Spoiled and Eaten
Figures of Absorption in Medieval English Poetry

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> Jerusalem stone is the only stone that can feel pain. It has a network of nerves.
>
> Yehuda Amichai, "Jerusalem 1967"

IN ONE OF THE oddest scenes of the very odd Old English narrative poem *Andreas*, the apostle Andrew recalls how Jesus performed miracles in the presence of unbelieving Jews in order to prove his divine origin and authority. In the Temple at Jerusalem, Jesus spots wondrous sculptures of angels on the wall. He commands one of them to speak to the assembled doubters and declare his lineage. The stone angel dutifully detaches itself from the wall and lectures the Jews, explaining that the man before them is the Son of the same God who created the world and gave gifts to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jews respond with stunned silence, then accusations of magic, so upon Jesus's command the angel heads off to Mambre, where the three patriarchs are buried. It bids them rise from their graves and make the Creator known to the people. The revenant patriarchs dutifully do so, to the horror of all watching.

In his article on "*spolia*-inflected poetics" in *Andreas*, Denis Ferhatović explains the vivification of the angel using the concept of the *spolium*. Originally a term for the skin or hide of an animal, *spolium* came to refer to arms or other treasure taken from a conquered enemy.[1] In art historical usage, *spolia* denote older objects or artifacts that are placed into a new architectural setting. The latter practice was common in the ancient period and the Middle Ages—including in medieval England—although the use of the term *spolia* for it is early modern.[2] Strictly speaking, the angel is not a *spolium*, but, as Ferhatović argues, Christ makes him into one, commanding the "detachment of [the] artifact from its immediate context so that it could fit itself in the largest context possible, that of the arc of Christian history."[3]

The stone angel suggests a tidy story of Christian textual and spiritual triumphalism, one at the core of both *Andreas* and the *Siege of Jerusalem*, also a poem about the radical spoliation of Jerusalem stone. At Christ's word, the angel comes to life, springs from the wall of the Jewish Temple, and marches on. In doing so, the artifact serves as a model for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to do the same—in other words, it models a textual process by which the dead letter of Jewish scripture is quickened by the living spirit of Christian revelation through the spoken word of Christ. However, while this miracle seems to offer us a standard master narrative of Christian historiography, in fact it resists such easy allegorizing. First, the story is one of failure: the Jews do not come to believe in Jesus as a result of this spectacular miracle, and more importantly, even Andrew relates it in the context of his own loss of faith.[4] Second, the poem models an audience response to the miracle, but that response is silent horror. Finally, there is an unbridled quality to the miraculous artifact. As Ferhatović has pointed out, in the Greek analogue that is closest to *Andreas*, both the stone sculpture and the patriarchs are explicitly commanded to return to their places, and they do so. In *Andreas*, the stone angel tells the patriarchs to seek heaven, but it is not clear if they obey. The angel itself remains at large, presumably wandering through the landscape, terrifying the locals.

The scene with the stone angel throws light on the way *Andreas* uses artifacts to reflect on textual tradition, and in this case, on Christian appropriation of Jewish text. Both *Andreas* and the *Siege of Jerusalem* are intensely interested in two parallel material processes: one is spoliation, the capture or reuse of treasured artifacts, and the second is consumption, with its related network of themes and images: hunger, regurgitation, cannibalism, and, by extension, the Eucharist. While at first glance spoliation and consumption seem to do different kinds of work in these poems, they are in fact closely linked—subtly in *Andreas*, explicitly in the *Siege of Jerusalem.* Beat Brenk recognized the common purpose of these processes in an article on the ideology and aesthetics of *spolia*:

> When someone removes the hide of a building or tears out its innards, he resembles a cannibal. A cannibal does not devour his enemies mainly because he wants to nourish himself but because he hopes that in so doing he will acquire his destroyed enemy's strength.[5]

Guiding these romances' use of appropriable, consumable materials is a third element, whose power Christianity aims to absorb: Jews, or characters

coded as Jews. *Andreas* and *Siege* use spoliation and consumption as figures for how Christianity both incorporates and supersedes Judaism, highlighting their interest in Jewish text: the Psalms, Exodus, the Ten Commandments, or the historical books of the Hebrew Bible. Augustine offered the standard positive view of spoliation when he compared the secular learning of the pagans to "the gold and silver vessels and ornaments as well as the clothes" (vasa atque ornamenta de auro et de argento et vestem) the Israelites took from the Egyptians: stealing precious objects from the faithless is a figure for taking what is valuable from the heathen past, and leaving what is dangerous—like idols—behind.[6] In his letter to Jovius, Augustine's contemporary Paulinus of Nola used the same figure to claim that using pagan rhetoric and eloquence in Christian poetry was like "grabbing spoils from enemy weapons" (quasi quaedam de hostilibus armis spolia cepisse).[7] The uses of *spolia* in *Andreas* and the *Siege of Jerusalem* would thus seem to figure the process of taming a textual tradition, in this case Jewish rather than pagan, either by picking what one likes and leaving the undesirable bits behind, or by turning weapons against their original owners.

Things, however, are not that simple. I want to suggest that both these medieval English poems offer evidence that spoliation is dangerous, that *spolia* are weapons that have not been fully laid to rest. Spoils from the past are not simply passive objects that can be used and reused at will, as the ideal would have it. Rather, they become active agents, potentially destructive to the people who take them up. We might even speak of a "dangerous" or "accursed spoil."[8] In the classical tradition, the *Aeneid* offers several literary instances of this motif. At the end of Nisus and Euryalus's bloody night raid on the Latin forces in book 9, Euryalus takes booty from the slaughtered men, among them Messapius' helmet (9.365).[9] The helmet gives him away: "the helmet betrayed heedless Euryalus in the shadows of dim night, and flashed back the rays" (galea Euryalum sublustri noctis in umbra / prodidit immemorem radiisque aduersa refulsit) (9.373–74). This gleam of light reveals him to the approaching Latin cavalry, who eventually kill both men. Similarly, in book 12, when Aeneas and Turnus meet in single combat and Turnus begs for his life, Aeneas spots Pallas's *balteus* and *cingula* (possibly a sword belt and shoulder belt) on Turnus. Turnus had taken these spoils after killing the young Pallas, and now they spell his doom: "are you to be snatched away from me, wearing the spoils of my people?" (tune hinc spoliis indute meorum / eripiare mihi?) (12.947–48).[10] The Hebrew Bible also features forbidden spoils, as when Saul counteracts the Lord's instruction to destroy

Amalek completely, allowing his people to take the best livestock and offer it to God. For this infraction, Samuel denies Saul the kingship of Israel (1 Samuel 15). It is a passage Prudentius recalls in the *Psychomachia*, when Sobrietas names "Samuel, who forbids laying hands on the spoil of a rich enemy" (Samuel, spolium qui divite ab hoste / adtrectare vetat) (388–89). In discussing Avaritia, too, Prudentius decries the son who discovers his father fallen in battle and delights in stripping off his father's belt with its gleaming studs and his bloody vestments" (fulgentia bullis / cingula et exuvias gaudet rapuisse cruentas) (475–76).[11] In both classical and Christian Latin literature, the desire for spoils can kill or corrupt.

Closer to England, and a direct source for *Andreas*, *Beowulf* features multiple instances of old artifacts that turn against their new owners. One example is the sword Grendel's mother keeps in her underwater lair, which Beowulf uses to kill her. It is not a traditional *spolium*, as there is no indication that she won it in battle—indeed, only Beowulf seems strong enough to carry it to war ("hit wæs mare ðonne ænig mon oðer / to beadulace ætberan meahte") (1560–61).[12] Still, the poet insists on it being an ancient object, an "ealdsweord eotenisc" (old sword of giants) (1558a), a "giganta geweorc" (work of giants) (1563b). The implication is that even found or inherited objects can betray their proprietors. Later in the poem, Beowulf predicts that the Danish Freawaru's peace marriage with the Heathobard Ingeld is bound to fail. When the families feast together, he imagines, an older Heathobard will notice an heirloom that brings back memories of the fight:

> Þonne cwið æt beore   se ðe beah gesyhð,
> eald æscwiga,   se ðe eall geman
> garcwealm gumena.
>
> (Then, during the drinking, an old spear-warrior will speak, seeing a torque, remembering the spear-death of men.)
>
> (2041–43a)

The old fighter is prompted to remember the massacre of his comrades by the sight of one battle spoil, and he has his revenge by drawing the attention of a younger warrior to another looted object. "Meaht ðu, min wine, mece gecnawan / þone þin fæder to gefeohte bær" (My friend, can you recognize the sword your father bore to battle?) (2047–48), he asks, pointing out one of the young Shieldings who inherited the blade.

Eventually, Beowulf suggests, one of Freawaru's men will lie dead, and the oaths between the two sides will be broken. The catalyst for the violence will be carrying an inherited battle spoil. Finally, the denouement of *Beowulf* is full of arrogated treasure that does nobody any good: the theft of a cup causes the dragon to wreak havoc on the Geats; the dragon's appropriation of the cursed heathen treasure indirectly leads to its own death; and at the end of his life, Beowulf suggests that he fought not to defend his people, but to win the dragon's treasure for them: "Nu ic on maðma hord mine bebohte / frode feorhlege" (Now I have sold my old life for a hoard of treasures) (2799–800a). The poem opens up the possibility that Beowulf's desire to win spoils in battle with the dragon might have spelled his downfall, and that of his people. When spoliation is seen in this light, the Geats seem wise to bury Beowulf's hoard treasure with him.

Andreas and the *Siege of Jerusalem* use the motif of dangerous artifacts articulated in the *Aeneid* and *Beowulf* to communicate a certain unease with textual spoils. Consumption also serves as a way to imagine the dark side of appropriation. Both poems feature cannibalism prominently and memorably, a motif that also invites an easy reading that is not quite right. At first glance, cannibalism seems to serve its traditional purpose in *Andreas* and *Siege*: it delineates those who are barbaric, subhuman, or monstrous from the civilized. It is also a crime of which Jews were frequently accused in the Middle Ages, and thus a fitting concern for texts interested in Christian triumphalism. In the poems at hand, however, cannibalism ricochets back on the Christian figures; while they convert or annihilate literal cannibals, they themselves turn out to be metaphorical cannibals. This is in keeping with Heather Blurton's observation that "although […] the figure of the cannibal may symbolize a demonized 'other,' this is not necessarily the case, as the act of cannibalism is also marked by a disconcerting similitude—the cannibal by definition eats only those who are just like itself."[13] I propose that fleeting hints of cannibalism ascribed to Christian figures in these poems reflect the potential monstrosity of appropriation, just as occurrences of spoliation reveal the danger of taking an enemy's treasure. Spoliation and consumption are both about taking something—an object, a person, a civilization, a verse—and making it your own. But if those things are too much like you, you risk becoming a monster; if you attempt to pick and choose the bits you like and use them to your ends, you risk that they may turn against you. In uncovering the inadvertent effects of Christian metaphors of

supersession, *Andreas* and *Siege* also reveal a conflict between ideology and poetry, between a desire to annihilate the past and a pleasure taken in recording and preserving its treasures.

Andreas

The Old English *Andreas* is found in one copy, in the tenth-century Vercelli Book.[14] It is a poetic adaptation of an apostolic adventure story found in Greek and Latin texts, though we do not have its direct source.[15] *Andreas* is also remarkable poetically. While the poet drew on the shared stock of Old English formulas used to compose poetry, he also borrowed heavily from the poems of Cynewulf and from *Beowulf*.[16] Alison Powell's 2002 Cambridge dissertation demonstrated this conclusively, but it also showed something interesting about how the *Andreas* poet incorporated these borrowings: Cynewulfian lines are worked seamlessly into the verse, while phrases taken from *Beowulf* tend to show a concern for contrast and irony.[17] In other words, they draw attention to themselves *as* borrowings. The result is a fantastical story about the Apostolic Age that is littered with echoes of Scandinavian events that took place, as it were, centuries later.

The plot consists of a voyage and a conversion. Matthew has been captured by the monstrous, cannibal Mermedonians, whose only food is the flesh of unfortunate travelers to their land, and Andrew is sent to rescue him.[18] The first part of the poem is a sea voyage, in which Christ, disguised as a helmsman, interrogates Andrew about the miracles Jesus performed to convince the Jews of his identity, including the vivification of the stone angel and the awakening of the patriarchs. Once in Mermedonia, Andrew is captured and tortured, an ordeal he more or less willingly undergoes in imitation of Christ. His marvelous resistance is supposed to convert the Mermedonians, but in fact it converts nobody. He does manage to release the prisoners meant to be used as food; in anticipation of their hunger, the despairing Mermedonians turn to eat their own people. Finally, Andrew commands one of the prison columns to set forth a flood that will kill the Mermedonians. In sheer terror, the Mermedonians agree to convert to Christianity, and Andrew prays to the Lord to bring a number of dead young people back to life.

There are two sets of Jews in *Andreas*: the Jews proper, who appear mainly in Andrew's recollection on the ship, and the Mermedonians. Andrew Scheil has demonstrated that the Mermedonians are coded as Jewish in a number of ways. They behave toward Andrew as the Jews

behave toward Christ; both they and the Jews are repeatedly described as unable to recognize or acknowledge the truth, as blind or causing blindness; both are perverted of mind and encouraged by Satan.[19] Finally, the Mermedonians' illicit eating practices recall the association of Jews and gluttony in Vercelli Homily 7, in the same manuscript as *Andreas*.[20]

The *Andreas* poet did not simply borrow heavily from Cynewulf and *Beowulf*, but he used the motifs of cannibalism and spoliation already present in the Andrew legend to reflect on this process of borrowing, on his own poetic practice. Throughout the poem we are treated to variations on the theme of cannibalism, and they are burdened with a maximum of symbolic weight, at least as compared to the story's analogues. The most obvious instance occurs in a scene where the Mermedonians' cannibalism comes to look like the Eucharist. When Matthew leads the Mermedonians' future victims out of their prison, the Mermedonians despair. They know no food but dead people, so the loss of the foreign prisoners spells starvation for them. They cast lots among themselves to see who will be the first to be sacrificed for the common meal, a process the poem describes as "hellcræftum, hæðengildum" (devilish arts, heathen rites) (1102). One of the chief men is chosen and immediately fettered. His reaction is typical for this miscreant people:

> Cleopode þa collenferhð   cearegan reorde,
> cwæð he his sylfes sunu   syllan wolde
> on æhtgeweald,   eaforan geongne,
> lifes to lisse.   Hie ða lac hraðe
> þegon to þance.
>
> (The courageous one called then with a troubled
> voice, said that he would give his own son, his young
> offspring, into their power, as mercy for life. They
> immediately and willingly received that sacrifice.)
>
> (1108–12)

As many critics have noted, this is a travesty of the Eucharist, one that emphasizes the cannibalism implied by the sacrament. Robert Boenig claims that this "distorted Eucharist creates no literary blasphemy."[21] Rather, he argues, the selfishness of the father who sacrifices his son to save his own skin is meant to contrast with the generosity of God's sacrifice of Christ.[22] Boenig reads *Andreas* as falling squarely on the Radbertian side of the First Eucharistic Controversy, its thick cannibalistic echoes supporting an understanding of the Eucharist as the true body and blood of

Christ. And yet it is not clear why the parody should not be a critique of the cannibalistic understanding of the Eucharist rather than a buttress for it. Andrew's own reaction to the father's sacrifice is that it is terrible:

> Ða þæt Andrea   earmlic þuhte,
> þeodbealo þearlic   to geðolianne,
> þæt he swa unscyldig   ealdre sceolde
> lungre linnan.
>
> (Then it seemed wretched to Andreas, a grievous evil
> to endure, that he, so innocent, should quickly lose his
> life.)
>
> (1135–38a)

Not only is the *Andreas* poet thinking of the Eucharist in cannibalistic terms, but he forces the audience to face the full horror of an innocent young person's death.

The poem plays other variations on this motif. When Andrew and the disguised Christ first meet on the seashore, Andrew asks him where he comes from. Christ's answer is surprising: "We of Marmedonia mægðe syndon / feorran geferede" (We have traveled from afar, of / from the tribe of the Mermedonians) (264–65a). Unlike any of the analogues, where Christ says he is going *to* Mermedonia, *Andreas* here opens the possibility that Christ is one of the cannibals.[23] Boenig argues that the poet thus adds a "theological dimension" to the narrative: "if we momentarily view Christ as a Mermedonian, the normal eucharistic relationship between the Lord and his disciple is inverted. In other words, Christ, for a moment, allows Andrew to take his place, to imitate him."[24] I argue rather that this is an instance of reflection on the process of textual cannibalism. The Mermedonians are described early on as *sylfætan*, or self-eaters. Christ, too, is a self-eater—as teacher and Messiah he repeatedly quotes the Old Testament, bringing it into the narrative of Christian history.[25]

Andreas subtly gestures to this process at the end of Andrew's third day of torture. Wearied by his travails, Andrew seems to lose faith—and in a prayer he reminds Christ of his own words on the cross:

> Hwæt, ðu sigora weard,
> dryhten hælend,   on dæges tide
> mid Iudeum   geomor wurde,
> ða ðu of gealgan,   God lifigende,
> fyrnweorca frea,   to fæder cleopodest,
> cininga wuldor,   ond cwæde ðus:

"Ic ðe, fæder engla,   frignan wille,
lifes leohtfruma;   hwæt forlætest ðu me?"
Ond ic nu þry dagas   þolian sceolde
wælgrim witu!

(Lo, ruler of victories, Lord saviour, you became
troubled on that daytime among the Jews, when you,
living God, lord of creation, called to the father from
the gallows, and spoke thus: "I wish to ask you, father
of angels, life's beginning of light; why have you
forsaken me?" And now for three days I have had to
suffer violent tortures!)

(1406b–15a)

Andrew understands his suffering to be an imitation of Christ's, but it is not clear what he is imitating.[26] He cites Jesus's cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," from Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34, suggesting that even the Savior despaired when tortured. He seems not to understand that the line was not a spontaneous expression of suffering, but itself a citation of Psalm 22, or Psalm 21 in the Septuagint numbering. Jesus's cry could be a sign of his human frailty, as Bede held, but it could also refer to the end of the psalm, which closes with faith in the Lord: "He hath not slighted nor despised the supplication of the poor man. Neither hath he turned away his face from me: and when I cried to him he heard me."[27] In Augustine's view, Jesus was not complaining of being forsaken, but drawing attention to the fact that he was the Messiah prophesied in the psalm.[28] Andrew does not understand that Christ is citing the Psalms, that he is, figuratively speaking, a textual self-eater.[29]

If Andrew's suffering takes place against the background of biblical citation, it also takes place, quite literally, on architectural *spolia*. Mermedonia is a place full of old, crafted things. Not only do they suggest a possible previous civilization (depending on how savage you consider the Mermedonians), but they are textual *spolia* too, borrowings from *Beowulf*. The Mermedonians torture Andrew partly by dragging him through the streets of their city: these ways are "enta ærgeweorc" (ancient work of giants) (1235a) and "stræte stanfage" (paved stone roads) (1236a). "Enta ærgeweorc" is also line 1679a of *Beowulf*, where it describes the famous sword hilt, and the Mermedonian street recalls *Beowulf* 320a, "Stræt wæs stanfah"—the stone road Beowulf and his men take to Heorot. Lori Ann Garner has noted the ominous quality of both built and natural features of Mermedonia, at least before it is converted.[30] Notably, much of the foreboding that permeates this description

comes through objects that are spoliated from *Beowulf*, bringing with them echoes of that poem's sense of doom.

The columns that release the genocidal flood also recall Beowulfian artifacts. Trapped in the Mermedonian prison, Andrew looks around and spots an unusual architectural feature:

> He **be wealle geseah**   wundrum **fæste**
> under sælwage   sweras unlytle,
> **stapulas** standan,   storme bedrifene,
> eald **enta geweorc**.
>
> (He saw great columns by the wall, wondrously fixed
> below the hall wall, pillars standing beaten by storm,
> old work of giants.)
>
> (1492–95a)

The problem with these storm-beaten columns is, of course, that they seem to be inside the prison. Ferhatović argues that these are architectural *spolia*: once outdoors and subject to the ravages of weather, they have been incorporated into a Mermedonian building.[31] His point is supported by the line "eald enta geweorc," a marker for such found objects and ruined structures.

Not only are the columns borrowed artifacts, put to a new purpose, but in this moment Andrew is as well. As Powell notes, this passage contains multiple echoes of the scene at the end of *Beowulf*, in which the dying hero looks at the dragon's hall:

>   Þa se æðeling giong
> þæt he **bi wealle**   wishycgende
> gesæt on sesse;   **seah** on **enta geweorc**,
> hu ða stanbogan   **stapulum fæste**
> ece eorðreced   innan healde.
>
> (Then the prince went so that he sat on a seat by the
> wall, thinking wisely. He looked at the work of giants,
> how the arches and columns held the eternal earth-hall
> fast from the inside.)
>
> (2715b–19)

Andrew regards a physical spoil from Mermedonia's past that is also a textual spoil from *Beowulf*—where it also seems to be an architectural spoil from an ancient civilization. In both cases, speechmaking and death soon

follow. Spoliated objects, even the simply architectural ones, seem to exist close to violence—and this force eventually turns back on the objects' owners. The Mermedonians' use of these columns might speak to some prior, implied conquest of another people. More concretely, the columns hold up the prison where the Mermedonians prepare their innocent victims for the slaughter. It is fitting, then, that the columns will kill so many of the Mermedonian folk.

While the columns seem to be remnants of Roman building, the poet deliberately connects them to Jewish law. Whereas the story's analogues feature a statue on top of one of the columns that opens its mouth to let forth a deadly deluge, in *Andreas* the killer column is inscribed with the ten laws given to Moses—inscribed, in fact, by God himself.[32]

>   on ðe sylf cyning
> wrat, wuldres God, wordum cyðde
> recene geryno, ond ryhte æ
> getacnode on tyn wordum,
> meotud mihtum swið, Moyse sealde,
> swa hit soðfæste syðþan heoldon,
> modige magoþegnas, magas sine,
> godfyrhte guman, Iosua ond Tobias.
>
> (On you yourself the king, the God of glory, wrote,
> revealed in words marvelous mysteries, and signified
> the right law in ten sentences. The Lord, mighty in
> power, gave it to Moses, just as the righteous, brave
> retainers held it afterwards, his kinsmen, the god-
> fearing men Joshua and Tobias.)
>
>   (1509b–16)

If the Mermedonians saw this writing, they seem not to have understood it, as they put the column in a place where the injunction not to kill would have been bitterly ironic. *Andreas*'s prison columns have much to hold up: the destructive potential of spoliated artifacts, and the lethal quality of Jewish text appropriated, but not understood.

The Siege of Jerusalem

The *Siege of Jerusalem*, a fourteenth-century alliterative poem, also features a tale of travel and conquest—though not of conversion—and a similar nexus of Judaism, cannibalism, and spoliation.[33] It begins with Titus

and his father Vespasian, whose troubling physical ailments are healed by Christian faith. When Nero hears that the Jews refuse to continue paying tribute to Rome, he sends Titus and Vespasian to make war on Judea. The war has, from the start, two justifications: Jewish refusal of taxation, and religious vengeance for Christ's death. The Jews retreat to Jerusalem, and a lengthy, brutal siege ensues, one in which Jewish suffering reaches a variety of ghastly extremes, including, at its worst, cannibalism. Finally, Jerusalem is conquered, plundered, razed, and the ground is sown with salt.

   Siege is notorious for its brutal treatment of the Jews, and by extension, in more recent scholarship, for the difficulty of interpreting its anti-Semitism. The author sometimes betrays admiration for Jewish military trappings or behavior and betrays empathy with the extent of Jewish suffering. As Elisa Narin van Court has argued, *Siege* testifies to the ambivalence of Christian doctrine with respect to Jews, and counteracts the "myth of a univocal, universal medieval anti-Judaism."[34] Accordingly, the Romans are polyvalent figures: they are ancient Romans who serve as proto-Christians and act like late medieval knights.[35] Moreover, while the *Siege* narrator explicitly justifies their crusade against the Jews, they are also frequently portrayed as brutish and sinful. In David Lawton's words, "*The Siege of Jerusalem* is organized around [...] a recognition of the unwelcome but necessary affinity of enemy and friend."[36]

   Even more powerfully than *Andreas*, *Siege* is concerned with the translation of Jewish cultural heritage from Jerusalem to Rome. Here too this is expressed through its use of cannibalism and spoliation, but it makes the connection to the Old Testament more explicit. At the beginning of the battle, Caiaphas and his men come out of the city with his clerks, the group resembling monks as much as ancient Jews:

> Lered men of þe lawe   þat loude couþe synge
> With sawters seten hym by   and þe psalmys tolde
> Of douȝty David þe kyng   and oþer dere storijs
> Of Iosue þe noble Iewe   and Iudas þe knyȝt.
>
> Cayphas of þe kyst   kyppid a rolle
> And radde how þe folke ran   þroȝ the rede water
> Whan Pharao and his ferde   were in þe floode drouned,
> And myche of Moyses lawe   he mynned þat tyme.
>   (477–84)

Soon after this, Vespasian recalls Christ's Passion, suggesting that the dominant Christian narrative supersedes the story of Exodus, so central to

Judaism.[37] Accordingly, Andrew Galloway has proposed two possible readings of the singing of psalms in *Siege*. One is a celebration of Jewish history, one which presents Christianity as "minor, recent, and derivative."[38] The other is ironic, in which the Jews are not up to the heroism suggested by Joshua and Judas Maccabeus.[39] But the Psalms suggest, I think, neither heroism nor its disappointment: rather, they attest to a common Jewish and Christian vocabulary of solace and despair, a language that unifies both faiths in a single lamenting voice.

Although the *Siege of Jerusalem* seems to focus on Jewish cannibalism under duress, most instances of the practice in the poem lead back to the proto-Christians of the story or to Christian ritual. The implication is that Christianity is a cannibal religion, figuratively eating itself much like Christ in *Andreas*. The first case of cannibalism in the story is in fact one where the Jews are completely passive. After Caiaphas and his men have been executed in a mock crucifixion, Vespasian orders the bodies to be burned and the ashes to be blown toward Jerusalem:

> "Þer is doust for ʒour drynke",   adoun to hem crieþ,
> And bidde hem bible of þat broþ   for þe bischop soule.
> <div align="right">(723–24)</div>

This is a mock Eucharist, but one born out of the brutality of Christians, not from the despair of Jews.[40] Moreover, the scattering of Caiaphas's ashes highlights the way forcing cannibalism on the Jews threatens to make cannibals out of Christians as well. For, one might assume, the soldiers tasked with throwing the ashes in the wind were likely to breathe some of them in, thus joining the Jews in their grotesque communion.

The *Siege* also features a much more famous mock Eucharist, in which a "mild woman" named Marie, driven mad by hunger, roasts her own child and eats part of it, offering the rest to the other starving citizens:

> Þan saiþ þat worþi wif   in a wode hunger,
> 'Myn owen barn haue I brad   and þe bones gnawen,
> ʒit haue I saued ʒou som',   and a side feccheþ
> Of þe barn þat ʒo bare,   and alle hire blode chaungeþ.
> <div align="right">(1093–96)</div>

This scene is not new to the *Siege*, present as it is in the poem's sources distant and close, including Josephus's *The Jewish War* (available in the Middle Ages in Latin translation), its Latin adaptation by Pseudo-Hegesippus, and Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*.[41] In his perceptive analysis of the

passage, Alex Mueller demonstrates that the *Siege* author adapted the scene to present the Jews in a sympathetic light. Marie is a "myld wyf" (1081), recalling the Virgin Mary. By inviting the other starving Jews to partake in her meal, "the *Siege*-poet highlights the contaminated Eucharistic structure" behind her act, as he does with the earlier imbibing of ashes.[42] In contrast to Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus, however, the *Siege* poet presents the Jews as desperate and horrified, not barbaric.[43] Instead of using an inverted Eucharist to portray Jews as monstrous and cannibalistic, as one might expect from a late medieval anti-Semitic text, *Siege* uses their horror to underscore the grotesque nature of the Eucharist itself. Years ago, Alan Dundes proposed that Christians promulgated the idea of blood libel as a result of "projective inversion": their guilt over the requirement of Christ's death for their salvation, as well as the cannibalistic aspects of the Eucharist, led them to accuse Jews of child-killing, cannibalism, and particularly, baking *matzot* with blood.[44] While this is but one of a number of theories for the origin of blood libel, it is true that, in the early years of Christianity, it was Christians who were accused of cannibalistic feasts featuring child sacrifice.[45] Whatever the merits of Dundes's theory for understanding the complex historical phenomenon, the scene of Marie eating and sharing her child in *Siege* is constructed so as to highlight Christian/Roman culpability.[46] Not only is this Eucharist due to the starvation caused by Romans, but even as the Jews consider killing women and the elderly before seeking a truce, it is made clear that "Tytus nold no trewe to þe toun graunte" (1110).

The theme of illicit eating joins that of spoliation in the killing of Jewish prisoners of war near the end of the poem. A number of desperate Jews come out of the city and beg Titus for grace, which he grants them, committing them to jailers.

> Bot whan þey metten with mete,   vnmyȝty they were
> Any fode to defye,   so faynt was here strengþe.
> Ful þe gottes of gold   ilka gome hadde;
> Lest fomen fongen hem schold,   here floreyns they eten.
>
> Whan hit was broȝt vp abrode   and þe bourd aspyed,
> Withouten leue of þat lord   ledes hem slowen,
> Goren euereche a gome   and þe gold taken,
> Fayner of þe floreyns   þan of the frekes alle.
>
> (1165–72)

This scene obviously recalls anti-Semitic stereotypes about Jewish gluttony, greed, and "wrong eating." It suggests eucharistic error, often associated

with "the passing of bad coins."[47] But it also makes monsters out of the Roman soldiers. They are insubordinate in betraying the leniency Titus had granted the Jews, and they turn out indeed to be greedier than Jews, putting gold above men's lives. The killing of the prisoners offers an alternative view on the symbolic spoliation of Jerusalem that the poem as a whole seems to celebrate. It may seem possible to take just the gold and leave the Jew behind, it seems to say—to take what is good about Jewish tradition and be rid of the hated people—but doing so only makes you like them, or rather, like your very worst stereotypes about them.

The *Siege of Jerusalem* ends with the plunder of the Temple, this spoliation forming a key part of the poem's establishment of Rome as a "spiritual capital of Christianity":[48]

> The Romayns wayten on þe werke,   warien þe tyme
> Þat euer so precious a place   scholde perische for synne.
> Out þe tresour to take   Tytus commaundyþ,
> "Doun bete þe bilde,   brenne hit into grounde."
>
>   (1261–64)

The brutish Romans now become connoisseurs, wistfully admiring the beautiful creation they are about to destroy. We are given to understand it is the sinfulness of the Jews that resulted in this devastation, but the phrase "for synne" leaves the question tantalizingly open. The action also recalls the Roman avarice of previous passages. In the five stanzas that describe the Temple and its despoliation, the word *gold* appears four times, and of course the conquerors find more gold and treasure in the city and sell the Jews off as slaves. The result is a fantasy of perfect pillage: take the riches and annihilate the architecture that serves as their context, make exchangeable currency out of a tradition and its people.[49] And yet the moment, as "warien" suggests, is a cursed one, and curses, like spolia, have a tendency to turn against those who wield them.[50]

Conclusion

Andreas and the *Siege of Jerusalem* present us with the triumph of Christianity over Judaism, be it through conversion or annihilation. And they are insistent about their point, with a kind of didactic monotony we know from the *Song of Roland*: "Pagans are wrong and Christians are right" (Paien ont tort e chrestiën ont dreit) (1015).[51] But when they look at the process of religious succession more closely, the metaphors they use undermine the victory. In making inhuman cannibals out of Jews or their

literary stand-ins, Christians are faced with their own faith's cannibalistic relationship to Judaism. In attempting to acquire desirable "gold" by killing the Jews who owned it, Christians come into possession of a cursed spoil, bound to kill or pervert them. These medieval English poems are about conquest, but they are also about desire: for the richness of an inherited textual tradition, for a city doomed but eternal. One might describe this dilemma as the clash between ideology and poetry. Ideology in this case aims to destroy the past. Poetry cannot help but try, greedily, to preserve it. It is a longing Yehuda Amichai once also connected to Jerusalem, almost nineteen centuries after the most famous of its sieges:

> Poets come in the evening into the Old City
> and they emerge from it pockets stuffed with images
> and metaphors and little well-constructed parables
> and crepuscular similes from among columns and crypts,
> from within darkening fruit
> and delicate filigree of hammered hearts.[52]

NOTES

[1] *Latin Dictionary*, ed. Lewis and Short, "spolium"; Ferhatović, "*Spolia*-Inflected Poetics," 202; and Kinney, "The Concept of *Spolia*."

[2] Ferhatović, "*Spolia*-Inflected Poetics," 202.

[3] Ferhatović, "*Spolia*-Inflected Poetics," 209.

[4] Dumitrescu, *Experience of Education*, 92.

[5] Brenk, "Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne," 103.

[6] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. Green, 124–27, 2.144–47. See also Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue*, 87–88. The despoliation of Egyptian goods posed a problem for both Jewish and Christian interpreters, since it seemed to suggest that the Israelites deceived the Egyptians into lending them goods they did not plan to return. For the commentary tradition see Allen, *The Despoliation of Egypt*.

[7] Paulinus of Nola, *Epistolae*, ed. Migne, 16.234B. Reference from Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue*, 87–88. On Paulinus's letters see Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*; Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster*.

[8] According to H. S. Versnel, with certain exceptions Romans, unlike Greeks and Germans, "shrank from the enemy armour they had captured. It was, loaded as it was with enemy power, dangerous and not to be brought within the walls of Rome" (Versnel, *Triumphus*, 309.) I have not, however, found direct evidence for his historical claim: Romans seem to have been fond of taking war booty.

[9] Quotations of the *Aeneid* from Virgil, *Opera*, ed. Mynors.

[10] Roger Hornsby notes that this is a recurring motif in the *Aeneid*: "On three different occasions in the *Aeneid*, men put on armor of a slain victim, and in

each instance the man dies. On two other occasions a person tries to wear armor that does not become him, and death again is his lot." Hornsby understands the *Aeneid* as presenting a changing heroic code, one in which captured arms are best dedicated to the gods. Hornsby, "The Armor of the Slain," 347, 56.

[11] Quotations of the *Psychomachia* from Thomson, *Prudentius*.

[12] Quotations of *Beowulf* from *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. Fulk, Bjork, and Niles.

[13] Blurton, *Cannibalism*, 9.

[14] For edition and background information, see *Andreas*, ed. Brooks.

[15] The Greek version of the text is the Πράξεις ᾽Ανδρέου καὶ Ματθεία εἰς τὴν χώραν τῶν ἀνθρωφάγων (*Acts of Andrew and Mathias in the City of the Cannibals*). Edition is *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, ed. Tischendorf 132–66. *Andreas* is assumed to be based on a Latin source, however. The closest surviving Latin text is found in the twelfth-century manuscript Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 1104, and another key version is found in Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 1274. For editions of the important Latin recensions, see *Die lateinischen Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt. Translations of the Greek, Latin, and Old English versions are in Boenig, *The Acts of Andrew*. There is also an Old English homily relating the story of Andrew, with a full version in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 198, and a shorter text in the Blickling Homilies. Editions are in *Blickling Homilies*, ed. Morris, 228–49; *Bright's Anglo-Saxon Reader*, ed. Bright and Hulbert, 113–28.

[16] Peters, "Relationship of the Old English *Andreas*"; Schabram, "Andreas und Beowulf"; Hamilton, "*Andreas* and *Beowulf*"; Riedinger, "*Andreas* and the Formula"; and Riedinger, "Formulaic Relationship."

[17] Powell, "Verbal Parallels," 235.

[18] On the monstrous and otherworldly nature of Mermedonia, see Bolintineanu, "Land of Mermedonia."

[19] Scheil, *Footsteps of Israel*, 228–39.

[20] Scheil, *Footsteps of Israel*, 253–59; Godlove, "Bodies as Borders."

[21] Boenig, *Saint and Hero*, 73.

[22] Boenig, *Saint and Hero*, and "*Andreas*, the Eucharist, and Vercelli."

[23] Boenig, *Saint and Hero*, 64.

[24] Boenig, *Saint and Hero*, 66.

[25] Dumitrescu, *Experience of Education*, 119–20.

[26] For Andrew's torture as an *Imitatio Christi*, see Biggs, "The Passion of Andreas," and Godlove, "Bodies as Borders," 151. Amity Reading notes, however, Andrew's intransigence, his need to be repeatedly converted to Christ: Reading, "Baptism, Conversion."

[27] Bede, *In Marci evangelium expositio*, ed. Migne, cols. 290C–91A.

[28] *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Enarrationes*, ed. Dekkers and Fraipont, 123.

[29] Dumitrescu, *Experience of Education*, 99–100.

[30] Garner, *Structuring Spaces*, 104–11, and "Old English *Andreas*."

[31] Ferhatović, "*Spolia*-Inflected Poetics," 214.

[32] *Die lateinischen Bearbeitungen*, ed. Blatt, 87.

[33] Edition used is by *Siege of Jerusalem*, ed. Hanna and Lawton. Square brackets and + sign (indicating editorial removal of words or letters) silently excised. *Siege* survives in its entirety (more or less) in six manuscripts, with significant fragments in two more, and a single leaf in a ninth manuscript. As Millar, *Siege of Jerusalem*, 30, points out, its manuscript contexts suggest religious and historical interests on the part of its readers (four of the manuscripts are religious miscellanies and two others contain religious works), and a learned audience who were interested in Latin texts as well.

[34] Narin van Court, "*The Siege of Jerusalem* and Recuperative Readings," esp. 154, 163.

[35] On the encoding of the Romans as Christians, see Yeager, "*Siege of Jerusalem*," 71.

[36] Lawton, "Titus Goes Hunting and Hawking," 114.

[37] Narin van Court, "*The Siege of Jerusalem* and Augustinian Historians," 230–31.

[38] Galloway, "Alliterative Poetry," 88.

[39] Galloway, "Alliterative Poetry."

[40] Mueller, "Corporal Terror," 300.

[41] Millar, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, 60–70, 85–86. See also Moe, "The French Source."

[42] Mueller, "Corporal Terror," 300.

[43] Mueller, "Corporal Terror," 301–2, and Narin van Court, "*The Siege of Jerusalem* and Recuperative Readings," 159.

[44] Dundes, "Ritual Murder."

[45] McGowan, "Eating People," 416–23.

[46] Narin van Court, "*The Siege of Jerusalem* and Recuperative Readings," 161–62. For a brief survey of theories see Rose, *Murder of William of Norwich*, 10–11.

[47] Rubin, "Whose Eucharist?," 204.

[48] Yeager, "*Siege of Jerusalem*," 73. Yeager also points out that in one interpretation of the Siege of Jerusalem available to medieval Christians (through Gregory the Great and Joachim of Fiore), the suffering of the Jews stood for the plight of the Christian Church: "the typological interpretation necessitates a counter reading of the *Siege* wherein the Roman aggressors become the adversaries of Christendom, and the Jewish siege victims occupy a martyr-like role as Christians" (Yeager, "*Siege of Jerusalem*," 95–96). The English had long looked to Rome as a spiritual capital, and long thought of themselves as participating in the culture of a Latinate, Christian empire centered on that city. See Howe, "Rome," and Dumitrescu, "Bede's Liberation Philology."

[49] Chism understands *Siege* as actively promoting a "muscular Christianity" with respect to the Jews, one in which contemporary economic anxieties about both Jews and Muslims are focused on the poem's Jewish figures. See also the

earlier version of her chapter: Chism, *Alliterative Revivals*, 178, and "*Siege of Jerusalem*." Nicholson, "Haunted Itineraries," also understands the poem as using Jews to describe a fear of demonized Muslims.

[50] Yeager, "Jewish Identity," has argued that the *Siege* could have been read as an apocalyptic warning to Christians, a reading of the poem that would require identification with its Jewish figures in order to avoid their doom. In contrast to my interpretation, Diamond, "Alliterative *Siege of Jerusalem*," argues that extreme depictions of violence were an expected pleasure of medieval romance, especially the alliterative kind.

[51] *Chanson de Roland*, ed. Jenkins.

[52] Amichai, "Jerusalem, 1967," 59. I thank Andrew James Johnston for inviting me to present an early version of this chapter at the SFB 980 in Berlin, Denis Ferhatović for rewarding conversations about Andreas, and Eric Weiskott for the brilliance and energy he has brought to this book. Most of all, I am grateful to Roberta Frank for years of friendship, encouragement, and devilish wit. I'm still working out how the gerbils fit in.

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