

The outer world of the European Middle Ages

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I. COLUMBUS

ALTHOUGH the final significance of the discovery by the Genoese navigator Christopher Columbus of a series of islands previously unknown to Europeans in the western Atlantic during the autumn of 1492 is still a matter of dispute, there can be little doubt that this event proved to be a turning-point in the history both of the discoverers themselves and of the peoples whom they discovered. Even before Columbus had finished his fourth and final voyage in 1504, the Florentine businessman, explorer and self-publicist Amerigo Vespucci was writing about his own discovery of a "new world," while perceptive observers, like the Italian humanist Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, were beginning to realize that it would now be necessary to add a new continent to those of Europe, Asia, and Africa into which the land mass of the world had conventionally been divided since classical antiquity; and in 1507 the German cosmographer Martin Waldseemüller, named this new discovery as America in honour of Vespucci.¹ Within thirty years of the first voyage of Columbus, the conquest of the New World had been begun by the Castilian adventurer Hernán Cortés, and the globe itself had been circumnavigated by the few survivors of the expedition of Magellan. It is even possible that as early as the 1520s the shores of the continent of Australia had been sighted by Portuguese explorers.²

The profound upheaval in European understanding of the physical nature of the world that these events initiated and that was brought to a conclusion only at the time of the voyages of James Cook in the

¹ *The Letters of Amerigo Vespucci*, ed. C.R. Markham, Hakluyt Society, First Series, vol. 90 (London, 1894; repr. New York, n.d.), pp.xvi-xviii.

² H. Wallis, "The enigma of Java-la-Grande," in *Australia and the European Imagination*, ed. I. Donaldson (Canberra, 1982); idem, "Java la Grande: the enigma of the Dieppe maps," in *Terra Australis to Australia*, ed. G. Williams & A. Frost (Melbourne, 1988).

eighteenth century was accompanied by an equally profound transformation in European experience and understanding of mankind itself. Edmund Burke, writing in 1777, was to characterize the change as the unrolling of the "Great Map of Mankind," so that "there is no state or Gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same instant under our View. The very different Civility of Europe and of China; the barbarism of Tartary, and of Arabia. The Savage State of North America, and of New Zealand."³ This process, the "clash of cultures," "the fall of natural man," or, in a more neutral phrase, "the discovery of man,"⁴ had begun both literally and symbolically the moment that Columbus set foot on the island he named San Salvador on 12 October 1492.⁵ Indeed, the very act of crossing beaches in order to land on islands has been shown to be one of the most potent metaphors available for the historian wishing to describe the encounters between peoples of different cultural backgrounds.⁶

However, the intention here is to explore some of the assumptions about the world and its peoples that may already have been implicit in the mind of Columbus in 1492 as well as in those of other European explorers of the late fifteenth century. Some important clues can be found in the letter that Columbus wrote early in 1493 while still at sea on the return from his momentous first voyage:

Since I know that you will be pleased at the great success with which the Lord has crowned my voyage, I write to inform you how in thirty-three days I crossed from the Canary Islands to the Indies, with the fleet which our most illustrious sovereigns gave me. When I reached Cuba, I followed its north coast westwards, and found it so extensive that I thought this must be the mainland, the province of Cathay'; From there I saw another island eighteen leagues eastwards which I then named 'Hispaniola' In

³ Cited on the title page of P.J. Marshall & G. Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment*, (London, 1982).

⁴ B.F. Fagan, *The Clash of Cultures* (New York, 1984); J.H. Elliott, "The discovery of America and the discovery of man," in idem, *Spain and its World, 1500-1700: Selected Essays* (New Haven & London, 1989); A. Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: the American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge, 1982); idem, "Dispossessing the barbarian: rights and property in Spanish America," in idem, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination: Studies in European and Spanish-American Social and Political Theory, 1513-1830* (New Haven & London, 1990).

⁵ P. Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London & New York, 1986), ch. I, "Columbus and the cannibals"; L. Olschki, "What Columbus saw on landing in the West Indies," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 84 (Philadelphia, 1941), pp.633-59.

⁶ G. Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land: the Marquesas, 1774-1880* (Hawaii, 1980).

this island of Hispaniola I have taken possession of a large town which is most conveniently situated for the goldfields and for communications with the mainland both here, and there in the territories of the Grand Khan, with which there will be very profitable trade.⁷

Despite his observation that on the island of Cuba "one of these provinces is called Avan, and there the people are born with tails," Columbus also remarked,

I have not found the human monsters which many people expected. On the contrary, the whole population is very well made"; . . . "Not only have I found no monsters but I have had no reports of any except at the island of 'Quaris', which is the second as you approach the Indies from the east, and which is inhabited by a people who are regarded in these islands as extremely fierce and who eat human flesh.⁸

The references by Columbus to "the Indies," "the province of Cathay," the "territories of the Grand Khan," and to the city of "Quinsay" and the island of "Chipangu" (which Columbus mentions in his journal) are a clear demonstration that he was, initially at least, convinced that the destination he had reached by a long and hazardous westward voyage across the mysterious Atlantic ocean was essentially the same one that had been reached by Marco Polo of Venice by the land route eastward across Asia in the 1270s, and his search for monsters in human form has obvious parallels in the narratives of Marco Polo and of other thirteenth- and fourteenth-century European travelers such as Giovanni di Piano Carpini, William of Rubruck, and John of Marignolli. None of this is at all surprising because it is well known that Columbus had read and annotated one of the early printed editions of the travels of Marco Polo, from which he had learned about the wonders of the dominions of the Great Khan in Cathay as well as about the island empire of Japan (Chipangu), which Marco Polo described but had not actually seen. Together with his assiduous readings of other fourteenth- and fifteenth-century authors and of newly published editions of classical authors, such as Claudius Ptolemy, Columbus's mind was therefore well stocked with ideas and impressions about the wider world around him.¹⁰

⁷ *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, ed. J.M. Cohen (London, 1969; repr. London, 1992), pp.115-16, 120.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.119, 121.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.71-3.

¹⁰ J.R.S. Phillips, *The Medieval Expansion of Europe* (Oxford & New York, 1988), pp.77-8, 194-5, 201. On these monsters in general, see the very important book by J.B. Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981). For a more detailed discussion of Columbus's ideas about "places and peoples," see

II. PLACES

Despite the extensive contacts that existed between medieval Europe and other parts of the world, with the lands of the eastern Mediterranean, with large areas of Asia, with parts of Africa and its adjoining oceans, and with the North Atlantic and even North America,¹¹ understanding of what lay out in this wider world was not always accurate, and older ideas frequently coexisted with and sometimes took precedence over new and more reliable information.¹² Thus we find the persistent search, in which Columbus was only the latest participant, for strange races of men, descriptions of whom can be traced back to the writers of classical antiquity.¹³ Or, to take a more recent example, there was from the twelfth century the quest for Prester John, the supposed ruler of a Christian realm of immense power and wealth lying somewhere in the East, who was allegedly awaiting only the opportunity to come to the aid of a beleaguered Christendom against its Moslem opponents.¹⁴ But erroneous as they were, such ideas were

P. Hulme, ch. I, "Columbus and the cannibals"; and Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca & London, 1988), ch. 5, "The end of the East: Columbus Discovers Paradise." For the sources of his geographical ideas, see F. Fernandez-Armesto, *Columbus* (Oxford, 1991), pp.24,34-43; Delno West, "Christopher Columbus and his enterprise of the Indies: scholarship of the last quarter century," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, April 1992; W.G.L. Randles, "Le projet asiatique de Christophe Colomb devant la science cosmographique portugaise et espagnole de son temps," *Islenha*, no.5, July-December 1989 (Funchal, Madeira, 1989), pp.73-88.

¹¹ See Phillips, *The Medieval Expansion of Europe*, and the bibliographies supplied for each chapter. I have discussed some possible explanations for European expansion in a forthcoming paper, "European expansion before Columbus: causes and consequences," in *The Haskins Journal*, vol. 5 (Woodbridge, 1994). See also A.R. Lewis, *Nomads and Crusaders, 1000-1368* (Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1988). This has much to say of interest about European relations with the outer world but is restricted by the choice of terminal date and by the concentration on Asia.

¹² Phillips, ch. 10, "Scholarship and the imagination"; see also Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World*; M. Helms, *Ulysses' Sail: an Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance* (Princeton, 1988); J.K. Hyde, "Real and imaginary journeys in the later Middle Ages," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 65 (Manchester, 1982-3), pp.125-47; F. Fernandez-Armesto, *Before Columbus: Exploration and Colonisation from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, 1229-1492* (London, 1987), ch. 9, "The mental horizon"; and the important collection of essays, *Discovering New Worlds: Essays on Medieval Exploration and Imagination*, ed. S.D. Westrem (New York & London, 1991).

¹³ See Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*.

¹⁴ Phillips, pp.60-2, 77-9, 190-2. The most thorough survey of the Prester John theme is V. Slessarev, *Prester John, the Letter and the Legend* (Minneapolis, 1959); but see also C.F. Beckingham, *Between Islam and Christendom: Travellers, Facts, Legends in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, 1983); B. Hamilton, "Prester John and the three kings of Cologne," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R.H.C. Davis*, ed. H. Mayr-Harting & R.I. Moore (London, 1985).

part of the spur and the incentive for would-be explorers, and they were probably as influential in the fifteenth century as they had been in the twelfth or thirteenth.

A twentieth-century student of medieval Europe's relations with and perceptions of the outer world can have a much broader view of the subject than his medieval predecessor: No thirteenth- or fourteenth-century traveler, for example, would necessarily know even what his own contemporaries had discovered about the world. Although it is possible that John of Monte Corvino might have heard reports of Marco Polo's stay in China, which had ended shortly before his own arrival in Peking in 1294, there is no reason to suppose that Marco Polo knew anything of John. Similarly, it is most improbable that Ibn Battuta of Tangier, one of the greatest of all Moslem travelers, who visited India in the 1330s, probably visited China in 1346 and also crossed the Sahara in the early 1350s, and whose career is often compared with that of Marco Polo, ever heard of the Venetian's exploits.¹⁵ A number of European travelers wrote about their experiences in Asia soon after the event: In some instances, like those of Giovanni di Piano Carpini in 1247 and Odoric of Pordenone in 1330, their accounts were widely read; in other cases, narratives that are now regarded as of great historical importance, such as those of the Franciscans William of Rubruck, who visited the court of the Great Khan at Karakorum in Mongolia in 1253-4, and John of Marignolli, who was in China in the 1340s, were either little known or were altogether unknown at the time they were written.¹⁶ But all these travelers did at least visit various parts of a continent whose existence was a familiar part of European knowledge: In the case of the Viking navigators from Iceland and Greenland who discovered and explored a part of the North American continent in the early eleventh century and who perhaps continued to go there as late as the fourteenth century, there is very little evidence that anyone outside their own ranks even knew of their exploits, let alone was influenced by them.¹⁷

Another difficulty arises from the nature of the records of medieval travel. Although it is possible for us to conclude that some contemporary or near-contemporary accounts were written with a consider-

¹⁵ Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta* (London & Sydney, 1986). There is, however, some doubt about Ibn Battuta's visit to China.

¹⁶ William of Rubruck's account was known to Roger Bacon but does not appear to have been widely read; John of Marignolli's account was contained in the chronicle of the kingdom of Bohemia, which he composed in Prague and was not rediscovered until the early nineteenth century.

¹⁷ Phillips, ch.9, "Medieval Europe and North America," ch. 12, "Fresh start or new phase?"

able degree of objectivity and that others contain a substantial amount of imaginative writing, such distinctions would have been less apparent to a medieval reader and would probably have had little meaning. Outstanding examples are the narratives produced by Giovanni di Piano Carpini, who was sent as a papal envoy to the Mongol Great Khan in 1245, and William of Rubruck who wrote about the Mongols a few years later. Although both men were traveling at a time when the terrors of the Mongol attacks on Europe were fresh in their minds and were describing a society that was alien almost beyond imagining, they nonetheless succeeded in treating the Mongols with sympathetic understanding.¹⁸ However, in other cases, most notably perhaps the works commonly known as *Marco Polo's Travels* and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, their form is both an attraction to the reader and a barrier to a full understanding of the material they contain. It is well known that Marco Polo's description of his travels was written for him around 1300 by a professional author, Rustichello of Pisa, who did not hesitate to incorporate highly colored passages to make his story more interesting, and also on occasions reused material from earlier works of his own. Exactly where Marco Polo's contribution began and ended is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain.¹⁹ On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that Marco Polo did not actually go to India and China as he claimed. By contrast, the eponymous Sir John Mandeville did not visit any of the lands described in his travels, and probably never existed. Here we are faced with a skilfully written and very popular piece of literature by an unidentified author who probably intended both to entertain and to improve the minds of his readers and who made use of a wide variety of sources, representing both real and imaginary travels. It is also significant that of the four examples cited, *Mandeville's Travels* was probably the best known and most widely read in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁰

Although the spherical shape of the earth was well understood and serious attempts were made by classical writers, notably Claudius

¹⁸ Phillips, pp.73–82; Dawson; Mary B. Campbell, ch. 3.

¹⁹ Phillips, pp.112–20, 204–6; J. Heers, *Marco Polo*; Marco Polo, *The Travels*, trans. R.E. Latham (London, 1958); Campbell, ch. 3; *Marco Polo and his Book: China and Europe in the Middle Ages*.

²⁰ Phillips, pp.206–11; *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, ed. C.W.R.D. Moseley (London, 1983); Campbell, ch. 4; J.W. Bennett, *The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville* (New York, 1954). The most recent major work on Mandeville is C. Deluz, *Le livre de Jehan de Mandeville: une "géographie" au XIV^e. siècle* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1988). See also J.R.S. Phillips, "The quest for Sir John Mandeville," in *The Culture of Christendom: Essays in Medieval History in Memory of Denis L.T. Bethell*, ed. M.A. Meyer (London, 1993).

Ptolemy of Alexandria in the mid-second century A.D. to supply details of latitude and longitude for all the important places on the earth's surface, the inaccuracy of their results meant that throughout the classical and medieval periods there was a fundamental imprecision in spatial relationships. In the fifteenth century, for example, there was no agreement among European scholars on either the measurement of the circumference of the earth or on the East-West extent of Asia and Europe: The two most common estimates of the latter were 180 degrees of the earth's circumference (a figure derived from Ptolemy) and 225 degrees (a figure quoted in the early fifteenth century by Pierre d'Ailly but derived ultimately from Marinus of Tyre, a predecessor of Ptolemy). Both calculations were overestimates, the true figure being about 130 degrees. The consequences for the calculations of Christopher Columbus, who also accepted Ptolemy's considerable underestimate for the earth's circumference, are well known.²¹ No classical or medieval European traveler, not even one as

²¹ Phillips, *The Medieval Expansion of Europe*, pp.4–5, 213–6; Ptolemy provided a figure of 180,000 Greek stadia (c. 18,000 nautical miles) rather than the more accurate 250,000 stadia calculated by Eratosthenes in the third century B.C. The concept of a spherical earth would have been known to anyone who had received a university education through such works as the textbook, *De Sphaera Mundi*, written by John Holywood at the university of Paris in the 1220s, which continued to be cited as late as the sixteenth century. It seems to have been a commonplace scholarly and literary theme that the spherical earth could in principle be circumnavigated: this notion can be found in such diverse contexts as the *Opus Maius* of the thirteenth-century English Franciscan scholar Roger Bacon and the anonymous fourteenth-century literary work known as *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. In the 1370s the French scholar Nicholas Oresme even calculated that a circumnavigation would take exactly four years, sixteen weeks, and two days. (See "A fourteenth-century argument for an international date line," in C. Lutz, *Essays on Manuscripts and Rare Books* (Hamden, Connecticut, 1975).) Whatever the views of the unlettered about the shape of the earth may have been, educated Europeans were not Flat-Earthers and Columbus was not making any revolutionary claims when he argued for the possibility of a westward voyage to Asia. The real problem lay in the fact that there was no general agreement on the actual circumference of the earth, on the extent of the inhabited landmass, and, just as important, on the breadth of the ocean separating the Far Western from the Far Eastern extremities of the land. Here there was ample room for debate, and it is not surprising that Columbus did not win immediate acceptance for his scheme. As late as 1538 the *Libro de Cosmographia* by Pedro de Medina, who was one of the cosmographers employed by the Casa de la Contratación in Seville and an expert on practical navigation, included many references to and simple proofs of the spherical earth without any attempt to calculate its dimensions: Phillips, pp.184, 188–90, 197, 208–9, 215, 245; *A Navigator's Universe: The Libro de Cosmographia of 1538 by Pedro de Medina*, trans. & ed. Ursula Lamb, The Monograph Series of the Society for the History of Discoveries (Chicago, 1972). The best studies of medieval geographical ideas are G.H.T. Kimble, *Geography in the Middle Ages* (London, 1937; repr. New York, 1968); and J.K. Wright, *Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades* (New York, 1925; repr. New York, 1965); to these should now be added the very important *History of Cartography*, vol. 1, *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient and Medieval Europe and the Medi-*

much traveled as Marco Polo, actually succeeded in traversing the full extent of Eurasia from ocean to ocean. But even if someone had done so, his conclusions would have been of little help because the separation of places was seen not so much in degrees of latitude or of longitude or in miles as in the time taken to cover the distance. For instance, it took Giovanni di Piano Carpini over a year in 1245–46 to travel by land from Lyons to the vicinity of Karakorum in Mongolia and John of Monte Corvino took over two years to travel by sea from Iran to China between 1291 and 1293–94, whereas Marco Polo's land journey to China took about three and a half years from 1271 to 1274–75.

Although the compass was available for use at sea in the thirteenth century, and by the end of that century portolan charts were beginning to make it possible to navigate by following a compass bearing, long journeys on land were commonly made by the use of itineraries of the kind that had originally been designed for travel around the provinces of the Roman world. In principle, all the traveler needed to know was the place he was currently situated in and where to go next, and so on until the ultimate destination was reached. The thirteenth-century English chronicler Matthew Paris produced such an itinerary for the journey to Jerusalem, although it has also plausibly been suggested that some of the most elaborate *mappae mundi*, such as the Ebstorf Map of c.1240 and the Hereford Map of c.1300, which were put on display in great churches, were designed in part to act as itineraries for potential pilgrims to Santiago, Rome, or Jerusalem.²²

However, not all destinations were as easily found as these. Then, as now, there was no questioning the existence in some specific location of a city such as Rome or Jerusalem, even if that location could not be described with mathematical precision. On the other hand, what may appear to us as well-defined geographical regions or countries were frequently very inexact in medieval usage. "Ethiopia" or "Sudan" or "Guinea," all of which have a context today as the names of African states, originally all meant more or less the same thing, "the land of the black people" to the south of the Sahara desert, each being expressed in a different language, Greek, Arabic, or Berber. In the case of Asia, the term "India" was very imprecise. A distinction between "India Major" and "India Minor" had already been made in

terranean, ed. J.B. Harley & D. Woodward (Chicago & London, 1987), together with future volumes in the series; D. Woodward, "Reality, symbolism, time and space in medieval world maps," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 75 (1985).

²² Phillips, p.217; M. Jancey, *Mappa Mundi: the Map of the World in Hereford Cathedral* (Hereford, 1987).

classical writings, but from about the twelfth century no less than three different usages of "India" were current: "Nearer" or "Lesser" India (roughly the northern part of the subcontinent of India as it is now understood); "Further" or "Greater" India (which referred to the southern part of India and also to the regions farther to the east which would now be called South-East Asia and Indonesia); and finally "Middle" India, which was often applied to Ethiopia, with all the further imprecision associated with that expression. "Middle" India should probably be understood as meaning "Intermediate" India or "on the way" to India proper. Although the modern analogy of "Near," "Middle," and "Far" East may help us to appreciate these different forms of "India," there is no doubt that ambiguity is inherent in any medieval writings that refer to India. It is equally significant that the classical and medieval varieties of "India" prepared the way for the multitude of "Indies" and "Indians" that European observers conjured into being in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As late as the eighteenth century, "Indians" were still being found as European navigators explored the mysterious islands of the Pacific.²³

The main features of medieval geography were derived almost entirely from classical sources: the spherical earth; the division of the earth's surface into equatorial, temperate, and cold $\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ or zones; and the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, which were surrounded by the all-embracing world ocean. All the known world was located north of the equator, but the belief that there might be an inhabited southern continent beyond the equator meant that there was an intellectual niche into which Australia and Antarctica could be fitted when these were discovered many centuries later. The southern continent did, however, create problems for Christian theologians, who had to consider whether its inhabitants could have received the blessings of Christianity and, if not, whether they were fully human. There was no such intellectual niche in classical writings for the undiscovered and unsuspected American continent, but the question of the humanity of its peoples was to be a very real problem when America finally was discovered in the early decades of the sixteenth century.²⁴ However, rather than examining the theoretical framework of

²³ Phillips, pp.203–4; Beckingham. *Between Islam and Christendom*, "The achievements of Prester John," pp.16–19; Marco Polo, *The Travels*, pp.210, 233, 268, 277–8.

²⁴ On geographical ideas, see Phillips, ch.1, "Classical discoveries and Dark Age transformations," ch. 10, "Scholarship and the imagination"; and also G.H.T. Kimble. On the "antipodes," see Friedman, pp.38–48. One of the ways in which Columbus formulated his objectives before 1492 and before he settled on an Asian destination was probably as a search for the antipodes; after his return from the New World in 1493 the royal and papal chanceries "inclined to the view that the explorer had found an

medieval geography, which was mainly the province of scholars, it will be convenient to take two commonplace forms of discourse in medieval European geographical thought that may broadly be described as a "western" and as an "eastern" view.²⁵ Apart from their obvious associations with the rising and the setting of the sun and symbolically with birth and death, these views also reflected the fact that the known world consisted of a broad band of territory in the northern hemisphere of the earth stretching from the shores of the Atlantic ocean in the west to an indeterminate point somewhere in eastern Asia.

The western view was strongly influenced by the proximity of the Atlantic. Some commentators, such as the twelfth-century Moslem geographer Al-Idrisi, regarded the Atlantic as an empty desolation, "a green sea of darkness" in the familiar phrase. As the most westerly known part of Europe, Ireland was frequently regarded as lying at the end of the world,²⁶ a perception that gave a peculiar and special sense of adventure to those pilgrims from all over Europe who went between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries to one of the strangest and most remote places of pilgrimage in medieval Europe, St. Patrick's Purgatory located on an island in Lough Derg in the north-western corner of Ireland.²⁷ It is ironic, though certainly coincidental, that the suppression of the pilgrimage was ordered by Pope Alexander VI in 1497 at the time that other European travelers were beginning to reveal the reality of a larger and more complex world. However, the fame of the Purgatory also effectively illustrates the very important point that a distant location on the earth's surface, whether in the far west or the far east, might nonetheless be very widely known either at firsthand or from common report. In this case the location happened to be a real one, but it is easy to understand how less well-attested places could also come to have an existence, if only in the imagination.

The desolation of the Atlantic and the remoteness of the western shores of Ireland were, however, tempered to some extent by knowl-

antipodal continent," an opinion that received support from Peter Martyr and other Italian humanists: Fernandez-Armesto, *Columbus*, pp.32, 43-4, 63, 96-8.

²⁵ Phillips, ch.10, "Scholarship and the imagination"; cf. M. Helms, *Ulysses' Sail*, ch. 6, "The outer realms of Christendom," especially pp.211-26.

²⁶ Phillips, pp.183-4; D. Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven & London, 1977), pp.123-4; V.H. Cassidy, *The Sea around Them: the Atlantic, c.1250*, (Baton Rouge, 1968).

²⁷ M. Haren & Y. de Pontfarcy, ed., *The Medieval Pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory: Lough Derg and the European Tradition*, Clogher Historical Society (Enniskillen, 1988).

edge of the existence of numerous islands in the ocean. Irish monks, like the historical St. Brendan in the sixth century, had explored and established hermitages on many of the remote islands off the shores of Britain and Ireland: The monastic settlements on the Scottish island of Iona and on the rocky pinnacle of Skellig Michael off the coast of Kerry are two of the most famous. Irish navigators had also visited the Faeroes by 700 A.D. and Iceland (which they identified with the Ultima Thule of classical tradition) before the end of the eighth century, paving the way for the Viking discovery and settlement of the latter after about 870. Iceland remained as a European outpost in the Atlantic throughout the medieval period, although regarded as a northern rather than a western location.²⁸ The discovery and partial exploration of other groups of islands – the Canaries, Madeira, and the Azores in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries – added a large number of other Atlantic destinations.

The real possibility that still more islands were awaiting discovery provided ample scope for the curious and the ambitious fifteenth-century navigator. Just as important in stimulating ambitions were several other islands, which we would regard as having no substance outside the imagination but which were widely accepted as genuine. The island of Antilia (probably meaning "the island opposite" or on "the other side" of the ocean), which Columbus hoped to find on his way to Cathay, was one example, with its origin in the Iberian Peninsula. Two more were of Irish inspiration but became very widely known throughout Europe because of the circulation in manuscript of such works as the tenth-century *Navigatio Brendani* in which St. Brendan in his mythological guise wandered from island to island, each more remarkable than the last. The island of St. Brendan and its companion the island of Brasil (Hy-Breasail, "the land of the Blest") had their origins in pre-Christian Irish voyage literature on the search for a western paradise that was later influenced by Christianity and became a spiritual quest. When maps for navigation began to be drawn in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, these two islands were duly included along with the island of Antilia. Apart from an appearance off the coast of Newfoundland in a seventeenth-century chart, St. Brendan's island quickly fell victim to the progress of Atlantic discovery after 1500, but the island of Brasil lasted even as late as the eight-

²⁸ Phillips, ch.9, "Medieval Europe and North America"; G.J. Marcus, *The Conquest of the North Atlantic* (Woodbridge, 1980); G. Jones, *The Norse Atlantic Saga* (Second edition, Oxford, 1986); on the Irish knowledge of Iceland, see Dicuil, *Liber de Mensura Terrae*, ed. J.J. Tierney (Dublin, 1967).

teenth century as a testimony to the power of the medieval Irish imagination.²⁹

Islands appear to have a special place in the history of human relations with and perceptions of the outer world. Each was in a sense a closed world in its own right, which was entered by the highly significant act of crossing the beach; the ship that took the explorer there was in itself a floating mobile world that took its origin from the society that constructed it, but that operated according to rules of its own.³⁰ Because real islands might hold many surprises for the outsider, it is hardly to be wondered at that islands have a place in the imaginative literature. The islands of St. Brendan and Brasil are two of the most evocative medieval examples: It is even possible that the enthusiastic descriptions of Vinland in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Icelandic sagas as a land of vines and self-sown wheat owed something to literary exemplars like the *Navigatio Brendani*.³¹ In the fourteenth century the multitude of islands existing in the seas beyond India, to which Marco Polo and Odoric of Pordenone gave eloquent testimony, provided the author of *Mandeville's Travels* with locations for his dog-headed men and other wonders, secure in the knowledge that few travelers were likely to attempt to check his tales at firsthand. The literary role played by islands can readily be extended via Shakespeare's *Tempest* and Robinson Crusoe's island to the imaginary worlds of modern science fiction.³²

By contrast with the "western view," which was heavily influenced by impressions of the Atlantic and its islands, the "eastern view" was connected with the land mass of the continent of Asia, which had been partly explored in classical antiquity and on which there was therefore a considerable amount of information available. The "East" was also the source of material goods of high monetary and prestige value. For Christians, the East was the direction from which salvation had come, and one very special part of it contained their Holy Places, which were given pictorial representation by the appearance on *mappae mundi* of Jerusalem as the symbolic center of Christendom.³³ In general, how-

²⁹ H.P.A. Oskamp, *The Voyage of Mael Duin: a Study in Early Irish Voyage Literature* (Groningen, 1970); T.J. Westropp, "Brasil and the legendary islands of the North Atlantic: their history and fable," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 30, Section C (Dublin, 1912-13), pp.223-60; P. Mac Cana, "The voyage of St. Brendan: literary and historical origins," and D.B. Quinn, "Atlantic islands," in *Atlantic Visions*, ed. J. de Courcy Ireland & D. Sheehy (Dun Laoghaire, Ireland, 1989).

³⁰ Cf. G. Denning, *Islands and Beaches*.

³¹ R. Boyer, "The Vinland sagas and Brendan's Navigation," in *Atlantic Visions*.

³² See P. Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, chs. 3, 5; or, for example, James Blish's novel, *A Case of Conscience* (London, 1958).

³³ The central location of Jerusalem should not be seen as an example of European

ever, European impressions of the East were subject to the imprecision in spatial relationships that was discussed earlier, and also to the association of the East since classical times with many tales of marvels and of wondrous races of men, with the result that it was a location within the European imagination just as much as a real (and very large) location upon the face of the earth. For the inhabitants of medieval Europe, all these uncertainties about the East meant that there was plenty of scope for the exercise of imagination: If the wonders of the East, were not found in one place, then they might be somewhere more distant again, perhaps beyond the empire of Cathay or in the kingdom of Prester John. For many people, the East probably began almost as soon as they left familiar ground, after which any strange experience might be expected to befall them. In the early thirteenth century, Jacques de Vitry, the bishop of Acre in the kingdom of Jerusalem, remarked that "some light-minded and inquisitive persons go on pilgrimage not out of devotion, but out of mere curiosity and love of novelty. All they want to do is travel through unknown lands to investigate the absurd, exaggerated stories they have heard about the east."³⁴ It is not perhaps all that surprising that such views of the East could be dominant even at times when firsthand information was in principle readily available.³⁵

Medieval European images of the East were founded in the writings of classical authors. These referred to the most distant parts of Asia either as the land of the "Sinae," whose name may correspond to the first ruling imperial dynasty of China in the third century B.C., or as the land of the "Seres," which adjoined that of the Sinae and was the place from which silk was thought to come. Other than these very vague impressions, the country that we think of as China was very little known to the civilizations of either Greece or Rome, and this continued to be the situation in Europe until the time of the Mongol conquests in Asia during the thirteenth century.³⁶

Instead, the most enduring impressions of the East were focused

ethnocentricity comparable with the Chinese portrayal of their own land as the center of the world. Because of Jerusalem's key role in the history of Christianity, it was natural that it should be the center of attention for European Christians. Since Jerusalem also lay more or less at the point of focus of the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, its Christian significance was easily grafted onto the classical idea of the *orbis terrarum*: see Phillips, pp.188-90, and D. Poirion, ed., *Jerusalem, Rome, Constantinople: l'image et le mythe de la ville* (Paris, 1986).

³⁴ Cited in J. Sumption, *Pilgrimage* (London, 1975), p.257.

³⁵ Phillips, ch. 10, "Scholarship and the imagination"; see also the detailed treatment of the theme in Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World*.

³⁶ H. Yule, ed., *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 2nd edition, vol. I, Hakluyt Society, 2nd. series, 38 (London, 1915), Introduction and pp.183-97.

upon India. The earliest known references in Greek sources are in the writings of Herodotus in the middle of the fifth century B.C. and of Ctesias of Cnidos in about 400 B.C. Ctesias named his work *Indica*, gave great attention to the marvels of India, and so established a genre of geographical writing that was followed by many later Greek and Roman authors, such as Pliny the Elder in the first century A.D. and Solinus in the third century.³⁷ Although it is doubtful whether even Ctesias ever visited India, there were many points of contact between Europe and Asia, through military conquests like those of Alexander the Great and his successors and through trade. With the collapse of Roman power, little opportunity for direct relations between western Europe and Asia remained, but the marvels of India lived on and received a new lease of life from such works as the *Cosmography* by the mysterious figure of Aethicus Ister, the so-called *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, and the Old English and Latin texts known as *The Wonders of the East*.³⁸

The spread of Christianity added a number of new perceptions and sources of interest in the East. One idea that became familiar was that of the terrestrial paradise, from which the four great rivers of the world began their course, and that was usually located in the easternmost reaches of Asia.³⁹ Although paradise was inaccessible to mankind, the supposed attempt by Alexander the Great to reach it became a part of the Alexander legend that was very familiar in medieval Europe. One of Alexander's exploits, which derives from material in both the Old and the New Testament, was the enclosure behind a wall or mountain range of the savage tribes of Gog and Magog, whose escape would herald the coming of Antichrist. Alexander's wall is usually identified with the Caucasus mountains, but it is just possible that the story contains an echo of one of the precursors of China's Great Wall far to the east.⁴⁰ Another tradition of

³⁷ J.B. Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art And Thought*, passim; R. Wittkower, "Marvels of the East," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5, 1942. For a collection of classical references to India, see the various works by J.W. McCrindle, e.g. *Navigation of the Erythraean Sea and Ancient India as Described by Ktesias of Knidos* (Calcutta & London, 1879; repr. Amsterdam, 1973).

³⁸ Phillips, pp.10-11; Friedman, op. cit., pp.5-7; Campbell, op. cit., pp.57-74; S. Rypin, ed., *Three Old English Prose Texts*, Old English Text Society, 161 (London, 1924, for 1921).

³⁹ J.K. Wright, *Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades*, pp.771-2, 261-5.

⁴⁰ Wright, op. cit., pp.72-4; G. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander* (Cambridge, 1956), pp.130-1; P. Noble, L. Polak & C. Isoz, ed., *The Medieval Alexander Legend and Romance Epic* (London, 1982). No European traveler to China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries made any mention of the Wall, which was constructed in its present form only

Christian inspiration was the legend of St. Thomas, which existed from about the third century A.D. and was based in part at least on the perfectly genuine spread of Christianity to parts of India. Although the legend underwent a revival in the twelfth century, after which a number of European pilgrims visited the shrine of St. Thomas at Mailapur on the east coast of India,⁴¹ it was soon overshadowed by the much more powerful tale contained in the fictitious *Letter of Prester John*, the eastern king who was preparing to come to the aid of Christendom.⁴² Once the *Letter* began to circulate, every European traveler who had the chance to travel in the East was almost bound to divert some of his energies to a search for the elusive Christian ruler.⁴³

A great many ideas and impressions about the East were therefore already current in Europe even before the thirteenth-century Mongol conquests provided an unexpected new opportunity for European travel in Asia. The Mongols did not conquer India at this time,⁴⁴ but European merchants like the Genoese Benedetto Vivaldi and Percivalle Stancone and the Venetian Marco Polo, and missionaries such as John of Monte Corvino, John of Marignolli, Odoric of Pordenone, and the French Dominican, Jordan of Séverac, who became bishop of Quilon in 1329, did succeed in going there through Mongol-controlled territory in Iran at various times in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁴⁵ Although they were sometimes skeptical of some of the old tales about India, they were never able to shake off all the ideas received from the past. John of Marignolli, for example, wrote several pages of reasoned argument against the existence of the monstrous races, while remaining convinced that while he was visiting Ceylon he had heard the waters issuing from the fountain of Paradise.⁴⁶ Jordan of Séverac's account of India, written in about 1330, contains much that is recognizable but was significantly entitled *Mirabilia Des-*

in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: see A.N. Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: from History to Myth* (Cambridge, England, 1990).

⁴¹ Phillips, pp.59-61, 96, 116, 192; Wright, op. cit., pp.74, 272, 275-9; P.W. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas* (Cambridge, 1956).

⁴² For the literature on Prester John, see fn 14 above.

⁴³ Phillips, pp.60-2, 77-82, 117, 151-3, 161, 184, 191-4, 200, 209, 227, 246, 251-3, 258.

⁴⁴ A leader of Mongol descent did, however, create the Mughal empire in India in the early sixteenth century. See D.O. Morgan, *The Mongols*, ch.8, "What became of the Mongols?"

⁴⁵ Phillips, pp.96-100, 109-10.

⁴⁶ Phillips, pp.194-5, 201-2; *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. III, ed. H. Yule, Hakluyt Society, Second Series, 37 (London, 1914; repr. Nendeln, 1967), pp.232-5, 254-61.

cripta,⁴⁷ whereas one of the most elaborately illuminated manuscripts of the account of Marco Polo's travels begins as follows:

Ci commence li livres du graunt Caam qui parole de la graunt Ermenie de Persse et des Tartares et dynde, et des granz merveilles qui par le monde sont.⁴⁸

To Europeans, the reality of the extreme climate of India, the strange plants and animals, and the customs of its peoples were genuine sources of wonder, and it is likely that their written accounts and the fictional ones, such as *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* and the *Itineraries* of Johannes Witte of Hese (1389), which were based upon them, succeeded all too well in reinforcing the old stereotypes about the East.⁴⁹

By contrast, European understanding of the region of east Asia, which we think of as China, was transformed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In this case there was very little classical precedent to go on, beyond the vague references to the land of the Seres. China was in some ways superficially familiar to a European traveler from the Mediterranean: In both there were great cities, extensive commerce by land and sea, and a highly organized money economy; Christianity existed and was tolerated. It is not surprising, for example, that the city of Kinsai, with its many canals and bridges, should seem very like Venice both in Rustichello of Pisa's version of Marco Polo's travels and in Italo Calvino's modern act of imagination, or that Marco Polo should compare the trade of the port of Zayton with that of Alexandria. But there the comparisons ended.⁵⁰ Everything about China was on a scale unknown in Europe: If Zayton were comparable with Alexandria, its trade according to Marco Polo was a hun-

⁴⁷ *Mirabilia Descripta: The Wonders of the East* by Friar Jordanus, ed. H. Yule, Hakluyt Society (London, 1863).

⁴⁸ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Bodley Ms. 264, f.218r. The illuminators of manuscripts sometimes added wonders that were not in the text: see R. Wittkower, "Marco Polo and the pictorial tradition of the wonders of the East," in *Oriente Poliano* (Rome, 1957).

⁴⁹ The literary phenomenon of the imaginary journey has been studied by a number of scholars: see, for example, J.K. Hyde, "Real and imaginary journeys in the later Middle Ages," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 65 (1982-3), pp.125-47; J. Richard, "Voyages réels et voyages imaginaires, instruments de la connaissance géographique au moyen âge," in *Culture et travail intellectuel dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. G. Hase-nohr & J. Longère (Paris, 1981); J. Richard, *Les récits de voyages et de pèlerinages*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge, ed. L. Genicot, Fascicle XXXVIII (Turnhout, 1981).

⁵⁰ Marco Polo, *The Travels*, pp.213-31; Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (London, 1974), pp.68-9.

dred times more than that of the great Egyptian port; the money in circulation was not made of silver or gold but of paper stamped with the emperor's seal and was accepted without question; China was to outward appearances a land of peace and order, unlike Europe; the local languages were very strange to European ears and were rarely mastered by them; Christians were very much in the minority and many of them were heretical Nestorians, descended from converts made centuries before, who were often hostile to the missionaries from Rome. Nonetheless, Europeans were and remained deeply impressed: Nothing like China had been seen or imagined before.⁵¹

Although true on one level, this is also a deceptive account of medieval European relations with China. To begin with, Europeans who went to the Far East in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries were in a sense not going to China at all but to a land that had recently been conquered by nomadic invaders from the north. China, which under normal conditions would have been largely closed to foreigners, was now accessible to outsiders from other parts of Asia and from Europe whose services were needed by the ruling Mongols and who were more trustworthy than their Chinese subjects.⁵² The "real China" was therefore temporarily in suspense during the rule of the Mongol Great Khans of the Yüan dynasty between 1272 and 1368. Second, China was known in medieval Europe as "the land of Cathay" and the great city of Peking/Beijing as Cambaluc (from the Turkish words "Khan-balik": "City of the Khan"). Strictly speaking, "Cathay" referred to

⁵¹ Phillips, pp.87-92, 115-19; J. Heers, *Marco Polo* (Paris, 1983); *Marco Polo and his Book: China and Europe in the Middle Ages*: Abstracts of papers delivered at the Second International Congress on Marco Polo, Venice, 1989 (published by University of New Hampshire, 1989); Marco Polo, *The Travels*, pp.40 (languages), 147-9 (paper money), 237 (Zayton). Paper money, which was remarked upon by many foreign visitors to China, was a system of currency inherited by the Mongols from their Chinese predecessors. Lack of knowledge of the local languages was a major problem for the European missionaries in China: see C. Dawson, *The Mission to Asia*, p.233. Marco Polo is said to have known four languages, but whether these included Chinese is not clear. On the early history of Christianity in China, see A.C. Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550* (London, 1930). The peacefulness of Mongol-ruled China was probably more apparent to later European travelers than it was to Marco Polo, since the latter arrived in China just as the Mongol conquest of the south was being completed. For a recent detailed study of medieval European conceptions of the "wonders of the East" and of actual travel in East Asia see F. E. Reichert, *Begegnung mit China: Die Entdeckung Ostasiens im Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen, 1992).

⁵² For information on China under the Mongols, see especially D.O. Morgan, op.cit., ch. 5; I. de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans* (London, 1971); *China under Mongol Rule*, ed. J.D. Langlois, Jr. (Princeton, 1981); *China among Equals: the Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th.-14th. Centuries*, ed. M. Rossabi (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1983); M. Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1988).

northern China, whereas southern China was known as "Manzi," but Cathay was the familiar and most commonly used word.⁵³ The name Cathay derived not from either the Chin or the Sung dynasties, which had ruled the north and south of China before the Mongol invasions, but from a people called the Khitans who had ruled Mongolia and northern China from the tenth to the early twelfth centuries. Their name had evidently survived the end of their rule in these regions, but it was also preserved in the empire of Kara Khitai, which had been founded in Central Asia in the twelfth century. The victory of their first emperor over the Turks near Samarkand in 1141 may have been one of the sources of the Prester John legend; more recently, in 1218, Kara Khitai had been destroyed by Ghenghis Khan in the course of his own empire building.⁵⁴

The first European sources to refer to Cathay in a sense that clearly refers to northern China are the narratives composed in the late 1240s and in the mid-1250s by Carpini and Rubruck, both of whom wrote from information they had picked up at the court of the Great Khan in Mongolia. Rubruck was the first to realize that Cathay was probably the classical land of the Seres from which silk had come, and was followed in his conclusion by the Franciscan scholar Roger Bacon, who made use of Rubruck's writings in his *Opus Maius* composed soon after 1266.⁵⁵ Marco Polo's narrative of around 1300 is the first account of Cathay (and of Manzi as well) by a European traveler who had seen these countries at firsthand.⁵⁶ From then on, Cathay was a familiar part of all writings about the Far East, such as the *Flor des estoires de la terre d'orient* composed at the papal curia in 1307 by the exiled Armenian prince Hayton, the *Livre de l'estat du Grand Caan* written in 1330 by John of Cori, the Dominican Archbishop of Sultaniyeh in Iran, as well as those of Odoric of Pordenone in 1330 and John of Marignolli in the 1350s.⁵⁷ Cathay also bulked large in the highly imag-

⁵³ Morgan, op. cit., pp.48, 63, 196. To confuse matters further, the official name for the Mongol capital was "Ta-tu" rather than "Khan-balik": Morgan, p.123.

⁵⁴ Morgan, op. cit., pp.47-50, 108-9, 123.

⁵⁵ C. Dawson, ed., *The Mission to Asia*, pp.21-2, 42, 62, 64, 121-2, 143-4, 184; *The Opus Maius* of Roger Bacon, trans. R.B. Burke (New York, 1962), vol. I, pp.387-8.

⁵⁶ Marco Polo, *The Travels*, passim.

⁵⁷ There is an extract from Hayton's work in H. Yule, ed., *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. I, Hakluyt Society, Second Series, 38 (London, 1915), pp.260-2 (the full text is published in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Documents Arméniens*, II (Paris, 1906)); the sixteenth-century English translation has been edited by G. Burger: *Hetoum: a Lytell Cronycle: Richard Pynson's Translation (c.1520) of La Fleur des Histoires de la terre d'Orient (c.1307)* (Toronto, 1988); for John of Cori (or Cora), see *Cathay & the Way Thither*, vol. III, Hakluyt Society, Second Series, 37 (London, 1914), pp.89-103; for

inative *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, which was composed in either the 1350s or 1360s and then circulated widely in manuscript in many European languages.⁵⁸

By the time *Mandeville's Travels* was written, Mongol rule in China was near its end but it and other popular works like Marco Polo's *Travels* ensured that just as the name Khitai had survived the demise of its original owners in the early thirteenth century, so "Cathay" and its ruler the "Great Khan" survived the ejection of the Mongols from China in 1368. "Cathay" was given a further lease of life by its inclusion in maps, such as the famous Catalan World Atlas of about 1375, which is still preserved in Paris, or the world map of Fra Mauro of Venice, which was made for the Portuguese in 1459,⁵⁹ and by the appearance of Mandeville and Marco Polo in printed editions from the early 1480s.⁶⁰ No European is known to have been to China in the fifteenth century, but the Castilian ambassador Clavijo who visited the court of the new Mongol conqueror, Tamerlane, at Samarkand between 1403 and 1406 was there at the same time as a Chinese envoy and probably learnt something about current conditions,⁶¹ and the Venetian traveler Nicolo Conti included a description of Cathay in an account of his travels after he returned to Europe in 1444.⁶²

Given the continuing European fascination with Cathay, it is hardly surprising that someone as suggestible as Christopher Columbus should become obsessed by it in his turn. What is more interesting is that "Cathay" survived even the discovery of America. Whereas India became increasingly familiar to Europeans in the sixteenth century,

Odoric of Pordenone see *ibid.*, vol. II, Hakluyt Society, Second Series, 33 (London, 1913); and for John of Marignolli see *ibid.*, vol. III, pp.213-16.

⁵⁸ *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, ed. C.W.R.D. Moseley (London, 1983), pp.137-60.

There are several other available editions. For the diffusion of Mandeville in manuscript and in printed editions, see C. Deluz, *Le Livre de Jehan de Mandeville: une "Géographie" au XIVe siècle*, Annexe V, pp.416-21. For a discussion of the problem of authorship see J.R.S. Phillips, "The quest for Sir John Mandeville," in *The Culture of Christendom: Studies in Medieval History in Memory of Denis L. T. Bethell*, ed. M. A. Meyer (London, 1993).

⁵⁹ Phillips, *Medieval Expansion of Europe*, pp.220-2; *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. I, pp.299-302; there is an excellent facsimile reproduction of the Catalan map in *Mapamundi: The Catalan World Atlas of the Year 1375*, ed. G. Grosjean (Zürich, 1975).

⁶⁰ *Mandeville's Travels*, for example, was published in German, French, and Latin editions between 1478 and 1483.

⁶¹ *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand*, A.D. 1403-6, ed. C.R. Markham, Hakluyt Society, First Series, 26 (London, 1859; repr. New York, 1970), pp.171-4; M. Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia from 1368 to the Present Day* (London, 1975), pp.13-17, 61-2.

⁶² *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. I, pp.266-7; for other fifteenth-century references to "Cathay" by Toscanelli and Barbaro, see *ibid.*, pp.267-70.

Cathay remained a mystery. It was suspected by the Jesuit missionaries who entered China from the sea at the end of the century that this was the country recorded in earlier European writings, but proof did not become available until 1606 when the Portuguese Jesuit Benedict Goes completed a four-year journey from India and was met by a colleague from Peking just before he died at Suchow.⁶³ Even then, some people were not convinced: As late as 1682 an edition of Peter Heylyn's *Cosmography* "assumed that there was still a Great Cham ruling over Cathay from a city called 'Cambalu,' although it admitted that nothing had been heard of him for over a hundred years"; and *Mandeville's Travels* was reprinted ten times in English alone in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, in America the very vastness and intractability of much of the continent led to hopes of discovering a way round it or a short cut through it to the East. Of the fifty-two expeditions sent out by the French in Canada between 1603 and 1751, no less than half had the East as at least one of their objectives. Jean Nicolet dressed in robes of Chinese silk, standing on the western shore of Lake Michigan in 1634 in the hope that he would meet a representative of the Great Khan, is symbolic of the whole European involvement with the East since classical times.⁶⁵ Distant "Cathay," like "India" before it, had become firmly embedded in the European imagination, and in a curious fashion the "western" and "eastern" views had come full circle, to meet in the heart of the New World.

III. PEOPLES

In July 1241, three months after the great battles of Liegnitz and Mohi in which the latest and one of the most ferocious invaders of Europe, the nomadic Mongols, had destroyed the armies of Poland and Hun-

⁶³ B. Penrose, *Travel and Discovery in the Renaissance, 1420-1620* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952; repr. New York, 1962), pp.268-70; *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. IV, Hakluyt Society, Second Series, 41 (London, 1916), pp.x-xii, 169-259.

⁶⁴ P.J. Marshall & G. Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind*, pp.8-9, citing Heylyn, Book 3, p.204; Peter Heylyn (1599-1662), first published his book in London in 1652 under the title, *Cosmographie: Foure Bookes containning the Chorographie and Historie of the Whole World, and All its Principall Kingdoms, Provinces, Seas and Isles Thereof*. Although Heylyn had a section on Cathay in Book 3 of his work (pp.185-205), he was aware that there was some distinction to be drawn between "Cathay" (in the north) and the rest of China and also included a section on the latter in Book 3, pp.206-12.

⁶⁵ *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. I, *From the Beginning to 1800*, ed. R. Cole Harris (Toronto, 1987), Plate 36; Phillips, p.259.

gary and their German allies,⁶⁶ Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen wrote to Henry III of England and to his fellow sovereigns recounting the horrors of the Mongol attack and appealing for aid to resist their expected advance into western Europe. In doing so, the Emperor listed the military virtues of the countries of Europe - from Germany, *furens ac fervens ad arma*, France, *strenuae militiae genitrix et alumpna*, Spain, *bellicosa et audax*, and England, *virtuosa viris et classe munita*, through Denmark, Italy, Burgundy, and Apulia, and ending with the nations bounding the western ocean, which he dismissed merely as *cruenta Hibernia, cum agili Wallia, palustris Scotia, glacialis Norwegia*.⁶⁷ The language employed is highly rhetorical and the descriptions of the various peoples of Europe are restricted to their supposed fighting abilities, but the letter is nonetheless of considerable interest, because it suggests that there was a perceived pecking order among the nations of thirteenth-century Europe, while at the same time it also firmly opposes Europeans to a group of outsiders who are both alien and terrifying. The Emperor's letter is in fact but one illustration of the forms of ethnographic description that were current in medieval Europe. Some were the product of classical theories and perceptions whereas others were Christian in inspiration; but these did not exist in a vacuum, and were also influenced by specific situations both within and outside Europe in which peoples of different cultural, religious, and political traditions came into contact or into conflict and were forced to develop at the very least some practical working explanation or justification or narrative to describe their relations with one another.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ For a general account of these dramatic events, see Phillips, ch. 4, "Europe and the Mongol invasions"; but see also D.O. Morgan, *The Mongols*, ch. 6; J.J. Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests* (London, 1971).

⁶⁷ Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. H.R. Luard (Rolls Series), vol.IV, pp.270-7 (this letter forms part of a collection of documents on the Mongol invasions that was made by Matthew Paris); for the historical context, see P. Jackson, "The Crusade against the Mongols (1241)," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 42, No. 1, January 1991, pp.1-18.

⁶⁸ I am attempting to avoid overprecise definition here. However, I am in agreement with Anthony Pagden's argument that the "Cartesian belief in the fundamental innocence of the observer's eye" cannot be sustained and that "observers of anything ultimately unfamiliar for which there exist few readily available antecedents had to be able to classify before they could properly see, and in order to classify in any meaningful sense they had no alternative but to appeal to a system that was already in use": *The Fall of Natural Man* (Cambridge, 1982), p.2. My only disagreement with this excellent book is that while it gives full treatment to medieval theoretical precedents drawn from Aristotle and Aquinas, it does not take sufficient account of the complexity and variety of medieval experience—for example, the relations between Christian and heathen in the Baltic lands or between English Christians and Irish Christians in Ireland.

Theories about the origins and distribution of the earth's peoples owed much both to classical and Christian ideas. The traditional classical division of the world into the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe was given new meaning by the story in the Book of Genesis of the peopling of the earth by the sons of Noah, Shem, Japheth, and Ham. By the seventh century this idea had been developed to the point at which

Europe was the land of Japheth, of the Gentiles, the Greeks, and the Christians; Asia was the land of Semitic peoples, glorious in that they had produced the patriarchs and prophets, the chosen people and Christ himself; but – as the land of the circumcised adherents of older laws – condemned to an inferiority which was stated in the scriptures. As for Africa, the lot of the unhappy descendants of Ham, the Hamitic subjection was equally clearly laid down: Canaan was to be the servant both of Shem and Japheth.⁶⁹

This distribution clearly implied the preeminence of Europe and its peoples over those of the other two continents and might have become a powerful idea in itself if "Europe" had not been overlaid so deeply for much of the medieval period by "Christendom." Although the whole world was visibly not Christian in allegiance, it was firmly believed that the world had been divided up and preached to by the immediate followers of Christ.⁷⁰ This idea was sometimes shown in pictorial form in the symbolic world maps that accompanied the commentary on the *Apocalypse* by the eighth-century Spanish monk Beatus. However, from the time of the papal reform in the eleventh century, the papacy saw itself as the leader of Christendom, which claimed in effect a superiority for Europe over the rest of the world, and which was given practical material effect in 1099 through the consummation of the Crusader⁷¹ movement in the capture of Jerusalem.

European superiority was also implied in the belief that civilization had gradually moved westward after its beginnings in the East, but that when it reached the uttermost limits of the West the human race would meet its doom and extinction. This idea has been traced through Christian writings from Severian of Gabala in the fourth century to Hugh of St. Victor and the German bishop and historian Otto of Freising in the twelfth. In the prologue to his *Chronicon*, Otto remarked,

⁶⁹ D. Hay, *Europe: the Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh, 1957), ch. I and especially p.14; Friedman, p.39.

⁷⁰ Hay, pp.27–36, 40.

⁷¹ Hay, pp.34–42.

What great learning there was in Egypt and among the Chaldeans, from whom Abraham derived his knowledge! But what now is Babylon, once famous for its science and its power? And Egypt is now in large part a trackless waste, whence science was transferred to the Greeks, then to the Romans, and finally to the Gauls and Spaniards. And let it be observed that because all human learning began in the Orient and will end in the Occident, the mutability and disappearance of all things is demonstrated.⁷²

The effect of environment on the characteristics of peoples was another theme with a classical origin that was taken up by medieval writers. Aristotle, for example, had remarked that

those who live in a cold climate and in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill; and therefore they keep their freedom but have no political organization, and are incapable of ruling over others. Whereas the natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, but they are wanting in spirit, and therefore they are always in a state of subjection and slavery. But the Hellenic race, which is situated between them, is likewise intermediate in character, being high-spirited and also intelligent.⁷³

In the seventh century A.D., Isidore of Seville wrote that "In keeping with the difference in climate, the looks of men, their color, and their stature vary, and different dispositions appear. Consequently, the Romans are stately, Greeks shifty, Africans sneaky, Gauls warlike by nature and plunge into things, all because the climates they live in differ."⁷⁴ The thirteenth-century English scholar Roger Bacon noted, for example, in his *Opus Maius* that according to classical sources the Hyperboreans who lived in the far north were "a very happy race, which dies only from satiety of life" and that Claudius Ptolemy was correct in supposing "that nature requires that there be two races of Ethiopians (i.e. black people)," one on either side of the equator.⁷⁵ Bacon's contemporary, the German Dominican Albertus Magnus, had a considerable amount to say on the subject in his *De Natura Locorum*. He argued that people born in the hottest places were very hot themselves and became "wrinkled like pepper seeds from too much dryness," whereas the black color of their skin was the result of the thinner parts of the semen boiling away in the womb. People living

⁷² J.K. Wright, *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades*, pp.233–5; cf. Hay, op. cit., p.51; see also C.J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp.276–82.

⁷³ Quoted in Hay, p.5; see also p.33.

⁷⁴ Friedman, pp.39, 43.

⁷⁵ Roger Bacon, *Opus Maius*, tr. R.B. Burke (New York, 1928; repr. New York, 1962), vol. I, pp.325, 327.

in the regions of great heat, like the Ethiopians and Indians, were "quick-witted in invention and outstanding in philosophy and magic." On the other hand, people living in areas of cold were white "because of the cold which constricts the blood"; they were energetic but "dull-witted and untutored," although "they could be aroused to better things by study." The peoples of temperate climates however, existed under ideal conditions. They lived to old age, their works "as natural as they are spirited," were most praiseworthy and they had good customs. The temperate people "live easily among themselves, practice justice, keep their word, respect peace and the society of men."⁷⁶

One of the best known and typically "medieval" forms of ethnography is the belief in monstrous races of men who "were always far away, in India, Ethiopia, Albania, or Cathay, places whose outlines were vague to the medieval mind but whose names evoked mystery."⁷⁷ As is well known, the monstrous races were originally another aspect of the fascination of the classical world with the wonders of the East. Altogether about forty such races have been identified in the writings of Greek and Roman authors from Ctesias in the late fifth century B.C. to Pliny the Elder in the first century A.D.: They include such beings as Amazons ("without breast"), *Anthropophagi* ("man-eaters"), *Antipodes* ("opposite-footed": supposedly people living on the opposite side of the world), *Blemmyae* ("headless men"), *Cynocephali* ("dog-head"), *Ethiopians* ("burnt face"), and so on.⁷⁸ J.B. Friedman has pointed out in his remarkable study of the monstrous races that many of them were not monstrous at all in the sense of being anomalous and deformed births. "They simply differed in physical appearance and social practices from the person describing them. Some took their names from their manner of life, such as the Apple-Smellers, or the Troglodytes who dwelt in caves; some were physically unusual but not anomalous, such as the Pygmies or Giants; and some were truly fabulous, such as the Blemmyae or men with faces on their chests. Even the most bizarre, however, were not supernatural or infernal creatures, but varieties of men, whose chief distinction from the men of Europe was one of geography."⁷⁹ Some of the "monstrous

⁷⁶ This passage is a paraphrase and quotation of Glacken, pp.267-9; see also *ibid.*, chapter 6, "Environmental influences within a divinely created world," and Friedman, pp.51-3.

⁷⁷ Friedman, p.1.

⁷⁸ Friedman, ch. 1, 'The Plinian races', especially pp.5-22.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.1, 3.

racess" are clearly the result of attempts to describe the unfamiliar: it has been suggested, for example, that the *cynocephali*, who are one of the most frequently met with, may be derived from hirsute-faced human beings or from cynocephalic monkeys, or from sightings of men dressed in animal skins.⁸⁰ It has also been argued that the monstrous races were the result of a form of xenophobia,⁸¹ but this argument is weakened by the fact that the monstrous races usually seem to have been located in distant places in which they posed no immediate threat. It is interesting, however, to discover that many of the monstrous races known to classical writers also appear in Chinese sources, such as the work known as the *Shan Hai Ching* ("Classic of the Mountains and Rivers," 6th century B.C. to 1st century A.D.), which contains, for example, a lively illustration of a "headless man" brandishing an axe in his hand. Various explanations for this coincidence have been put forward, but none that is wholly satisfactory. Whatever the reason, it is apparent that for the Chinese the "wonders of the East" were instead the "marvels of the West."⁸²

With the Christian gloss that they were the children of Cain, who had been sentenced to deformity and exile as punishment for their ancestor's sin,⁸³ the monstrous races passed into the medieval European imagination along with other aspects of the East, and they are to be found regularly in works of scholarship, cartography, and literature. In the early thirteenth century, Jacques de Vitry, the bishop of Acre in the kingdom of Jerusalem, described the monstrous races in his *Historia Orientalis* as if they were among the inhabitants of the Holy Land; the Ebstorf *mappa mundi* of c.1240 contained twenty-four of the races and the Hereford map of c.1300 includes a total of twenty.⁸⁴ The author of the mid-fourteenth-century *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* peopled some of the many islands in the East with dog-headed men, one-eyed giants, headless men, men who sheltered from the sun beneath their enormous upper lip, and beings with the genitals of both sexes, and Johannes Witte of Hese, who set out for Jeru-

⁸⁰ Needham, vol. III, p.507; Friedman, p.15.

⁸¹ Needham, vol. III, p.507. Some of the races may also represent the projection of subconscious fears of the observers, but that perhaps is to get into too deep psychological waters.

⁸² Needham, vol.III, pp.503-7 (see illustration on p.506).

⁸³ See Friedman, ch. 5, "Cain's kin."

⁸⁴ Friedman, pp.42,46,77. On the Hereford *mappa mundi* see M. Letts, *The Pictures in the Hereford Mappa Mundi* (8th.edition, Hereford, 1979); M. Jancey, *Mappa Mundi* (Hereford, 1987). On *mappaemundi* in general see the chapter in J.B. Harley & D. Woodward, ed., *History of Cartography*, vol.1.

saalem in 1389, and claimed to have visited both Purgatory and Paradise, also "found" many of the monstrous races along his way.⁸⁵ On the other hand, a number of the European travelers in Asia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries expressed great skepticism about them. Although Marco Polo claimed that the Andaman islanders were as fierce as mastiffs and had heads like dogs, he also noted that some of the inhabitants of the island of Java tried to deceive unsuspecting travelers by claiming that the dried and shriveled bodies of monkeys were those of pygmies. John of Marignolli, for example, concluded that "no such peoples do exist as nations, though there may be an individual monster here and there," and also argued that the Indian use of parasols to keep off the sun was the origin of the *sciapods*, who were said to shade themselves with their one large foot. To prove his point he even took a parasol back with him to Florence.⁸⁶

Almost by definition, the monstrous races existed in distant and inaccessible parts of the world and usually seemed to recede into every greater obscurity whenever any outsider went in search of them. However, on a few occasions they came closer to home. One example is that of the "wild man," who appears in various eastern forms in classical and medieval literature, but who also had a place within European traditions and folklore. He was "a hairy man compounded of human and animal traits, without, however, sinking to the level of an ape," who was particularly to be found in remote places in the mountains and forests of many parts of Europe. He was an ambiguous figure, often regarded as threatening to normal human beings, and with strongly erotic associations, but sometimes seen as a benevolent creature whose behavior could provide useful moral lessons for civilized humanity, becoming in the process a prototype "noble savage."⁸⁷ Another group of savages who were anything but noble were the tribes of Gog and Magog, whose escape from captivity behind Alexander's Gate somewhere in the East would herald the ending of the world.⁸⁸ It was naturally hoped that the tribes would stay there indefinitely, but it was almost inevitable when the Mongols appeared

⁸⁵ *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, ed. Moseley, pp.134-7; Friedman, p.143. For the marvels included in Mandeville and their geographical distribution, see C. Deluz, *Annexe IV*, pp.402-15.

⁸⁶ Phillips, pp.78, 94-5; C. Dawson, *The Mission to Asia*, p.170; Marco Polo, *The Travels*, pp.258, 253-4; *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. III, pp.254-6.

⁸⁷ Friedman, pp.15-16, 200-7 & Ch. 8, "Monstrous men as noble savages," especially pp.104-7; R. Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: a Study in Art, Sentiment and Demonology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952; repr. New York, 1970), p.1. Both these books contain illustrations of "wild men."

⁸⁸ On Gog and Magog, see fn 40.

in the 1240s from the prophesied direction, with little warning and without any indication of their true identity, that many Europeans should be influenced in their descriptions of the invaders by existing ideas of the monstrous races and their supposed characteristics, and so identify them with Gog and Magog.⁸⁹

Recent work on the chronicles composed by writers such as Thomas of Spalato in Dalmatia who experienced the Mongol attacks at first hand has shown that although they contain ample evidence of the destruction caused by the Mongols, they do not present an apocalyptic interpretation of these events.⁹⁰ It has also been demonstrated that some of the best known material on the Mongols, particularly that recorded by Matthew Paris in England, far from the scene of events, was probably edited to produce a more dramatic effect.⁹¹ But whether edited or not, a dramatic effect was achieved. The Mongols were commonly referred to as "Tartars," with the implication of infernal origins; some writers claimed that (like the *anthropophagi*) the Mongols indulged in cannibalism, and Matthew Paris even included a drawing of them committing this atrocity.⁹²

The Mongols could also readily be identified with another form of

⁸⁹ C.W. Connell, "Western views of the origin of the 'Tartars': an example of the influence of myth in the second half of the thirteenth century," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 3 (1973), pp.126-33.

⁹⁰ Connell, pp.126-7; James Ross Sweeney, "Thomas of Spalato and the Mongols: a thirteenth-century Dalmatian view," *Florilegium*, 4 (1982), Carleton University Annual papers on Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages, pp.156-8, 163-71; the text of Thomas of Spalato's chronicle is published in *Der Mongolensturm: Berichte von Augenzeugen und Zeitgenossen, 1235-1250*, ed. H. Göckenjan & J.R. Sweeney (Graz, Vienna & Cologne, 1985), vol. 3 in the series *Ungarns Geschichtsschreiber*, ed. T. von Bogayay.

⁹¹ For details of the material recorded by Matthew Paris, see J.J. Saunders, "Matthew Paris and the Mongols," *Essays in Medieval History presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, ed. T.R. Sandquist & M.R. Powicke (Toronto, 1969). For critical remarks on Matthew Paris, see Sweeney, "Thomas of Spalato," pp.157, 172, nn.3,4; and P. Jackson, "The Crusade against the Mongols (1241)," pp.2, 8-9.

⁹² Connell, pp.115, 117-18; W.R. Jones, "The image of the barbarian in medieval Europe," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 13 (1971), pp.399-400; J.A. Boyle, "The last barbarian invaders: the impact of the Mongol conquest upon East and West," *Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, vol. 112 (1969-70), pp.5-8; G. Guzman, "Reports of Mongol cannibalism in the thirteenth-century Latin sources: Oriental fact or Western fiction?," in Westrem, ed., *Discovering New Worlds*; M.R. James, "The drawings of Matthew Paris," in *The Fourteenth Volume of the Walpole Society* (Oxford, 1925-6), pp.15-16 and drawings nos. 75, 86; see also the more recent work by Suzanne Lewis, *The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora*, California Studies in the History of Art, 21 (Aldershot, 1987). It should however be pointed out that the derivation of "Tartar" from "Tartarus," the classical Hell, was not universally argued by thirteenth-century writers and has been hotly debated by modern scholars: see J.R. Sweeney, "Thomas of Spalato," pp.177-8. On the other hand, whatever the origin of the name, it probably produced the appropriate "infernal" effect on many of those who read accounts of the Mongol invasions.

ethnography, the image of the barbarian, which was a familiar concept in antiquity in regions as far apart as Greece, India, and China. The barbarian was distinguished by such features as his lack of an ordered urban or rural existence, his inability to manufacture and to employ the material artefacts of more advanced civilizations, and by the absence of a sophisticated spoken and written literary culture.⁹³ Barbarism was, needless to say, in the eye (and in the mind) of the beholder and was particularly ascribed by the members of settled civilizations to neighbors whose way of life was conspicuously different from the accepted norms. When the "barbarian" was not simply someone of a different culture but was also perceived as a threat, the idea became a very emotive one.⁹⁴ The image of the barbarian outlived the classical world that had given birth to it. For the descendants of the former barbarians who took over the western Roman provinces in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. and became partly Romanized in the process, there were other peoples living beyond the new frontiers who could now be classified as barbarians. But barbarism was also redefined to make adherence to paganism or to a Christian heresy rather than to Roman Christianity one of the most significant distinguishing marks. By these criteria the unconverted Slavs, Germans, Magyars, and Scandinavians were obvious barbarians, especially if like the latter two they were also a cause of terror and devastation to Christian Europe.⁹⁵ In this guise the barbarian was bequeathed by classical antiquity to medieval Europe.

The medieval European idea of the barbarian can also be understood more clearly through the modern concept of the "core and periphery," as expressed in the relations between areas like Anglo-Norman England and Germany on the one hand, which considered themselves as the natural repositories of civilization, and on the other the societies with which they came into contact and sought to dominate, Wales and Ireland to the west and the Baltic lands and the Slav territories beyond the Elbe to the east.⁹⁶ The perceived contrast be-

⁹³ Based on the definition of "barbarian" given in W.R. Jones, "The image of the barbarian in medieval Europe," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 13 (1971), p.376. This is a very important paper to which I am much indebted for this paragraph. See also A. Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, ch. 2, "The image of the barbarian."

⁹⁴ Jones, pp.377-8.

⁹⁵ Jones, pp.385-8.

⁹⁶ This idea is very well expressed in A. Simms, "Core and periphery in medieval Europe: the Irish experience in a wider context," in *Common Ground: Essays on the Historical Geography of Ireland presented to T. Jones Hughes*, ed. W.J. Smyth and K. Whelan (Cork, 1988), p.22; see also the very important collection of essays in *Medieval*

tween the core and periphery is clearly stated in a much-quoted passage about the Irish by the twelfth-century historian Gerald de Barri, better known as Giraldus Cambrensis because of his shared Norman and Welsh ancestry:

The Irish are a rude people, subsisting on the produce of their cattle only, and living themselves like beasts – a people that has not yet departed from the primitive habits of pastoral life. In the common course of things, mankind progresses from the forest to the field, from the field to the town, and to the social condition of citizens; but this nation, holding agricultural labour in contempt, and little coveting the wealth of towns, as well as being exceedingly averse to civil institutions – lead the same life their fathers did in the woods and open pastures, neither willing to abandon their old habits or learn anything new.⁹⁷

Gerald's remarks are typical of many that could be cited from twelfth- and thirteenth-century English and German authors about the inhabitants of the European periphery. Their pastoral existence was contrasted unfavorably with that of the settled "normal" societies; the richness of their land and their supposed failure to put it to proper agricultural use were stressed; and for good measure they were regularly accused of "ferocity, cruelty, and bloodthirstiness" and "faithlessness and disregard for good laws and customs." Otto of Freising spoke for many of his contemporaries when he said of the Hungarians: "Fortune is rightly to be blamed or, rather, the divine patience is to be wondered at, which exposed a land as delectable as this to such, not men, but human monsters."⁹⁸ Clearly such debased and degraded peoples as these were fit only for conquest, and all the more so if religion or the lack of it could be used in further justification. This was the case, for example, in 1155 when Pope Adrian IV was induced to send his famous bull *Laudabiliter* to Henry II of England urging him as a Catholic prince to go to Ireland "to enlarge the boundaries of the church, to reveal the truth of the Christian faith to unlearned and savage peoples, and to root out from the Lord's field the vices that grow in it." Despite the recent reforms in the Irish Church that were bringing it into line with the new standards of organization and au-

Frontier Societies, ed. R. Bartlett & A. Mackay (Oxford, 1989); and R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales, 1146-1223* (Oxford, 1982), especially ch. 6, "The face of the barbarian."

⁹⁷ Cited in Glacken, p.281; Simms, p.24.

⁹⁸ Bartlett, pp.158-65; Simms, p.24. See also R.C. Hoffman, "Outsiders by birth and blood: racist ideologies and realities around the periphery of Europe," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, n.s. 6 (Vancouver, 1983); W.R. Jones, "England and the Celtic fringe: a study in cultural stereotypes," *Journal of World History*, 13 (1971), pp.155-71.

thority elsewhere in Europe, the core's view of the periphery (the core in this instance being probably the Church of Canterbury) had its customary effect.⁹⁹

Where the objects of hostility were heathens the need to convert them to Christianity was an additional argument for intervention. From the time of the expedition against the Wends in 1147 until the final conversion of Lithuania in 1386, a series of Crusades was fought against them and other Baltic peoples. The question regularly arose as to whether conversion could properly be carried out by force. The papacy regularly stated that it could not, but this made little difference to the brutality of the eastern campaigns.¹⁰⁰ A twelfth-century bishop of Lübeck once "explained to the Slavs that he was not surprised that the Saxon princes had treated them badly because it was generally believed that it was not a serious sin to maltreat heathen, and in their own interests he encouraged them to convert to Christianity."¹⁰¹ In the late thirteenth century an anonymous writer in Bohemia remarked: "May God deign to listen and reveal to his Christian people a Czech king such as he (Alexander the Great); I hope that before long the Latvians, Tartars, Turks, Prussians and the schismatic Russians will experience such terror that they will adopt the Christian faith and relinquish their idols."¹⁰²

The fact that these words were written by a member of a Slav people (albeit one that had been converted three centuries earlier) is a sign that the periphery could fight back, verbally at least. In 1282, for example, the Welsh princes protested to the Archbishop of Canterbury that the English had failed to keep treaties, had devastated and burnt churches, and had slaughtered priests, monks, and nuns, as well as women and children at the breast.¹⁰³ In the early fourteenth century, when Edward I of England was trying to conquer Scotland, both the English and the Scots attempted to convince the papacy of the justice of their cause by presenting rival versions of mythical history, one employing the widely used Trojan legend while the other went one

⁹⁹ On *Laudabiliter*, see M.T. Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship: Interaction in Ireland in the Late Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1989), pp.7-8, 52-4, 277-8.

¹⁰⁰ The standard work on these conquests is E. Christiansen, *The Northern Crusade: the Baltic and the Catholic Frontier of Christendom, 1100-1525* (London, 1980), especially chs. 5, "The theocratic experiment, 1200-73," 6, "The interminable crusade, 1283-1410." See also R. Bartlett, "The conversion of a pagan society in the Middle Ages," *History*, 70 (1985), pp.185-201; J. Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers and Infidels: the Church and the Non-Christian World, 1250-1550* (Liverpool, 1979).

¹⁰¹ A. Simms, p.24, citing the chronicler Helmold of Bosau.

¹⁰² A. Thomas, "Czech-German relations," in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, p.203.

¹⁰³ D. Douie, *Archbishop Peckham* (Oxford, 1952), pp.238-40.

better and claimed descent from ancient Egypt; in 1317 the Irish tried the same approach in a document that was also filled with examples of alleged English injustice and villainy since the time of Henry II.¹⁰⁴

Usually such complaints had little or no practical effect: Wales was conquered and Ireland remained under a kind of English rule. However, a hundred years later an impassioned debate took place at the Council of Constance in which the Teutonic Knights were accused of unjustly attacking the newly converted Lithuanians. The Lithuanians won their case.¹⁰⁵ The last barbarians had finally been absorbed. In future, Europe would have to look for them elsewhere.

IV. CONCLUSION

Medieval Europeans had acquired a very varied experience of the world and of its peoples well before the opening of the New World by Columbus and his successors. In a few rare instances, notably Iceland, they found and settled lands that were empty of people or, like Greenland, were so vast that for most practical purposes they were unoccupied. In North America they also found a land of vast potential, but of which they learned little and which was moreover already settled by a people to whom the Vikings referred as "wretches" (*skraelings*) who were almost certainly the "Indians" encountered by a later generation of European explorers. The *skraelings* conformed to the image of the barbarian but they had a local superiority in numbers that helped to prevent any permanent European settlement on this occasion. Geographical distance from home bases was another factor both in the failure of settlement in North America and in the final disappearance of the Greenland colony in the fifteenth century. In the latter case, climatic change and southward migration by the native *inuit*, another candidate for the status of barbarian, were also responsible. But so too was the failure of the European settlers to adapt their way of life to local conditions by making full use of the rich fishing grounds around Greenland. Like some of the earliest English settlers in Virginia, they may in effect have "starved in the midst of plenty."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ J.R.S. Phillips, "The Irish Remonstrance of 1317: an international perspective", *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. XXVII, no. 106, November 1990, pp.112-29; idem, "The Remonstrance revisited: England and Ireland in the early fourteenth century," in *Men, Women and War: Studies in War, Politics and Society, Historical Studies*, XVIII, ed. T.G. Fraser & K. Jeffrey (Belfast, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ Muldoon, pp.107-19, especially p. 118; Christiansen, pp.223-32.

¹⁰⁶ On North America, see Phillips, *The Medieval Expansion of Europe*, ch.9, but see also G. Jones, *The Norse Atlantic Saga* (2nd. edition, Oxford, 1986); E. Guralnick, ed., *Vikings in the West* (Chicago, 1982); L. Rey, ed., *Unveiling the Arctic* (Calgary & Fair-

In Asia, which was the continent most visited by medieval Europeans and that left the deepest impression on them, Europeans were rarely in a position of even local superiority. The merchants and missionaries who went to Iran, India, and China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were few in number, surrounded by people of alien culture and dependent for their survival on the continued favor of the local rulers, who were themselves often foreign to these regions. No doubt partly because they were so dependent, European relations with the Mongols, who controlled much of Asia at this time, underwent a transformation. From being the almost supernatural bringers of doom, the Mongols became in European eyes benign and trustworthy and a potential ally against the world of Islam.¹⁰⁷ Marco Polo's idealization of Kubilai Khan is a good example of this change in outlook, only a generation or so after the latter's near relatives had sown terror in Europe.¹⁰⁸ The Mongols were almost "homogenized" and made safe for domestic use. There are examples of noble families in the city of Genoa naming their sons after the Mongol rulers of Iran with whom they did much diplomatic and commercial business, while in 1344 Edward III of England held a tournament at which the participants were dressed as Tartars. Only a few years before Columbus's first voyage of discovery, a citizen of Genoa bore the name Casano, possibly unaware that he was named after Ghazan Khan who ruled Iran at the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁰⁹ In the fourteenth century, female Tartar slaves were a common sight in the households of the great cities of northern Italy, and sometimes, as in the case of Gregorio Dati of Florence in 1391, had children by their masters.¹¹⁰

But the Mongols were only one aspect of European relations with Asia. There is no doubt that in the broadest sense European views of Asia were colored by a form of "orientalism," which was the result of the accumulated experiences and perceptions of both classical an-

banks, 1984). I have examined this and other situations involving the movement of populations of European origin in a forthcoming paper, "The medieval background," in *In Search of a Better World: Migration from Western Europe, 1500-1800*, ed. N. Canny (Oxford, 1994).

¹⁰⁷ Phillips, Part II, "Europe and Asia," especially ch. 7, "The lost alliance: European monarchs and Mongol 'crusaders.'"

¹⁰⁸ Marco Polo, *The Travels*, passim.

¹⁰⁹ Phillips, pp.109, 198; the information on "Casano" was obtained from the Italian Government travelling expedition on Christopher Columbus, Dublin, 1989.

¹¹⁰ *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: the Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, ed. G. Brucker (New York, 1967), p.112. On Tartar slaves, see I. Origo, "The domestic enemy: eastern slaves in Tuscany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries," *Speculum*, 30 (1955); and W.D. Phillips, *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Minneapolis, 1985), pp.97-106.

tiquity and medieval Europe. But, with the important exception of Moslems, this orientalism was not the product of an attitude of antagonism or superiority on the part of Europeans.¹¹¹ The wealth in goods and spices was well appreciated, as were the technical achievements of the land of Cathay in such things as porcelain manufacture and ship design. But the East was also seen as the abode of virtuous peoples whose conduct compared favorably with that of many Christians at home. Indian holy men, such as the Brahmans, were often described in this way. In 1247, after his return from Mongolia, the papal envoy, Giovanni di Piano Carpini, who was probably confused by reports of Chinese Buddhism, recorded that the people of Cathay "worship one God, they honor Our Lord Jesus Christ, and they believe in eternal life, but they are not baptized." Carpini also wrote with some admiration of the standards of honesty and justice of the Mongols in their dealings among themselves. It is also possible that one of the intentions of the author of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* in the fourteenth century was to draw a contrast between the corrupt state of Europe and the justice of the East.¹¹² As soon as the favorable conditions created by the Mongols changed, direct European contacts with Asia virtually ceased: Only on the periphery of the continent, on the shores of the Black Sea, and in Egypt did direct relations continue for any length of time. On the other hand, there was no doubt that Europeans were determined to resume relations with the East at the earliest opportunity.

For roughly two centuries, between 1099 and 1291, European colonists held a position of local dominance in Syria and Palestine in the crusader states of Antioch, Tripoli, and Jerusalem. But here their situation was complicated by the existence of neighboring Moslem powers that were frequently hostile and that in the end conquered the European enclaves. The society of the crusader states was itself very mixed. European settlers were few in number, being restricted to a select aristocracy, a small urban population of European origin, here and there a few peasant landholders, and a constantly changing contingent of merchants and pilgrims who visited the Holy Land but usually did not stay for long. The native population was a mixture of Moslems and Jews, who were viewed with the distrust reserved in medieval Europe for the "infidel," and Christians, whose allegiance

¹¹¹ Cf. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978); idem, "Orientalism revisited," in *Europe and its Others*, ed. F. Barker, P. Hulme, et al. (Colchester, 1984), vol. I.

¹¹² Friedman, pp.167-70; C. Dawson, ed., *The Mission to Asia*, pp.21-2, 15-17 (Carpini also wrote extensively about the bad points of the Mongols' character); *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, ed. Moseley, pp.22-9.

and traditions did not endear them to Rome. Greatly outnumbering the colonists, these local communities were inferior to them in legal status and in practice there seems to have been little attempt to win their loyalty.¹¹³ The attitude of the colonists was set from the first. In 1098 the conquerors of Antioch informed the pope: "We conquered the Turks and pagans, but we could not defeat the heretics, the Greeks, Armenians, Syrians, Jacobites" and hoped that "all the heresies, whatever they might be, you will eradicate and destroy by your authority and our valour."¹¹⁴ There is no doubt that crusading as an ideal long outlived the crusader states and helped to inspire the European expansion at the end of the fifteenth century, but as possible examples of sympathetic understanding of complex cultural situations the European settlements in Syria and Palestine were poor precedents for the future.

In regions like Wales and in the Baltic lands, conquest and settlement were more complete and enduring; and a colonial population was also permanently established in Ireland, although the entire island was not conquered until the sixteenth century. In all of these cases there were fundamental differences in the status of colonists and of native peoples. In Ireland the natives were excluded from the English common law courts unless expressly granted the privilege; after 1284 the Welsh were allowed to retain their own civil law for cases involving property and inheritance although coming within the bounds of English criminal law.¹¹⁵ But this was no concession on the part of the English monarch, who preserved only those parts of the Welsh legal system that were "just and reasonable" and consonant with "God and justice." In 1277, Edward I had gone even further and

¹¹³ There is an enormous literature on the society of the crusader states. There is a summary of the general situation in Phillips, ch. 3, "Commerce and the crusades"; but for a more detailed treatment, the most recent work is *A History of the Crusades*, ed. K.M. Setton, vol. 5, *The Impact of the Crusades on the Near East*, ed. N.P. Zacour & H.W. Hazard (Madison & London, 1985), especially the section by Joshua Prawer, ch. 3, "The Minorities," and ch. 4, "The Franks." See also the important collection of essays, *Muslims under Latin Rule, 1100-1300*, ed. J.M. Powell (Princeton, 1990), which deals with the situation in the crusader states, the Iberian peninsula, and Sicily.

¹¹⁴ *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 5, p.72.

¹¹⁵ The relationship between England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in the medieval period can readily be approached through two important new books: R. Frame, *The Political Development of the British Isles, 1100-1400* (Oxford, 1990); R.R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: the Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 1100-1300* (Cambridge, 1990); and also R.R. Davies, ed., *The British Isles, 1100-1500: Comparisons, Contrasts and Connections* (Edinburgh, 1988). On the Baltic lands the standard work is E. Christiansen, *The Northern Crusade: the Baltic and the Catholic Frontier of Christendom, 1100-1525* (London, 1980).

described native Irish law as "detestable to God . . . and not to be deemed laws."¹¹⁶ In practice there was a much greater degree of co-existence in Wales and Ireland than would appear at first sight, but there were nonetheless accumulations of grievances that awaited only the right moment for expression in revolt.

The only part of Europe in which a relatively harmonious mixed society was created was in the Iberian peninsula, where the kingdoms on both the Moslem and Christian sides of the frontier contained mixed populations of Moslems, Christians, and Jews, and various intermediate groups resulting from conversion or from acculturation to one group or another. The traditional view of the history of the peninsula in the medieval period has been conditioned by the notion of the *reconquista*, the opposition between Christian and Moslem Spain, which was expressed in unending warfare until the final Christian victory over Granada in 1492. The conclusions of recent research, however, have suggested that those who did the fighting were as inclined to fight Christian opponents as they were Moslems and that the Christian expansion of the period down to about 1300 "was rather a conquest than a reconquest" and "was propelled by more earthy impulses than earlier and more fastidious scholars chose to contemplate: demographic pressure, climatic change, developing military technology, the needs of an emergent aristocratic elite, the appetites of sheep and cattle." The papacy's attempt to dignify this process by the name of crusade in the twelfth century was really the implanting of an alien concept, which took root only slowly.¹¹⁷ In place of conflict, greater emphasis has been placed on the practical recognition through *convivencia* of the different religious and cultural traditions, on, for example, the pride of Alfonso VI of Castile in the late eleventh century "on being emperor of the two laws, Christianity and Islam," or on Alfonso X's ability in the thirteenth century to write poetry in Moslem verse forms.¹¹⁸

The intermingling of cultures is particularly well illustrated in the transmission of texts from Arabic to Latin in the twelfth century. When Peter the Venerable, the abbot of Cluny, visited Spain in 1142,

¹¹⁶ Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change*, p.367.

¹¹⁷ R.A. Fletcher, "Reconquest and crusade in Spain, c.1050-1150," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th. series, 37 (1987), pp.46-7.

¹¹⁸ R. Highfield, "Christians, Jews and Muslims in the same society: the fall of *convivencia* in medieval Spain," in *Religious Motivation: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian*, *Studies in Church History*, vol. 15 (Oxford, 1978), ed. D. Baker, pp.121, 123; A. Mackay, *Spain in the Middle Ages: from Frontier to Empire, 1000-1500* (London, 1977), p.90. There is also valuable material on medieval Spain in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. R. Bartlett & A. Mackay (Oxford, 1989).

the four scholars whom he recruited to make a translation of the Koran were two foreigners, Herman of Carinthia and Robert of Chester; Peter of Toledo, who was a Mozarab (an Arabic-speaking Christian); and Muhammad of Toledo, a Moslem. In another case, one of the works of the Arab philosopher Avicenna was first translated from Arabic into Castilian by a Jewish scholar and then by another scholar from Castilian into Latin. It has been aptly concluded that such people, Jews and Mozarabs, were "hinge men" who could both translate and mediate between the different cultures."¹¹⁹

The relations between cultures both in Spain and elsewhere in Europe and in the wider arena of Christendom were also influenced, if never fully controlled, by such features of papal ideology as the just war, the crusade, the universal mission to spread Christianity, and the treatment to be accorded to Moslems, Jews, and pagans, subjects that overlap and intertwine but can only be treated very generally here. By the thirteenth century the debate on the possible justification of war, which had begun with St. Augustine in the fifth century and had been completed by the canon lawyers and theologians, had led to the conclusion that warfare was licit provided that it was conducted by properly constituted authority (a king or an emperor) in defense of legitimate rights.¹²⁰ In the special case of the crusade the pope or his representative put himself at the head of an armed force for the defense of Christians and for the recovery of their property.¹²¹ In theory a war should not be fought solely for aggressive purposes: Even infidels and pagans were entitled to their possessions. The homelands of pagans could be invaded and occupied only for the purpose of spreading Christianity, but the inhabitants should not be dispossessed, and their conversion should be carried out by preaching and persuasion, not by the "iron tongue" of force.¹²² This latter view was strongly argued by Pope Innocent IV in the 1240s.¹²³ Also by the thirteenth century the papacy had conceived the mission to preach Christianity in every accessible corner of the world. Gregory IX's bull *Cum hora undecima* expressed this very clearly in 1235. Already, in 1233, Gregory

¹¹⁹ Mackay, *Spain in the Middle Ages*, p.88.

¹²⁰ On the just war, see F.H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1975); *The Church and War*, *Studies in Church History*, 20, ed. W.J. Sheils (Oxford, 1983).

¹²¹ See L. & J. Riley-Smith, ed., *The Crusade: Idea and Reality, 1095-1274* (London, 1981), Section B, "The just cause," Section C, "Right intention."

¹²² Muldoon, pp.34-8; R. Bartlett, "The conversion of a pagan society," pp.186, 196.

¹²³ Muldoon, pp.10, 21-2, 29-48. The idea of the "virtuous pagan," who might achieve salvation through divine grace, although denied the knowledge of Christianity, was also sometimes expressed: see C.L. Vitto, "The virtuous pagan in Middle English literature," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 79 (Philadelphia, 1989).

had sent a number of Franciscan missionaries to the sultan of Egypt and other Moslem rulers and even to the caliph in Baghdad, each with a written exposition of Christianity and with an injunction to listen to it; and one of the purposes of the papal envoys who were sent to the Mongol khans later in the same century was to try to convert them to Christianity.¹²⁴ It was hoped too that even the Jews might one day be induced to see the true light of Christianity.¹²⁵

In all its policies, however, the papacy was essentially trying to square a circle. Crusading was supposed to be conducted with the minimum of violence, but there was no escaping the fact that it often led to atrocities, such as those that occurred after the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. The language in which preachers presented the crusade was frequently highly colored and an incentive to extremes of violence. In a sermon delivered (c. 1216-25) to one of the military orders, who were professed religious trained specifically for war, Jacques de Vitry, bishop of Acre, informed his audience that "If we were not resisting the Church's enemies, the Saracens and heretics would have destroyed the whole Church. For this reason the poisonous limbs must be cut off and the decayed flesh must be cut out, so that the sound part is not corrupted."¹²⁶ Although the suggestion has been made that the church's simultaneous encouragement of crusading and of peaceful missionary activity involved contradictory aims and that the latter only really came into its own after the loss of Acre and the apparent military failure of the crusades in 1291, such a contradiction was not generally perceived at the time. Peter the Venerable, for example, who commissioned a translation of the Koran and composed a refutation of Moslem doctrine, *Liber contra sectam sive haeresim Saracenorum*, and believed in a policy of peaceful conversion of the Moslems, was also fully in support of the crusade.¹²⁷ Nonetheless the crusade was extensively criticized in the thirteenth century on such grounds as the bloodshed involved, or the waste of resources, or through fears by some secular rulers that a successful crusade would make the papacy too powerful. Criticism became so strong that

¹²⁴ Muldoon, pp.36-45; Phillips, ch. 5, "The eastern missions"; I. de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans* (London, 1971). The standard work on the subject is J. Richard, *La papauté et les missions d'Orient au moyen âge* (Rome, 1977). See also R.I. Burns, "Christian-Islamic confrontation in the West: the thirteenth-century dream of conversion," *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), pp.1386-1434; B.Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: Europe Approaches towards the Muslims* (Princeton, 1984).

¹²⁵ Muldoon, pp.30-2.

¹²⁶ L. & J. Riley-Smith, p.68.

¹²⁷ See B.Z. Kedar; E. Siberry, "Missionaries and crusaders, 1095-1274," in *The Church and War*.

a common religion, nor are lacking in normal social in-
imals"; they had "no contac-
kind of metal or money."¹³⁹
achieved after great brutality
of this event with the conqu-
the Spanish Jews, and the f-
of which took place in 1492
deeper level the coincidence
ciety" that had developed v-
sive continent, now startin-
"Europe" rather than as p-
transfer its aggression overs-

Europeans entered the ne-
teenth century with a variety
savage" and the "cannibal"
races" to the "barbarian" an-
existed of a particular place
teenth century, it was possib-
were of great antiquity, w-
replaced by more objective c-
to change, as the long quest
the New World and its peo-
pected to their first discover-
the latter had little alternat-
that were already implicit.
remarked, that America be-
woodcut of 1505 could dep-
without disease for a centu-
sonal property.¹⁴³ Neither v-

¹³⁹ Muldoon, pp.119-29, especially

¹⁴⁰ Hay, *Europe: the Emergence of a*

¹⁴¹ See, for example, D.F. Lach, *Asia*
(Chicago, 1972).

¹⁴² See G. Williams & P.J. Marshal

¹⁴³ L. Hanke, *Aristotle and the Ame-*
A. Pagden, *The Fall of Natural*
ognition"; P. Hulme, *Colonial E-*
(London & New York, 1986), c-
Strange New World (New York,
man, op. cit., Epilogue; V.I.J. Fli-
ages and enlightenment," *Viato*
fountain of youth: history of a
view, 21 (1941), pp.361-85. See

Humbert de Romans, the Master General of the Dominicans, was com-
missioned by Pope Gregory X to write a treatise refuting the critics
for use at the Council of Lyons in 1274.¹²⁸

In general, little attempt was made to understand the beliefs of Mos-
lems on their own terms. Studies of their religion or of the Arabic
language were usually made with a view to refutation or conversion
rather than comprehension, while the scholarly works that were trans-
lated from Arabic into Latin were in fields like philosophy, medicine,
and mathematics rather than religion.¹²⁹ Relations between Christians
and Moslems were characterized for the most part by mutual hostility
and suspicion.¹³⁰ Unlike Moslem communities, which were concen-
trated in the Iberian peninsula, Jewish communities were widely
spread through Europe. The general principle in Christian-Jewish re-
lations was one of toleration by the Church and protection by the
secular authorities. But toleration and protection were gained at a
price. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, for example, laid down
regulations that Jews should wear distinguishing marks and attacked
their role as suppliers of capital: "The more the Christian religion
curbs the taking of usury, the more does Jewish perfidy become used
to this practice, so much so, that in a short time, the wealth of Chris-
tians will be exhausted." The protection offered by rulers was pred-
atory in nature: In England, for example, the monarchy made such
extensive demands on the financial resources of its Jewish subjects that
by the middle of the thirteenth century these were greatly diminished
and some of the most prominent Jews close to ruin.¹³¹

Medieval Europe has been described with some reason as taking on
the character of a "persecuting society."¹³² This was certainly true in
relation to open heretics or those who were regarded as deviants from
standard Christian belief and practice, all of whom were treated with
growing severity from the thirteenth century onward. The institutions
of the Inquisition, which were first established at this time to deal

¹²⁸ E. Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading, 1095-1274* (Oxford, 1985); L. & J. Riley-Smith,
pp.103-17; J.H. Mundy, *Europe in the High Middle Ages* (London, 1973), p. 76.

¹²⁹ See N. Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* (Beirut and London, 1975); C. H.
Haskins, *Studies in the History of Medieval Science* (Cambridge, Mass., 1927).

¹³⁰ See J. Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton, 1964); R.W. Southern, *Western*
Views of Islam in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1962); R.M. Thomson, "William of Mal-
mesbury and some other western writers on Islam," *Medievalia et Humanistica New*
Series 6 (1975); J.H. Mundy, op. cit., pp.75-81; M.A. Ladero Quesada, "El Islam,
realidad e imaginación en la Baja Edad Media castellana," in *Las utopías*, Casa de
Velásquez (Madrid, 1990), pp.215-40.

¹³¹ Mundy, pp.81-92. See also R. Chazan, *Church, State and Jew in the Middle Ages*.

¹³² R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Eu-*
rope, 950-1250 (Oxford, 1987).

with the Cathars in southern France, were potentially available to be
used elsewhere if needed. The "demonization" of groups like the Ca-
thars or the Templars was another indication of the possible extremes
of intolerance.¹³³ Some missionaries, like Ricold of Monte Croce at the
end of the thirteenth century, spoke of the need to understand the
beliefs and languages of their opponents,¹³⁴ but such niceties were
little in evidence in practice. The Lithuanians may have won the ar-
gument at Constance in 1416, but this did nothing to improve relations
between them and their bitter enemies, the Teutonic Knights.¹³⁵ Anti-
Semitism, which had already shown itself in the massacres in Ger-
many that accompanied the beginning of the First Crusade in 1095-6,
was evident in thirteenth-century attempts at forced conversion, in the
expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290, and in the breakdown in
convivencia in the Iberian peninsula that led to the pogroms of 1391.¹³⁶
The "intensification of lordship" in areas such as Wales and Ireland,¹³⁷
the brutalities of warfare in many regions of Europe, and the preva-
lence of urban and rural revolts were other signs of a society that was
not at peace within itself.

Such conditions did not augur well for European relations with the
non-European world in the fifteenth century. In the Ottoman Turks
the Europeans encountered a new set of barbarians whom they could
fear but could not overcome; in the native peoples of the Canary Is-
lands, whose occupation began in 1402, European adventurers found
a more feasible objective.¹³⁸ Although the papacy intervened in 1434
to ban further settlement because of attacks on native converts to
Christianity, two years later Eugenius IV issued the bull *Romanus pon-*
tifex, emphasizing the fullness of his power as Vicar of Christ and, in
consequence of this power, authorizing the Portuguese to convert all
the remaining infidels in the islands. In persuading the pope to make
this concession, the king of Portugal had uttered pious sentiments and
intentions, but he had also described the native inhabitants in terms
that are reminiscent of earlier images of the barbarian: "The nearly
wild men who inhabit the forest [of these islands] are not united by

¹³³ N. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (London, 1976).

¹³⁴ Phillips, pp.85-6.

¹³⁵ Christiansen, pp.232-4.

¹³⁶ J. Riley-Smith, "The first crusade and the persecution of the Jews," in *Persecution*
and Toleration, Studies in Church History, 21, ed. W.J. Sheils (Oxford, 1984); J. High-
field, "The end of *convivencia*"; A. Mackay, "Popular movements and programs in
fifteenth-century Castile," *Past & Present*, 55 (1972); M.A. Ladero Quesada, *Historia*
de America Latina, vol. I, *España en 1492*, ch. 6.

¹³⁷ The phrase is that of R.R. Davies in *Domination and Conquest*, ch. 5.

¹³⁸ F. Fernandez-Armesto, *Before Columbus*, pp.175-92, 203-12; Quesada, ch.8.