

## Research Article

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# Hrabanus Maurus' Post-Patristic Renovation of 1 Maccabees 1:1–8

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**Abstract:** In this article, I examine Hrabanus Maurus' exegesis of the opening verses of 1 Maccabees, which preserves a concise account of Alexander the Great's career. My main goal is to demonstrate how Hrabanus reinterpreted the representation of the Macedonian king from 1 Maccabees. To this end, I employ transformation theory, which enables me to analyze the ways in which Hrabanus updated the meaning of the biblical text. I argue that Hrabanus turned the negative Maccabean narrative of Alexander into a positive representation that was attractive to contemporary readers. I support this argument by focusing on Hrabanus' recourse to Latin sources, primarily the late antique authors Jerome, Orosius, and Justin, an epitomist of Roman history. I find that Hrabanus challenged Jerome's interpretations, neutralized much of Orosius' negative appraisal of Alexander, and amplified the laudatory passages of Justin, which generated a new image of the ancient king. The present article thus contributes to three fields: medieval exegesis of biblical texts, Carolingian reinterpretation of the patristic heritage, and the reception of Alexander the Great.

**Keywords:** Alexander the Great, biblical scholarship, medieval exegesis, "Carolingian Renaissance", historiography, historical text reuse, transformation theory

## 1 Prelude: What is the point of reception?

Miriam De Cock, the prime mover behind this special issue of *Open Theology*, invited contributors to reflect on how and why we conduct research into the "reception history"<sup>1</sup> of biblical and patristic heritage. My perspective on this task differs from that of many other contributors, since my training lies in Classics. Thinking about transmission of texts as a Hellenist normally means tracking the afterlives of ancient Greek works enshrined in the "classical tradition," a body of literature already selected in antiquity and reread throughout the ages for a multitude of reasons. Of course, the narrow sense of "literature" is problematic because literary "quality" reflects a deliberate choice of textual priority based on taste at a particular moment in time, as well as an implicit and subjective validation of the texts in question. Such prioritization goes hand in hand with marginalization, if not direct exclusion. For instance, it is an irony of history that the Septuagint – the most influential text from the Hellenistic period and a true exemplar of cultural hybridity – is not on the Classics curriculum. In research, as well as in liberal education at large, it is thus always worth asking not only "what to read," but also "how and why."

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<sup>1</sup> For this concept as it relates to reception studies more widely, see Willis, *Reception*, 1.

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Reception studies have had an important role in challenging us to go beyond disciplinary boundaries. By pursuing materials outside our regular domains, we stimulate the widening of our horizons, not only among individual scholars and disciplines, but also at large. To take just one example from my personal experience, studies of Alexander the Great's worldwide reception have resurged in my lifetime,<sup>2</sup> thanks to the work of Richard Stoneman, Pierre Briant, Corinne Jouanno, Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, and numerous others. We have turned "Alexandrology" (Briant's neologism) into a viable avenue for research across the Humanities. In conducting this research, we rediscover the historical period or culture from which we derive the Alexander reception.<sup>3</sup> This cultural perspective also has a wider impact on the general public, an audience to which we all owe an obligation. For instance, in October 2022, the British Library will launch an exhibition on the legends of Alexander.

In this article, I invoke the Alexander theme as a current research topic and as reception's cardinal principle of interdisciplinarity. I approach a subject outside the typical purview of Classicists: an exegete of the post-patristic era, Magnentius Rabanus Maurus – or Hrabanus Maurus (c. AD 780–856) – and his Latin exegesis of the first eight verses of 1 Maccabees. The opening verses of 1 Maccabees present one of the earliest surviving synoptic accounts of the king's reign, and Hrabanus' commentary provides a peculiarly extensive exegesis of those verses. The two texts engendered innovation in the reception of Alexander; in the history of interpretation of a biblical text; and, in Hrabanus's case, in the reinterpretation of patristic and non-Christian late antique authors. The task of capturing all these aspects – thus illuminating diachronic cultural change – calls for interdisciplinary research. The venue of this issue makes such research possible.

## 2 Introduction

The first (early) modern biography of Alexander appeared in 1665, offering an account of both the Macedonian king and the Frankish Emperor, Charlemagne (748–814).<sup>4</sup> The paralleling of their lives implies a comparison. The author, the clergyman Samuel Clarke (1599–682), introduced the two kings as the respective founders of empires in world history: a Greek and a French, an eastern and a western. In separate biographies, he introduced further binaries between the royal pair, including their differences in age, moral conduct (e.g. treatment of women), and religion.<sup>5</sup> His verdict lays bare the partiality of an English Puritan biographer: while the French Charlemagne had been misled by the Catholicism of his day, Alexander deteriorated because of the superstition of paganism and his dealings with the Jews. According to Clarke, the Macedonian king had apparently approached the holy city of Jerusalem, bowed before the high priest, and interpreted the prophetic scriptures to predict his own military success.<sup>6</sup>

The tale of Alexander's entry into Jerusalem reveals a perennial issue with reading conflicting sources and stories about such larger-than-life personages of the past. While Clarke paraphrased the Jerusalem tale with confidence and credulity, the story's authenticity was debated for centuries. As Briant has shown, intellectuals, such as Voltaire in his *La Bible enfin expliquée* (1776),<sup>7</sup> found the tale difficult to believe, because neither the Jewish 1 Maccabees 1:1–8 nor any other ancient authority had made mention of Alexander's sojourn in Palestine.<sup>8</sup> Authorial selection and reuse of certain stories thus speak volumes about the authors' agendas in rewriting the past, which we can use to challenge their creations. Of course, such an

<sup>2</sup> Apparently, the study of Alexander texts and receptions proliferated in the late nineteenth century, for which see Hogarth, *Philip and Alexander of Macedon*, 281 n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Briant, *The First European*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Clarke, *The Life & Death of Alexander*; Cf. Briant, *The First European*, 21–3.

<sup>5</sup> One might expect a moralizing tone from a Puritan preacher, whose "historical" assessment ran along the lines of the adage that History should offer lessons for life, a *topos* with a long history after its formulation in Cic. *De Or.* 2.9.36.

<sup>6</sup> Clarke, *The Life & Death*, 7, 18–21.

<sup>7</sup> Briant, *The First European*, 62.

<sup>8</sup> For this story in the ancient context, see Djurslev, *Alexander*, 129–36.

exercise is always of pivotal importance for the historian, since illusory pasts continue to be created and die hard.

I wish to devote the following pages to the representation of Alexander by a Frankish author, the biblical scholar Hrabanus, who lived half a lifetime under Charlemagne. He did not incorporate the Jerusalem tale into his commentary on the account of Alexander in 1 Maccabees 1:1–8 but provided a powerful narrative that overrode the prior meaning of the Maccabean version.

This article constitutes the first sustained study of this topic since 1950. That year saw the submission of a dissertation on the general reception of Alexander across medieval Europe by George Cary (1928–1953).<sup>9</sup> Cary concluded that “in setting the historical career of Alexander against a Biblical background, Rhabanus (sic) may be called the first representative of the German school of learned writers upon Alexander.”<sup>10</sup> This thesis seems to have withstood the test of time.<sup>11</sup> In the four-volume, multi-authored work on the fascination with Alexander across European literature,<sup>12</sup> Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas and her team characterize the German discourse on the king as “religious” and therefore “ambivalent” in its reception of Alexander because Christian writers denigrated him as a heathen but praised him for personal virtues like bravery. This equivocal representation stands in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly laudatory, secular romances of medieval France. When thus viewed as an instance of medieval German reception, Hrabanus' representation stands as a perfect example of it and so may indeed be considered first in the field. This conclusion is stunningly apt, because posterity has often conferred upon Hrabanus the grandiose title of the “first teacher of Germany,” *primus praeceptor Germaniae*.<sup>13</sup>

Since these scholars' concern was the Middle Ages, they have not devoted the same attention to the more distant past. In this article, I will expand upon Cary's comments on Hrabanus' Alexander narrative, not looking ahead to the rest of the Middle Ages, but rather looking back on the tradition that the Carolingian exegete received. This change of perspective causes conceptual difference in seeing Hrabanus' place in line with prior Christian scholars, including the Venerable Bede (d. 735). It moves the focus to the exegete's active use of the biblical text, his sources and intermediaries, as well as his rewriting of these materials. We shall explore what he Hrabanus reused and how he altered the text to create a partial version of the distant past for his Carolingian readership.

## 2.1 Methodology

The articles of this journal issue must be regular “case studies” of reception history. But the study of any case involves a number of choices of what that case actually exemplifies and how to go about showing it. Accordingly, I offer a brief outline of my methodological considerations before approaching the texts.<sup>14</sup>

I examine the novelty of Hrabanus' exegesis, recognizing that he conducted an experimental interpretation of Alexander history in the context of his Carolingian faith community. I am interested in his “discursive practice,”<sup>15</sup> by which I mean how his writing reflects and reshapes not only his materials, but

<sup>9</sup> Cary's surveys covered much besides Hrabanus Maurus by collecting instances of Alexander receptions from many European texts, which reviewers appreciated as a research tool. See Rose, “Medieval Alexander;” and Smithers, “Medieval Alexander.”

<sup>10</sup> Cary, *Medieval Alexander*, 123.

<sup>11</sup> Cited with approval by e.g. Gaullier-Bougassas, *La fascination*, 1.8; Masse, “L'image royale d'Alexandre,” 2.1087; Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher-King*, 3–6.

<sup>12</sup> Gaullier-Bougassas, *La fascination*, 3.1806–9.

<sup>13</sup> Some contrarian reactions to this assessment, see the bibliographical outline of Kottje, “Hrabanus Maurus,” 195; “Hrabanus war zwar kein origineller Denker.”

<sup>14</sup> I am myself influenced by wider “turns” in Classics' cognate fields, the cultural turn in religious studies and the linguistic turn in history. For the former, see the magisterial account of Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*; cf. the papers in Martin and Cox Millar, *The Cultural Turn*. For the later, see in particular Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, 156–85.

<sup>15</sup> Mills, *Discourse*, 23.

also the Carolingian culture and society to which he belonged. Hrabanus' access to texts and his active reuse of them become important for the present investigation.

I must stress that a direct scripture-to-commentary approach or a "text-to-text"<sup>16</sup> approach will not on its own be able to convey adequately the richness of textual reception in Hrabanus' exegesis. For instance, Hrabanus did not record all the verses that concerned Alexander, but replaced them with his own words or phrases from other texts, such as an account of the king's death by a Roman historian identified as Pompeius Trogus.<sup>17</sup> Besides modifying the biblical text itself, Hrabanus used intermediaries or "sources" to construct his exegesis, thus negotiating existing Alexander-related material.<sup>18</sup> Hrabanus' reassembling and streamlining of texts to recalibrate the meaning of 1 Maccabees thus tells us much about his textual flexibility and makes it difficult to capture with a regular "reception history" approach.

To complement the "text-to-text" approach, I have adopted another theoretical framework, "transformation theory." I find this useful because it offers basic terminology to explain cultural change. I personally welcome specialized language to categorize receptions, since existing vocabularies of the field vary. Transformation theory also changes our conceptual focus by foregrounding subjectivity rather than objectivity in the representation of the past. It helps us to see that the past, no matter the period, is in fact rather alien to us, and so the theory allows us to embrace the otherness of both an object from that pre-selected past and its reception through time and space.<sup>19</sup> There is then practical benefit to be acquired from this theory at the communicative and conceptual levels.

Transformation theory operates with two spheres, reference and reception, with transformation taking place between them in a reciprocal process. The Berlin-based creators refer to this process as *allelopoiesis*,<sup>20</sup> an unwieldy neologism of *allellos* (mutual, reciprocal) and *poiesis* (creation, generation). I paraphrase the central idea: *agents of change* reconstruct the *reference sphere* by reworking an *object* from the *reference culture* into the *reception culture*, thus modifying the *reception sphere* in the process. Applied to the present case: *Hrabanus as represented by his commentary* reconstructs the *distant past* by reworking *Alexander of 1 Maccabees 1* from *late antique culture* into *Carolingian culture*, thus modifying *Carolingian society*. It follows that both reference and reception spheres are transformed through Hrabanus' text, which itself generated further receptions as other people, syn- and diachronically, engaged with his commentary.<sup>21</sup>

I wish to comment briefly on the reference and reception cultures already designated. For the former, I point to the culture of Late Antiquity, commonly considered to be the third to eighth centuries AD. All the texts Hrabanus reworks are part of the cultural production of this post-classical period. Consider only the source text: Hrabanus did not work with the Greek text of 1 Maccabees, but commented on a reworked Latin translation of 1 Maccabees, the "Vulgate" translation of Jerome of Stridon (c. AD 345–420; Jerome's text is in itself an adaptation of yet another Latin translation by an unknown author from the second or third centuries AD).<sup>22</sup> Translations are also transformative, as they transfer meaning partially from one language to another.<sup>23</sup> Even the ancient Romans that Hrabanus referenced, such as Trogus, are in fact read through late antique intermediaries rather than as the original text. The lateness of Hrabanus' source texts says something about the author, insofar as his dialogue with the past mainly harkened back to the time of his

<sup>16</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 38–40.

<sup>17</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, *Comm. 1 Macc. PL* 109.1130D–1131.

<sup>18</sup> Collated at Stoneman, "Primary Sources."

<sup>19</sup> Typically, temporal order has taken priority: the original text first and then its reception. Normally this means that "great men" respond "to the text of the great man." Cf. Goldhill, "Limits," 420.

<sup>20</sup> Bergemann et al., "Transformation," 12; Cf. *ibid.*, 13, "The two sides of *allelopoiesis* – the constitution of the reception culture through the reference to a reference culture, and the reception culture's construction of the reference culture[...]."

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. Shimahara, "Histoire," 591, who notes that a contemporary anonymous commentary on 1 Maccabees extracted more than 75% from Hrabanus' commentary. To a lesser degree, a later German textbook has extracted content from Hrabanus' commentary in a retelling of Alexander's story, for which see Schnell, *Liber Alexandri Magni*; Cf. Gaullier-Bougassas, "L'historiographie médiévale," 14.

<sup>22</sup> Grimm, *Handbuch*, xxx–xxxi.

<sup>23</sup> Bergemann et al., "Transformation," 23.

so-called “holy Fathers,” *sancti patres*. Hrabanus' reconstruction of the past thus stands further removed from antiquity than normally acknowledged.<sup>24</sup>

On the “Carolingian Renaissance” (c. AD 768–888),<sup>25</sup> much ink has been spilt. In essence, the very usage of the “Renaissance” terminology suggests a rebirth of Greek and Roman antiquity that is typically associated with the humanism of the Renaissance. Hrabanus' recourse to the late antique reference culture instead of ancient culture indicates, however, a separate point of departure. This is telling for the intellectual movement of his era.<sup>26</sup> Like many other Carolingians, his reuse did not confer “classical” or privileged status upon the Greek and Roman texts of antiquity, but prioritized a different set of texts, both qualitatively and quantitatively. In this way, Carolingian literary production rejuvenated patterns of operation from the Christian Roman Empire and the waves of Christian scholarship from the fall of Rome and onwards. If the Carolingian era rebirthed anything, it was the polyvalent, pluralistic world of Late Antiquity. Given this, it is important to determine the cultural distinctiveness of the Carolingian literary production by setting it against what had gone before.

Finally, I highlight that my choice of Hrabanus' testimony is a self-conscious one. We could perform a similar reception exercise with other texts, including 1 Maccabees itself. We know that the Hasmonean author of this text tapped into the Alexandrology of antiquity, constructing a particular representation of the Macedonian king in order to create a partial version of the past for contemporary consumption. The Jewish historian's appeal to the example of Alexander was therefore as unstable as that of Hrabanus' commentary and required discursive negotiation for it to be presented as a “historical” example at court. Scholars have been preoccupied with the original meaning and historical framework of this text since the Enlightenment movement,<sup>27</sup> however, and so this endeavor does not require urgent attention. Of course, it is necessary to swap order the first verses of 1 Maccabees, as a way of providing a backdrop.

### 3 Hasmonean historiography on Alexander as the rise of evil

Today, 1 Maccabees is best known for commemorating the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem in 165/4 BC; the event is celebrated annually at Hanukkah, the Jewish festival of lights. The Hebrew original, now lost, was probably written during the zenith of Hasmonean power under John Hyrcanus (134–104), and the Greek translation may have followed a few years later (c. 100 BC?).<sup>28</sup> John was the son of Simon Thassi, who had founded the Hasmonean dynasty a couple of decades after his brother Judas Maccabaeus – “the Hammer” – had wrested Israel from the Seleucid Empire through guerilla warfare.

1 Maccabees was written to provide a narrative of Jewish history that constructed legitimate origins for the Hasmonean dynasty through use of the Maccabean revolt. To furnish this image of the prehistory of Maccabean rule, the historian self-consciously continued the historical narratives from the Old Testament. He began his composition with the Persian War of Alexander (335/4–323). The Macedonian conquest provided him with a brief prehistory for his parochial interests in the conflict with the Seleucids. The basic narrative runs thus:

<sup>1</sup>It came to pass that, after the son of Philip, Alexander the Macedonian, who reigned over Greece as the first, had come out of the land of Kittim and defeated Darius, the king of Persians and Medes, <sup>2</sup>he fought many battles. He captured all the strongholds, put to the sword worldly monarchs, <sup>3</sup>and advanced to the ends of the earth. He plundered many nations, and the earth was silent before him. <sup>4</sup>He gathered a very strong army, and his heart was exalted and lifted up. <sup>5</sup>He conquered

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Rissel, *Rezeption antiker und patristischer Wissenschaft*.

<sup>25</sup> So coined by French philologist Jean-Jacques Ampère (1839). Cf. Noble, “Carolingian Era.”

<sup>26</sup> Contreni, “Carolingian Renaissance.”

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. Panel, *Remarques*, which precedes Baron de Sainte-Croix's seminal *Examen critique*. Cf. Briant, *The First European*, 19–49. For more recent contributions, see e.g. Kłęczar, “Creating the King;” Nawotka, “1 Maccabees.”

<sup>28</sup> Eckhardt, “The Hasmoneans,” 56.

nations and princes, who became tributary to him. <sup>6</sup>After this he collapsed on his bed, realizing that he was dying. <sup>7</sup>He summoned his noble officers, who had been brought up with him, and divided his kingdom among them while he still lived. <sup>8</sup>Alexander reigned 12 years and then died. <sup>9</sup>The young men took power, each in his own place. <sup>10</sup>They all put on crowns after Alexander's death, and so did their descendants after them for many years. Evils emanated through the earth.

1 Maccabees 1:1–10 (ed. Stuttgart Vulgate,<sup>5</sup> trans. Djurslev).<sup>29</sup>

The partisan quality of this etiology is self-evident. The text links the Greek invaders with the rise of evil in the world. The connection to the king's excessive imperialism and unlimited destruction resonated, not only with readers of the Old Testament, but also readers of Greek historiography. Since Herodotus, the Greek historian, and his accounts of Persian warlords, ambitious kings were ripe for destruction when puffed up with pride (verse 4). Alexander managed to disseminate his territorial legacy by distributing conquered territories to men who would be kings themselves. The negative effects were considerable: Alexander's and his successors' actions turned the entire pre-Hasmonean period of Greek rule into an age of calamity in the history of Israel. The Hasmonean historiographer stresses time as a factor through his use of the Seleucid dating system to link Alexander with Antiochus IV,<sup>30</sup> whom the historiographer represented as the chief adversary of the Jews (1 Macc. 1:11).

This revaluation of Jewish history may strike readers as partisan, but it is only half the story. According to Elias Bickerman,<sup>31</sup> the contributions of other factions of resistant Jerusalemite Jews or pro-Seleucid Jewish elites are reduced or omitted from the Maccabean narrative. This exclusion helps to create an impression of Maccabean preeminence in all things. The absence of political rivals and actors is indeed striking, especially considering the fact that the Tobiad and Oniad factions clashed over control of Israel during the pre-Hasmonean period (acknowledged by e.g. 2 Macc. 3). Combined with the historiographer's hostile interpretation of the Greek era, this elimination of other contributors paints a stark impression of a Jewish history in which foreign powers infected Israel with evil, and no one did anything to counter the bleak situation before the emergence of the Hasmoneans. In doing so, the court historiographer overwrote any achievements of other Jerusalemite factions, primarily the Oniads, by associating their entire existence with the rule of the wicked Greek invaders.

The negative representation of Alexander naturally follows on from this agenda in the rewriting of the pre-Maccabean history of Israel. The author constructs his image to extend the king's evil deeds – those of a bloodthirsty foreign warlord – beyond his lifetime. As we have seen, in constructing this partial version of the king's deeds, the Hasmonean author ignored other, more positive Jewish tales about Alexander, such as his entry into Jerusalem. We shall now explore how Hrabanus undid this past through his exegetical activity.

## 4 Alexander reloaded: Hrabanus' recoding of 1 Maccabees 1:1–8

In this section, I first contextualize Hrabanus' commentary on 1 Maccabees before I proceed to an analysis of its first eight verses of Alexander history. I use transformation theory to explore how Hrabanus changed first the biblical text itself, then the texts of Jerome, Orosius, and Justin. The analysis shows that Hrabanus' exegesis reused historical texts to generate a new image of the king to suit the purposes of the author and his readership.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Kinney, *Vulgate Bible*, 276–7; Beriger et al., “Maccabeorum,” 1050–1.

<sup>30</sup> For time as a factor in Jewish resistance to the Seleucids, see Kosmin, *Time and its Adversaries*, 137–86.

<sup>31</sup> Bickerman, *God*, 1053.



## 4.1 Overview: The background of the commentary

Hrabanus' exegesis was part of a wide-ranging program of writing, primarily biblical scholarship, that fills no less than six volumes of Jacques-Paul Migne's *Patrologia Latina* (1864, PL vols. 107–12). No critical edition of his works swap order of words.<sup>32</sup> Hrabanus' commentary on 1 Maccabees was not the first known commentary on the Maccabean books but is the oldest extant (c. AD 840s). He seems to have composed it in a vacuum, that is, without influence from other commentaries.<sup>33</sup>

Taking up the task was not his idea. As he proudly proclaimed in the double dedicatory prologue to the commentary (PL 109.1125D–28A), the Archdeacon Geroldus and King Louis the German (r. 843–76) had requested a commentary on this specific book on several occasions from August 829 to the mid-840s.<sup>34</sup> Hrabanus tells us something more of the chronology of composition. He mentions that, the year before, he had sent Louis his commentary on the prophet Daniel, a text that included both his own and ancient views of the subject. Apparently, the Maccabean commentary was a revision of an oral version dictated to friends at an earlier point. The unnamed *amici* had asked Hrabanus to expound the historical and mystic meaning of the text, since it was being read at church. Louis' royal request – more than a decade later than the inquiry was first made by Geroldus – seems to have created an opportunity for Hrabanus to write his commentary.

Hrabanus produced the commentary for esteemed members of the highest social and religious strata, perhaps after the peace treaty of Verdun (843). From 840, civil war had broken out between the grandsons of Charlemagne, and Hrabanus had to go in exile because he remained loyal to the losing side, his patron, King Lothar I (c. 795–855).<sup>35</sup> The exile gave him an unexpected 5 years or so of immense productivity in his office, which he called his *Meditatorium*. Here he sat like “a spider in a web that spanned the former empire, serving as the undisputed source of orthodox wisdom” (Lothar himself had named Hrabanus *magister orthodoxus* in a letter).<sup>36</sup> At this time, Hrabanus indiscriminately cultivated his relations with both Lothar and Louis, dedicating biblical commentaries as magnificent gifts to either party (Genesis, Jeremiah, Ezekiel to Lothar; Daniel and 1 Maccabees to Louis).<sup>37</sup>

Hrabanus was well suited for the role of advisor for such monarchs. From birth, he was raised as a privileged member of the social elite with access to the best education in the letters of the Carolingian Empire. He had been one of the last pupils of Alcuin of York, studying at Tours with luminaries like Haymo, later bishop of Halberstadt. Alcuin died in 804, the year of Hrabanus' return to Germany, and Hrabanus took charge of the monastic school at Fulda, which he had himself attended previously. He turned it into the highest-regarded school in the Carolingian society; its reputation surged after he became abbot in 822.<sup>38</sup> Hrabanus' credentials were well established in bibliophile high society.

According to Sumi Shimahara, Hrabanus desired to renew his role as royal councilor when he dedicated his commentary on the Book of Daniel to Louis.<sup>39</sup> He may have envisioned the Maccabean commentary as the second part of Louis' reading program, because it supplied the historical continuation of the Danielic book. It was certainly timely, considering the political turmoil, as well as an excellent opportunity for Hrabanus to maintain his former social position by recommending himself to a new patron in writing. It

<sup>32</sup> Schipper, “Unpublished Commentaries,” 229. Hrabanus Maurus *Comm. 1 Macc.* = PL 109.1125–1256D, is a reprinting of Colvener, *Magnentii Hrabani Mauri*, 4.380–429. Schipper, “Unpublished Commentaries,” 272 shows that Hrabanus' commentary appears in manuscripts in Oxford (236 n. 45), Cambridge (236, n. 46), Leipzig (263), and Bologna (272).

<sup>33</sup> Grimm, *Handbuch*, xxxiv notes that Cassiodorus' friend, the presbyter Bellator, produced ten books of commentary on the Maccabean books, none of which remain extant (cf. Cassiodorus *De Inst. div.* 1.6.4–6). The volumes do not seem to have reached Hrabanus Maurus. Cf. Shimahara, “Histoire,” 590.

<sup>34</sup> Shimahara, “Histoire,” 591; Cf. Schipper, “Unpublished Commentaries,” 262, citing the letters of Geroldus in Dümmler, *Epp.* 3.424–5 (*Ep.* 19; c. 834/838) and Louis 3.469–70 (*Ep.* 35; 842/846).

<sup>35</sup> De Jong, “The Empire as *Ecclesia*,” 209 n. 72.

<sup>36</sup> De Jong, “Old Law,” 169.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>38</sup> For the monastery under Hrabanus' direction, see Raaijmakers, *The Making*, 175–249.

<sup>39</sup> Shimahara, “Le Commentaire,” 289.

seems to have worked, for he received the prestigious appointment over the episcopal see of his birthplace, the archbishopric of Mainz, which he held from 847 until his death on 4 February 856.

## 4.2 Hrabanus' revision of the Maccabean Alexander

Hrabanus' account of Alexander's life runs to just over 4 columns of text, about 2,000 words.<sup>40</sup> The narrative is highly Alexandrocentric, tracking the king's actions and the reactions of others to the king's conduct. At a general level, it can be said to provide specific episodes, whether fictional or historical, to particularize the vague Maccabean narrative. It mainly focuses on outlining the Macedonian campaigns beyond Persia (c. 350 words) and the circumstances of the king's death in Babylon in 323 BC (more than 400 words). In terms of transformation terminology, Hrabanus created a hybrid history by reconstructing what was missing in the source text, 1 Maccabees, from other texts. These intermediaries were reworked using a range of transformative tools, such as omission and substitution, which we will consider below.

Perhaps the clearest indication that Hrabanus changed the meaning of Maccabean narrative lies in his framing of Alexander's meteoric rise and fall. The Alexander narrative is constructed by two explicit paraphrases of a vision from the Book of Daniel 8, in which a one-horned he-goat of the west crushed a two-horned ram of the east (1129A; 1132C). After this, the single horn grew great, but was split and flew into the four winds. In line with many previous interpretations, Hrabanus represented Alexander as the goat and King Darius of the Medes and Persians as the ram. After Alexander defeated Darius, he acquired a great empire, but then died, and the empire was fractured. On this reading, the two kings were allegorized as similar but geographically opposed animalistic entities. Hrabanus placed them within the framework of Old Testament causality: God raised up a king to destroy another when the latter had transgressed. By including this prophetic frame, Hrabanus altered the gist of 1 Maccabees, which saw Alexander as a prideful king who distributed his kingdom himself. This prophetic frame recalibrates the original meaning of the narrative.

### 4.2.1 Reuse of text from 1 Maccabees

At first glance, the literary form of Hrabanus' exegesis appears to follow a basic pattern. Each chapter heading is followed by a short summary of the contents, after which a line of scripture is quoted. Exposition of various lengths ensues, and then another line of scripture is reproduced. However, Hrabanus deviates from the pattern after 1 Maccabees 1:4 (1130D); subsequent lines are paraphrased until Hrabanus quotes 1:9 (1132C–D). Although he does not reproduce all the verses, he does cover all the content from the Maccabean Alexander narrative, as the following analysis shows:

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1 Maccabees 1:1 ~ 1129A–C	Hrabanus quotes the entire verse at the top, with explication of several points. For instance, Hrabanus names both parents of Alexander, <i>Philip and Olympias</i> , as is typical in his sources but not in 1 Maccabees 1:1. <sup>41</sup> In this sense, he reconstructs the past by including material not in the reference object, a common strategy. He repeats “left Cethim,” <i>egressus de Cethim</i> , to make a comment on the Hebrew placename, Cethim.
1:2–3 ~ 1129D–1130C	Again, quotation of the entire verse, with repetition of <i>et siluit terra in conspectu eius</i> at the rear. The entire exposition is lifted from the third book of Orosius' <i>History against the pagans</i> (3.18–20), a universal history in Latin with a focus on Rome

<sup>40</sup> Hrabanus Maurus *Comm. 1 Macc.* PL 109.1129A–1132D.

<sup>41</sup> See e.g. Euseb. *Chron.* p. 121 Helm; Oros. 3.11.2.



- (c. 416/7). The source is not explicitly identified, save by the vague “the writers of history say,” *sicut tradunt historici*. While much information is taken from Orosius, Hrabanus omits any reference to the spoils of war mentioned by the third verse.
- 1:4–(5) ~ 1130C–D Quotation only of the first part of the verse, *et congregavit virtutem exercituum fortem nimis*. Hrabanus omits *et exaltatum est et elevatum cor eius*, which is normally taken as a sign of Alexander’s arrogance, as we saw above. This is highly significant, for it removes the negative connotations of the king’s conquests, and Hrabanus could thus reinterpret them as he saw fit. Moreover, the commentary does not actually comment on the military might of the army, but focuses on the amassed wealth in Alexander’s treasuries, which were discovered after the king’s passing. It seems therefore that Hrabanus was in fact discussing the statement of verse 5, *et facti sunt illi in tributum*, namely, the tribute paid by the conquered peoples and lords, while at the same time covering what he had not in his exegesis of verse 3, *accepit spolia multitudinis gentium*. For this purpose, he makes an explicit source citation of Justin’s *Epitome* of the *Philippic Histories* of Pompeius Trogus, a Vocontian Gaul who wrote the first world history in Latin in c. 20 BC. Hrabanus does not cite Trogus but reproduces Justin’s epitome verbatim,<sup>42</sup> which we may consider an encapsulation of an object from the reference culture.
- 1:6 ~ 1130D–1131B Without noting the Maccabean verse specifying that Alexander realized he was going to die, Hrabanus launches into the conspiracy to poison the king. This extensive plot is extracted once more from Justin’s text, although Hrabanus names Trogus explicitly; he thus obfuscates the identity of his source from the reference sphere. In transformation terms, I believe that Hrabanus’ rewriting employs a strong sense of “negation,” insofar as a specific association is systematically eliminated from the source to create a wholly new interpretation of the source’s story. That we have no citation of the specific biblical verse in Hrabanus’ text also makes it difficult to avoid the interpretation that the author is presenting to us.
- 1:7 ~ 1131C–D Hrabanus does not cite the Maccabean text verbatim, but paraphrases it, changing the order of words. While 1 Maccabees 1:7 specifies that Alexander divided up his empire among his successors while alive, Hrabanus maintains that Alexander instead left the task to them. He casually introduces his remark in an odd place, a sort of parenthetical sentence when he has already moved on from Justin’s account. In so doing, he not only rejects the Maccabean narrative but also Justin’s. Hrabanus relates how Alexander’s successor Perdiccas was selected. Alexander had desired to his kingdom to pass to the most worthy, *dignissimum*, but was unable to speak when the day came to announce it; he therefore passed on his ring to this important officer on his final day. Hrabanus thus assembles a narrative by giving both the Maccabean and Justinian versions, however faithfully, but then overlays them with his own revaluation of the events. He seems to do so in order to make the story adhere to the Danielic framework that four successors would rise up after Alexander (Dan. 8:8). Hrabanus identifies these four in 1132C (Ptolemy, Philip III, Seleucus, Antigonus).
- 1:8 ~ 1132A Hrabanus does not cite the Maccabean verse. He also does not repeat the information from the verse that Alexander died, *et mortuus est*. Instead, he presents other data that overlaps with the verse: the king reigned 12 years, *et regnavit Alexander annis duodecim*. The number of regnal years is taken directly from Orosius (3.23.6), with a verbatim quotation, “Alexander had crushed the trembling world beneath his sword for 12 years” (trans. Fear), *Alexander per duodecim annos*

<sup>42</sup> Apparently, a common strategy in earlier Christian historiography, cf. Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, *Jordanes*, 249 n. 239.

*tremement sub se orbem ferro pressit.* However, Hrabanus omits “sword,” *ferro*, thus reducing the association between the king and military terminology, as well as instruments for killing. This representation is apt, for the very next sentence likens Alexander to a lion who has brought down prey (the Persian empire), and his greedy lion cubs (the successors) split the carcass between them – a striking comparison also lifted directly from Orosius (without alteration and thus an encapsulated object from the reference culture). This appropriation of a line of text and the encapsulated imagery substitutes 1 Maccabees 1:8 with Hrabanus’ own reworking, thus transforming the end of the Maccabean Alexander narrative.

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The analysis above demonstrates that Hrabanus was not mindlessly reproducing a commentary on every word of 1 Maccabees 1:1–8. He was an active exegete clearly involved in expounding the Maccabean narrative. He transforms the story using a variety of techniques that we can categorize, particularly omission, substitution, negation, and reconstruction. To corroborate this impression of the involved exegete, we turn to his adaptation of other source texts.

#### 4.2.2 The recourse to sources in Hrabanus’ account of Alexander “history”

A group of scholars, led by Silvia Cantelli Berarducci, has charted all of Hrabanus’ sources across his biblical scholarship.<sup>43</sup> This impressive achievement is a useful resource, but it is also an open invitation to investigate Hrabanus’ actual use of the texts beyond the mere citation. In the present case, we have already seen how Hrabanus altered his source material, whether subtly or openly, even that by other Christians. It is remarkable that we have access to all the sources at his disposal and so can accurately pick out exactly how Hrabanus reworked them. In what follows, I will consider some of the more significant cases that also challenge the conclusions of Cantelli Berarducci’s team, collecting the results at the end.

#### 4.2.3 Case A: Hrabanus and Jerome’s writings

In the commentary on the first verse (1129A–C), Hrabanus reused three different works by Jerome besides the text of the Vulgate: the *Chronicle* (c. 380); the *Commentary on Daniel* (c. 406/7); and *Hebrew Questions or On Genesis* (c. 389). Only the reuse of the first two has bearing on Hrabanus’ Alexander,<sup>44</sup> so let us consider the citations in order of appearance:

Hrabanus used Jerome’s *Chronicle* to explain a question in the *Commentary on Daniel* that Jerome had himself already answered.<sup>45</sup> The Church Father had solved the problem that the Maccabean book considered Alexander the first king of Greece by explaining that Alexander reconquered Greece before his Persian campaign. For no apparent reason, Hrabanus took issue with this idea; instead, he posited that Greece was divided before Alexander by using the lists of Greek lands from the *Chronicle* and then arguing in his own words

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<sup>43</sup> Cantelli, *Repertorium Fontium*, 2.923–4 for the sources of Hrabanus’ exegesis of 1 Maccabees 1:1–8. I would like to thank Grifoni for providing access to the relevant pages.

<sup>44</sup> For the latter text, Hrabanus reproduced information from Jerome that he had himself already reused in his own work, the *Commentary on Genesis* (sources at *Repertorium Fontium* 2.923). Commenting on the Greek world and the location of Cethim, “Greece,” he deployed Jerome in extension of a passage from the Latin Josephus that claimed that Cyprus was colonized by Sethim, a descendant of Noah, and so the islands and coastal lands beyond Cyprus were named Cethim in Hebrew. Hrabanus inserted his reworking of Jerome at this point to support the notion that the areas from the Taurus Mountains to the British Isles had been colonized by Greeks, for which Jerome had cited several authorities, including the Roman polymath Varro (first century BC).

<sup>45</sup> Jerome *Comm. Dan.* 3.10.21a (CCSL 75A.896). Cantellis’ team has not detected this source.

that Alexander had brought all these countries together.<sup>46</sup> Hrabanus also noted that Alexander was not the first king of Macedon but the twenty-fourth. He thus transforms the data from Jerome's *Chronicle* by reassembling the information for his own purpose, almost in the style of what we would expect from a historian.

Hrabanus' alternate response may nevertheless strike us as strange. We know that Philip, Alexander's father, had ruled a united Greece briefly before Alexander's reconquest, and so we may prefer Jerome's argument to that of Hrabanus. Rather than dismissing his argument, however, we should consider through the lens of transformation theory: for whatever reason, Hrabanus evaluated Jerome's response and found it necessary to offer an alternative interpretation. He generated a new argument by reassembling information from the same authority. This argument provided more information to explain Alexander's place in history, as he saw it.

Hrabanus then continued his exposition of Alexander's reign by citing Jerome verbatim from another place in the *Commentary on Daniel* in order to expound on the Macedonian monarch's reseizing of Greece and slaying of King Darius.<sup>47</sup> Greece's subjection is represented by Alexander's sack of Thebes (335 BC), after which the king conquered Darius' generals and then Darius himself. Still channeling Jerome directly, Hrabanus reiterated that Darius was the ram of the Danielic prophecy; his horns were the Persians and the Medes, the pair of peoples also mentioned in the first Maccabean verse; and they were all crushed under Alexander's might. While Hrabanus faithfully reproduced Jerome's text for this section, he changed one word about the initial submission of Darius' generals: the Granicus River, the site of the battle (Biga River, modern Turkey), is modified to the Indian Ganges River, *apud Gangem fluvium*. I can think of several explanations for this ostensible mistake, such as scribal error, but it is once again central that the text is transformed – perhaps through ignorance.<sup>48</sup>

It is highly notable that Hrabanus' sole focus is on the imagery of Daniel 8 to illustrate the conflict between Alexander and Darius. In Daniel 7:6, a four-headed, four-winged leopard appeared as part of a quartet of monstrous beasts, and early Christians, including Jerome, had interpreted this monstrosity as symbolizing Alexander himself.<sup>49</sup> It is therefore significant that this feline imagery is excluded from Hrabanus' account. Of course, the omission makes sense, since only Daniel 8 had indicated that Alexander fought Darius directly (Dan. 8:19–22).

#### 4.2.4 Case B: Hrabanus and Orosius

In Hrabanus' commentary on verses 2 and 3 (1129D–30C), as well as the epilogue to the Alexandrocentric account (1132A–C), the exegete relied on the historian Orosius. This shift presents a conscious choice, for Hrabanus could simply have continued using Jerome's works to summarize the Macedonian movements. The length of the treatment is also notable. While Hrabanus had devoted few words to the pre-Darius leg of the offensive, reusing a rather brief quotation of Jerome, he inserted an extensive passage from the historian Orosius to outline the remaining campaign narrative. This curtailed treatment of the war until Darius illustrates the weight of the Danielic prophecy in interpreting the narrative of 1 Maccabees, since they both specified that the Persian king was the only enemy at the onset of the campaign.

At 1 Maccabees 1:3, it is written that Alexander slaw more kings (after Darius), and so Hrabanus chose to rework Orosius' contents to cover Alexander's actions after dispatching Darius. He accounted for the king's subjugation of India, his conquest of the peoples at the eastern Ocean, and the return to Babylon. Hrabanus punctuated the Orosian account by saying that the verse of 1 Maccabees 1:3, *et siluit terra in conspectu eius*, expressed well the situation in Babylon, where embassies from the west reached the new lord of a silent planet, *siluit terra*.

<sup>46</sup> I contend that the words *sed ideo[...]*graeicia regnavit** must be by Hrabanus himself (*Comm. Macc. PL 109.1129B*).

<sup>47</sup> Jerome *Comm. Dan.* 2.8.9a (CCSL 75A.853).

<sup>48</sup> We do not have a critical edition of the text, which is why we cannot identify whether there were variant names. If one were to allow for human error on part of Hrabanus, Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel* (2.7.6, CCSL 75a.842) does indeed mention the Indian Ganges elsewhere in relation to Alexander.

<sup>49</sup> Djurslev, *Alexander*, 111–9.

The Orosian account emphasized the highly negative impact of Alexander's conquests, stressing the king's bloodlust, his immoral conduct, and his reign of terror.<sup>50</sup> Although Hrabanus accepted much of this condemnatory representation, he still reassembled information in a selective manner, thus generating a more balanced account. We can observe that through the following omissions of the Orosian narrative in Hrabanus' commentary:

- The meeting of Alexander and the Amazon queen (Oros. 3.18.5)
- Alexander's killing of his friends throughout the campaign (Oros. 3.18.8–9)
- Alexander's attachment to the Indian king Porus and his city foundations in honor of his horse, Bucephalus (3.19.3–4)
- Alexander's sacking of several Indian cities and near-fatal wounding at the Malloi town (3.19.5–10)
- Orosius' extensive assessment of Alexander himself (3.20.4–13).

Hrabanus' omissions create multiple effects in its restructuring of the Orosian narrative. First, the narrative is more economical. Instead of many instances of a similar thing, such as the slaying of friends or destruction of cities, one example suffices. For instance, the philosopher Callisthenes is the only friend of the king who is killed, Cleophis is the only woman Alexander defeats, and Porus embodies all Indian kings defeated by Alexander. Secondly, Hrabanus negated miscellaneous information of quasi-mythical origin, such as the Amazons. Thirdly, explicitly hostile remarks and negative episodes were removed to project the image of a superhuman Alexander who vanquished every obstacle in his path. He overcame not only kings, queens, and peoples, but also the very territory, such as mountains and the sea; he even received information in a dream on how to treat his poisoned troops so they could return to action (1130C).

The third point is perhaps the most significant for Hrabanus' reworking. He represented a type of undefeated conqueror, noting later in his own words that "Alexander had been preserved through the dangers by the nod of God," (*nutu Dei*, 1130D).<sup>51</sup> This casual line thus helps to explain the representation of the unstoppable Alexander. It follows that Hrabanus rewrote Orosius' materials precisely to reinforce his own impression, as well as that of Danielic prophecy that Alexander was the instrument of God. To this end, Hrabanus edited Orosius on Alexander to project an image of a divinely favored daredevil who stopped dead when his purpose was fulfilled. The consequence of this rewriting is that the negative account of Orosius is made more nuanced and balanced, insofar as the monarch's killing spree is justified by both biblical prophecy and history.

It is important that a similar concern for the divine made Hrabanus alter further content from the Orosian account. In 1130A, Hrabanus retold the story of Callisthenes, who refused to bow before Alexander as a god and was consequently slain.<sup>52</sup> Hrabanus modified the story by changing a single word of Orosius from "god," *deum* (Oros. 3.18.11) to "lord," *dominum*.<sup>53</sup> This wording makes the scene more ambiguous, in that the philosopher refuses to bend the knee to his lord. The wording removes the association between Alexander and his desire for deification, which is clearly the point of reference in Orosius' text. In terms of transformation theory, Hrabanus has negated a piece of information by substitution to avoid the problematic debate over Alexander's belief in his own divinity.

#### 4.2.5 Case C: Hrabanus and Justin

We move on to the last historian that Hrabanus adapted, "Pompeius Trogus and his abbreviator Justin" (1130C–D; 1130D–1131D), which he primarily used for the protracted material on Alexander's death. Just as with the case of choosing Orosius over Jerome, it is notable that Hrabanus moved from Orosius to yet

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., *Alexander*, 157–9.

<sup>51</sup> Cary, *Alexander*, 123.

<sup>52</sup> Djurslev, *Alexander*, 44–6.

<sup>53</sup> Of course, this alteration could also be scribal. *Deum* is usually abbreviated "dm" and *Dominum* "dnm." I thank Stephan Borgehammar for this observation.

another historian and cited him at such considerable length. The “heathen” historians were even given more space than either patristic author.

The original forty-four books of Trogus' *Philippic Histories* contained much information on Alexander's father Philip and Alexander himself (books 11–12). They are the only example of Roman universal historiography in Latin before Orosius, whereas Justin's “epitome” was a later (c. AD 400?) abridgement of Trogus that followed the same principal structure.<sup>54</sup> As already noted, however, Hrabanus consulted the text of Justin, not Trogus, who must have been lost by the Carolingian era. Orosius had also worked with Justin's text as a writing aid for ancient history, especially of the East, so Justin had a long history of supplying material for Christian historical writing.

Hrabanus introduced Trogus/Justin without further qualification than the fact that the pair had written books of history, *libris historiarum suarum* (1130C). Only after a considerable citation of Justin, Hrabanus noted that these books were by non-Christians, *ex libris gentilium* (1131D). He did so in a brief authorial comment (31 words), saying that he justified inclusion of such sources, because the Maccabean books had made mention of Alexander (1131D). Accordingly, he wanted the reader “to recognize that the virtue of Alexander, *virtus*, was not spoken of in vain; indeed, he was one of the leading men [reading MS *principium*] in terms of greatness of spirit and accomplishments, *magnanimitate atque actione*.” Hrabanus' underpinning line of thought seems to have been that, if Alexander had been of small spirit and had no accomplishments, to tell of him would have been in vain, but since the king was of great spirit and had worthy accomplishments as related by Justin, to tell of him was not in vain. However we read this passage,<sup>55</sup> we need to remember that Hrabanus has actively included the material from Justin precisely to generate this representation of Alexander and so, we must view his creation as new rather than a prepackaged product from the sources of the past.

We will consider this comment further below, but let us now focus on Hrabanus' actual citations of Justin. He cited him twice, referring explicitly to Trogus instead of Justin, thus omitting the fact that he had used the abbreviated account. In the first citation of Justin (16 words), Hrabanus added a simple explanatory word “gold,” *aurum*, to describe the talents that the Macedonians had accumulated in their treasury. In transformation terms, he added an encapsulated quotation of Justin, while reconstructing the substance of something that was left unexplained in the reference culture. Presumably, he did this to clarify what kind of treasure the Macedonians had taken, since Justin had not specified it, and the Carolingians did not use talents as measurement of wealth. In the second citation – made explicit by the full mention of Pompeius Trogus, *sicut praedictus Pompeius Trogus narrat* (1130D) – Hrabanus retold the story of the poison plot against Alexander, as well as how the king approached his death. This two-part narrative requires fuller exposition.

Hrabanus introduced the assassination of Alexander immediately after mentioning that God had preserved the king through all dangers on the campaign (1130D). Hrabanus noted that Alexander at the end stayed in the city of Babylon and was “killed through a Median(?) ambush by a faction led very much by Alexander's general Antipater, whose son Cassander assassinated the king by poison,” *per insidias Medorum* (MS) *interfectus est, et maxime factione Antipatris ducis eius, qui per Cassandrum filium suum eum veneno exstinxit* (1130D).<sup>56</sup> The king evidently did not get to enjoy the fruits of his labors upon the completion of the divine mission.

The clearest indication that the conspiracy mattered to Hrabanus and his readers is the length of the recounting of the conspirators' actions (over 200 words). He devoted a great number of words to a single episode to slow the narrative pacing, so that readers saw first-hand the conspirators operating against the king (Antipater, Thessalus, Cassander, Philippus, and the cupbearer Iollas), as well as the minutiae of the plot. From reading the passage, we also get the impression that all sense of space is edited away, which

<sup>54</sup> Mineo and Zecchini, *Justin*, 1.li–lii.

<sup>55</sup> Cary, *Alexander*, 198–9 interprets it as an apology for the entire citation of “Trogus.”

<sup>56</sup> The text is here uncertain, for several later biblical glosses change the text to the more obvious *per insidias suorum* instead of *Medorum*. I thank Stephan Borgehammar for pointing this out.



makes the narrative read as if the event took place in Babylon over a few days. This change of *dramatis personae* (non Alexandro-centric), obfuscation of space, and retardation of the narrative pace – Alexander conquered Persia, India, and the Ocean in the same amount of words – show just how much Hrabanus' lens lingered on the event.

Given the problematic reading of *Medorum* in Migne's reproduction of Colvener's text, it is difficult to assert how Hrabanus framed the murder itself. *Suorum*, which we find in biblical glosses, is by far the most straightforward option of interpretation. After all, Alexander was killed by his own personnel. If we read the more difficult wording on the textual principle of *lectio difficilior potior*, it is possible that Hrabanus reevaluated the conspiracy as a "Median" plot.<sup>57</sup> The Medes were a Near Eastern people explicitly associated with the Persian power in 1 Maccabees 1:1. The use of such terminology would make the episode appear as if Antipater's faction murdered Alexander in a non-Greek fashion. While this is a rather vague interpretation, it is suspicious that Hrabanus went to some lengths to remove any spatial connection between Antipater and Greece. For example, he omitted one of Antipater's reasons for the plot, the death of his son-in-law Alexander Lyncestis (Just. *Epit.* 12.14.1); and he also deleted Antipater's reflections over why he was summoned from Macedon (12.14.4–5). These changes are noteworthy because the historical Antipater ruled Macedon in the king's absence, and so he was strongly associated with the Greek world.

Throughout medieval Europe, regicide by poison was stigmatized because of the disgrace associated with the act.<sup>58</sup> Accusations of poison could be deployed to taint political opponents; this was probably also the case at the Carolingian court. Therefore, the usage of such rumors was not unknown to Hrabanus nor to his dedicatee, Louis the German. In this context, the whole episode may be read as Hrabanus' effort to discredit Alexander's ostensible enemies by pinning the blame on an internal faction within the Macedonian court. If the text does indeed say a "Median ambush," Hrabanus makes an intriguing branding of the method of murder, because he indicated that poisoning was an adopted method of murder. This classification no doubt reinforced the existing stigmatization of poisoning by providing an etiology for its inception in a faraway land.

Hrabanus' text makes it seem as if Alexander was the first king killed by this "foul" method in Europe. The plotters appear to carry full responsibility and thus the guilt for the act, which seems atrocious in Hrabanus' narrative, and the author conveys the sense that the monarch had no blame in death, since he was poisoned. This impression is backed up by another extensive narrative (almost 200 words), detailing Alexander's last days. Hrabanus includes powerful pieces of information from Justin, such as the idea that, just as the king's soul was invincible in life, so it was when faced with impending death (1131C; Just. *Epit.* 12.15.5). Moreover, the narrative emphasizes other exceptional qualities, especially how the king was loved by all. Hrabanus reproduces from Justin's text (12.15) an image of a king who visibly and publicly received affection from his subjects, took time to console the troops in their grief, and considered the future course of his new empire by leaving it to the worthiest successor. The king's last word "to the most worthy," *dignissimum* (1131C), was not enough, however; unable to speak further on the sixth day, he had to perform one final deed by handing over his signet ring to Perdiccas, his general (1131D). The Macedonian monarch thus remained a man of action to the last in Hrabanus' account.

Once again, omissions matter. First, Hrabanus removed the first question that Alexander's officers had asked him, "where would they find such a king?", and the king's response (Just. *Epit.* 12.15.5–6). This removal may be interpreted along the lines of the Orosian omissions in which Hrabanus deleted extraneous information, since the officers were just about to ask Alexander to whom he would leave the kingdom (12.15.8). Hrabanus preserved only the latter question. The second piece of information Hrabanus omitted was Alexander's wish to be buried in the temple of Jupiter Ammon, the deity presumed to be the king's father (12.15.7). As was the case in Hrabanus' refraction of Orosius, "pagan" elements were carefully edited out or altered by substitution of words. This avoidance of the subject of Alexander's religiosity thus neatly

<sup>57</sup> For the generation of a story, see Heckel, "The Earliest Evidence of a Plot."

<sup>58</sup> Collard, *The Crime of Poison*.



conveys a representation of the king as yet another monarch of history; a historicized example from which Christian rulers could learn without worrying about the fact that Alexander was heathen.

In sum, Hrabanus reused Justin's account to produce a fitting end to the Alexandrocentric part of the narrative, as he envisioned it. He did not dismiss a "pagan" historian, but rather redeployed him to extend the argument beyond the usual sources of information – a decision Hrabanus had to justify.<sup>59</sup> That is why he had to introduce Trogus/Justin so explicitly, as compared to his citations of Jerome and Orosius, whom he did not need to name in the text (he may have marked them by source citations in the margins). This point is an obvious one, for it is well known among medievalists that patristic texts were the bread and butter of the minds of medieval Europe. This is true on several levels besides the religious context. For instance, Jerome and Orosius wrote a Latin much more germane to Hrabanus', not only at a stylistic level, but also content-wise. As we have seen, however, Hrabanus was more than capable of changing whatever he read, no matter its origin or status, and so produced a balanced account fit for his readership from King Louis himself to readers in the church community.

### 4.3 Conclusion: A Carolingian Alexander?

The results of our investigation in Hrabanus' reworking of 1 Maccabees 1:1–8, Jerome, Orosius, and Justin may be summarized as follows. Hrabanus sought to explain the Alexandrocentric account of 1 Maccabees through the framework of Danielic prophecy, which overwrote the original meaning of the Maccabean account. His exegesis did not, however, follow the grain of the biblical book, in that he saw fit to alter specific verses and provide his own narrative after 1 Macc. 1:4. To supplement the Maccabean account, he went to great lengths to alter information from his predecessors' writings in subtle ways. He reproduced but challenged Jerome's interpretations, neutralized much of the negativity of Orosius' account, and amplified the positivity of Justin. He reworked data in a similar fashion for all three, using a range of transformative tools, primarily omission, substitution, reconstruction, and negation. My analysis identified a thoroughgoing pattern in his omissions: he swap order of words stories of deification, trivia, and extraneous content in his intermediaries, so as to provide a streamlined, concise narrative that was sanitized of "heathen" features. This heavy-handed recounting thus tell us much about Hrabanus' shaping of the historical tradition in his society, guiding his readers in a certain direction in their understanding of the past.

What of Hrabanus' representation of Alexander? According to Cary, the brief authorial intrusion presented his overall assessment of the Macedonian monarch.<sup>60</sup> Hrabanus' assessment, inserted after the citation of Justin (1131D), expressed an admiration for the Macedonian king: Alexander's virtue should not go unrecognized by Hrabanus' authorial audience. As we have seen, however, comment alone does not reveal the transformative actions at work in the text. When we consider the whole reworking in more detail, we discover that his reconstruction was indeed far more positive, simply because he made it so. Consider only that his Christian predecessors had not made much of Alexander's demise. If we compare with Orosius' abridging of the very same place of Justin, Orosius afforded the entire poison plot and death a single summative line in his own paraphrase (3.20.4).<sup>61</sup> Hrabanus' enormous expansion of the story – 400 edited words from Justin – combined with his extolling interpretation in the authorial comment demonstrates very clearly that Hrabanus was producing a positive image of Alexander for a very different era than that of his patristic sources. He achieved transformative renovation through a thoroughgoing revaluation of the source material, recombination of texts, and appropriation of the contents of those texts. In my view, the collective account of Alexander's deeds and death borders on encomium.

<sup>59</sup> Hrabanus may have been inspired by Jerome *Comm. Dan. Prol.* (CCSL 75a.775) who highlights the usefulness of non-Jewish sources, including Justin himself.

<sup>60</sup> Cary, *Alexander*, 123–4.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Jerome *Commentary on Daniel* 4.11.4a (CCSL 75a. 899).

Why did Hrabanus represent Alexander in this fashion? It is perhaps tempting to attribute the reason to the fact that Hrabanus' exegetical activity enjoyed royal patronage from the new ruler in the Rhineland, but we have to bear in mind that it was not the first time that Hrabanus was working for a king, nor were intellectuals strangers to the Carolingian courts.<sup>62</sup> Even if histories and biblical commentaries were meant for the edification of monarchs,<sup>63</sup> we should also consider that such commentaries found readers in and outside monastic communities in the Carolingian kingdoms.<sup>64</sup>

Hrabanus' representation of the king in this commentary thus calls for further contextualization. With a view to previous treatments of Alexander close to Hrabanus' own time, such as the one by Bede in the *Reckoning of Time* (CCSL 123c.488), it is clear that Christian scholars were in the process of transforming Alexander – and thus the meaning of the past – in many experimental ways. For example, Bede's text was readily available in Fulda's library, so Hrabanus could easily have consulted that text when he needed to expound the Maccabean Alexander narrative. Nevertheless, he opted for his patristic sources – and Justin – in reconstructing a new story of the Macedonian monarch. It would require a much fuller study of these patristic-era and post-patristic text-worlds than can be attempted here to explain why Hrabanus came to this representation of Alexander. One could start, for example, by collating and comparing his other references to Alexander across the rest of his oeuvre. There lies a task for the future.

## 5 Postlude: Tradition, transformation, and historical renovation in the Carolingian Era

*Praeterita renovant grammata sola biblis.*

Only things written in books renew what has been.<sup>65</sup>

From the preceding pages, it has emerged that Hrabanus Maurus' exegesis of 1 Maccabees 1:1–8 was written at a rather long distance from the Maccabean historiography of the Hasmonean dynasty. Hrabanus' commentary on these verses overwrites their beginning, as is exemplified by the complete transformation of its Alexander narrative. That Hrabanus reworked the story in this way does not necessarily surprise us, for "reception and appropriation is the exegetical process whereby readers make the text their own."<sup>66</sup> Instead, I have used transformation theory to explore this process: *what* Hrabanus' text changed and *how* it did it. Such an investigation is important because, if "tradition is how cultural ideology writes its history,"<sup>67</sup> it becomes a priority for receptionists to identify that history and challenge its tradition by analyzing how it is constructed.

Carolingian Frankia offers a rich vein for this agenda of reception history. Of course, medievalists have already made plain the strong historical orientation in Carolingian times. In a pioneering monograph on the significance and originality of Carolingian historical writing, Rosamund McKitterick singled out Hrabanus' hand in shaping new kinds of historical texts for his times.<sup>68</sup> There is then real impetus to join forces and produce research that recognizes the strangeness of the past that the Carolingian scholars created through the biblical and patristic heritage.

<sup>62</sup> Contreni, "Carolingian Renaissance," 709–11; Cf. Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien*, 3.213–33.

<sup>63</sup> McKitterick, *History*, 276.

<sup>64</sup> Shimahara, "Le *Commentaire*," 282.

<sup>65</sup> Hrabanus Maurus *Carm.* 21.10 (MGH Poet. Lat. aevi Caroli 2.186, ed. Druemmler). Trans. Nelson from De Jong, "Old Law," 175.

<sup>66</sup> Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 27.

<sup>67</sup> Goldhill, "Politics of the Classical Tradition."

<sup>68</sup> McKitterick, *History*, 281.

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