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GLOBALISM BEFORE GLOBALISM: THE ALEXANDER LEGEND IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE (PRIEST LAMBRECHT'S ACCOUNT AS A PATHWAY TO EARLY GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES)

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ABSTRACT

We certainly live in a world today determined by globalism, however we might want to define it. But it would be erroneous to assume that earlier centuries, and not even pre-modernity, were entirely ignorant about foreign worlds and did not have any interest in reaching out to, or in approaching foreign countries, peoples, and cultures either peacefully or militarily. The first part of this paper examines some of the misconceptions and then outlines many features that justify us in using the term 'globalism' already at that early stage, maybe free of much of the modern baggage brought upon by the colonialist attitude pursued by early modern Europeans. To illustrate the claim more specifically, this then leads over to a detailed examination of one of the many versions of the Alexander narratives in the Middle Ages, specifically of Priest Lambrecht's Middle High German *Alexanderlied*. Although Alexander is presented as a conqueror of the Persian empire and the Indian kingdom, apart from many other countries, there is still a strong narrative strategy to open the perspective toward the East and to make it to an integrative part of the global worldview of the western European audiences. This and many other Alexander versions contribute in their own intriguing way to the process of "worldmaking," as Nelson Goodman (1978) had called it. Although historic-fictional in his approach, Lambrecht facilitated in a path-breaking way, drawing on many classical sources, of course, the establishment of a global vision, at least in the mind of his medieval audiences.

KEYWORDS

Globalism before globalism; Medieval literary perspectives; Priest Lambrecht.

In the post-modern world, it has been fashionable to claim that we live in a time only now when globalism has finally arrived impacting everyone here on earth in one or the other way, which forces us all to reconfigure our personal and universal outlook fundamentally because the basic conditions of all our lives have changed in consequence of many different factors. These include, for instance, the rise of the USA to a world power after Second World War, the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990, the development of the computer and subsequently the internet, and based on that a glob process leading to universal digitization and robotization. With the help of voice recognizing technologies, people can, theoretically, talk to each other all over the world, and this without the need to learn a foreign language. It almost seems as if the biblical account of the Tower of Babel has reached its conclusion which is now allowing humankind to return to its original cohesion as a global community — certainly nothing but a pipedream! This does not mean that the study of foreign languages and cultures would no longer be necessary, quite on the contrary, but we have now at least available a technical medium to communicate across most language barriers, which leaves, however, most cultural, ethical, moral, social, and philosophical issues outside of the merely technical equation.

At the same time, the ever-growing computerized system developed in many different countries represents also challenges and deep dangers because human ethics and morality cannot yet be coded into Artificial Intelligence, although many scientists are working on this issue right now (WELSH, 2018). When will we reach that point when the future robots develop a consciousness on their own, and then will quickly dismiss us humans as incompetent to handle the problems of this world, such as global warming, violence, famine, etc.? (BOŁTUĆ, 2019; 2020) These issues are no longer just of local or national relevance; instead, they challenge humankind at large.

UNIVERSAL VALUES, TIMELESS ISSUES, AND GLOBAL

However, those dangers or imminent changes affecting everyone here on earth also prove to be important epistemological catalysts insofar as they alert us to a fundamental truth we often tend to forget. Whatever paradigm shift we might have to face, in essence, the human substance or nature has always remained the same, irrespective of all cultural, material, political, religious, or military changes. There are, after all, universals, such as critical values that make human life possible in the first place, if we think of the concept of the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Virtues as developed by members of the early Christian Church (SHEEN, 1940; BLOOMFIELD, 1952; NEWHAUSER; RIDYARD, 2012; WIKIPEDIA..., 2021).

Social life is predicated and depends on the ideal that virtually all members of the community agree on basic laws, ethical principles, and moral concepts. This simply means that in essence a Chinese community near the border to Mongolia and a German community in the Black Forest, for instance, either in the past or today, ultimately share much more in fundamental principles than we might have thought. That is hence, idealistically speaking, the basis for the quest for globalism, either in economic or political, or, as is the case here, in literary terms (HENG, 2015). The common denominators of all human societies make it possible, for instance, that African novels, Brazilian short stories, Japanese haikus, or Fijian plays, from whatever historical period, can be enjoyed fruitfully by audiences across the world, and this only

after a very brief effort to understand the slightly different cultural framework. Recent efforts to develop a solid foundation for world literature critically rely on this essential premise (DAMROSCH, 2009; FORDE, 2019; SEIGNEURIE, 2020).

Tragically, however, as much as the literary discourse has consistently projected the possibilities of a global community, historical reality has often demonstrated the very opposite trend, with mass murder/genocide in many different countries of our world, mostly directed by a majority group against a minority group within the same country, as when the Indian subcontinent split into two countries after the British Crown had given independence to its former colony, India and Pakistan in 1947 (CASTAING, 1947), which led to massive expulsions, hatred, violence, and even murder of a large number of people.

GLOBALISM IN HISTORICAL TERMS

The argument that I want to develop here is that throughout history, the various peoples and cultures were much more connected with each other than we might have thought, as the literary evidence demonstrates especially well, and which a wealth of archaeological data now also confirms (LINDE, 2012; BYCROFT; DUPRÉ, 2019). The prevalent concept of globalism as being a purely post-modern phenomenon above all is nothing but the result of a dangerously myopic perspective not based on any historical foundation. By contrast, it is part of human nature to explore and to conquer the world, to travel, to meet new people, to occupy neighboring countries, to do business on distant markets, to meet admired teachers and to learn from them, to gain inspiration from pilgrimage sites irrespective of their distance to one's own location, and so forth. The ancient Greeks and Romans, then also the pre-modern Chinese, and other people were certainly global players a long time before the emergence of modern globalism.

Most dramatically, for instance, we can state with certainty that a large number of people in the Middle Ages were on the road and covered enormous distances to reach their goals (OHLER, 1986; REICHERT, 2001; CLASSEN, 2018), and this both men and women, both aristocrats and burghers, both clerics and artists, students and their teachers, architects and craftsmen, physicians and mystics. And in parts of medieval Europe there existed an extensive, of course rather necessary network of taverns, hospitals (in the medieval sense), restaurants, pilgrimage routes, supply stations, etc. which made those endeavors possible in the first place. Similarly, for the long-distance routes across bodies of water, transport by ship was mostly well organized, primarily in Venice, or other Mediterranean harbors (BENTLEY; BRIDENTHAL; WIGEN, 2007).

Christian pilgrims went to visit the Holy Land, Rome, Santiago de Compostela, and many other sites all over Europe. The Vikings were a most daring sea-voyaging people, making all the way to Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland; they traveled throughout the Baltic Sea, Russia, and made their way through the Black Sea and from there to the Mediterranean (MCTURK, 2005; SHORT, 2010; WALAKER NORDEIDE; EDWARDS, 2019). Christian missionaries and monks (esp. Benedictines and Cistercians) established most impressive networks across Europe and beyond already in the early Middle Ages; and some merchants were daring enough to make all the way to eastern China (thirteenth century; Marco Polo, Odorico da Pordenone) (BLOCK FRIEDMAN; MOSSLER FIGG, 2000). Some Arabic travelers explored not only the Middle East, but also Bulgaria, western Russia, modern-day Poland, and northern

Germany, as their travelogues confirm (SCHMITZ-ESSER, 2015; CLASSEN, 2018). And Jewish merchants and scholars were constantly on the road, all of these individuals certainly harbingers, if not already representatives, of the global age (HANSEN, 2000).

There is much additional evidence for Arab or Chinese travelers throughout the Middle Ages, which cannot be adduced here so that we do not lose our focus, but it is evident that medieval European and other travelers were not alone by themselves, although the various networks were not necessarily the same, all depending on the geographic focus. We should also not forget that in the early Middle Ages massive waves of nomadic people arrived in Europe and attacked wherever possible (Huns, Avars, Magyars), until they were either defeated, pushed back, or settled in distant lands. The huge waves of the Mongol invaders in the thirteenth century underscored most dramatically that military threats from eastern Asia even against eastern Europe were possible and were actually materialized in a stunning fashion, leaving most countries behind in shambles (RUOTSALA, 2001; MAY, 2019).

The meaning and implications of globalism have already been discussed from many different perspectives (CONRAD, 2018; MIDDELL, 2019; WENZLHUEMER, 2020), but not so much from a pre-modern literary perspective. The fictional discourse does not necessarily convey a sense of truth, an absurd issue by itself because it is contradictory to its very nature and intention. Instead, here we grasp the realm of feelings, emotions, sorrow, love, hatred, but also the concept of 'the other,' imaginations of foreign worlds, and also fantasies of fictional territories (CLASSEN, 2020a, esp. p. 122–137). People throughout time have enjoyed literature or poetry and have given relevance to it also because it provides avenues for potentialities which the ordinary person cannot achieve. And those very potentialities reveal universally shared values and ideals and can be identified today as the critical bridges among the various cultures, languages, religions, and politics.

For instance, the glory of *Beowulf* (ca. 700) hinges, of course, on the protagonist's heroic acts, but likewise on his boldness in traveling across a large body water and seeking out adventures in distant lands. One of the fascinating aspects of the *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200) consists of the individual characters moving around and traveling to distant kingdoms (from the Netherlands to Burgundy, to Iceland and Hungary). The pan-European *Apollonius of Tyrus* (first composed in the second or third century C.E., translated and imitated far into the late Middle Ages and well beyond) was predicated on extensive travels throughout the entire eastern Mediterranean; similarly, the many different versions of *Floris and Blanchefleur* (since the mid-twelfth century) follow the many travels by the two young protagonists which take them even from the Iberian Peninsula to the distant Babylon. Very similar observations also apply to the stories in the collection of Arab tales, *One Thousand and One Night*, and in the ancient Indian *Panchatantra*.

There are many other late medieval narratives that include fantastic travel imaginations, which underscores principally that the literary discourse had already developed early concepts of globalism, even though practical aspects pertaining to financial, linguistic, political, or religious challenges are simply not paid much attention to. Pilgrimage account, however, could rarely contribute to the emergence of world knowledge because the pilgrims were too self-absorbed to reach out to the new social environment, including the Islamic or Jewish religion.

Even though still limited to the European framework, the late medieval economic alliance of the Hanseatic League demonstrated the enormously far-flung reaches of mercantile interests since the fourteenth century (HAMMEL-KIESOW; PUHLE, 2009).

Then, further and more intensive forms of globalism can be identified already in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially with the discovery of the New World by the Europeans, which were subsequently followed by intriguing cases of global exchange, at least as endeavored by western travelers in the seventeenth century (CLASSEN, 2021). Simultaneously, the Jesuits were the first Christian organization to establish a truly global network in order to missionize all over the world on every known continent since the sixteenth century (CLASSEN, 2014; for global perspectives since ca. 1500, see SUBRAHMANYAM, 2017).

Global perspectives can thus be traced already long before the alleged development of globalism in the late twentieth century. The universal knowledge of the triumphs of and conquests by Alexander the Great, the topic of this paper, underscores quite dramatically the extent to which global perspectives were not at all unfamiliar to medieval European poets and their audiences. The legendary account of Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E.) and his conquests of the vast Persian Empire has had a huge impact on the imagination of the various audiences throughout antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern age, and his myth certainly continues to matter for modern fantasy as well (BRÄUER, 1996). For most Europeans, Alexander's travels must have exerted an astounding, intriguing, highly attractive fascination because his military exploits took him far beyond the normal geographical realm. In fact, the hero gets as far east as India, and in the literary imagination even straight to the walls surrounding paradise. Facts and fiction seamlessly merge in the many different accounts, but there is never any hesitation by the poets to track down this hero in his stunning explorations and conquests, such as of Persia, Amazonia (fictional), and even part of India.

THE STORY OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT: A GLOBAL PLAYER ALREADY THEN?

Subsequently, I will briefly outline the enormous reception history of this account, a mix of historical narrative and literary fantasy, and then turn to one Middle High German version by the Priest Lambrecht (also: Lamprecht) whose version will serve us to identify and examine more in detail what elements of globalism can be detected in his account, that is, imaginary globalism before factual globalism.

Both during Alexander's lifetime and consistently during the subsequent centuries, historiographers and chroniclers related his adventures, military accomplishments, defeats, and recoveries when he conquered the Persian empire. Apart from the mythical (?) King Arthur and the Frankish king/emperor Charlemagne (crowned in 800), no other figure ever occupied people's minds during the premodern period as much as Alexander the Great. Some of his contemporaries who provided written records for posterity were his campaign historian Callisthenes; Alexander's generals Ptolemy and Nearchus; Aristobulus, a junior officer on the campaigns; and Onesicritus, Alexander's chief helmsman. The earliest firm written sources were produced by Tiodorus Siculus (1st century B.C.), followed by Quintus Curtius Rufus (second half of the first century C.E.), Arrian (first to second century C.E.), the contemporary biographer Plutarch, and Justin from the fourth century.

From there, a virtually endless stream of medieval adaptations followed, and so emerged and developed the huge myth surrounding Alexander (STOCK, 2016). Without being exhaustive, we can be certain that various *Alexander* versions were

translated from the fourth through the sixteenth centuries into Coptic, Byzantine Greek, Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Syriac, Hebrew, and most medieval European vernaculars. One of the most famous ones was Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis* composed in France during the late twelfth century, based on Quintus Curtius Rufus's first-century *Historiae Alexandri Magni* (the full title was: *Historiarum Alexandri Magni Macedonis Libri Qui Supersunt*; there are at least 123 medieval manuscripts, all based on a ninth-century copy; it was first printed in Venice in 1470 or 1471; for a good listing, see the surprisingly comprehensive and reliable article online (WIKIPEDIA..., Jan. 2021); for an English translation, see (SMITH, c2016).

Well known are also the Old French *Roman d'Alexandre* by Lambert le Fort and Alexandre de Bernay; then a twelfth-century *Alexander* poem in Provençal by Alberic de Pisonçon, and the Middle High German version, *Alexanderlied*, by Priest Lambrecht. On the basis of an Anglo-Norman version, the *Roman de toute chevalrie*, an anonymous fourteenth-century Middle English poet created his *King Alisaunder*. In fourteenth-century Scotland, the *Alexander Baik* was composed, perhaps by a John Barbour. There were many other versions published throughout late medieval Europe and in the Arabic world, which all contain the same narrative core, but differ in the framework, emphasis, language, format, and sometimes the values examined (CÖLLN; FRIEDE; WULFRAM, 2000; DOUFIKAR-AERTS, 2010).

LAMBRECHT'S MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN ALEXANDERLIED

Lambrecht's *Alexander* is contained in three different versions, identified by the location of the respective manuscript today: Strasbourg (ca. 1150), Vorau (ca. 1170, and Basel (late thirteenth century; for an exact listing, see HANDSCHRIFTENCENSUS, c2021). Scholars have already engaged intensively with this earliest form of Middle High German Alexander poem, which invites many different interpretations, either more historical or more religious (RUTTMANN, 1964, from which I will quote; see also LIENERT, 2007). There are also more substantive differences, but my purpose here is not to engage with philological and interpretive issues. Instead, Lambrecht's poem, in whatever version, represents a fascinating literary window into another world far away from most of the listeners or readers of the text.

In a nutshell, the narrative relates Alexander's life. When he is born, the earth shakes, signaling that a major leader has arrived, almost like a messianic figure. He receives an extensive education, especially by the famous philosopher Aristotle. After his father's death, Alexander follows him on the throne as king of Greece. Soon thereafter, he embarks on war campaigns, first against Rome and Carthage, then against Persia. Despite many challenges, Alexander wins all battles and conquers the entire empire, especially after he has defeated the Persian King Darius, whose own people then kill him as a consequence of his flight from the battlefield. The victor then marries Darius's daughter Roxanje (Roxane) (v. 3990) and moves on far into the Middle East up to India, and even reaches the wall of Paradise, where he cannot penetrate and must finally think of his return home.

In a long fictional letter addressed to his mother Olympia and his teacher Aristotle, he relates all the many miracles and wonders he has witnessed in the foreign, exotic world, such as monsters, the bird Phoenix, magical flower girls who happily share their eroticized bodies with him and his men (CLASSEN, 2000), and he also reports of what

he has learned at the wall to Paradise, where he received a mysterious rock. Only an old Jew is able to explain the symbolic and spiritual meaning of the stone, which then teaches Alexander about the need of humbleness especially for rulers.

The second part of Lambrecht's *Alexanderlied* is based primarily on the Latin *Historia de preliis*, which was the Latin translation of the Greek *Alexander* romance by Leo of Naples in the twelfth century, along with some other sources (*Iter ad paradisum*). There are clearly courtly, spiritual, and historiographical elements, and despite the text being deeply grounded in late ancient Latin and French sources, it constituted the foundation of the emerging courtly culture in the middle of twelfth-century Germany (BUMKE, 1990, p. 64–66; MÖLK, 2002).

Obviously, both the Middle High German version and all the others in the various European languages represent classical learning, and it was thus no particular problem for the audiences to allow the author to transport them into many different parts of the eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and even India. Nevertheless, here we recognize a fascinating mirror into distant worlds which are most relevant for the understanding of the Alexander myth. The poet openly admits that Alexander was not a Christian — he could not have been because he lived a long time before the birth of Christ — but he served a universal function in world history and thus enjoys the full credit as a fascinating and important figure from antiquity who decisively change the course of events as they pertained to Greece, Persia, and neighboring countries. Although the entire narrative is predicated on the conquest of the Persian empire, it signals to the audience that the distant world even beyond the eastern Mediterranean deserved full attention by the German (English, French, etc.) audience. In some versions (Rudolf von Ems, ca. 1230), for instance, Alexander appears even as God's instrument to punish the Persian emperor for his sinfulness (WIKIPEDIA..., 2021).

We thus face the great opportunity to explore in greater detail what global perspectives were outlined and projected in high and late medieval literature, at least with regard to the west to east direction. For our purposes, it does not matter whether anyone among the individual audiences might have traced the distant worlds discovered and conquered by Alexander once again; what matters, instead, is that those worlds were called up within the literary framework, which was actually a major strategy in much of pre-modern literature, if we think, for instance, of the anonymous *Fortunatus* (first printed in Augsburg in 1509). There, the protagonist at first travels from Cyprus to Flanders and England, then returns to the Continent, and because of magical circumstances can then also tour, truly like a modern tourist, many countries both east and west, and at the end even Egypt, the Holy Land, and India, whatever the author might have understood with that geographic term (MÜLLER, 1990).

In light of all these other examples, it makes good sense to incorporate Lambrecht's *Alexander* as an intriguing early case in which most events take place far outside of the European framework and suggest convincingly that adventures can await the individual far away from home, that major challenges await him/her in military campaigns that extend to distant kingdoms, and that his/her accomplishments might be possible only if the global dimensions are taken into account — very similar as in the near-contemporary anonymous goliard narrative, *Herzog Ernst* (ms. A., ca. 1170/1180; ms. B, ca. 1220) (ed. HERWEG, 2019).

Although it might not amount to much for our general discussion, the fact that the narrative takes place at first in Greece deserves our attention. Most medieval romances, whether involving King Arthur or another major ruler and his courtiers, take place in

a somewhat fictional world without specific markers. In the *Alexander* tradition since antiquity, however, the narrator is naturally forced to start his account in Greece, which at that time was already far-removed from the common European attention and mental horizon (MÜLLER, 2019). One of the few remarkable exceptions proves to be the story of *Mai und Beaflo* (ca. 1290, anonymous) where the female protagonist escapes from her incestuous father, the Roman emperor, and manages, with God's help to reach Greece. There she marries the local duke, but because of her mother-in-law's hostility, eventually she has to escape from there as well, only to return to Rome, where the final denouement takes place (CLASSEN, 2006). Another Orientalizing verse narrative was the anonymous Middle English *King of Tars* (ca. 1330; CHANDLER, 2015), but see also John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*.

In Lambrecht's *Alexander*, as in countless other versions, the narrative is simply bound to start in Greece because of the historical conditions. Most European readers/listeners must have had some familiarity with Greece, if they had received at least a minimum education, at least in imagological terms. Nevertheless, hardly anyone in Latin Europe could speak Greek (WEISS, 1977; cf. also O'HOGAN, 2016), and Greece itself represented very foreign territory, at least in practical terms for those further west. Nevertheless, within literary imagination, the eastern Mediterranean was a relatively familiar platform of operation for poets, if we think, once again, of *Apollonius of Tyre* (ARCHIBALD, 1991).

Lambrecht, however, does not give us any significant details about Greece, apart from informing us that Alexander ascended to the throne after his father's death, that he was an outstanding individual, and was praised by everyone. Despite evil rumors, the dynasty deserves highest respect, ruling over the entire kingdom of Macedonia. Alexander himself receives the highest accolade as a man and as the leader of his people, but there is nothing else specific about him, since he could have been the king at any Latin European court. However, he learns to speak and write both Greek and Latin (v. 201–02), which immediately makes him stand out in comparison with traditional kings, although royalties quite commonly acquired knowledge of various languages so that they could speak with their diverse subjects (SCHNEIDER, 2012, p. 51–57).

The early part of Lambrecht's *Alexander* amounts to a panegyric on the young glorious ruler, and then the actual contacts with the Persian ruler Darius are described, which lead over to the attack against the entire Persian empire, which then takes the protagonist far into the Middle East and even India. In order to assemble an army large enough for this task, Alexander recruits soldiers from as far away as Sicily, Rome, and Carthage (northern Africa) and thus emerges already at that early stage as a global leader. His first campaign takes him to Egypt (v. 665), and we also hear of Babylon, Troy, and Syria, along with other locations in the Holy Land, all names on the mental map for any learned individual at that time, whether they had a clear understanding of those location or not.

The narrator obviously drew extensively from his ancient sources, so his poem emerges, without any doubt, as a literary rendition of the famous Alexander account in Middle High German. Interestingly, however, the poet endeavors constantly to drop geographic names to demarcate Alexander's progress, battles, sieges, and war campaign, which takes us to the Holy Land, Arabia, then the major fortress of Tyre, which he can conquer only with great difficulties and the loss of many of his soldiers. Only then do Alexander and Darius clash against each other, which ultimately leads to the former's victory, which then opens the doorway toward the entire Persian empire; a

virtually exotic world for European audiences, and yet, through Alexander's conquest, opened up for them, even though only in their literary imagination.

Darius's army consists of many companies that have joined his forces coming from many different parts of the Middle East, including Armenia, Mesopotamia, Persia, and Nineveh (i.e., Assyria). After the victory over Darius, Alexander moves on and defeats an army from Arabia, conquers Thebes and Lacedemonia (v. 2319; though those are back on the Peloponnese, i.e., in Greece), and then successively moves further east, soon enough gaining complete control of the entire Persian empire with its many provinces and territories.

The poet is primarily interested, as to be expected, in profiling Alexander's heroic achievements, and he makes sure that his audience is fully entertained with reports about battles, political intrigue, military triumphs, sieges, etc. The geographic aspect itself seems to be only a by-product, especially because everyone knew that Lambrecht had developed his narrative, as he emphasizes himself repeatedly, on the basis of classical sources. To present a narrative about Alexander the Great was a clear sign of one's learnedness and education, but it also mirrored the extent to which the intellectual community was interested in and aware about distant worlds far in the East, and this as part of their learning. For instance, without any particular comments, we learn that Alexander reached also the Caspian Sea (v. 3866) and then moved further to meet his opponent, Darius. Nevertheless, the fact itself that the audience was invited to follow the hero ever further east into exotic countries, explicitly opened perspectives toward a more global worldview, as already developed long before the Middle Ages by this famous, mythical figure, the Macedonian conqueror.

In one particular scene, we learn about the hero's resoluteness and determination to force his army to fight with all their might without ever thinking about retreat. Once they have crossed a bridge, Alexander brings it about that the entire structure collapses, which makes any potential flight back home impossible and requires all of his men to fight like heroes with absolute resolve to gain victory (2638–2699; this represents a concept which the slightly later poet of the *Nibelungenlied* [ca. 1200]) will employ as well when he describes how Hagen, after he has transported the entire army across the Danube river, destroys the ferry boat. Officially, he claims that this would force all warriors to be bold and never to think of escape, but unofficially it symbolizes that none of the Burgundians will return while still living (SCHULZE, 2010, stanzas 1578–1580). Lambrecht interpreted this move very differently compared to his successor, but the outcome of Alexander's efforts was entirely victorious for himself, whereas the Burgundians marched directly into their own death in the distant Hunnish lands.

While the ubiquitous pilgrim accounts from the Middle Ages are normally limited to the travel to the Holy Land and to the various religious sites there, and also to Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, both Lambrecht and the anonymous poet of the *Nibelungenlied* identified the East as ominous, appealing, and yet also threatening to one's own existence (*Nibelungenlied*). On the way to their goals (Persia vs. the Hunnish lands), the interaction with the native population takes place without major problems or frictions (less so in the heroic epic where the erupting hostilities soon lead to an Armageddon of mutual destruction), which clearly indicates that these poems were determined by a sense of globalism, the acceptance and integration of the mysterious world far beyond the narrow confines of Europe as a significant part of the global perspective outlined in both texts. But I hastened, once again, to admit that both here and there, as well as in many other medieval texts (such as the anonymous

Reinfried von Braunschweig, late thirteenth century), particularly when Persia is involved, literary imagination plays a significant role, and not practical experience.

In many different respects, the poet projects Alexander as the ideal ruler, such as when he sets up a new government in Persia after the defeat and death of Darius, appointing new dukes and counts everywhere in charge of maintaining peace and justice, though the verse addressing this topic uses the word “*gnade*” (v. 3892; mercy) in order to rhyme on “*graben*” (v. 3893; counts). He ensures that all of his subjects can rely on a fair legal system (v. 3897), and that all merchants, and hence all travelers, can travers the empire without fearing any danger (v. 3905–3912). Interestingly, Alexander also uses a devious strategy to bring to justice those who had murdered Darius, seemingly offering them a monetary reward, but in reality, once they have identified themselves, they are apprehended and executed, irrespective of all their pleading, protests, and accusations that he himself broke his oath. Once they have been hanged at the gallows, both the Greeks and the Persians display great satisfaction with and happiness about this outcome (v. 3077–3081) because thereby the threat of murder, deception, ambush, and other crimes has been greatly diminished.

Alexander thus emerges as a new global leader who can appeal both to his old and his new subjects, to those from the West and from the East. In other words, the poet does not only present to us, like most of his fellow authors from past and present, an idealized military ruler who manages to push his way far into the East, but also an individual who understands what all people’s basic needs are, that is, justice and peace, and thus, personal happiness. By performing as a good ruler, the cultural differences quickly fade away, and the Greek hero thus becomes fully accepted in the new world. Whether eastern audiences, especially in Persia, perceived it that way, I cannot confirm, but the western perspective was certainly predicated on the idea of good government under any circumstances all over the world (BEJCZY; NEDERMANN, 2007; LUCE, 2015).

Moreover, Alexander then marries Darius’s daughter Roxanie with the explicit purpose of strengthening the cultural ties between both cultures and peoples (v. 3982–3984). At the same time, he sends letters to his mother back in Greece and to his people there to inform them about his decision and to invite them to participate in the wedding ceremonies. While before he had made his way far into the East, now he turns his attention back to the West so that he does not lose his connection and can truly operate as a global leader, thereby overcoming long-term cultural tensions, political and military conflicts: “*ubir manige riche mere / wiz ime irgangen were / in persischen riche*” (v. 4014–4016; he sent the letters throughout many countries to tell them how he had performed in the Persian empire). Greece, in the present context, has to be read as a representative of the entire western world, and Persia as a representative of the eastern world. The narrative thus projects a merging of both, as constituted by Alexander, who thereby earned the moniker of ‘the Great,’ the first major leader in establishing global connections.

Of course, for the medieval audiences, the events described in the many different versions of Alexander’s life, whether in Latin or in any of the many vernaculars, were actually situated in the distant past, in antiquity, and in a distant world, Greece, Persia, India, and neighboring countries. Nevertheless, the narrative discourse as it evolved in the early and high Middle Ages, such as in Lambrecht’s *Alexanderlied*, signaled most importantly already to the European readers/listeners that a parochial worldview, a confined human existence within their own small community, and the status within

their monolingual, religiously homogenous context was entirely insufficient and actually incorrect, not in synch with the actual reality of a much wider, hence global world. And this is precisely the very aspect which makes this and many other medieval *Alexander* narratives so valuable to us today, in the twenty-first century, with globalism having a huge impact on us in many different ways. Studying Lambrecht's poem, for instance, illustrates significant antecedents of globalism already in the Middle Ages, at least in literary, fictional terms.

Military leaders often do not only conquer a neighboring country and are then satisfied; instead, they have always tended to keep going and to take over ever more countries, whether we think of most of the Roman emperors, Attila the Hun, Charlemagne, William the Conqueror, Genghis Khan, the Spanish conquistadors, Napoleon, or particularly monstrous Hitler. Ironically, they have thereby opened the window toward many new worlds and contributed, although in a negative fashion, to the further development of globalism. This is also the case, even though only indirectly, with Alexander, who is suddenly challenged by the ruler of India, Porus, which thus brings three worlds into a clash and contact: Greece, Persia under Alexander, and India.

This clash gains additional interest for us because the poet, again drawing from his Latin source, incorporates a race element because King Porus receives much help from black leaders who bring elephants with him as military means to overcome Alexander's army (v. 4225–4355). But the poet does not say anything else about those allies. Already the famous anonymous anthology with allegorical descriptions of animals and mythical beasts, the *Physiologus*, perhaps from the fourth century C.E., certainly known to Lambrecht as an educated cleric, contained a chapter on the elephant, which considerably colored the description of this animal provided here (CURLEY, 1979, p. 29–32). Of course, Alexander conceives of a war stratagem to overcome this threat, which makes the elephants turn crazy and race through the Indian army, trampling many to death. Subsequently, because the fighting kills too many of the men, Alexander suggests a duel with Porus, which he wins, whereupon new fighting breaks out, but again the Greeks and their affiliated Persians remain victorious.

While the details do not concern us here, the protagonist's subsequent exploration of further countries deserves more detailed attention. Alexander and his men discover, for example, Occidratia, where the people walk around naked (v. 4765–4771) and do not know of any particularly developed civilization, which adds to the standard othering of those distant countries in cultural terms. This effort to exoticize the world to the East ever more becomes then particularly evident in the long letter which Alexander composes, relating to his mother and his teacher, Aristotle, of his many adventures. While many of these elements have already been discussed many times by previous scholars, we can trace here more in detail the extent to which the narrator emphasizes the complexity, the geophysical dimension, and the potency of the wide world far beyond the ordinary European mental horizon.

Again, probably in the vein of the *Physiologus* and other learned treatises, Alexander reports of many exotic animals and describes giants, plants, the bird Phoenix, and many other extraordinary creatures and phenomena, which was rather common throughout the pre-modern era (MITTMAN; DENDLE, 2013). Those invoked, of course, a wide range of fantasies about the Orient, and this long before the phenomenon was recognized we are calling since Edward Said's seminal study from 1978, *Orientalism*. For Alexander in Lambrecht's version, those are "wundir" (v. 5161; miracles), and they populate, of course, very similar to numerous other literary

examples filled with the excitement about the monstrous Orient, the distant edge of the known world, or in remote locations, such as the famous episode with the flower girls, whom the protagonist and his men encounter and enjoy for the summer months until the arrival of colder weather makes them all fade away, as happens to all flowers (CLASSEN, 2020b).

Alexander reports of all kinds of other adventures and wonders, and includes numerous references to various countries which they discovered somewhere in the East. The world is open to this protagonist, and the narrator invites us to come along with him in an ever more extending trail of perspectives about other peoples and kingdoms, the list of which does not seem to come to an end, whether Brasiacus (v. 5476), Meroves (v. 5513; primarily a castle), or Amazonia (v. 6472).

Lambrecht creates a kind of mental map, similar to a *mappamundi*, whether populated by realistic features or not, and thus suggests to his audience in unmistakable terms that Alexander forged a path into the far distance where many exciting adventures awaited him. Although we are dealing here with an ancient-classical hero, the high popularity of the Alexander myth confirms the strong awareness, at least among the literary-minded audience, that their own world was not limited at all and that explorations of the exotic countries of Persia and even India was certainly possible (CLASSEN, 2008a). Wisely, Alexander avoids fighting against the Amazon women and comments only “daz ih irvaren wolde / di manicfalden wunder / di mir dicke besunder / von u waren gesagit” (v. 6370–6373; that I wanted to learn the many different miracles which I have heard told about you many times).¹

Of course, this mythical account does not carry much realistic weight and does not suggest concrete ways to build specific connections with the various peoples in Persia, India, and the neighboring kingdoms. Instead, Alexander returns home after he has besieged in vein the enwalled Paradise, bringing with him a stone handed over to him by the gatekeeper. But only an old Jew is capable of interpreting its secret property by placing it on a scale balanced by gold. Irrespective of the amount of the latter, however, the stone always weighs more; however, when a feather and a handful of soil are placed on the other scale, they are much heavier than the stone. The Jew then explains that the stone teaches Alexander always to observe humility irrespective of all of his triumphs (gold), whereas the feather and the soil symbolize the imminent presence of death even in the midst of the most splendid life.

TURNING AWAY FROM THE WORLD AT THE END?

The irony of this literary account and many other versions is thus directly driven home to us, as the world explorer and founder of a global empire ultimately has to remember his true identity and meaning in life, which takes him completely back from the world into his own self, a very theological retraction which was very common for medieval literature at large, commonly promoted by the best and most influential authors, such as St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, though he is not mentioned here by name (v. 7235–7246). Nevertheless, despite the final admonishment always to keep the afterlife in mind, the entire narrative is predicated on the excitement and intrigue

¹ For Spanish perspectives on the Amazons, see Jiménez (2020).

which the individual can find in the distant countries of this world and that a true hero can overcome all challenges of military or political kind and can thus establish himself as the ruler of a mighty empire, in this case Persia. Alexander performs exceedingly well, embraces the principles of a good and virtuous ruler, and avoids, despite his final attempt to conquer even Paradise with violent means, a catastrophic transgression. Just in time, he breaks of the siege upon the enjoinder of an old man, the guardian of this unique location, and returns home, where he enjoys nothing more than twelve more years and then dies.

As much as the poet endeavors to observe the standard expectation to undermine the value of this world, and especially warning about the exotic fascination exerted by the East when he reminds everyone of the supreme value of eternal life, as much does the entire narrative reveal an innovative sense of globalism and a deep interest in getting to know different parts of this world far away from the own home. Undoubtedly, the German or French audiences of any of these *Alexander* versions were probably not capable or willing to follow suit, to depart from home, to travel to Persia and India. Until today, for most people such a move seems equally most unlikely and impossible, but the literary discourse both then and today makes the projection of an open world a potential reality.

ALEXANDER AND GLOBALISM

To talk about globalism in this context requires, of course, a rather loose definition since we do not learn much at all about exchanges between Alexander and the various peoples in the exotic East. Nevertheless, Lambrecht imagines, based on his classical sources, the likelihood of personal contacts, marriage, travel, and life in the Orient, without any cultural frictions, tensions, or other problems once the military issues are solved – conquest by the western king over the eastern emperor. Alexander, once having defeated Darius and later Porus, proves to be an ideal ruler, both over the Greeks and over the Persians/Indians. Of course, since he is constantly on the move and never really settles, we do not learn much about him in terms of his role as an ruler/administrator, about his personal preferences, friendships, love affairs, and other fundamental cultural aspects that would have connected him with the new subjects. But this literary account does not aim for in-depth discussions, and only projects early forms of globalism, even though Alexander operates more like a colonizer than a harbinger of peace and justice during the conquest. The latter, however, also happens, at least as viewed by this Middle High German poet, as soon as the young man has established his authority and sets up law and order under his leadership. For most authors of the countless *Alexander* narratives, however, the Emperor Darius deserved to be defeated because of his tyrannical attitude and politics. Young Alexander was thus projected, both in western and in eastern sources, as a liberator and promoter of peace, though he always operated primarily as a military leader. By pushing so far east, including parts of India, Alexander is, and this already since antiquity, consistently projected as a mythical leader (BRÄUER, 1996), who opened many doors and created, already in antiquity, a model for globalism we are today still far away from.

CONCLUSION

What this all means in the end is nothing less than the realization that already the twelfth-century audience was exposed to a classical-based form of globalism, impressively couched in the canonical narrative of Alexander the Great. Although Persia and India were certainly far away on the mental map of most medieval Europeans, Lambrecht brought both worlds close to his audience's home and thus laid, to some extent, the foundations for medieval globalism before globalism. I would not go so far as to suggest that Lambrecht wanted to encourage his audience to follow the model set by Alexander and to embark on colonizing strategies.

However, the literary framework insinuated the possibility also for European readers/listeners to envision the world of Persia, India, and Amazonia, among other places, as part of their own, in their learned imagination. Fiction, after all, removes all possible barriers and projects unforeseen possibilities, such as the opening up of the parochial doors and windows toward a global universe. We could continue with this investigative approach by examining also such medieval narratives as Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (ca. 1205) and the anonymous *Reinfried von Braunschweig* (ca. 1290), where new worldviews are developed as well (CLASSEN, 2008b). Yet, still at the end of the Middle Ages, it was pretty obvious that most Europeans would not make their way to India and that most Indians would not even want to visit Europe because of the too high cost factor, dangers and challenges on the way, inclement weather (for Indians), and lack of interest (at least in India). That, at least, is the outcome of the reflections by the anonymous narrator in *Fortunatus* (1509), although things then rapidly changed, once Vasco da Gama had found the way to India around Cape Horn in 1499 and an increasing number of European merchants, explorers, and diplomats made their way to India (CLASSEN, 2015).

Nevertheless, Lambrecht had already outlined in concrete and virtually feasible fashion that a political and military joining – not colonization in the modern sense of the word – of East and West could be possible, which would bring justice and peace to all people and unify them, so to speak, in one world where neither linguistic nor religious differences, not even to speak of ethnic or political ones, seem to matter. Of course, we are dealing here with a kind of Orientalism *avant* Edward Said (1978), and yet without the later colonialist brand since the sixteenth century. We also should keep in mind the high popularity of the Alexander sage in the eastern countries, which makes this account really to a document of global interests, and this a very long time before the rise of modernity. The account of Alexander the Great, as popular it was both in East and West, does not, of course, suggest that there were direct connections and exchanges between both parts of the world. However, in terms of imagology, we have here great evidence for global perspectives.

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