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## ARTICLE

### **Genus and Genre: The Old French Verse *Roman d'Alexandre*, *Alexander and Dindimus*, and MS Bodl. 264**

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#### **Abstract**

This essay argues that genres as positive entities are fantasies that texts project, and proposes to study how such projection occurs. Drawing on Derrida's account of genre as law, it explores how Agamben's work on genus might extend into poetics. Through content, form, and treatment of the philosophical question of the limits of human being, three medieval artefacts, each foregrounding Alexander the Great, position themselves relative to law, and therefore to genre. By invoking two genres (*roman antique* and *chanson de geste*) without conforming to either, the Old French *Roman d'Alexandre* carves out a position at once subject to and exempted from the law. Contrastingly, the Middle English *Alexander and Dindimus* claims exemplary obedience to the law as the perfect alliterative debate poem. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 264, treats *Alexander and Dindimus* as an interpolation completing the *Roman d'Alexandre*, adding a French prose Marco Polo and a program of illustrations. Bodl. 264 presents itself as supplementing the law when it overrides textual, formal, and linguistic boundaries in the name of Christian expansionism. In each artefact, relations to poetic laws interact with political and philosophical stances, inviting different audience responses.

**KEYWORDS:** Roman d'Alexandre, Alexander and Dindimus, manuscript context, Derrida, Agamben, law, the open.

In "La Loi du genre," Jacques Derrida presents the interaction between texts and genres as an erotic courtroom drama. Arraigned at the bar of genre ("Exactly what genre are you, text? Have you obeyed the rules laid down for that genre?"), texts fantasize about genres, exalting them as authorities to be submitted to, seduced, flirted with, defied, perverted, or theatrically betrayed. Texts respond to genre's demands—to be properly genred or to declare their genre—at an intimate level, in ways sometimes obvious and direct, sometimes obscure and circuitous. Each text will respond in an individual manner to the genres it cathects and thereby proclaims as its own laws, and therefore each text will actualize different potential facets of those genres, and in different ways. Any single instance of genre is therefore *sui generis*. Genres' mandates nevertheless extend beyond the particular text, for the very

textual responses they evoke empower them as objects of desire and hence authorities for other works. Thus, different novels may convey dissimilar impressions of what “the novel” as a genre is, without the concept losing coherence.

Whereas Derrida considers genre largely in relation to gender, I wish to focus on a different cognate: the biological term *genus*, as mobilized by Giorgio Agamben in *The Open: Man and Animal*. Agamben claims, “In our culture, the decisive political conflict, which governs every other conflict, is that between the animality and the humanity of man” (80). The choice of theorist alters the focus as well as the rhetorical terms of the analysis. If both Derrida and Agamben are concerned with the ethics and politics of legalistic discourses, Derrida treats the primary instance of the Law as the incest taboo, whereas Agamben emphasizes the human/animal distinction. The former therefore employs an erotic discourse which highlights manifold and multiform libidinous relations developed as texts orient themselves desiringly towards genres. Agamben’s account of the scientific discourse of genus, in contrast, highlights efforts to classify, to establish and allocate stable categories and identities, and to police a single boundary. Although his aim is ultimately to suspend and then reorient operative political distinctions, Agamben emphasizes how “proper” relations to law are encouraged and monitored. I am encouraged by Agamben’s practice elsewhere in his philosophical writings of creatively relating politics to poetics to explore *The Open’s* potential as a tool of poetic analysis. I would like, however, to keep in mind Derrida’s emphasis on the teasing and creative play that occurs when genres and texts encounter each other—aspects less obvious in Agamben, with his graver focus on political struggle.

The examination of genre that I undertake here, then, is not a hunt for the fantasy bodies that would be identifiable genres, but an exploration of networks of desire, divergence, and conformity implied by texts’ form, content, and other attributes. In connecting genre to Agamben’s discussion of the political and metaphysical aspects of genus, I propose to explore how relationships to boundaries and laws (relationships that texts display in various ways including thematic and formal) also indicate each text’s self-positioning towards genre. My discussion will focus on the Old French verse *Roman d’Alexandre* and Middle English *Alexander and Dindimus*, and on their manuscript context in the richly decorated Bodleian Library MS Bodl. 264, “a kind of verbal and visual *summa Alexandriana*.”<sup>1</sup> These artefacts invite analysis in Agamben’s terms for they stage repeatedly the questions of the places in creation of man in general and of one man in particular—Alexander the Great—and of the relations between laws and different kinds of being (genera). Such taxonomical matters carry ethical, political, and metaphysical importance in the *Roman d’Alexandre* and *Alexander and Dindimus*; they are evident also in each work’s relations to genre. These relations look different, however, when we analyze how Bodl. 264 as a whole expresses codicologically relationships to boundaries and rules which are analogous to those which the two literary texts manifest thematically and formally. Each artefact reaches across distinctions of varying kinds, invoking different laws in order to test them; each considers identifying correct laws and customs to be a matter of priority. However, these shared concerns give rise to various attitudes towards genre and towards law more broadly.

The next section of this essay will lay out briefly Agamben's concepts of the "open" and the "closed," in order to show how he connects metaphysical reflections on humanity's distinctive, superior nature with scientific classification of animal genera. Agamben's insistence on the political function of scientific and metaphysical discourses is directly relevant to the themes of the *Roman d'Alexandre* and of *Alexander and Dindimus*, and my second and third sections will analyse those works in turn. Finally I shall turn to the reframing of the texts in Bodl. 264. If, as I have suggested, any single instance of a genre is *sui generis*, then that is true not only of texts. In medieval literature, genre is also a function of individual manuscripts.

### **The Open and the Closed**

Agamben's guiding principle in *The Open* is that "the caesura between the human and the animal passes first of all within man" (16). The "animal question" is therefore also, and primarily, a human one. Asking "in what way—within man—has man been separated from non-man, and the animal from the human" (16) will allow us to critique the bases of human inequality. On the one hand, Agamben rejects the toxic ideologies which misuse the "zone of indifference" (37) or "of exception" (79) to deny true humanity to some human beings. On the other hand, he combats the "biopower" (12) typical of modern societies, which posits us all as "anthropophorous animals" (18) and thus encourages bovine complacency and ovine conformism. Agamben argues that both of these objectionable developments depend significantly on the modern scientific distinction between human and animal, whose functioning he therefore sets out to interrogate and to dismantle.<sup>2</sup>

Heidegger helps him in this task by arguing that human living (*Dasein*) is not simply opposed to animal life as "open" to "closed" (49-77). In Agamben's use here, the Heideggerian concept of "the Open" may be glossed roughly as the existential dimension of human life. "Open" human characteristics include free will, self-determination, discretion, decision-making, self-awareness, and consciousness. These, Heidegger argues, meet their absolute limit in mortality and in other human beings, and are therefore ultimately "closed," bound as is animal life to materiality, necessity, and finitude. Furthermore, even the most "open" characteristics are less autonomous than we like to think. Agamben's account of Heidegger's discussion of "profound boredom" (63-70) highlights the mundane limitations on human freedom. When waiting for a train I should read to pass the time, yet somehow I can't. Imprisoned by boredom, I am "closed"; tedium overrides and mocks my supposed ability to transcend my surroundings. At best, therefore, human "openness" for Heidegger is "openness to a closedness" (68): the best that we can hope for is an ironic awareness of the restrictions set upon our higher capacities by our "animal" base. For Heidegger, this is both a chastening of the master of the universe and a restatement of human superiority, but Agamben artfully emphasizes its consequences for his own project by extending the notion of "closedness." In his account, even within the highest and most "open" of human experiences there are aspects which are humbly stimulus-bound, therefore "closed." These align us with the being that we attribute to animals, undermining the human/animal distinction and Heidegger's claims for human elitism. Conversely, a degree of "openness" can be

accorded non-humans, including even the humblest of animals (39–47).<sup>3</sup> Agamben's contestation prompts us to challenge the powerful political caesuras—the laws—which regulate the human sphere by distributing access to openness differentially to individual and groups.

There are significant points of contact between Agamben's discussion and the medieval texts that I shall discuss. Both the *Roman d'Alexandre* and *Alexander and Dindimus* take exercise of the higher, properly human faculties to be an ethical (and for *Alexander and Dindimus*, spiritual) good. Each stages encounters between humans and other beings, inciting us to classification. Each also proposes "openness" as the principal test of humanity, specifically in an "open" relationship to law. And each uses the caesura that marks the point of separation-connection between human and animal as a way of valuing human beings differently, considering that those who accept or reject laws uncritically behave in a bestial manner. Both texts incorporate the notion of "openness to closedness" in the willing acknowledgement of certain constraints on action, dependent on the consciousness seeing beyond and reflecting upon the horizons that those constraints imply. Supposed restrictions thereby become evidence of the highest human freedom. For both works this "openness to closedness" forms part of a creaturely ethics in which the supreme good consists in obedience to God's plan for the class of being to which one belongs. I shall argue, moreover, that in each text this discussion is led at the level of genre and form as well as that of theme.

### ***Le Roman d'Alexandre: Human and Animal***

The Old French Vulgate *Roman d'Alexandre* by Alexandre de Paris (usually dated to around 1180) relates the spectacular exploits of Alexander the Great from cradle to tomb.<sup>4</sup> The work places itself at the bar before the two major secular narrative genres of the *langue d'oïl* (Gaullier-Bougassas). Usually discussed alongside the early romances known as *romans antiques*, with which it shares classical setting and several themes, it is nevertheless considered peripheral to that group by virtue of its date, milieu, and manuscript context, as well as of its form.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the other *romans antiques* employ octosyllabic rhyming couplets—the dominant meter of twelfth-century French-language historiography and romance – the *Roman d'Alexandre* is written in *laisses*: sequences of a variable number of lines bound together by a single rhyme or assonance at the line end. Through this form, along with warlike themes and formulaic style, the text simultaneously exempts itself from the laws of the *roman antique*, and appeals to the *chanson de geste* or Old French epic genre. Here too, however, the choice of form is out of step, since the usual *chanson de geste* line of the time is decasyllabic while the *Roman d'Alexandre* is written in dodecasyllabics, as are its many later continuations. This is neither the first nor by any means the only use of what will in the fifteenth century become known as the alexandrine line (Lote, vol. 2, 54–56); nevertheless, one can speculate on the collocation. Like Alexander himself, the dodecasyllabic line gives extra measure and surpasses the norm. It commands attention, notably by displacing the caesura from its usual position in twelfth-century *chansons de geste*, where it creates hemistichs of different lengths (four plus six syllables, occasionally six plus four). In Alexander's dodecasyllabic line, the caesura falls on the sixth syllable, thus equalizing the syllabic count of the hemistichs. The effect on an ear accustomed to the decasyllabic arrangement is to make the alexandrine line seem over-long

in one hemistich even as it emphasizes the symmetry between the half-lines: a subtly troubling effect, which makes the metric pattern seem at once intuitive, innovative, and imposed. Lote's discussion of the caesura, to which I owe this account of its balancing effect, demonstrates that the caesura represents not a silence but a suspended note, in which the voice lingers over a stressed syllable.<sup>6</sup> Falling on, not after, that syllable, the caesura suspends as well as introduces difference, and makes its management a living issue for performer and audience. Whereas Agamben treats the caesura as synonymous with hiatus and linked to the will to separate cleanly, Lote's account emphasizes the caesura as articulating troubling continuities and crossovers. Agamben's political aims may therefore be considered to be in harmony with the poetics of works like the *Roman d'Alexandre*.

This brief discussion shows how the *Roman d'Alexandre* manifests "openness" in relation to not one but two genres. Claiming to be an exception relative to the laws it cathects, the work exemplifies the *sui generis* aspect of genre. This stance correlates to its subject matter: the *Roman d'Alexandre* is a showcase for its exceptional protagonist. Alexander's appetites for knowledge about the human and natural world feed into his heightened diplomatic and strategic awareness, making Alexander the greatest of commanders and the best of men. This is a cue for the text to explore at length the relations between Alexander and different kinds of beings in ways which recall Agamben's terms of "open" and "closed."

Thus the prologue begins by insisting that the reader will learn from this account of Alexander's life:

De connoistre reison d'amer et de haïr,  
 De ses amis garder et chierement tenir,  
 Des anemis grever, c'on n'en puisse eslargir,  
 Des ledures vengier et des biens fes merir,  
 De haster quant leus est et a terme soffrir. (1.3–7)<sup>7</sup>

To know when it is right to love and when to hate, to look after and cherish one's friends, to harm one's enemies, as badly as possible, to avenge offences and to reciprocate good deeds, to hasten when that is appropriate and to bide one's time.

Although most readers can hardly hope to follow Alexander beyond the "bonnes Artu" (1.128; the limits of Arthur [i.e. the limits of the known world]), they can be like him by exercising judgement in their everyday interactions with others. The prologue gradually establishes this capacity for discretion as one that distinguishes humans from animals. *Conoistre* (to recognize, acknowledge) is repeatedly used to refer to knowledge available to human subjects. It is employed both in reference to the audience (for example, 1.3, 1.39, and 1.47) and to Alexander himself (1.77). Beasts on the other hand are allotted only *saveir* (to know intellectually or practically): "Les bestes en fremirent, quant sorent la menee" (1.88; the beasts quivered when they knew the business). In an episode that epitomizes the distinction between the "closed" animal and "open" human, griffins, captured by their appetites, will transport Alexander in flight, but only he gains cosmic knowledge and expands the field of his human understanding (1.73–76 and 3.4949–5098).

Alexander establishes his own and humanity's role as at once masters of the natural world and part of it, subject to its laws but "open" to the "closedness" those laws impart. To foreground this activity on Alexander's part, the text presents us with fluid categories. The borders between human, animal, vegetable, and mineral are placed in question as Alexander repeatedly encounters creatures occupying "zones of indifference" between human and other genera: Bucephalus, sirens, flower-women, automata, Gog and Magog, to mention only a few. Alexander's job is to subdue these creatures and, in doing so, to judge carefully how to treat them. When he descends into the ocean depths in a glass submersible, for example, Alexander learns from the marine creatures: "Comment guerre doit estre en bataille establee / Aucune fois par force et autre par voidie, / Car force vaut molt peu s'engiens ne li aïe" (3.530–32; how war in battle must be waged sometimes with military might and sometimes with trickery, for might is worth little unless assisted by strategy). This lesson, carried over into human affairs, will enable him to defeat the Indian king Porrus. On the other hand, Alexander condemns another submarine scenario as unfit for humans:

Et vit les grans poissons vers les petis mellés;  
 Qant li petis est pris sempres est devourés.  
 Qant ce vit Alixandres, adont s'est porpensés  
 Que tous cis siecles est et peris et dampnés. ...  
 "Covoitise nos a tous surpris et vaincus,  
 Certes par avarisse est li mons confondus.  
 Je vi as grans poissons devorer les menus,  
 Ainsi as povres homes est li avoires tolus." (3.445–48, 3.508–11)

And he saw the big fish clash with the small; when the small fish is taken, it is straightaway devoured. When Alexander saw this, then he thought to himself that all this world is lost and damned. ... "Covetousness has overcome and vanquished us all, certainly, by avarice has the world been ruined. I saw the little fish devoured by the great, in the same way are the possessions of the poor man snatched away."

Comparing human and piscine behavior, Alexander draws out each's ethical and political valences. Because Porrus's kingly practice resembles that of the big fish, he will lose the war; his small fry will desert him. As Alexander asks the defeated monarch on seeing the latter's accumulated treasure, "Qui rien ne veut doner quels homes cuide avoir? / Cil ou il mieus se fie le met en nonchaloir" (3.2213–14; if someone is not willing to give away anything, what kind of men does he expect to have? The one in whom he most trusts cares nothing for him). Alexander, wiser than fish or king, gives liberally, ensuring loyal service. Thus the continuum drawn by the *Roman d'Alexandre* across human and non-human behaviors serves to establish the ideal human character: the one who can place caesuras appropriately despite that continuum. This ability defines human sovereignty over other beings, and identifies the actual sovereign as its best practitioner.

However, Alexander is not merely “open” on humanity’s behalf; he exemplifies Heidegger’s notion of “openness to closedness.” Even such achievements as his are limited by mortality, as he himself turns out to be the one “maniere de char” (1.89; kind of flesh) that he cannot overcome: “sa belle char fu morte et enterree” (1.133; his fair flesh was dead and buried). Warned that he is soon to die, he refuses to turn aside from his goal “por paor de mort” (3.3874; for fear of death). He carries “openness to closedness” to a heroic level. Alexander marches with eyes open towards death, the final limitation that he simultaneously recognizes and defies. When he does so, Alexander both acknowledges and exceeds the anthropophorous animal that is the human substrate. Here as elsewhere, Alexander’s incomparable performance dignifies the human genus.

The same limited “openness” means that the *Roman d’Alexandre* does not chart a simple triumphal progression. Alexander always challenges constraints (the characteristic word is “esprover”; to test, prove), but with varying outcomes. Sometimes he abolishes a restriction, as with the dismantling of the automata guarding the flower-women’s forest (3.3388–456). Sometimes he bows to constraint, as when he accepts that the flower-women cannot survive outside their forest (3.3521–44); the limitation is again mortality.<sup>8</sup> But other cases are more complex. Trapped with his men in the inescapable *Val périlleux*, Alexander reads an inscription which unexpectedly sets them free; however, the audience remains in the dark and the valley remains fatal (3.2876–78). Alexander here transcends the common law but upholds its general validity, his exception proving the rule.

This leads me to a different understanding of the “zones of indifference” within the *Roman d’Alexandre*. Turning from the caesura between human and animal we may, following Agamben’s advice, focus instead on caesuras as stress points within humanity. The poem’s opening lines, quoted above, tell us that some are friends, some enemies. More subtly, these lines distinguish between those who know how to tell friends from enemies and to act accordingly, and those who do not. Discernment may be a properly human faculty, but it is not universally shared. Poor narrators and “cil trouveour bastart” (1.37; these bastard poets) lack it and therefore “resamble[nt] l’asnon en son versefier” (1.34; resemble the ass in its versifying). The final refinement of discernment is to know the extent of our own “closedness”: the laws that properly bind us. To achieve this is both our duty and our reward as readers. And an important test of our understanding, according to the *Roman d’Alexandre*, is whether we accept our place within the political order.

Alexander himself makes this point when reproached by his barons for the “grans desverie” (3.524; great insanity) of his submarine escapade. Kings, say the barons, should remember that the well-being of their people hangs on their personal safety. Alexander’s reply to the barons finely mixes philosophical generality with political specificity, and the natural with the human world:

“Dans Clins,” ce dist li rois, “bien fait a otroier,  
Mais li rois est molt fols et peu fait a proisier

Qui toutes ses besoignes fera par conseilier –  
 Puis qu'il a tant de sens, qu'il se sache targier –  
 Et a autrui s'atent; bien le puis afichier  
 Que il n'est mie rois ne ne vaut un denier,  
 Ains est espoëntaus q'on seut en champ drecier  
 Qant li vilains en veut les oisiaus manecier,  
 Il ne set ne ne puet ne traire ne lancier." (3.549–57)

"Lord Clin," said the king, "that I grant you, but the king is very foolish and little worthy of praise who does all his tasks by counsel – if he has enough sense, let him look after himself – and who waits on others; I can well declare that he is no king, and not worth a penny, no: he is a scarecrow of the sort that's put up in the field when the peasant wants to threaten the birds with it, he [it] neither knows how nor is able to draw bow or wield lance."

For the common good, royalty requires a greater degree of freedom in the exercise of its discretion than do those of lesser station. In Alexander's case, then, transgressing laws is part of the same process as law-giving. Along with generalship, it is in relation to law that it is most appropriate and crucial that a king exercise his discernment freely, untrammelled by common norms. On the other hand, because the text emphasizes the discernment that he uses to assess and correct existing laws and to instate new ones, the royal relation to law is presented as largely on a continuum with that available to lowlier mortals. Everyone, including Alexander, is a subject of the law.

The lowest category of human being in the *Roman d'Alexandre* is accordingly represented by those who refuse to recognize their place, the "serfs" against whom the text rails. "Serfs" are presented as uniquely "closed" within a nature incapable of gratitude, loyalty or respect: animal in their degree of determination. In such figures as Alexander's murderers, Antipater and Divinuspater, humanity's internal caesuras harden into rigid divisions, disrupting the continuum through which the text generously offers its readers the chance to identify with Alexander (so long as they acknowledge the social difference). Agamben has written elsewhere (*Homo sacer*) about the logic of the exception as underpinning the sovereign authority to make or suspend laws, a capacity that aligns kings with the indifferently human. Thus the "serfs," through social mobility, mirror Alexander in audaciously challenging boundaries. What the text portrays as their exceptional "closedness" mirrors and enhances Alexander's exceptional "openness," as well as explaining his fall.

Thus the *Roman d'Alexandre* establishes the ideally human as both subject and exception relative to the law. Audience members are invited to be "open" to their own "closedness," freely and consciously adopting their proper position in an order that stretches from questions of human and non-human being, to distinctions of social rank. Overstepping proper boundaries is represented as either an imperial or a slavish activity. The text allies itself with the elite variant through the way it positions itself relative to two genres. Partially both *roman antique* and *chanson de geste*, fully neither, it is doubly, asymmetrically extraordinary. Like its protagonist, it claims the privilege of exploring new territories and of challenging existing laws. Like him, it establishes itself as one of a kind; if we can speak of

an “Alexandrine” genre here, it lies in this haughty, paradoxical refusal to conform to prototypes (Brady).

### ***Alexander and Dindimus: Human and Divine***

*Alexander and Dindimus* is considered to be a romance, and often presented as a fragment of a lost, longer Alexander romance. However, “Middle English romance” is a nebulous category which leaves uncertain what laws may be invoked, or how, and which overlaps with other generic groupings. The poem’s form complicates the question further: written in unrhymed alliterative long lines, it is considered an early work of the disputed “Alliterative Revival” of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.<sup>9</sup> Some critics consider that alliterative form does not significantly affect genre, others that it does, while a third group represents alliterative works as effectively constituting a genre in their own right. As a group, the works share many themes with *roman antique* or *chanson de geste*, among them learning, Latinity, *translatio*, history, and warfare. I shall argue that *Alexander and Dindimus* uses alliterative form to invoke a set of laws and to establish a relation to them. In this sense, the form implies generic specificity.

Some of the best works of Middle English literature are written in alliterative verse, whose metrics have attracted excellent scholarly discussion. Its conspicuous alliterating syllables and strong stress patterns give long-line, unrhymed alliterative verse an impression of densely focused tight-knittedness: “with lel letteres loken” (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 35). It is surprising, therefore, that scholars still cannot pinpoint its versification to their satisfaction. It is accepted that the alliterative long line usually has four stresses, two in the first hemistich, two in the second; the hemistichs are bridged by alliterating syllables in the pattern aa/ax, where a is the alliterating sound and x a non-alliterating one. The stress patterns of the half-lines must differ, and certain rules of stress distribution have been established. Nevertheless, it is not always clear where in any given line these stresses lie, and critics struggle to find an account which does not leave many lines irregular or corrupt. Near misses and false starts or endings complicate the design. And although it is a critical element in the metrics, notably in distinguishing alliterative verse from prose, the position of the caesura in practice often remains uncertain. In my view, such resistance to the expertise of both medieval and modern readers bears witness to the form’s open-endedness, which I propose to treat as a positive feature. The alliterative long line itself raises questions of intention and accident, of pattern and predictability and (drawing on Agamben) of regularity and conformity in their political and legal senses. Reading or listening to these texts, we must be alert to identify the alliterating design while accepting that some lines never fulfil expectations. Insofar as it embodies a will and a plan felt but not fully apprehended, alliterative verse shades easily into uncertainty and thence into enigma.

It is interesting, then, that *Alexander and Dindimus* should be so regular: “the single most accurate guide to the metrical practices of an alliterative poet” (Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes 47–48).<sup>10</sup> *Alexander and Dindimus* relates to the formal law it invokes in the mode of exemplarity, promoting an ideal of conformity the rules of which, however, remain obscure. It endows those rules with substance, authority and desirability by the way that it evokes them, performatively creating “a paradigmatic

alliterative poem, an almost perfect example of the species” (Grady 82). This could be explained in terms of literary history: *Alexander and Dindimus* as an early work of the Revival might represent a purity from which later efforts degraded. Alternatively, this “almost perfect” poem may be a fantasy object of our curiosity, which the text both arouses and baffles. *Alexander and Dindimus* thus presents itself as an exemplary expression of a singular law, a law which we are induced to desire especially because it remains mysterious. Contrast to this the way in which the *Roman d’Alexandre* invokes two genres both in the mode of exception, constantly calling us to measure how far and in what ways the text departs from expectations that it itself establishes even as it distances itself from them.

This positioning relative to the law of genre both supports and is glossed by the debate within *Alexander and Dindimus*, whose theme is how best to accomplish God’s will. By comparison with both the *Roman d’Alexandre* and Agamben’s essay, *Alexander and Dindimus* displaces the caesura which marks humanity’s relationship with its significant other, who is not animal but divine. Alexander and Dindimus agree that he who rejects God’s plan for mankind is worse than an animal; being “closed” to that transcendence to which a human ought, uniquely, to be “open,” his degraded condition may be described as “bestial” or “brutish.” Thus in my view, the relationship drawn between humans and animals in this text is primarily a rhetorical trope, used to gauge the proper relationship between humans and God.

In his first letter describing the Brahmins’ life and ethos, their king Dindimus, “pe doctour of wise” (249; wise teacher), explains that they approach God by embracing the condition of the human animal, what Agamben calls “bare life” (76). Their asceticism enables them to master the internal enemy that is temptation, liberating them from either fear of or desire for externals, which in turn permits them to focus on God (337–62). Dindimus insists that the Brahmins lead a life comparable to the Golden Age (Steel). It is simple, but not deprived: “We han so michel at pe mel pat we no more wilne” (304; we have so much at the meal that we want no more). Free from lack, they have no reason to commit crimes (369–97). Their rightful and reasonable habits ensure the maximum possible lifespan: “Forpei ne se we no seg sodainly deie; / For we ne lijthe noht our lif wip no lupur dede, / Wherefore we scholde with schame be schorted of daies” (399–401; therefore we see no one die suddenly, for we do not shorten our life with any hateful deed because of which we ought in shame to be deprived of days). As Dindimus presents it, this is not a rejection of the flesh but a fulfilment of its potential on the path to divinely ordained humanity. Thus, although the Brahmins disdain most human crafts as vanity (for instance agriculture, beautiful clothing, philosophy, or washing, 402ff.), they do not scorn the dew that cleanses them (425), wise words (461–62), nor reading historical romances (467–68). Their voluntary self-restriction is properly seen as “openness to closedness,” of great spiritual and ethical worth. In the example of the Brahmins, the anthropophorous animal occupies a zone of indistinction not only between man and animal, but also, and precisely for that reason, between man and God. In Dindimus’s account, this zone is that of exemplary subjection to God’s law.

Alexander's retort (822–966) to this lengthy account contains a slew of animal similes supporting this contention:

Panne hit semep by 3oure sawe, 3if 3e sob tellen,  
 Pat kindely 3oure consience acordeþ to bestus;  
 For as bestes 3e ben by no skile reuled, –  
 Ne hem of kinde no comeþ no konninge of witte, –  
 So be 3e, ludus, bylad and laweles also  
 Pat han no reward to riht but redlese wirchen.  
 But we faipful folk, þat faren as wise,  
 Ben ydemed to do dedus of rihte.  
 Forþy us kenneþ our kinde to acorde in trowþe,  
 In swiche lawus to live þat longen to Gode,  
 For to sowe and to sette in þe sad erthe  
 And opur wordliche werk wisly to founde. (902–13)

Then it appears, from what you say, if you speak truly, that your hearts are like those of beasts in nature, for like beasts, you are ruled by no discretion – no intelligent understanding is natural to them – just so are you, people, misled and lawless at the same time, who have no regard for right but behave foolishly. But we, faithful folk, who behave wisely, are appointed to perform great deeds as by right. Therefore our nature teaches us to live together faithfully, to live in God's laws, to sow and to plant in the firm earth, and to practice other earthly works wisely.

The Brahmins are bestial and lawless; the genuinely law-biding path is that taken by Alexander's people in their response to natural resources and opportunities. The parable of the talents comes to mind, although it is not mentioned (Alexander's discourse remains aristocratic, leaving the clerical register to Dindimus). Refusing to fish, trap birds, cultivate crops, wear fine clothes or sail ships, the Brahmins perversely reject God's gifts: "Panne schewe 3e to hur Schappere schame for His sondus" (959; then you treat your Maker's ordinances contemptuously). In the habits that Dindimus exalts as virtuously chosen austerity and pious acceptance of divinely imposed constraints, Alexander sees only bestial compulsion, the result of a restricted diet, likening the Brahmins to starving wolves (858–69). The Brahmins are "closed" where they should be "open." This is not holiness but "folie" (966; folly). Alexander rejects both Dindimus's advocacy of "mekenesse" (614; humility, obedience, patience) as the chief virtue and his interpretation of Alexander's expansionism and inquisitiveness as "covaitise" (257; covetousness), driven by need and greed (a particular insult given that Alexander's defining quality is largesse). He advances the variety of beings and of being that he has seen on his travels, alongside more familiar variations such as youth and age, to argue that true reverence lies in fulfilling the potential given variably to different creatures by God and by *kinde*. Alexander denies that his own conquests and boundary-crossings trap him in earthly "closedness"; on the contrary, his daring epitomizes the path to true humanity, and therefore exemplifies obedience to God's will.

Thus the two kings agree on the goal of exemplary submission to God's law, but differ on how to attain it. Mirroring this, their debate turns on puns whose meaning and value are disputed. Dindimus expatiates on the "fals godus" (603; false gods) that the Greeks "Wilfully worschipe[n] wip wordliche godus" (604; worship obstinately with worldly goods). The pun on gods/goods is extended, with the pagan pantheon translating into consecration of body-parts and appetites. Devotion to Bacchus, patron of the throat, corresponds to desire for wine, held to be a good (675–78). The Brahmin king asserts that such gods and goods "han miht upon molde and of no mo pingus" (739; have power on earth but over nothing else). Therefore, when he introduces himself as the son whom the "grete god Amon ... / Bigat on Olimpias þe onurable queen" (193–94; great god Ammon begot on Olympias, the honorable queen), Alexander plays into Dindimus's hands: according to the latter, Alexander is imprisoned in materiality precisely where he targets transcendence. Dindimus's own people, in contrast, worship not "wordliche godus" but "Godus worpliche Word" (615; God's worthy Word), a Christian-sounding "Sone sopliche of Man þat in Himsilf dwelleþ" (616; Son truly of Man, who dwells in Himself). Dindimus's rhetoric implies intuitively obvious superiority, however Alexander is not prepared to concede the point, and elaborates effectively on his former arguments: he pursues worldly goods because they are God's, not gods. The idea that God is immanent in the created world, and therefore in humans, allows both of the contrary arguments that Dindimus and Alexander advance. For each, the other attends to "this world" in such a way as to miss "the Word" in it; each claims correct reconciliation between Word and world in his own people's practice and attacks the other's lack of fit.

The crucial question concerns "þe lif þat come schal heraftur, / And derely wipoute dep dure schal evere" (363–64; the life to come hereafter, which will indeed last forever, beyond death). The debaters differ over what earthly actions will best achieve this greatest, metaphysical boundary-crossing. Alexander's condemnation of the Brahmins' willful philosophical and physical isolation recalls the prisoners of Plato's cave: "þe arn liche of þour lif to swiche loþe burnus / þat ben in dep presoun don al hure daies time / And han mirpus on molde missed ful clene" (1097–99; in your way of life you are like wretches who have been thrown into a deep prison for their whole lives and have completely lacked joy on earth). Who best serves God exploits his creation; damnation awaits the blinkered Brahmins (1106–9). For his part, Dindimus warns especially against the attempt to usurp divine status, associating Alexander with those who reject the "closedness" of mortality—a mistake that will, of course, end in the final closure of damnation (1060–71).

As the text stands, the debate remains open. The relative equality between Alexander and Dindimus is evident when compared with Alexander's earlier encounter with the Gymnosophists. Superficially similar to the Brahmins, they present *vanitas* arguments to justify their ascetic way of life. When Alexander offers them a reward in return for their story, they ask for "Ai-lastinge lif" (70; life everlasting), and when he declares that he cannot give, they ask:

[S]yn pou so knowist  
 þat þe is demed þe dep to dure nouht longe,

Whi farest pou so fihtinge folk to distroie,  
And for to winne þe word wendest so romme? (77–80)

Since you know that you are condemned to die and not to live long, why do you go around fighting to destroy people, and travel so widely to gain the world?

Although this question uses *contemptus mundi* rhetoric, the Gymnosophists stop short of making the connection to God's will. Their question only opens up the space for Alexander to claim the spiritual high ground:

Porou þe grace of God I gete þat I have.  
þei han demed me or dep, þorou dintus of mighte  
Of erþe to be emperour in everych a saide.  
Sin I have grace of þat graunt grimmet to worþe,  
I wrouthe wrecheli now and wrapede Drihten,  
ʒif I for dul of any dep my destené fledde  
þat is markid to me and to no mo kingus. (84–90)

I achieve what I have through God's grace. They have ordained me before I die, through mighty blows, to be emperor of the whole earth. Since I have permission by that grace to be most tempestuous, I would do basely now and anger the Lord if I for fear of any death fled my destiny which is assigned to me and to no other kings.

Alexander compares his characteristic restlessness and haste ("cof" and "raþe") to the waves on the sea, equally moved by the breath of heaven (91–100). Compared to this grand vision of providence acting through the gifts of one man, the Gymnosophists' philosophy remains on the worldly side, exposing poverty of spirit rather than pious humility.<sup>11</sup> To be "open" to the "closedness" of this world, as the Gymnosophists are, does not guarantee the vision beyond this world to the next. In contrast, Alexander and Dindimus agree that it is this vision that defines the properly human.

I do not wish to oversimplify: to live like a beast in *Alexander and Dindimus* is not to live as an animal does. Even the Gymnosophists, most limited of the peoples presented, are clearly on the human side of the animal/human borderline. Their elaborate, glossed name indicates culture (11–12). If, as Agamben indicates, that borderline is a primary instance of the law, then the law rules all the peoples portrayed in *Alexander and Dindimus*. Whereas in the *Roman d'Alexandre* boundaries become frontiers, making the text about the judicious testing, recognition, reform, and creation of laws, *Alexander and Dindimus* focuses on law-keeping; the question is not what the law is, or whether it should be obeyed, but how best to obey it. Living like a beast is the tragic result of answering this question wrongly.

In both the content and form of *Alexander and Dindimus*, then, an overarching, divinely authorized law is posited, though its details remain obscure and elusive even while the desire to conform is clearly defined. Although spiritual error becomes an

urgent concern, the relation between God and humanity has its political counterpart. Whereas in the *Roman d'Alexandre* the king's legitimacy rested on his ability to adapt law to any situation, in *Alexander and Dindimus* it relies on his ability to present himself as correctly interpreting and obeying a divine power-source all the more intransigent because unknowable. Flora and fauna, and creatures lying between those categories and humanity, are in the *Roman d'Alexandre* exemplary subjects of royal law, crying out for regulation and classification as do the varied classes of human beings within the poem. In *Alexander and Dindimus*, non-human creatures are available as figures of speech precisely because they are merely brutish stage properties in creation's drama, whose only actors are humans and God. While on the one hand, *Alexander and Dindimus* buttresses the boundary separating humans from other beings, on the other, it flattens the potential distinctions between humans. It presents a universalist argument: one law will apply to all human subjects, kings included. Such a law can only be divine in origin and inscrutable in nature, a law to be desired, felt anxiously in our bones, but not to be mastered intellectually.

Precisely because of this universalism, however, *Alexander and Dindimus* opens up a zone of exception within the law itself: the law has no need to explain itself; indeed, its prerogative correlates to its opacity. The poem stakes its own claim to exceptionality in its close relation to that law, being idiosyncratic in its consummate submission. The emphasis on exemplary reproduction of an ideal model is mimicked in the way alliteration is taken to extremes in the polemical use of puns. *Alexander and Dindimus* adheres so scrupulously to the alliterative law that it looks like someone's fantasy of obedience, and this destabilizes the law itself. The *Roman d'Alexandre*, in contrast, places itself at once within and without two genre laws, insisting doubly, even reflexively that in order to give and enforce laws successfully, one must be exempted from them. It encourages us to interrogate the different systems, to ask whether in particular circumstances one law may seem better fitted than the other. Rather than implying complete answers to these questions, the *Roman d'Alexandre* emphasizes the critical faculty to know, analyze and negotiate multiple systems. The desire that the *Roman d'Alexandre* incites in us towards law is marked more by curiosity than by anxiety.

### **MS Bodl. 264: Genus and Genre**

Having discussed each poem individually, in this final section I consider the effects of their presentation together in Bodl. 264. Since any concrete instance of genre is *sui generis*, the manuscript contributes as much as the literary text proper does to the cathected authority of genre. The manuscript does so through such textual factors as the combination of works included and the versions of those texts, their language and form, and through paratextual features like illustrations, rubrics, and titles, materials, and craftsmanship. I have argued that although both the *Roman d'Alexandre* and *Alexander and Dindimus* claim "openness to closedness" in support of their particular relation to genre law, the former uses this strategy to position itself as a partial, privileged exception to that law, the latter as an (exceptional) exemplification of it. Here I shall address the question of how their instance in Bodl. 264 changes those positions.

We can begin with the description on the Bodleian Library website:

(fols. 3r–208r) The *Romance of Alexander* in French verse, with miniatures illustrating legends of Alexander the Great and with marginal scenes of everyday life, by the Flemish illuminator Jehan de Grise and his workshop, 1338–44; with two sections added in England c. 1400, (fols. 209r–215v, with fol. 1r) *Alexander and Dindimus* (*Alexander Fragment B*) in Middle English verse, with coarser miniatures, and (fols. 218r–71v, with fol. 2v) Marco Polo, *Li Livres du Graunt Caam*, in French prose, with miniatures by Johannes and his school.<sup>12</sup>

Thus the manuscript's production has three phases. An Alexander manuscript manufactured on the continent (probably in Tournai; Cruse 61–102) evidently travelled to England where it acquired two further texts and two significantly placed miniatures: the artist who illustrated *Alexander and Dindimus* supplied a miniature introducing the manuscript as a whole, while Johannes both illustrated Marco Polo's travels and contributed a miniature introducing the French Alexander. The rubrics of the first phase were also probably completed in England.

These additions produce a volume whose "physical appearance is intended to flow uninterruptedly across the differing origins of the book's parts" (Dutschke 294), urging us to treat it as a new whole. At the top of a blank column on fol. 67<sup>r</sup>, the hand that later copied *Alexander and Dindimus* has written:<sup>13</sup>

Here fayleth a prossesse of þis rommauce of alixaud' þe wheche prossesse  
 þat fayleth ʒe schulle fynde at þe ende of þis bok ywrete in engelyche ryme  
 and whan ʒe han radde it to þe ende torneþ hedur aʒen and turneþ ouyr þys  
 lef and bygynneþ at þys reson Che fu el mois de may que li tans renouele  
 and so rede forþ þe rommauce to þe ende whylis þe frenche lasteþ

The rubricator's instructions imply that we are to view the textual fabric of the expanded Alexander narrative as seamless, and the beginning (fol. 209<sup>r</sup>) and ending (fol. 215<sup>v</sup>) of *Alexander and Dindimus* are marked only by brief rubrics, not the grand miniatures that elsewhere in the manuscript mark major textual divisions.<sup>14</sup> The English poem is therefore treated like the French Alexander texts here incorporated into the *Roman d'Alexandre: La Prise de Dafur* (fols. 102<sup>r</sup>–109<sup>v</sup> and 182<sup>v</sup>–185<sup>r</sup>), *Les Voeux du paon* (fols. 110<sup>r</sup>–163<sup>v</sup>), *Le Restor du paon* (fols. 165<sup>r</sup>–182<sup>v</sup>), *Le Voyage au paradis terrestre* (fols. 185<sup>r</sup>–188<sup>r</sup>) and *La Venjance Alixandre* (fols. 197<sup>r</sup>–208<sup>r</sup>).<sup>15</sup> That this is a typical presentation of medieval French Alexander material does not diminish the importance of the additions or the urge to include them. The extant manuscript substantially reorients the meanings and generic positioning of the earlier manuscript and of the texts it contains. I have space here to indicate only some of the complex effects.

The inscription insists that *Alexander and Dindimus* is an omission from a section of the *Roman d'Alexandre* in which Alexander seeks and fails to achieve immortality and where his forthcoming death is announced. Adding *Alexander and Dindimus*

implies that the manuscript's earlier Alexander material "fayleth" to give a correct account of the relationship between human and God. Dindimus's rebuke applies also to the hero, ethos, and politics of the *Roman d'Alexandre*; this extension of his authority lends weight to his arguments in *Alexander and Dindimus*, perhaps tipping the debate in his favor. However, the consequences are not straightforward. Because *Alexander and Dindimus* contributes a relatively heavyweight intellectual debate to the manuscript's Alexander compilation, it enhances our reading of Alexandre de Paris's text as a *roman antique*.<sup>16</sup> Strengthening the elements of *clergie*, curiosity, and learning increases the earlier compilation's prestige, with the consequence that the vast repertoire of wonders in the *Roman d'Alexandre* actually supports the argument (advanced by the Alexander of *Alexander and Dindimus*) that travel broadens the mind, while the earlier work's extensive, sympathetic account of its hero as a scholar-prince lends substance to a figure only sketched in the later poem. Thus interpolation into the *Roman d'Alexandre* strengthens both sides of the debate that animates *Alexander and Dindimus*.

By the same token, its manuscript context turns the law-abiding *Alexander and Dindimus* into an exception. It is the sole English work in Bodl. 264, notably different by language, meter, form, and tradition from either the French-language Alexander compilation or Marco Polo's prose *Livres du Graunt Caam* (a work better known as, variously, *Le Devisement du Monde*, *Travels*, or *Il Milione*). Bodl. 264 presents the alliterative long line as an alternative and equivalent to the twelve-syllable, monorhymed *laisse* which dominates the first 208 folios. By implying an audience competent in both languages and forms, the manuscript carries us effortlessly across the boundaries it displays. It thereby claims for the alliterative work the same exceptionality, imperiousness, expansiveness, and refusal to leave limits unchallenged that the *Roman d'Alexandre* makes for itself, and which *Alexander and Dindimus* eschews in its stress on obedience and the observation of limits.<sup>17</sup> Bodl. 264 ensures that alliterative form and English expression cannot be accused of the same insularity for which Alexander reproaches Dindimus; they are "open" to the wider world.

There is yet another layer to Bodl. 264. In the *Roman d'Alexandre*, Alexander is presented as God's instrument; in *Alexander and Dindimus*, he declares himself to be God's own tempest (91-100). The miniatures added to the manuscript in England, however, remind us that he was a pagan. The manuscript's frontispiece depicts Nectanabus in his palace, referring to the tale that Alexander's true father was the necromancer and exiled king of Egypt. This slur is further highlighted by the frontispiece added to the *Roman d'Alexandre*, which shows Olympias, Alexander's mother, in bed with Nectanabus in the form of a dragon, whom she mistakes for the god Ammon. In the earliest phase of Bodl. 264, animals and hybrids proliferated in the margins of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, challenging us to mimic Alexander in investigating and categorizing them appropriately. In the reworking, they invade the central space and become an easily legible moralizing metaphor: Olympias is a fool, Nectanabus a knave. Alexander's boast of divine descent, a feature of the English poem, is deflated by the illustrators who decorated that poem and the Marco Polo text. On the other hand, the pictures of Dindimus remind us that he too is a pagan, his nudity echoing that of the idol pictured on fol. 213<sup>r</sup>, rubric: "How he tellep alixandre of his maumeutrie" (the text makes it clear that "his" refers to Alexander,

but picture and rubric are ambiguous). Thus, the later phases of Bodl. 264 construe both Alexander and Dindimus as no better than the Gymnosophists: “closed” to the divine exactly where each thinks that he is “open” to it. For all their aspirations, they are in the end misled and bestial.

This interpretation of the Alexander material in Bodl. 264 is reinforced by the inclusion of the Marco Polo text in French prose. This adds another genre and form to the manuscript, and mercantile aspirations to Alexander’s global vision, but there is more. Bodl. 264’s *Livres du Graunt Caam* is copied from another manuscript, London, British Library, Royal 19.D.I, which is often considered to be a crusading compilation produced in Paris for Philip VI in the 1330s but which was no doubt in England by the time it served as a model for Bodl. 264.<sup>18</sup> Simon Gaunt argues that this, the French redaction of the text, has “far greater pro-Christian and anti-Islamic force” (*Marco Polo* 140) than does the Franco-Italian redaction, and that “an albeit unsuccessful attempt is made to foreclose other idioms and exclude differences of a variety of kinds, not just linguistic or cultural but also ... ambivalent narrative techniques” (*Marco Polo* 111). Royal 19.D.I also contains the Old French prose *Alexander*, which includes the story of Nectanabus’s paternity introduced into the later phase of Bodl. 264; it has been argued that the Nectanabus frontispiece is imitated from fol. 1<sup>r</sup> (Dutschke 295). The Christian reorientation supplied by Bodl. 264 therefore also creates a relationship with another prestigious, specifically royal, continental manuscript.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the manuscript alters not only how we interpret the texts it contains but also their relation to the genre law they invoke, which in turn challenges both law and genre. Bodl. 264’s emphasis on confessional difference as the most important instance of law and criterion of classification positions the expanded *Roman d’Alexandre* (including *Alexander and Dindimus*) differently relative to the *roman antique*, highlighting how the prowess that genre sponsors “comes to nought because it is not predicated on any sort of transcendence” (Baumgartner “Raid” 34). The same reorientation also reinforces associations with the *chanson de geste*, but now reminds us how that genre repeatedly stages military encounters between Christian and “pagan.” In each case, a late medieval aristocratic audience is encouraged to see an injunction to be properly Christian implied in the genres encountered when reading the *Roman d’Alexandre*. If crusade is invoked here, it may be both a real possibility and a useful trope for the assertion of authority closer to home. By interpolating *Alexander and Dindimus* into the French-language Alexander tradition, Bodl. 264 affirms the outward orientation and global reach of alliterative verse. It not only translates culturally diverse material into a sophisticated English poetic form, but also commands cosmopolitan and politically astute audiences across and beyond English lands. Bodl. 264 exploits and inflects the genres that it contains. A significant element in its coherence and productivity as an artefact is the exceptionalism that the manuscript and the texts it contains enact relative to genre law. A ruler who could overstep boundaries and laws in the name of imposing more “human” (because more rationally and spiritually justified) ones while preserving his sovereign independence of the established Church and of his peers would be skillful indeed. He might claim to have achieved the “openness to

closedness” which, as in Heidegger, seems in these artefacts to constitute humanity’s highest achievement.

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<sup>1</sup> Busby, in his indispensable *Codex and Context*, 1.308.

<sup>2</sup> For Calarco, Agamben’s argument is “essentially political and, in the last analysis, anthropocentric” (142; and see 79-102).

<sup>3</sup> Agamben develops Uexküll’s discussion of the tick (Uexküll 44-53).

<sup>4</sup> Baumgartner’s “Formation” is an introductory essay on the French Alexander tradition and on the *Roman d’Alexandre* which touches on many points I shall discuss here. An English-language overview of the tradition is Harf-Lancner, “Alexander Romances.” Also useful is The Medieval Alexander Project website.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Blumenfeld-Kosinski’s classic study virtually omits the work, but Baswell’s essay gives it pride of place alongside a contemporary Alexander life, Thomas of Kent’s *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*. See also Gosman 1-24.

<sup>6</sup> Caesura and rhyme in Latin and French medieval verse occupy much of Lote’s first volume. For the elements on which I focus, see especially 167-77.

<sup>7</sup> I quote Alexandre de Paris’s *Roman d’Alexandre* from *The Medieval French “Roman d’Alexandre,”* ed. Armstrong et al., vol. 2, cited by branch and line number. All translations are my own.

<sup>8</sup> On Alexander’s limitations in this episode, see McCracken; Baumgartner, “Formation.”

<sup>9</sup> The Database of Middle English Romance gives the date of composition as 1350. Hanna’s essay is an excellent introduction.

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<sup>10</sup> The poem's few irregularities are detailed by Magoun in the introduction to his edition (96-100).

<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps relevant that it is only women and children who speak for the Gymnosophists here; the men are hiding in caves. This is one of many points where one might interrogate the notion of genus relative to gender.

<sup>12</sup> <http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msbodl264>.

<sup>13</sup> The hand often does not distinguish between *u* and *n*. I have transcribed from the Bodleian's online reproduction. On the language of the note, see Grady 83-84, n. 3.

<sup>14</sup> For detailed discussion of the manuscript, see especially Busby, *Codex and Context* 1.307-15, in his wider discussion of the manuscript contexts of the *Roman d'Alexandre*, 1.278-328. Cruse's recent, valuable monograph on Bodl. 264 has only a short section on the English phase (194-98).

<sup>15</sup> I take the folio ranges from the database to be published in 2014 as part of the AHRC-funded Medieval Francophone Literary Culture Outside France project. The database integrates codicological and textual information for a number of medieval French textual traditions, among them the *Roman d'Alexandre*.

<sup>16</sup> Grady argues that alliterative verse has a particular affiliation with debate, at least after *Piers Plowman*. See also Cartlidge on debate poetry generally, and Otter on Alexander's place in philosophical dialogues.

<sup>17</sup> I agree with those critics for whom alliterative verse evokes multilingual contexts: Latin, French, and Greek. See especially the writings of Elizabeth Salter, for instance "Alliterative Verse," and recently Schiff.

<sup>18</sup> The detailed record is:

<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8467>.

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<sup>19</sup> Much more could be said here than I have space to explore. Gaunt offers a different reading of the Alexander tradition; see his comments on the tension between text and illustration in Bodl. 264 and Royal 19.D.1 (*Marco Polo* 120-22, 131-33; see also Strickland). Warren's essay on the prose Alexander contains interesting reflections on prose form which may be relevant to Bodl. 264 thanks to the willed connection with Royal 19.D.1.