Workshop: Cannibalism and the Eucharist in medieval literature

Wednesday 15th June, 5pm-7pm
Wolfson 3

Jacob Cornelisz. van Oostsanen, *Man of Sorrows*, first half of 16th century, oil on panel, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp.

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There is one Universal Church of the faithful, outside of which there is absolutely no salvation. In which there is the same priest and sacrifice, Jesus Christ, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being changed (transsubstantiation) by divine power into the body, and the wine into the blood, so that to realize the mystery of unity we may receive of Him what He has received of us.

[Canon 1, the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, Medieval Sourcebook http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/lateran4.asp ]

The process of transubstantiation, by which the bread and wine of the Eucharist is transformed into the body and blood of Christ, would have been familiar to all medieval Christians. Yet even as it formed an essential part of Christian ritual and an important means of constituting the Christian community, it remained a point of contentious debate and profound anxiety for many medieval writers. What did it mean to eat the human flesh of God? To digest it? How was this consumption different to the consumption of animal flesh, or the bodies of other humans? What does eating God do to the body of the consumer?

From representations of the Eucharist in devotional literature in which the celebrant explicitly consumes flesh and blood to tales of cannibals in far-off lands whose customs eerily echo the Christian rite, throughout the literatures of medieval Europe these questions were not just a source of doctrinal anxiety, but a spur to imaginative reflections on and reformulations of a cannibal Eucharist. This workshop will discuss the various ways this imagery of cannibalistic consumption might have resonated with the medieval Christian, and how it reshapes the familiar sacrament of taking Communion.

The extracts to be discussed have been divided into two broad sections. The first, Eating God, engages directly with depictions of the Eucharist in which the fleshy nature of the sacrament is revealed. The second considers two very different reflections on the cannibal nature of Eucharistic consumption, exploring the diverse ways this motif is absorbed throughout medieval literary production. Each text is followed by a translation into modern English.
Part One: Eating God

_L’Estoire del Saint Graal_: Imagining the first Communion

This anonymous text (1220-1230) represents the first of the long prose romances that make up the great Lancelot-Grail cycle (first, that is, in terms of the cycle’s internal chronology, rather than composition). The cycle narrates the adventures of Arthur’s court, from the king’s early years, through the quest for the Holy Grail, to the collapse of the kingdom and Arthur’s death. _L’Estoire del Saint Graal_, composed around 2 decades after the main body of the cycle, fills in the ‘prehistory’ of the Grail quest. It weaves a quasi-Biblical narrative into the foundations of the Arthurian world, explaining the origins of the Grail and how it came to be in Britain, as well as tracing the ancestry of such central figures as the Fisher King, Galahad, Lancelot and Gawain back to the first post-crucifixion converts. The tale centres on Joseph of Arimathea, who collects Christ’s blood in the ‘escüele’ that becomes the Grail, and his son, Josephé, the first ordained priest and Grail-guardian who leads an evangelising mission to Britain, bringing the Grail to these shores.

In the following passage Josephé, having just been consecrated as priest by Christ himself, leads the first ever communion amongst the small band of devotees who have followed himself and his father on their mission of conversion to pagan lands. This evangelising community carry the Grail with them in a wooden Ark, which miraculously expands and opens to reveal an altar, paten and chalice with which to carry out the ceremony. The text dwells on the process of transubstantiation, and explores the potentially horrifying implications of the real presence of flesh and blood in the sacraments.


134.

... Laiens fist Josephés le premier sacrament qui onqques fist fais en chelui pule, mais il l’ot mout tost acompli, car il n’i dist ke ches paroles seulement ke Jhesucris dist a ses disciple en la chaine, quant il lor dist : « Tenés, si mangiés, che est li miens cors, qui pour vous et pour maintes gens serra livrés a tourment. » Et autresi lor dist il du vin : « Tenés tout et si buvés, car che est li sans de le novele loy, li miens sans meïsmes qui pour vous sera espandus en remission des pechiés. » Ches paroles dist Josephés sous le pain ke il trova tout aparilliet sous la platine du calisce, ensi com li contes a dit la u il parla de l’autel qui estoit en l’arche. Et quant il les eut dites sous le pain et sous le vin qui el calisce estoit, si devint tantost li pains charz et li vins sans.
135.
Et lor vit Josephés tout apiertement ke il tenoit entre ses .II. mains un cors autresi comme d’un enfant et li sanbloit ke chil sans qu’il veoit el calisce fust cheüs del cors a l’enfant. Et quant il le vit ensi, si en fu mout durement esbahis, si ke il ne savoit sous chiel ke il peüst faire, anchois se tint tous chois et commencha mout angoisseusement a souspirel du cuer et a plourer des iex pour la grant pavour ke il avoit. Lors li dist Nostre Sires : « Josephé, il te convient desmembrer chou ke tu tiens, si ke il i ait trois pieches. » Et Josephé li respondi : « Ha ! Sire, aiés pitié de vostre serf, car mes cuers ne porroit souffrir a desmembrer si biele figure ! » Et Nostre Sires li dist : « Se tu ne fais mes commandemens, tu n’aras point de part en mon hyretage. »

[p. 87] Lors prist Josephés le cors, si mist la teste a une part et dessevra del bu tout autresi legierment comme se la chars de l’enfant fust toute quite, en tel maniere com on quist char ke on a oublie sour le fu. Apres chou fist .II. parties du remanant a mout grant paour, comme chil qui mout durement souspiroit et plouroit. Ensi com il commencha a faire les parties, si chaïrent tout li angele qui laiens estoient devant l’autel a terre et furent tout a coutes et a genous tant ke Nostre Sires dist a Josephé : « Quel chose atens tu ? Rechoif chou qui est devant toi et si l’use, car che est tes sauvemens. » Et Josephés se mist a genous et bati son pis et cria merchi en plourant de tous ses pechiés.

136.
Et quant il fu redrechiés, se ne vit devant soi sour la platine ke une pieche en samblanche de pain et si le prist, si le leva en haut et, quant il eut rendu grascus a son Creatour, si ouvri la bouche et vaut metre dedens. Et il regarde, si voit ke che restoit uns cors tous entiers. Et quant il le vaut traire arriere, si ne paut, aïn sentoit c’on li metoit tout dedens la bouche, anchois qu’il le peüst clore. Et quant il l’eut usé, si li fu avis ke toutes les douchours et les suatumes ke on porroit nomer de langue li fuissent entrees el cors. Apres rechut une partie del saint boire sacré qui estoit el calisce.
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137.
Et quant il eut che fait, si vit ke uns angeles prist la platine et le calisce, si les mist ambedeus en la sainte escüele, l’un sour l’autre, et sour chele platine, si vit plusieurs pieches en samblanche de pain. Et quant li angeles eut prise l’escüele, si vint uns autres, si leva la platine en haut et che qui estoit sus avoes, si l’enportoit entre ses .II. mains hors de l’arche ; et li tiers angeles prist le calisce, si le porta apres chelui en autrestel manière. Et chil qui portoit la sainte escüele fu tous li daarrains.

Et quant il furent hors de l’arche tout troi, si ke tous li pules les veoit, si parla une vois, qui dist : « Mes petis pules novielement renés de l’espiritel naissenche, je t’envoi ton sauvement, che est mes cors qui pour toi souffri corporel naissenche et corporel mort. Or garde dont ke tu aies vraie creanche a si haute chose rechevoir et user, car, se tu crois parfitement ke che soit tes Sauveres, dont le recheveras tu au pardurable sauvement de l’ame ; et si tu ne crois enterinement, tu le rechevras au pardurable dampnement del cors et de l’ame, car qui « usera mon cors et buvera mon sance et il n’en sera dignes, il mangera son detruisement et buvera » ; ne nus n’en puët estre dignes, se il n’est vrais creans : or garde donques ke tu le croies. »

Lors vint li angeles qui portoit la platine devant Joseph, et Joseph s’agenoilla, si rechut, jointes mains, son Sauveour tout visaument, et chascuns des autres autresi, car il estoit a chascuns avis, quant on li metoit en la bouche la pieche en samblanche de pain, ke il veïst entrer en sa bouche un enfant tout fourmé.
Joyfully, Josephé performed the first sacrament that was ever made amongst that people, although he completed it very quickly, for he only said those words that Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples at the last supper, when he said to them: “Take, eat, this is my body, which, for your sake and for that of many people, will be delivered to torment.” And likewise he said to them of the wine: “All of you take and drink, for this is the blood of the new covenant, my very own blood, which will be spilt for you in remission of your sins.” Josephé spoke these words over the bread that he found prepared on the paten\(^2\) of the chalice, as the tale has mentioned when it described the altar that was inside the Ark. And when he had spoken these words over the bread and over the wine that was in the chalice, without delay the bread became flesh and the wine, blood.

And then Josephé saw clearly that he held between his two hands a body like that of a child, and it seemed to him that the blood he saw in the chalice had fallen from the child’s body. And when he saw it in this way, he was greatly frightened, so that he didn’t know what on earth to do, before he silenced himself and began with great anguish to sigh from his heart and weep from his eyes because of his great fear. Then Our Lord said to him: “Josephé, you should dismember that which you hold, so that it is in three pieces.” And Josephé answered him: “Ah! Lord, have pity on your servant, for my heart could not bear to dismember such a beautiful figure!” And Our Lord said to him: “If you do not follow my commandments, you will have no share in my inheritance.”

Then Josephés took the body, he put the head to one side and severed it from the torso as easily as if the child’s flesh had been completely cooked, like when one cooks flesh that has been forgotten on the fire. After that he very fearfully made two parts from the rest, sighing and weeping most severely. As he started to make the divisions, all the angels who were there joyfully came before the altar, fell to the ground and prostrated themselves on their elbows and knees as Our Lord said to Josephé: “What are you waiting for? Receive that which is

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1 Matthew 26: 26-27, Mark 14: 22-23.
2 A small plate or dish used to hold the Eucharistic bread.
before you and eat it, for it is your salvation." And Josephés got to his knees and beat his chest and, weeping, cried for mercy for all his sins.

136.
And when he had stood back up, he saw nothing before him on the paten but a piece in the appearance of bread, and he took it, he raised it up to the sky and, when he had given thanks to his Creator, he opened his mouth and wanted to put it inside. And he looked at the piece, he saw that it remained a whole entire body. And when he wants to pull it back out, he cannot, as he feels that it is being placed whole inside his mouth before he can close it. And when he had eaten it, he thought that all the sweetnesses and softnesses that one could put into words had entered into his body. After, he received a piece of the holy sacred drink that was in the chalice.

137.
And when he had done this, he saw that an angel took the paten and the chalice, and placed them together in the holy grail, one on top of the other, and on the paten he saw several pieces in the appearance of bread. And when the angel had taken the grail, another came and raised the paten up high, and another angel who was also there carried it in his two hands out of the arc; and the third angel took the chalice, and carried it after the other in a similar manner. And the one who carried the holy grail was last of all.

138.
And when all three were out of the arc, so that all the people could see them, a voice spoke, saying: "My small people newly reborn in spiritual birth, I send to you your salvation, this is my body which suffered bodily birth and death for your sake. Now ensure that you have true belief to receive and eat such an exalted thing, for, if you believe perfectly that this is your Saviour, then you will receive it for the eternal salvation of your soul; and if you do not believe entirely, you will receive it for the eternal damnation of body and soul, for he who ‘eats my body and drinks my blood and is unworthy of it, he eats and drinks his own
destruction, no one can be worthy of it if he is not a true believer: therefore ensure that you believe it.”

Then the angels who carried the paten came before Joseph and Joseph kneeled, with hands clasped he visibly received his Saviour and all of the others likewise, for it was the opinion of each that when the piece in the appearance of bread was placed in the mouth, he saw a fully formed child enter into his mouth.

3 1 Corinthians 11: 27-29
The motif of the miraculous transformation of the Host into visible flesh or blood, to quell doubts about the doctrine of real presence or to reward a particularly devoted worshipper, appears in a vast number of accounts, and is particularly popular in the later Middle Ages. Caroline Walker Bynum has written extensively on these miraculous transformations, in particular in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992) and *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Recently, she has summarised much of her research in a short article that traces the historical development of the motif throughout the Middle Ages, and considers why the Eucharist became such a potent focus for worship. We have also selected two very different examples of visions of consuming God’s flesh to explore the wide range of ways this motif is deployed, as punishment and comfort, public and private.


[See end of booklet for photocopy of article]
Bread made flesh in text and image: The Mass of St Gregory

In this version of the transforming Host motif, recorded in the *Golden Legend* (c.1260), a portion of Christ’s flesh appears while St Gregory performs Mass before a doubting congregation member. The association of Gregory and a miraculous Eucharist flourished into a major iconographic motif in the later Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century. The identity of the doubter and the appearance of Christ’s body shifts in these later representations: the doubter is no longer a lay woman, but a deacon, and Christ’s body becomes whole. Like the *Estoire*, this tradition emphasises the corporeality of the sacraments and explores the ideas about bodily wholeness and partition at the centre of the Eucharist.


Cap. XLVI. De sancto Gregorio

[...] 

Matrona quaedam singulis diebus dominicis beato Gregorio panes offerebat, cui cum per missarum sollemnia corpus domini offerret et diceret: corpus domini nostril Jesu Christi proficiat tibi in vitam aeternam, lasciva subrisit. Ille continuo dexteram ab ejus ore convertens partem illam dominici corporis super altare deposuit, postmodum coram populo interrogavit, quam ob causam ridere praesamserit? At illa: quia panem, quem propriis minibus feceram, tu corpus dominicum appellabas. Tune Gregorius pro incredulitate mulieris se in oratione prostravit et surgens particulam illum panis instar digiti carnem factam reperit et sic matronam ad fidem reduxit. Oravit iterum et carnem ilam in panem conversam vidit et matronae sumendum tradidit.

[...]
Translation


46. Saint Gregory

[...]

A certain woman used to bring altar breads to Gregory every Sunday morning, and one Sunday, when the time came for receiving communion and he held out the Body of the Lord to her, saying: “May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ benefit you unto life everlasting,” she laughed as if at a joke. He immediately drew back his hand from her mouth and laid the consecrated Host on the altar, and then, before the whole assembly, asked her why she had dared to laugh. Her answer: “Because you called this bread, which I made with my own hands, the Body of the Lord.” Then Gregory, faced with the woman’s lack of belief, prostrated himself in prayer, and when he rose, he found the particle of bread changed into flesh in the shape of a finger. Seeing this, the woman recovered her faith. Then he prayed again, saw the flesh return to the form of bread, and gave communion to the woman.

[...]
Figure 1. Robert Campin, Mass of Saint Gregory, 1440, oil on panel, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels.
Figure 3. *The Mass of St. Gregory*, c. 1480, limewood, original colours, Bode-Museum, Berlin.
Cannibalism in the Convent: Adelheid of Katharinental.

The *Katharintaler Schwesternbuch*, from which Adelheid’s vision is taken, is a collection of short recountings of significant events in the lives of the sisters of the Swiss convent. The brief stories might be read as something of a memorialisation, as the events are drawn from the lives of the nuns who have died, recorded by the convent’s current sisters. While the events discussed in the stories are likely to date from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the earliest manuscripts of the *Schwesternbuch* can be dated to the fifteenth century. The story of Adelheid is just a few paragraphs in length, and includes a viscerally literal interpretation of the act of consuming the divine body, in which Christ rips the skin from his hand and gives it to her as the Eucharist.


20. Adelheit von St. Gallen


Es was en erbú burgerin ze Costentz, do der ir vatter starb, do kam si her zü swester Adelheit, die was ir sippe, vnd gab ir pfenning [26a] vmb einen beltz. Dar nach do batt die
fröw einen behofften menschen, das er ir etwas seiti von ir vatter sele. Do sprach der vyend vsser dem menschen: 'Frag die nonnen ze Dissenhouen, der du den beltz hest gen, die kan dir wol von im sagen.' Do kam si her. Do batt si vast, das si ir ettwas seiti. Do wolt si ir nützet sagen, wan das si sprach: 'Du solt got wol getruwen, das er an der statt si, da im schier wol [26b] werde.’

[p.106] In einer metti do man von únser fröwen sang die antiphon 'Aue stella’, do sahú sälig swester, das únser fröw dur den kor gieng vnd trüg únsern herren an ir arm vnd neig yeglicher swester. Vnd do si zü den singenden swestram kam, do gab si das kindli yeglicher swester an ir arm.

Translation


There was a sister called Sister Adelheid von St. Gallen who was an extremely contemplative, devoted sister. And on the day of Candlemas, she helped the sacristan. And then, after compline and after they had taken away the altar, she became very tired from the work. And she went to her prayers and bowed herself before our Lord and said: “Lord, I offer to you a tired body, a loving soul, and a desiring heart.” Then she heard a voice that said: “You are my most beloved daughter.”

This holy sister was at one time very ill and lay in her bed in the dormitory. There she saw a man come toward her, who sat down to face her beside her bed, broke off a piece of his flesh from his hand, gave it to her in her mouth, and said to her: “This is my flesh and my blood.” And then she saw him no more. She performed works of mercy very often and served the other sisters very well. After this she again became very sick and fell so deeply into a human sickness that it seemed to her that the sisters she had served so well and so often were not serving her in her sick days as loyally as she had served them. And that thought moved her in
her heart. Then our Lady spoke with her and said: “Everything that you have done to serve your sisters you have done through my Child and through me. Why do you desire service from them in return?”

There was a worthy, high-born woman in Constance, and when her father died she came to Sister Adelheid, who was her relative, and gave her silver coins for a pelt. After this, the woman asked a person possessed by evil to show her something of her father’s soul. Then the devil spoke from out of this person: “Ask the nun at Diessenhofen to whom you have given the pelt. She can surely tell you something of him.” Then she arrived there. She urgently asked Adelheid to reveal to her some news of her father’s soul. She did not want to say anything, so she only said this: “You should wholly trust that he has been brought to the place where he may very soon become entirely well and whole.”

During a mass, when the antiphon Ave Stella was sung for our Lady, this holy sister saw our Lady walking through the choir carrying our Lord in her arms, and she bowed to each sister. And when she came to the choir sisters, she handed the child Jesus into the arms of each sister in turn.
Part Two: Reflections of the Eucharist

The Doctrine of the Hert: Domesticating cannibalism

*The Doctrine of the Hert* is a fifteenth-century Middle English translation of a thirteenth-century Latin devotional treatise, directed towards readers in the religious orders. The Middle English text, of interest to our discussion today, is an abridged version of the Latin, its content adapted for a readership of enclosed nuns. The *Doctrine* is split into seven books, each of which details the pairing of the heart with a particular spiritual ‘gift’, as the reader works towards achieving union with God. The culinary reworking of Eucharistic imagery is drawn from Book One, which makes extensive use of domestic spatial allegory in order to frame the reader’s devotional practice. The scenes that we will examine today are preceded by gruesome metaphors of self-flaying and self-roasting, the reader encouraged to share the agonies of Christ’s Passion in the most visceral terms.


Book 1, pp. 768-777.

He was flayn whan his cloþis were take from hym and was put naked upon þe crosse. He was rostid upon þe spite of þe crosse be þe Jues, þe wiche were his kokis, in gret tribulacioun. But he was not brennyd because þe þrid wanted not, þe wiche was þe fatnes of charite that flowid oute be þe fyve gret holis of his body. What was ellis þe blood flowyng oute of his wounds, but þe holy anoynement of charite? Good sister, put undir þe panne of thin hert and gadre inow of þis precious oynement, and þan schalt þou lakke no lardir in tyme of tribulacioun.

Translation

*He was flayed when his clothes were taken from him, and he was put naked upon the cross. He was roasted upon the spit of the cross by the Jews, who were his cooks, in great tribulation. But he did not burn... because of the fat of charity, which flowed from the five great wounds of his body. What else was the blood that flowed out of his wounds, other than the holy anointment of charity? Good sister, put the pan of your heart under the wounds and gather enough of this precious ointment, and then you will lack no larder during times of tribulation.*
He hath yiven himself to the passioun for us, into a grete price for oure rawnsom. Thus seith Seint Poule: Empti enim estis precio magno. ‘Ye ben bought’, he seith, ‘with a gret price’. Also, he hath yiven his blissed body in the sacrament of the aughter for oure meete, as for þe most worthiest yifte þat ever he yaf to mankynde, as he seith himself: Caro mea vere est cibus: et sanguis meus, vere est potus. ‘My flessh’ he seith, ‘is very gostly mete, and my blode is very gostly drynke.’ This is an excellent shewyng of love to mankynde: it passith al his oþer yiftes. Thus shalt þou considere þe excellent benefices of the sacrament of the aughter… He hath yiven himself for þi mete; yive þou now þiself for his mete.

Translation

*He gave himself to the Passion for us, paying a great price for our ransom. As St. Paul says... you have been bought... with a great price. Also, he has given his blessed body in the sacrament of the altar for our meat, as the worthiest gift that has ever been given to mankind, as he says himself... my flesh... is very holy meat, and my blood is very holy drink. This is an excellent display of love for mankind, surpassing all his other gifts. Thus you will consider the excellent benefits of the sacrament of the altar. He has given himself for your meat, now you give yourself for his meat.*

And whan þou art... flayn, þou must rost þin hert at þe fire of tribulacioun. Sister, whan þou entrest first þe cloyster of þi religioun, þou puttist þin hert into Godis kychyn, þer for to be rostid in þe fire of tribulacioun.
Translation
And when you have been flayed, you must roast your heart in the fire of tribulation. Sister, when you first entered the cloister, you placed your heart in God’s kitchen, to be roasted there, in the fire of tribulation.

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Excerpt taken from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Holkham Misc. 42, a manuscript of the French version of the Doctrine, fol. 24v.

Entent donc quel es choses ont met deuant toi en la table de lautel. Sest venisons dou ciel deliciouse. Car tes sires Ilhesu Criz fist venisons de son propre cors por ce que il donnast a toi deliciouse reffection. Car il fu fustez ausi com venisons de sengler. Quant il fu chaciez de Pylate a Herode et de Herode renuoiez a Pylate.

Translation, Mouron, p. 195.

Notice then what things are put in front of you on the table of the altar. This is delicious venison from heaven. For your Lord, Jesus Christ, made venison of his own body, so that he might give you delicious restorative food. For he was hunted like wild boar venison, when he was driven away from Pilate to Herod and from Herod sent back to Pilate.
Confronting the cannibal other in Jean de Mandeville’s *Livre de merveilles*

In the account of his supposed travels in the Holy Lands and a fantastical, exoticised East, (1357-71), Mandeville encounters a range of different cannibal peoples, from ferocious giants to those who trade in human flesh and breed people like livestock. Alongside this depravity and violence, he describes a number of peoples for whom cannibalism plays an important ceremonial role in the formation of their communities. The following passages describe the cannibalistic funerary rites of two different societies (Dondia and Byboth). The descriptions of the elaborate religious ceremonies surrounding the consumption of human flesh, a focus on communal incorporation and exclusion, on re-enactment and commemoration, invite comparison to and interrogation of the terms of the Eucharist. As in so much of medieval literature, descriptions of the foreign and the alien reflect back on the anxieties of the Christian community.


Chapter XXII, pp. 356-357.

De ceste isle en alant par mer vers mydy y a un autre isle grande et lee qe ad noun Dondia. En celle isle sont gentz de diverses natures, si qe le piere maunge le filz et le filz le piere, et le marit la femme et la femme soun marit. Et s’il avient qe ly piere ou la mere ou ascuns des amis soit malades, tantost ly filz vait al prestre de leur loy et ly prie qu’il voille demaunde a lour ydole si son piere morra de celle maladie ou noun. Adonques ly prestre et ly filz par ensemble vont devant l’ydole et s’agoenilent moult devoutement et font lour demaunde, ly diable qe est dedeinz l’ydole respoint et dit q’il ne morra mie a ceste foiz et lour enseigne coment ils le devent garrir. Et lors ly filz retorne ariere et sert le piere et luy fait cee qe l’ydole ly ad deissee tanques il soit garriz. Et ensy font les femmes pur lour maritz, et ly maritz pur les femmes, et ly amis l’un pur l’autre. Et si l’ydole dit qe il doie morrer, adonques ly prestre vait ovesquez ly filz ou ovesquez la femme al maladie et ly met un pain sur la bouche pur estoupper l’aleyne et ensy l’estuffe et occist. Et puis ils copent tout le corps par pieces et font prier touz leur amiz a venir manger de celuy mort, et font venir touz les menestrizz q’ils poient avoir, et le mangent a grant feste et a grant solempnité. Et quant ils ont mangée la char, ils prignent les os et les ensevelissent et chauntent et font grant melodie, et touz les parentz et amis qe n’ount esté a celle feste sont repueve et vergondez et ount moult doel qar jamès après homme ne les tendra pur amys. Et dient ly amis q’ils
From this island, travelling south by sea, there is another large, wide island named Dondia. On this island there are peoples of strange natures, for the father eats the son and the son, his father, the husband his wife and the wife her husband. And if it happens that the father or the mother or any friend is ill, the son goes immediately to a priest of their religion and requests him to ask their idol if his father will die from this illness or not. The priest and the son then go before the idol together, kneel with great devotion and make their request. The devil that is inside the idol answers, and says that the father will not die this time and instructs them how they must heal him. The son then returns home and serves his father and does what the idol has shown him until his father is healed. And the women do the same for their husbands and the husbands for their wives and friends for one another. And if the idol says that the sick person is going to die, then the priest goes with his son or his wife and places a cloth over his mouth to prevent him from breathing and so he suffocates and kills him. Then they cut the body up into pieces and ask all their friends to come and eat the deceased. And they assemble all the minstrels they can, and they eat the deceased with great celebration and solemnity. When they have eaten the flesh, they take the bones and bury them and sing and make great melodies. And all the relatives and the friends who have not been at the celebration are reproached and shamed, and they are greatly grieved, for they will never again be considered friends. And the friends say that they eat the flesh in this way to prevent the deceased from suffering, for, as they say, if worms ate him in the ground, his soul would suffer great pain.

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En ceste isle ount ils un costume par tout le pays qe quant ly pierre d’ascun moert, et il voet faire grant honour a soun pierre, il fait mauder tous ses amis et parentz et religiouns et prestres et de menestriers grant foysoun. Et puis porte homme le corps sur une montaigne a grant feste et a grant joye menant. Et quant ils ount porté jusques la, ly plus grant prelat ly cope la teste et la met sur un grant plateau d’or ou d’argent, s’il est si riches hommes, et puis il baille la teste al filz. Et ly filz et ly autres parentz chantent a Dieu mult des oreisouns. Et puis ly prestres et ly religiouns detrenchent toute la char du corps par pieces, et puis dient lous oreisons. Et ly oyselx du pays qe ount bien apprise celle costume de long temps viengent volant par dessure, come vautours, aygles, et touz autres oyselx qe mangent char. Et ly prestres lour gectent des pieces de la char, et ils la portent un poy loingz et la mangent. Et puis aussi come les chapellains par decea chantent pur les mortz : « Subvenite sancti Dei etc », aux cilz prestres la chantent adonques a haut voiz en lour langa ge : « Regardez come prudhomme cis estoit qe ly angeles Dieu le viengent querre et le porten en Paradis. » Et adonques semble il al filz q’il est mult honorez quant ly oyselx ount mangé soun pierre. Et cil ou il avery plus grant nombre des oyselx est ly plus honorez. Et puis ly filz remeigne ses parentz et ses amis a l’hostiel et lour fait grant feste et touz ly amis tiegnent lour compte coment ly oyselx vindrent cea V, cea X, cea XX, et se glorifient mult forment au parler. Et quant ils sont a l’hostiel, ly filz fait mettre cuyre la teste soun pierre et en donne a chescun des plus especials amis un poy de la char en lieu de entremes. Et de testeu il fait faire un hanap et en cely il boit et les parentz aussy a grant devocioun en remembrance del seint homme qe ly oyselx ount mangé. Et celle hanap le filz gardera et bevera deediez toute sa vie pur la remembrance du pierre.

Translation

On this island [Byboth] they have a custom throughout the whole country that when the father of someone dies and his son wants to do great honour to his father, he sends for all his friends and relatives and clergymen and priests and a great number of minstrels. And then they carry the body up a mountain, with great celebration and great joy. When they have carried it there, the greatest prelate chops off his head and places it on a great plate of gold
or silver, if the man is rich, and delivers the head to the son. And the son and the other relatives sing many prayers to God. And then the priest and the clergy chop all the flesh of the body into pieces and then say their prayers. And the birds of the country, which have learnt this custom a long time ago, arrive flying overhead: vultures, eagles and all the other flesh-eating birds. And the priests throw them the morsels of flesh; the birds carry them a little further away and eat them. And then as the chaplains below sing for the dead, “Subvenite sancti Dei etc”, then these priests sing out loud in their language “See how wise and valiant this man was, that the angels of god come to seek him and take him to Paradise”. And then it seems to the son that he is very honoured when the birds have eaten his father. And he who has the greatest number of birds is the most honoured. Then the son brings his relatives and friends back to his home and holds a great celebration for them and all the family count how many birds have come, this one five, this one ten, this one twenty, and they boast strongly in speaking of it. And when they are in the house, the son has his father’s head cooked and gives each of his most special friends a bit of the flesh as a part of the meal. And he has a goblet made from the skull, from which he and his relatives drink with great devotion in memory of the holy man that the birds have eaten. And the son will keep this goblet all his life and drink from it for the sake of his father’s memory.

4 Mass for the Dead: ‘Come to his assistance, ye Saints of God…’
http://missale.heliohost.org/requiem.html
Vol. 8

Kym Rygh
Cees W. Meijer, Beate Pongratz-Leisten, D. T. Potts, Amelia Kuhn, Peter Machiowski, Markus Hilger, Nicole Blish, Peter Coedes,

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Edited by Beate Pongratz-Leisten and Karen Zonik

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Kim Rygh, Cees W. Meijer, Beate Pongratz-Leisten, D. T. Potts, Amelia Kuhn, Peter Machiowski, Markus Hilger, Nicole Blish, Peter Coedes.
The European Middle Ages

The Animation and Agency of Holy Food

Caroline Walker Bynn

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No more account rendered from the period the first account was made. A record of the data is made by the people and control.

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it invisibly became the physical body and blood of Christ at the words of consi-

eration. In 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, a technical formulation was

required of the faithful. Jesus Christ himself is both priest and sacrifice, and his body and blood are really con-

sumed in the sacrament of the altar under the species of bread and wine. The bread being

transubstantiated (a technical term adopted Aristotelian categories into the body and the un-

ion to the body of the blood, the body himself belongs to us. (Dodd and Schon-}

meister 176-260)

The explanation usually given for the proliferation of Eucharistic miracles

has been that such miracles came to be seen as a result of the definition of the Fourth

Lateran Council. In other words, the church said that these things literally came to be

unveiled by the clergy in such holy stuff and hence became part of the trans-

substantiation reaction. Yet it is not clear just how widespread the belief that

miracles were real was and what miracles were being performed to prove that the trans-

formation was real and how widespread such miracles were. In the 16th-17th cen-

turies, people had trouble accepting this miracle story, and strict interpretation of

the miracles was often necessary in order to prove that the transformation was real.

Eucharists are real and therefore miracles are real. 

The representatives of the council at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 are best

understood as holding the position that because the ritual of consecration was

performed in the act of turning bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ,

this became the physical body and blood of Christ. This is the same position that

the church has held ever since. 

9 The period after the Gregorian reform movement of the late eleventh century, also called the

Investiture Controversy, saw the growing opposition of the clergy to the local, lay, civil, and

increasingly, religious authority of the papacy. 

10 Under the Lateran Councils, the church sought to unify the various churches of the

Byzantine Empire and to bring them under the authority of the papacy. 

11 These changes in Enricus's practice and host muniments, see Procopio, 1593.