

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



# Barthélemy Aneau's Alector ou le coq and the Paradox of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism

Jenny Meyer

Volume 38, numéro 1, hiver 2015

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1088689ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v38i1.22780>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Meyer, J. (2015). Barthélemy Aneau's Alector ou le coq and the Paradox of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 38(1), 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v38i1.22780>

### Résumé de l'article

L'histoire fabuleuse de Barthélemy Aneau, *Alector ou le coq* (1560) illustre la conscience grandissante de la Renaissance pour le globe terrestre et son espace. Les nouvelles façons de voir l'espace global se sont développées en même temps que les sympathies cosmopolites de certains humanistes de la Renaissance, en particulier en ce qui concerne leur enthousiasme pour la république mondiale. Dans cet article, l'auteur montre comment la trame narrative d'Aneau illustre une vision idéalisée du rôle global du roi de France. On y analyse qu'*Alector* est écrit dans l'esprit du manuel du prince, en mettant l'accent particulièrement sur l'obligation qu'a le roi de maîtriser l'espace de navigation, illustrant l'idée au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle que la connaissance géographique se situe au cœur de la gouvernance. Aneau crée un pastiche de mythes de fondation française et de sources géographiques afin de souligner à la fois la prééminence du roi de France et son rayonnement mondial. Certains éléments de la tradition hermétique peuvent également être retracés dans *Alector*, puisque l'espace y fonctionne comme une allégorie de la conception d'Aneau de la place de la France dans le cosmos. De cette façon, son oeuvre est similaire à celle de son contemporain, Guillaume Postel, qui se décrivait lui-même comme un cosmopolite. Enfin, un décalage s'observe entre la géographie réelle évoquée dans *Alector* et le cadre fictionnel qui l'abrite. Ce décalage souligne à son tour la nature paradoxale d'un cosmopolitisme voulant intégrer les nationalismes, ce qui représente bien une question complexe et non résolue pour les citoyens du monde en devenir de la Renaissance.

# Barthélemy Aneau's *Alector ou le coq* and the Paradox of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism

JENNY MEYER  
Fordham University

*Barthélemy Aneau's histoire fabuleuse, Alector ou le coq (1560) epitomizes a burgeoning sixteenth-century awareness of the globe and its scope. New possibilities for envisioning global space went hand in hand with the development of cosmopolitan sympathies among Renaissance humanists; namely, enthusiasm for the ideal of a world republic. In this article, I show how Aneau's fictional narrative demonstrates an idealized vision of the French monarch's global role. I argue that Alector is written in the spirit of the princely manual, with a singular emphasis on the monarch's obligatory mastery of spatial navigation that evinces sixteenth-century awareness of geography's relevance to governance. Aneau creates a pastiche of French foundation myths and of geographical sources in order to emphasize both the French monarch's preeminence and his worldwide reach. Elements of the hermetic tradition are manifest in Alector, where space is allegorized to illustrate Aneau's conception of France's place in the cosmos; in this way, his work is similar to that of his contemporary, the self-described cosmopolitan Guillaume Postel. Ultimately, there is a discord between the real geography evoked in Alector and the fictional genre that houses it. This dissonance emphasizes the paradoxical nature of a cosmopolitanism that strives to incorporate nationalism, and illustrates an unresolved complexity for would-be Renaissance world citizens.*

*L'histoire fabuleuse de Barthélemy Aneau, Alector ou le coq (1560) illustre la conscience grandissante de la Renaissance pour le globe terrestre et son espace. Les nouvelles façons de voir l'espace global se sont développées en même temps que les sympathies cosmopolites de certains humanistes de la Renaissance, en particulier en ce qui concerne leur enthousiasme pour la république mondiale. Dans cet article, l'auteur montre comment la trame narrative d'Aneau illustre une vision idéalisée du rôle global du roi de France. On y analyse qu'Alector est écrit dans l'esprit du manuel du prince, en mettant l'accent particulièrement sur l'obligation qu'a le roi de maîtriser l'espace de navigation, illustrant l'idée au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle que la connaissance géographique se situe au cœur de la gouvernance. Aneau crée un pastiche de mythes de fondation française et de sources géographiques afin de souligner à la fois la prééminence du roi de France et son rayonnement mondial. Certains éléments de la tradition hermétique peuvent également être retracés dans Alector, puisque l'espace y fonctionne comme une allégorie de la conception d'Aneau de la place de la France dans le cosmos. De cette façon, son œuvre est similaire à celle de son contemporain, Guillaume Postel, qui se décrivait lui-même comme un cosmopolite. Enfin, un décalage s'observe entre la géographie réelle évoquée dans Alector et le cadre fictionnel qui l'abrite. Ce décalage souligne à son tour la nature paradoxale d'un cosmopolitisme voulant intégrer les nationalismes, ce qui représente bien une question complexe et non résolue pour les citoyens du monde en devenir de la Renaissance.*

Barthélemy Aneau's *histoire fabuleuse, Alector ou le coq* (1560) epitomizes a burgeoning sixteenth-century awareness of the globe and its scope. Bursts of geographical realism stand out sharply in the fictional universe of Aneau's disarmingly whimsical yet structurally coherent narrative, evincing his era's fascination with the expanding reaches of the known world. Movement is an integral part of *Alector*, and Aneau's singular narrative exemplifies an effort to accommodate a global worldview in an increasingly mobile era. In Renaissance Europe, ever-greater swaths of global territory were becoming progressively more knowable through oceanic discovery, the advent of cartographic science, and the transmission of spatial knowledge through print and other channels. In *Alector*, concern for the world at large flourishes alongside allegiance to France, and the ideal French monarch is a cosmopolitan whose influence has global reach.

Here, I demonstrate that the juxtaposition of real and fictional geography in *Alector* signals the difficulty of attributing a global role to a French monarch. Inconsistencies in *Alector* that might reasonably be attributed to its unorthodox plot are instead, I posit, evidence of tension resulting from the urge to portray geographical veracity on a backdrop of nationalistic mythology. Through its protagonist, the fictional monarch Franc-Gal, *Alector* reflects an impulse to privilege French supremacy by perpetuating Franco-Gallic mythology, and the seemingly contradictory ideal of commensurate responsibility for the entire planet. In *Alector*, space is allegorized to convey the French monarch's role in ensuring global harmony. Franc-Gal's altitudinous wanderings over the course of the narration suggest that an ideal monarch exerts influence by seeing, naming, and organizing space, as a mapmaker would do. Aneau's creation of a mobile, high-flying hero with singular geographical sagacity, who champions France but succours the entire world, implicitly addresses the perplexing conundrum of how to be a French monarch and a *citoyen du monde*.

Barthélemy Aneau (1510–61) was a regent and principal at the Collège de la Trinité in Lyon from 1538 until his death. Little is known of his family; though of humble origins, his parents evidently valued education and sent him to good schools. Aneau's work testifies to the influence of his tenure as a student of the University of Bourges, where he studied under the German Hellenist Melchior Wolmar and may have crossed paths with the Italian jurist Andrea Alciato. Aneau's oeuvre comprises plays for students, pamphlets, translations, poetry, and the *histoire fabuleuse* that is the subject of this essay. Among his best-known works are the *Quintil Horatian* (1551), a pamphlet written in response to Du

Bellay's *Deffence et Illustration*, and the *Juris Prudentia*, a paean to justice written in Latin verse. *Alector ou le coq*, published a year before Aneau's death, represents a foray into novelistic prose. It consists of twenty-six chapters, prefaced by three parcels of text labelled "propos rompus." Aneau claims to have derived his narration from a preexisting manuscript, and that the resulting document is "Traduicte en François d'un fragment divers, trouvé non entier" (1).<sup>1</sup> In Aneau's "Dédicace" to Catherine le Coq, he knowingly hypothesizes that the subsequent text is "un fragment d'une diverse et estrange narration [...]. Laquelle à mon advis est une histoire fabuleuse couvrant quelque sens mythologique" (10).

*Alector* is a peculiar amalgam of geographical references, myths of national origin, alchemical observations, cabbalistic allusions, Neoplatonic revelation, and parody of popular literary forms such as the *roman de chevalerie*. It is the story of the fictional king Franc-Gal's quest to find his son Alector who has been carried away by the wind, and of young Alector's eventual victory over a vile killer serpent. The story begins *in medias res*, with its eponymous protagonist apprehended and imprisoned in the imaginary city of Orbe, held responsible for the accidental death of his beloved, Noémie. Franc-Gal, who had been seeking his errant son from aboard his winged hippopotamus Durat, is approaching the city of Orbe on foot, unbeknownst to his son Alector. The events leading up to this juncture are subsequently narrated by Franc-Gal to a travelling companion met en route, a priest from Orbe named Croniel Archier. Franc-Gal recounts, among other fantastical deeds, his worldwide peregrinations astride Durat and the details of Alector's birth and eventual ravishing. The pair reaches Orbe in time to witness Alector's redemptive act of slaying a serpent that had been plaguing the city, after which Franc-Gal dies of joy. For all its outlandish plot elements, *Alector* has a deliberate structure that is strikingly innovative in its deviation from the standard narrative trajectory. The circuitous route that Aneau takes in order to bring readers to the conclusion of the tale's initial episode is reminiscent of the work's dominant motif, the circle, evoked by Alector's birth from an egg, by the circular city of Orbe, and by the globe that Franc-Gal circumnavigates.<sup>2</sup>

1. This and all other references to *Alector* are taken from the following edition: Barthélemy Aneau, *Alector ou le coq: histoire fabuleuse*, ed. Marie-Madeleine Fontaine (Geneva: Droz, 1996). Page references will be given in the main text in parentheses.

2. The circle motif is likewise reminiscent of Aneau's *dévisé*, the *ouroboros*, a choice inspired by his own name (*anneau*: ring). Brigitte Biot, *Barthélemy Aneau, regent de la Renaissance lyonnaise* (Paris:

*Alector* is a story of a prince's initiation. In the spirit of the princely manual, with important contributions from authors such as Erasmus, Machiavelli, and Guillaume Budé, Aneau's *histoire fabuleuse* attests to a Renaissance preoccupation with how young sovereigns ought to behave. Aneau's innovation in this tradition is to place particular emphasis on the value of spatial awareness for governance, and to imply that a competent monarch must possess geographical sapience in order to exert his influence worldwide. In this vein, *Alector* prescribes an aptitude for movement and cartographic consciousness as ideals for royal comportment. Aneau's peculiar narrative illustrates this value in Franc-Gal, whose world tour doubles as a civilizing mission. The action in *Alector* takes place on a macrocosmic level as it details the worldwide peregrinations of its hero, and on a microcosmic level with the tale's denouement in the utopian city of Orbe. Aneau's insistence on geography, both real and fantastical, speaks to an emerging impetus during the Renaissance for defining and refining a humanist stance towards the globe and its inhabitants. At a time when the world was increasingly visible and knowable, the king had to lead with knowledge of his country's place in the universe. Far from being diminished in status with respect to a large and populous planet, France, for Aneau, rises to a position of preeminence in its global setting.

Aneau's ideal monarch, Franc-Gal, is quintessentially French. *Alector* reflects a literary trend that burgeoned in the latter half of the sixteenth century concerning myths of French national origin. Inspired by the historiographical writings of fifteenth-century Dominican friar Annius of Viterbo and the second century Greek philosopher Lucian of Samosata, among others, Aneau, like many of his contemporaries, took up his plume to link the Gallic people with Noah of the Old Testament, the divine hero Heracles, and classical rulers of Troy.<sup>3</sup> The writings of Lucian and Annius were more famously parodied by Rabelais, as were Jean Lemaire de Belges's *Illustrations de Gaule et Singularitez de Troie*.<sup>4</sup> Like Rabelais, Aneau concocts a fictional universe that showcases the attributes of an ideal monarch within the context of his relationship to France.

---

Champion, 1996), 16.

3. For more on this topic, see Marc-René Jung, *Hercule dans la littérature française du 16e siècle: de l'Hercule courtois à l'Hercule baroque* (Geneva: Droz, 1996).

4. For more on the intertexts between Aneau and Rabelais and the likelihood of their acquaintance see Pierre Servet, "Barthélemy Aneau lecteur de Rabelais?" in *Etudes Rabelaisiennes*, vol. 29 (Geneva: Droz, 1993), 63–81.

Aneau relies on the genealogies that had been constructed by his predecessors in order to situate his portrait of Franc-Gal within a mythological narrative of French supremacy. References to Gallic antiquity and the symbol of the rooster are essential elements of Aneau's narration: Alector, "c'est à dire en bon François LE COQ" (10), actually hatches from an egg, and affirms his identity by proclaiming "suis Franc, filz de franc" (29). His mother, Priscaraxe, half-serpent, half-woman, recalls the mythological Scythian nymph who coupled with Heracles to initiate the Gallic race, and the legendary half-serpent fairy Melusine of French lore.<sup>5</sup> Franc-Gal's name is an allusion to Franco-Gallic French patrimony and to the Gallic rooster. Aneau associates Franc-Gal with Noah of the Old Testament, recalling the link that Lemaire de Belges traced between Noah and the founders of Gaul and Troy. In the early days of Franc-Gal's peregrination, he succours survivors of a great flood:

les allans visiter, pource que j'en trouvoie la plus grande part despourveuz de vivres et affamez sur ces steriles cruppes de chauves montaignes, je leur distribuoe partie des biens d'ond nous avions faict provision, et mesmement du vin, d'ond j'avoie bonne fourniture, j'en secouroie les defaillans pour leur faire revenir le coeur [...]. (90)

It is these survivors who dub him "Franc-Gal," at once affirming his Frenchness and the associated characteristic of liberality or *franchise*.

Despite Aneau's insistence on Gallic mythology, *Alector's* protagonists cover the expanse of the known world without ever actually setting foot on the Hexagon. Aneau intended to produce a second part to his *histoire fabuleuse* in which Prince Alector goes on to found Gaul, and Priscaraxe moves to Poitiers to establish a noble lineage.<sup>6</sup> Tragically, Aneau's opus was truncated by his untimely demise at the hands of an angry mob upon suspicion of heresy in 1561. While his violent passing deprived us of the chance to envision France

5. In her critical edition of *Alector*, Marie-Madeleine Fontaine details the recurrence of the myth of the Scythian nymph that began with Herodotus and influenced authors of classical and French mythology; see 374n4 and 571n32.

6. "[...] du passage d'Alector en Gaule, jusques au val obscur, depuys par luy clamé Vau-Jour, et de des beaux faictz [...] Tout cecy sera narré en la seconde partie, car icy prent fin la premiere" (200); "Car tu t'arresteras aux trois poix d'Aquitaine/Avec un Roy mondain, comme Royne mondaine/Et de toy proviendra la noblesse premiere" (109).

as a fledgling nation through his eyes, *Alector* provides sufficient evidence of Aneau's conception of the ideal French monarchy: the king as a quasi-divine being with a mandate for global control and an imperative for helpful intervention worldwide. In this respect, Aneau's work resembles that of the orientalist and onetime ambassador to François I, Guillaume Postel. Postel's writings, which precede *Alector* by roughly a decade, seek to establish Gallic supremacy while simultaneously affirming the legitimacy of a universal world order. I will revisit the relationship between Aneau and Postel once I have demonstrated the role of geography and spatial symbolism in *Alector*. Postel's cabalistic and Neoplatonic reasoning, his cosmopolitan worldview, and his forays into the genre of the cosmography are harbingers of the mystical and puzzling universe evoked in *Alector ou le coq*.

To emphasize an ideal monarch's global reach, Aneau's literary portrayal of Franc-Gal juxtaposes a pastiche of geographical texts with the aforementioned pastiche of French foundation myths. Geographical references are frequent in *Alector*. Before the birth and eventual disappearance of his son Alector, Franc-Gal is independently motivated to travel around the globe, taking stock of its lands and peoples. Episodes detailing Franc-Gal's flight harbour a volley of authentic geographical indices, borrowed if not overtly copied from a variety of classical and humanistic texts. Chapters 17 and 18 stand out in this regard, as they contain a detailed itinerary of Franc-Gal's "peregrination par le circuit du Monde," with insistence on the motif of the circle: "par la force de mes destinees, il me convenoit premierement circuir la rondeur des terres et des mers, tant que je fusse en tournoyant revenu au lieu d'ond j'estoie parti" (119). These chapters are rich with toponyms that reveal Aneau's reliance on the work of both contemporary and ancient geographers. Editor Marie-Madeleine Fontaine identifies a number of probable sources: Strabo, Ptolemy, and Pomponius Mela are among the ancients; André Thevet, Sebastian Münster, Nicolas Nicolay, Jean Lemaire de Belges, Benedetto Bordone, Martin Fumée (translator of López de Gómara), and Simon Grynaeus are among the sixteenth-century authors and geographical savants who inspire Franc-Gal's itinerary. Aneau's appropriation of their geographical erudition is remarkable, as he lifts itineraries from their respective works without particular concern for narrative harmony. Chunks of geographical realism, grafted into *Alector*, stand in relief against a fusion of myth and fantasy.

Passages detailing Franc-Gal's flight are distinguished from the rest of the narration by their precipitous evocation of real geographical locations. In including the extent of the known world in the setting of his *histoire*, Aneau notably glosses over descriptive detail that he relishes elsewhere in his narration. Toponyms drawn from the works of well-known geographers serve to convey Franc-Gal's authentic experience of global space. After founding a new civilization in Scythia, Franc-Gal leaves his beloved half-snake queen, who is heavy with egg (from which Alector is soon to hatch), and sets off on his ambitious world tour astride his flying hippopotamus Durat. He crosses the mountains and visits a host of places in Europe, the Mediterranean, and Africa, culminating in a bewildering enumeration of place names:

j'estoie monté en mer sur mon grand Cheval Durat Hippopotame, au goulphe inhospital du pont Euxin. Duquel passée la large propontide, et entré en la mer Mediterraine par le destroit d'Hellespont, Bras Saint George, je visitay vers la part du Levan et Midy la coste de l'Asie mineur ou Natholie, Phrygie, Pamphilie, Cilicie, Caramaigne, Surie, Aigypste et les sept bouches du Nil, Lybie, et Barbarie, jusques au mont Atlas. Et vers la part du Septentrion et Ponant, je recogneu la Morée de Peloponnesse. Puy, rasant le col de l'Isthme, aborday ès ports fameux et nobles villes de la renommée Grèce, tant en la mer de Negrepont que de l'Archipel, sans laisser pas une Isle – ne Rhodes, ne Candie, ne le Lango, ne Methelin, ne Malthe, ne les Isles esparses, ne les Isles tournoyantes [...] et semblablement ès terres fermes de Macedoine, du Boulphe de Larthe, d'Epidaure ou Albanie, de la Rade des mons Foudroyans. (114)

Paradoxically, geographically rich descriptions of Franc-Gal's flight are visually opaque, remarkably unencumbered by the illustrative language and meticulous descriptions that distinguish other episodes in the narration. After riding out a tempest near the Acroceraunian Mountains, Franc-Gal continues his peregrination thus:

[...] en peu d'heures j'arrivay aux plages et ports de Dalmace et Sclavonnie, ès Illyriques. Puy, passant entre les insatiables gueulles de Scylle et Charybde, au Far de Messine & de Rhege, recogneu les Isles de Sicile, Sardaigne, Corse et toute la coste de Puille, Calabre, Naples, Italie; entray



au bras de la furieuse Hadriatique, où n'estoit encore la riche ville sans terre; passay la coste Ligustique, prins les ports de Lune; rasay l'heureuse Gaule Narbonnoise; de là costoyay la maritime Hespaigne Occidentalle, jusques aux Colomnes des haulx mons Calpe et Abyle, où le grand Ocean faict pertuys pour s'espandre au milieu de la terre et la separer en la grande Asie, la riche Aphrique et la populeuse Europe [...] (117)

In spite of numerous geographical allusions, Aneau's text provides minimal indications of how to visualize these places, alone or with respect to one another. Place names suffice to allude to a world that sixteenth-century savants could know only through books, which must have possessed a certain exoticism in popular imagination. The primary purpose of these passages is to affirm Franc-Gal's spatial sapience, not to impart it to the reader. Descriptive adjectives that are applied to toponyms ("furieuse," "heureuse," "grande," "riche," "populeuse") do not convey visual information; rather, their relative opacity serves to underscore the layman's virtual inability to cultivate first-hand knowledge of the universe. Geographical inventories are embedded into *Alector* to emphasize the facility with which Franc-Gal can access the farthest reaches of the known world.

Aneau's liberality with geographical indices suggests that verisimilitude was not his main objective. He exerts himself to construct itineraries based on real places without a similar effort to order them logically. Despite the casual sophistication of his geographical ruminations, Aneau's itineraries contain several glosses and incoherencies that are identified by Fontaine: in chapter 18, for example, Franc-Gal skirts the eastern coast of South America, abruptly leaps to Madeira and the Canary Islands, and then incongruously visits Japan ("Zipangre et les 7448 isles de l'Archipelague occidental," 128) before hurtling down the western coast of Africa and passing through the Strait of Magellan. Later in the same chapter, he bounds from Africa to China and then back to the Indian Ocean. As Fontaine notes, these errors are probably due to an over-reliance on geography texts: in Bordone's *Isolario*, which Aneau appears to have been following closely, descriptions of Madeira and the Canary Islands are sandwiched between descriptions of the Antilles and Japan, in the same order that Franc-Gal visits them.<sup>7</sup>

7. See Fontaine's notes that accompany chapters 10, 18, and 25.

Aneau acknowledges these awkward geographical improbabilities in the “Prémonition” hastily added to the beginning of *Alector* after its completion:

Si à quelqu'un en aucuns lieux de la peregrination de Franc-Gal, la Geographie des terres et mers semble estre inconsequente et non directement continuée, sache que ainsi est, et autrement ne pouvoit estre, pour l'errante et indirecte navigation dudict Franc-Gal et son Hippopotame allant et venant à l'aventure, et après un cours devers l'Asie ou l'Europe, soubdain retournant à reprendre la coste d'Aphricque, et quelques fois r'entrant, ou par les bouches des fleuves ou par terre, és parties mediterranees, ce qui faict sembler ses erreurs mal ordonnez. (8)

In this “Prémonition,” Aneau recognizes the incongruence of episodes that evoke real geography with respect to the deliberate structure of the rest of his narration. Franc-Gal's progression towards the city of Orbe culminates in the transmission of a founding legacy from father to son in an episode replete with symbolism that concludes the first part of Aneau's epic narrative. By contrast, Franc-Gal's global flight is completely lacking in telos. This aspect of his physical displacement is particularly salient given the singular spatial acumen that Aneau attributes to his ideal monarch.

During his walk to the city of Orbe, Franc-Gal recounts his foundation of a postdiluvian civilization. He draws survivors of the flood out of caves in the mountains where they had sought refuge and teaches them to farm, to build, to govern themselves, and to hunt. Franc-Gal's mandate is justified by his privileged relationship with space and with time, namely, by his ability to behold the sphere of the universe from a celestial perspective. In *Apollo's Eye*, Denis Cosgrove underscores the urge among early modern authors to mesh geographical and metaphysical knowledge through an imaginative depiction of space that he dubs “poetic geography.” The “Apollonian eye,” evoked by Ortelius in his 1570 cosmography, is an omniscient eye, whose ability to visualize the globe by means of spherical projections is linked to a capacity for ordering and controlling the world.<sup>8</sup> Cosgrove goes on to explain that classical rulers in Greece and Rome embraced the idea of a universal empire where the city

8. Denis E. Cosgrove, *Apollo's Eye: a Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 20.

serves as an “*axis mundi*,” “a point where terrestrial space connects with celestial time.” According to this model, the ruler of a nation or empire has a pivotal role in controlling the spatial and temporal order of his domain.

In *Alector*, cosmographical understanding of the world is a king’s gift and privilege. Franc-Gal’s altitudinous wanderings are reminiscent of the oneiric writing that exemplifies the Stoic philosophic ideal of *kataskopos*, or “view from above,” a point of view linked with a superior intellectual perspective.<sup>9</sup> Works such as Plato’s *Phaedo* and Macrobius’s *Commentary* on Scipio’s dream from Cicero’s *De re publica*, which fascinated Renaissance authors, ascribe a bird’s eye view to their respective protagonists. The influence of these texts is manifest in *Alector* through depictions of Franc-Gal’s flight.<sup>10</sup> The first flight episode is detailed in chapter 7, where Franc-Gal recounts his ascension of the supernatural “Tour d’Anange.” Ascent of the tower serves as a metaphor for the journey of life. A mystical personage dubbed Dame Anange presides over the tower, and from her superior vantage point imposes world order: “par son seul regard, tout est conduit et reduit à son final et droict poinct d’éternelle ordonnance” (82). A person’s life is represented by the candle he or she carries while ascending the tower. Franc-Gal, having climbed higher and lived longer than any other (he is over nine hundred years old), thereby confirms both spatial and temporal superiority. His candle equips him with the ability to see and understand things beyond the scope of a typical mortal:

Et tout cela par longueur de temps ay je veu à la resplendissante clarté de mon cierge, par laquelle je voioie les causes des choses et les consequences et progrès d’icelles; et comme n’ignorant point les antecédents, je comparoie de similitudes, adjoignant aux choses presentes les futures, et par ainsi facilement je prevoioie tout le cours de ma peregrination, qui a esté jusques icy longue, durable et diverse par divers pays et regions du Levant et Ponant, Septentrion et Midi [...] (p 88)

Franc-Gal’s superhuman perspective implies physical and metaphysical clairvoyance, which enables his civilizing mission. His privileged relationship with time allows him to understand the causes and consequences of events, and to

9. Cosgrove, 49.

10. See Fontaine’s note in *Alector*, 454n4.

foresee their outcomes: from his superior position, he is capable of “reading” time and space.

Franc-Gal's role in the narrative structure of *Alector* mirrors his role as a cosmopolitan monarch. His movement is both horizontal and vertical: he moves up and down in episodes such as the ascent of the Tour d'Anage, and laterally in his walk to Orbe with Croniel. This emphasis on horizontal and vertical movement is reminiscent of the depictions of gridded space in the work of sixteenth-century French mapmakers Oronce Finé, Jean Jolivet, and Guillaume Postel. With the advent of cartographic science in the sixteenth century and the rediscovery of Ptolemy, whose *Geographia* contains instructions for constructing a map using mathematical projections, Renaissance maps gradually superseded itineraries as the dominant means of visualizing the space between two places. The narrative progression in *Alector* demonstrates a corresponding awareness of possibilities for multidirectional movement, with digressions and diversions between the tale's beginning and end that do not detract from a logically consistent whole. Without sacrificing coherency, *Alector* contains multiple chronological leaps within the same narrative framework, while progressing from the story's inception to its conclusion. Although the narration does not adhere to a linear plot, it is instead tethered to the personage of Franc-Gal. His function, both within the narrative and as an element of its structure, is to provide order.

Aristotle and Ptolemy, whose works inspired Renaissance geographers, described a universe in which the heavens and the earth are fixed, and the celestial sphere rotates on an axis. *Alector* represents an allegorization of space in which the monarch functions as the axis of history. The role of mapping in the sixteenth century, according to Frank Lestringant and Monique Pelletier, was to “mold the future by giving orientation to the present,” and this is precisely Franc-Gal's role in the universe evoked by Aneau.<sup>11</sup> The narrative is structured along the horizontal axis of Franc-Gal's promenade with Croniel, during which he tells of his world travels, his foundation of a postdiluvian civil society, and the birth of his son Alector. This trajectory on foot is noteworthy, not only because Franc-Gal has temporarily renounced his epic global peregrination, deigning to progress on foot, but also because it underscores Franc-Gal's role as the narrative's fulcrum. Franc-Gal and Croniel walk and talk, their forward movement

11. Frank Lestringant and Monique Pelletier, “Maps and Descriptions of the World in Sixteenth-Century France,” in *A History of Cartography Vol. 3: Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1463.

occurring in conjunction with the narrative's progress. Their horizontal trajectory is punctuated by tales of vertical movement: the Tower of Anage and Franc-Gal's tour of the globe in addition to anecdotes about Alector's early attempts at flight. Franc-Gal's superhuman omniscience is related to his ability to move up and down with ease. He soars higher than mere mortals, lives longer, and is consequently endowed with visionary, god-like capabilities. It follows that an ideal monarch should, according to Aneau, be endowed with a similar propensity for imposing order on the world through mastery of space.

Leading up to Alector's victory is the detailed "Corographie de la ville d'Orbe" that constitutes all of chapter 24. At this point in *Alector*, the sequence of events as narrated by Franc-Gal finally synchronizes with the overall narrative's progress: both his quest and the *histoire* are drawing to a close. The city of Orbe is characterized by its symbolic symmetry, evoking a spherical microcosm that marks the endpoint of Franc-Gal's navigation of the globe and celestial spheres. Franc-Gal's first destination in Orbe is the temple, where "en parfaite rondeur" the citizens of Orbe contemplate the heavens "par un grand trou rond" (155). Orbe is bounded by thick stone walls, "close en parfaite circularité" (169). Four main streets traverse the city, and four doors and four bridges connect Orbe to the outside world, "desquelz champs le territoire contenoit un bien grand pays à la ronde," which is divided into four temporal zones that correspond to the four seasons. There are four ports, where "les marchans de toutes nations et langues" (182) travel up the river Clotterre and assemble to trade their wares. Vertical structures (towers, pillars, and structures such as an arena and coliseum) suggest a view from above, in addition to the increase in elevation as one moves towards the city centre, where a temple marks the highest point. The depiction of Orbe is one of self-contained perfection, separated from the chaos of the outside world by physical ramparts as well as by a sense of ideological superiority. Sixteenth-century imaginings of idealized space were known to Aneau: the term "corographie" in the chapter's title recalls the term he used in his preface to a French translation of More's *Utopia* in 1559, which he dubs a "fiction corographique."<sup>12</sup> This and other visions of utopia certainly coloured his portrayal of the microcosm that concludes *Alector*.<sup>13</sup>

12. Biot, 424.

13. Biot points to Aneau's probable familiarity with Rabelais's *Thelème*, in addition to the utopian constructions of Anton Francesco Doni, Francesco Patrizi, and others; Biot, 425.

Aneau's imaginary city is reminiscent of fifteenth-century theories about city planning devised by architects such as Brunelleschi and Alberti, who developed and refined Ptolemaic systems of coordinates in order to plan and to illustrate Italian Renaissance cities. In a monograph on Renaissance city maps, Naomi Miller affirms: "Just as medieval cartography placed symbolism and moralizing above geographic precision, so the Italian Renaissance could subordinate the science of mapmaking to a desire to convey ideas no less dear to its particular ideology and politics."<sup>14</sup> Aneau's chorography of the city of Orbe is a spatial representation of his civic values. The temple at the centre of the city indicates the preeminence of religious devotion. It is flanked by the building where justice is administered by a parliamentary system of elected magistrates, and a building where civil servants are honoured: "ceux qui par quelque insigne bienfaict, ou d'invention utile, ou de sapience, ou de prouesse, ou de liberalité, ou autre acte vertueux et à la cité honorable et profictable, avoient bien merité de la Republique" (179). While religion and civil service reside at the heart of the city, which is also its highest elevation, commerce and money are relegated to space outside the city walls, indicating their less venerable status in Aneau's civic hierarchy: "là y avoit Change general d'espèces d'or, d'argent et monnoies, de dictes, responses, remises, letters de Banque, ports et rapports, et toutes faciendes de negotiations" (182). The demarcation of four temporal zones is associated with the idea of eternal life: each zone is associated with one of the four ages of man, and citizens move freely from one zone to the next. In the description of Orbe as in the rest of *Alector*, Aneau's meticulous evocation of spatial organization and of movement is deeply symbolic.

Franc-Gal's arrival in the circular city of Orbe marks the conclusion of his peregrination "par la ronde" and likewise indicates the final stage of Aneau's *histoire fabuleuse*. Franc-Gal looks on as Alector vanquishes a killer serpent in Orbe's arena before assembled masses, and witnesses him receiving Orbe's "coronne Civique" for his efforts. In an act of filial piety, Alector places the crown on his father's head, and Franc-Gal subsequently dies of joy. Alector's victory in the spherical microcosm of Orbe signals his readiness to assume his father's role in the global macrocosm. It is noteworthy that the threat to the ideal city comes not from without but from within: the sinister "ennemi interne"

14. Naomi Miller, *Mapping the City: The Language and Culture of Cartography in the Renaissance* (London: Continuum, 2003), 156.

represented by the serpent and subsequently vanquished by the rooster “qui naturellement luy est redoutable” (186). At a time when France was suffering from destabilizing internal conflict on the brink of the Religious Wars, it is a noteworthy choice to portray salvation at the hand of a cosmopolitan hero, a French *citoyen du monde*.

In *Alector*, the motif of the circle symbolizes the oneness of the global macrocosm and the microcosms within it. Concentric spheres connote unity between *polis* and *cosmopolis*, culminating in the utopian circular city of Orbe where the egg-hatched hero Alector enjoys his first definitive victory. Aneau’s ideal monarch is above all a visionary, who uses his capacity for vertical movement to anticipate the future and to protect his mortal subjects from earthly perils. To see space is to control it. *Alector*’s plot implies a bird’s-eye perspective: the omniscient narrator (whose voice is often conflated with Franc-Gal’s) follows multiple plot trajectories, demonstrating awareness of their relationship to one another, in the way that a map reader or cartographer comprehends the various possible routes between two places.

For all his recognition of the globe and its scope, *Alector* remains resolutely francocentric. Aneau’s work anticipates the work of cosmographer Guillaume Postel, whose 1578 world map features a meridian bisecting Paris, making Paris the centre not just of France but of the world. Postel sought to establish a direct correspondence between geography and ideology, believing that nature holds the signs that confirm divine design.<sup>15</sup> Aneau’s pastiche of geographical and mythological writing is likewise an appeal to a readership that shares a cosmic vision of French supremacy in a universal world order.

Aneau shares an intellectual kinship with the sixteenth-century thinkers who used hermeneutics to decode divine messages regarding France’s place in the universe.<sup>16</sup> His engagement with the emblematic tradition is manifest in his translation into French of Alciato’s famous *emblemata*, a volume that appeared in 1549, and in his own *Picta poesis*, published in its first edition in 1552. The emblem was similarly a favoured motif of the mapmakers and cartographers who shared Aneau’s cosmopolitan ideals. Oronce Finé and Abraham Ortelius used codiform projections to portray the world in the form of a human heart,

15. Nancy Bouzrara and Tom Conley, “Cartography and Literature in Early Modern France,” in Woodward, ed., 427–37, 430.

16. Alexandre Y. Haran, *Le Lys et le Globe* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2000), 114–15.

relying on the topos of the heart as a microcosm, furthering the notion of the world as a theatre where humans exercise free will in their quest for eternal salvation. Their work deliberately echoes the ancient stoic representation of the world as *theatrum mundi*.<sup>17</sup> Guillaume Postel, himself a mapmaker esteemed and immortalized by Renaissance geographer André Thevet, was an ardent admirer of Ortelius's *Theatrum* and deemed Ortelius's atlas to be the most important book after the Bible. In a congratulatory letter to Ortelius upon the completion of his map of Asia, Postel writes: "Ortel, en réduisant la terre à la raison polaire, a commencé l'oeuvre de la cosmographie, qui met sous les yeux l'image du monde, quinte essence après les quatre elements des mathématiques."<sup>18</sup> Rendering the world visible, "mettre sous les yeux l'image du monde," was important not only from a scientific perspective but also from a philosophical one. For humanist geographers, visual renderings of the world were more than just maps: they were a means of understanding and transmitting philosophies about the universe and our place in it.

Aneau, like Postel, employed geographical symbolism to support his notion of a universal world order while relying upon mythological commonplaces to confirm French supremacy in the cosmos. In Postel's design, universal concord is to be realized by the descendants of the Gallic people, a mandate that he justifies by upholding the lineage of French kings; namely, their link with Noah of the Old Testament.<sup>19</sup> This position, which Postel articulates in works published concurrently with Aneau's, is similar to the suggestion in *Alector* of a Noah-like figure with Gallic associations, a benevolent mission, and global reach. Both authors portray a universalist vision that is at once nationalistic and cosmopolitan. Like Aneau, Postel upholds the image of the circle or *encyclie* as a spatial representation of an essential philosophical understanding: the belief that history will end at the point at which it began, and that the future will

17. Giorgio Magnani, "Abraham Ortelius and the Hermetic Meaning of the Codiform Projection," *Imago Mundi* 50 (1998): 63–66.

18. As quoted in Georges Weill and François Secret, *Vie et caractère de Guillaume Postel* (Milan: Arché, 1987), 132.

19. This vision of Gallic lineage and superiority was in vogue in the years 1550–60 and was shared by authors such as Jean Picard, Robert Cenau, and Postel's disciple Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie. It persisted into the seventeenth century; see Haran, 122–23, 156–59.



resemble the past.<sup>20</sup> With a fictional portrayal of Gaul's beginnings, *Alector* suggests that, as it was in the beginning, the globe will once again be unified under a cosmopolitan French monarch.

Alector's capacity to become that monarch hinges on his ascendancy within both the microcosm and macrocosm. At Alector's trial, recounted in chapter 2, he stands accused of the death of his beloved Noémie, and of being "étrangier, espion, insidiateur de lictz pudiques, violateur d'hospitalité, raptéur de virginité, voleur et effracteur de nobles maisons, turbateur de paix publique et meurtrier sanguinaire" (24). In defending himself against such spurious and ignoble claims, Alector refers to his lineage as the son of Priscaraxe and Franc-Gal, affirming: "Ainsi je suys noble, non incogneu étranger (comme ilz disent) mais mondain et citoyen du monde" (26). In this case, *étrangier* (foreigner) is opposed to *citoyen du monde* (world citizen). By the end of the *histoire fabuleuse*, the term "étrangier" is employed more favourably to refer to the father and son who are jointly responsible for Orbe's salvation: "ces deux hommes étrangers [...] envoyez en ces regions pour le salut public et pour la destruction de nostre ennemi interne" (193). As such, they are received as citizens of the city of Orbe:

la cité d'Orbe universellement vous regracie de la salutaire liberation du danger et mal publique, en recognoissance de laquelle les Seigneurs, Magistratz et tout le peuple decerne à vous, étrangers, tous les droitcz et privileges de la ville, et dès ceste heure vous reçoit pour citoyens et Patrices de la ville d'Orbe. (195)

This victory symbolizes the assimilation of two previously polarized identities: in rendering an invaluable service to the city, the foreigner becomes a citizen. Alector's acceptance by the citizens of the microcosm of Orbe prefigures his destiny in assuming Franc-Gal's role in the cosmos, where he will truly be a *citoyen du monde*.

Aneau's portrayal of a fictional hero who knows and visits real places reflects sixteenth-century geographical awareness. Novel methods of spatial visualization compounded the impression that the world was becoming more

20. Claude-Gilbert Dubois, *Celtes et Gaulois au XVIe siècle: le développement littéraire d'un mythe nationaliste* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1972), 57–58.

accessible, even smaller, as it could be fit into the pages of an atlas.<sup>21</sup> Humanist authors grappled with questions of how members of the world's geographically disparate populations should be governed. For some, the answer was a world republic, such as the one envisioned by Postel. Through the influence of Christian theologians, from Saint Augustine in the first century BCE to Saint Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, cosmopolitan rhetoric coloured the writings of Martin Luther in the early sixteenth century, as well as of Erasmus—who described himself as “*civis mundi*” in letters to Guillaume Budé<sup>22</sup> and Ulrich Zwingli.<sup>23</sup> For many Renaissance authors and thinkers, world citizenship was a question of shared humanity that surpasses geographical distinctions. Cosmopolitanism, which is essentially a question of identity and belonging, subsequently raised questions of empathy and duty.

The idea of cosmopolitanism predates the Renaissance by roughly two thousand years, dating back to the Cynics and Stoics of Greek and Roman antiquity. The writings of Cynic philosophers had a large audience in Renaissance France, where the years 1530–50 were “l’apogée du diogénisme,” according to Michèle Clément.<sup>24</sup> Aneau was certainly familiar with Cicero’s *De Officiis*, in which Cicero draws inspiration from the Roman Stoic philosopher Zeno to ascribe the possession of reason to all mankind, and *De la République*, where he refers to the earth as a universal house.<sup>25</sup> Cicero did not see a contradiction between a sense of kinship to all mankind and a particular relationship to one’s own home.<sup>26</sup>

21. Jean-Marc Besse, *Les grandeurs de la terre: Aspects du savoir géographique à la Renaissance* (Lyon: ENS Editions, 2003), 274–75.

22. Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet, *La République des Lettres* (Paris: Belin, 1997), 32.

23. “Ego mundi civis esse cupio” (I would like to be a citizen of the world) as quoted in Peter Burke, “Erasmus and the Republic of Letters,” *European Review* 7 (1999): 7.

24. Michèle Clément, *Le Cynisme à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2005), 13.

25. Robert Fine and Robin Cohen, “Four Cosmopolitan Moments,” in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*, ed. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 138.

26. “Here it may be well to trace back the social relations of men to their principles in nature. The first of these principles is that which is seen in the social union of the entire race of man. Its bond is reason as expressed in language, which by teaching, learning, imparting, discussing, deciding, conciliates mutual regard, and unites men by a certain natural fellowship”; “But there are several degrees of relationship among men. To take our departure from the tie of common humanity, of which I have spoken, there is a nearer relation of race, nation, and language, which brings men into very close community of feeling.

Ciceronian nationalism is predicated on a natural feeling of closeness with those who live in close proximity. Aneau's heroes, by contrast, epitomize France without ever having visited it (although they are slated to in *Alector's* unrealized second part), and are duty-bound to all humankind. Franc-Gal is a citizen of the world both in his practical ability to inhabit the entire globe and in his mission to serve and protect the world's diverse populations. His world citizenship is expressed both as an identity and as a moral imperative. It is striking, from this perspective, to consider that his character is also a vessel for French values and the expression of Gallic superiority. Alector and Franc-Gal's innate Frenchness, and the liberality associated with it, enables their constructive interventions in Orbe and other places. Franc-Gal's global involvement, while not overtly imperialistic in nature, upholds a hegemony of Gallic civic values. During his world tour, he stops to visit different civilizations, dismounting his flying hippopotamus Durat in order to progress on foot or horseback: "[...] je traversoie les pays et regions mediterraines et visitoie les villes et les peuples, en cognoissant leurs langages, loix, meurs et façons de vivre, les recommandant s'il y avoit du bien, et les emendant s'il y avoit moins que bien, selon la prudence qui du souverain m'a esté donnée [...]" (117). While embodying a cosmopolitan orientation towards the world and its peoples, Franc-Gal acts according to the understanding that power has been vested by one sovereign entity in one earthly representative. He reiterates this stance at another juncture in the narration of his global peregrination:

outre toutes ces chevauchées marines, en tous pays et regions que j'abordasse, je traversoie le plus souvent sur chevaux terrestres dans les terres fermes, pour cognoistre les diverses villes, pays et meurs des hommes, en les politisant s'ilz estoient barbares, et les rendans humains s'ilz estoient sauvages et cruelz, leur enseignant Religion d'honneur au Souverain, Vertu, Foy, Justice, Temperance, Mariage. (129)

While acknowledging the diversity that he encounters, noting that different peoples possess different languages, laws, customs, and ways of life, Franc-Gal

---

It is a still more intimate bond to belong to the same city; for the inhabitants of a city have in common among themselves forum, temples, public walks, streets, laws, rights, courts, modes and places of voting, beside companionships and intimacies, engagements and contracts, of many with many." Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, book 1, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 16–17.

nevertheless takes it upon himself to amend (“emendant”) and to civilize (“politisant,” “rendans humains”) foreigners. For this, they are patently grateful: “j’acquis la grace, amour et bienveillance de tous Princes et peuples du monde” (129). The world traversed by Franc-Gal represents Aneau’s cosmopolitan ideal, where all peoples can be reached and won over by the representative (Franc-Gal) of a benevolent superpower (France). The ease with which Franc-Gal, and later his son Alector, access all of the strata of the concentric formation that radiates from the arena at the heart of Orbe to the imaginary meridians that encircle the planet suggests an opinion of France’s rightful position in a universal world order, and of the French monarch’s necessary possession of spatial *savoir-faire*.

*Alector* is noteworthy evidence of a cosmopolitan worldview during the Renaissance, inasmuch as it demonstrates that humanists such as Aneau were considering the ramifications of inhabiting not just a city or even a country, but the entire planet. Benedict Anderson’s concept of an “imagined community,” used to describe the phenomenon of emerging nationalism, is also applicable to the dawning Renaissance apprehension of a shared planet: as Europeans gained consciousness of other peoples and places, the idea of a shared global community gained resonance.<sup>27</sup> While firsthand knowledge of the entire world remained impossible, except for imaginary flying heroes, secondhand knowledge became realizable for ordinary people. The awareness of a world that extends beyond the familiar confines of city and country and the acknowledgement of one’s potential role in that world are primordial elements of a cosmopolitan worldview.

The obvious problem, from a modern standpoint, with the cosmopolitanism embodied by Aneau’s itinerant hero is its clear nationalist bias. For modern-day philosopher Kwame Appiah, cosmopolitanism is a question of empathy and duty: everybody that you know about is somebody that you are responsible for. Unlike Aneau, Appiah maintains a concomitant dedication to pluralism.<sup>28</sup> Franc-Gal’s role in the universe of *Alector* is to impose Gallic civic values onto the world’s populations, “les politisant s’ilz estoient barbares.” Aneau’s implicit contention that French values are universally applicable recalls

27. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

28. Kwame Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 7–8, 151, 153.

Erasmus's references to the *orbis christianus* in that the evocation of a global society assumes the predominance of a specific worldview: for Aneau, franco-centric; for Erasmus, Christian. Aneau's effort to depict a cosmos harmonized by the noble feats of a mythological French ruler assumes a universalist perspective, whereby what is good for one population is automatically good for another.

The perceived advent of a world republic raised questions of obligation to others, and of identity with respect to geographical affiliation. At the time that *Alector* was written, France was lagging behind its European counterparts (namely Spain and Portugal) in the establishment of a colonial presence abroad. Colonialism, largely an economic concern, is not at the heart of Aneau's ideological ruminations on the French monarch's relationship with space. *Alector* explores the ramifications of world citizenship for a French monarch, assuming that Franco-Gallic values are superior, and implying that a monarch's mandate will be partially justified by his proficiency for visualizing and organizing global space. Aneau illustrates this contention by situating a fictional story about fictional heroes in a real geographical setting, with abundant references to a real national hegemony. The juxtaposition of real and fictional geography, however, is an area where the carefully conceived narrative structure of *Alector* falters and gives way to an impression of disorder. The utopian city of Orbe, with its designated temporal zones and deliberate architecture, is hardly mirrored in the planet that Franc-Gal traverses so haphazardly. Inconsistencies in Aneau's evocation of real geography stand out in sharp relief against the backdrop of an otherwise orderly fictional universe, particularly when compared with the chorography of the city of Orbe. Mythology and fiction can be manipulated to suit the author's purpose: in *Alector*, Aneau blends creation myth and literary traditions interspersed with wisdom from the cabbala and the *prisca theologia* as he sees fit. Geography, by contrast, does not lend itself to pastiche. In measuring the fictional Orbe against the real *orbis*, the plight of the would-be cosmopolitan is manifest: when it comes to geography, naming is not knowing. The "Prémonition" that Aneau added to the beginning of his work testifies to his awareness that the geographical itineraries in *Alector*, "inconsequente et non directement continuée," are at odds with the rest of the narration. In a tale containing a flying hippo, an egg-hatched hero, and a killer serpent, it is particularly noteworthy that Aneau's addendum only addresses geographical improbability.

*Alector* is a singular work for many reasons, not the least of which is its suggestion that spatial knowledge is essential to good governance. The monarch's role in organizing and governing civilization is privileged by his superior perspective, an innovation in the genre of the princely manual that places new emphasis on the role of cartography in governance. Aneau's eagerness to incorporate real geography into an otherwise fictional narrative suggests a desire to participate in an evolving dialogue about the world and France's place in it. He crafts protagonists who are at once champions of France and world citizens, hailing cosmopolitanism as a noble virtue, to be emulated. However, Aneau's attempt to evoke global space falls flat in comparison with the nuanced fantasy he weaves, whose intrigue reaches its apex in a fictional microcosm. Orbe's architectural perfection only emphasizes Aneau's imperfect grasp of the global geography he strives to depict in a few swift passages, whose dearth of descriptive cues makes them all the more opaque. Aneau perhaps unwittingly finds himself grappling with a reality that renders world citizenship difficult: no imagining can replace firsthand knowledge, and even firsthand knowledge is marred by its relative superficiality with respect to the intimate knowledge accrued of one's geographical home. Orbe, with its echoes of the French cities Bourges and Lyon, both of which Aneau inhabited, cuts a more vivid figure in *Alector* because of his authoritative familiarity with the city.<sup>29</sup> In the rest of the real world, Aneau and his hero are at risk of getting lost.

By adding swaths of geographical realism to *Alector*, Aneau attempts to attribute cosmopolitan sensibility to a quintessentially French hero. His effort rings false. While it is sufficient to blend and borrow civilizing myths in order to craft a monarch figure who represents Franco-Gallic values, and to ascribe powers of vision and spatial navigation to a quasi-divine superhero in order to symbolize his capacity for good governance, Aneau's lists of place names culled from an assortment of geographical sources give the impression of a confused and unknowable world, to which even his omniscient monarch fails to ascribe order. The struggles facing would-be cosmopolitans of the early modern period are hardly different from those facing them today, in a world that is increasingly imaginable and accessible, where our place and role are ever more complicated by our awareness of its scope.

29. Biot, 428.