

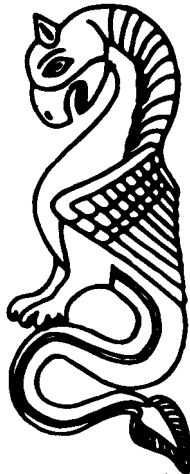
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## EPITAPHIA ALEXANDRI IN ENGLISH MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

By BETTY HILL

In his study "*Parva Recapitulatio*. An English Collection of texts relating to Alexander the Great",<sup>1</sup> Professor D.J.A. Ross discusses the metrical Epitaph on Alexander in hexameters, beginning "Primus Alexander Pillea natus in urbe" (= Hilka's text I),<sup>2</sup> which is extant in four of the six manuscripts which include the *Parva recapitulatio* (a selective account of Alexander and his successors). The four-line Epitaph in BL MSS Royal 13 A I and Harley 5054, which is identical with lines 1-4 of Hilka I, is followed by a prose sentence from Orosius's *Historiarum adversus paganos Libri VII*.<sup>3</sup> In BL MS Royal 15 C VI and CUL MS Mm 5 29, the four lines plus the Orosian sentence are followed by twenty verse lines corresponding to the remainder (lines 5-24) of Hilka I. Professor Ross indicates in tabular form the variable position of the Epitaph among the Alexander texts in these four manuscripts. He concludes that lines 5-24 were not originally part of the four-line Epitaph but are a verbose elaboration on it, adding little fresh information.

From his list of the six manuscripts in English libraries which include the Epitaph, Hilka omits MS Harley 5054, now added by Professor Ross, and Worcester Cathedral Library MS F 172. The Worcester Epitaph, which in this manuscript follows the unique Middle English renderings of the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* (Alexander's letter on the marvels of India) and the *Parva recapitulatio*, has been printed and collated with Hilka I by Terence Keough.<sup>4</sup> I add three more, not included by Hilka, in the Cambridge and Oxford College libraries. These bring the number of identified Epitaphs in manuscripts in English libraries, with which this study deals, to eleven.

The texts are listed alphabetically within the century in which they were written. The provenance (when known) is given, with descriptive references to the three College texts. The following sigla, which include Professor Ross's sigla for the texts and manuscripts pertinent to his own study, are used throughout:

### *Late-eleventh century*

R1 = BL MS Royal 13 A I, f. 78<sup>r</sup>.

### *Twelfth century*

C2 = CUL MS Mm 5 29, f. 144 recto-verso.<sup>5</sup>

R2 = BL MS Royal 15 C VI, f. 116 recto, col. 2 - verso, col. 1.

Superior quippe pars que adhuc pater. queq; iam putrida ac semiviva videtur. te  
 significat dñe in rex. In promptu quoq; est ut tu moriaris atq; interea. Infe-  
 rior u pars que ferms caputib; cingitur. queq; uiuere uidetur. In se pncipalē  
 subiecta. Et ut he fere inter se dissident. sic qq; p morte tuā in inter se disor-  
 derunt. Hec interpretatio. n̄ modicā alexandro mestuam intulit.

**O**ccasione illi mortis hec fuit. Mater ei sepe serax adeū desinatitatu;  
 anticipatis & diuino patris; p̄monuit. Insciat corū cauendas. At ille  
 statuit aditē de macedonia venire. alio in loco ei subrogat. Unde an-  
 ticipatē iratus. in ipso tenere ueneno efficacissimo atq; potentissimo elaborato.  
 p̄mittitū regi desinatit hauriendū. Quo ille hausto. mox lectulo datus in-  
 telleritq; se moriturū. Ordinatis itaq; reb; dispositiq; pncipib; de duobus suis  
 p̄tibus sibi libuit. spm emisit. Cuiq; de sepultura illi iurgia orrent. quippe ma-  
 cedonib; in sua cū dūltere cupientib; & p̄tibus h̄ cont̄ resistētib; tande i-  
 talis oraculi consulentes. responsum acceperunt apud egyptū eis sepeliri oportē  
 n̄ in mēphib; uerū in illa quā ipse sibi edificauerat urbe. Ergo honorifi-  
 centissime ibi ei erecta est sepultura. Vixit autē annos. xxx. imperio post  
 annis. xii. condiditq; urbes. xii. quas om̄i suo denique alexandriā nuncupatū;

- A**lexandria que con-  
 dita ē. sub nomine  
 buccali equi.  
 Alexandria monicula.  
 Alexandria apud porū.  
 Alexandria in scythia.  
 Alexandria babylonis.  
 Alexandria apud massagetas.  
 Alexandria apud egyptū.  
 Alexandria apud orygalā.  
 Alexandria apud granicū.  
 Alexandria apud troadam.  
 Alexandria apud tigridem  
 fluminem.  
 Alexandria apud scythiā.  
 Alexandria signum ē muros ex  
 p̄morū q̄nq; grecorū ele-  
 mentorū caracterib; un-  
 legere. in eis. Alexander  
 rex. gen̄ noui fecit. A. B. A. H.  
 Et que orbis uniuersaliter  
 ro supere n̄ potuit. unio

**EPITAPHIUM**

**P**rimus alexander pulcherrimus uacat in urbe.  
 Quē comel antipater citato melle ueneno.  
 Abstruxit ex medio regnante flore necavit.  
 Bissemis p̄quam populos dominauerat annis.  
 Idem per duodecim annos alexander op-  
 pressit orbem se t̄tinentē. ferroq; reg-  
 na legit.

**EXPLICIT HOR**

**TVS**

**ALB**

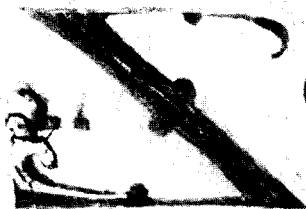
**MAONI MALEDO**

**N V 09 :**

**Q**uid inhumanis constat irruibus alta  
 superat magnus belli virtute choroschu  
 rbus alexander dominor sediq; subactio  
 terra nec se mari virtute potens special  
 ue non predui ualuerunt frangere mur  
**C**us nec mente pelagus superare furente  
 um macrone suo uastaret cuncta cruent  
 ay; solo maros equaret funditus alto  
 ue sic magnanimu nimu cunctaq; tremendu  
**T**ellus que timant pontus quem ferre nequunt  
 t t unis reges robur stupore potence  
 Quenq; duces ualidi meuebant nec ne tyrann  
 t ontussit subito maiber conspecta timor  
 Quantas sic pronus palas virtute superb  
 terror & incandia conuersus peccoris ira  
 uent tamen e mutata uiri turbataq; uirtu  
 Sic que pugnantu nonquunt sternere terra  
 Omnia confecto nec fortia multa duell  
 uicere preforat ualuerunt robore coru  
 S uacubunt leco sumpto cum melle tamen

S.  
 S.  
 R.  
 T.  
 T.  
 O.  
 O.  
 S.  
 M.  
 T.  
 S.  
 I.  
 T.  
 A.  
 O.  
 S.  
 M.  
 O.  
 S.  
 O.

INCIPIIT OPERA ALEXANDRI REGIS



uita dubia belloru nroru pericula  
 carissime preceptor ac sedm matre mea  
 sororesq; meas acceptissime: qm te de  
 dau philosophye nouera: scribendu t de regionib; in du ac statu qui in  
 numerisq; serpentu & hominu feraruq; generib; existant. ut aliqd p  
 noua reru cognitione studio & ingenio possit accedere. quia nra con  
 sumata prudentia nulluq; aduicoru ppositu et ratio docuit. si ate  
 & tuo seculo ac futuris temporib; conueniat. Tam ut mea gesta cognoscat  
 que diligis. & neqd in uitacu haberes: ea que in mdu coacta per  
 sumos labores ac pericula macedonu passu te scribendu t putau. t eni

Rejected as a Bury book by N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain*, (2nd ed., 1964), p. 367.

T = BL MS Cotton Titus A XXVII, f. 216<sup>v</sup>. Assigned to Canterbury, St Augustine's by Ker, p. 43.

#### Thirteenth century

G = BL MS Cotton Galba E XI, f. 118<sup>v</sup>. Assigned to the Canterbury Franciscans by Ker, p. 48.

P = Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 258, f. 33<sup>v</sup>. Described by M.R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Pembroke College, Cambridge* (1905), p. 234.

R3 = BL MS Royal 12 C IV, f. 160 recto-verso. Assigned to Rochester by Ker, p. 63.

#### Fourteenth century

J = Cambridge, St John's College MS G 16, f. 41<sup>v</sup>, col. 2. Described as MS 184 by James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of St John's College, Cambridge* (1913), p. 218.

O = Oxford, Worcester College MS 285, f. 159<sup>r</sup>, col. 2. Written at Salisbury from twelfth-century exemplars: see R.W. Hunt, "A Manuscript belonging to Robert Wivill, Bishop of Salisbury", *Bodleian Library Record*, 7 (1962-67), 23 ff., esp. 26-27. [Not included in the list of MSS in W.W. Boer, *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem ad Codicum Fidem Edita et Commentario Critico Instructa* (1953), p. v.].

#### Fifteenth century

H = BL MS Harley 5054, f. 167<sup>v</sup>.

W = Worcester Cathedral Library MS F 172, f. 148<sup>r</sup>. On the MS see n. 12 below.

These eleven Epitaphs fall into six main groups:

1. O is the short four-line version identical with the first four lines of Hilka I. The title "Versus" is written in the outer margin of f. 159<sup>r</sup> beside the second line of the Epitaph.

2. R1 and H, both identical with O, are preceded by "Alexander Illirocos et Thraces feliciter dimicans et subuersis Thebis in Persas arma corripuit.", and both are followed by the Orosian sentence "Id est per .xii. annos alexander oppressit orbem [sub] se trementem ferroque regna lesit", which in H is written as though it were two lines of poetry.

3. C2 R2 G P R3 consist of the four-line version and the Orosian sentence, and each is followed by the *Explicit* of the *Epitome* (an abridgement of Julius Valerius's *Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis*) and by the twenty lines corresponding to lines 5-24 of Hilka I. The whole is headed "Epythaphyum" in G and "Epitaphium" in P, and the first four verse lines of R3 are written as prose.<sup>6</sup>

The arrangement of C2 requires fuller discussion. On f. 144<sup>r</sup> (reproduced on p. 97) of CUL MS Mm 5 29, the "Account of the Twelve Alexandrias" fills twenty-two lines at the left-hand side of the leaf. The first line runs parallel with the last line "& ueneno superatus atque extinctus occubuit" of the *Epitome* material. Below

this line, at the right-hand side of the leaf, the four verse lines headed "Epitaphium" and followed by the Orosian sentence, fill nine lines parallel with lines 2-10 of the "Twelve Alexandrias". The *Explicit* of the *Epitome* ends opposite line 20 of the "Twelve Alexandrias", leaving two lines blank at the right-hand side of the leaf. The twenty verse lines follow overleaf on f. 144<sup>V</sup> (reproduced on p. 98) and are placed at the left-hand side. The final letter of each line is set apart near the inner margin, written in small capitals and followed in each case by a punctum. The separation and presentation of these lines, in my opinion, support Professor Ross's general conclusion that they were a separate composition from the four-line Epitaph. They are therefore subsequently referred to in all the texts which include them as the *Supplement*.

4. T consists of the four verse lines, the Orosian sentence<sup>7</sup> and the *Supplement*, but this version on f. 216<sup>V</sup> follows not the *Epitome* but the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, which covers ff. 206<sup>V</sup>-216<sup>V</sup>. Thus the whole, uninterrupted by the *Explicit* of the *Epitome*, forms a continuous text.

5. J is the four-line Epitaph (lacking the Orosian sentence). It is immediately followed in a different hand by the *Explicit* of the *Epitome* and by the *Supplement*. The whole, which follows a one-line gap after "extinctus occubuit." [the conclusion of the *Epitome* material] and on the same line the heading "Versus.", is written much abbreviated as prose and completes the second column of f. 41<sup>V</sup>; f. 42 is blank.

6. W is the continuous verse-form (four lines and the *Supplement*) corresponding to Hilka I. As Dr Keough (n.4) shows, W repeats two lines, omits three and has a different line-order from Hilka I.

The eight Epitaphs in groups 3-6 show the following textual variants from Hilka I: 1 Primus: T [P]rimus; urbe: J orbe. 2 Antipater confecto: J antepater confetto. 4 Bissenis: T Bissenos; postquam: W primoquam; domitaverat: J dimicauerat, W dormitauerat; annis: T annos, W orbis. 5 Quicquid: C2 Quiquid, J [Q]uicquid, W Quicquam. 6 Exsuperat: C2 R2 P J W Exuperat; magnus: W magnis; choruschus: P choruscus, W coruscus, J chorustus. 7 domitor: W domtor; saeclique: G sedique. 8 necne: H siue; potens: P potest. 9 perduri: C2 R3 W preduri; valuerunt frangere: J ualuere fugere. 10. Eius: R3 [E]ius, C2 W Cuius, P Quis. 11 Quin: C2 P R3 W Cum; mucrone: J mucione, with .i. gladio written above; cuncta: P W cunta. 13 Hunc: W hu[n]c; cunctisque: W cuntisque; tremendum: J trem[e]ndum. 15 reges robur: J vires reges with uel rober written above vires. 16 necne: J atque; tyranni: R2 T J W tiranni. 17 Concussit subito mulier conspecta timore: J Horribilis protus concussit femina monstro.<sup>8</sup> 18 Quamvis: C2 R3 Quauis, J Et qua[m]uis; sit protinus: C2 P W sit pronus, J fuerit pulsus. 19 in tumidam: W indomitam; conversus: R2 conuersis. 20 Mens: P Gens; tamen: J tum, W cum; viri turbataque: W virique turbata est. 21 Hic: C2 G R3 Sic; pugnantum: W pugnantem; nequirit: C2 T G P R3 J W non quiuit. 22 Milia: P Filia, R3 [?]ilia. 23 robora: J robora. 24 Succubuit: G Occubuit; leto: J morte written above. 22-24 W omits.

As regards their diverse positions among the Alexander material in the relevant manuscripts, seven Epitaphs, including O, follow the

"Twelve Alexandrias."; C2 R2 G P R3 J, as seen above, are closely connected with the *Epitome* and C2 R2 G P R3 O are followed by the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*.<sup>9</sup> Of the remaining four Epitaphs, R1 T and H follow the *Epistola*. But H is immediately preceded on ff. 166-167<sup>v</sup> by a misplaced table of the chapters of the *Epitome*, and the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* is numbered as though it were the final chapter of the *Epitome*.<sup>10</sup> Only W follows the Englished (*Epistola* and) *Parva recapitulatio*.<sup>11</sup>

The evidence presented above suggests that the Epitaph of four hexameters may originally have followed the *Epitome* and have preceded the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*. When the Orosian sentence was added, the whole may well have been considered a suitable conclusion to the prose *Epitome* and have been inserted before the *Explicit* of the *Epitome*. The twenty-line verse *Supplement* was then added. But the position of the Epitaph may have been variable so that, as in the earliest known version R1, it followed not preceded the *Epistola*. This being so, the addition of the *Supplement* as in T and the omission of the Orosian sentence as in J, would ultimately result in a continuous verse text, as exemplified by W, corresponding to Hilka I.

Professor Ross considers (though not in connection with the Epitaph) that the earliest extant manuscript of the eleventh century (containing R1), which shows the order *Epitome*, "Twelve Alexandrias", *Epistola*, Epitaph, *Collatio Alexandri Magni cum Dindimo*, *Parva recapitulatio* probably represents most exactly the original form of the collected texts. Nevertheless, the explanation of why the Epitaph could originally have followed the *Epitome* and later have followed the *Epistola* may be provided only by the fifteenth-century manuscript containing H, where, as mentioned above, the *Epistola* was regarded as the final chapter of the *Epitome*.

On the other hand, the same material can support the thesis that the four-line Epitaph originally followed the *Epistola*, then became attached to the *Epitome*, then attracted the Orosian sentence and was inserted before the *Explicit* of the *Epitome*. In this position it acquired the *Supplement*, which certainly in the J text (see n. 8) was inspired by the content of the *Epitome* as the original four-line Epitaph seems to have been. But the complicated textual tradition and transmission of the vast quantity of Alexander material admits of no more than such hypotheses.

Of prime interest are the facts which emerge from the consideration of these known eleven texts. Two (J and O) of the three versions added here, establish that the Epitaph was continuously copied in England from the late-eleventh to the late-fifteenth century, and, from the available evidence, chiefly in southern provincial centres.

W, in particular, is unique in form, textual connections and provenance. It is the only example of the continuous verse Epitaph corresponding to Hilka I.; it appears with vernacular material comprising Englished versions of Latin originals and vernacular

contemplative compositions; and the manuscript containing it is one of a group of ten, which were apparently compiled by the successors of John Shirley† 1456, and are written in the highly distinctive hand of one scribe active in London between 1460 and 1483. The Worcester manuscript was likely intended for a sacerdotal community with an inadequate grasp of Latin or for lay members of a City church, chapel or guild.<sup>12</sup>

It is of some interest for Alexander studies that either the community which commissioned the compilation of this particular manuscript or its scribe, who elsewhere wrote down *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede* and produced three copies of Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*,<sup>13</sup> thought the Latin Epitaph on Alexander worthy of preservation.



NOTES

- 1     Forthcoming in a Festschrift for Professor Quintino Cataudella, University of Catania. I am much indebted to Professor Ross for an advance typescript copy of his work.
  
- 2     Twenty-four lines printed as no. I by A. Hilka, "Eine Zweite Handschrift der erweiterten Epitome des Julius Valerius", *Romanische Forschungen*, 29 (1911), 70, with a list of the manuscripts which include it. The C2 version of Hilka's text I is reproduced on pp.97-8.
  
- 3     Identified by Professor Ross in his n. 15.
  
- 4     "Another *Epitaphium Alexandri*", *Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medioevale*, 15, (1973), 57-59. Dr Keough is now publishing the English *Epistola*, myself the Englished *Parva recapitulatio* not as in his n. (1).
  
- 5     I have examined the C2 version, reproduced on pp.97-8 by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library, and the J O and P texts from photostats. I thank the Cambridge Librarians and the Assistant Librarian, Worcester College, Oxford for their courteous assistance.
  
- 6     Keough, 58, thought these missing.
  
- 7     Variants noted to this passage are: Id est: G P R3 Adest, C2 Idem; .xii.: T P duodecim; annos alexander: T alexander annos.
  
- 8     Mr R.L. Thomson has confirmed and assisted with my elucidation of this line. The unique J reading of lines 17-18 would seem to support Professor Ross's suggestion that lines 17-20 of Hilka I refer to the portent of the monster produced by the woman in Babylon foretelling Alexander's death. For the incident see, e.g., *Iuli Valeri Alexandri Polemi. Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis*, ed. B. Kuebler. *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*, (1888), Book III, sections 54-55, pp. 161 ff. The next section 56, p. 163, begins "Ergo occasio illi moriendi talis fuit".
  
- 9     G is followed by the Proem to the *Epistola*, and a reference indicating that the rest follows later on ff. 121 ff. (H.L.D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, I (1883), p. 116, item 3). The *Epistola* following P is incomplete (James, *Catalogue*, p. 234, item 6).
  
- 10    Ward, p. 119, items 1-4.
  
- 11    Professor Ross's study indicates that the *Parva recapitulatio* normally follows the *Collatio Alexandri Magni cum Dindimo* (correspondence between Alexander and Dindimus, King of the Brahmins).
  
- 12    I.A. Doyle, "An Unrecognised Piece of *Piers the Ploughman's Creed* and other work by its scribe", *Speculum*, 34, (1959), 428 ff., esp. 430-32, 434. In part i of "More Light on John Shirley", *Medium Aevum*, 30 (1961), 93-101, Dr Doyle expands on Shirley's associations with St. Bartholomew's hospital, four shops in Duck Lane and Edward Norris, citizen and scrivener of London, who may have been associated with the disposal of Shirley's stock of MSS, which remained together and were copied by later scribes. Part ii, which (p. 99 and n. 47) promised further information on this latter point has not yet appeared.

- <sup>13</sup> See E.P. Hammond, "A Scribe of Chaucer", *Modern Philology*, 27 (1929-30), 29 ff., esp. 30.