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Ursinus College

Seasoned Antisemitism: Cannibalism in *The Destruction of Jerusalem*

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Abstract

My project examines an episode of maternal cannibalism within the medieval poem *The Destruction of Jerusalem*. Several variations of the story of the 70 AD Roman siege of Jerusalem that include this particular episode exist; the story even has roots in the bible. I am looking at the poem within this context and noting its differences in order to best determine its intentions. This version, more so than any other I have encountered, eliminates complicating factors, such as the murder of the child or presence of male figures, in order to make its antisemitic message as direct as possible. The text consistently incorporates typology, supersession, and pointed binary oppositions in order to enforce its positive construction of Christians and its negative construction of Jews. The handling of issues of gender and food, such as the controversy surrounding transubstantiation, further support the text's antisemitism while also revealing the influence of other contemporary concerns. The episode's puzzling subject matter makes it difficult to decipher, especially for a modern audience, however contextualizing the poem while acknowledging the importance of binaries and typology to the text's structure enable me to draw attention to and clarify some of the more ambiguous examples of prejudice.

Maternal cannibalism is a part of a long-spanning and wide-spread tradition of the telling of the story of the 70 AD Roman siege of Jerusalem; it even has roots in the bible. Variations of this story appear in many texts, spanning hundreds of years and from several different countries. Examining *The Destruction of Jerusalem* while considering these other versions enables the reader to identify the peculiarities of this particular telling of the story, which ultimately work to reveal the author's intentions. *Destruction* modifies key aspects in order to simplify the story and enhance its antisemitism. The episode of maternal cannibalism is especially useful in proving this as each version has distinct and religiously significant variables, such as the gender of the child or the religion of the mother, that are modified in order to significantly change the episode's meaning. In order to reveal *Destruction's* intentions, I will compare its episode of maternal cannibalism to three others from *The Siege of Jerusalem*, *Eusebius The Ecclesiastical History*, and *La Vengeance de Notre-Seigneur*. The variations that I will be examining include the portrayal of mother and her actions, the presence of Clarice, the child's status before consumption, the gender of the child, the religion of the mother, and the way in which the child is consumed. Using these comparisons, I will reveal *Destruction's* simplification and strict adherence to the medieval romance genre format through binaries (including the binaries' relation to typology and supersession), gender, and the construction of a deeper ideology. I will also evaluate how the poem addresses late medieval concerns, including female asceticism and transubstantiation, within these larger arguments to more completely reveal the text's intentions. Altogether, these things reveal the text's blatant antisemitism as well as its consistencies with the perpetuation of antisemitism throughout history.

In short, *Destruction* loosely tells the story of the Roman siege of Jerusalem by Titus and Vespasian. Interestingly, early in the poem Vespasian is described as having an illness that

causes him to have wasps in his nose, among other symptoms, and it is only cured by a cloth that has touched Christ. The majority of the plot revolves around Titus and Vespasian declaring and waging war on the Jews, who are led by Pilate, in order to avenge Christ's death. During one particular attack, where mass graves are dug around the city, the people of Jerusalem become trapped and starve. Jewish families and neighbors cannibalize each other as a result. After the description of the Jewish cannibalism, the episode describes Marie and Clarice, two Christian women, cannibalizing Marie's dead daughter after an angel reassures them that it is God's will. Pilate smells the child, investigates, and is horrified by what he finds, so he bans parents from consuming their children. Eventually, the Romans defeat Pilate, and demons toss him around in a barrel. After this, the poem creates a story of Judas's life and compares him to Pilate. The poem concludes with Vespasian getting christened as the Roman emperor, and he and Titus are celebrated for avenging Christ's death through their violence against Jews.

Unlike *Destruction*, *Eusebius* and *Siege* feature Jewish mothers in the episode of cannibalism and portray her actions negatively. *Siege* describes its Jewish mother positively, stating that she is "a myld wyf" (Livingston 1081) and "worthi" (Livingston 1093); the only reason she commits such a crime is "for meschef of foode" (Livingston 1081). The text recognizes the act of cannibalism as a tragic consequence of war, and it leads the Jews to make the decision "To voiden alle by vile deth that vitelys destroyed - / Wymmen and weyke folke that weren of olde age, / That myght nocht stonde in stede bot her stor mardyn" (Livingston 1102-1104). The mother, who was once good, brings about a series of horrific events as the result of her decision to cannibalize her child. *Eusebius* describes its Jewish mother in a blatantly negative way by claiming that "famine entered into her heart and marrow, and rage burnt more fiercely than famine", "[a]nger and necessity were her councilors", and "she turned against

nature” when she chose to eat her child (Lake 213). The other Jews in the city were “at once filled with the horror” after learning of her cannibalism (Lake 215). Later, the text describes the famine and cannibalism in Jerusalem as “the reward of the iniquity of the Jews and of their impiety against the Christ of God” and notes that Jesus prophesied these events (Lake 215). Not only is the mother driven by anger and suffering, but the text indicates that she deserved this prophesied punishment. While the texts differ in their intensity, they both construct the Jewish mothers’ cannibalism negatively.

The negativity of the Jewish cannibalism is notable in contrast to *Vengeance* and *Destruction*, which feature Christian mothers. In *Vengeance*, the mother and her companion, Clarice, left Africa and “vindrent en Jherusalem et se convertirent a la foy de Jhesu Crist et se firent baptiser” [came to Jerusalem and converted to the faith of Jesus Christ and were baptized] (Ford 147). The ladies are characterized as sympathetic, and the text repeatedly describes their “grant duel” [great mourning] for their lost children (Ford 149). Similarly to *Eusebius*, *Vengeance* describes this event, specifically the famine and “la mere mengeroit son enfant” [the mother eating her child], as prophesied, but the women receive this message through an encouraging vision of an angel. This implies that the women are fulfilling God’s will as opposed to receiving a punishment like the Jews in *Eusebius*. This vision and prophecy occur in *Destruction* as well. *Destruction*’s mother resists eating her child when Clarice suggests doing so. She initially seeks religious meaning in their suffering by arguing that it could “stonde [them] to Purgatory”, which reinforces her strong Christian faith (McShane 3423). The mother is only convinced after an angel informs her that “God wil so er than yee dye / For to fulfille the prophecye” (McShane 3434-3435). Similarly to *Vengeance*, the vision constructs this act of cannibalism a fulfillment of God’s will, thus relieving the women of any guilt. *Destruction*

differs from *Vengeance*, however, in that it is much simpler. *Destruction*'s mother is not African or converted, removing any stigma or complications that could be attached to those features as well as making her more relatable for the poem's English audience. Avoiding complicating factors makes the episode simpler and its positive construction of the mother and the event much clearer. *Destruction* and *Vengeance* both construct their Christian mothers positively, but *Destruction* does so while limiting complicating features.

Clarice's presence in the episodes helps to construct the mothers positively as well. *Siege* and *Eusebius* both lack Clarice or any companion for the mother, which means that the mother comes up with the idea to cannibalize her child. *Eusebius* clearly expresses that it is the mother's decision to cannibalize her child. She wonders why "amid war, famine, and rebellion" she keeps her child as only slavery and starvation await them, which suggests that she is tired of fighting for her child, contributes to the episode's taboos, and makes her wholly responsible for her child's death (Lake 213). The mother in *Siege* similarly acknowledges that as a result of "Batail aboute the borwe [their] bodies to quelle", her child is unlikely to survive and chooses to consume him (Livingston 1085). Like *Eusebius*, this decision constructs the mother negatively. In both *Vengeance* and *Destruction*, however, the Clarice characters suggest cannibalism first, and the idea has apparently never occurred to the mothers before. Furthermore, the mothers only consider cannibalism a viable option once an angel has communicated its acceptability. This prevents any negativity or guilt that could be attached to the mothers for suggesting the consumption of their children. Though Clarice is not written negatively, *Destruction* describes her as "A womman of ful holy fame", her character takes on a tricky aspect of the episode to avoid tainting the mothers' images (McShane 3397). *Destruction*'s inclusion of the Clarice character continues to clarify the mother's positive portrayal.

The positive or negative constructions of the cannibalism are further perpetuated through the status of the children before consumption. In *Destruction* and *Vengeance*, the children die of starvation, which prevents the mothers from having to kill their children and eliminates a particularly taboo aspect of an already taboo scenario. The two Christian mothers even hesitate to eat their children even though they are already dead, which contributes to their sympathetic and positive depictions. *Eusebius*'s mother, during her fit of rage, "[kills] her son", which coincides with her blatantly negative depiction (Lake 213). *Siege* describes the murder of the child less directly by noting that the war will kill him regardless of her actions and stating that the child should "yeld that I thee gaf, and agen tourney / And entre ther thou cam out", but it is still evident that she kills her child (Livingston 1088). The murder of their children functions to suggest that the women are committing a crime instead of doing what they need to in order to survive. After these mothers murder their children, they do not mourn and even offer to share some of their leftover child with others. All of these behaviors contradict what is expected of a mother, which suggests to the reader that there is something wrong or cruel about them. Consuming a child that has already died helps *Destruction* to eliminate this stigma and, again, support the mother's goodness.

Gender continues to complicate the episode and, to a lesser degree, skew it positively or negatively. A male child is cannibalized in all of these texts except for *Destruction*. Consuming a male child complicates the religious implications of the episode as it creates "a literalized Eucharistic image", especially because the mothers' names are Marie (Boyarin 24). The maternal cannibalization of a male child also poses gender-related issues. Cannibalism "is never just about eating. It is a powerfully complex and divisive symbol that channels communal and individual anxieties about incorporation, ultimately functioning to reinforce critical social and

cultural taxonomies” (Price 23). Because of this, a female consuming a male results in a more complex, power-subverting, and anxiety-evoking episode. For example, “the case of Marie at the siege of Jerusalem is not just another medieval anti-Semitic trope. Also operating here is an association of infanticidal cannibalism with women, specifically mothers, that includes resonances of anxiety over threatened family structure and unlicensed female sexuality” (Price 82). Consuming a male child is not inherently bad nor is the consumption of a female child inherently good; the women in *Vengeance* consume both a male and female child and the episode is ultimately positive. *Destruction* simply avoids these complications and anxieties by exclusively cannibalizing a daughter. The female child also connects to the poem’s relationship to the medieval romance genre and uses its typical formula for female characters in order to further develop the mother’s innocence and goodness; this will be discussed further in a later paragraph. Most simply, however, a female child removes the complications that a male child would have presented.

As a result of late medieval cultural concerns, cooking and consumption method are other variations that alter the meaning and complexity of this episode. Because of Greek and Roman ideas, “in the Middle Ages people who did not cook their meat (the Scandinavians of Paul the Deacon) or their grains (Procopius’s Moors) were described as [“barbarians”]” (Montanari 38). Medieval texts, such as *The Knight with the Lion*, perpetuate this relationship between cooked food and civilization. In the aforementioned text, “[t]he knight Yvain [...] wanders into the forest, where he throws off all trace of courtly manners and begins living exclusively on raw meat. Later, he slowly returns to his knightly state, and the first sign of his recovery is his return to cooked food” (Montanari 38-39). Another topic that complicates the consumption of flesh in the Middle Ages is transubstantiation. The idea of literally consuming Christ’s flesh evoked

anxiety and sparked debates about the nature of the host. Debates surrounding transubstantiation questioned how “the *totus Christi* [could] be present in physical elements so distressingly fluid or breakable” or if “one hurt God by chewing the host” (Bynum 51). While a mother consuming her child is not the same as consuming God, these concerns about transubstantiation reveal that there are proper ways to consume a body and ways are troubling. Transubstantiation debates involve antisemitism as well, as “Jews were reimagined as murderers and as host desecrators. In these stories of host desecration, the Jews are fantasized as expressing “contempt for Christianity and evil intent towards its God in His eucharistic manifestation,” Miri Rubin writes. Such blood libel tales speak of psychic distress or rather the surfacing of an anxiety (about, for instance, the act of eating God) wherein the Subject first splits off all unwanted characteristics and then projects those undesirable traits onto the Jew” (Krummer 7). This not only reveals prejudice, but a Christian anxiety about the mistreatment of the host, which is perceived to be human flesh. Understanding these anxieties and ideas about the proper ways to consume flesh are essential for interpreting the way that *Destruction* chooses to describe the cooking and consumption of the child.

Each episode of cannibalism discusses the mother’s cooking method to varying degrees of specificity, and, of the four texts, *Destruction* has the vaguest description. *Destruction* only states that the women “putten the childe on a spyt, / Agein the fyre to rosten it” (McShane 3444-3445). Due to the stigma surrounding raw meat, mentioning that the child has been cooked actually contributes to the positive construction of *Destruction*’s mother. Any further details about the consumption of the child, however, would be unnecessary, contribute to the taboo nature of the action, and, ultimately, reflect negatively on the mother. *Siege* states that the mother chooses to “etyth a schouldere” (1088) and “rost” (1089) the child. This description of

eating the child before mentioning a cooking method complicates this version, as it suggests she starts to consume the child raw. She also “saved [the people of Jerusalem] som”, which signifies further mutilation of the child’s corpse (Livingston 1095). *Vengeance* describes the mother and Clarice “prirent l’enfant et en trancheret ung quartier avec l’espaule et puis le mistrent roustir” [taking the child and cutting a quarter with the shoulder and roasting it] (Ford 150). The text also repeatedly references roasting and uses the word “cartier” [quarter] to describe carving the children (Ford 149). In *Eusebius*, the mother “killed her son, and then cooked him, ate half, and covered up and kept the rest” (Lake 213-215). When the soldiers smell her cooking, “she told them that she had kept a good helping for them and uncovered the remains of the child” (Lake 215). Again, this description details the infant’s mutilation. Interestingly, there are a lot of consistencies throughout these three texts that are not present in *Destruction*, including the quartering of the child, the consumption of the shoulder, and offering to share the leftovers. The repetition of these details suggests that the author of *Destruction* would have been aware of them and then chose to omit them. The mutilation of the child recalls the anxiety surrounding host desecration and disrespect for flesh, so *Destruction*’s choice to avoid these details helps to maintain the mother’s positive image. Noting that the child has been cooked but eliminating the more graphic details of the cannibalism limit how much the reader thinks about the damage done to the child and keep the episode as palatable and uncomplicated as possible.

In addition to the simplification of the episode, *Destruction* intentionally employs and relies on characteristic features of the medieval romance genre in order to construct its message. Romances generally, though not always, adhere to a formula in order to convey their stories. A key aspect of romance is that the stories “end happily. The logic of their episodic structure is driven by the logic of the ending: the structure carefully defines what events, in what order, are

necessary to achieve that happy ending” (Simpson 169). Methods employed to ensure the formulaic arrival at a happy ending include “archetypal binary oppositions: for example, youth versus age, male versus female, human versus monster, castle versus forest, aristocrat versus bourgeois, superior versus inferior aristocrat, Christian versus Saracen,” etc. (Simpson 170) and “[expressing] a deeper ideology” (Simpson 171). *Destruction* conforms to these characteristics, even when that requires modifying details of the story of the siege of Jerusalem or historical facts. The poem not only simplifies and modifies the story in order to adhere to the medieval romance genre, but the adherence to the genre is a simplification in and of itself. By sticking so strictly to the genre, the reader knows what to expect from the structure, making the meaning easier to pick up on. These adherences to the romance genre help the text to clearly present its antisemitic message.

A direct way that the text perpetuates its antisemitism is through the manipulation of historical fact so that it adheres to the text’s established binary. Often in medieval romance, “[t]he narrative content [...] is driven by archetypal binary oppositions” (Simpson 170). In *Destruction* the driving binary is Christian vs Jewish. The poem notably distorts religious realities so that all of the poem’s heroes are Christian and all of its villains are Jewish, despite historical inaccuracy. As a result of the strict adherence to binaries, Christianity is constructed as unquestionably positive and Judaism as unquestionably negative. The text writes Pilate, the primary villain, as Jewish, despite the historical fact that he is not. Titus and Vespasian, on the other hand, are converted to Christianity, despite the fact that historically neither of them were actually Christian. Though Titus and Vespasian are only baptized at the end of the text, it does not detract from their status as Christians per se. They both acknowledge their Christianity throughout and wage their war because they believe “[Jesus’s] deth shulde avenged be”

(McShane 2636). The postponement of the baptism actually follows “a tripartite structure that involves “a state of *integration*, or implied integration, gives way to a state of *disintegration*, successfully undergoing the trials of which is the premise of *reintegration*””, which is characteristic of Medieval Romance, however the focus and length of this paper does not permit me to explore this further (Simpson 168). The text constructs Titus and Vespasian as Christian, though unbaptized for a time, making their heroism correspond with the poem’s binary. The modification of these figures’ religions removes any ambiguity from the text’s stance on the Christian vs Jewish binary.

The binary and its antisemitism are further enforced through the text’s incorporation of typology. Typology looks at the relationship between the Old Testament and the New, specifically how stories from the Old can be seen to prophesy the events of the New. Though *Destruction* is not a text from the bible, it offers the fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy through the episode of maternal cannibalism and directly references the idea of prophecy fulfilment throughout. The concept of Messianic time, according to Giorgio Agamben, involves “a time of suspension characterized by both typology and recapitulation. In typology, a completed past is reactivated (made incomplete), even as an incomplete present reaches fulfillment, is completed through its relationship to the typos” (Kruger 33). Considering this, types can be fulfilled outside of the New Testament. *Destruction* extends the concept of typology beyond the bible, and the text uses this to demonstrate the applicability of biblical stories and types outside of scripture itself, especially in its attempt to justify the mistreatment of Jewish people.

The episode draws from the Book of Lamentations, which is an Old Testament text that directly references maternal cannibalism. Lamentations 4:10 says that “[w]ith their own hands

compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed”, and *Destruction* directly retells this event (*Bible Study Tools*). Furthermore, the angel says to Marie that she must eat her child “to fulfill the prophecy”, reinforcing the event’s link to the bible and Christ (McShane 3435). This episode recalls an Old Testament type and acknowledges that the event has been prophesied, and then repeats the incident. Within this episode, the event is positively fulfilled by a Christian, which mimics New Testament fulfillment. Notably, Marie’s cannibalism is preceded by other occurrences of chaotic cannibalism committed by Jews, in which “Men and wymmyn her children ete, / And uche ete othere by every strete” (McShane 3386-3387). The Jewish cannibalism lacks the discretion, religiosity, and positivity that mark Marie’s, suggesting that, even though they are doing the same things, they are unable to fulfill the type because they are Jewish. The juxtaposition of Jewish and Christian cannibalism works to highlight the Jews’ failure to convert to Christianity that, in this circumstance, results in their inability to properly complete the typological pair. The episode utilizes typology in these ways in order to enforce the Christian vs Jewish binary.

Destruction’s typology extends to include supersession, which continues to enforce the poem’s antisemitism. Supersession challenges the validity and adequacy of Judaism, viewing it as “merely a precursor of Christianity” (Rose 3). The way that the text handles the episode of cannibalism perpetuates the idea that Jews are inferior to Christians and incompatible with the author’s constructed Christian reality. The text vilifies Jews for ““staying Jewish, insisting on one’s unchangeable Jewishness” [and this] is taken by the Church authorities to signify “that Jews are a people trapped by their own stubbornness in the past, a people incapable by their very nature of embracing change”” (Krummer 5). Marie’s unconverted Christianity further enforces this idea; she has no history of Judaism or any other religion, like the converted mothers in

Vengeance or the Jewish mothers in *Eusebius* and *Siege*. Through this, the author subtly contributes to the portrayal of non-Christians, particularly Jews, as too stubborn to convert and, as a result, unable to successfully fulfill the necessary types. This episode “echoes in miniature the larger historical trajectory that the Christian dispensation constructs for itself, the movement via the Incarnation to the Resurrection from Judaism to Christianity, from the Old Testament to the New, from Eve to Mary, Adam to Christ, sin to redemption—a movement traced out most influentially in the epistles of that early Jewish convert to the Christian way, Saul-Paul” (Kruger 20). Applications of this ideology, particularly their manifestation through typology and supersession, are “dangerous because they erase the efficacy of the Jewish past” (Krummer 5). *Destruction*’s handling of this episode not only portrays Jewish people negatively, but attempts to undermine the foundations of their religion through the evocation of supersession.

Contributing to the binary, and Marie’s goodness, the text further recalls medieval romance traditions and enhances its antisemitism through the feminization of the episode of cannibalism. My sampling of texts suggests a larger precedence for male children, and even an instance of a male and female child, but *Destruction* only presents a female infant. An all-female episode, as was mentioned earlier, simplifies and clarifies its meaning. The feminization of the episode also reflects the portrayal of good women in medieval romance and uses it to further support Marie’s undoubtable goodness and, thus, the text’s antisemitic binary. In medieval romance, there is a pattern of portraying good women tragically. The princess in *The King of Tars* is a particularly good example, and her story mirrors that of Marie. The princess, like Marie, finds herself in a bad situation outside of her control. She marries a sultan in order to prevent a war and receives a vision from God allowing her to pretend she is Muslim as long as she secretly remains Christian (Chandler 449-453). She and her child, who is born “as a rond of

flesche”, continue to suffer until her piety results in the Sultan’s conversion (Chandler 577). Using her feminine piety and aversion to violence, the princess is able to convert the sultan and save a lot of people, but she suffers immensely in the process. Another example of a tragic female character includes the “feyr and heynde” daughter of the emperor in *Sir Gowther* who only gains the ability to speak in order to end Gowther’s penance after she nearly dies (Laskaya 386). These women are portrayed as perfect in every way—beautiful, wealthy, and pious—which makes their suffering pitiable to the reader and constructs the women as unambiguously good characters, despite their difficult situations or choices. Their overwhelmingly positive construction makes their difficult situations even more tragic, because they are made to seem wholly undeserving of their suffering. Cannibalizing a female child, who starved to death as the result of a war, adds another layer to the tragedy of the child as well as the mother, as a female infant becomes the epitome of innocence and helplessness. The implications of the feminization of this episode help to intensify the text’s antisemitism by emphasizing the absolute goodness and tragedy of the Christian mother and her daughter. A medieval audience would be familiar with similar female characters from other texts and feel more empathetic towards these women as a result.

Marie and the child’s gender are not the only factors that bolster their positive and particularly feminine construction; their ties to food and Christianity link them to the practices associated with female saints. Regardless of gender, fasting, feasting, and other food-related rituals are essential to Christian doctrine and practices. A focus on food, however, appears to be a particularly female form of devotion, as the “association of the contemplative, the ascetic, and the charitable activities of women with food—both actual food, eaten and distributed, and food as a symbol of gift or flesh—runs throughout the *vitae* of women saints” (Bynum 114).

Quantitative patterns even “suggest that food practices were more central to female spirituality than to male in the later Middle Ages” (Bynum 81). One particularly common manifestation of women’s religious relationship with food are eucharistic visions, which are reminiscent of Marie’s angelic vision. Though Marie’s vision is not explicitly a eucharistic vision, as it does not literally involve Christ or the host, a divine vision encouraging the consumption of a child bears a striking resemblance. Because of this, the handling of these visions and their content function as a useful comparison when determining the nature of Marie’s vision. In the history of eucharistic visions, the recipients are not exclusively female and their meanings were at times unclear. For example, “[r]ecipients of visions of the smiling infant Jesus in the consecrated bread are frequently holy women” (Price 30), but “Jews figure especially in [...] eucharistic *exempla* that feature bloody and dismembered Christ figures” (Price 32). Thus the recipient and the content of the vision within *Destruction* should factor into the way it is interpreted.

The construction of Marie’s relationship with food, when compared to female ascetics of the Middle Ages, suggests the positivity of her character and, ultimately, her vision. She refuses to eat her child despite starvation. This desire and ability to abstain from food in this particular circumstance reflects well on Marie due to fasting’s Christian significance. It was perceived, for example, that “what one denied to oneself in fast was given to Christ’s own body, his church” (Bynum 33-34). Despite the general positivity of fasting, however, it was not uncommon for people to take issue with excessive female fasting. Examples of this include “Ida of Louvain and Christina the Astonishing [who] were both considered insane and were chained up by their families because of their eucharistic cravings” (Bynum 117). Similarly, Lidwina’s diet was seen to “[criticize the clergy’s] behavior” and perceived as a potential threat to “their power” (Bynum 128). Thus, women’s fasting and attention to the eucharist needed to be handled carefully and

sensibly in order to be respected. Marie's starvation is not as emotionally driven or as extreme as the more controversial instances of female fasting, which prevents it from becoming problematic. Marie's starvation is not self-inflicted, but imposed on her by her situation. She acknowledges the possibility that this suffering could serve to shorten her time in purgatory, but this does not prevent her from listening to the angel when it tells her to eat. Additionally, she is reasonably hesitant to eat her daughter, unlike the cannibalistic Jews that are mentioned just before her, which further highlights her self-control. The way that Marie handles the cannibalism and starvation work to demonstrate her piety and self-control, rather than to suggest that she could be a questionable religious fanatic. This continues to contribute to Marie's goodness and helps to indicate that her vision is not a punishment.

Along with Marie's acceptable relationship with food, the circumstances surrounding the vision and the vision's content continue to support its positivity. Marie's suffering is circumstantial, and the vision only occurs to her in order to save her life. This is unlike accounts of negative eucharistic visions, which traditionally occurred as the result of insults to Christianity, typically perpetrated by Jews. An example of this occurs "in the accounts of the attempted host desecration by the "Jew of Cologne" reported in an early sixteenth century sermon, [where] the Jew spat out the host to find that it had turned into a small child smiling at him" (Price 32). Here, violating the host results in a horrifying vision. Another instance involves "a Jew looking for his Christian traveling companion [entering] a church only to see the priest lifting above his head a "ffair child, I-wounded sore/In foot, in hond." As the child is divided, the congregation receives not fragments, but individual replicas of the child, and the horrified Jew watches them devour the babies. This gory sacramental vision is explained not as a blessing, but as the Jew's inheritance of the sins of his ancestors: "And thy kun made hym

dye/Therefore al blodi thou hym seye.’” (Price 32). In this event, discomfort surrounding the Christian consumption of flesh is actually criticized. The congregation consumes the child in a sanctioned and acceptable fashion, similarly to Marie, so it should not elicit horror. The gore specifically causes the Jew’s discomfort and is administered as punishment; the negativity surrounding the mutilation of an infant further supports the importance of *Destruction’s* aforementioned omission of any details about carving the child. In Christianity, the consumption of an infant’s flesh is not a punishment or uncomfortable in the correct circumstances, but witnessing the gore could be. Omitting the consumption method helps to prevent the reader from interpreting the scenario negatively. The horror that the Jew feels in this scenario also mirrors *Destruction’s* application of typology and supersession. It is suggested that Jews are unable to understand, let alone complete, this action as a result of their religion and history. Marie does nothing wrong to trigger her vision, rather the vision occurs because she refuses to do something taboo in order to save her own life. Her vision also lacks any of the visually disturbing elements of the negative eucharistic visions. Marie’s Christianity, positive portrayal, and lack of any bad behavior indicate the positive nature of her vision, and, again, the goodness of Christians.

These pointed modifications help the text to adhere as closely as possible to the medieval romance format, which includes the expression of a larger ideology. The ideology that *Destruction* presents relates heavily to its incorporation of typology and supersession. Overall, the message of the poem is that the Jews are inferior to the Christians, and it establishes this message through consistent negative characterizations of Judaism. The expression of this ideology requires “that for the civilized order to maintain its balance, it must have commerce with, and enter into, everything that threatens it. Mere resistance only more acutely exposes vulnerability” (Simpson 171). The poem’s primary source of conflict stems from Christianity vs

Judaism, so the isolation of the Christian mother in Jerusalem within the episode of cannibalism helps to develop this ideology. The text immerses the Christian mother in a Jewish city, which the poem constructs as a threat. Despite her physical and religious isolation, Marie is able to successfully navigate her trials because of her Christianity. *Destruction* presents a reality in which Jews are inherently inferior and in opposition to Christians and shows how Christians are supposed to navigate this conflict. The text's strong adherence to this Christian vs Jew binary helps to make this ideology even clearer. Resultantly, "[t]here is, for the most part, no analytic consciousness judging characters ethically, since story structure does all the work" (Simpson 171). By the end of the text a "particular version of the civilized order is reaffirmed [...], but that civilized order has been enlarged and reformed by recognizing its often shameful dependency on all that threatens it" (Simpson 171). The author constructs details of the story of the revenge enacted on the Jews by Christians in a way that reaffirms typology, and, thus, Judaism as a foundation or precursor for Christianity. The modification of the story and genre adherences all work to express an antisemitic ideology rooted in typology and the suggested inferiority of Judaism.

Simplification, the incorporating of typology and supersession, and adherence to the medieval romance genre, enable *Destruction* to convey a clear and consistent message of antisemitism. Examining the episode of maternal cannibalism specifically is useful as it thoroughly incorporates all of these elements. A disadvantage of looking at cannibalism from the Middle Ages, however, is that it feels too distant from modern reality. The way that antisemitism is employed and construed within this episode, and text as a whole, however, can be directly linked to antisemitism throughout history into modern day. For Christians, antisemitism has traditionally drawn on "the conception of Judaism as a superseded religion that

was essentially national, and based on the Law, and thus merely a precursor of Christianity, the new universal religion of Love” (Rose 3). *Destruction* endorses the idea of supersession.

Decades after *Destruction* would have been written, and hundreds of miles away, Martin Luther preached that “any hope of Jewish redemption was rendered vain by the irremediable evil of Jewish national character” (Rose 6). Luther additionally believed that Jews prevented Germans from “achieving both their "Christian freedom" and their political "freedom." In Luther—and in modern German antisemitism—this perception was fed by the older theme of the Jews as Christ-killers” (Rose 4). Both of these ideas are from the same ideology that fuels the antisemitism in *Destruction*. Much later, Hitler employs similar language and arguments “in which the issues of "Germanness" and "Jewishness" and national redemption stood to the fore” (Rose 8). To a modern day reader, *Destruction*’s manifestation of antisemitism seems far outside the scope of anything that could happen now, but the ideas that drove these actions have and continue to be utilized to justify prejudice and violence. The same ideas that caused this episode of cannibalism are used today, but their application evolves so that it seems acceptable. Examining the episode of cannibalism in *The Destruction of Jerusalem* reveals the deep-rootedness and consistency of antisemitism, and recognizing these dangerous ideologies is essential to preventing their perpetuation.

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