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The Illustrated *Alexander* in French Verse:  
the Case of Italy

ALISON STONES  
(University of Pittsburgh)



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Piazzetta Gianfranco Folena, 1  
35137 PADOVA

[info@francigena-unipd.com](mailto:info@francigena-unipd.com)

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*In ricordo di Peter Wunderli*



# The Illustrated *Alexander* in French Verse: the Case of Italy

Alison Stones

mastones@hotmail.com

(University of Pittsburgh)

## ABSTRACT:

This paper considers three Italian manuscripts of the *Alexandre* in French verse in order to assess their contribution to the verse tradition in general. Concentrating on their decoration and illustration in a comparative context, I present a detailed analysis of features that allow a more accurate placement of these manuscripts between Bologna and Padua in the thirteenth century.

## KEYWORDS:

Pen-flourishing – historiated initials – miniatures – Padua – Bologna

The marvellous exploits of Alexander the Great enjoyed immense popularity in the Middle Ages and accounts of his military and amorous adventures, his meetings with valiant warriors and exotic peoples and monsters, and his treacherous death and vengeance, survive in many versions and languages. They were surveyed by D.J.A. Ross in his monumental *Alexander historiatus*, first published in 1963 and reprinted in 1988<sup>1</sup>. Ross also published many essays on aspects of *Alexander* iconography, several of which were reprinted as *Studies* in 1985, and furthermore published a substantial book on the illustrations of the German and Dutch illustrated *Alexander*-Books in 1971<sup>2</sup>. At his death he left an incomplete draft of an important study of the *Alexander* in French verse, which I and Maud Pérez-Simon have now edited. It will be published at the end of 2018 in the series *Manuscripta Illuminata* by Brepols<sup>3</sup>. As agreed with Ross before his death, we have thoroughly revised his descriptions, situated each of the manuscripts as far as possible each in its cultural context, and updated the bibliography. Our research has led to greater certainty about where the manuscripts were made and what else the same craftsmen produced.

Ross's analysis of text and illustration suggest that, on occasion, the various illustrated manuscripts of the verse versions depend on similar iconographic

*Grateful thanks to Francesca Gambino, Gianfelice Peron and Karl-Georg Pfändtner for their kind assistance.*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ross 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ross 1971; Ross 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ross (*et alii*) 2019; Gaullier-Bougassas 2015; Stones 2015.

traditions, but that despite some convergent patterns, there is no overall iconographic programme that coordinates the verse versions as there is for the prose versions. We can further show that patrons from England, Picardy and Paris in northern France, Ghent in Flanders, probably also in the South of France, and northern Italy, were interested in the exploits of Alexander, commissioning illustrated copies of the romance in verse from the mid-thirteenth to the late fourteenth centuries. Our comparative stylistic analysis has often enabled us to ascribe these manuscripts to centres where other kinds of liturgical, devotional, and literary texts were being illustrated, so that we can now specify more accurately when and where these books were made, even though the names of patrons and makers still elude most of our investigations.

The *Alexander* in French verse is transmitted in twenty-three manuscripts and ten fragments, in which fifteen of the manuscripts are illustrated. They fall into two recensions, one by Alexandre de Paris and the other an earlier, pre-Alexandre de Paris version in decasyllables. The pre-Alexandre de Paris version survives in three copies, two of which are Italian: the early, unillustrated, Arsenal manuscript (Paris BA 3472, MS A) and the copiously illustrated Correr manuscript from the end of the thirteenth century (Venice MC 1493; *olim* B.5.8 (VI, 665), MS B). The Alexandre de Paris version was more popular to judge by the number of survivals, mostly made in France: but among these, too, are Italian copies: the Parma copy, the Lugo fragments, and the Treviso fragment<sup>4</sup>. Of these, Parma BP 1206 contains two illustrations while the Lugo and Treviso fragments have text only. In what follows I survey the Italian manuscripts and offer some suggestions as to the stylistic context of their illustrations, adding some further references to a considerable body of literature already assembled by other scholars<sup>5</sup>. In England, *Alexander* in verse has survived in another version, the *Roman de toute chevalerie*, by Thomas of Kent. There are three incomplete manuscripts, two of which are very copiously illustrated, and two fragments. Whereas the *Roman* borrows from Alexandre de Paris, copies of neither the pre-Alexandre de Paris nor the Alexandre de Paris versions have come to light in England<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Lugo BCFT cartella I XII C6 (MS a); Parma BP 1206 (MS F); Treviso AC Scatola 20 (MS j).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Kleinhenz – Busby 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas de Kent, *Le Roman de toute chevalerie*. For MS P, Paris BNF fr. 24364, cf. Avril – Stirnemann 1987: 126-138, no. 171; for MS C, Cambridge TC O.9.34, cf. James 1902: III, 482-491; IV: pl. XV; Morgan 1982: 129 no. 81 and Meuwese 2007. The fragments are MS O, Oxford BL Lat. misc. b. 17, f. 142 and MS L, London BL Add. 46701, ff. vii-ix; cf. Ross 2018: part II, *The Roman de toute chevalerie*. That an illustrated Alexander-Book was available in England in the late thirteenth century is indicated by the bequest made by Guy de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick († 1305) to Bordesley Abbey of romances in French, one of which was ‘*Un Volum del Romaunce d’Alisaundre, ove peintures*’, Blaes 1957; Busby 2002: 684-685. It is of course unclear as to which version this was.

The earliest manuscript is the pre-Alexandre de Paris version, Paris BA 3472 (siglum A), datable to the first quarter of the 13th century<sup>7</sup>. It is certainly the earliest of the pre-Alexandre de Paris group and among the earliest in general: a few of the Alexandre de Paris fragments might rival this for an early date, but none is so beautifully decorated. Though once thought to come from the Poitou region<sup>8</sup>, apart from replacement folios copied in Italy, recent authors follow Nixon's re-attribution of the entire manuscript to Italy<sup>9</sup>. Busby suggests that it might have been copied in Italy by a Poitevin scribe or that an Italian scribe was using a Poitevin model<sup>10</sup>. The Correr manuscript (MS B), of the late thirteenth century, is certainly Italian and copiously illustrated with miniatures in the margins – more illustrations than any other copy, although there are more illustrations in the Bodleian *Alexander* (Oxford BL Bodley 264, MS P) if the count includes the interpolations as well as the version by Alexandre de Paris. The third pre-Alexandre de Paris manuscript, Paris BNF fr. 789 (MS L) is illustrated with historiated initials by a French painter from Amiens active at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century<sup>11</sup>. It is important as a witness to the existence of the pre-Alexandre de Paris version in France, suggesting a lost French archetype (from Poitou?) from which MSS A and B might also have derived, despite the many variants evident in the comparative edition of A and B by La Du<sup>12</sup>. Of the many surviving Alexandre de Paris fragments, three are Italian, as noted above: Lugo BCFT cartella I XII C6 (siglum a)<sup>13</sup>; Parma BP 1206 (siglum F), to which I return below; and Treviso AC Scatola 20 (siglum j)<sup>14</sup>. Among these, the Parma fragment contains some illustration. The fragments are important because they show that not only the pre-Alexandre de Paris version but also the Alexandre de Paris version circulated in Italy as well as in France.

Situating the Italian manuscripts more closely is a challenging task but a provenance in Bologna or Padua would appear to be most likely for all of them, as already suggested for the Correr and Parma manuscripts by several scholars. The Arsenal manuscript most likely also comes from Bologna or Padua. Its decoration consists entirely of pen-flourished initials. Particularly striking is the one on f. 88v, at *Oëz franc chevalier* (fig. 1)<sup>15</sup>. It is outlined in red with distinctive

<sup>7</sup> Edited, together with the Correr manuscript, in 'Pre-Alexandre de Paris', *Roman d'Alexandre* (La Du 1937). Fully reproduced on *Gallica*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Meyer 1882: 249-250; Meyer 1886: I, 25-105.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Nixon n.d.; Nixon 1989: 26, 581; cf. Ruby in *Album* 2001: no. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Busby 2002: 493, noting that MS A is attributed to Deux-Sèvres by Dees 1987: 519.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Stones 2013-2014: part I, I, 61; II, 224; part II, I, 78.

<sup>12</sup> 'Pre-Alexandre de Paris', *Roman d'Alexandre* (La Du 1937).

<sup>13</sup> Meyer attributed it to Italy, but suggested no date (Meyer 1882: 319); Ross (*et alii*) 2019 propose late 13th or early 14th c., cf. figs. 200-208; cf. Busby 2002: 612.

<sup>14</sup> Peron 1998 ascribes the script, which is dated to 1325, to the notary Fantono di Pietro della contrada di S. Vito. Ross (*et alii*) 2019 Appendix VI and figs. 222, 223.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. 'Pre-Alexandre de Paris', *Roman d'Alexandre* (La Du 1937): 226, l. 4594, a line without

flourishing in blue; two animal-heads appear in the initial letter and trailing flourishes in both colours extend horizontally to fill the bottom margin. These trailing borders seem to me very close to the flourishing in Bolognese manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century, notably those reproduced by Avril and Gousset in their survey of Italian manuscripts in the BNF<sup>16</sup>, although the exact configuration of pen-drawn animal heads in the initial and horizontal flourishing in the border is not matched exactly in what is reproduced there. Also comparable are legal manuscripts such as Cambridge SSC 101 which also has trailing pen-flourished borders in the bottom margin. It was planned to include illumination as well as pen-flourishing: spaces were left for painted initials which were never executed<sup>17</sup>.

The MS Parma BP 1206 contains a fragment of the *Roman d'Alixandre* (MS F) followed on ff. 173r-190v by a *vengeance* poem which is a conflation of the two works of Jehan le Nevelon and Gui de Cambrai<sup>18</sup>. It has only two historiated initials of a fairly generic type (both are the letter 'Q'), on ff. 14r and 35v, in the section by Alexandre de Paris. It is possible that the subject on f. 14r (fig. 2) represents the education of Alexander, since it depicts a seated master wearing academic dress addressing a standing man; but it could also be intended for Alexander giving orders to Emenidus as in the rubric. Border medallions on f. 14r, lined by thin curling tendrils, contain a man raising a sword against a naked hybrid-creature. I suggest these medallions are most similar to those found in Paris BNF lat. 22, written c. 1267 by Cardinalis and Rugerinus de Forli for Frédol de Saint-Bonnet, a student in Bologna, then canon of Maguelonne and bishop of Le Puy (1284-1289)<sup>19</sup>. Border medallions become a hall-mark of Bolognese illustration—but mostly with complete roundels clustered closely together, as in

parallel in MS B. For a reproduction of ff. 44v-45 see Ruby in *Album* 2001: 83-85 (84) no. 21, and for ff. 15v and 16r, whose decoration is much simpler, see Busby 2002: figs. IV 19 (f. 15v), VI 27 (f. 16r).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Avril – Gousset 1984: no. 103, pl. XLIX, L, with reference to further related Bolognese manuscripts, notably Paris BNF lat. 4523 Justinian (Cat. 77 pl. XL); Paris BNF lat. 414 Peter Lombard (Cat. 79 pl. XL); Paris BNF lat. 3919A Stephen of Tournai (Cat. 80 pl. XLI); Paris BNF lat. 14317 Gratian (Cat. 82 pl. XLI); Paris BNF lat. 16894 Peter of Capua (Cat. 88 pl. XLII-XLIII); Paris BNF lat. 16911 Justinian (Cat. 92 pl. XLIV); Paris BNF lat. 16896 Peter of Capua (Cat. 93 pl. XLIV).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. L'Engel – Gibbs 2001: 105-110 no. 1, figs. 24-25, 29-31, by R. Gibbs, attributed to the late twelfth century; I think the Tables of Affinity and Consanguinity are additions from another (possibly earlier) manuscript. Cf. Bamberg SB Misc. Jur. 19, also with spaces for illustrations and trailing flourishes in the bottom borders, reproduced in Pfändtner 2014: fig. 3, and attributed to the late twelfth century, Bologna or Padua.

<sup>18</sup> Edwards 1926: 4-12; Jean le Nevelon, ed. Ham 1926/1965: 13-46. Cf. Busby 2002: 281, 288, 321, 612, 614; Rinoldi 2006; Giannini 2002-2003: 361-374; Ross 2018: figs. 183-189.

<sup>19</sup> Avril – Gousset 1984: 85-87, no. 103, pl. C, XLIX-L, comparing one of the artists of Bibles in Paris AC Saint-Sulpice A.S.S. 1972, 1973, and further Bibles: Oxford BL Canon. Bibl. Lat. 56 (dated 1265, cf. Conti 1981: pl. 13 (f. 5v), 16 (f. 427v)); Major J.R. Abbey JA. 7345 (before

the Dominican Antiphoners made for San Domenico in Bologna<sup>20</sup> and particularly in one of the key manuscripts of Bolognese production, the Gerona Bible<sup>21</sup>. But the border design found on f. 14r in MS F is long-lived, reappearing in two Justinian manuscripts in Durham CL C.I.4<sup>22</sup>, and C.I.6<sup>23</sup>, both datable to c. 1275-1285; and later still, a similar design appears in the Bible written in part by the nun Agnese Scarabella in 1297<sup>24</sup>. The figure style of MS F, on the other hand, does not reappear in the Durham Justinians or in Agnese's Bible. The other initial in MS F, on f. 35v, shows a seated man with crossed legs, a sign of authority<sup>25</sup>. He wears an academic hat and gestures towards the text. This figure is similar to the many minor initials in Bolognese legal manuscripts<sup>26</sup>, and in the prefaces in Bolognese Bibles<sup>27</sup>. Whereas the border decoration on f. 14r is extremely fine, the two initials do not stand out for iconographic invention or stylistic interest.

The pen-flourished initials in Parma BP 1206 however offer another interesting dimension for comparison, one that has not been analysed in previous literature and is little reproduced (fig. 3). F's pen-flourishing is elegant, in red and blue, characterized in part by distinctive spiral motifs<sup>28</sup> which I suggest are very close to those in the *Passio Margaritae*, Florence BR 453, a manuscript whose primary illustrations are large miniatures with gold backgrounds and lively scenes of the sufferings of the saint, of much greater interest and higher quality than the tiny historiated initials in MS F – they offer an indication of what kind of larger miniatures MS F might once have contained<sup>29</sup>. Also comparable is the pen-flourishing in several legal and literary manuscripts, such as the Decretals of Gregory IX, Bamberg SB Misc. Can. 25<sup>30</sup>, and the *Mort Artu*, Chantilly MC 649

1262), Madrid BN A. 25 (written in 1272); Turin BN D.I.13. For Paris BNF lat. 22 cf. Conti 1981: pl. III (f. 457r), figs. 17 (f. 192r), 18 (f. 201r), 24 (f. 24r); and Pfändtner 2014: fig. 1. To this list may be added another Bible closely related to MS F: Padua BSV 542 I, written by Agnese Scarabella, Benedictine nun of the convent of Sant'Agatha, in 1297 (Valenzano in Mariani Canova 1999: 85-86, no. 18). For more named scribes see Gibbs 2003; Murano 2006; Soetermeer 1989.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Mariani Canova 1979.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Hoffmann 2013, Hoffmann 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. L'Engle – Gibbs 2001: 165-171, no. 11, pl. 11a, g, h, by R. Gibbs.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*: 172-181, no. 12 by R. Gibbs.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. n. 18 above.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Golden 2005, with reference to the many studies of gestures and meanings in medieval art.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Conti 1983; L'Engle – Gibbs 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Such as New York MLM M.436, fully reproduced on Corsair, with bibliography (4 December 2018). The colophon on M.436 f. 432v says it was written by Mutinensis de Grasulfo for Niccolò di Monterano of Padua, datable between 1285 and 1297.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Rinoldi 2006: tav. VII (f. 117v).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Conti 1981: pl. VII (ff. 6v and 23r).

<sup>30</sup> Pfändtner 2014: fig. 11, attributed to a date c. 1310-1320 (too late?). And the rather summary figure style is not unlike the figures in MS F.

(1111), written by Bo de Gualandis for Brexianus de Salis, Podesta of Modena in the last months of 1288<sup>31</sup>, although its few historiated initials to my mind bear no relation to the painted illustration in MS F. They have been compared to the illustrations – partly historiated initials and partly small miniatures – in the *Estoire* and *Merlin*, Oxford BL Douce 178, although I do not find this comparison very convincing<sup>32</sup>. A more telling comparison for the first painter in Douce 178 is the Correr *Alexander*, MS B, to which I return below. Further literary manuscripts that have been linked to Douce 178 and Chantilly MC 1111 (649) are the troubadour chansonniers, Paris BNF fr. 12473 and Paris BNF fr. 854, to which may now be added another chansonnier, Città del Vaticano BAV Vat. lat. 5232<sup>33</sup>.

The Correr manuscript of the pre-Alexandre de Paris version (MS B, Venice MC 1493) holds a special place in the illustration of *Alexander* in Italy, and in *Alexander* illustration in general (figs. 4-9)<sup>34</sup>. Whereas it lacks full-page illustrations, a format which is used only in the other copiously illustrated manuscript, the Bodleian *Alexander* of Alexandre de Paris (MS P, Oxford BL Bodley 264, written and illustrated in Flanders between 1338 and 1344)<sup>35</sup>, MS B is densely illustrated with square miniatures set in the outer margins and accompanied for the most part by rubrics. The miniatures are of lesser quality than, for instance, the *Passio Margaritae* mentioned above. They also lack the distinctive borders of MS F, but broadly speaking they fit well into the vast lesser production of Bolognese and Paduan manuscripts of the late thirteenth century, including the vernacular manuscripts in French by a variety of artists already drawn together by Loomis and Loomis, as noted above in relation to MS F.

MS B differs from MSS A and F in that its minor decoration is substantially less significant, lacking the elaborate flourishing which is such a distinctive feature of MS A and to a lesser extent of MS F. In MS B the minor decoration is limited to alternating blue and red initials with simple double-verticals in the other colour,

<sup>31</sup> On line at *BVMM* [4 December 2018]. Loomis – Loomis 1938, transcribed the damaged colophon as ‘*Liber domini Brexiani de Salis. Qui [quem] scripxit Bo. de Gualandis existens cum eo in regimine mutinensi?*’; they identified Brexianus de Salis as Podesta of Modena in the last six months of 1288.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Pächt – Alexander 1970: no. 104, attributed to Venice? (emended, in the Bodleian copy, to Bologna), by two artists, the first responsible for ff. 1r-24r and 149r-172r, compared with the psalter, Bologna BU 346 and the Bible, El Escorial Cod. a. I. 5, written by Ugolino of Bologna; also mentioned by Loomis – Loomis 1938: 115-116, figs. 312-13. Oxford BL Douce 178 does not contain branch 3, the *Lancelot* proper, *pace* Pächt – Alexander; it is announced on the last folio but not executed. Conti 1981: 49, n. 9, 48 n. 27, ascribes the *Mort Artu*, Chantilly MC 1111 (649), to the second artist of Douce 178.

<sup>33</sup> For Paris BNF fr. 12473 see Avril – Gousset 1984: no. 15, pl. VI-VII; for Paris BNF fr. 854 *ibid.*: no. 14, pl. VII; cf. Lemaitre (*et alii*) 2006 and Lemaitre (*et alii*) 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. ‘Pre-Alexandre de Paris’, *Roman d’Alexandre* (Benedetti – Conti 1998); Vanin 2013, Várvaro 2001, Ross (*et alii*) 2019: 32, 34-52, figs. 1-118.

<sup>35</sup> Facsimile in James 1933; cf. Ross (*et alii*) 2019: 70-94.

accompanied by short flourishes joining one letter to the next, not unlike the simpler initials in MS A reproduced in Busby, but without A's distinctive border flourishing and animal-heads (fig. 4). What is distinctive about MS B is the huge quantity of miniatures accompanying the text but placed in the margins as though an afterthought.

These miniatures in B differ in format from those in the literary manuscripts listed above, in most of which historiated initials predominate. B's miniatures are in square or rectangular frames, depending on the marginal space available, and are coloured in green red, or white, with blue backgrounds (figs. 4-9). The action scenes are lively and dynamic, with trees, mountains, architectural elements, flags, and occasionally horses and figures overlapping the frames: there are few parallels for these characteristics among the liturgical and legal books that are their closest stylistic associates. Square miniatures and action scenes of a similar type (but with gold bars on the corners) are also found in the *Faits des romains*, Brussels BR 10168-72, written, according to its colophon, in Rome in 1293 and based on a manuscript owned by Luca de Savello, nephew of pope Honorius IV, who is mentioned in the pope's wills of 1279 and 1285, and in letters of Honorius dated 1283 and 1284 (figs. 10-12)<sup>36</sup>. The Brussels manuscript seems to have escaped the notice of the Italian specialists and merits further investigation in relation to its stylistic cognates and the implications of the information in its colophon. Does the mention of Rome in the Brussels manuscript mean that a scribe, and perhaps also an artist, from further north were working there? Gaspar and Lyna wondered if the arms, *sable a cross or charged with a fleur de lis gules* which occur with some frequency in the initials, might be those of Luca de Savello<sup>37</sup>? However the shields look like an afterthought as they are shown in different shapes, pointed or rounded, and the fleurs de lis are painted in several different styles (figs. 13, 14). Three shields *sable a cross or* are found in *Armorial le Breton*, Paris AN AE I 25 no 6 (MM 684), dating c. 1285. One presents on the cross a *brisure of a merlette gules*, another with a *brisure of a fleur de lis gules*, which perfectly fits the shield in Brussels BR 10168-72<sup>38</sup>. Unfortunately they are unidentified; the editors suggest

<sup>36</sup> Masai – Wittek 1968: 26, no. 26; Gaspar – Lyna 1937: 124-126, no. 46, pl. 84-86; Gardner 2013: 199; Condello – Signorini 2018: 125-129; fully reproduced on line in *BRB*. Its incipit, *Chascuns hors a cui diex a donne raison...* is close to entry no. 7 in the 1304 inventory of Jean d'Avesnes, count of Hainaut and Holland (Mons RA Cart. 19, f. 120, '*...ki se commenche "chascuns hom a qui Diex a donnei raison..."*'), ed. Devillers 1871; cf. Derolez 2001: IV, 240. The secundo folio incipit is *qui seruoient illueques...* It is not otherwise traceable in Derolez' booklists. The arms of Philippe II de Croÿ (1496-1549), *argent three fesses gules*, are on the foreedges and Philipp's son Charles added an inscription on f. 227 noting the presence of 27 illustrations ('histoires') and his own ownership. Thereafter the manuscript was in the library of Marguerite d'Autriche (1480-1530) and remained in the library of the Dukes of Burgundy apart from a spell in Paris between 1794 and 1815 (Gaspar – Lyna 1937: 125).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* His manuscript however was simply the model for BR 10168-72.

<sup>38</sup> I thank Christiane Van den Bergen Pantens for her assistance with the heraldry.

ownership by the Raitz family of the region of Cologne—far from the Italian origins of the manuscript<sup>39</sup>.

Whereas the buildings in MS B do not include the particular decorative motifs of black bars and dots signaled by L'Engle as one of her bench-marks of Paduan illustration, the pink and white colours, crenellations, windows and doors (figs. 5, 9) are somewhat similar to those in the Justinian, Padua BC C9, although they lack C9's distinctive dark rectangular openings flanked by dots<sup>40</sup>. The figure style in MS B is clearly summary in its treatment of faces and draperies, by no means matching the sophistication of the Gerona Bible painters, from whose style the artist of MS B has been seen to derive<sup>41</sup>. Many details of mountains and landscape elements look unfinished and suggest the execution of the illustrations was done in haste. This may explain the summary treatment of the figures as well. Yet the figures in MS B engage in lively action throughout, taking place in landscapes or in and around buildings and tents. Particularly striking are the bathing scenes on ff. 3r and 55r (fig. 6), which are reminiscent of those in the Psalter of the liturgical Use of Padua, Bologna BU 346, f. 98v<sup>42</sup>. This important psalter also comes into play for other motifs characteristic of MS B. I single out two motifs in particular: the use of architectural columns which are bulbous in the middle (as opposed to straight cylinders), found in MS B on ff. 41r, 83v (fig. 9), 105r (fig. 7); those on f. 105r are used to elevate the tomb of Alexander to a great height, suggesting that the columns carry symbolic significance, endowing the tomb, and no doubt the buildings on the other folios, with special importance. Similar bulbous columns are also used in the psalter Bologna BU C 346 for the building under construction in the border of Psalm 97 (f. 101r)<sup>43</sup>. The other motif characteristic of MS B is an unusual type of headgear—an open helm worn by warriors over their mail coif. It is pointed at the top, curves forwards slightly at the front, and is painted blue with a white triangle just below the point (figs. 4, 8). Much less common in MS B are round helms of the type worn by warriors in the Brussels *Faits des romains* manuscript, though they do occur occasionally in MS B, as on ff. 65v, 70v (fig. 5); and pointed helms also occur on occasion in the Brussels manuscript (on ff. 27v, 33r, 132r (fig. 12), 147v, 161r). The Resurrection initial (f. 125r) in the Gradual of Padua BC B16\* of 1290, written by Agnese, Benedictine nun of the convent of San Pietro, Padua, also has a pointed helmet worn by one of the three soldiers sleeping by the sepulchre<sup>44</sup>, and another instance

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Armorial Le Breton*: 31, 179, nos. 404, 405, 406.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. L'Engel 2012: fig. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Hoffmann 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Conti 1981: 39 and fig. 72, compared with Oxford BL Douce 178. For Bolognese psalters see Pfändtner 1996, Pfändtner 2004.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*: 87-88, fig. 93; Medica 2000: 322; Pfändtner 2004; Hoffmann 2016: 536-537.

<sup>44</sup> Contin in Mariani Canova 2014: 156-162, no. 16; Medica 2000: 277. Conti 1981: fig. 71 shows Oxford BL Douce 178, f. 202 where a pointed helmet is just visible, worn by the combatant

is found in the Stuttgart bible, WLB Cod Bibl. 2°16, f. 73v<sup>45</sup>. The somewhat summary figure style, with repetitious faces and unmodelled drapery found in MS B, the Brussels *Faits des romains* and in Padua BC B16\*, has further been compared with the *Ordinarium* of Padua, Padua BC E57, whose opening initial A contains a Virgin and Child quite similar in facial type to the figures in MS B<sup>46</sup>. Further parallels include the *Matricola degli spadai*, Bologna AS min. 3, of c. 1285<sup>47</sup>, and the *Statuta dell'Unione delle Fraglie*, Padua AS CN busta B, of 1295<sup>48</sup>.

It is reasonable to claim a Paduan provenance for MS B given the preponderance of motifs that are best paralleled in liturgical and devotional manuscripts made for use in Padua, notably the Gradual B16\*; the Psalter of Paduan Use, Bologna BU C 346; and the *Ordinarium* of Padua BC E57. MSS A and F on the other hand would appear to be more closely allied with manuscript production in university circles in Bologna. The relations between and among these manuscripts reveal a complex network of production in both cities in which movement of scribes, artists, patrons and books, must have been major factors in the commissioning and production of illustrated books. The *Alexander* romances are important witnesses to the stylistic, iconographic, and geographical puzzles they present in 13th century northern Italy.

on the left. The pointed helmet would seem to derive from a byzantinizing style, as in the Gradual in Florence MSM 561 f. 206r, where the Resurrection initial shows a soldier wearing just this kind of headgear (see Medica 2000: no. 103). I thank Karl-Georg Pfändtner for this reference. But other important Paduan manuscripts like the Bible, New York MLM M.436, lack this distinctive feature: see for instance ff. 317v, 327v which show soldiers wearing yet another striking form of headgear (reproduced on *Corsair*, with complete references).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Hoffmann 2013: fig. 141.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Mariani Canova 1999: 75-76 no. 13; Mariani Canova (*et alii*) 2014: 147-152, no. 14.

<sup>47</sup> Conti in 'Pre-Alexandre de Paris', *Roman d'Alexandre* (Benedetti 1998): 55-67.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Novello 2012: 103.

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| Città del Vaticano BAV Vat. lat. 5232 | Città del Vaticano | Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Vat. lat. 5232          |                            |
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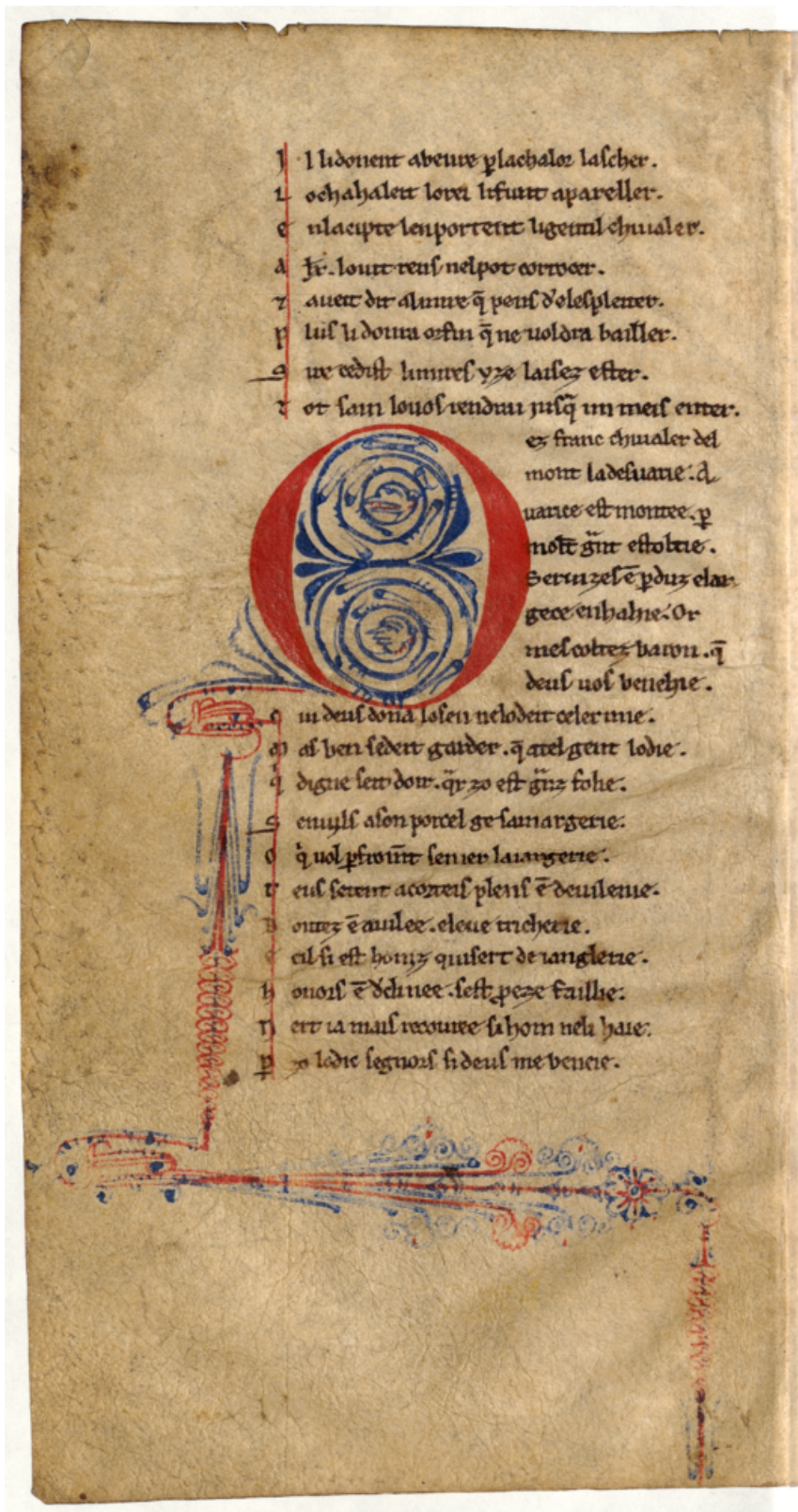


Fig. 1

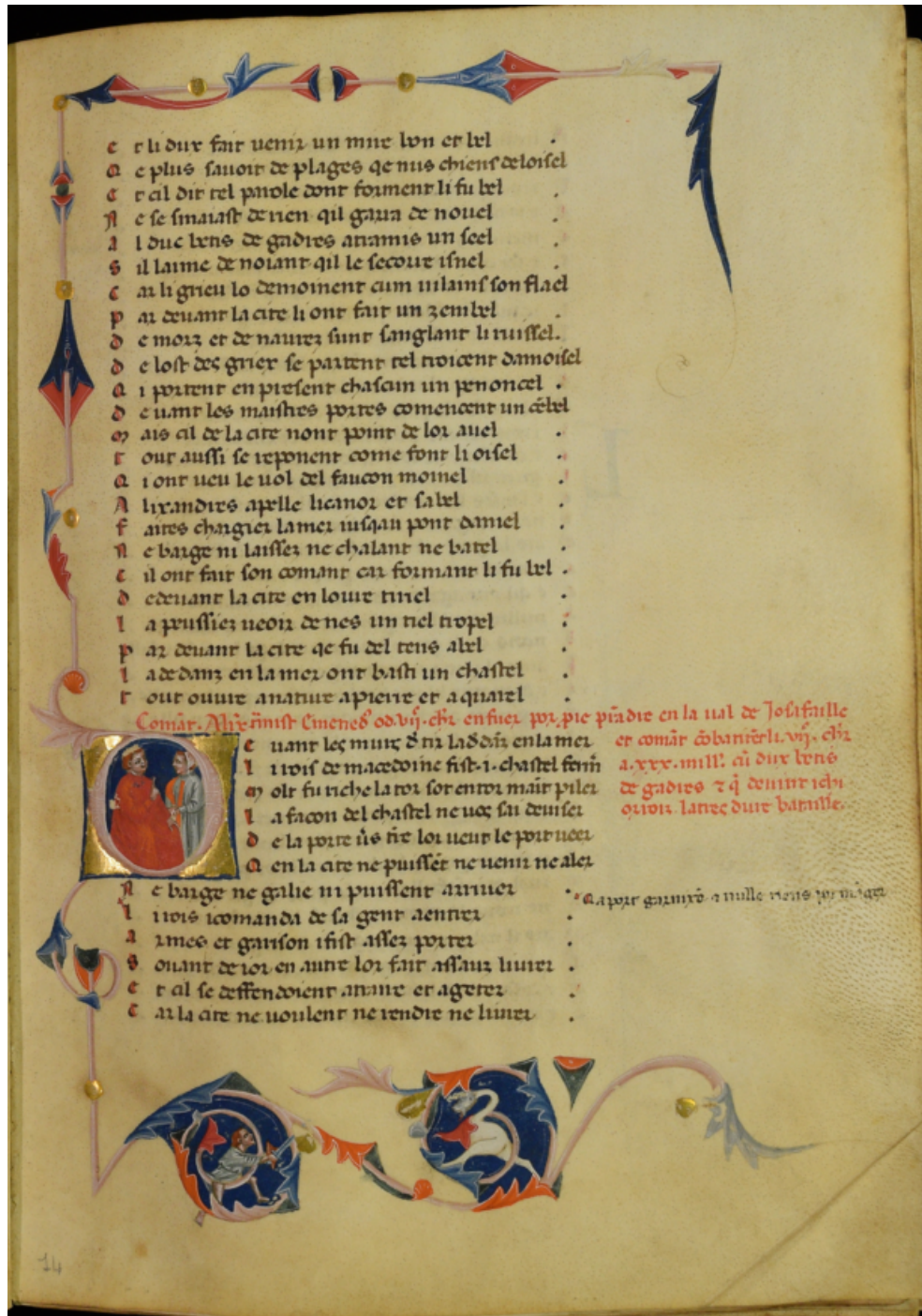


Fig. 2

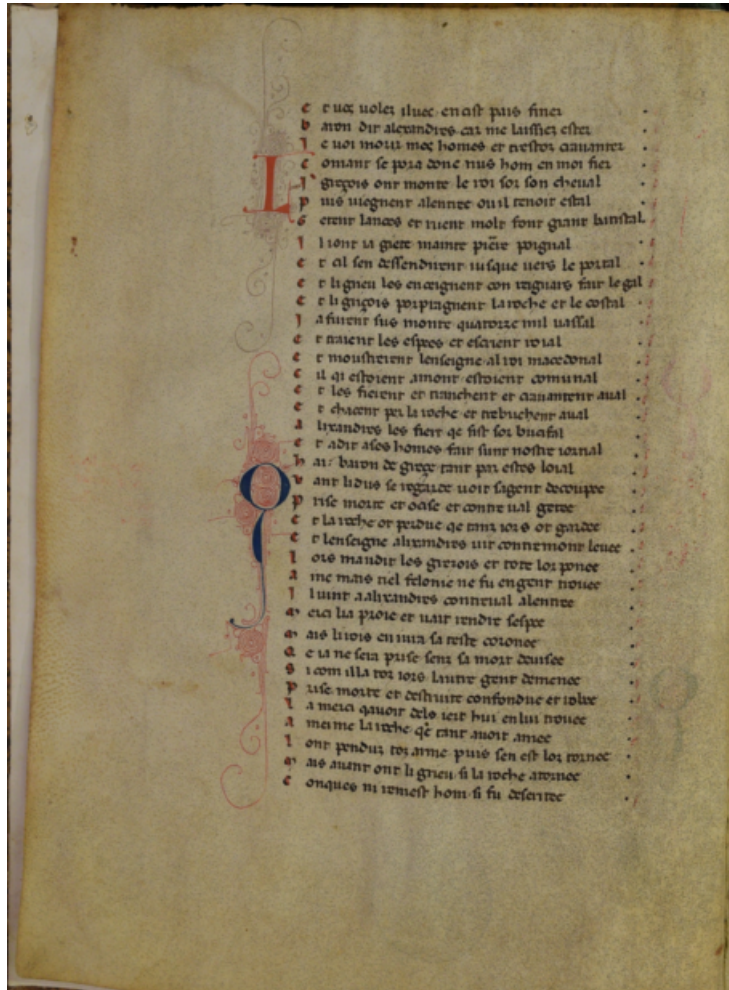


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

THE ILLUSTRATED ALEXANDER IN FRENCH VERSE: THE CASE OF ITALY



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

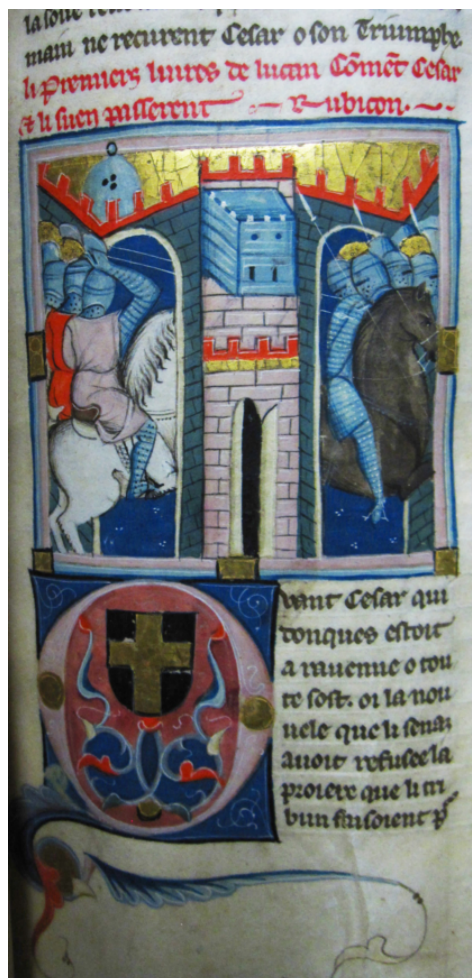


Fig. 10



