 86va–100vb)
6. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova* (fols. 101ra–112vb)
7. *Alexandreis* (fols. 113ra–142rb)
8. Theological notes and mnemonics (fols. 142v–144r).³⁴

This list does not seem unusual at first sight. All of the texts save the *Tragedies* and the *Poetria nova* can be dated to the later twelfth century; more importantly, the *Architrenius*, the *Anticlaudianus*, and the *Ylias* were all composed between 1180 and 1190 in northern France in the area encompassing

³¹ R. H. Rouse and A. C. de la Mare, “New Light on the Circulation of the A-Text of Seneca's *Tragedies*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977): 283–90, at 284 col. 1; R. M. Thomson, “The Library of Bury St Edmunds Abbey in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” *Speculum* 47 (1972): 617–45, at 620 n. 16.

³² Margaret T. Gibson, Danuta R. Shanzer, Nigel F. Palmer, “Manuscripts of Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus* in the British Isles,” *Studi Medievali*, 3d series, 28 (1987): 905–1001, at 948; R. H. Rouse, “The *A* Text of Seneca's *Tragedies* in the Thirteenth Century,” *Revue d'histoire des textes* 1 (1971): 93–121, at 114. Both studies date the manuscript to the early thirteenth century. See also Townsend, “Paratext, Ambiguity and Interpretative Foreclosure,” 37–39.

³³ See Rouse, “The *A* Text of Seneca's *Tragedies*.”

³⁴ See Gibson, Shanzer, and Palmer, “Manuscripts of Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*,” 949, and also M. R. James's description online at the Parker on the Web archive, stable URL: <http://parkerweb.stanford.edu.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/parker/web/data/mss/pdf/MS_406.pdf> [accessed 16 December 2013]

Reims, Rouen, Chartres, and Paris, a hotbed of intellectual activity at that date.³⁵ All three of these texts also contain intertextual references to the *Alexandreis* or use it explicitly as a model.³⁶ They are therefore appropriate texts to be found with the *Alexandreis* in terms of date and geographical area. Yet in fact such a coherent collection is unusual among *Alexandreis* manuscripts, since the poem is most commonly found as the sole work in a witness or amongst far more miscellaneous contents.³⁷ The texts of Corpus Christi College 406 may therefore provide an insight into the *Alexandreis*'s reception history that is different from other manuscripts.

Beginning with the texts that refer explicitly to Walter's poem, the *Architrenius*, *Anticlaudianus*, and *Ylias* are, like the *Alexandreis*, epic, "classicalizing" poems, although in very different terms from that work; they reflect contemporary ideas about how to write poetry using classical material, all in Latin hexameters. The *Architrenius* is a difficult work to define, satirical in tone, which describes the journey of the "Arch-Weeper" narrator to find personified Nature to ask why she has abandoned humanity to grief; the *Anticlaudianus* tells of the journey of Prudence to heaven in order to gain a soul for Nature's perfect "New Man," and notably inspired Dante's *Commedia*; and the *Ylias* is a poetic retelling of the fall of Troy based on Dares' version. Even from this brief description it is clear that these poems, despite their mutual interest in using classical styles and ideas as inspiration, differ greatly from each other. Although the *Anticlaudianus* and the *Architrenius* are united by their interest in philosophy and are found together in three other manuscripts,³⁸ the heterogeneous nature of the *Architrenius* gives it multiple frames of reference beyond the philosophical, and neither text is related by subject matter to the *Ylias*. The latter is the most obvious companion for the

³⁵ The *Anticlaudianus* was probably composed between 1182 and 1183, the *Architrenius* in 1184, and the *Ylias* between 1183 and 1190. For the *Anticlaudianus*, see C. M. Hutchings, "L'Anticlaudianus d'Alain de Lille: étude de chronologie," *Romania* 50 (1924): 1–13, at 7 and 13; for the *Architrenius*, see *Johannes de Hauvilla: Architrenius*, ed. Paul Gerhard Schmidt (Munich, 1974), 14–17; and for the *Ylias*, see Riddehough, "Joseph of Exeter's *Bellum Troianum*," 7, and Jean-Yves Tilliette, in *L'Iliade: épopée du XIIIe siècle sur la guerre de Troie*, trans. and notes by Francine Mora, intro. Jean-Yves Tilliette, Miroir du Moyen Âge (Turnhout, 2003), 14.

³⁶ See n. 2 above.

³⁷ Of the twenty-six manuscripts I have viewed in the British Isles, twelve contain the *Alexandreis* as the only major text (often with paratextual apparatus such as glossing or commentary passages), and fourteen contain the poem (or extracts from it) as part of a more miscellaneous collection of texts.

³⁸ These are Auxerre, Bibliothèque municipale 243; Edinburgh, University Library 20 (D. b. VI 6); and Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit Vulcanius 94; see Schmidt, *Johannes de Hauvilla: Architrenius*, 93–94.

Alexandreis in this area but takes a distinct approach to its narrative that is not shared by Walter's poem.³⁹ Whoever decided to place these poems in a single manuscript (or the copyist of the exemplar he was following) is likely therefore to have had knowledge of the geographical and temporal circumstances of their production. The presence of these texts in Corpus Christi College 406 gives it the feel of a highlights-of-the-twelfth-century compilation, if its thematic integrity as a deliberate anthology is assumed, which seems plausible in this instance because of the texts' connections and given that its booklets were probably copied in a single scriptorium.

This sense of Corpus Christi College 406 as a witness to key twelfth-century texts is expanded by its other contents. Bernard's *Megacosmus*, the first half of his *Cosmographia*, describes the world's creation and is a product of the so-called "school of Chartres," specializing in Platonist philosophy. The *Poetria nova* teaches practical elements of Latin poetry, the tools needed to create the literary and philosophical works found in the manuscript. These texts add a different aspect of philosophy and practical linguistic skills to the list of highlights, defining the manuscript more strongly as a handbook to the achievements of the twelfth-century "Renaissance." The sole remaining major text, that of Seneca's *Tragedies*, might seem anomalous as the only classical work, but it is a crucial reminder that the poetic, philosophical, and linguistic achievements of the period were driven by rediscovery of classical material.

Corpus Christi College 406 appears to be a collection of connected twelfth-century works produced by a person or persons with some knowledge of contemporary intellectual trends. In this analysis, the *Alexandreis* is an example of the classicizing poetry that was a feature of the period. Its reception as such in early thirteenth-century England thus seems clear-cut. A more detailed consideration of its *compilatio*, however, raises questions. The ordering of the medieval texts—the *Architrenius*, the first part of the *Cosmographia*, the *Ylias*, the *Anticlaudianus*, the *Poetria nova*, and finally the *Alexandreis*—does not highlight the links between the texts that was surely one of the reasons for their inclusion. Only the *Ylias* and the *Anticlaudianus*, different in subject matter, are directly next to each other, and the *Alexandreis* itself, the link between three of the texts, is oddly positioned at the end of the manuscript, rather out on a limb. It seems as if the texts' presence here, together yet apart, is due perhaps to knowledge of their mutual date and their wider importance rather than to any sense that they relate more closely to each other at a textual

³⁹ For a detailed comparison of the two poems, see Venetia Bridges, "Writing the Past: The 'Classical Tradition' in the Works of Walter of Châtillon and Contemporary Literature, c.1160–1200" (PhD thesis, Cambridge, 2012), 125–34.

or philosophical level. The issue of dating, however, complicates this analysis. The dates could have been derived from the texts themselves (as modern scholars have done), but this of course contradicts the idea that the compiler/copyist did not have close knowledge of the texts. The picture presented by the ordering of the texts in Corpus Christi College 406 is more complex than it first appears, since the reasons for the order are opaque. What is certain is that although the compiler/copyist's precise reasoning is not easily recoverable, he is well aware that he is working with twelfth-century material: the manuscript is clear evidence of thirteenth-century interest in the literary and intellectual phenomena of the previous century.

The *Alexandreis* in this analysis becomes part of a conscious intellectual and literary history of the twelfth century via a recoverable narrative of its *compilatio*. In fact, however, the work's presence here provokes further questions, such as the poem's relationships with the other texts and its position in the manuscript. A seemingly straightforward witness to a broad cultural narrative, Corpus Christi College 406 therefore nuances the question of the *Alexandreis*'s reception more widely, particularly in terms of historicity. In contrast to Oxford, Bodleian Library Auct. F. 2. 16 and Add. A. 208, Corpus Christi College 406 seems to have been the product of a compiler aware of the fact that his material is twelfth century but unaware of its more precise textual relationships, as just mentioned. This could indicate an antiquarian impulse, where the broad facts of the texts' provenance have been preserved but their detailed connections (probably derived via earlier exemplars) have been lost. Such an impulse would in turn suggest that there was already awareness of changes in intellectual culture by the early thirteenth century, something that Townsend's researches also indicate. This means that its compilation is witness to two different periods and textualities, first the era in which most of its anthologized texts (and the ones especially relevant to the *Alexandreis*) were composed, and second the early thirteenth century (a generation later), in which these works were beginning to be revered as classics dating from a slightly earlier textual culture. This dual focus explains why the texts that are closely related to the *Alexandreis* are present but not juxtaposed in a way that highlights this proximity; rather than being solely the product of embryonic thirteenth-century antiquarianism, they are representative both of this and of the period in which they were composed. So Corpus Christi College 406's seemingly definite anthologizing principle is in fact the product of two historical moments. This means that this manuscript anthology too bears witness to a variety of possible compilatory impulses, which are historically contingent, as in Bodleian Library Auct. F. 2. 16, but more in terms of contemporary intention than in terms of later reception. Both manuscripts demon-

strate an open and varied set of responses to the *Alexandreis* rather than a single and definitive answer, although in Corpus Christi College 406 these responses are more clear-cut.

LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY ADDITIONAL 20009

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 406 is fascinating because it is unusual in the context of the *Alexandreis*'s manuscript history. It is more common to find the poem in company as part of monastic miscellanies and/or anthologies, as is evidenced by three BL manuscripts: Additional 20009, Royal 8.B.iv, and Royal 15.A.x. The contents of all three were copied over time, mainly during the thirteenth century, but with some fourteenth- and fifteenth-century additions as well. For example, in BL Additional 20009, a Liège manuscript, the *Biblia Pauperum* by the scholar Alexander of Villa Dei or Ville Dieu in Normandy (1175–1240 or 1250) was copied in the fifteenth century, but some sermons “de tempore et de sanctis” are thirteenth-century versions and excerpts from the writings of Augustine were copied in the fourteenth century.⁴⁰ As one would expect in a monastic context, in these three witnesses the *Alexandreis* is found accompanied by sermons, verses on monastic sins, and moral *exempla* and tales.⁴¹ Although any overarching compilatory hermeneutic here is necessarily a broad one, the *Alexandreis*'s presence suggests that it was thought to provide appropriate moral guidance as well as a classicizing education, an opinion evidently shared by the compiler of Bodleian Library Add. A. 208, the *florilegium* discussed above. This possibility indicates that in BL Additional 20009, and again like the Oxford *florilegium*, the *Alexandreis* is subject to an ethical meta-narrative, making its interpretation clear despite the more miscellaneous contents of the anthology.

⁴⁰ See David Townsend, *An Epitome of Biblical History: Glosses on Walter of Châtillon's "Alexandreis" 4.176–274*, Toronto Medieval Latin Texts 30 (Toronto, 2008), 7. The manuscript is described briefly online at the stable URL: <[http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS032-002090255&indx=1&recIds=IAMS032-002090255&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=1&frbg=&scp.scps=scope3A28BL29&tab=local&dstamp=1387218731798&srt=rank&mode=Basic&dum=true&vl\(freeText0\)=Additional+20009&vid=IAMS_VU2](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS032-002090255&indx=1&recIds=IAMS032-002090255&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=1&frbg=&scp.scps=scope3A28BL29&tab=local&dstamp=1387218731798&srt=rank&mode=Basic&dum=true&vl(freeText0)=Additional+20009&vid=IAMS_VU2)> [accessed 16 December 2013].

⁴¹ See, for example, the contents of Royal 8.B.iv at the stable URL: <[http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-002106316&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-002106316&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=1&frbg=&scp.scps=scope3A28BL29&tab=local&dstamp=1387210389903&srt=rank&mode=Basic&dum=true&vl\(freeText0\)=royal+8.+B.iv&vid=IAMS_VU2](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-002106316&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-002106316&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=1&frbg=&scp.scps=scope3A28BL29&tab=local&dstamp=1387210389903&srt=rank&mode=Basic&dum=true&vl(freeText0)=royal+8.+B.iv&vid=IAMS_VU2)> [accessed 16 December 2013].

Yet even here, within this seemingly shared monastic textuality, the *Alexandreis* gives evidence of different reading practices. In the two Royal manuscripts, the poem is complete (or nearly so), but in Additional 20009 there is none of the authorial text at all. What this manuscript preserves is in fact selected glosses from a varied commentary on the poem that is found in several witnesses.⁴² The glosses are not continuous but, like the *florilegium* lines, appear to have been chosen individually. They cover the prose commentary that often accompanies the work's beginning; the opening of the poem; book 2.494–544, 3.140–88; and 4.176–274. The extracts from books 2, 3, and 4 are the most heavily glossed parts of the poem across all the manuscripts, and occasionally gained “the status of a freestanding text deserving study in its own right.”⁴³ They describe Darius's shield that depicts Persian history, the natural phenomena of the world and the universe, and Darius's wife Stateira's tomb, a monument that pictures the history of the world in Old Testament times. The choice of these extracts suggests an interest in history and geography relevant to medieval Christians. The extracts, however, suggest more than a general interest in these subjects. The terse, oblique references to Old Testament history found in the poem are not just commented on but transformed into narrative. For example, the line “et dolus et carcer et transmigratio prima,”⁴⁴ which refers to the Old Testament story of Joseph and is part of the description of Stateira's tomb, is expanded in Additional 20009 into a retelling of the whole episode of Joseph's imprisonment from Genesis 40:

Postea cum Ioseph fuisset in carcere detrusus pincerna regis et pistor erant cum eo. Pistor autem quadam nocte sompniavit quod frumentum crescebat super caput suum, et corui comedebant spicas. Ioseph uero exposuit illud sompnum....⁴⁵

[Afterwards when Joseph had been thrown into prison the king's cupbearer and baker were with him. One night the baker dreamed that corn was growing over his head, and crows were eating the ears. Joseph explained this dream....]

The full explanation of this single part of the line occupies thirty printed lines in a modern edition. Evidently it is biblical history that is of interest here, suggesting that these *Alexandreis* glosses are preserved because they provide

⁴² Townsend, *Epitome of Biblical History*, 6, 7, draws attention to the lack of study on the relationships of the various commentaries.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁴ *Alexandreis* 4.207.

⁴⁵ It is transcribed in Townsend, *Epitome of Biblical History*, 9–10.

an Old Testament summary suitable for teaching religious history.⁴⁶ This observation relates the glosses copied in this part of Additional 20009 to the rest of the manuscript's contents; they are indicative not just of a general intellectual interest in history but specifically of the knowledge of the Old Testament necessary for everyday monastic life. The *Alexandreis* glosses found in BL Additional 20009 therefore fit well with its other contents. In a different context from the *florilegium*, this monastic compilation also highlights a particular aspect of the *Alexandreis* that was of enduring importance from the thirteenth century, when the commentary extracts were copied, until later in the medieval period, when they were placed alongside religious and theological works. Yet the *Alexandreis*, or rather an aspect of it, is only present via its commentary: it is not the poem itself that is important in this particular context, but rather the useful summaries of biblical history that it inspires. The *Alexandreis* has undergone a radical reformatting to fit a new, theological set of requirements. At a basic level this reformatting reflects the manuscript's monastic context, but it may also suggest a move away from interest in the poem as a literary artefact (as the compilatory concerns for genre, ethics, and literary history seen in the other three manuscripts discussed here all indicate) towards its potential (if partial) interpretation as a text with explicitly Christian resonances, something even the related ethically valent emphasis of Bodleian Library Add. A. 208 did not claim. BL Additional 20009 resembles that *florilegium* in its textual fragmentation, however, since both manuscripts "edit" the *Alexandreis* to the extent that it is no longer recognizable as the poem going by that name. Their strong ethical-spiritual hermeneutic has overwhelmed the identity of the text.

CONCLUSION

These four manuscripts demonstrate that the *Alexandreis*'s later history is indeed varied, even within the supposed confines of pedagogy. Intriguingly, witnesses that at first sight appear to confirm the idea that the poem is subject to increasingly "monologic" interpretation, like Bodleian Library Add. A. 208 (the *florilegium*) and BL Additional 20009 (the monastic collection), in fact demonstrate pluralist variety, albeit in a subtle fashion. These two very different witnesses contain several narratives rather than a single guiding principle, since, for example, the ethical *compilatio* so strongly marked in Bodleian Library Add. A. 208 is joined by an interest in and value for the wisdom of the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.

classical *auctores*. Although in that manuscript these two interests, ethics and classicism, are broadly unified, in other anthologies like Bodleian Library Auct. F. 2. 16 different impulses are less easy to reconcile. In the latter manuscript, complicated by its original status as two separate witnesses, even identifying these impulses is problematic and leads to further questions. Is the *Alexandreis* present in the modern single version by accident, meaning that it is not part of any deliberate compilatory narrative at all? When the two manuscripts were separate, was the poem viewed as more historical or more “fictional,” or a mixture of the two? Was it thought to be a medieval or a classical work? As the earlier detailed argument about this witness showed, the manuscript both as it now is and also when first copied as two separate codices can be made to answer “yes” and “no” to most of these questions, demonstrating Pearsall’s wisdom concerning the perception of anthologies’ compilatory principles. This *sic et non* conclusion should not be viewed as simply sitting on the fence; seeing complex multiplicity rather than a single dominant narrative reflects what Townsend sees as the poem’s “dialogic complexity.”⁴⁷ For Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 406, the picture is similar, since it too is the product of several different narratives, although these are rather more clear-cut than is the case for Bodleian Library Auct. F. 2. 16. In all these observations about the four anthologies, the reader is paramount, since it is only via his or her perceptions of texts and their relationships that these narratives can be created. Whilst understanding anthologies’ compilation of course involves palaeographical and codicological facts, this study has shown how dependent the interpretation of such facts is upon their perception by an individual reader. The question of whether a manuscript is an anthology or a miscellany is hence not always capable of a definite “yes” or “no” answer; we need to begin to think about the question in less binary terms.

An increased desire for single and clear interpretation, or a “rage for order,” seen in the *Alexandreis*’s paratextual histories is not therefore paralleled by a similarly identifiable *compilatio* in these anthologies. Given their different dates, natures, and concerns, this is not surprising, but this study has demonstrated that even in anthologies such as *florilegia*, where such a single compilatory narrative might be expected, it is not always to be found alone nor without considerable textual excision that may make “the poem” unidentifiable. It can be misleading to assume that compilations such as *florilegia* are simple, straightforward collections, either textually or hermeneutically, especially when a complex text like the *Alexandreis*, which mediates between the classical *auctores* and medieval (and indeed later) cultures, is involved.

⁴⁷ Townsend, “Paratext, Ambiguity, and Interpretative Foreclosure,” 25.

Whether the poem is found as a thirteenth-century collection of ethical extracts or as a *speculum principis* for a young Jacobean heir to the English throne,⁴⁸ any individual synthesis reflects complex processes of reading and interpretation. The variety of these processes confirms that the *Alexandreis* is a particularly versatile and hermeneutically open-ended work, or as Peter Dronke puts it, “a continual embodiment of ... *sic et non*.”⁴⁹ As such, it merits consideration not primarily as a stable twelfth-century school text that inspires more vibrant vernacular works in the later medieval period, but as a difficult yet prestigious text that has to be frequently re-imagined throughout the entirety of its history, medieval and modern.

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⁴⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library Jones 44 was copied in 1610 by R. Barker for James I of England's eldest son Prince Henry, to whom it is dedicated in the hope that he will gain “fortitudine Alexandrum, potentia Craesum, prudentia Solomonem” (fol. i v).

⁴⁹ Dronke, “Peter of Blois and Poetry,” 189.

