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HISTORY OF ALEXANDRIA Written sometime in the 1170s, Walter of Chatillon's Latin epic on the life of Alexander the Great loomed as large on literary horizons as the works on Jean de Meun, Dante, or Boccaccio. Within a few decades of its composition, the poem had become a standard text of the literary curriculum. Virtua]]

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Walter of Châtillon's Latin epic on the life of Alexander the Great was a twelfth- and thirteenth-century [best-seller:]] scribes produced over two hundred manuscripts. The poem follows Alexander from his first successes in Asia Minor, through his conquest of Persia and India, to his progressive moral degeneration and his poisoning by a disaffected lieutenant. The Alexandreis exemplifies twelfth-century discourses of world domination and the exoticism of the East. But at the same time it calls such dreams of mastery into question, repeatedly undercutting as it does Alexander's claims to heroism and virtue and by extension, similar claims by the great men of Walter's own generation. This extraordinarily layered and subtle poem stands as a high-water mark of the medieval tradition of Latin narrative literature. Along with David Townsend's revised translation, this edition provides a rich selection of historical documents, including other writings by Walter of Châtillon, excerpts from other medieval Latin epics, and contemporary accounts of the foreign and [exotic:]]

Written sometime in the 1170s, Walter of Chatillon's Latin epic on the life of Alexander the Great loomed as large on literary horizons as the works on Jean de Meun, Dante, or Boccaccio. Within a few decades of its composition, the poem had become a standard text of the literary curriculum. Virtually all authors of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries knew the poem. And an extraordinary two hundred surviving manuscripts, elaborately annotated, attest both to the popularity of the Alexandreis and to the care with which it was read by its medieval audience.

“This book considers how ancient and medieval commentaries on the Aeneid by Servius, Fulgentius, Bernard Silvestris, and others can give us new insights into four twelfth-century Latin epics—the Ylias by Joseph of Exeter, the Alexandreis by Walter of Châtillon, the Anticlaudianus by Alan of Lille, and the Architrenius by John of Hauville. Virgil’s influence on twelfth-century Latin epic is generally thought to be limited to verbal echoes and occasional narrative episodes, but evidence is presented that more global influences have been overlooked because ancient and medieval interpretations of the Aeneid, as preserved by the commentaries, were often radically different from modern readings of the Aeneid. By explaining how to interpret the Aeneid, these commentaries directly influenced the way in which twelfth-century Latin epic imitated the Aeneid. At the same time, these Aeneid commentaries allow us a greater awareness of the generic expectations held by the original readers of twelfth-century Latin epic. Thus, this book provides a new way to look at the development of allegory and contributes to our understanding of ancient and medieval perceptions of the Aeneid while exploring the importance of commentaries in shaping poetic composition, imitation, and reading”--

The Medieval Classic considers how ancient and medieval commentaries on the Aeneid by Servius, Fulgentius, Bernard Silvestris, and others can give us new insights into four twelfth-century Latin epics – the Ylias by Joseph of Exeter, the Alexandreis by Walter of Châtillon, the Anticlaudianus by Alan of Lille, and the Architrenius by John of Hauville. Justin Haynes argues that the most profound connections between medieval epic and the Aeneid have been overlooked because ancient and medieval interpretations, as preserved by the commentary tradition, were often radically different from modern ones. By explaining how to interpret the Aeneid, these commentaries directly influenced the way in which medieval authors were inspired by the poem. At the same time, these commentaries allow us a greater awareness of the generic expectations held by medieval readers. Because two of the medieval epics considered here are allegorical narratives, this book offers new perspectives on the importance of commentaries in the development of allegorical literature. Thus, The Medieval Classic contributes to our understanding of ancient and medieval perceptions of the Aeneid while exploring the importance of commentaries in shaping poetic composition, imitation, and the history of allegorical literature.

This dissertation approaches theoretical issues regarding the literary representation of the body through readings of two medieval Latin epics, Walter of Chatillon's Alexandreis and Joseph of Exeter's Ylias. I argue that these texts, based on prose histories but shaped by the heritage of classical epic, establish vital aspects of their epic identity through their representations of the body. The first chapter of the thesis studies how implicit or explicit comparisons to the alternate representational mode of the visual arts enable Walter and Joseph to think through the epic task of commemorating the dead, a task which brings the act of representation into dialogue with the destruction of the body. The second chapter deals with the major rhetorical setpieces which both poems feature, in which the literary representation of the body coincides with the social representation of the self in speech. The third chapter addresses the implications of allusion. Through an examination of the workings of this textual device in relation to the body, it considers how the representation of the body involves the reader in the text. The last chapter examines the role of the representation of the body in the larger structure of the poems. I show that Joseph invests the unifying imagery of the Ylias in the bodies of his female characters, while Walter structures his narrative on a competition between narrator and protagonist for control of the poem's epic voice, a contest centered on Alexander's body. The dissertation draws throughout on theoretical literature surrounding the body in relation to gender, violence, and sexuality. I insist, however, that in their unique cultural situation and poetic achievement the Ylias and the Alexandreis are not passive objects of theoretical analysis but vital contributors to our theoretical understanding of the body.

Walter of Chatillon, the twelfth-century Latin poet now famed for his satirical lyrics, acquired international renown in the Middle Ages for his epic on Alexander the Great, the Alexandreis. This work did for the Middle Ages what Vergil had done for the Romans, proving the ability of the moderni to rival the ancients in learning and the arts. The Alexandreis immediately joined the Aeneid in the medieval paideia and was read in schoolrooms throughout Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Alexandreis enters into the twelfth-century debate about education. The intellectual world was rapidly changing, as the schools became specialized and professionalized, threatening the hitherto secure position of the liberal arts and Latin literature in the educational curriculum. At the same time, translations from Arabic and Greek, not only of the works of Aristotle, but also of Arabic philosophers, had begun to alter the concerns and methodologies of Western scholars. Theologians increasingly used Hebrew commentaries in their studies of the Hebrew Scriptures. The awareness of the intellectual achievements both of the ancients and of highly-civilized non-Christian contemporary cultures had reached a new peak. Twelfth-century intellectuals were presented with the challenge of assimilating the flow of new works and ideas into western historiography and the Latin world-view. Walter's exploration of the problems of interpreting not only languages, but also the texts, philosophies, religions and literatures of the past, is the subject of this study.

An epic of some 5500 lines on the life of Alexander the Great, Walter of Chatillon's Alexandreis stood, from the late twelfth century till the close of the Middle Ages, among the most successful and widely read works of Latin literature. This volume presents one free-standing version of the more or less 'standard' commentary on a uniquely celebrated passage from the poem. The lines in question, 176-274 of Book 4, describe a tomb commissioned by Alexander for the wife of Darius, after her death in captivity to the Greek commander. The painter Apelles devises for the tomb an iconographical schema largely devoted to rehearsal of the Hebrew Scriptures. The commentary elucidates Walter's compressed biblical references to the fictive tomb's illustrative cycle through extensive paraphrase of episodes from the Hebrew Bible.

In the Middle Ages, the life story of Alexander the Great was a well-traveled tale. Known in numerous versions, many of them derived from the ancient Greek Alexander Romance, it was told and re-told throughout Europe, India, the Middle East, and Central Asia. The essays collected in Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages examine these remarkable legends not merely as stories of conquest and discovery, but also as representations of otherness, migration, translation, cosmopolitanism, and diaspora. Alongside studies of the Alexander legend in medieval and early modern Latin, English, French, German, and Persian, Alexander the Great in the Middle Ages breaks new ground by examining rarer topics such as Hebrew Alexander romances, Coptic and Arabic Alexander materials, and early modern Malay versions of the Alexander legend. Brought together in this wide-ranging collection, these essays testify to the enduring fascination and transcultural adaptability of medieval stories about the extraordinary Macedonian leader.

The final and most important book of Walter of Châtillon's Alexandreis is examined as a paradigm for both the compositional techniques and the meaning of the whole poem. These techniques are shown as being reliant on the medieval arts of composition, the strategies inherited from the Biblical paraphrasts and the strict discipline of classical epic hexameter. The author shows that Walter of Châtillon is not simply a classicising epigone of Vergil, but a master poet refining contemporary epic techniques and incorporating scientific and philosophic materials into an elegant moral diatribe against arrogance.

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