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Joël Blanchard and Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, eds., *Philippe de Mézières et l'Europe: Nouvelle histoire, nouveaux espaces, nouveaux langages*. Geneva: Droz, 2017. 327 pp. 42.10€. (pb). ISBN 978-2-600-05785-1.

Review by Andrea Tarnowski, Dartmouth College.

A pre-review flag: one component of this volume is the edition and translation of a primary text, and thus, a go-to essay for all scholars of Philippe de Mézières. Joël Blanchard and Antoine Calvet have established the prologue to the *Oratio tragedica* from its sole manuscript and present it here in both its original Latin and in modern French translation. Calvet takes on the task of describing the text and its importance, noting that it was written towards the end of 1389, the same year in which Mézières composed his best-known work, the *Songe du Viel Pelerin*. He posits that the two texts, despite their different genres (an allegorical travel narrative for the *Songe* and a meditation on Christ's Passion for the *Oratio*), form a sort of pair, and when evoking the *Oratio*, he offers a phrase that could as well apply to the *Songe*, calling it "une forêt aux ramifications quasi infinies" (p. 247). These branches and outcroppings include motifs that recur through Mézières's work: the author himself in the role of "le vieux Solitaire," Christ as an apothecary, and God as a doctor, the benediction of tears, and the necessity of internal moral reform and of a crusade to reconquer Jerusalem. The connections between the *Oratio* and the *Songe* take on particular force when Calvet notes that the *Oratio* closes with mention of the anchorite, Arsène de Scété. This is the same personage who appears at the beginning of the *Songe* to advise the protagonist on the route of his travels. Blanchard and Calvet will soon publish a full edition and translation of the *Oratio tragedica*. The prologue that appears in this volume suggests that it will be an excellent resource for mapping the Mézièrian mentality.

The titles of each of the three sections of this volume are formulated as questions: "L'Europe, un concept multiforme?," followed by "Aventures européennes?," and finally "L'Europe fille de la croisade?" This gesture of intellectual humility—exploration rather than declaration—intimates that the essays are loosely grouped, their variety a standard feature of the edited volume format. But the greatest question is implicit in the title of the volume itself. *Can* one speak of Philippe de Mézières and Europe? That is, do the author and this place name co-exist in space, time, or cultural perception? If one were allowed only a one-word answer, it would have to be "No." Throughout the volume, and despite the wide range of contributors' subjects, the observation continually surfaces that as concerns Europe, there is little there there. A strong element in the interest of this work lies in the ways contributors analyze their material to elicit nuanced interpretations of what Europe could have meant for Philippe and his era.

Klaus Oschema is an excellent choice to open the series of essays: the author of *Bilder von Europa in Mittelalter* [1], he brings an understanding both panoramic and precise to his study of Europe as a geography and an idea; his bibliographical notes are particularly rich. Beginning with the ancient division of the world into three parts, Asia, Europe and Africa (with the position of greatest prestige occupied by Asia), he traces textual mentions of Europe, noting an especial increase in the twelfth century. In the thirteenth century, with the decline of the Latin Crusader states, the notion of Europe was increasingly fused with that of Christendom; Europe was viewed as the sole refuge of a beleaguered religion no longer honored on all three continents. Turning his attention to Mézières specifically, Oschema counts only four mentions of the word “Europe” in the 900-page (printed) *Songe du Viel Pelerin*; Mézières is intensely devoted to promoting, or in his terms, restoring, universal faith. He does not seek to privilege Europe as much as he aspires to see Christianity prevail. Oschema ultimately sees Mézières as a pioneer in the construction of the idea of Europe against the Turkish threat—an idea that would gain in strength throughout the fifteenth century.

In an essay focused on the *Songe*, Anne-Hélène Miller assembles her remarks around the idea of travel: fictional dream itineraries, travel over land, and maritime voyages. While the not-easily-encompassed structure of the *Songe* seems to have affected the number of themes she takes up, she does formulate compelling phrases and images, for example when she defines Mézières as a “chevalier franc à l’identité diasporique” (p. 66). To describe the travels of the *Songe* in cartographic terms, Miller writes that Mézières’s route is not a line traced across the plane of a static map; rather, the map is continually folded, unfolded, and refolded to capture the movement of the *Songe*. Paris and Jerusalem, the sites of necessary reform and aspiration, do, however, remain two crucial fixed points.

Kiril Petkov brings vigor and a systematic approach to his own examination of Mézières and Europe. He asserts that, while Mézières uses the tripartite model of the world (Asia, Africa, Europe), the borders of these geographies are neither precise nor stable. Most importantly, they do not signify. Mézières is not moved by geographical distinctions; the only category he ultimately recognizes is that of the world itself (by which he means the lands of the late Roman Empire). Distressed by the reduced territories of Catholic Christianity, Mézières wants to re-establish its universal dominion. While Petkov portrays Mézières as a cosmopolitan product of the Mediterranean, citing his connections to Jerusalem, Famagusta, Nicosia and Venice, he stresses the devotional superscript to all Mézières’s thought. He concludes that the author substitutes *Catholicitas* for *Romanitas* to promote his conception of the world.

As a specialist in medieval travel narratives, Christine Gadrat-Ouerfelli recalls that the best way to know one’s own country is to visit others. But travelers attempt to understand new locales by way of the familiar; thus, a thirteenth-century Franciscan crossing Hungary measures his progress in units he judges equal to the distance separating Orléans from Paris, and voyagers seeking to evaluate paper money in China compare it to gold florins and silver *tournois*. Gadrat-Ouerfelli highlights Western travelers’ repeated observations of territorial size, scale and population in Asia, and their resultant sense of their own constriction. An anonymous fourteenth-century author writes, “...nous, qui sommes les vrais chrétiens, nous ne sommes pas la dixième, que dis-je la vingtième partie [du monde]” (pp. 92-93). The reaction to this diminished self-image is a desire for conquest, particularly in crusade.

The welcome emphasis in Benoît Grévin's essay is on Mézières as a linguistic artefact. Steeped in two languages, French and Latin, the author composed in both. Grévin reminds us that it was Latin that gave linguistic unity to the vast swath of Europe, but also points out that Mézières's fourteenth century was key in the rise of vernacular texts. He also asks whether Mézières might have known some Greek from his time on Cyprus. Grévin posits that he must have spoken one or more forms of Italian, the idiom of commerce, negotiation and travel across the Mediterranean. Finally, Grévin contributes to the impression of an amorphous medieval Europe by speaking of linguistic continuums or space--Romanic, Germanic, Slav--that each included multiple language variants.

The second part of *Philippe de Mézières et l'Europe*, "Aventures européennes?," contains five essays more distanced from the protagonist of this work--witness the fact that unlike the majority of the other contributions, none of these articles includes Mézières's name in its title. Pierre Monnet writes on Emperor Charles IV (1316-1378), like Mézières an indefatigable traveler, but one who sought to shore up a modern royal state around his person. Monnet defines Charles's Europe as Czech, German, Hungarian and Polish, and to a lesser extent northern Italian and French. When he enumerates what Charles's Europe was *not*--Spanish, English, Mediterranean, Balkan, Oriental, Byzantine--we take the measure of differences in the two men's arenas of interest. François Foronda highlights Mézières's mentions of Spain in eleven chapters of the *Songe*, and considers the possibility that Philippe spent time in Spain as a young man. But central to his essay is discussion of Pedro López de Ayala, a Castilian ambassador and one of the knights of Mézières's chivalric order, whom Foronda imagines Mézières might have met in the early 1380s. Ayala, whose life dates of 1332-1407 are very close to Mézières's, was also chronicler of the reigns of Peter I and Henry II of Castile.

Emilie Rosenblieh's topic is not a person, but an institution: the Catholic reform councils of the first half of the fifteenth century. These paid little attention to the notion of Europe. In fact, in the 3000 pages documenting the years 1421-1443 in the Council of Basel, Europe is not mentioned. Instead, councils were defined by the geographic and linguistic criteria of attending clergy, divided into "nations": Italian, French, Germanic, English, and eventually Iberian. Rosenblieh affirms that the notion of Europe was given impetus by the papacy rather than council fathers, and that Roman union with Eastern Christians played a key role in Europe's conceptualization. She notes, too, that the definition of Europe went hand in hand with the desire for crusade.

The last two essays in this part of the volume both concern books. To show how European literature was influenced by the Arab and Muslim world, Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas offers the history of *Choix de maximes et de dits sages*, an Arabic work of wisdom and ethical teachings by the eleventh-century Egyptian physician and astronomer Mubassir ibn Fatik. After a first partial translation into Latin, the text had a Castilian vernacular translation in the thirteenth century. At the end of the fourteenth, it was adapted into French as *Dits moraux des philosophes* by royal counselor Guillaume de Tignonville. In the fifteenth century, three different translations were made into English; Gaullier-Bougassas provides the memorable note that one of these was in fact the first printed English text (produced by William Caxton in 1477).

Sylvain Piron examines the work of Opicinus de Canistris, which in 2008 was edited and translated from Latin into French by Muriel Laharie. The fourteenth-century Opicino was a cleric who worked as a scribe for the Avignon papacy. A native of Pavia, he had originally trained

as an illuminator. His noteworthy trait, for the purposes of *Philippe de Mézières et l'Europe*, is that he speaks of Europe often—Piron counts more than two hundred mentions. His journal or diary, in which commentary keeps company with diagrams and drawings, includes anthropomorphic maps of the three continents. Europe is depicted as a suffering, disfigured woman divesting herself of her robes. Piron discusses both Opicino's personal anguish and his view of the Church as sources for this image of renunciation.

Opening the third part of the essay collection, Philippe Buc catalyzes his argument with a comment by Michael Hanly. Hanly suggests Mézières's lack of logic when he calls for peace among Christians the better to take up arms against infidels.[2] Buc posits a perfect coherence in Mézières's vision, which asks first that Christians recognize each other as beloved brethren, and then that they achieve an even greater peace—durable and universal—by way of just war and the recapture of the Holy Land. Political and social reform combine with the objectives of crusade. Internal enemies such as pride, greed and lust must be conquered in Christians before the same sins in amplified form can be fought in the Turks and Saracens. The reform Mézières urges will be led by his Knighthood of the Passion, whose members must be living exemplars of devotion. While Buc makes more of Hanly's reference to illogic than the latter's own arguments warrant, this does not detract from his clear conceptualization of Mézières's mission: that constantly renewed faith and humility would allow humanity and history to progress together.

The peace-war-peace trajectory Buc traces in Mézières's thought usefully highlights a point in the next essay, by Kevin Brownlee. Brownlee compares the historical writing of Mézières to that of Jean Froissart. Both men relate two signal events of 1396: the marriage of Isabella, the daughter of the king of France, to Richard II, King of England; and the ill-fated battle of Nicopolis. Mézières funnels both through his crusade project: France and England will strengthen their alliance by means of marriage, and then jointly organize passage to Jerusalem. The mistakes of Nicopolis will give Christian soldiers a chance to try again to make their way east. Froissart, on the other hand, recounts political actions and chivalric comportments without an eye to transcendent purpose. Brownlee notes that Mézières's "historical" writing can be aptly said to compose a history of the future, given that he systematically incorporates events of both past and present into a plan for a victorious crusade.

Camille Rouxpetel's essay, like the two that precede it, does not seek to define the parameters of Europe or the European in Mézières's work; rather, she sets about detailing what is *not* Europe—an equally legitimate way to assign the contours of this physical and mental space. Rouxpetel asks what the East means for Mézières, as well as for such fifteenth-century diplomatic figures as Bertrand de La Broquière and Giovanni Torzello. She examines Mézières's negative view of Byzantine Christians (he unfairly suggests they are to blame for the defeat at Nicopolis), and shows his desire for the dominance of the Latin rite. Cyprus, the author's one-time home in his role as chancellor of the isle, remains the easternmost site of benefit to Mézières' definition of Christendom—that is, the last outpost of the West. Further afield, the East of the Ottomans, and that of the Mamluks, serve principally to re-train attention on the Catholic Occident.

At this point in the volume, we find the analysis, edition and translation of the prologue of the *Oratio tragedica* evoked at the beginning of this review. Its discussion of the spiritual pilgrimage that consistently accompanies Mézières's material plans for passage to the Holy Land connects us to the title of this part of the collection, "L'Europe, fille de la croisade?" But in the last essay in *Philippe de Mézières et l'Europe*, Yves Coatiy moves us both as far west in Europe as possible

(Brittany), and into the present. He writes of two fragments of a mid-fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Songe du Viel Pelerin* that he found split among three Breton archives in 2015, accounting for ten to fifteen percent of the total text. He relates the detective hunt that led him to determine that the complete manuscript was originally held in a Breton aristocratic household or religious house, that it was seized during the French Revolution, and that, because its folios were undecorated and thus less valuable, the manuscript was taken apart so that some of its parchment could be used in the bindings of copies of baptismal, marriage and death records in the diocese of Nantes. For a medievalist unfamiliar with the later lives of manuscripts, this essay is interesting for its overview of record destruction and parchment re-purposing in Revolutionary France. Parchment apparently made good cartridges (*gargousses*) for cannons.

## NOTES

[1] Klaus Oschema, *Bilder von Europa in Mittelalter* (Ostfildern, Germany: Thorbecke, 2013).

[2] Buc cites from Hanly's "Marriage, War, and Good Government in Late-Fourteenth-Century Europe: The *De Regimine Principum* tradition in Langland, Mézières, and Bovet," in Donka Minkova and Theresa Tinkle, eds., *Chaucer and the Challenges of Medievalism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 327-349, at p. 334.

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