



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

**UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)**

**Images of ethnicity in later medieval Europe**

Weeda, C.V.

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Weeda, C. V. (2012). Images of ethnicity in later medieval Europe.

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

*UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<http://dare.uva.nl>)*

Download date: 24 Oct 2019

## 6

## Ethnic Invective and Ridicule

At the new international educational centres in Western Europe, populated by clerics from broader layers of society than merely the highest elite, ethnic stereotyping and ridicule were epidemic. Students practicing verse composition wrote derisory epigrams such as ‘French learning, English thirst, Breton stupidity, and Norman boasting all increase with increasing years’.<sup>1</sup> At the emerging university of Paris, clerics from all over Europe entered into ethnic slanging matches, assailing members of other ethnic groups and, as Jacques de Vitry (circa 1170-1240) tells us, rudely hurling a multitude of insults and sneers at one another.<sup>2</sup> According to this bishop, mutual envy, conflict and disparagement led to both verbal clashes and physical violence, with students shouting things like ‘drunk’ and ‘tail-bearer’ at the English, calling the French arrogant, weak, effeminate, the Normans vain and boastful, the Romans violent and greedy, the Brabanders rapists and the Flemish rich, gluttonous and soft as butter.<sup>3</sup>

---

1 This is a typical Francophone gloss of the period, found in a manuscript containing Évrard of Béthune’s grammar textbook, the *Graecismus*. Here, for the French read: the inhabitants of the environs of Île de France. The manuscript is of the thirteenth century, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS. 18522 f. 149 col. 2. Printed in Hauréau, *Notices et extraits* (1893), vol. 6, here at 124: ‘Francis scire, sitis Anglis, nescire Britannis, / Fastus Normannis crescit crescentibus annis.’ In the same manuscript (Hauréau, *Notices et Extraits*, vol. 6 117) the verse ‘Anglia, Flandria flent quia Francia, nescia fraudis, / Continet haec tria: praemia, praedia, praelia laudis’; in Walther, ‘Scherz’, no. 10a from the thirteenth-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. Cf. Walther, *Initia* no. 6840; Walther, ‘Scherz’, no. 59; also in Bern MS 211 f. 136 of the fifteenth century. See for another Francophone gloss to 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 Hauréau, *Notices et Extraits*, vol. 4, 281; Walther, ‘Scherz’, no. 17.

2 Jacques de Vitry, *The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry: A Critical Edition*, ed. Hinnebusch, 92.

3 The full quotation in Jacques de Vitry, *The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry: A Critical Edition*, ed. Hinnebusch, 92: ‘...anglicos potatores et caudatos affirmantes, francigenas superbos, molles et muliebriter compositos asserentes, tuetonicos furibundos et in conviviis suis obscenos dicebant, normanos autem inanes et gloriosis, pictavos proditores et fortune amicos. Hos autem qui de Burgundia errant brutos et stultos reputabant. Britones autem, leves et vagos iudicantes, Arturi mortem frequenter eis obiciebant. Lombardos avaros, malitiosos et imbelles; romanos seditiosos, violentos et manus rodentes; siculos tyrannos et crudeles; brabantios viros sanguinum, incendiarios, rutarios et raptos; flandrenses superfluos, prodigos, comessionibus deditos, et more butyri molles et remissos, appellabant. Et propter

Jacques de Vitry decried ethnic stereotyping as seditious student behaviour, alongside gambling and prostitution. His denunciation of ethnic slander and violence was however quite exceptional.<sup>4</sup> For the most part, ethnic stereotyping was actively encouraged in the textbooks of poetry and letter composition on the curriculum of the schools and universities.<sup>5</sup> In concurrence, the clerics seem to experience a vicious pleasure in attacking the ethnic other in satire and invective. The recipe they followed was to ridicule the other as morally inferior, thus laying claim to their own moral and cultural superiority. Such diatribes seem to induce little moral self-introspection; these are not tools of meditation but outward attacks, directed at the ethnic other, predominantly targeting the vice, *malum*, rather than the virtue, *bonum*. However, as Lawrence Levine has demonstrated in his analysis of ritualized insults in black American culture (the Dozens), we must be careful not to dismiss these insults merely as aggressive attacks. Ritualized insults – permitting aggression within a structured setting – might also deflect aggression, freeing group members of feelings of tension, creating order through disciplined play, creating a community of laughter.<sup>6</sup> Verbal aggressive acts of aggression, within a disciplined structure, might even create intimacy, as community members are allowed to express distress without being penalized.

The recorded outburst of ethnic ridicule and invective in this period can be related to educational, literary and socio-cultural and political factors. Chapter 5 discussed how rhetorical manuals purposely prescribed using widespread ethnic images in order to strike a chord in the audience's mind. In this chapter, ethnic ridicule is discussed in relation to the genres of satire and invective, its purpose and employment in the international milieu of universities and courts, from a socio-cultural perspective. Partly, we can classify ethnic invective as a literary clerical exercise, influenced by the

---

huiusmodi convitia, de verbis frequenter ad verbera procedebant.' ('...the English were drunks and tail-bearers, the French arrogant, weak and effeminate, the Germans were furious, and had disgusting manners, the Normans vain and boastful, the Poitevins traitors and adventurers. The Burgundians were reputed to be vulgar and stupid. They reproached the Bretons for being frivolous and fickle, often teasing them about Arthur's death. They called the Lombards greedy, malicious and cowardly; the Romans seditious, violent and avaricious; the Sicilians tyrannical and cruel; the Brabanders bloodthirsty, arsonists, brigands and rapists; the Flemish self-indulgent, rich, gluttonous, and weak and soft as butter.') For the accusation of usury among the Lombards, see also Walther of Châtillon's *Alexandreis* VII 413 (see chapter 5); Rutebeuf's 'La Bataille des VII Ars' (late thirteenth century), printed in *Oeuvres complètes de Rutebeuf, trouvère du XIIIe siècle*, ed. Achille Jubinal, 3 volumes (Paris 1874-1875) vol. 3, 330-331, note 3; for their comparison to snails, see the poem printed by F.W. Lenz (ed.), *Das Pseudo-Ovidische Gedicht De Lombardo et Lumaca* (Rocca San Casciano: S.I., 1957). For their role as merchant-bankers, see Winfried Reichert, 'Lombarden als "merchant-bankers" im England des 13. und beginnenden 14. Jahrhunderts', in Dietrich Ebeling, Volker Henn, Rudolf Holbach, Winfried Reichert, Wolfgang Schmid (eds), *Landesgeschichte als multidisziplinäre Wissenschaft: Festgabe für Franz Irsigler zum 60. Geburtstag* (Trier 2001), 77-134.

4 Perhaps his concern about ethnic stereotyping was a subject of discussion within the theological school of Peter the Chanter, to whom Raoul Ardent and Gerald of Wales also belonged. See chapter 1 for Raoul Ardent's sermon. For the group around Peter the Chanter, see John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter & His Circle*, 2 volumes (Princeton 1970).

5 See chapter 5.

6 Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York 1977), 320-321, 344-358. With thanks to George Blaustein for this reference.

reading of classical satirists in education, condemning the moral weaknesses in order to reveal hypocrisy and incite reform. Anti-Roman satire arising from the Gregorian Reform movement sheds some light on the purpose of ethnic satire and invective within the Church. In addition, however, we might view such ethnic attacks as acts of aggression triggered by strong emotions evoked in relation to ethnic identity. Emotions could stem from perceived threats to ethnic identity, such as verbal insults or physical violence, or from feelings of ethnic superiority or pride. Also, within a social context wherein many ethnicities convened, slanderous jokes might also have helped to forge alliances as an act of disciplined aggression, within an ordered structure, creating intimacy. In this chapter, I discuss attacks on the etymology of ethnic names alongside specific ridicule of the English as tail-bearers, half bestial creatures purportedly stripped of their full humanness as a result of their reluctance to accept Christianity. Specifically, this chapter discusses how university milieus were ‘multipliers of national prejudice’ by examining Bolognese rhetorician and university master Boncompagno da Signa’s use of catalogues of invective as a theatrical tool performed before an international student audience.<sup>7</sup> Employing ethnic stereotypes in group lectures possibly strengthened notions of identity and animosity among students from various backgrounds; however, the ethnic ridicule, prompting laughter and jeers, perhaps also alleviated socio-cultural tensions within the international communities.

How could ethnic derision have strengthened ethnic sentiment in these communities? Many of the ethnic ‘jokes’ in this chapter can be viewed as expressions of blatant ethnic sentiment. They attest to the fact that the clerics studying in international centres such as Paris or Bologna were strongly aware of their ethnic identity. This led to the usual derogatory remarks regarding the other on the fringes of Europe, but also to diatribes against those living in the heartland of Europe. Jacques de Vitry’s report of ethnic assaults thus makes clear that the French, although often proclaiming their own superiority, were termed effeminate and arrogant by others. However, such attacks might strengthen instead of crush the identity of the ethnic other. This has to do with the relational aspect of identity, and its relation to denigrating humour, which is discussed below.

### **Categories of ridicule and invective**

In order to understand the effects of ethnic invective (humourless attacks, or verbal violence) and satire (ridicule with a moral purpose) on identity it is useful to first discuss briefly the socio-psychological function of ridicule and humour. As Nicolino Applauso has argued in his study of the use of invective among poets in late medieval Italian city-states, humour and invective can be aggressive ethical tools which should be taken seriously in historical research.<sup>8</sup> This applies

---

7 Schmutge, ‘Über “nationale” Vorurteile’, 454: ‘Die Hohen Schulen – und später die Universitäten – scheinen gerade wegen ihrer internationalen Besetzung zugleich Brutstätte und Multiplikator nationaler Vorurteile gewesen zu sein.’

8 Nicolino Applauso, *Curses and Laughter: The Ethnicity of Political Invective in the Comic Poetry of High and Late Medieval Literature* (unpublished diss. University of Oregon 2010), 4.

especially to this period as there was a ‘prominence and pervasiveness of invective in medieval society and culture because both developed and centralized the connection between vituperation and humour on both rhetorical and ethical terms’.<sup>9</sup> In this view, it is necessary to understand the relation between humour and obloquy. As Walter Ong has argued, this agonistic struggle in an arena, using riddles and proverbs, was typical of oral societies lacking distance as knowledge was ‘embedded in the human lifeworld’.<sup>10</sup>

In discussions of the factors causing and functions of humour, a threefold division can be applied. First, humour can play with perceptions of reality, postulating an incongruent perspective. Secondly, humour can be employed as an internal coping mechanism, explained by Freud using the ‘principle of economy’: jokes bring relief as a form of disguised aggression while expending less inhibiting energy, by freeing oneself of inhibiting feelings.<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, and relevant here, is the disparagement theory of humour, which feeds on perceptions of human behaviour which are interpreted morally. Disparaging humour denounces the other as morally inferior in an act of aggression, at the same time claiming one’s own moral superiority. Ridicule and humour can serve as a tool to cast blame and pinpoint human faults in order to correct social behaviour.<sup>12</sup> It often functions as an expression of moral self-conceit in relation to the other. However, as said above, it might also create order, as a form of play, as disciplined verbal acts of aggression.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, we can add that humour and ridicule might also evoke relief when a shameful act of behaviour is admonished in the other, or empathy for the other. Humour, leading to laughter, might create a shared experience, as Henri Bergson argued.<sup>14</sup>

Disparaging humour is frequently employed in ethnic relations. This has to do with the circumstance that ethnic identities are, in social-anthropological terms, viewed as ‘relational’. This relational aspect of identity and the role of humour therein will be discussed further, in order to understand how disparaging ethnic attacks forged identities.

### **Relational aspects of identity and humour**

In *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen explains that ethnic identity – the notion of having *self-perceived boundaries* such as a shared culture, common descent, a past

---

9 Idem, 40.

10 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 43-45.

11 Levine, *Black Culture*, 320-321, referring to Sigmund Freud’s *Jokes and the Relation to the Unconscious* (New York 1963).

12 Applauso, *Curses and Laughter*, 1-11. Jean-Claude Schmitt discusses the normative aspects of invective, which might either be condemned by authorities (i.e. bans on slanderous comments) or conversely employed by the same to exert authority in for example excommunications. The power of invective and its limitations is thus situational. His article focuses on the rituals of invective images. See Jean-Claude Schmitt, ‘Les images de l’invective’, in É. Beaumatin and M. Garcia, *L’invective au Moyen Âge: France, Espagne, Italie: actes du Colloque L’invective au Moyen Âge, Paris, 4-6 février 1993* (Paris 1994), 11-20, here at 11-14.

13 Cf. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study in the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston 1955), 10, 65; Levine, *Black Culture*, 348.

14 Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (London 1935), 3-8.

history, and a link with a homeland – is often developed by contrasting the ethnic other to one's own group. According to Eriksen, ethnic groups or categories 'are in a sense *created* through that very contact. Group identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not – in other words, in relation to non-members of the group'.<sup>15</sup> This defining of ethnicity is marked by the application of 'systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders; between Us and Them'.<sup>16</sup> This application of distinctions might result in ethnic stereotyping, which can be defined as 'the creation and consistent application of standardised notions of the cultural distinctiveness of a group'.<sup>17</sup> Othering, by applying standardized notions of the distinctiveness of the other, often results in taking an elevated position towards the other. By extolling the virtues of one's own group, and denouncing the vices of others, members of an ethnic group subsequently justify their belief in belonging to group X instead of Y, and thus develop standard ways of behaviour towards one another.<sup>18</sup>

This belief in belonging to an ethnic group can evince the notion of shared socio-cultural values. As is often the case, an ethnic group will view its own culture and morals as the norm. In contacts with the ethnic other, the cultural distinctiveness of a group might thus be expressed in moral terms. It is here that denigrating humour steps in.

Scholars such as Henri Bergson have emphasized that laughter, a somatic reaction to humour, might help create communities, exclude and include, and evoke feelings of animosity, sympathy or understanding.<sup>19</sup> As Jacques le Goff has stressed, it is indeed a social phenomenon and instrument of power, where at least two people are needed.<sup>20</sup> As such, disparaging humour as an aggressive ethical act can thus strengthen feelings of moral and cultural superiority of one's own ethnic group (or the feeling of being in control), forging group awareness and loyalty and offering comfort. The fact that ethnic jokes are made at the *expense* of others, might evoke relief that one does not belong to the group under attack. Moreover, the ring of laughter – the shared somatic experience of laughing together, out loud – creates sharp distinctions dividing group members into us and them. However, at the same time, as Nicolino Applauso has argued, laughter induced by ethnic jokes can also serve to alleviate tensions within a community – and might have also evoked feelings of empathy for the group under attack. By publicly naming and shaming the ethnic vices of all those present, each and

---

15 Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 10. Eriksen's approach to ethnicity is socio-anthropological, stressing the relational aspects of ethnicity and the role that *boundary maintenance* plays in forging ethnic identity, a theory which was set out by Fredrick Barth and who Eriksen discusses in detail. Eriksen does not apply the theory of boundary maintenance within a historical framework. Nevertheless, it is my view that the application of the theory of boundary maintenance and its influence on ethnic identity is not limited to a specific historical period or place.

16 Idem, 19.

17 Idem, 23-24.

18 Idem, 25.

19 Albrecht Classen, 'Laughter in the Middle Ages', 3. For Bergson, see above note 14.

20 Le Goff, 'Laughter in the Middle Ages', in Jan N. Bremmer and Herman W. Roodenburg (eds), *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge 1997), 40-53, here at 40. points to King Henry II of England as *rex facetus*, who uses laughter as a tool of power.

everybody's shortcomings might be laid bare. In this sense, humour can also create larger inclusive communities in exciting disciplined acts of aggression. As such, in many cultures humour and invective have served as tools in poetry performed orally within a social environment. Strengthening awareness, forming ties, humour and invective played a role in including and excluding individuals within social and ethnic groups.

The international milieu of clerics creating ethnic invective thus actively forged and at the same time underwent processes of identity formation. The development of the universities from the early twelfth century was pivotal herein, as these new centres of learning were international hubs where young men from various ethnic backgrounds lived together, sometimes in houses founded for specific ethnic groups, and organized themselves in guilds along ethnic lines (known as nations), with their own festivals.<sup>21</sup> In the twelfth century, their literary output included many examples of such ethnic ridicule in verse and prose composition as a result of the close ties between verse, the art of rhetoric, and invective in social relations as aggressive tools of persuasion and social ethical control, as humour might enforce conformity. In this light, it is necessary here to differentiate between oral invective recorded by others, such as Jacques de Vitry's passage on stereotyping – which records stereotyping in a non-literary context – and intentionally constructed invective and satire such as in poetry, prose and rhetorical manuals.

### **Denigrating humour, rhetoric and social relations**

In many societies, poetry is composed in order to be performed orally instead of being read silently in solitude. As such, the power of poetry and rhetoric moves far beyond the purely aesthetic. It can serve political, social and ethical functions. Indeed, invective and panegyric, alongside hymns, are considered the earliest forms of poetry, which, performed orally, could be used to control social relations. In practice, invective could thus, for example, be employed in public spaces in order to crush someone's reputation and remove him from society.<sup>22</sup>

The social power of poetry in antiquity and the Middle Ages becomes evident in light of its relationship to the judicial. Both compilers of ancient and medieval poetry and court rhetoric occupied themselves with the art of persuasion. In order to persuade, both needed to employ powerful images touching the strings of the audience's mind. To that end, both the poet and the lawyer could turn to humour, wit, and mockery in order to amuse, but also to discredit for example

---

21 See Stephen C. Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and their Critics 1100-1215* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); Walter Rüegg and Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (eds), *A History of the University in Europe* (4 volumes, Cambridge 1992), vol. 1; Gordon Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: An Institutional and Intellectual History* (New York 1968). The organization of the nations is treated extensively in Pearl Kibre, *The Nations in the Medieval Universities* (Cambridge, Mass. 1948). For the English nation, see: Gray Cowan Boyce, *The English-German Nation in the University of Paris During the Middle Ages* (Bruges 1927).

22 Applauso, *Curses and Laughter*, 95-96.

court opponents.<sup>23</sup> This very relation between forensics, literature and invective is evident from the many corresponding rules laid down in manuals of oratory and poetry on the employment of invective. As Nicolino Applauso has discussed, the ‘*oratio invectiva*’ was actively employed and taught in books of rhetoric and grammar. Students were instructed to use ridicule in the *disputatio*, diplomats in their letter writing.<sup>24</sup> For example the Roman *Ad Herennium* for oratory teaches to target external (place of birth, education), physical and mental characteristics. In the latter parts of the twelfth century, especially manuals of *ars dictaminis* and *ars praedicandi* also contain distinct precepts to use invective.<sup>25</sup> In the arts of poetry, both Matthew of Vendôme and Geoffrey of Vinsauf distinguish between praise and vituperation as ethical tools of invention; the latter prescribes to balance ridicule and blame, to lend serious matters a lighter touch.<sup>26</sup>

Invective also developed in the *sirventes*, political debate poems.<sup>27</sup> One specific genre was the medieval debate poem, which arose from two classical traditions: the forensic and the eclogue. Battle verse stemming from the forensic tradition, including ethnic debate verse, was usually arranged in two blocks, each party making his case after which in some case ‘judges’ adjudicate. Debate verse in the eclogue tradition on the other hand contains alternate short verses; this was modelled on the singing competitions of herdsman in Virgil. From the Carolingian era and especially in the twelfth century, countless debate verse were written between, for example, wine and beer, water and wine, summer and winter, the soul and the body, but also between ethnic groups.<sup>28</sup>

In this light, the question arises whether the ethnic debate verses and epigrams were performed before an audience.<sup>29</sup> Boncompagno da Signa’s catalogues of invective, composed for the purpose of teaching rhetoric, were almost certainly read out or ‘performed’ live. We can glean how ethnic verse was chanted out loud, appealing to sentiments of self-pride and belonging, from an educational treatise on rhetoric composed by Marbod of Rennes (c. 1035-1123), *De ornamentis verborum*. Marbod taught at the cathedral school of Angers. In his discussion of the ‘*complexio*’ (which Évrard of Béthune later copied into his school grammar, the *Graecismus*), Marbod extols the superiority of the Angevins three times in succession. The *complexio*, a repetition of both initial and final words in successive clauses, seems deliberately tailored to feelings of self-pride, control, and belonging among the pupils. It is easy to imagine how the teacher posed each clause in the form of a question, whereupon the students chanted the answer as in a military drill:

Who fights with courage? The Angevins.

---

23 Idem, 29-32.

24 Idem, 18.

25 Idem, 37.

26 Idem, 40, 116.

27 Idem, 38.

28 Peter Stotz, *Beobachtungen zu lateinischen Streitgedichten des Mittelalters: Themen - Strukturen - Funktionen* (Zurich 2001), 2-7.

29 Hans Walther believed the debate poems were improvised exercises, sometimes written down afterwards.



Who vanquishes his enemies? The Angevins.

Who spares the vanquished? The Angevins.

Malice thus does not touch the excellent Angevins.<sup>30</sup>

Below, more detailed examples of such oral performance of ethnic invective will come to light. First, however, the question arises whether these invectives served a moral means to correct group behaviour. Should they be viewed as blatant expressions of ethnic sentiment? What was the nature and context of these attacks? The sources under review include satirical epigrams, parodies, debate verse, composed from the end of the eleventh century. In this discussion, we must differentiate between the earliest examples arising in the context of anti-Roman sentiments in the wake of the Gregorian reform movement, and twelfth- and thirteenth-century sources containing references to ethnic flytings.

### Anti-Roman satire and invective

The core business of medieval literature was to blame, it was steeped in questions of morality.<sup>31</sup> Twelfth-century Latin criticism might be levelled at a life of corruption among the clergy and hypocrisy in the cloister, of avarice and simony within the Church, although all classes, from kings to peasants, could be at the butt end of its ridicule.<sup>32</sup> Satirical literature included parodies such as the *Tractatus Garsiae*, parodic drinkers' masses, gamblers' masses, jibes, gabs, witticisms, *risus paschalis* (joking at Easter). Late medieval 'passions' of ethnic groups included those of the Scots, the French after the Battle of Courtrai, and the Jews of Prague.<sup>33</sup>

Satire's ultimate purpose was moral, to reprehend vice and encourage virtue. In this sense, it was 'constructive' criticism.<sup>34</sup> Invective, use of ridicule and acts of aggression as such were not incongruent with religious ethics; they were moral tools employed by men of the Church, and not specific manifestations of folk culture. Martha Bayless has argued extensively that religious parody, for example, was composed by and for the clergy, not for a lay audience.<sup>35</sup> Satirical texts were

---

30 Marbod of Rennes, 'De ornamentis verborum', in *Opera omnia*, ed. J.J. Bourassé (Paris 1854), 1688: 'Qui sunt qui pugnant audaciter? Andegavenses. / Qui sunt qui superant inimicos? Andegavenses. / Qui sunt qui parcunt superatis? Andegavenses. / Egregios igitur livor neget Andegavenses.' See also Évrard of Béthune, *Graecismus*, ed. Wrobel, III vs. 10, who repeats the lines. Cf. Bautier, 'Peuples, provinces', 13.

31 Vincent Gillespie, 'The Study of Classical Authors from the Twelfth Century to c. 1450', in Alistair Minnis and Ian Johnson (eds), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, 225-226.

32 For an overview of forms of satire in the twelfth century, see Ronald E. Pepin, *Literature of Satire in the Twelfth Century: A Neglected Medieval Genre* (New York 1988), 1-29; Rodney M. Thomson, 'The Origins of Latin Satire in Twelfth Century Europe' in *Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch* 13 (1978), 73-83; A.G. Rigg, 'Satire', in F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg (eds), *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide* (Washington D.C.1999), 562-568.

33 Examples are printed in Paul Lehmann, *Parodistische Texte: Beispiele zur Lateinischen Parodie im Mittelalter* (Munich 1923), and Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages* (University of Michigan 1996).

34 Gillespie, 'The Study of Classical Authors', 224-225.

35 Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 178-179.

written by ecclesiastics of high standing; the *Cena* (dinner) parodies for example were performed for popes and emperors. Rather than adhering to Bakhtin's theory that the Feasts of Fools were part of carnival culture, these kinds of satire did not entail subversion but instead reaffirmed the order of society. Through the 'unhinging of signifiers', submitting them to ridicule, travesty and inversion, binaries temporarily collapsed, only to be built up again.<sup>36</sup>

Satire was thus part and parcel of an elite culture with a view to moral admonition. The genre of satire first gained huge momentum from the end of the eleventh century within an anti-Roman sphere. This kind of satire arose in educational centres, which is evident from the numerous examples of elaborate case punning in Anti-Roman satire such as 'Aurum, Roma, sitis dantes amat absque dativo; / Accusativo Roma favere negat'.<sup>37</sup> Partly, these attacks may be viewed as the product of exercises in composition influenced by the study of ancient Roman poets such as Horace, Juvenal, Persius, and Martial.<sup>38</sup>

Whether or not such satirical literature served mere literary purposes or were direct reactions to abuses of power, is subject to debate. According to John Yunck, these diatribes were a direct reaction to the introduction of the *servitium* during the Investiture Conflict, a payment due by newly elected ecclesiastics.<sup>39</sup> However, as Rodney Thompson has noted, much of the satire was written after the conflict.<sup>40</sup> As Arpad Orbán has argued, the attacks arose primarily in reaction to a stronger and more worldly papal curia, which continued from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. Diatribes against Roman arrogance and avarice, originally articulated in the New Testament in the context of Rome's suppression of foreign peoples and desire to dominate the world, were now transfixed to the contemporary Roman Church and termed as arrogance towards the powers invested by God, and a desire to gain control both in and over the Church.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, satirical attacks on Rome stand in a longer classical tradition and can be viewed as part of the general medieval blame culture. Although throughout the Middle Ages Rome was acclaimed and revered as noble head of the ancient world and site of Peter's and Paul's tombs, and although in both the Carolingian period and in the twelfth century, humanist elegies were composed lamenting the ruin of ancient Rome, the city was also frequently under verbal attack.<sup>42</sup> This double-

36 Idem, 183-184. Discussing Eco; 'any perversion of a model or norm ultimately acknowledges the preexistence of that norm'.

37 'Rome's thirst of gold loves givers; without the dative / Rome knows not to favour the accusative.' Walther, *Lateinische Sprichwörter*, no. 276; for other examples see Orbán, 'Omgang met "het verleden" van Rome', 84-85, esp. note 59 and chapter 5 note 54.

38 Thomson, 'On the Origins of Medieval Satire', 76-79.

39 Yunck, *Lineage of Lady Mead*, 71-81.

40 Thomson, 'On the Origins of Medieval Satire', 81.

41 Orbán, 'Omgang het "het verleden" van Rome', 85.

42 A.P. Orban, 'De omgang met "het verleden" van Rome in de oudchristelijke en middeleeuws Latijnse literatuur', in R.E.V. Stuip and C. Vellekoop (eds), *Omgang met het verleden* (Hilversum 2001), 63-90, here at 74-79: 'Roma manus rodit; quos rodere non valet, odit; / dantes exaudit non dantibus ostia claudit.' Cf. Rodney M. Thomson, 'Satire, Irony, and Humour in William of Malmesbury', in Constant J. Mews, Cary J. Nederman, Rodney M. Thomson, *Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West 1100-1540. Essays in Honour of John O. Ward* (Turnhout 2003), 115-127, here at 115-116. Cf. Hans Walther,

edged reputation fed a long tradition of accusations of sexual lewdness, unreliability, and, notably, greed, arrogance and contentious behaviour, of which Liutprand of Cremona's (c. 922-972) scathing attack is perhaps the most well-known.<sup>43</sup> Rome's arrogance (*superbia*) – also documented in the early monastic ethnic lists – and desire to dominate foreign peoples (*libido dominandi*) is condemned extensively in Augustine's fifth-century *On the City of God*. Negative representations of Rome appear from the ninth century onwards primarily though not exclusively in the German territories; Lombardy and Romania are termed places of ruse, poison, where there is little hospitality and things generally come at a price.<sup>44</sup> Criticism of Roman arrogance was justified, according to Gerhoh of Reichersberg (1093-1169), in the circumstance that the German emperor was forced to hold the pope's stirrup while the latter mounted his horse. The superior attitude of Rome towards the Germans, denoting them as stupid, might have fed this sense of animosity. In the aggregate, though, the tensions were primarily couched in the context of the power struggle between emperor and pope, which heated up in the eleventh century, in the same period as anti-Roman satire becomes popular. However, according to Josef Benzinger, the attacks on Rome, directed at the Romans, should be viewed as directed at the people of Rome and the curia, not the pope, who was more or less exonerated.<sup>45</sup>

In reaction to the Gregorian Reform movement, clerics increased their attack on Rome's avarice. Accusations rang that Rome's greed damaged the whole Church; simony, in the form of payments to Rome by ecclesiastics on entering office, was subject to attack and was viewed as caused by avarice. Rome's greed was, the clerics scathed, visible from the sale of false relics. The following passage puts it succinctly: 'The empire has fallen, but pride survived in Rome. The cult of greed reigns tightly. (...) You murdered living saints with cruel wounds, and now you are selling their dead limbs. But so long the earth devours the bones, you will continue to sell false relics.'<sup>46</sup> Rome's perceived avarice subsequently brought an outburst of venality satire, such as 'The Gospel according to Saint Mark of Silver'. Although the pope was sometimes spared from the harshest of criticism, those surrounding the pope, the Romans – the inhabitants of the city – were the target of money grabbing, greed and hypocrisy.

---

'Lateinische Verseinträge in einem Vocabular des 15. Jhds.', in *Historische Vierteljahrschrift* 26 (1931), 295-311, here at 296: 'Accusative si Romam ceperis ire, / Veneris in nichilo, si veneris absque dativo', and other examples at 296-297; *Carmina Burana*, ed. Hilka, 23; Zingerle, 'Berichte', 312; Walther, *Initia*, 26929.

43 Orbán, 'Omgang met "het verleden" van Rome', 80.

44 Idem, 81.

45 Benzinger, *Invectiva in Romam*, 94-99; Goetz, *Entstehung der italienischen Kommunen*, 63 argues that especially during the reign of Frederick Barbarossa, the anti-Roman attitude created a stronger sense of unity in the north-western territories of England, France and Germany. For their stupidity, see for example the fictitious letter to Frederick Barbarossa, quoted by Benzinger, *Invectiva in Romam*, 99.

46 MGH *Poetae III*, I 29, ed. Schramm, 556: 'Transiit imperium mansitque superbia tecum, / Cultus avaritiae te nimium superat / (...) Truncasti vivos crudeli vulnere sanctos: / Vendere nunc horum mortua membra soles. / Sed dum terra vorax animantum roserit ossa, / Tu poteris falsas vendere reliquias;' quoted by Orbán, 'Omgang met "het verleden" van Rome', 82.

In the twelfth century, anti-Roman satire, directed at the people of Rome, forms the context of some of the earliest sources containing ethnic invective. Complaints about the wealth flowing from all corners of the world to Rome were manifold, as in the poem ‘Gens subdola’ quoted in the previous chapter. The highly satirical parody *Tractatus Garsiae Toletani* (1099) whimpers:

Let us be consoled, let us be consoled, my people; behold Albinus comes, behold the Church of Toledo brings us Rufinus. Behold the three Gauls make offerings; behold England, in which the buried entrails of Albinus are housed, sends them back to you. Behold the rich seat of the Flemish, where the bones of the martyrs lie artfully hidden...<sup>47</sup>

Especially the relation of the English – reputed for their excessive wealth – with the Roman papacy was satirized in remarks claiming the English sent large amounts of silver to Rome in order to bribe the avaricious Curia.<sup>48</sup> Gervase of Canterbury (c. 1141-c.1210) thus wrote that the archbishop of Canterbury sent large amounts of English relics to Rome – referring to the relics of the martyrs Albinus (white, silver metal) and Rufinus (red, gold metal), representing the popular image of simony and greed at the Roman Curia.<sup>49</sup> Walter Map’s etymological punning on the name R.O.M.A. as meaning Radix Omnium Malorum Avaritia (Avarice is the root of all evil) follows the same tradition.<sup>50</sup>

Whereas these attacks on Roman avarice may serve to correct behaviour, many of the early extant ethnic catalogues of invective appear to signify outbursts of ethnic sentiment among the clergy in the schools with little moral objective. Instead of containing an intent to reform, they were meant to harm or ridicule, attacking the other by deriding his appearance, character, eating and drinking habits and notably, religiosity. Clerics also took to playing games with ethnic groups’

---

47 *Tractatus Garsiae or The Translation of the Relics of SS. Gold and Silver* vs. 277-282, ed. and transl. Rodney M. Thomson (Leiden 1973), 39-31: ‘Consolamini, consolamini, popule meus, ecce Albinus venit, ecce Rufinum praesentat nobis Toletana ecclesia. Ecce tres Galliae offerunt nobis, ecce tellus Anglica, in qua renes Albini sepulti astruuntur, ad nos respicit. Ecce Flandriarum praedives sinus, ubi sanctorum martirum ossa arte condita requiescunt’; cf. Yunck, *Lineage of Lady Mead*, 74, for the translation used here.

48 Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 25-30; Yunck, *Lineage of Lady Mead*, 71-76; Peter Dronke, ‘Profane Elements in Literature’ in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, 584. For England’s wealth from the eleventh century, see further chapter 8.

49 Gervase of Canterbury, *Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. William Stubbs, 2 volumes (London 1879-1880), I 560. Cf. Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, 335. He says criticism of the papacy was generally divorced from a specific English identity until after the interdict of King John. Other references to Ruffinus and Albinus can be found at Rodney M. Thomson, ‘Introduction’, in *Tractatus Garsiae*, ed. Thomson, 8; ‘Tractatus Garsiae Toletani Canonici de Albino et Rufino’, ed. Sackur, *MGH Libelli de lite imperatorum et pontificum* 3 volumes (Hannover 1892), vol. 2 424; cf. Salimbene’s *Chronica* A. 1248, ed. Guisepppe Scalia, 227: ‘Curia Romana non curat ovem sine lana. / Presulis Albini seu martyris ossa Ruffini / Rome quisque habet, / vertere cuncta valet: / mus elephas fit, fasque nephas, de Symone Cephas’, and further references in notes 2-3 for other Goliardic verses. Albinus and Ruffinus first appear in late eleventh century verse. Walther, *Lateinische Sprichwörter* vol. 2, 83, no. 14460; Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 25-29.

50 Walter Map, *De nugis curialium* II 17, ed. James, Brooke and Mynors, 168-169.

names. The nature and context of these attacks is discussed further below. These flytings might be viewed as a factor contributing to community building, vis-à-vis the other in an international milieu. They might also serve to control social relations, as a well-ordered form of ‘play’, alleviating tensions.

### **Ethnic flytings**

In the twelfth century, invective and prose satire were especially popular in Anglo-Norman England and the northern regions of France. Whereas, according to Trevor Dean, the insults directed at individuals in slanging matches in late medieval Italy focused on three archetypes – sex, defecation, and rottenness – these ethnic jabs refer to categories of vice (arrogance, avarice), cowardice, eating and drinking customs and in some cases political power relations.<sup>51</sup> According to these ethnic jokes, even the French, so often praised as chivalrous, learned, pillars of faith, are depicted as arrogant, fickle and effeminate, lacking any real bravery.<sup>52</sup> The Normans, too, are chivalrous yet proud and cruel;<sup>53</sup> the Bretons stupid, the Flemish wealthy yet garrulous; the English, besides being intelligent, merry, and having a good sense of humour, are also drunkards, cowards, treacherous snakes, who speak terrible French.

One of the earliest extant examples of ethnic invective is in an English manuscript of the late twelfth century. It contains a large collection of twelfth-century secular Latin verse, written mostly by Anglo-Norman or northern French clerics, including poetry by the contemporaries Serlo of Wilton, Hildebert of Le Mans, anonymous Goliardic verse, and various proverbs.<sup>54</sup> Twice the scribe has copied into the margins derisory lines about ethnic groups. The narrator perhaps refers to an English cleric in Paris, reviewing the ethnicity of the students in his midst.

The French, I see, are fickle, boasting about their  
Wealth of talent, if they pursue their study.  
The Britons, I see, are girded for altercation,  
Although their Arthur never makes a show.  
The Normans trim their hair, speak with  
elegance – their native soil permitting.  
The English nobility sends me blond pupils,

---

51 Trevor Dean, *Crime and Justice in Late Medieval Italy* (Cambridge 2007), 114; see also Trevor Dean, ‘Gender and Insult in an Italian City: Bologna in the Later Middle Ages’, in *Social History* 29/2 (2004), 217-231.

52 See Bautier, ‘Peuples, provinces’, 10. The students at Orleans are called sodomites.

53 According to Potts, ‘Atque unum’, 144-145, we might interpret this double-edged reputation as an attempt to protect the Viking identity of the Normans as warriors, from accusations of becoming too soft, effeminate, as they embraced Frankish ways.

54 William D. Macray, *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae pars nona codices a viro clarissimo Kenelm Digby, Eq. Aur., anno 1634 donatos, complectens: adiecto indice nominum et rerum* (Oxford, 1883). Reprinted with corrigenda by R. W. Hunt and A. G. Watson (Oxford, 1999), 26-7.

Who shine brightly thanks to Albinus.

The Teutons are hardly Catholic, nobody's friend:

When they greet you, beware, as they are your foe!<sup>55</sup>

The anonymous author is repeating common jokes and snarls, which leave few ethnic groups untouched. The remark that the Teutons are barely Catholic is also applied to the people of Alsace and Westphalia;<sup>56</sup> the warning to be on guard can also occur in verse about the English tail-bearers, or in a misogynist context.<sup>57</sup> References to Breton stupidity are found both in Latin and late twelfth-century vernacular, expressed in sayings such as 'Neither a fat chicken nor a wise Breton'.<sup>58</sup> As Anne-Marie Bautier has remarked, the image of wrathful Britons or Bretons (*ira Britonnum*) is represented in remarks that they are quick to pick a fight, to wave their fists.<sup>59</sup> However, the tendency of the Bretons to resort to violence is presented as an act of desperation. The reference to Arthur is a common element of ridicule, belittling their belief that King Arthur will one day return and free them from the yoke of subordination. In the 1120s, William of Malmesbury had already made reference to this belief, which is known as the 'Breton Hope': 'This Arthur is the hero of many wild tales among the Britons even in our own day, but assuredly deserves to be the subject of reliable tales rather than of false and dreaming fable; for he was long the mainstay of his falling country, rousing to battle the broken spirit of his countrymen.'<sup>60</sup> Derision of the Breton's foolish belief especially came to a head in the event of Henry II's campaign to assert his feudal claim over Brittany in 1167.<sup>61</sup> This is Anglo-Norman Latin court waggery, although within a darker context of claims to dominion over Brittany.

---

55 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 53 f. 17. Walther, 'Scherz', nos 13, 97, 172, 174, 178: 'Instabiles Galli mihi sunt, predivite vena / Freti, si studium perpetuare queant. / Sunt mihi succinti Britones ad iurgia, quorum / Arturus numquam perveniendo venit. / Sunt castigati Normanni crine, faceti / Verbis, natalis si patiat humus. / Anglica nobilitas flavos mihi legat alumnos, / Quos facit Albinus preradiare comes. / Theutonici vix catholici, nullius amici: / Quando dicit Ave, sicut ab hoste cave!'

56 In the fifteenth-century manuscript Berlin Lat. Fol. 49, printed by Wattenbach, 'Aus einer Humanistenhandschrift', 823, it is the people of the Alsace who are barely Catholic, Walther, 'Scherz' nos 7 and 166B. In the *Carminum proverbialium*, 69, the Westphalians are hardly Catholic, Walther, 'Scherz', no. 193.

57 Walther, 'Scherz', no. 15.

58 , Joseph de Morawski (ed.), *Proverbes français: antérieurs au XVe siècle* (Paris 1925), 1340: 'Ne gras porci ne sage Breton.' In Wilmart, 'Florilège de Saint-Gatien', 32: 'Nec pinguis pullus, Brito nec sapiens erit ullus.' See also chapter 5.

59 Bautier, 'Peuples, provinces', 12.

60 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum* 1 8, ed. and transl. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, vol. 1, 27: 'Hic est Artur de quo Britonum nugae hodieque delirant, dignus plane quem non fallaces somniant fabulae sed veraces predicarent historiae, quippe qui labantem patriam diu sustinuerit infractasque civium mentes ad bellum acuerit.' See Echard, *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition*, 69.

61 Idem, 85-93; In the *Draco Normannicus*, a chronicle written between 1167-1169 by Etienne de Rouen, monk at Bec, are inserted spurious letters written by count Roland to Arthur, who himself replies from the Antipodes. Cf. Mildred Leake Day, 'The Letter from King Arthur to Henry II: 'Political Use of the Arthurian Legend in *Draco Normannicus*' in Glyn Burgess and Robert A. Taylor (eds), *The Spirit of the Court* (Cambridge, 1985), 153-157.

Although the verse repeats the triumphant claim that France is the home of learning, here the French are also fickle and proud. Their arrogant claim to be the receptors of knowledge and chivalry rubbed some Anglo-Normans clerics and crusading Germans up the wrong way.<sup>62</sup> In fact, only the Normans seem commendable, well-spoken, with neatly trimmed haircuts. This last remark, although reminiscent of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' description of their courtliness, is however accompanied by the curious aside that this is only the case if their native ground 'permits it'. Possibly, this is a derisory allusion to the 'degeneration' of Anglo-Norman language and culture under the influence of English customs. In the latter part of the eleventh century, authors such as William of Poitiers, the author of the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* and Baudri of Bourgueil related long hair to effeminacy and unwarlike qualities.<sup>63</sup> According to Hugh Thomas, long hair had become very fashionable first among the Anglo-Norman nobility and then among English burghers and peasants during the early years of the twelfth century.<sup>64</sup> This was much to the disdain of the Church, who from the 1090s repeatedly issued that 'no one should grow his hair long but have it cut as befits a Christian', under the threat of exclusion from Christian burial and the Church.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, at the end of the twelfth century, the well-spoken French of the Normans was firmly contrasted with the blustering Anglo-Norman tongue in jokes in Latin and the vernacular.<sup>66</sup> In the *Roman de Renart*, for instance, the fox Renart disguises himself as a *jongleur* in order to deceive wolf Ysengrimus, but he cannot even conjugate the simple verb *être*.<sup>67</sup> Anglo-Normans were deigned to speak 'Marlborough French',

---

62 See further chapter 9.

63 William of Poitiers writes of the amazement at the long hair of some English hostages brought back to Normandy by William the Conqueror in *Gesta Guillelmi* II 44, eds Davis and Chibnall, 178-180. See Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, 50-51; Bartlett, 'Symbolic Meanings of Hair', 43-60; Henri Platelle, 'La Problème du scandale', 1071-1096; Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain and Ireland', 13-15; Williams, 188-190.

64 Thomas, *The English and the Normans*, 55 and 247.

65 Such as at the Council of Rouen in 1096. Orderic Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica* IX 3, ed. and transl. Marjorie Chibnall, vol. 5, 22. On the other hand, William of Malmesbury denounces the English at Hastings as drunkards with 'hair short, chin shaven, arms loaded with gold bracelets, skin tattooed with coloured patterns, eating till they were sick and drinking till they spewed'; cf. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum* III 245, ed. and transl. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, vol. 1, 458-459: 'crines tonsi, barbas rasi, armillis aureis brachia onerati, picturatis stigmatibus cutem insigniti; in cibis urgentes crapulam, in potibus irritantes vomitam'.

66 See especially Peter Rickard, *Britain in Medieval Literature, 1100-1500* (Cambridge, 1956), 163-87; Rosemary Morris, 'King Arthur and the growth of French nationalism' in *France and the British Isles in the Middle ages and Renaissance* (Woodbridge, 1991), 115-29, here at 119-20; Schulze-Busacker, 'French Conceptions of Foreigners and Foreign Languages', 39-40; John Matzke, 'Some Examples of French as Spoken by Englishmen in Old French Literature' in *MP* 3 (1905/6), 47-61; Charles H. Livingston, 'The Fabliau Des deux Anglais et de l'anel' in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 40 (1925), 217-24 for another example of ridicule of the French dialect spoken in England; Elisabeth Schulze-Busacker, 'Renart, le jongleur étranger. Analyse thématique et linguistique à partir de la branche Ib du Roman de Renart', in *Nieder-deutsche Studien* 30 (1981), 380-391.

67 Rickard, *Britain in Medieval Literature*, 171. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, 489.

confusing the gender of nouns, forgetting syllables and generally muddling up their vocabulary, just like the English pilots hidden in René's café in the television comedy *'Allo 'Allo*.<sup>68</sup>

Two folia further along in the same manuscript, the scribe has inserted another collection of proverbial ethnic jabs, 'Italians sell all things both sacred and profane'.<sup>69</sup> Here Italy is substituted for Rome. It opens with an attack on Rome's (Italy's) insatiable thirst for money, and further refers to the eating and drinking customs of the Flemish and English (drinking beer), to Breton writing and the singing of those people in the Auvergne. This time, however, the compiler seems decidedly positive about the French, who are victorious in battle but do not occasion war unless provoked. However, the collection of proverbs also appears in an extended version in a thirteenth-century manuscript now held at the British Library.<sup>70</sup> Here, the Germans are denounced as barely Catholic. This time, however, the Normans are considered of the most treacherous character:

The Italians sell all things both sacred and profane.  
 All reprehend the Burgundians for their treachery.  
 The Teutons are hardly Catholic, nobody's friend.  
 For you, Flemish, there is food and beer.  
 The Normans are nourished on watery beer;  
 They are cunning, puffed-up, liars, fickle, insidious.  
 The French are usually victorious, but do not inflict harm unprovoked.  
 The Normans are usually treacherous and avoid battle.  
 The Auvergnac sings, the Breton writes, England drinks.<sup>71</sup>

Such proverbial ridicule was collected and tailored to the ethnic sentiments of the scribe. Some of the remarks are light-hearted, some rather vicious. In view of the broad dissemination of these remarks in both Latin epigrams, historiography and vernacular writings, there is evidence that clerics used these stereotypes both in the schools and at the courts; the Breton stupidity, for example, was also entertained in court ridicule of their claims to autonomy. These collections remained popular throughout the later Middle Ages, appearing in dozens of variants. In the thirteenth century, an

---

68 For the continuity of Norman identity in relation to the territory of Normandy, instead of to a shared common descent, see Nick Webber, *The Evolution of Norman Identity 911-1154* (Woodbridge 2005), especially 175-80.

69 Walther, 'Scherz', no. 136. Printed in *Archives des missions scientifiques et littéraires* (Paris 1868), 2nd series vol. 5, 183. MS. Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 53 f. 16r: 'Romani que non sacra sunt atque que sacra vendunt / Prodere Romanis mos est belloque pavere. / Vincere Francigenis mos est, non sponte nocere. / Gens, tibi, Flandrigena cibus est et potus avena. / Avernus cantat, Brito notat, Anglia potat.'

70 MS London, BM. Vespasian B. XIII f. 123r. Walther, 'Scherz' no. 101; *Initia carminum* no. 9661. Source printed in Wright and Halliwell, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, vol. 1, 5.

71 'Italici, que non sacra sunt et que sacra, vendunt. / Allobrogas de perfidia cuncti reprehendunt. / Gens, tibi, Flandrena, cibus est et potus avena, / Gens Normannigena fragili nutritur avena, / Subdola, ventosa, mendax, levis, insidiosa. / Vincere mos est Francigenis nec sponte nocere. / Prodere mos [the manuscript reads dos] Normannigenis belloque pavere. / Alvernus cantat, Brito notat, Anglia potat.' Cf. note 69.



extensive catalogue was drawn up focusing predominantly on the German territories of which many variants appear in late medieval manuscripts.<sup>72</sup> A fifteenth-century probably German verse, breathing the Goliardic tradition of itinerant scholars, playfully bemoans the flight of a wandering clerk, fleeing from Flanders' butter, the drinking of the Bohemians, the Fallacious Hungarians.<sup>73</sup>

As such, the hustle and bustle of the schools and courts, frequented by men of various ethnic backgrounds, was a stage where ethnic identities took on sharper edges. Although some jokes were seemingly harmless, others were direct assaults. This is especially the case in the attacks on ethnic names, represented in both glosses to manuals of rhetoric and debate verse. From these sources a picture emerges of biting mockery, sometimes counter-attacked by using irony. These examples point to strong awareness of ethnic identity in this period.

### Name games

One of the key components of ethnic identity is a people's name; attaching a name to a group indicates and labels the group to which a person belongs. As Isidore of Seville had taught, in medieval thinking the etymology of a name was considered a reflection of a person or thing's essence.<sup>74</sup> Making a play on individual or group names is thus potentially an effective tool to ridicule and humiliate, as it can profoundly affect a person as an attack on a core component of identity. Jokes about names could thus be jokes about a core element of group identity.

Names of ethnic groups could be etymologized as springing from their eponymous founder, often of Trojan descent. In his early twelfth-century *History of the British Kings*, Geoffrey of Monmouth had awarded the Britons a Trojan ancestry from Brutus, the grandson of Ascanius.<sup>75</sup> In invective, it was not a huge step, then, to make a play on Brutus and claim that the British were brutes. A variant on the common attack on the British as stupid was thus delivered by William of Newburgh (c. 1136-c. 1198), who wrote that the Britons' name came from stupid, which explained their gullibility in believing Geoffrey of Monmouth's fabrications in his *History of the British Kings*.<sup>76</sup>

The glosses to Évrard of Béthune's *Graecismus* are full of ethnic name games, especially in reaction to Marbod's passage on the superiority of the Angevins which was itself incorporated in the *Graecismus*.<sup>77</sup> In general, glosses on the *Graecismus* can be termed Francophone, mentioning France's superiority in warfare, arms, and wisdom.<sup>78</sup> Évrard of Béthune, however, elaborates on the passage about the Angevins by also including the 'claim of a common servant' that '*astin* means

72 Haye, 'Deutschland und die deutschen Lande', 309; see chapter 5 note 76.

73 'Quo miser exul venio turbine perfusus?', printed in Paul Lehmann, *Mitteilungen aus Handschriften*, 9 volumes (Munich 1929-1950), vol. 1, 28; cf. Walther, 'Scherz', no. 143.

74 See chapter 1.

75 Koht, *Dawn of Nationalism*, 270-271. Nennius was the first to award the British with Trojan descent in the ninth century.

76 *Idem*, 272.

77 Évrard of Béthune, *Graecismus* III vs. 10, ed. Ioh. Wrobel (Bratislava 1887), viii.

78 See chapter 5 note 73. The manuscript, BN Latin 15133 is discussed in Hauréau, *Notices et extraits* vol. 4, 280-289.

towns and *anda* shit, hence they are called Angevins'.<sup>79</sup> There are earlier references to the same Latin pun already being employed in a political context. In a verse rendered here in Latin, in order to convey the pun, the motif *nomen est omen* is fully present:

Sicut Pictavis nomen trahit ex ave picta,  
Sic est Andegavis volucris de stercore dicta.  
Stercus avis sonat Andegavis: de stercore nomen  
Urbs tua contraxit, quia sic tibi contulit omen.<sup>80</sup>

The context, according to Wilhelm Wattenbach, was the papal election of 1130, in which Poitiers and Anjou represented the two rival camps of Popes Anacletus and Innocent II.<sup>81</sup> It is nonetheless difficult to ascertain whether this verbal attack was echoing an already existent pun on the name of the Angevins. The same image is contained in another gloss on Évrard of Béthune's *Graecismus*, explicitly stating that the city of Anjou was built on a foundation of bird excrement.<sup>82</sup> In response, another gloss on the text directly targets the etymology of Poitou and Anjou:

Just as Poitevin comes from a 'painted bird',  
Thus Anjou is said to come from bird shit.  
Just as a painted bird does not represent the truth,  
Thus the people here always want to fill words with falsities.<sup>83</sup>

In this case, the gloss targets the 'essence' of the name Anjou as revealed through etymology.

---

79 Évrard of Béthune, *Graecismus* VIII vs. 28-29, ed. Ioh. Wrobel, 28: 'Ut mediastinus probat, astin denotat urbem, / Andaque stercus, ab hinc dicitur Andegavis.'

80 'Just as Poitevin comes from a painted bird, Thus Anjou is said to come from bird shit. / Birdshit sounds like Angevin, your town's name is based on shit, as the omen says of you.' The verse, 'Est ratio quare bafio dici merearis', is printed in W. Wattenbach, 'Mittheilungen aus Handschriften', in *Neues Archiv* 8 (1883) 191-193, from a thirteenth-century manuscript (MS Vienna 840 f. 63). A little further, the folio explicitly mentions that in Greek *anda* means excrement: 'Stercus et andec [anda?] idem dixerunt significare / Qui crecas [Grecas?] voces studuerunt notificare.'

81 The author of the verse was a supporter of Anacletus and Count William VIII of Poitiers, who had expelled Bishop William of Poitiers, supporter of Innocent II, from the town. Bishop Ulger of Anjou also supported Innocent II.

82 Évrard of Béthune, *Graecismus* VIII 29, ed. Wrobel (1887), 28: 'Anda graece est stercus latine et inde Andegavis et est nomen civitatis et derivatur a stercoribus avium, qui ubi invenerunt stercora avium ibi fundaverunt civitatem.' Cf. Bautier, 'Peuples, provinces', 13-4, notes 71-2.

83 The manuscript, BN Latin 15133 is discussed in Hauréau, *Notices et extraits* vol. 4, 280-289, here at 284: 'Sicut Pictavis nomen trahit ex ave picta, / Sic est Andegavis avium de stercore dicta. / Sicut avis picta verum non denotat esse, / Sic gens hinc dicta falsis vult semper inesse.' In MS BN Latin 8427 it says: 'Andaque, stercus ab hinc, dicitur Andegavis'; cf. *Histoire littéraire de la France*. XIII siècle, vol. 30, 296; Walther, 'Scherz', no. 160. The Florilegium of St Gatien only contains the first two lines, in a slightly different version: 'Sicut Pictavis nomen trait ex ave picta, / Sic est Andegavis volucris de stercore dicta'; cf. Wilmart, 'Le florilège de Saint-Gatien', 28. The same manuscript (on page 32) contains a positive verse on Poitou: 'Pictavis aurea, Gloria terrea, terra quietis, / utilis aere, clarior ethere, plena poetis.' Cf. Walther, 'Scherz', no. 128; Bautier, 'Peuples, provinces', 13.

Of course, attacks might be harmless prods between jesting clerics. Yet the general tendency was to sharply ridicule and attack ethnic identities, sometimes targeting the religiosity of peoples. Another gloss etymologized that ‘the Allebroges come from *allos*, i.e. foreign, and *broge*, faith, as if foreign to faith. Certainly a man from Burgundy is a traitor.’<sup>84</sup> These attacks were directed especially at groups in Northern and Eastern Europe, from the German territories, and at the English; there is a range of proverbs warning to be one’s guard when greeted by a German or Englishman, as they are barely Catholic or, where the English are concerned, treacherous.<sup>85</sup> These insults directly questioned the veracity of religious belief; in the case of the English, moreover, they challenged the notion of their chosenness and the very humanity of its people. The ‘joke’ of the English tailed man, and attacks on the etymology of the word *Anglus*, were especially angular assaults on their identity.

### Tailed Englishmen

Bartholomaeus Anglicus, in his encyclopaedic *On the Properties of Things*, elaborately explains how the name *Angli* was etymologized from *angelus*, angel, or *angulo*, corner. The angelic etymology goes back to the story of Gregory the Great’s encounter with the young, angel-faced slaves at a market in Italy, told by Bede.<sup>86</sup> Gregory himself, engaged in some dexterous punning, realizes the potential of conversion – foreshadowed by their beautiful angelic faces – and subsequently sends Augustine on a mission to proselytize in this corner, *angulo*, of the world. This episode forms part of the foundation of the conversion and the myth of chosenness of the Anglo-Saxons.

In the twelfth century, the reputation of the English was double-edged. On the one hand, Anglo-Norman clerics praised the English as intelligent, generous, and merry. As discussed in chapter 8, in the aggregate these characteristics corresponded to the character traits of courtliness which the clerics attributed to themselves. At the same time, negative stereotypes of perfidy, cowardice and drunkenness were also circulating.<sup>87</sup> Another recurring motif was that of the tailed Englishman (*Anglus caudatus*), which in the thirteenth century evolved into the image of the Englishman who hatched eggs.<sup>88</sup>

In this period, images of perfidy and drunkenness, the etymology of the English name, as well as their beast-like tails, are all attacked in the same breath. In a gloss on Alexander Neckam’s *On Instruments*, the etymological attack on the Angevins is thus transposed onto the English: ‘*Anglia*,

84 Hauréau, *Notices et extraits* vol. 4, 284: ‘Allobroga dicitur ab allos, quod est alienum, et broge, fides, quasi alienus a fide. Scilicet homo de Burgundia, id est proditor.’

85 Walther, ‘Scherz’, nos 7, 15, 178.

86 Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica* II 1, ed. and transl. Colgrave and Mynors, 132-135.

87 See chapter 8-9.

88 For the tailed Englishman see George Neilson, *Caudatus Anglicus: a Medieval Slander* in *Transactions of the Glasgow Archaeological Society, new series*, 2 (1896); Diederik T. Enklaar, *De gestaarte Engelsman* (Amsterdam 1955); Lilian M.C. Randall, ‘A Medieval Slander’, *The Art Bulletin* 42/1 (1960), 25-38; Peter Scott Brown, ‘Scoundrels and *Scurrilitas* at St-Pierre de Sévignac’, in Cohen and Firnhaber-Baker (eds), *Difference and Identity*, 197-226, here at 217.

that is to say *Anglicus*, comes from *anda*, that is shit, or from *angue*, because it stings with its tail like a snake, or from *angulo*, or from *angelus*.<sup>89</sup> The etymology of the English name is here related to defecation, the evil prelapsarian snake, the tail, or the traditional references to a corner or an angel.

In some cases, etymological references were used in a political context. Between 1157 and 1161, Frenchman Pierre Riga wrote an attack on King Henry II, on occasion of his broken promise to King Louis VII regarding the marriage of their young progeny.<sup>90</sup> In reference to the etymology of *Anglus* as angelic or a corner, Riga retorts:

Name and deed do not correspond well.  
 To scrutinize the purport of the name: either English sounds  
 Like an angel or Angelic like English.  
 Take note: he is English, no angel, not worthy  
 Of heaven, but a corner of crime, indeed crime itself.<sup>91</sup>

As said, the image of the tailed Englishman is tied directly to the conversion, after Gregory had seen their angelic faces, of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. The oldest known source, produced by the Flemish Benedictine monk Goscelin of St Bertin (died c. 1035-c. 1107), relates how St Augustine, on his mission, encountered resistance among the inhabitants of Dorset, who were said to have attached fishtails to the saint's behind, thus forever condemning their progeny to having tails.<sup>92</sup>

---

89 J.B. Hauréau, *Notices et extraits de quelques manuscrits latins de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (6 volumes, Paris 1890-1893), vol. 3, 203-204: 'Anglia, inde Anglicus, ab ande, quod est stercus, vel ab angue, quia pungit cum cauda sicut anguis, vel ab angulo, vel ab angelus.' According to Hauréau, the manuscript dates from the first part of the thirteenth century. The glossator was possibly French; 'Gallus means bird, Gallus means a people, and Gallus means a poet. Gallus is a river and known for its priests.' Ibidem: 'Gallus avis, Gallus populus Gallusque poeta / Est fluvius Gallus presbyterumque notat.' Cf. the thirteenth-century Franciscan William Brito's *Expositiones vocabulorum biblie* (circa 1250/1270), which says that the sibyls called the Gallic priest weak and effeminate. Cf. Charles-Victor Langlois, 'Les Anglais du Moyen Âge d'après les sources francaises' in *Revue historique* 52.2 (1893), 298-315, here at 309.

90 See further chapter 8.

91 Hauréau, 'Un poème inédit', 8: 'Nec bene respondent nomen opusque sibi. / Nominis augurium scrutare: vel angelus Anglus / Ille, vel Angelicus Anglicus ille sonat. / Facta notes: Anglus, non angelus est, neque coelo / Dignus, sed sceleris angulus, imo scelus.' Another, possibly late medieval, saying about the treacherous, 'angelic' nature of the English is: 'Anglicus angelus est cui numquam credere fas est', printed by R. Peiper, 'Europaischer Völkerspigel', in *Anzeiger für Kunde der deutschen Vorzeit* 4 (1874) 102-106, here at 104; Walther, 'Lateinische Verseinträge', 308; Walther, 'Scherz', no. 16. The angelic nature of the English is also ridiculed by the Peter, the Breton, in Lawrence of Durham's twelfth-century *Dialogi* III vs. 207-222, ed. Raine, 37-38, ransl. Rigg, 'Lawrence of Durham: Dialogues', 79.

92 Goscelin of St Bertin, *Life of St Augustine* I 41, *Patrologia Latina* 80, Col 0082B-0082D: 'Fama est, illos effulminandos, prominentes marinorum piscium caudas sanctis appendisse; et illis quidem gloriam sempiternam peperisse, in se vero ignominiam perennem retorsisse, ut hoc dedecus degeneranti generi, non innocenti et generosae imputetur patriae.' According to Goscelin, *Life of St Augustine*, the inhabitants of Rochester attack the saint by attaching fish tails; this is repeated by William of Malmesbury writing about Dorsetshire, and later by Wace, *Roman de Brut 13711-13744*, ed. and transl. Weiss, 345, where all the descendants of the town dwellers are damned; Neilson, 'Medieval Slander', 4-5. Enklaar, *Gestaarte*

According to Wace (c. 1100-1171/83), writing in Old French, Augustine prayed to God in Dorchester to dishonour and disgrace those who remained deaf to his preaching, wreaking upon them his anger and judgment, perpetually shaming the inhabitants. However, it also soon became a popular image used to ridicule the English in general, not only in satirical literature such as the *Ysengrimus* but for example by the students in Paris, as theologian Jacques de Vitry (c. 1160-1240) tells us.<sup>93</sup> In the poet's Layamon's thirteenth-century Old English version of the *Brut*, the myth was extended to include all Englishmen, of whom every free man spoke foul, shaming red-faced English free men in foreign countries, where they were called 'muglings'.<sup>94</sup> The tale was also confused with an incident occurring on the night before the murder of Thomas Becket (c. 1120-1170), when his adversaries cut off one of his horses' tails.<sup>95</sup> This spurious version was then encapsulated in sayings such as 'You, laughing Englishman, cut off the mule's tail: or are you an English serpent? I'm not sure, the tail is hidden.'<sup>96</sup>

By the thirteenth century, in a debate verse by Henry of Avranches, the highly common image of English drinking is mentioned in the same breath as their tailed behinds, the butt of so many jokes directed at for example the Anglo-Norman knights in Richard Lionheart's army during the Third Crusade.<sup>97</sup> The verse is part of a debate poem (the initial attack by the Englishman is probably missing), in which a German named Conrad attacks the English fiercely:

When the tailed English, who were born for drinking cups,  
 Are filled up, it is with the seed of Brutus.  
 Then they throw themselves into the fray, boasting they are a glorious people,  
 Bringing death to all, belching with bursting bellies,

---

*Engelsman*, 14-15 refers to their refusal of Christianity, repeated by John Major in the sixteenth century, where men in Dorset throw fish tails at Augustine. Cf. Randall, 'Medieval Slander', 34-35.

93 Enklaar, *Gestaarte Engelsman*, 3. Cf. *Ysengrimus: text with translation, commentary and introduction*, ed. and transl. Jill Mann, (Leiden 1987), attributed to Master Nivardus, and written in Gent circa 1148/9, at III 659, transl. Mann, 334: 'Non habet hic caudam, velut Anglicus alter habebat', and at V 1041-1042, transl. Mann 472: 'Pravior Angligena caudato partis inique / Quidam rufus ad hec dogmata clamat ouans.'. Cf. also the twelfth-century Provençal poet Peire D'Auvergne, who speaks of the English as *coüitz*, in ed. Zenker, *Die Lieder Peire's von Auvergne*, 110. Richard of Devizes mentions that Richard I and his crusader knights at Messina after 1190 were called *caudati* by the Greeks and Sicilians. Cf. Richard of Devizes, *Chronicle*, ed. Appleby, 18-19. In *Richard Coer de Lyon*, the Emperor of Cyprus uses the tailed image in retort, as well as when captured by the 'King of Allemayne'. Cf. *Der mittelenglische Versroman über Richard Löwenherz*, ed. Brunner, 194, as well as references at 117, 180, 196; Neilson, 'Medieval Slander', 7-8.

94 Layamon, *Brut vs. 14756-14772*, eds Barron and Weinberg, 758-759.

95 Cf. Neilson, 'Medieval Slander', 6-7. It apparently occurred on Christmas Eve 1170. In the twelfth century, it is also related to the figure of Bevis of Hampton, tails attributed to descendants giant in Bevis' service. Cf. P. Rickard, 'Anglois Coué and L'Anglois qui couve', in *French Studies. A Quarterly Review* 7 (1953), 48-55, here at 49.

96 *Anecdota Bedae, Lanfranci et aliorum: Inedited tracts, letters, poems etc. of Venerable Bede, Lanfranc, Tatwin*, ed. Giles (New York 1851), 96: 'Te ridens Anglus mulo caudam amputate: anne / Est Anglus serpens? Nescio, cauda latet'; Cf. Walther, 'Scherz', no. 176.

97 Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Phantasy* (New York 2003), 92-96.

For they are unwarlike weavers and fullers.<sup>98</sup>

The Germans, on the other hand, are not a royal but an imperial people, subject only to Rome, strong, triumphant, impetuous, with their golden hair and tall bodies. (Afterwards, the Englishman defends himself by referring to his own generosity, contrary to the German who is reviled throughout the world like a dog). According to Henry, the miserable British – Henry of Avranches seems to use words synonymously – the English/British might take a leaf out of their book:<sup>99</sup>

But you, o miserable British, slow to altercation,  
Whose belly is your God, and abyss of food.<sup>100</sup>  
Full of the dregs of beer and without wisdom,  
You honour Bacchus when darkness falls;  
Then Venus appears, applying her lewd potion...<sup>101</sup>

In the fourteenth century, in *Ly Myreur des Histors*, Jean d'Outremeuse further elaborated by linking the English ancestry to the descendants of Cain (the forebear of servile peasants); whether his clarification is original, or older, is difficult to ascertain.<sup>102</sup> Other remarks related the tail-bearing to the female gender, such as Etienne de Bourbon's question why females do not have tails similar to the English.<sup>103</sup> These images of the tailed Englishman, which seem directed at Anglo-Saxon identity, containing elements of servility, weakness, and treachery, were essentially a vicious attack on the humanity of the Anglo-Saxons, referring their animal-like nature. At the end of the thirteenth century, a monk from Silli (in northern Hainaut) wrote an extremely scathing diatribe against King

---

98 Printed in Josiah Cox Russell and John Paul Heironimus (eds), *The Shorter Latin Poems of Master Henry of Avranches Relating to England* (Cambridge Mass. 1935), no. 93 vs. 5-9: 'Angli caudati, qui sunt ad pocula nati, / cum sunt imbuti, tunc sunt de semine Bruti; / prelia tunc tractant, quod sunt gens inclita iactant, / dant omnes leto, ructantes ventre repleto, / cum sint imbelles textores vel paripelles.'

99 For the meaning and use of the names Anglia and Britannia, see chapter 8 notes 21-23.

100 Cf. Phillipians 3:17-19: 'Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.'

101 Russell and Heironimus (eds), *The Shorter Latin Poems of Master Henry*, no. 93 vs. 15-19 and 29: 'Sed vos, O miseri Britones, ad prelia seri, / est venter quorum deus atque vorago ciborum, / vos fece cervisie pleni vacuique sophie / precolitis Bacum suberit cum tempus opacum; / tunc Venus obscena subit apponendo vene<na>.'

102 Only the inhabitants of Canterbury and Dorchester still have tails. The first Angles had tails; those of pure lineage retained their tails, the others have been murdered. Those who were the product of intermarriage lost them. The tail bearers had been unwilling to embrace Christianity, it took Augustine two years. They descended from the King Englans, originating from Engle, a region near the Tower of Babel. Enklaar, *Gestaarte Engelsman*, 4. Eustache Duchamps, joking about tails and drinking, questions what the Englishman should do with his tail in Balade 868, on a visit to Calais. Cf. Iris Black, 'An accidental Tourist in the Hundred Years' War: Images of the foreign World in Eustache Deschamps', in Forde, Johnson, and Murray (eds), *Concepts of National Identity*, 171-187, here at 177-178.

103 Randall, 'Medieval Slander', 34.

Edward I and the English, referring to scorpions' tales and treachery.<sup>104</sup> By the late thirteenth century, in the wars between England and Scotland, men shouted before battle that the English were *canes caudatos*, tailed dogs; or apes. They were also compared to rats in the early fourteenth century, or eels.<sup>105</sup> In addition, in the thirteenth century, the image arose that they hatched eggs, as the Old French *cové* meant both to hatch and 'tailed', implying stupidity, brooding and scheming.<sup>106</sup> In the fourteenth century, in a commentary of Benvenuto d'Imola, the Gascons were thus said to have wolves' tails, the English snakes' tails.<sup>107</sup>

Testimony to the fact that the use of the image of the tailed Englishman caused affront can be found in Matthew Paris' *Chronica Majora*. In 1250, during the Sixth Crusade, a dispute arose between Robert of Artois and the Templars and Hospitaller knights, who were blamed for conniving with the Saracens and deliberately procuring the failure of the Crusades. William Longuespée tries to intervene to calm tempers and placate Robert of Artois, referring to the divide between East and West, and the Saracens' strength and craft, which the Templars had experienced before. However, Robert of Artois retorted and, 'shouting as the French do and swearing indecently, gave tongue to the following invective in the hearing of many: "How cowardly these timid people with tails are! How blessed, how clean, this army would be if purged of tails and tailed people!" The shamed William, provoked and upset by these insulting words, replied: "Count Robert, I shall assuredly advance unafraid of any danger of impending death. We shall be today, I fancy, where you will not dare to touch my horse's tail." And, putting on their helmets and unfurling their banners they resumed their advance against their enemies, who covered a spacious plain, and the hills and valleys on all sides.'<sup>108</sup>

---

104 See also comment end thirteenth century in John of Oxenedes on the Barons' War: 'Anglicus est caudatus plenus versutiis fallax et instabilis et exanimatus.' Neilson, 'Medieval Slander', 10

105 Enklaar, *Gestaarte Engelsman*, 11-14.

106 The joke is mentioned in the early second part 13th century in the *Vie de St. Remi*. In fourteenth-century manuscripts there is also mention of Bretons hatching eggs. Cf. Randall, 'Medieval Slander', 36.

107 'Vascones, dit Benvenuto, dicuntur in partibus. Gallie habere caudam lupinam propter rapacitatem, juxta illud: Anglicus anguinam fert caudam, Vasco lupinam.' Langlois, 'Les Anglais du Moyen Âge', 309-310; Cf. *Notes and Queries* 4 February 1893, 108; see also 18 February 1893, 155 and 28 January 83-84.

108 Matthew Paris, *Cronica Majora* anno 1250, ed. Luard, vol. 5, 151, transl. Richard Vaughan, *The Illustrated Chronicles of Matthew Paris; Observations of Thirteenth-Century Life* (Gloucester 1993), 169: 'more Gallico reboans et indecenter jurans, audientibus multis os in haec convitia resolvit, dicens: "O timidorum caudatorum formidolositas, quam beatus, quam mundus praesens foret exercitus, si a caudis purgaretur et caudatis." Quod audiens Willelmus verecundatus, et de verbi offendiculo laccessitus et commotus, respondit: "O comes Roberte, certe procedam imperterritus ad quaeque imminetia mortis pericula. Erimus, credo, hodie, ubi non audebis caudam equi mei attingere." Et apponentes galeas et explicatis signis progressum contra hostes, qui spatiosam planiciem, montes, et valles undique cooperuerunt.' A similar incident is related in Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. Luard, vol 5, 134. Robert Artois had claimed the booty won by the English; after William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, complained about this to Robert Artois' brother French King Louis IX, to no avail, and left for Acre, the following was said: 'fertur etiam comes Atrebatensis super his dixisse cum cachinno. "Nunc bene mundatur magnificorum exercitus Francorum a caudatis." Quod in multorum auribus offendiculum generavit.' Cf. *Chronicle of Lanercost*, on the defeat of 1217 at Lincoln: 'Rex in Rupella / regnat et amodo bella. / Non timet Anglorum / quia caudas fregit eorum.' In reply, the English claimed to use tails

Ethnic ridicule and invective, expressed verbally on social platforms, might sharpen identities and humiliate the ethnic other. By ridiculing the other, internal group solidarity and awareness might increase. As said above, these flytings might also serve as a release mechanism for inhibiting emotions, creating order through play, typically in oral societies. In his twelfth-century description of London, William FitzStephen tells us how on feastdays young clerics engaged in flytings as if they were in a wrestling match, where ‘boys of different schools strive against each other in verses, or contend about the principles of grammar and the rules governing the past and future tenses. Others use epigrams, rhythm and metre in the old trivial banter; they pull their comrades to pieces with “Fescennine [scurrilous] Licence”, mentioning no names, they dart abuse and gibes, and mock the faults of their comrades and sometimes even those of their elders, using Socratic wit and biting harder even than the tooth of Theon in daring dithyrambics. Their hearers, ready to enjoy the joke, wrinkle up their noses as they guffaw in applause.’<sup>109</sup> This raises the question how these attacks functioned as means of expressing superiority and humiliation of the other, but also as ‘aggressive games’ in which social tensions could be relieved and order created through disciplined aggression. Moreover, Geraldine Heng has emphasized that negative stereotypes could serve as negotiating tools which the ethnic other could appropriate as badges of identity worn with pride. In the vernacular *Richard Coer de Lyon*, for example, King Richard takes to joking about tails in references to homosexuality.<sup>110</sup> These final questions will be approached through examination of a number of passages from Boncompagno da Signa’s university lectures on the art of rhetoric, performed at Bologna in the early parts of the thirteenth century. How the use of stereotypes in these lectures might have enhanced feelings both of superiority, and humiliation, forging stronger identities but also relieving tensions, is discussed below.

### **Dissolving ethnic tensions**

Besides morally denouncing the other as inferior, ethnic ridicule, employed within an international setting, can also disarm hostile relations, creating a more extensive ‘us group’. Nicolino Applauso has examined how invective and curses employed in late medieval Italian city-states functioned within social relations, political and religious contexts, civic chaos and violence. As he argues,

---

to hang the French: ‘Ad nostras caudas / Francos, ductos et alaudas / Perstrinxit restis: / superset Lincolnia testis.’ Charles, brother of French King, also compares tailed Englishmen to dogs. Cf. Neilson, *Medieval Slander*, 8-9; Enklaar, *Gestaarte Engelsman*, 4.

109 William FitzStephen, *Descriptio Nobilissimi Civitatis Londoniae* XI, in *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber albus, Liber costumarum, et Liber Horn*, ed. Henry Thomas Riley (3 volumes, London 1860), vol. 2, 6: ‘Pueri diversarum scholarum inter se versibus conrixantur, aut de principiis artis grammaticae, aut de regulis praeteritorum vel futurorum contendunt. Sunt alii qui in epigrammatibus, rhythmis, et metris, utuntur vetere illa triviali dicacitate; licentia Fescennina socios, suppressis nominibus, liberius lacerant; loedorias jaculantur et scommata; salibus Socraticis sociorum, vel forte majorum, vitia tangent; ne mordacius dente rodant procaciori, audacioribus convitiis. Auditores “multum ridere parati / Ingeminant tremulos naso crispante cachinnos”.’ An English translation is printed in David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway (transl.), *English Historical Documents* (12 volumes, London 1953), vol. 2, no. 281, 1024-1030, here at 1025-1026.

110 Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 92-96.



invective ‘emerges from and reflects an ethical engagement’ and its confrontational nature may serve as a tool to resolve tensions, as a release mechanism.<sup>111</sup> Humour can also defuse hostility, releasing inhibitions, condensing and displacing aggression.<sup>112</sup> This was also argued by Martha Bayless, who writes that religious humour, instead of being subversive and disruptive, could serve a cathartic function. In repetitive social systems, ritual rebellion (such as in the inversion of carnival) acting out conflicts emphasizes the social cohesion within which these conflicts exist. Role reversal, for example, thus served to ease tension between different social groups.<sup>113</sup> As long as invective was recognized as play among adults, its form of humour could also encourage group cohesion.<sup>114</sup> It might serve as mechanism releasing tensions, disciplining aggression.

Schools and universities (but also locations of pilgrimage or crusading armies) were sites where men of different ethnic backgrounds gathered.<sup>115</sup> That these places of encounter might be a stage of animosity is evident from Jacques de Vitry’s remark about stereotyping and violence in twelfth-century Paris. In view of the relational aspect of identity, discussed above, the resonance of stereotypes employed might thus have further sharpened awareness of ethnic identities.<sup>116</sup> The language of ethnic invective employed in these international educational centres was deliberately aggressive and amusing. Indeed, in accordance with the rules of rhetoric, use of invective and humour in education gained the attention of the students. It may also, however, have served as a means to express and defuse tensions among groups with different backgrounds. Closer examination of the writings of one rhetorician, Boncompagno da Signa, might offer some insights. Boncompagno da Signa (c. 1165-1240) taught in Bologna, the only town where the *ars dictaminis* was studied as a separate discipline, in front of an international audience of students.

The rhetorical precept to attack character in a verbal assault, *genus demonstrativum*, was practised in extenso by this highly colourful, not to say brash, rhetorician. Boncompagno’s lively readings in rhetoric were extremely popular and attracted large crowds; poor students were allowed to attend for free. The story of how he conceived the *Palma* (c. 1198), the manual in letter writing under consideration here, is remarkable. More than any other rhetorician, Boncompagno was known for his distaste for the highly ornate, artificial, classicistic rhetoric taught in French cathedral schools such as Orleans. Instead, he championed the use of simple, efficient, original language – even dismissing the influence of Cicero in his own teachings.<sup>117</sup> He deplored artificiality, ornate amplification, and even broke a lance for the employment of the singular pronoun ‘ego’ and ‘tu’

---

111 Applauso, *Curses*, 3.

112 Idem, 12-13.

113 Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 189.

114 Idem, 191-192. Bayless refers here to Johan Huizinga’s argument in *Homo ludens*.

115 See Schmugge, ‘Über “nationale” Vorurteile’.

116 See Weeda, ‘Ethnic Stereotyping in Twelfth-Century Paris’.

117 The *ars dictaminis* was influential especially in the French cathedral schools of Tours, Orleans and Meung, although here more rooted in a grammatical rather than rhetorical-legal tradition. Camargo, ‘Rhetoric’, 109-110.

instead of the common ‘nos’ and ‘vos’ in letter writing.<sup>118</sup> The *dictatores*’ goal was practical, to persuade an audience in contemporary language, conforming to the customs and prejudices of their day.<sup>119</sup> But Boncompagno’s tone was arrogant and his ridicule of the followers of the school of Orleáns made him enemies in both that city and in Bologna. After publication of his *Quinque tabulae salutationum*, his adversaries in the Bolognese *collegium* consequently plotted revenge, at least according to Boncompagno. Upon obtaining a copy of the manuscript they erased the title, wetted the pages, and let them hang in smoke, supposedly aging the parchment. They then convened a meeting of masters and students and charged Boncompagno of theft, of strutting with borrowed plumes – of plagiarism. After all, they had found an old manuscript containing the same text, about a century old. Seemingly, the audacity of claiming to invent original material instead of drawing from the ancients was unforgiveable.

It is not unlikely that Boncompagno made up this story himself, staging a clever plot in which he lets his adversaries consider originality as a crime to be punished by setting up a trap of plagiarism (thus implicitly acknowledging the value of originality). According to his account, he was subsequently jeered off by his opponents; his reputation in shreds, Boncompagno retreated into seclusion for nine days. When he reemerged, he bore with him the *Palma*, which he proceeded to read out loud in public.<sup>120</sup> Like Abelard a century before him, the intellectual battle was fought out in front of an audience, and egos were headstrong.

Boncompagno performed before a live audience of different ethnic and social groups, reciting his precepts of invective orally.<sup>121</sup> This is an abbreviated passage from what he read out loud, which I quote in full as it might offer insight into how such a text solicited reactions and stirred emotions in the audience. Its extensive, inclusive nature left nobody out:

A clause is a certain part of any tract which contains in it sometimes two, or three, or four, or five, or six, or even seven distinctions. For it can be constructed from at least two distinctions; to use more than seven is however of no value whatsoever, for if the distinctions are greater, the meaning of the phrase/discourse will be rendered obscure. From two in this manner: the Armenians and the Greeks grow beards from ancient custom (or otherwise: the Armenians and Greeks grow beards, in order to appear more authoritative in everything). From three: the Indians worship the Lord, who is the truth itself, and revere the Father in spirit and truth, rejecting falsehood. Or else: Babylonia is adorned with gold and precious stones, and, overflowing with various kinds of fragrances and spices, produces the balsam of fruits of paradise. Or else: the minds of the Saracens are so blindly enshrouded in dark gloom, that they daily lave their genitals,

---

118 Ronald G. Witt, ‘Boncompagno and the Defense of Rhetoric’ in *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 16 (1986), 1-31.

119 Idem, 5.

120 Related by Carl Sutter, *Aus Leben und Schriften des Magisters Boncompagno* (Freiburg i. B., 1894), 42-51.

121 Applauso, *Curses*, 111.

in the belief that they are thus appeasing the Lord. Or else: the Sheikh of the Mountain built a false paradise on earth, where he raised certain men from boyhood, who afterwards were not afraid to suffer death for him. Or else: Suriani<sup>122</sup> defile themselves with adulterous crime and, contriving all kinds of harlotry, for example continually fornicating prostitutes. The sagacious Greeks and envious Sicilians pursue the art of magic and, conjuring up marvellous things, often drink poisoned cups. Or else: Miramominin<sup>123</sup> resides in the blossoming town of Marrakech, and today surpasses all mortals in wealth, balancing it on the scales of secular justice. From four in this manner: the whole world proclaims that the defenceless Calabrians, the timid Apulians and the Sardinians are damned to the vice of jealousy and servility.<sup>124</sup> Or otherwise: I see that by effect Africans are naked, Ethiopians savage,<sup>125</sup> and the people of the Provence liars.<sup>126</sup> Or otherwise: the Corsicans might be highly commended for their courtliness, if they were not thieves and traitors, and if they did not afterwards steal what they had first given away. The Romans, forever rousing up wars and strife, do not fear to engage in civil wars, and becoming unmindful of their former glory, do not cease to exact money with fraud and violence. Or otherwise: the Tuscans would use their own resources commendably and sparkle with many virtues, if a cloud of fraud and envy did not easily cast them in darkness.<sup>127</sup> Or otherwise: the Lombards are the patrons of liberty, outstanding defenders of the law, and those who most often

122 In Latin texts, Suriani generally denoted local Christians in the Levant who spoke Arabic or Syriac. See Christopher Hatch MacEvitt, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance* (Philadelphia, 2007), 102-103.

123 According to Alexander Patschovsky, Miramominin should probably be identified with the Arab title Amīr al-Mu'minīn (Commander of the Faithful) which was used by the Almohad rulers since the time of the Berber Abd al-Mu'minīn (1133-1163), who is possibly also known as Mesulmut. He and his successors held the whole of North Africa and Muslim Spain. See Alexander Patschovsky, 'The Holy Emperor Henry "the First" as One of the Dragon's Heads of the Apocalypse: On the Image of the Roman Empire under German Rule in the Tradition of Joachim of Fiore', in *Viator* 29 (1998), 291-322, here at 301-302, esp. note 39.

124 Apulia had been held successively by the Goths, Lombards, and Byzantines. In 1059 the Norman Robert Guiscard created the duchy of Apulia, which was part of the *regnum Siciliae* until 1282. Calabria was also part of the kingdom of Sicily. Sardinia, however, was at this time divided into four sovereign *judicatives*.

125 It was not uncommon to declare Ethiopia (and Africans in general) as a region habituated by savage peoples with monstrous appearances, also known as the Plinian races. See Wright, *Geographical Lore*, 303. The image was related to notion that they were descendants of the accursed Ham, who embodied uncivilized man. See Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*, 48, 102. For the savagery of the Ethiopians, see for example Isidore, *Etymologiae* IX 2,125: 'Extremi autem quia saevi et a consortio humanitatis remoti', drawing on Servius, *Ecl.* VIII 44 who writes: 'Populi Africae. Extremi autem, saevi, quasi a consortio humanitatis remote,' and *Etymologiae* XIV 5, 14: 'Eziopia ubi sunt gentes diverso vultu et monstruosa specie orribilis preversa usque ad fines Egipti.'

126 Cf. Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia* II 12: 'That is why there are strong breezes near the fast-flowing waters of the Rhône, and windy people are born there, who are empty-headed, inconstant, and extremely unreliable in their promises. [...] Its people, whom we call the Provençals, are shrewd in judgment, untrustworthy in their promises, hard-working when they want to be, warlike though only lightly-armed, generous in offering food in spite of their poverty, cunning in mischief-making, silent in suffering abuse...'

127 Boncompagno's negative opinion of the inhabitants of Tuscany is remarkable, given that he himself originated from Signa. Perhaps it is a sign of opportuneness, as Bologna, where he was lecturing, was a member of the Lombard League.

fight to protect their freedom, are deservedly the senators of Italy.<sup>128</sup> Or otherwise: the inhabitants of the March are judged by all to be fools,<sup>129</sup> the people of Romagna to be traitors and double-tongued,<sup>130</sup> and the Dalmatians and Croatians fishermen. Or otherwise: the courtly march of Verona has derived its name from celebrated Verona, which is the capital of three provinces and is adorned with indescribable pleasantness.<sup>131</sup> From five in this manner: I proclaim that the customs of the beast-like Slavs to be detestable, hoping to avoid each and every one of them as a community, who may deservedly not be called human beings but animals, and, although they have the form of human beings, yet in many ways live as animals. And from six in this way: Hungarians of little faith stuff themselves with food, an abundance feeds all, they bestow many gifts and, like velocious hunters, roam through the woods all the time. The shapely, furious fighters of Bohemia, of whom the Poles differ but little, defile themselves in drunkenness and eat raw meat, but the wild people of Ruthenia go out hunting. The fury of the Germans, the rapacity of the Alobroges, the arrogance of the French, the Spanish for their mules, the English for their tails and the mendacity of the Scots are often cause for derision.<sup>132</sup>

It is easy to imagine how Boncompagno entertained and struck a chord in his treatment of clauses in the *Palma*. Transmigrating from the east via northern Africa and southern Italy to the northern regions of Italy, the catalogue reaches the apex of justice in Lombardy. If the first stereotypes are about ancient or religious groups, Boncompagno soon turns to the peoples surrounding him. In a concentric movement Boncompagno then migrates even further north, into more unpleasant lands, where the beast-like Slavs, drunken Bohemians and Poles, furious Germans and mendacious Scots reside. By characterizing these peoples as on the ‘edge of civilization’ and barely human, Boncompagno is appealing to the prejudices held by the inhabitants of ‘civilized’ Western Europe. The eating of raw flesh by the Bohemians and Poles carried with it implications of their beastlike inhumanity, as Raw Meat-Eaters were one of the monstrous races.<sup>133</sup> Equally, the Hungarians, roaming through the woodlands, are famished. ‘A very ferocious people, more cruel than any monster’, as Regino of Prüm had said at the turn of the tenth century, these *Hungri* (an etymological explanation for the Hungarians coined by his contemporary Remigius of Auxerre) had left the

---

128 In 1164, Bologna had joined the Lombard League.

129 Cf. the late medieval poem ‘Gentium quicum mores’, in which the people of the March, together with those of Lusatia and the Slavs, are described as ‘thieves’, for the most part lazy and vile. Walther, ‘Scherz’, no. 72 vs. 18; Peiper, ‘Europäischer Völkerspigel’, 103-106.

130 The people of Romagna: Ravenna and its surroundings.

131 In 1167 the Veronese League had joined the Lombard League.

132 See Appendix XI for the full Latin text; from Boncompagno da Signa, *Palma*, ‘Quid sit clausula et ex quot distinctionibus consistere possit’ in Carl Sutter (ed.), *Aus Leben und Schriften des Magisters Boncompagno* (Freiburg i. B., 1894), 122-123.

133 Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*, 18 and 28.

regions of Scythia in order to still their hunger. These, too, are raw flesh-eaters, descendants of Gog and Magog, and hunter-gatherers, thus lacking the civilization of a sedentary agricultural society.<sup>134</sup>

In Boncompagno's unsurprising overview, the apex of civilization is seated in northern Italy: 'the Lombards are the patrons of liberty, outstanding defenders of the law, and those who most often fight to protect their freedom, are deservedly the senators of Italy'. Boncompagno is assuredly alluding to the struggles against the German emperor's claims to authority over the communes of northern Italy.<sup>135</sup> Possibly, the diatribe that the Romagni are 'traitors and double-tongued' may be interpreted as an attack on their disloyalty to the Lombard League following Frederick Barbarossa's campaign in late 1174. Notably, Boncompagno's political viewpoint seems to take precedence over any local pride in his *patria*, the Tuscan town of Signa, for the Tuscans, 'would use their own resources commendably and sparkle with many virtues, if a cloud of fraud and envy did not easily cast them in darkness'.

By roaming across the planes from East to West, and ridiculing almost every ethnic group along the way, Boncompagno is playing a game of expectation with his audience. The international student audience, including members of many ethnic groups mentioned in this catalogue, were each targeted one by one. Jeers and laughter perhaps rippled through the crowd, as each took his turn to be ridiculed and blamed. Only Lombardy – notably the location where all these students resided – was excepted. Through inclusion, sparing only the patrons of liberty, laughter at the expense of others was a shared experience. Laughter here could bring relief, let off steam, disciplining aggression, under a tacit agreement not to revert to physical violence but instead to cooperate. It would also, of course, have livened up the classroom, catching the students' attention.

Another instance can be found in Boncompagno's discussion on suspended, quasi-final and final clauses. Here, Boncompagno explicitly refers to the emotional expectancy which the image of 'Italy' might arise in the minds of the audience -- here, he was certainly not loathe to appeal to a sense of *Italian* pride, to emotions aroused at the sound of the word Italy. His example of a suspended clause, which 'keeps the mind of the hearer in suspense', reads: '*Since Italy alone among all the provinces of the world enjoys the privilege of liberty...*', leaving his audience in a state of happy expectancy. The mind of the hearer is thereupon informed about the meaning of the utterance, namely that '*...one should especially defer to the Italians...*'. Finally, the hearer is made certain of the meaning of the utterance, '*...and the provinces of the world are deservedly required to be subject to the*

134 See for the etymology of the Hungarians Sager, 'Hungarians as *vremde* in Medieval Germany', in Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages* (New York 2002), 27-44, here at 27-30. Remigius of Auxerre's etymological explanation can be found in *Epistola ad D. episcopum viridunensem*, PL 131, Col. 968A. For Regino of Prüm's characterization of the Hungarians, see his *Chronicon*, MGH *Scriptores rerum germanicarum*, 131. Both are discussed by Sager.

135 Phillip James Jones, *The Italian City-State: from Commune to Signoria* (Oxford 1997), 336-340. In this sense, Lombardy seems to entail more than 'a mere geographic expression, with no civic, nor broadly "political" identity', although this is an isolated example. Cf. Diego Zancani, 'Lombardy in the Middle ages', in Alfred P. Smyth, *Medieval Europeans* (New York 2002), 217-232, here at 223 and 227. Zancani was not able to find any examples of the political use of the word Lombardy.

*Italians.*' It is easy to imagine how Boncompagno delivered this lesson in front of his audience of students, pausing after the first phrase, and thus allowing his students to directly experience what he was teaching: to use suspension and appeal to emotion.<sup>136</sup>

Boncompagno da Signa's enumeration of stereotypes in both the *Palma* and the *Rhetorica antiqua* was meant to bring a touch of laughter to the lecture room. On 26 March 1215, Boncompagno was ceremoniously crowned with a laurel palm for his *Rhetorica antiqua*, which he read out in front of the college of professors of civil and canon law.<sup>137</sup> Adding a satirical edge, the *Rhetorica antiqua* addresses 'the mourning customs' of various peoples.<sup>138</sup> Here, however, the people of Romagna and Lombardy are also full of guile: 'The Lombards and Romagnoles display but little wailing and tears, and while thus murmuring, hasten themselves in throngs above the body of the dead. And in order to simulate lamentation there are many who wet their eyes with saliva or prick their eyelids, so that it seems as if they are lamenting. And in such a manner these people make a mockery of lamentation.' Boncompagno himself continues to make a mockery of the northern peoples and their typical drinking habits: 'The English, Bohemians, Poles, Ruthenians and Slavs mix their tears with drink until they are in a state of drunkenness, and thus consoled, they retain their usual merriment.' His discussion of the Germans, who speak in soft voices, is a playful inversion of their stereotypical harsh voices and rough character.

These kinds of jests are redolent with the atmosphere of both mockery and reproach, typical of the Latin literature written by secular clerics and monks of the twelfth century. Some of the gibes about character seem to serve by and large as convivial, sarcastic amusement. These sarcastic jokes hover somewhere on the border between satire, ridicule, and invective. Boncompagno's sneers about the raw flesh-eating Poles, Bohemians and roaming Hungarians, are typical pokes at 'less civilized' peoples. But it must not be forgotten that there were many foreign students in Bologna, or Paris, who had formed *collegia* or student nations according to their place of birth.<sup>139</sup> Boncompagno's lectures in the *ars dictaminis* must surely have been accompanied by roars of jeering and pointing of fingers,

---

136 This is, it would seem, a strikingly early expression of the concept of the 'liberty of Italy', generally connected to the confederation of republics striving for civic freedom against Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan at the end of the fourteenth century. See Teresa Hankey, 'Civic Pride versus Feelings for Italy in the Age of Dante', in Smyth, *Medieval Europeans*, 196-216, here at 196; H. Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, 1955), 446-448; N. Rubinstein, 'Florence and the Despots: Some Aspects of Florentine Diplomacy in the Fourteenth Century' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* II (1952), 21-45. A display of unity among the communes, coined in the use of the word Italia, was however, as Boncompagno himself was aware, a necessity, for it was local divisions which could make Italy vulnerable to submission. Jones, *The Italian City-State*, 339, esp. note 16. Cf. Boncompagno da Signa, *Liber de obsidione Ancone* 3: 'Contingit enim multotiens ut multi facere anelent quod eos postmodum trahit in exitium et servitutem, sicut fecerunt Lonbardi ad tempus, qui Mediolanum ob invidiam destruxerunt; unde ante illius rehedificationem sub quodam servitutis vincula tenebantur. Nam oppinio me in hanc trahit sententiam, ut non credam Italiam posse fieri tributariam alicui, nisi ex Italicorum malitia prodederet ac livore; in legibus enim habetur, quod Italia non est provincia, sed domina provinciarum.'

137 Also known as the *Boncompagnus*, 1215, revised in 1226.

138 See Appendix XII for text and translation.

139 Kibre, *The Nations*, 3-6.

sharpening the ethnic divide, yet at the same time unifying the clerics in laughter emphasizing unity in diversity.

The use of stereotypical images thus enlivened the classroom, and facilitated understanding, as they would have been easy to understand for the students. Medieval educational texts taught students to praise and blame, by using images which meant something to their audience.<sup>140</sup> By studying the *ars rhetorica* or *dictaminis*, students thus became familiar with ethnic stereotypes, probably having to memorize and internalize such images. The fact that the students were surrounded by the peoples described in the school books would have stirred their interest in these stereotypes as they could be applied in daily life. Employing ethnic stereotypes in the literature of the *artes* curriculum therefore both resonated with and reinforced the mental images in the students' minds.<sup>141</sup>

The ability to make plays on ethnic identities indicates that they were strong markers of identity. These stereotypes were generally vicious, but sometimes also contained a playful edge. Humour and ridicule could thus defuse as well as infuriate. Jokes are also indicators of the acceptance of ethnic 'otherness'. In the *scholiae* in the thirteenth-century codex of German provenance, the Teuton is glossed: 'The Germans are positioned under the planet of Mars, and are for that reason naturally bellicose of character, for their customs are cruel. For that reason, also, the Romans have inserted in their liturgy: "Save us, o Lord, from the German fury."'"<sup>142</sup> Besides harsh attacks such playful stabs indicate acceptance, and even bemused affection for the co-religious ethnic other in Western Europe.

---

140 Blaicher, 'Zur Entstehung nationaler Stereotypen', 568-569.

141 Unfortunately, this has remained so throughout times, as authors of school textbooks have continued to employ them in didactic literature, something which Günther Blaicher also has noted. Thomas Graves Law, *Collected Essays and Reviews of Thomas Graves Law*, ed. P. Hume Brown (Edinburgh, 1904), 11. In London British Library Royal 12 C IX f. 179 and Göttingen, Luneb. 2; cf. J. Werner, *Lateinische Sprichwörter des Mittelalters* 85/2, 20. Walther, 'Scherz', no. 28 and 118. According to Thomas Graves Law, the students in medieval Paris used to chant 'The Norman sings, the English drink, the German eats' in the Paris' taverns during feasts, such as after matriculation. If this is true (unfortunately, he does not mention a source), then this is testimony to how images from Geoffrey of Vinsauf's treatise on rhetoric were applied directly by students in medieval Paris.

142 'Teutonici enim constituti sunt sub Marte illo planeta, et ideo naturaliter sunt bellicosi de more quia secundum consuetudinem crudeles sunt. Inde etiam Romani habent in letania sua 'A furore Theutonicorum libera nos, Domine.' See Walter of Châtillon, *Alexandreis*, ed. Colker, 455-456, and also 482. In Vienna, Nationalbibliothek Vindobonensi MS 568.