

Parmi tous les problèmes qu'ils rencontrèrent au cours des voyages, les deux poètes signalèrent aussi les différences linguistiques. Machaut et Deschamps se sentaient parfois dépayés, car ils ne comprenaient pas la langue locale. Les voyages incitèrent néanmoins les deux poètes à s'intéresser aux langues étrangères, dont ils percevaient et commentaient les différences. Il se peut que cela annonce une nouvelle façon de parcourir le monde.⁵² Ces sources fournissent ainsi un précieux témoignage sur les rencontres et sur les confrontations entre conceptions politiques, représentations et imaginaires. Grâce aux poèmes de voyage d'un Machaut et d'un Deschamps, et même grâce aux écrits d'un Froissart ou d'un Jean d'Arras, l'Europe du quatorzième siècle se révèle comme un espace de rencontres et de confrontations.

SUMMARY

Bohemia and its inhabitants in the eyes of four French Medieval authors (Guillaume de Machaut, Eustache Deschamps, Jean Froissart, Jean d'Arras)

French Medieval poets Guillaume de Machaut and Eustache Deschamps visited Bohemia and its capital in the 14th century. Impressions of their journey, coloured by imagination, can be found in their works. Guillaume belonged to the closest circle of the king John of Luxembourg whom he followed on his journeys through Europe. He often used an idealized image of the Bohemian king as a source of inspiration. He depicted the king as a prototype of a perfect ruler, a knight and an expert on courtly love. He helped the king to remain an ideal aristocratic paradigm for a long time, however much the ideal was rooted in the past.

Eustache visited Prague and the Bohemian countryside as a diplomat in 1397. He made a detailed description of everyday life in Bohemia. The description reflects the difficulties he encountered in a foreign country, especially his experience with food, hygiene and accomodation, and has a negative overtone. He took his visit as an opportunity for an affectionate praise of the "sweet France".

Jean Froissart never saw the Kingdom of Bohemia but left a number of interesting passages about the Luxemburg dynasty and their lands. He wrote his Arthurian novel *Méliador* for the duke Wenceslaus of Luxembourg, con-

⁵² Voir JACQUELINE CERQUIGLINI-TOULET, *La couleur de la mélancolie. La fréquentation des livres au XIV^e siècle, 1300-1415*, Paris 1993, p. 18 et suiv.

necting the lyric verses of his mercenary with an eulogy of his powerful predecessors. He spoke about the character and habits of the Bohemians in a way that reflected an overall tendency of his Chronicles to emphasize the contrast between the culturally and morally superior centre (esp. France and England) and the inferior periphery.

Jean d'Arras' genealogical novel written for the three grandchildren of John of Luxembourg is an exceptional document of the political and cultural relations between the Luxembourg and Valois dynasties. Its heroine is the foundress of the dynasties, the fairy Melusine. The Czech lands are depicted in a positive light in this politically minded work. Not only are they one part of the domain of the Melusina's progeny (the race of the legendary Arthur), but also an obvious part of the civilized world.