Translator’s Note

The aim of this translation is to give a text which is comprehensible in modern English and which preserves as many as possible of the features of the medieval text without mimicking Malory, Sir Walter Scott or Hollywood epic.

The decision has been taken to use modern, Turkish, forms for names of places and characters. Thus the hero, Jacob Xalabín, is always translated as ‘Yakub Çelebi’; his stepmother Issa Xalabina is ‘Issa Çelebina’; and L’Amorat or L’A(l)morat is ‘the Great Emir’. Setalia and Palàcia are ‘Satalia’ and ‘Palatia’. Further explanations are given in the notes.

The style of the Història is brief and long by turns. In this respect it recalls writing of an earlier generation: in comparison with the well-formed periodic style of its contemporary Bernat Metge (his Lo somni is of c. 1399) the sentence structure is loose and additive. In a few cases the author’s sentences have no finite verb, and here I have been forced to improve his syntax. The opening sentence would have been translated literally as:

You must know, and a famous thing it is too, that in the year of our lord 1387, in the regions of the Orient, that is, where great Troy was built, which is now called Turkey, the land which the Turkish Emir rules; and as the said Emir, by name Elbai Murat, being in the great prosperity of his lordship in a very great city of his land, called Borsa; and he, having two sons, one legitimate and the other a bastard; and as one of the two sons, namely the bastard, by name Beseyt Bei, the said Emir, his father, made the said Beseyt Bei stay continually on the frontier with the Great Caramany; and the said other son, by name Jacob Xalabin, who was legitimate, was continually with his father in the city of Borsa, being one who loved him much (and this he ought to do, as he was his firstborn), and being thus as befits a lord, taking pleasure in going hunting like one who found great pleasure in it, as a lord should do.

I finally opted for:

You must know, and a famous thing it is too, that in the year of our lord 1387, in the regions of the Orient, that is, where great Troy was built, which is now called Turkey, the land which the Turkish Great Emir rules, the said Great Emir, by name Ilbey Murad, being in the great prosperity of his lordship in a mighty city of his land, called Bursa, had two sons, one legitimate and the other a bastard; and one of the two sons, namely the
bastard, was named Bayezid Bey. The said Great Emir, his father, made the said Bayezid Bey stay continually on the frontier with the Great Karaman; and the said other son, by name Yakub Çelebi, who was legitimate, was continually with his father in the city of Bursa, as he loved him greatly (and this he ought to do, as he was his firstborn), and being thus as befits a lord, taking pleasure in going hunting like one who found great pleasure in it, as a lord should.

Here we also see another distinctive phrase of the author, \textit{com cell qui}, occasionally left as 'like one who' but chiefly rendered as 'because he' or a causative present participle.

Most sentences begin 'And', and I have seen no reason to remedy this as it is not a fault. In common with many medieval texts, the author is fond of synonymous pairs which must be preserved in translation, even where English does not have two words for the same thing. On one occasion archaism has saved the day: \textit{glavi o lança} 'glaive or lance' (XVI).

The author uses \textit{ad nauseam} fillers such as 'this' and 'the said' before the names of the characters: it would be unfaithful to the original to omit them, but on a few occasions I have felt impelled to cut them. His favourite emphasizer \textit{del món} 'in the world' I have usually rendered literally but twice as 'earthly' (I). Many many actions are performed \textit{decontinent}, which I have translated 'quickly', 'immediately' or (where it suggests quick-thinking, a quality much valued in the text) 'promptly' (XI).

One character, ‘the sister of the lord of Setalia’, is always so called, and the lady Nergis, ‘daughter of the lord of Setalia’, is often called by her title alone. This clumsy repetition recalls the formulaic epithets of epic poetry, phraseology often attributed to the exigencies of oral composition. They may also reflect a feudal concern with lineage.

Alongside these redundancies, the dialogue is majestic in its terseness, which comes to the fore in moments of high passion: \textit{No digats res; si no, vós sou morta} ‘Say nothing, or you are dead.’ (XI) or \textit{E on és la vostra sciència? E on és la vostra medecina? E què és açò, que guaríó no·s puscha atrobar en aquesta mia dona?} ‘Where is your science? Where is your medicine? What cure is it that cannot be found in my wife?’ (I).

Brutal as it is, the text is also suffused with courtliness: the author uses the phrase \textit{fina amor} (VIII) on one occasion, which I have rendered 'courtly love' as this is by far the most familiar translation for the English reader. The characters speak the elevated language of courtly love: \textit{O senyora, sapiats que jamay no fo ne habità tanta gentilesa en cors de homa; e si goig era perдут ne alegria, sí seria atrobada en aquell beneventurat cavaller,} ‘Oh my lady, know that