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Weeda, C.V.

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## Painting Peoples

In the twelfth century, catalogues enumerating human diversity and the world's riches surface in poetry, prose, sermons and historiography. In some cases these catalogues migrate from East to West, just as the early lists compiled in monasteries as tools to ruminate mankind's sins had. In his renowned epic verse the *Alexandreis*, for example, Walther of Châtillon inserted an *ekphrasis* (representation of a work of art) of the world description inscribed on the tomb of Darius III, the last Persian king who was murdered by the satrap Bessus in 330 BC. The poem, probably written in the last quarter of the twelfth century,<sup>1</sup> shortly became a highly popular school text, with over two hundred manuscripts extant.<sup>2</sup> In the verse, the regions' riches and stereotypical images of peoples are painted in words from East to West:

Libya is fruitful. Near the Syrtes  
 Ammon begs for showers. Nile's stream  
 enriches Egypt. India is endowed  
 with ivory and with shores decked out in gems.  
 Great Carthage with its lofty citadels  
 marks Africa, and the immortal fame  
 of Athens picks out Greece. The Palatine  
 marks Rome proud in her growth, Sabaea glories  
 in incense, Spain in Herculean Gades,  
 France in her soldiery, Campania  
 in wide-famed wine, the Britons in their Arthur,

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1 The poem is notoriously difficult to date; several manuscripts contain the gloss that Walter embarked on his composition in 1170, the year of Thomas Becket's murder. However, the poem was dedicated to William of the White Hands, archbishop of Reims, who held the archbishopric between 1176 and 1202. Telfryn Pritchard, 'Introduction' to Walter of Châtillon, *The Alexandreis*, transl. R. Telfryn Pritchard (Toronto, 1986), 4-5.

2 Maura K. Lafferty, *Walter of Châtillon's Alexandreis. Epic and the Problem of Historical Understanding*, (Turnhout, 1998), 10-11. Just how popular in the French universities becomes evident from thirteenth-century Henri d'Andeli's satirical *Bataille des Septs Arts*. In a joust between Paris and Orleans on the merits of grammar and logic, the latter kills the widely read school texts in the medieval curriculum, including the *Alexandreis*. Telfryn Pritchard, 'Introduction' to Walter of Châtillon, *The Alexandreis*, 7.

and Normandy in customary arrogance.

England entices. Love of possession burns

Liguria. The Teuton vents his rage.<sup>3</sup>

According to David Townsend, the inscription ‘calls to mind the legends on the oversize *mappae mundi* of the High Middle Ages’.<sup>4</sup> The *ekphrasis*, representing the map decorated by the (erroneously called Hebrew) sculptor Apelles on Darius’ tomb, verbally recalls ‘a crystal image of the turning sky, a hollow shell of balanced weight, on which the tripart world lay beautifully described’, distinguishing places, rivers, peoples, cities, forests, mountains, provinces and towns, and every island, in sum ‘what every land was rich in, what it lacked’.<sup>5</sup> It concludes with a reference to Daniel’s prophesy of the four empires and the sculptor’s inscription of the passage of time ‘following the Hebrews and their Scriptures’, setting down ‘the years of humankind from its creation, how all the sequence of past times revolved until the warlike Great One’s victories’ – the feats of the poem’s hero, Alexander the Great.<sup>6</sup>

As in the earlier lists compiled by monks, Walter of Châtillon’s tomb description served as a representation of the passage of time and space from the Creation towards the end of time and the role of human diversity within this course of events. However, from the early twelfth century these catalogues increasingly became part of literary composition, of verse and prose texts compiled by clerics educated at the schools and universities of Chartres, Orleans, Tours, Paris, Bologna, and Oxford, who frequented the courts of princes and the nobility.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, these clerics increasingly fixed their gaze on the world around them; the images of the regions and peoples become topical. Thus, although a classicizing epic verse, there is a notable shift in Walter of Châtillon’s text from ethnic characteristics drawn from biblical and exegetical commentary, to images concurring with widespread contemporary prejudice. Indeed, references to Ligurian (or Lombard) avarice, Norman pride, German fury and the Britons’ belief in King Arthur’s return (known as Breton Hope and an

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3 Walter of Châtillon, *Alexandreis*, ed. Colker (Padua 1978), 191: ‘Frugifera est Lybie, vicinus Syrtibus Hamon / Mendicat pluvias: Egyptum Nilus opimat; / Indos ditat ebur vestitaque litora gemmis. / Affrica pretendit magnae Kartaginis arces, / Grecia divinas famae immortalis Athenas. / Pallenthea domus Roma crescente superbit, / Gadibus Herculeis Hyspania, thure Sabei, / Francia militibus, celebri Campania Bacho, / Arthuro Britones, solito Normannia fastu/ / Anglia blanditur, Ligures amor urit habendi, / Teutonicusque suum retinet de more furorem.’ The translation is from *The Alexandreis of Walter of Châtillon. A Twelfth-Century Epic*, transl. David Townsend (Philadelphia, 1996), 127.

4 Walter of Châtillon, *The Alexandreis*, transl. David Townsend, 203. For pictorial *mappae mundi* accompanying manuscripts containing the *Alexandreis*, see Marcel Destombes, ‘The Mappamundi of the Poem “Alexandreidos” by Gautier de Châtillon (c. A.D. 1180)’, in *Imago Mundi* 19 (1965), 10-12.

5 Walter of Châtillon has confused the fourth century B.C. sculptor with a Jewish Apelles mentioned in Horace’s satires. See Walter of Châtillon, *The Alexandreis*, transl. David Townsend, 195 note 4.225.

6 Idem. For the tomb ekphrasis in the *Alexandreis*, see Maura K. Lafferty, ‘Mapping Human Limitations: The Tomb Ekphrases Walter of Châtillon’s *Alexandreis*’, in *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 4/4 (1994), 64-81.

7 For literature on the rise of the universities, see chapter 6 note 21.

indication of their naïve stupidity) were commonplace in a wide range of twelfth-century texts.<sup>8</sup> French self-acclaim as the epitome of learning and chivalry (which was sometimes counter-attacked as arrogance) is prevalent in texts ranging from encyclopaedias to *chansons de geste*. Some of these stereotypes such as the purported Lombard avarice, infused with jealousy of Italian merchant bankers and their monetary prosperity, were drawn from ‘proverbial’ prejudice or ‘common knowledge’. Cultural topoi such as eating and drinking habits (especially English drunkenness) were now also included in the catalogues. Other stereotypes, such as the German fury, were in origin classical Roman epithets grounded in climate theory.<sup>9</sup>

Although the same shift towards increasing topicality occurs in the concise lists compiled in the cloisters, the images in the literary compositions might be full of derision of the ethnic other.<sup>10</sup> Ethnic ridicule will be further discussed in chapter 6. The present chapter addresses how lists of ethnic characterizations were incorporated in twelfth-century literary texts. In this chapter I will discuss how lists of peoples became part of academic text books – handbooks of rhetoric, in particular – used at the arising universities from the early twelfth century. Secondly, I will examine how ethnic stereotypes became increasingly topical, i.e. reflecting contemporary images and ideas, rather than (biblical-)allegorical. Although the stereotypes retained their purpose as moral tools to reflect on sin, these lists no longer served merely as monastic mnemonic exercises. They were produced in the new educational centres, especially in northern France and England, where detailed attention was paid to creating poetry which was convincing. The inclusion of fresh stereotypes in these lists springs forth from the intricate relationship between the rise of these new hubs of learning, the enormous literary production, influenced by the knowledge of classical poetry, and the economic growth and strengthening of institutional administrations at the central courts, generally classified under the umbrella term of the twelfth-century renaissance. These developments led to increasing contacts between various groups at these centres of education and court, within trade networks and on the Crusades, and sparking off greater awareness of ethnic identities.<sup>11</sup>

The intellectual and cultural twelfth-century revolution produced a vast harvest of Latin verse. Receiving their education especially in the schools of northern France – Orleans, Chartres, Tours –

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8 See for the Breton Hope, Siân Echard, *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge 1998), esp. 68-106; Rosemary Morris, ‘King Arthur and the growth of French nationalism’, in Gillian Jondorf and D.N. Dumville (eds), *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Essays by Members of Girton College, Cambridge, in Memory of Ruth Morgan* (Woodbridge 1991), 115-129; Mildred Leake Day, ‘The Letter from King Arthur to Henry II: Political Use of the Arthurian Legend in *Draco Normannicus*’, in Glyn S. Burgess, Robert A. Taylor and Aland David Deyermond (eds), *The Spirit of the Court: Selected Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society* (Woodbridge 1985), 153-157.

9 See further chapter 7.

10 See for example the twelfth-century MS Corpus Christi 139, in which the older list ‘The Envy of the Jews’ (Appendix VI) now speaks of the *luxuria* of the people of Gascony, or the callousness of the Bavarians. Furthermore, in the list ‘Sapientia Grecorum’ of the fourteenth century, the French are courteous, the English generous, the Tuscans avaricious (Appendix IX). These are stereotypes also present in the verse catalogue printed in Walter, ‘Scherz’, no. 91.

11 For the influence of increasing contacts in this period, see Smugge, ‘Über nationale Vorurteile’.

and advancing to the universities of Paris (theology) or Bologna (law), the clerics of Western Europe spent hours exercising their skills in the Latin tongue, memorizing and emanating the classics.<sup>12</sup> The multiple anthologies filled with thousands of lines of verse are testimony to this incredible outburst of literary activity. Especially relevant to ethnic images with regards to this reciprocal pattern of cultural and social development, was the influence of new rhetorical manuals which taught how to write poetry and, notably, how to stereotype, to create images in the mind. To this end, we will examine how these manuals prescribed the use of epithets to sum up a person's or ethnic groups' essence. Moreover, these manuals encouraged the use of credible common proverbial images, and were themselves repositories of ethnic stereotypes circulating among clerics. Indeed, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's popular rhetorical manual *New Poetry* (1200), or Boncompagno da Signa's *Palma* (c. 1198) and *Ancient Rhetoric* (1215), treatises for the *ars dictaminis*, explicitly prescribe how to apply ethnic images. Students were thus not only instructed to stereotype, they were fed with plenty of examples of how to do so. Ethnic stereotypes in literature thus drew from common images and reaffirmed them, furthering an acceleration of stereotyping. Here we can see the influence education has in shaping perceptions of difference, then and now. Ethnic stereotypes in educational handbooks might be classified as institutionalized knowledge of common beliefs. As such, ethnic stereotypes were 'formalized'. In addition, in manuals such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *New Poetry*, a close relationship was evinced between territory and ethnic stereotype.

This chapter focuses on the prescription to employ ethnic proverbs as credible images. Indeed, *dits* or sayings were collected in vernacular repositories. Their incorporation in the poetry, sermons, romances, and letters of this period – with its desire for credibility – is a strong indication that such ethnic stereotypes were widespread and recognized among broad layers of the population in North-West Europe.

### **Moulding stereotyped characters**

In the twelfth century, the art of rhetoric swiftly became highly influential in verse and letter composition. Whereas in classical times the art of rhetoric was applied predominantly (excepting the precepts laid down in Horace's *Art of Poetry*) to the judicial, deliberative (in politics) or epideictic (rhetoric to praise or blame, in for example ceremonies), in the twelfth century, these oratorical rules and systems were supplanted to the arts of poetry and letter writing.<sup>13</sup> Descriptions of place such as the *locus amoenus* could thus be based upon classical judicial *argumenta a loco*, or on rules of invention for epideictic oratory. But instead of applying the precepts of description to judicial or

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12 There is a vast array of literature on the 'twelfth-century renaissance' and the flourishing of knowledge and literature. See for example Janet Martin, 'Classicism and Style in Latin Literature', in Robert L. Benson, Giles Constable, Carol D. Lanham (eds), *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge Mass. 1982) 537-568; see for further references Introduction note 3.

13 Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 193-194.

oratorical writing, description became an independent form of poetry, in order to praise (such as in panegyric or idealized topographical descriptions) or blame.<sup>14</sup>

To this end, in order to write verse as an exercise in the rules of rhetoric, twelfth-century clerics had new textbooks at their reach. Certainly, even before the appearance of these new manuals Cicero's *On Invention* and Horace's *Art of Poetry* had been used to instruct on the art of writing. Traditionally, pupils studying Latin had also been guided by grammar textbooks such as Donatus' fourth-century elementary *Ars minor* or Priscian's sixth-century *Institutiones grammaticae*. In reaction to the expansion of governmental institutions from the end of the eleventh century, rhetoric was however increasingly applied to letter writing, for which the rules were laid down in manuals of *ars dictandi*.<sup>15</sup> At the end of the twelfth century a number of fresh manuals on grammar also appeared, such as Alexander of Villedieu's *Doctrinale* (1199) and Évrard (or Eberhard) of Béthune's *Graecismus* (1212). And in the field of poetry, Matthew of Vendôme's *Art of Versification* (early 1170s), Gervase of Melkley's *Art of Versification* (late twelfth century) and Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *New Poetry* (1200) elaborately laid down new rules for verse composition. The works of Quintilian, Horace and Cicero, although studied in the previous centuries mainly in *florilegia*, were also especially influential in the twelfth century.<sup>16</sup> Partly as a result of this new and heightened attention to composition, ethnic characterizations now increasingly entered verse composition either praising and blaming, debating (in so-called *Streitgedichte*, battle poems) or satirizing peoples.<sup>17</sup>

In effect, handbooks of rhetoric instructed how to stereotype: to identify and describe persons and things according to type, enhancing them with *maneries*.<sup>18</sup> Such typing could follow highly normative schematizations and stretch to registers of speech. In the new textbooks of composition, the three classical styles of speech (*humilis*, *mediocris*, and *grandiloquus*), for example, were now applied to a classification along the lines of (literary) social order and profession.<sup>19</sup> For example, in the *Parisiana poetria* (c. 1240), John of Garland sets out that the grandiloquent style is befitting to the *miles dominans* (including both *curiales* and *civiles*), the mediocre style to the *agricola*, and the humble style to the *pastor otiosus*. These three styles went hand in hand with examples from military, agricultural and pastoral life, with their 'appropriate attributes' such as the sword, the

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14 See for example the descriptions of towns J.K. Hyde, 'Medieval Descriptions of Cities' in *Bulletin of The John Rylands Library* 48 (1965/1966), 308-340; Carl Joachim Classen, *Die Stadt im Spiegel der Descriptiones und Laudes urbium in der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur bis zum Ende des zwölften Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim 1980).

15 Martin, 'Classicism and Style', 538.

16 Martin Camargo, 'Rhetoric' in David L. Wagner (ed.), *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, 100. Martin, 'Classicism and Style', 538 remarks that Cicero and Horace remained influential throughout the Middle Ages.

17 For debate poetry see chapter 6.

18 Douglas Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose* (Turnhout 1991), 72. For the relation between typology and allegory, see Warren Ginsberg, *The Cast of Character: The Representation of Personality in Ancient and Medieval Literature* (Toronto 1983), 78-79 who argues that in medieval literature exemplary figures are increasingly personified, emphasizing the universal rather than the particular, 'losing sight of individuals in order to consider the moral and psychological categories to which they belonged'.

19 Arbusow, *Colores Rhetorici*, 27. The system was known as the *rota Vergilii* in the Middle Ages.

plough and the shepherd's staff, and suitable locations such as the fortress, field or pasture.<sup>20</sup> Other classifications could include for example aesthetical dichotomies, teaching how to depict the ugly (applied to descriptions of the 'morally inferior' Ethiopian) and the beautiful, personified by 'elegant' nobles.<sup>21</sup>

How these manuals taught to employ *ethnic stereotypes* will now be examined in further detail, as the application of these stereotypes in literary texts can illuminate the extent to which images of ethnic identity existed in the minds of twelfth-century writers and their audience. Examining how the manuals laid down the rules for stereotypical description also underlines the significant role education played in enhancing stereotypical thinking, as it still often does in elementary textbooks to this day. First, however, we shall discuss briefly the importance of images in rhetorical composition and how they resonated in the mind.

### **Painting mental pictures**

The purpose of the new manuals of rhetoric was essentially prescriptive. These manuals guided the student in his endeavours to invent poetry, to find images, to describe, with the ultimate goal of moral edification in search of 'truth'. In order to successfully invent and describe, however, a writer had to employ images which somehow found response in the minds of his audience. The trick was to find the right words or linguistic signifiers to create mental images of something's or somebody's essence. This could be achieved by recalling, remembering the essence of things in one's own mind, in an attempt to create new pictures in poetry or prose.<sup>22</sup>

To this end, the poet could employ ornaments, which played a pivotal role in catching one's attention and orientating cognitive processes.<sup>23</sup> Such ornaments, as Mary Carruthers put it, are 'elaborate punning riffs of memory' which 'do to a word what jazz does to a written musical phrase'.<sup>24</sup> However, in order to make meaning, rhetorical ornaments had (and have) to be in tune with the images in one's memory; otherwise they are empty signifiers.<sup>25</sup> In other words, images are only forceful if related to images already existent in one's memory. Memory needs images to remember; in memory ornaments can serve as 'mnemonic hooks'. At the same time, images are only forceful if related to images already existent in one's memory – it is a two-way street.<sup>26</sup> The more

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20 John of Garland, *Rota Vergiliana*, ed. Edmond Faral, *Les arts poetiques*, 87. See also Leonid Arbusow, *Colores rhetorici. Eine Auswahl rhetorischer Figuren und Gemeinplätze als Hilfsmittel für akademische Übungen an mittelalterlichen Texten*, edited by Helmut Peter (Göttingen, 1963), 15-16.

21 Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 55.

22 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 119.

23 Idem, 122. Jeay, *Commerce des mots*, 33 states that lists do not necessarily invite to search inner depths. However, as Carruthers has argued extensively, as instruments of meditation they did indeed offer 'food' to chew on.

24 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 159.

25 Idem, 117.

26 Idem, 144.

playful and surprising the images (*loci* or places), the more likely they will stick in one's mind.<sup>27</sup> In this regard, word (linguistic signifier) and image were viewed as equally important – the pictorial *mappae mundi* thus served the same function as verbal maps, as did Walter of Châtillon's verbal *ekphrasis* of the (imaginary) visual world map on Darius' tomb.

Turning to the manuals themselves, these indeed explicitly instructed to employ images which would strike a chord in one's mind. In order to make meaning, the tools with which to set a person or group in the appropriate scheme of things thus came in the form of befitting ornaments or attributes. This is clearly prescribed in Matthew of Vendôme's *Art of Versification*, written in the early 1170s as an introductory schoolbook.<sup>28</sup> For Matthew of Vendôme, the main purpose of poetry was description. To describe was to uncloak the essential characteristics of the subject: a person, thing or group, and to place it within its appropriate topical milieu. Uncloaking these essential characteristics was achieved by applying epithets, attributes (ornaments), summing up a person's or thing's essence.<sup>29</sup> It was through *descriptio*, topical invention of the circumstances of persons and things (using 'found' images), that a type was moulded and cast: 'Therefore, a description of a church shepherd is to be made in one way, of a general in another; of a girl in another, of an elderly woman, a matron, a concubine or a waiting-woman in other ways; that of a boy or young man in one way, of an elderly man in another; of a freedman in another, one in a limited state in another. Variations in other characteristics should be observed in descriptions: Horace calls these tones of the works.'<sup>30</sup>

It is possible to gain a clearer understanding of how these epithets, summing up the essence with which a thing is 'overflowing', could create – and reflect – mental images of ethnicity from the following example of a verse composed by Reginald of Canterbury, a monk at St. Augustine's in Canterbury, who probably originated from Faye-le-Vineuse in north-eastern Poitou. Circa 1100 he wrote an epic *vita* of the desert saint Malchus. This he sent, among other things, as a gift to the

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27 Idem, 131. As Carruthers writes, an 'arresting simile serves as an inventory marker, a heuristic for our recollection'.

28 Idem, 540.

29 'Matthew of Vendôme: Introductory Treatise on the Art of Poetry', transl. Ernest Gallo, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 118/1 (1974), 51-92, here at 55.

30 Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars versificatoria* 146, ed. Munari, 63, transl. Parr, 28: 'Igitur aliter ponenda est descriptio alicuius ecclesiastici pastoris, aliter imperatoris, aliter puella, aliter veterane, aliter matron, aliter concubine vel pedissece, aliter pueri vel adulescentuli, aliter veterani, aliter liberi, aliter conditionalis, et aliarum proprietatum variationes in descriptionibus debent assignari, que ab Oratio colores operum nuncupantur.' Cf. 'Matthew of Vendôme: Introductory Treatise', ed. Gallo, 67. For dates see Gallo's introduction, 51-52. Matthew of Vendôme is drawing directly upon Cicero's *De inventione* and Horace's *Ars poetica*, whom he quotes verbatim: 'It makes a great difference whether it is Davus or a hero who speaks; a mature old man, or one yet aglow with flowering youth; a high-ranking lady or a busy nurse; a wandering merchant, or the cultivator of a fertile field; a Colchan or an Assyrian; a son of Thebes or of Argos.' Horace, *Ars poetica* 114-118; Cicero, *De inventione* 146.



hagiographer Goscelin of Saint-Bertin (died c. 1100).<sup>31</sup> In the poem accompanying his gift, Reginald (who is also known for his distaste for English beer) sets out to extol the literary talents of his fellow monk, who is adept at all arts of verse, is in fact ‘filled with verse’.<sup>32</sup> To illustrate this Reginald breaks into a boundless enumeration of places, phenomena of the physical world, peoples, and the characteristic thing with which they abound. From around 1100, more and more of these kinds of lists appear amplifying an essential attribute of which a person or place is *overflowing*:<sup>33</sup>

As the sky is filled with stars, the Eastern Sea with blustery storms,  
 The forest with many kinds of leaves, the sun with rays, Rome with marble,  
 The Greek with books, the body with the fibres of life,  
 The Pindus with ice, the Alps with snow, the Indus with vermin,  
 Liguria with towns, Scythia with nations, the Etna with sparks,  
 The Thracian mountains with sheep, Cluny with monks,  
 April with flowers, old age with cold,  
 The Chaldeans with shellfish,<sup>34</sup> the Sabeans with gems and myrrh,<sup>35</sup>  
 The Aeolians with fish and streams, Egypt with olives,  
 Athens with the arts, Mycenae with fury and wrath,  
 Venus with temptation, the voice with air, night with darkness,  
 The Rodope<sup>36</sup> with laurel, Lebanon with pine trees, the Pactolus<sup>37</sup> with gold,  
 Arabia with rocks and stones, the Turks with arrows,  
 The Phoenicians with pepper, the Nile with cranes, Cantabria with hedgehogs(?),  
 The English with herds, the Riphean summit with wind,  
 The Senones with wine, Latium with nuts, Crete with caraway seed,

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31 F. Liebermann, ‘Reginald von Canterbury’, in *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde* 13 (1888), 518-556, at 522 and 526.

32 Idem, ‘Gozelino monacho suo suus, amico amicus Reginaldus’, poem no. xv, 542: ‘Carminis omne genus scit enim, sic carmine plenus’.

33 Especially in England, it was popular to sketch a laudatory overview of regions, small and large, and their fine commodities, natural resources or praiseworthy character. For example, Henry of Huntingdon, archdeacon of Lincoln, inserted an excerpt of a poem into the first book of his *Historia Anglorum* 1 6, ed. and transl. Greenway 20-21 (the first version completed after October 1131), which Diana Greenway has suggested comes from a poem in hexameters in praise of Britain. As usual, there is local pride, here in the charm of the people of Lincoln: ‘To this witness London rich in ships, Winchester in wine, / Hereford in flocks, Worcester in the fruits of the earth; / Bath famed for pools, Salisbury for wild game, Canterbury for fish, / York for woodlands, Exeter for metals; / Norwich near to the Danes, Chester for the Irish, / Chichester to the Gauls, Durham to the Norwegians. / There witness also Lincoln’s people boundless in beauty, Ely beautiful in its site, Rochester in its appearance.’

34 The murex was used to make purple dye.

35 The people of Sheba (Arabia) were famous for their wealth, frankincense and myrrh in ancient times. See for example Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia* II 4, 198-199, from Orosius, *Historiae adversum paganos* I, 2, 21. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* IX 2, 14, who quotes Virgil, *Georgica* 2, 117, and *De imagine mundi* I 16, from *Etymologiae* XIV 3, 15.

36 A mountain in present-day Bulgaria.

37 A river in present-day Turkey, from which gold was mined in ancient times.

Famous Ephesus with cinnamon, Gascony with apples,  
 Flanders with knights, Anjou with heroes,  
 As birds abound with feathers, the serpent with poison, Scotland with thorny bushes.  
 The pig with bristles, snow with cold, Orcus with shadows of the dead,  
 And men with various woes, the Scriptures with figures...<sup>38</sup>

To a degree, these exhaustive lists were drawn from classic schematization.<sup>39</sup> Possibly imitating a passage from the 'Foreign Lands Scheme' in Virgil's *Georgics*, the earliest examples concerning regions mainly list their natural resources.<sup>40</sup> By picturing the geographic locations and their essential characteristics, the reader or listener could thus traverse the corners of the earth, its heights, its depths, its mountains, towns, regions and cloisters and consider their essence. Thus, although the catalogue predominantly describes the produce of regions and peoples from ancient antiquity, Reginald eventually turns his attention to territories closer to home: 'Cordoba with sapphires, Tuscany with pigs, The Britons with butter...'<sup>41</sup> The purpose was essentially to picture these places in one's mind, assisted by evocative epithets of the essence. We can see the same 'stylistic hyperactivity', as Winthrop Wetherbee put it, is displayed in the *Architrenius* by John of Hauville, master in the cathedral school of Rouen, dedicated to the ascending archbishop of Rouen, Walter of Coutances, in 1184. In this satirical narrative, the 'Arch-weeper' navigates the world, only to find that it, the Church, court and schools are overflowing with vice. Again, John of Hauville brings forth

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38 F. Liebermann (ed.), 'Raginald von Canterbury', in *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde* 13 (1888), 518-556, here at 542-544, no. xv, 'Gozelino monacho suo suus, amico amicus Raginaldus': 'Ut polus est stellis, Euro mare flante procellis, / Et nemus omne coma, radiis sol, marmore Roma, / Gens ut Greca libris, animantium corpora fibris, / Et glacie Pindus, Alpes nive, vermibus Indus, / Et Ligures villis, Scitha plebibus, Aethna favillis, / Ut montana Thracum gregibus, monachis Cluniacum, / Floribus Aprilis, aetas algore senilis, / Murice Chaldei, gemmis et thure Sabei, / Piscibus et rivis Eoles, Egyptus olivis, / Artibus Athenae, furiis iraque Micenae, / Ut Venus illecebris, vox aere, noxque tenebris, / Ut Rodope lauro, Libanus pice, Pactolus auro, / Rupibus et petris Arabes, Turcique pharetris, / Phenices pipere, Nilus grue, Cantaber here, / Anglus ut armentis, Riphea cacumina ventis, / Ut Senones vino, Latium nuce, Creta cimino, / Clara cinamomis, Ephesus, Guasconia pomis, / Milite Flandrenses, heroibus Andegavenses, / Sicut aves plumis, draco viru, Scotia dumis, / Ut setis porcus, nix frigore, manibus Orcus, / Et variis curis homines, scriptura figuris...'

39 Ernst Curtius mentions the 'ideal mixed forest' as a subspecies of the catalogue; in the *Metamorphoses*, for instance, Ovid names twenty-six tree species with their epithets; cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* x 90-106; Curtius, *European Literature*, 190-195. In his *Daretis Phrygii Ilias* I 516-519, composed in 1190, Joseph of Exeter likewise assembles a forest not far away across the fields from Troy, where ten species of trees grow: 'prophetic laurel, pine that loves to roam, pacific olive, cornet bane of beasts, bold ash, the friendly elm, and never-aging, full of song – the box'. The translation is by A.G. Rigg, and has been published on the website of the Center of Medieval Studies, Toronto, in 2005. A later example is Geoffrey Chaucer's catalogue of species of trees and birds in the *Parlement of Foules*; cf. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules*, 176-178 and 344-346; quoted by Gallo, 'Matthew of Vendôme: Introductory Treatise', 55-56.

40 See Virgil's *Georgica* I 56-59 and II 114-135. See L.P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Virgil: A Critical Survey* (Norman 1997), 87.

41 Liebermann (ed.), 'Raginald von Canterbury' (see above note 37): 'Corduba saphiro, sue Tuscia, Brito butiro...'

an endless list similar to Reginald of Canterbury's, enumerating the regions and the natural resources which they are teeming with.<sup>42</sup>

Picturing the world's plenitude was thus embellished with things and their essential characteristics. The redundant use of an abundance of epithets – *copia* – was, according to Walter Ong, typical of oral societies.<sup>43</sup> We shall now examine in more detail how these manuals, which were mainly used by students, instructed to apply images of ethnic groups. For, as such, ethnic stereotypes served as ornaments, applied in the process of 'unclinking the essence' of the ethnic group. From the application of these ornaments we can infer two conclusions. First, that these ethnic images were accepted commonplaces in their day; otherwise, they would not strike a chord as mental pictures. Secondly, that these manuals and poems further entrenched these ethnic stereotypes in the minds of their audiences, as they entered into the pockets of memory of those reading or listening to these verses. Thinking about a place, or a people, using topical images, might thus lead one to think about the essence of a place or people.

### **Ethnic images as arguments**

How was a poet successfully to describe a person in relation to his ethnicity? In medieval poetry, to describe meant 'to reveal the essential characteristics, the properties of the subject'.<sup>44</sup> In order to appropriately describe a person, a poet should attach attributes as the starting point for elaborate composition. Matthew of Vendôme patiently explains how to do so in his *Art of Versification*: 'However, everyone should be designated by that epithet which is strongest in him and for which he is best known.'<sup>45</sup>

To this end, in order to invent (or find) the appropriate attributes, a person could be given eleven *argumenta*, which were to be observed from the *topoi*, general commonplaces (*loci*) of condition, age, office, sex, and place.<sup>46</sup> Matthew of Vendôme calls these eleven arguments 'characteristics', 'epithets' or 'personal attributes': name, nature, way of life, fortune, acquired disposition, pursuit, feeling, deliberation, accident, deeds, speeches.<sup>47</sup> These epithets 'sum up the essence of the object being observed'.<sup>48</sup> The second of these attributes, arguments from *nature*, are further divided into

42 John of Hauville, *Architrenius* VII 6 vs. 206-219, ed. and transl. Winthrop Wetherbee, 182-185: 'Frigoribus bruma, nitro Pharos, India nardo, / Cameleonte Friges, basiliscis Affrica, Nilus / Ypotamis, Ganges hebenis, sturionibus Helle, / Tartara tormentis, Styx nocte, Megera venenis, / Sedicione furor, gemitu dolor, ira tumult, / Fulmina terrore, Mars ictibus, alea rixis, / Garrulitate merum, Venus igne, Cupido sagittis, / Ingluvies luxu, gula sorde, bitumine venter, / Curia fabellis, fora litibus, histrio nugis, / Pelex blandiciis, lupa questu, lena susurris, / Fastu nupta, socrus odio, livore noverca, / Sors dubiis, Fortuna dolo, velamine Fatum, / Spe miser, oppositio felix, utroque Iohannes.'

43 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 40-41.

44 Gallo, 'Matthew of Vendôme: Introductory Treatise', 53.

45 Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars versificatoria*, I 44, ed. Munari 62, transl. Parr, 28: 'Debet autem quelibet persona ab illo intitulari epytheto quod in ea pre ceteris dominatur et a quo maiorem fame sortitur evidentiam.'

46 Idem, 141, ed. Munari, 60.

47 Idem, I 75 and 77, ed. Munari, 95-96.

48 Gallo, 'Matthew of Vendôme: Introductory Treatise', 55.

physical, spiritual, and external attributes: *natio, patria*,<sup>49</sup> age, kindred, and sex. In the first century AD, Quintilian had already identified similar arguments in his *Institutio oratoria*, ‘such are birth, for persons are generally regarded as having some resemblance to their parents and ancestors’. This resemblance could sometimes, according to Quintilian, lead to disgraceful or honourable behaviour. Another important argument was their ethnic identity, as peoples ‘have their own characters, and the same action is not equally probable in a barbarian, a Roman and a Greek; country, because in the same way, the laws, institutions, and opinions of societies differ’.<sup>50</sup>

Successful description depended on finding the right attributes, ornaments which created images in the mind. In antiquity, these images might be based on climate theory. However, in the twelfth century this theory had not yet entered into the prescriptions of poetic manuals. Also, whereas Quintilian refers to parental transmission of characteristics, within the manuals of rhetoric of this period examples of external attributes such as *patria* are not based upon humoral theory. Instead, these poetic manuals turned to proverbs. Thus, Matthew of Vendôme first elucidates the commonplace of a *natio* with a classic example, ‘as in Virgil: *I fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts*’, implying their treachery.<sup>51</sup> In the two following examples from respectively *natio* and *patria*, he further demonstrates the moral depravities of two peoples: ‘The people of Gabii grow sour with the vinegar of wickedness;<sup>52</sup> the bitter decay of the mind glides down into vice’, and: ‘Rome thirsts for gold, loves those who give; without the dative, Rome refuses to favour the accusative’.<sup>53</sup> The right attributes, in this case, were drawn from proverbial sayings. The topicality of such sayings is illustrated by the fact that complaints against Rome were highly popular in contemporary parody and satire, first evolving in the eleventh century as invective against the practice of simony and the power of money at the Roman curia, to which the world’s riches flowed.<sup>54</sup> Matthew of Vendôme’s gab about Rome’s hypocritical greed would thus be easily understood by Latin students. In the early part of the twelfth century, an anonymous poet similarly enumerated the natural resources of the world’s regions, ranging from east to west, in the anti-Roman invective ‘The Cunning People of Rome’. The poem was written by a cleric possibly from Lotharingia or Gallia, and is representative

49 Nation here is defined by Matthew of Vendôme as determined by a man’s language, whereas *patria* is his place of origin. He is possibly alluding to Isidore’s *Etymologiae* IX 1, 1 and 1, 14.

50 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* v 10, 24-26, ed. and transl. Donald A. Russell (5 volumes, Cambridge Mass. 2001), vol 2, 376-377: ‘nam et gentibus proprii mores sunt nec idem in barbaro, Romano, Graeco probabile est; patria, quia similiter etiam civitatum leges instituta opiniones habent differentiam’.

51 Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars versificatoria* I 82, ed. Munari, 97: ‘ut apud Virgilium: “timeo Danaos et dona ferentes”’. He is quoting here the proverbial line from Virgil’s *Aeneid* II 49. Bautier, ‘Peuples, provinces’, 5 notes that Matthew of Vendôme also used an ancient stereotype here as an example in his textbook. Odo of Deuil applied this ancient prejudice to Byzantium during the Second Crusade; cf. Odo of Deuil, *De projectione Ludovici VII in orientem* IV, ed. and transl. Berry, 66-67.

52 The people of Gabii refers to an ancient city of Latium.

53 Matthew of Vendôme, I 82, ed. Munari, 98-99: ‘A natione sic: / Nequitia populus Gabiensis acescit, aceti / Defluit in vitium mentis amara lues; / a patria sic: / Aurum, Roma sitit, dantes amat, absque dativo, / Accusativis Roma favere negat.’

54 Walther, *Proverbia sententiaeque Latinitatis* 1831; Benzinger, *Invectiva in Romam*, 74-76; Paul Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1963), 51-52.

of anti-Roman satire mocking the curia's cupidity.<sup>55</sup> Moving from east to west, Rome hankers after the riches of the world. Rome is the central point to which the territories render their riches. The Church, whose institutions are becoming more powerful, thus becomes a benchmark to which the diversity of the regions, and their relative wealth, relates:

Worships the gold of Arabia,  
 The ornate robes of Greece,  
 The ivory and jewels of India,  
 The delights of France,  
 The silver and gold of England,  
 The milk and butter of Flanders,  
 The horse and mare mules of Burgundy –  
 Rome devours them all completely,  
 With no worthiness left at all.<sup>56</sup>

By parodying Rome's greed through reference to the dative (the receiver, Rome) and the accusative (the giver), Matthew of Vendôme's verse manual is thus offering a simple example easily recognizable and remembered by pupils because of its satirical slant; in the same breath, he throws in a bit of grammar for good measure. At the same time, the verse was perhaps a moral admonition to the pupils who were being schooled within the Church: avoid simony and greed.

### Striking a chord with proverbs

One of the main precepts of the art of rhetoric was to ensure that images stuck in the mind of the audience. In order not to fall on deaf ears, the images in composition needed to strike a chord, to fall onto fertile ground in the mind of the listener. As said, words needed to bear significance; otherwise they remained empty signifiers and the mind barren. In addition, figures of speech such as metonymy, especially when using unlikely similarities, could arouse emotions in the mind (the technique of *pathos*), making them all the more persuasive. Also, the texts had to appeal to the guiding beliefs and ideas of the audience (*ethos*). In this light, one of the precepts was to credibly describe persons or places in their proper setting by using proverbs describing their essence. In antiquity, in for example criminal trials, a speaker could thus try to persuade the court by appealing

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55 Benzinger, *Invectiva in Romam*, esp. chapter 6, 111-113; John A. Yunck, *The Lineage of Lady Mead. The Development of Medieval Venality Satire* (Notre Dame, 1963), esp. 80-81; Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 25-68.

56 'Gens Romanorum subdola antiqua colit hydola', in *Libelli de lite imperatorum et pontificum saeculis xi et xii conscripti*, ed. H. Boehmer (Hannover 1897) III, 705-706, vs. 6-14: 'Aurum colens Arabiae, / Ornatas vestes Graeciae, / Ebur cum gemmis Indiae, / Delitiosa Franciae / Argentum, aurum Angliae, / Lac et butirum Flandriae, / Mulos, mulas Burgundiae, / Roma deglutit penitus, / Digna perire funditus.' Cf. F. Mone, *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit* 8 (1839), 597; Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 52.

to ‘common knowledge’ regarding character types. Quintilian clarifies this use of reference to ‘character types’ thus: ‘Is it credible that a father has been killed by his son, or that he committed incest with his daughter? Or again (to take the opposite line), is poisoning credible in a stepmother, or adultery in a debauchee? Again, is a crime committed in public credible, or a forgery done for a small sum of money? Each of these offences has its particular character, as it were – as a rule, of course, not invariably, or these things would be certainties and not Arguments.’<sup>57</sup> Through reference to prejudiced beliefs about people’s character types in regards to their gender or social position, an advocate could thus hope to cast doubt or persuade his audience of the likeliness that his client would have acted in a certain manner.

According to Quintilian, some acts were induced by someone’s station in life or occupation. In addition, a speaker must relate to a person’s natural disposition, ‘because avarice, irascibility, mercifulness, cruelty, severity, and the like often enhance or detract from credibility’.<sup>58</sup> This ‘general knowledge’ of a person’s character was thus based on the *argumenta* drawn from one of the eleven categories such as nature, age, office or sex. However, in the twelfth century in order to pick convincing attributes, a writer was specifically encouraged to draw upon proverbial knowledge. Matthew of Vendôme himself instructs that ‘one ought to set down first a general proverb, that is, a general idea (...) to which credence is customarily given, common opinion renders assent, and by which the integrity of uncorrupted truth is undisturbed.’<sup>59</sup>

Matthew of Vendôme’s illustration of Rome’s greed would indeed have been easily understood by twelfth-century Latin student. As a result of this encouragement to elucidate someone’s character by means of proverbs, literary composition thus actively tapped into ‘vulgar’ common knowledge. The proverb, expressing ‘a universal character’ and thus memorized in the minds of the community, could be smoothly transformed and encapsulated in accompanying epithets.<sup>60</sup> As such, lists contributed to the vulgarization of knowledge but also fed on popular ‘knowledge’, or better-said stereotypical prejudice of ethnic groups. Below, we will examine how clerics could amass popular proverbs for their compositions. As it turns out, they did not have to collect random utterings snatched from conversation; clerics, especially preachers, were in fact actively tapping into common sayings which were collected in manuscripts from the twelfth century.

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57 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* v 10, 19, ed. and transl. Russell, 374-375: “An credible sit a filio patrem occisum, incestum cum filia commissum”, et contra veneficium in noverca, adulterium in luxurioso: illa quoque, “an scelus palam factum”, “an falsum propter exiguam summam”, quia suos quidque horum velut mores habet, plerumque tamen, non semper: aliquid indubitata essent, non argumenta.’

58 Idem, v 10, 27, ed. and transl. Russell, 378-379: ‘etenim avaritia iracundia misericordia crudelitas severitas aliaque his similia adferunt fidem frequenter aut detrahunt’.

59 Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars versificatoria* I 16, transl. Parr, 22: ‘premittendum est generale proverbium, id est communis sententia (...) cui consuetudo fidem attribuit, opinio communis assensum accommodate, incorrupte veritatis integritas adquiescit’; cf. Wendy E. Pfeffer, *Proverbs in Medieval Occitan Literature*, (Gainesville 1997), 10 for similar references.

60 Elisabeth Schulze-Busacker, *Proverbes et expressions proverbiales dans la littérature narrative du Moyen Âge Français* (Geneva and Paris 1985), 19-20; Bautier, ‘Peuples, provinces’, 1-2.

### Collections of proverbs

The earliest known Old French collection is the *Proverbes au villain*, compiled in Flanders between 1174 and 1190, but earlier Latin examples are the *Proverbia Magistri Serlonis* or Egbert of Liège's eleventh-century *Fecunda ratis*, an educational textbook containing proverbial wisdom. The twelfth-century manuscript compilations included proverbs and moral admonitions about the behaviour of men or normative and practical rules. As Anne-Marie Bautier remarked, such compilations probably aided preachers when compiling sermons.<sup>61</sup> They might also have been consulted by clerics writing Latin verse (who often also wrote sermons) – as handbooks of rhetoric actively encouraged to use them, especially in the *exordium* or conclusion. These sayings, instead of being transmitted in Latin texts accessible only to the literate elite, had been passed down through oral transmission and repetition, often from generation to generation, and memorized in the collective mind, thus becoming collective cultural 'knowledge'. Proverbs were adopted collectively across broad sections of the population, reflecting general opinion, and not simply that of the literate elite.<sup>62</sup>

As Günther Blaicher observed, there is hardly a substantial collection of proverbs from early modernity which does not include many examples of ethnic stereotypes. It is difficult to discriminate between vernacular and Latin proverbial sayings, as they were often translated from one language into another.<sup>63</sup> When examining such collections, a distinction should be made between proverbs which teach a lesson, laying claim to absolute validity, and more general sayings, or *dictons*, including the lists of peoples and their epithets.<sup>64</sup>

An early Old French example of a collection of proverbs is known under the title the 'Dit de l'Apostole', and is contained in a thirteenth-century manuscript. This compilation is replete with lists characterizing peoples, animals, professions and regions of France, including types of wines and cheeses, such as *fromage de Brie*.<sup>65</sup> The fact that this list is incorporated in a corpus of other *dictons*, indicates that it is not a random collection jotted down. The fifth list runs as follows:

The wisest of men live in Lombardy.

The wisest traders in Tuscany.

The most ingenious in the world are the Saracens.

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61 Bautier, 'Peuples, provinces', 1.

62 Idem, 2; Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 34.

63 Günther Blaicher, *Merry England: Zur Bedeutung und Funktion eines englischen Autostereotyps* (Tübingen, 2000), 17.

64 I will not discuss the various definitions of the proverb. For this discussion, see James Woodrow Hassell, *Middle French Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases* (1982), 4-9 (following Susanne Schmarje); Pfeffer, *Proverbs in Medieval Occitan Literature*, 1-11; Schulze-Busacker, *Proverbes et expressions*, 19. Grace Frank, 'Proverbs in Medieval Literature', in *Modern Language Notes* 58/7 (1943), 508-515, here at 513-514 argues that the chansons de geste and dit could create ready-made axioms.

65 'Proverbes et dictons populaires', printed in Jean-Henri-Romain Prompsault, *Discours sur les publications littéraires du moyen-âge* (Paris 1835), 114-140, from two manuscripts, formerly 1830 (now Paris BN 19152) and 7281.

The most treacherous in Hungary.

The greatest traitors live in Greece.

The most slavish in Slavonia.

The most furious are in Germany.

The most frank live in France.

The most stupid live in Brittany.

The most inquisitive are the Normans. Where do you come from, what do you want, where are you going?<sup>66</sup>

The handsomest women live in Flanders.

The handsomest men in Germany.

The tallest are the Danes.

The greatest drinkers the English.

The greatest vagrants are the Scots.

The most savage are the Irish.

The most fickle are the Welsh...<sup>67</sup>

The list continues with an enumeration of professions: the best lancers are in Navarra; the best leapers in Poitou; the best archers live in Anjou; the best preachers in Spain; the best jugglers in Gascony; the most courteous people in Provence; the most blasphemous in Burgundy ('and I renounce God if I'm lying', the manuscript says); the best dancers in Lorraine; the greatest turnip eaters in the Auvergne.<sup>68</sup> The collection continues with lists of types of clothing in regions; minerals

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66 Cf. Diodorus Siculus, VI 9 and Caesar, *De bello gallico* IV 5, who said the same of the Gauls.

67 'Proverbes et dictons populaires', 122-123: 'Li plus sage homme sont en Lombardie. / Li plus sage marcheant sont en Tosquanne. / Li plus engigneur en Sarrazienesme. / Li plus trahitre en Hongrie. / Li plus traiteur sont en Gresce. / Li plus serf sont en Esclavonie. / Li plus ireux sont en Alemaigne. / Li plus apert home en France. / Li plus sot en Bretaingne. / Li plus enquerant en Normandie. Ou aliax? Que queriax? Dont veniax? / Li plus belles femes sont en Flandres. / Li plus bel home en Alemaigne. / Li plus grant en Danemarche. / Li mieldre buveor en Engleterre. / Li plus truant en Escoce. / Li plus sauvage sont en Irlande. / Li plus ligier en Gales. / Li meilleur lanceor on Navarre. / Li meilleur sailleor en Poitou. / Li meilleur archier en Anjou. / Li meilleur préigator sont en Espaingne. / Li mieldre jugleor sont en Gascoigne. / Li plus courtois en Provence. / Li plus renoié en Bourgogne. En reni Dieu, si ne di voir. / Li meilleur danseur sont en Loheraine, / Li meilleur mangeur de rabes en Auvergne. / Li plus roignoz en Limozin. / Chevalier de Champagne. / Escuier de Borgogne. / Serjant de Hennaut. / Champion de Eu. / Vilain de Beauoisin. / Usurier de Cahorse. / Mires de Salernes.' For the fickle character of the Irish and Welsh, cf. Lydon, 'Nation and Race', 104.

68 It continues to mention the knights of Champagne; squires of Burgundy; foot-soldiers of Hainault; champions of Eu, villains of Beauvoisis; usurers of Cahors; doctors of Salerno. In manuscripts containing the 'Riote du monde', the world is surveyed left and right, in like manner to the collection of proverbs in the 'Dit de d'Apostoilé'. Cf. J. Ulrich, 'Neue Versionen der Riote du Monde', in *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 24 (1900), 112-120, here at 115: 'Mais encores me fait il pis, / Car on parle sur les païs, / Je voys a dextre et a senestre, / Je ne sçay de quel païs estre. / S'il est François, malicieux; / S'il est Picart, trop enuyeux; / S'il est ort, c'est ung Alement, / Et grant buveur, s'il est Norment, / Et jureur, s'il est Bourguignon, / Et trop testu, s'il est Breton. / Fort a cognoistre; c'est Anglois; / S'il est Escot, trop felonnois. / S'il est Provençal, enquereur; / S'il est Lombart, il joue aux dez. / S'il est Romain, trop



and metals; vegetables and fruits; animals; fish; patisseries. Similar lists of shires or towns, and their characteristics were also compiled in Middle English, such as the probably mid-thirteenth century ‘The Baronage of London’ (inserted as Appendix X as an example), and the ‘Hervordschir, shild and sper’.<sup>69</sup>

The stimulus to employ proverbs in verse composition offers insight into contemporary opinions about ethnic groups. The similarities between the sayings above and stereotypes in contemporary Latin verse are striking: that the Bretons are stupid, the Germans furious, the English drunkards are highly topical images.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, Latin verse frequently incorporated them. For example, an anthology of (fragments of) Latin verse mainly by Hildebert of Le Mans and Marbod of Rennes, compiled around 1175-1180 in the chapter of St. Gatiens in Tours, contains the saying: ‘It is not surprising if a Breton eats butter.’<sup>71</sup> A longer verse, erroneously attached to the end of a verse by Marbod of Rennes, reads:

Just as it is not surprising that no one escapes death,  
 So it is not surprising that a Breton eats butter,  
 That the Normans are satiated with beer,  
 That the people of Poitou greatly fear our swords.<sup>72</sup>

Just as in Reginald of Canterbury’s verse about Goscelin’s poetical talents, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the Bretons are ridiculed for their appetite for butter. Now it becomes clear that the poet is incorporating *proverbial* knowledge. Dairy products such as milk and cheese were associated particularly with the northern regions of the Low Countries, Flanders, and Brittany, and although sometimes viewed as fattening and a token of wealth, they were generally regarded as culturally inferior to olive oil and wine, and even compared to eating excrement in a proverb about the

couvoiteux; / C’est Espaignot, luxurieux. / En pour ce je me passe a tant, / Que je [ne][ vous voise ennuyant.’

69 Wright and Halliwell, *Reliquiae Antiquae* vol. 1, 269-270; vol. 2, 41-42.

70 See further chapters 7-9.

71 Wilmart, ‘Le florilège de Saint-Gatien’, 35: ‘Hoc non est mirum, si mandit Brito butyrum.’ Walther, ‘Scherz’, no. 88.

72 Printed in H. Hagen, *Carmina Medii Aevi maximam partem inedita* (Bern 1877), 168-9: ‘Sic non est mirum, quod quisque moritur, / Ut non est mirum, si mandit Britto butyrum / Quod Normannigenae potu satiantur avenae, / Quod nostros enses formidant Pictavienses.’ Walther, ‘Scherz’, no. 158. For Norman beer drinking see further the epigram in Paul Lehmann, ‘Eine Sammlung mittellateinischer Gedichte aus dem Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts’, in *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 30 (1935), 20-58, here at 45: ‘Potum Normannis et in hoc et omnibus annis / prebebit culmus, non baiula palmitis ulmus.’ (In each and every year the stalk gives the Normans to drink, the bearing vine not for pilgrims). This saying is in a twelfth/thirteenth-century manuscript Copenhagen Univ.-Bibl. MS. Fabr. 81 f. 75v. Cf. Baudri of Dol, *Carmina* 202 vs. 20-21: ‘Ergo liquet: culmus non baiula palmitis huius / Pocula Normannis producat in omnibus annis’ and the epigram ‘Vinum Normannis et in hoc et in omnibus annis / ferre solet culmus, non subdita uitibus ulmus’, ed. Tilliette, vol. 2, 136. Cf. Carsten Wollin, ‘Kein Wein für die Normannen’. Marginalien zu Baudri de Bourgeuils carm. 202’, in *Sacris Erudiri* 44 (2005), 275-283, in a verse discussion between Baudri and William of Lisieux on wine and beer. See further chapter 7 for the wine-beer debate.

Frisians.<sup>73</sup> The Normans, besides being famed for their excessive bragging, greed and cruelty, were sometimes portrayed as beer drinkers (although this was usually especially associated with the English). Another example concerns the acclaimed chivalric valour of French knights and learning of the clerics. The proverb ‘The French are used to victory without bringing harm’, breathes the values of chivalrous warfare.<sup>74</sup> Many verses also acclaim its civilization, as in Walter of Châtillon’s *Alexandreis*, where the learning of the French is extolled. The fact that such lines circulated separately might however offer insight in the extent to which these images were acknowledged. Departing from the characterizations in the earlier monastic lists, these proverbial images are sometimes derisory and related to topical values and cultural customs such as eating and drinking habits.

Some of the verses containing these proverbs still follow the traditional religious moralizing axis from east to west, such as Walter of Châtillon’s *Alexandreis*, the poem ‘Gens subdola’ or the verse in Bower’s fourteenth-century continuation of John Fordun’s *Scotichronicon*, which mentions that ‘a certain [poet] reflecting on the particular product of each natural region which possesses an outstanding or supreme abundance of riches, thus describes the actual regions saying:

“Gold enriches the Chaldeans, incense the Sabean,  
 Silver the Assyrians, corn the kingdoms of Africa.  
 Ivory is the wealth of the Indians, milk of Flanders, wine of France.  
 England is swimming in beer, Scotland in fish.”

However, the stereotypes are now clearly topical, as indeed more contemporary stereotypes creep into the later ethical lists. Moreover, in many of these lists the role of peoples on the east-west axis is abandoned. For example, in the early lists variants appear of the following saying: ‘The Greek are wise before the deed, the French during, Romans and Jews afterwards’.<sup>75</sup> In a fourteenth-century

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73 ‘Infelix Friso gaudebat stercore viso. / Et non est mirum, quia credidit esse butirum.’ Walther, ‘Scherz’, no. 96. In no. 187 is an example of the Saxons eating butter; possibly referring to Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis* XXVIII 35, transl. 93: ‘From milk is also made butter, among barbarian tribes accounted the choicest food, one that distinguishes the rich from the lower orders.’

74 See a gloss on Évrard of Béthune’s *Graecismus*, in a thirteenth-century manuscript, BN Paris Latin 15133: ‘Armis, militia, rebus, probitate, Sophia / Francia munitur, nec eidem par reperitur.’ (With weapons, warfare, goods, probity, wisdom France is fortified, its equal will never be met.) In B. Hauréau, *Notices et Extraits de quelques manuscrits Latins de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, 6 volumes (Paris 1890-1893), vol. 4, 283; Walther, ‘Scherz’, no. 17. In another manuscript containing the *Graecismus*, Bibliothèque Nationale Latin 18522 f. 9, printed in Hauréau, *Notices et Extraits* (1893), vol. 6, 115-125, here at 117, the verse ‘Anglia, Flandria flent quia Francia, nescia fraudis, / Continet haec tria: praemia, praedia, praelia laudis’; in Walther, ‘Scherz’, no. 10a from the fifteenth-century manuscript Rome Vat. Burgh 200 f. 23, which is more comprehensible: Anglia, Flandria flat (...) pretia laudis’. (England, Flanders puff as France, without fraud, enjoys three things: privileges, land and the rewards of fame.) Bautiers, ‘Peuples, provinces’, 9.

75 *Chronica minora*, ed. Mommsen, 390: ‘Grecus ante causam sapientem Francus in causa. Romanus et Judeus post causa. Tullius Marcus dixit.’

manuscript from Pommersfelden, this has changed into ‘the French are wise during the action, Flanders afterwards, Lombardy beforehand’.<sup>76</sup>

We might thus conclude that the Latin students composing such verse took their material for the overview of ethnic groups and their character traits mainly from a tombola of proverbs and sayings, to be amplified or adapted to one’s will. We might examine, therefore, how the proverbial characterizations – embedded in an oral tradition – vary in the manuscripts, for there is every appearance that the texts were adapted in accordance with the ethnic proclivities of the scribe.

This becomes abundantly clear from four manuscripts, the fourteenth-century Sterzinger Miscellaneen-Handschrift; the Berlin manuscript; a manuscript from the monastery of Lubiąż in Poland and that from Munich.<sup>77</sup> Although the inconsistencies are great, these collections of sayings are clearly related. According to the Berlin manuscript, for instance, Swabia breaks its promises at sniff of a reward / It does not speak of disgrace, for it is noble and proud.’ The Sterzinger manuscript, however, reads ‘Swabia is proud, and, after devouring a reward, runs off. / It berates disgrace, as if it were of noble character.’ Finally, a fifteenth-century Breslauer manuscript notes that ‘Swabia breaks its promises at a sniff of a reward, / It does not give indiscreetly as it is not a rich country.’<sup>78</sup> According to all three sayings, Swabia does not keep its word – such an important trait in a world of fealty. Notable however, is the interpretation of its infidelity: according to the Sterzinger manuscript Swabia is hypocrite; the Berlin manuscript speaks of its noble and proud character, whereas the Breslauer mentions its frugality and poverty.

Just how pivotal these collections are in the development of verse composition stereotyping peoples is evident from the priamel, which became especially popular in the fifteenth century. The priamel is an epigrammatic poetic form which consists of two parts: the ‘foil’ and the ‘climax’. In the foil, seemingly unconnected individual examples are listed one after another; the climax brings these together under a common, often moral, umbrella, expressing the subject of the verse. Numerous examples were eventually produced in Germany and Poland in the fifteenth century, listing the vices of nations:

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76 Walther, *Initia*, no. 10306; quoted in Bautier, ‘Peuples, provinces’, 4.

77 Cf. Walther, ‘Scherz’, 165. The possibly earliest version, from the thirteenth century, is printed by Thomas Haye, ‘Deutschland und die deutschen Lande im spiegel einer lateinischen Spruchsammlung’, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 131/2 (2009), 308-317, from the Vatican codex Borgh. 200. Cf. Sterzinger Miscellaneen-Handschrift f. 28a (fourteenth century) is printed in Ignaz V. Zingerle, *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften Wien, Phil.-Hist. Klasse* 54 (1867), 293-340, here at 317-318; for the Berlin Lat. Fol. 49 manuscript: W. Wattenbach, ‘Aus einer Humanistenhandschrift’, in *Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 8 (1843), 823; J. Werner, *Beiträge zur Kunde der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters aus Handschriften* (1905), 195, refers to MS. Zürich C. 101/467 (fifteenth century) (provenance Sankt Gallen 947, p. 89); W. Wattenbach, *Monumenta Lubensia* (Breslau 1861), 33-34; F. Mone, ‘Städte und Völkerspigel’, in *Anzeiger für Kunde der Teutschen Vorzeit* 7 (1838), 507-508, for Husemann’s Codex lat. Mon. 10751; R. Peiper, ‘Europäischer Völkerspigel’, in *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit* 21 (1874), 102-106; see als Prague, Metropolitan Library 1641 f. 171v. of the fifteenth century.

78 ‘Suevia promissa percepto munere frangit; / Vitat turpe loqui, quia nobilis atque superba.’

Piety in Italy,  
 Truth in Hungary,  
 Humility in Austria,  
 Poverty in Venice,  
 Beautiful women in Ethiopia,  
 Devoutness in Bohemia,  
 Felicity in Poland –  
 All these things are worthless.<sup>79</sup>

These listings are highly reminiscent of the enumerations in the proverbial collections; in fact in a fourteenth-century manuscript (Arundel MS 220 f. 303), there is a priamel which draws directly from the ‘Dit de l’Apostoile’ collection, ending with ‘the pride of the Templars, / the vanity of the Knights Hospitaller – all these things are worthless’.<sup>80</sup>

### **Territories and peoples**

In this period, the topical inclusion of proverbial images was accompanied by a tightening relation between territory and ethnic groups in the rhetorical manuals. Handbooks of rhetoric explicitly bear testimony to the strengthening notion that ethnic groups are bound to a specific territory. The same development is already present in the visual depiction of the world in *mappae mundi*, for example in the Beatus map drawn circa 1065 in the abbey of Saint-Sever in southern France, where Gascony, Poitiers and now Aquitaine are visualized as separate entities.<sup>81</sup> A greater awareness of geographical space was also translated into a greater awareness of the distinctive peoples inhabiting Western Europe.<sup>82</sup>

The tight relationship between territory and inhabitants is expressed especially in explanations of the metonymic figure of speech known as the *continens pro contento*, wherein a word is substituted by another on the grounds of a close connection. In some manuals, this form of metonymy is explained with the example that a territory – ‘the container’ – was replete with an ethnic group – ‘the contained’. In a thirteenth-century rhetorical poem from the monastery of Clairmarais in Saint Omer, the relationship between the riches of Flanders and its inhabitants is thus underlined:

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79 From Munich manuscript Codex Latin Monac 18910 f. 102, of the fifteenth century, originating from the monastery in Tegernsee; Walther, ‘Scherz’ no. 43: ‘Devocio in Italia / Veritas in Ungaria / Humilitas in Austria / Paupertas in Venecia / Formose mulieres in Ethiopia / Religiositas in Bohemia / Foelicitas in Polonia... Nichil valent per omnia.’ Also printed in Kot, ‘Old International Insults’, 181-209, here at 203, who offers more examples.

80 Printed in Leroux de Lincy, *Le Livre des Proverbes*, vol. 2, Appendix II, 471: ‘Orgoyl de templer, / Bobbaunt de ospitaler / Touz ceuz ne valunt un dener.’ Cf. the list of social groups and vices printed in Prompsault, *Discours*, 118.

81 Baumgärtner, ‘Die Welt’, 540. For Beatus maps, see chapter 4.

82 Cf. Englisch, *Ordo Orbis Terrae*, 336-364.

Here a container is used for the contained, in this manner:

Flanders flowers with delights, France with teaching;  
Flanders stands for the Flemish, France for the French.<sup>83</sup>

The, presumably Flemish, compiler has chosen proudly to highlight the renowned wealth of its inhabitants, reflected for example in the saying: 'Flanders is very agreeable, garrulous, rich.'<sup>84</sup> Flanders, nominally a fief of the French kingdom, was a strong feudal principality which was seemingly considered a separate entity. Again the reference is topical: France – the lands north of the Loire – is famed as the new seat of learning, as a result of the *translatio studii*.<sup>85</sup>

The same relationship between territory and inhabitants is set out even more clearly in one of the most popular of medieval treatises on the arts of poetry, the *New Poetry* by Geoffrey of Vinsauf (written circa 1208/1213). In his example, however, the container: the territory, standing for the contained: the ethnic group, is related to the group's reputation:

Use the container for the contained, aptly employing either a noun or an adjective. Apply the noun thus:

Tippling England; weaving Flanders; boastful Normandy.

Thus use the adjective:

The noisy forum; the silent cloister; the doleful prison; the happy house; the quiet night; the busy day.

Use such expressions as these:

In the area of disease, Salerno cures the sick with healing power; in legal cases, Bologna arms the defenceless with laws; in the arts, Paris dispenses the bread with which she feeds the strong. Orleans educates infants in the cradle with the milk of authors.<sup>86</sup>

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83 In Saint Omer MS. 115 f. 53B; Walther, 'Scherz' no. 52. Printed in *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale* 31 (1884), vol. 1 106, no. 40: 'Hic ponitur continens pro contento, hoc modo: Flandria deliciis, doctrinis Gallia floret; / Flandria designat Flandrenses, Gallia Gallos.'

84 Walther, 'Scherz' no. 166B vs. 23 and no. 171 vs. 5; Bazel F. IV 4 f. 106 (fifteenth century) and Rome, Vat. Burgh. 200 f. 23 (fifteenth century): 'Flandria se nimium commendans, garrula, dives.'

85 See also Serge Lusignan, 'L'Université de Paris comme composante de l'identité du royaume de France: étude sur le thème de la *translatio studii*', in Rainer Babel and Jean-Marie Moeglin (eds), *Identité régionale et conscience nationale en France et en Allemagne du Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne* (Sigmaringen 1997), 59-72.

86 Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *The Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* vs. 1006-1017, ed. and transl. Ernest Gallo (The Hague 1971), 67-69: 'Rem vice contenti quae continet accipe, ponens / Verbum, vel fixum, vel mobile quodlibet, apte. / Inserere sic fixum: *Potatrix Angia; Texitrix / Flandria; Jactatrix Normannia*. Mobile nomen / Sic appone: *Fora clamosa; Silentia claustra; / Luctisonus carcer; Domus exhilarate; Quieta / Nox; Operosa dies*. Sumptis sic utere verbis: / *In morbis sanat medica virtute Salernum / Aegros. In causis Bononia legibus armat / Nudos. Parisius dispensat in artibus illos / Panes unde cibatur robustos. Aurelianus / Educat in cunis auctorum lacte tenellos.*'

The container, for example tippling England, thus denotes the people within the territory, in this case drunken Englishmen. In another of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's didactical works, the prose treatise *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, into which he had recast his *New Poetry*, he again adorns his explanation of the *continens pro contento* with an array of ethnic stereotypes: '... one can say "keen England, blunt Germany, weaving Flanders, feminine France, boastful Normandy", because of the keen Englishmen, the blunt Teutons, the Flemish weavers, the feminine French, and the Norman boasters.'<sup>87</sup>

Again, in these examples, the images are tuned to the students' own world, using widespread stereotypes. Again, a stronger awareness of ethnicity increasingly goes hand in hand with more positive autostereotypes, in other words with feelings of ethnic pride in one's own group.<sup>88</sup> Whereas in the earlier lists the emphasis lay on ruminating both the sins and virtues of the whole of humanity, in order to overcome sin, Geoffrey of Vinsauf chooses here to describe the English as intelligent instead of drunken, both common characterizations of the English in twelfth-century Latin literature. As nearly all of the twenty manuscripts of the *Documentum* are in England and it is probable that Geoffrey did most of his teaching there, in this case he perhaps chose to apply the more positive characteristic of intelligence in order to accommodate his English audience.<sup>89</sup>

From these examples it is clear that twelfth-century manuals were focused on the world which the students inhabited. They offered lively examples of images which would have struck a chord in the student's mind. This tradition stretched to vernacular sources, including troubadour literature associating towns and regions with products.<sup>90</sup> The late twelfth-century poet Jean Bodel and the late thirteenth-century trouvère Rutebeuf thus both produced lively *dits* with lists of wares sold in towns, professions, products sold at markets, enumerating the world's diversity and plenitude as a kind of

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87 Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle: recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du moyen âge*, ed. Edmond Faral (reprint Paris 1962), 291. The translation is from Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi*, trans. Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee, 1968), 66-67. See also Bruce Harbert (ed.), *A Thirteenth-Century Anthology of Rhetorical Poems: Glasgow ms Hunterian V.8.14* (Toronto 1975), poems 11-13, at 18-21, which follow Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Documentum de modo et arte dictandi et versificandi* in an early thirteenth-century manuscript containing rhetorical treatises and poems. These verses, in praise of King Henry II, and in reference to the rebellion against the king in 1173-1174, mention his adverseries and their characteristics: the knights of France, the weavers of Flanders, the spears of the Scots, but also the ragged Scots.

88 As Stanzel, 'Das Nationalitätenschema', 85-86 also remarked about the late medieval ethnic catalogues.

89 See *An Early Commentary on the Poetria Nova of Geoffrey of Vinsauf*, ed. Marjorie Curry Woods (New York and London, 1985), xv. Jeffrey F. Huntsman, 'Grammar', in David L. Wagner (ed.), *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages* (Bloomington, 1983), 75. Ernest Gallo, 'The *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf,' in James J. Murphy (ed.), *Medieval Eloquence. Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1978), 68. Likewise, in his *Parisiana poetria*, John of Garland explains metonymy as when 'the instrument is put for the act or the wielder, or the material for the thing made of the material, or the inventor for the invention: May the Roman eagle conquer her, may France trample her with its bridles, may learned Greece wear her down with books'; see *The Parisiana Poetria of John of Garland* VI vs. 281-288, ed. and transl. Traugott Lawler, 126-127. Again, there is the notion that a territory and, in this case, its characteristic cultural assets: Rome's power, France's chivalry, Greece's learning, are the essence, the stuff of these territories.

90 L.M. Paterson, *The World of the Troubadours* (Cambridge 1993), 5.

repertoire of the world.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, these catalogues of stereotypes served as an area of common ground where the Latin knowledge of the elite and the common knowledge of the vernacular entered into a dialogue. Indeed, besides literary stereotypes drawn from Latin sources accessible in first instance only to the literate, there is also an increasing application of vernacular proverbs in these poems. In fact, the rhetorical manuals actively stimulated the inclusion of such proverbs in order to create heightened levels of credibility. This development provides strong evidence that these ethnic stereotypes were not sterile images, devoid of any meaning for broader, illiterate audiences. It also underlines the role school texts played in increasing ethnic awareness and prejudice.

### **The plenitude of diversity**

From the twelfth century, catalogues of ethnic groups also express wonderment at the diversity of God's creation. The sense of marvel aroused a desire to capture and grasp mankind's diversity, which in early modern times would be augmented with information about clothing, language, and customs.<sup>92</sup> As Nicholas Howe has argued, the educational function of poetry goes against most modern poetic principles: poetry was didactic. As a result, even such dry material as Isidore's encyclopaedic geography could be versified – which comes across today as deeply prosaic.<sup>93</sup> This interpretation even stretches to the epic, in that it is a cultural phenomenon of a preliterate world where poetry as a didactic form displays the expanse of the universe, in its plenitude and diversity.<sup>94</sup> Despite the increasing tendency to extol the self, the end purpose of Latin verse remained moral, as indeed was the case in the earlier lists compiled in the monasteries. They continued to serve as ethical exercises to produce wisdom, to recognize sin, to emotionally experience what one was reading. In this light, the distinction between literary and didactic precepts was often blurred.<sup>95</sup> In medieval times, reflections by the clergy on knowledge of the world thus remained, in their heart, morally didactic. For example, in the early thirteenth century, Diego García, chancellor of Castile, included an extensive catalogue of ethnic characteristics in the prologue to his devotional treatise *Planeta*. This he introduces with a geometric exposition on the creation of the world centred around the four elements, four periods of the year, four rivers of paradise, evangelists and so forth. Then he goes on to describe man as fabricated in the image of the macrocosm. After arguing that the ancients were in many ways ignorant of divinely revealed knowledge (Socrates was ignorant of many things

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91 Idem, 17-35.

92 Stanzel, 'Nationalitätenschema', 85.

93 See the 'Versus de Asia et de universi mundi rota', ed. Franciscus Glorie, CCSL 175 (Turnhout 1965), 441-454, for an early (seventh-century) example of versification of geography. The verse probably originates from Spain and is related to Isidorian and Beatus manuscripts. Cf. Dag Norberg, *La poésie latine rythmique du haut moyen âge* (Stockholm 1954), chapter 6.

94 Howe, *Old English Catalogue Poems*, 16-17.

95 The huge collection of medieval Latin proverbs is accessible especially through Hans Walther, *Lateinische Sprichwörter und Sentenzen des Mittelalters in alphabetischer Anordnung* (5 vols, Göttingen 1963-1967) and Samuel Singer, *Thesaurus proverbiorum medii aevi* (13 vols, revised edition Berlin 1995-2002). For other medieval proverb collections and ethnic stereotypes see Walther, 'Scherz'; Bautier, 'Peuples, provinces', 1-22.

about the devil which Origenes knew, Diego enters into unabashed flattery of the mighty archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada of Toledo, to whom his treatise is dedicated. His laudation, full of rhetorical flourish, is interlarded with lists, of the prophets, of ancient philosophers. According to Diego, the expanse of God's creation was reflected in one man's abundance of virtues – Rodrigo's –, as the peoples inhabiting the earth display the virtues and vices of mankind:

If we pass the four regions of the world to the famous provinces in a ship of comparison, it shall be abundantly clear that he surpasses, in the gift of his own virtues, not only as types of each kind but as kind of each type. For it is known that these are all strewn out in diverse manner over the five zones of the world. Some are to approve of, some to favour, some to reject, some to reproach, some to add to, some to destroy, some to instruct, some to shatter, some not only to retain but to conceal. He corrects and commends the Galicians in speech, those from León in eloquence, those from Campesinia at the table, the Castilians in battle, the Saracens in rigor, the Aragonese in constancy, the Catalans in joy, the Navarrese in leloa [meaning unclear], the Narbonese in miniatures. He improves or commends the Britons in musical instruments, the Provincials in rhythms, the men of Tours in verse, the Gascons in crossings, the Normans in friendships, the French in strenuousness, the English in aptness, the Germans in faith, the Poles in serenity.<sup>96</sup>

Rodrigo – the epitome of moral virtue – for all to imitate – is described using commonplaces of peoples embellished with their attribute. This moral purpose was retained in later medieval catalogues. In the ninth century, Hrabanus Maurus had advocated that rhetoric should be employed to convert pagans to Christianity: the moral power of tropes was to serve 'Christian invention'.<sup>97</sup> In the fifteenth, the same precepts are still at work in the ethnic verse, jotted down on the cover of manuscript held in Nürnberg. The final line neatly sums up the same moral precept of rhetoric:

The Englishman is treacherous, the French arrogant-minded,  
The Spaniard is a vain-talker, the German rough.

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96 Diego Garcia, *Planeta*, ed. P. Manuel Alonso (Madrid 1943), 177-178: 'Si autem per quatuor mundi climata ad famosas provincias per comparationis navigium transfretemus: patebit liquido quod in propriorum donis carismatum non solum genera singulorum set singula generum antecellit. Novit enim omnia que per quinque mundi zonas diversimode sunt repersa. Quedam novit ut probet quedam ut approbet, quedam ut recuset, quedam ut accuset, quedam novit ut astruat, quedam ut destruat, quedam ut instruat, quedam novit ut discutiatur, quedam ut docet, quedam ut non solum teneat set occultet. Emendat vel commendat Gallecos in loquela, Legionenes in eloquencia, Campesinos in mensa, Castellanos in pugna, Sarranos in duricia, Aragonenses in constancia, Cathalanos in leticia, Navarros in leloa, Narbonenses in miniatura. Emendat vel commendat Brictones in instrumentis, Provinciales in rithmis, Turonenses in metris, Vascones in traiectis, Normannos in amiciciis, Francos in strenuitate, Anglicos in calliditate, Alemannos in fidelitate, Polonos in serenitate.' He goes on to mention the thieving Hungarians, ship-faring Venetians, the power of the Romans, among others.

97 Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 123-128.



The Lombard is superbly well-behaved, the Tuscan avaricious;  
 Four are vile, who evilly seduce a people  
 The heathen Muhammed misleads the pagans in their faith,  
 The Talmudic prophet the Jews, Wycliffe the English, and Hus the Bohemians;  
 He who preaches actively, gives to the poor, is made a martyr,  
 The contemplator prays, reads, and as mediator, teaches deeds in writing.<sup>98</sup>

The audience is encouraged to pray and read instead of succumbing to the poisonous guile of Muhammad or Wycliff – to embrace Catholic belief instead of heresy. In later, more extensive catalogues, the theme of the vices of ethnic groups was also continued and augmented with the damnation of social groups such as monks, clerics, kings and noblemen.<sup>99</sup> An expanded catalogue ‘Of the Cause of the Destruction of Various Nations and Diverse Orders’ contains an amalgamation of vices from the earlier catalogues. Its crux, ‘the destruction of all’, points to a continuous tradition of listing vices in order to position nations and, in this case, social groups, within the concept of ruin as a result of sin and immorality. As said, these catalogues would also, from the fourteenth century, develop into the genre of the priamel, listing the virtues of peoples or social groups and satirically concluding their worthlessness.<sup>100</sup> They would also continue to be amassed in collections – *sobriquets de peuples, blasons populaires* – for literary purposes, reflecting curiosity about the diverse character traits, customs, clothing, eating and drinking habits, religion, and languages of humanity.<sup>101</sup> Once admitted to these collections, however, their original social context faded out, becoming proverbial stereotypes and taking on an affective meaning.<sup>102</sup> Still, these collections of stereotypes retained many of the characterizations of the medieval lists; they are found in Scaliger’s *Poetices libri septem*, or in Ianus Parrhasius commentary (1531) on Horace’s *Ars Poetica*.<sup>103</sup>

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98 Nürnberg, Stadtbibliothek Cent. I, 97 Vorderspiegel; Walther, *Carmina* no. 13999: ‘Anglicus infidus est, Gallicus mente superbus, / Iber vaniloquis factis, Alemannus acerbus / Gestu sublimis Lombardus, Tuscus avarus; / Bis duo sunt nequam, qui seducunt male gentem / Machmet prophanus deceptit fide paganos / Thalmet propheta judeos, Wycleph anglos Hüsque bohemos; / Predicat activus, dat egenis, martirisatur / contemplativus orat, legit et mediator / Littera gesta docet.’

99 In the twelfth century, Gerald of Wales clearly relates the vices of the Welsh to their fate at the hands of God and his wrath, saying that ‘it will never be totally destroyed by the wrath of man, unless at the same time it is punished by the wrath of God’. Cf. *Descriptio Kambriae* II 10, ed. Dimock, vol. 6, 227, transl. Thorpe, 274.

100 Cf. Kot, ‘Old International Insults’, 203-205 for examples.

101 Idem, 181.

102 Blaicher, ‘Zur Entstehung und Verbreitung nationaler Stereotypen’, especially 565 and 573-574.

103 The Lacedaemoni are grave, desirous are the Thebans, sacrificing many things for their own, fat are the Boethians, and finally, the Scythians are cruel. Italians, shining brightly with regal nobility, arrogant French, stupid, fickle Greeks, cunning Africans, avaricious Syrians, sharp Sicilians, wanton Asians, fixed on pleasure, the Spanish, preposterous in their elated proud boasting; the Cretans are liars, stomachs are fat, the Phrygians are cowardly, half men, the Jews persist in their obstinate hearts. *Q. Horatii Flacii Omnia Poemata Cum Interpretibus Acrone, Porphyrione, Iano Parrhasio* (Venice, 1562). Printed in Wolfgang Zach, ‘Das Stereotyp als literarische Norm: Zum dominanten Denkmodell des Klassizismus’ in Günther Blaicher (ed.), *Erstarrtes Denken*, 97-113, here at 100: ‘Lacadaemonii severi, TheBartholomaeus Anglicusni cupidi, et suis multa condonantes, Boetii crassi, denique Scythe soli crudeles. Itali regali

Thankfully, it was not all lamentation of the world's vice. The world's peoples could piece together a thing of beauty, in the idealized form of a woman. In Heinrich Bebel's collection of proverbs (1508) a jigsaw puzzle of beauty is thus laid out: 'That woman is endowed with all the gifts of nature, who has: a head from Prague, breasts from Austria, a stomach from France, a back from Brabant, from Cologne white legs and hands, feet from the Rhine, private parts from Bavaria and buttocks from Swabia. And she will be so perfectly shaped as there is a variety of gifts of nature in various places and regions.'<sup>104</sup> The form is prescribed by Geoffrey of Vinsauf,<sup>105</sup> and the puzzle is possibly a Latin adaptation of a popular German verse, included in the fourteenth-century Sterzinger Miscalleneen-Handschrift mentioned above, which is rendered here in the vernacular:

Von Prag ein hawpt aus Pahemlant,  
 Von Frankreich ein prust daran gesant,  
 Von Brabant zwai hendlin clar,  
 Die nemen newr der seiden war,  
 Zwai prüstlin von Karnden her,  
 Die sind wechß recht als ein sper,  
 Und ein pawch von Osterreich,  
 Der ist eben und geleich,  
 Ein mündlin rot aus Preussen gewachsen,  
 Zwei augen clar dort her von Sachsen,  
 Von Meissen zwai armlein planck,  
 Von Swaben ein hubs[ch]er minnesanck,  
 Ein weissen chel von Duringen,  
 Ein gutes hertz von Sibenpurgen,  
 Zu Florenz einen wehen tritt,  
 Die ander Etsch haben hubs[ch]en sitt,  
 Und ein ars von Polan,  
 Von Pairn ein gute fut daran,

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nobilitate praefulgidi, Galli superbi, stolidi, leves Graeci. Afri subdoles, avari Syri, acuti Syculi, luxoriosi Asiani, et voluptatibus occupati, Hispani elato iactantie animosi praeposteri, Cretenses mendaces, ventres pigri, Phyriges timidi, semi-viri, Iudei cordis pervicacia obdurantes...

104 In Heinrich Bebel, *Proverbia Germanica*, 151. Printed in Samuel Singer (ed.), *Thesaurus proverbiorum medii aevi: Lexikon der Sprichwörter des romanisch-germanischen Mittelalters* (13 vols, revised edition, Berlin 1995-2002), vol. 10, 230-231: 'Ea mulier omnibus dotibus naturae et formae praedita est, quae habeat caput ex Praga, ubera ex Austria, ventrem a Gallia, dorsum ex Brabantia, ex Colonia Agrippina alba crura et manus, pedes a Rheno, pudibunda ex Bavaria et nates ex Suevia; et sic perfecte formosa erit, quod variae sint dotes naturae variis locis et regionibus.' Singer offers more variations.

105 Cf. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova* vs. 1780-1781 and 1812-1814, ed. Gallo, 110-113: 'Es Cato mente / Tullius ore, Paris facie, Pirrusque vigore' or 'Sapit ut Cato, dicit / Ut Cicero, viget ut Pirrus, nitet ut Paris, auget / ut Campaneus, amat ut Theseus, modulator ut Orpheus.'. Quoted by Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose*, 81.

Zwen fuoß von Koln am Rein,  
 Das möcht ein schone fraw gesein.<sup>106</sup>

Lacking in the twelfth-century rhetorical manuals, however, is an explanation for the diversity of peoples. For this to come about, the newly rediscovered climate theory had yet to be formally incorporated into the art of rhetoric. This we find expounded in Scaliger's sixteenth-century *Poetices libri septem*. Here the author proclaims the diversity of peoples as a deliberate act of God. Looking up at the heavens, Scaliger says, we are amazed at the seemingly rash dispersion of stars, for things have their relative place and size, following an order, whether created by nature or art. Likewise, God, not wanting every living being to be the same, created genera and species. Even within these species, God created differences amongst individuals – following Aristotelian theory – by infusing substance with accidents. To this end, he created different regions, so that the people – under the influence of climate – would differ. Nonetheless, as Scaliger himself instructs, the descriptions of these too should be based on vulgar information: 'The character of nations and populations should, I believe, be drawn from both histories and proverbs, and from popular speech.'<sup>107</sup> Scaliger might thus be placed in a tradition with earlier roots, in the twelfth century.

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106 Printed in Zingerle, 'Berichte über die Sterzinger Miscellaneen-Handschrift', 321.

107 Iulius Caesar Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem: Sieben Bücher über die Dichtkunst*, ed. and German transl. Luc Deitz (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1994), III 16, on pages 226-231, here at 228: 'Gentium itaque ac populorum ingenia tum ex historiis, tum ex proverbii atque ex ore vulgi excipienda censeo.'