

Introduction

Powerful fragments: Ruin, relics, *spolia*¹

The Ruin

An influx of sensuality can come at the least expected places in Old English literature. For instance, at the end of a short Exeter Book lyric now titled *The Ruin*, the speaker who has just brought to life an entire dilapidated city with walls, roofs, gates, and buildings, imagines a bathhouse:

Stanhofu stodaŋ, stream hate wearp
widaŋ wylme; weal eall befeŋg
beorhtaŋ bosme, þær þa baþu wæron,
hat on hreþre. Ðæt wæs hyðelic.

Leton þonne geotan [.....]
ofer harne stan hate streamas
un[.....

] þþæt hringmere hate [.....

.....] þær þa baþu wæron.

Þonne is [.....

.....]re; þæt is cynelic þing,
huse [.....] burg [.....] (38–49)²

[Stone houses stood; water gave off heat in a great wave. The wall enclosed everything in its bright breast, hot in its embrace (the place) where the baths were. That was as it should be. Then they let flow ... the hot streams over the grey stone ... un... into the ring-shaped pool. Hot ... (the place) where the baths were. Then is ... that is a proper/noble thing, the house ... the city.]

Two elements commonly emerge in critical discussions of this text: the strong illusion of specificity, and the bringing together of the past and present of the poem with a suggestion of its future. The author's attention to detail, down to the original binding agent for the wall, the loops of wire that with time gave way to congealed clay (19), has sent scholars in search of the actual place that supposedly

inspired the lyric. Many have suggested the Roman ruins at Bath; some prefer Hadrian's Wall; still others argue for Chester.³ But no single *locus* needs to be discovered as the setting for *The Ruin*; the poem reaches, through all its carefully observed ephemera, towards something larger. Bruce Mitchell and Fred Robinson call the work 'a composite of various Roman ruins that the poet had seen'.⁴ Alan Renoir sees the alternating scenes as 'a series of tableaux rather than a narrative or philosophical monologue'.⁵

In addition to the quick succession of particulars in this passage, from the wall to the inside of the building to the circular pool, there is temporal switching. The past tense predominates. But, near the end, two instances of the present tense appear; the exclamation 'þæt is cynelic þing' [that is a proper/noble (lit., kingly) thing] seems to echo the preceding appreciation of the baths, 'Ðæt wæs hyðelic' [that was as it should be (lit., that was convenient)]. In an earlier tableau, the speaker familiarises the ruin by peopling it in his imagination with a multitude of men in war-gear who gaze at their material belongings. Those treasures, lovingly enumerated, accord better with the world of the vernacular epic such as *Beowulf* than with the urban pleasures of an outlying Roman province: the men look 'on sinc, on sylfor, on searogimmas, / on ead, on æht, on eorcanstan, / on þas beorhtan burg bradan rices' [at (their) treasure, at silver, at expertly wrought gems, at riches, at possessions, at precious stones, at this bright citadel of the broad realm] (34–7). Imagining the individuals who came before him, the poet transforms them into figures from a literary convention closer to him in time. Yet in positioning himself as one who comes after them, he becomes 'not only a witness to a heroic past, but ... also its survivor'.⁶ The ruin is, simultaneously, his and our own past, present, and future.⁷

Different temporal and spatial layers come into being through a particular imaginative intersection of the human, artefactual, elemental, and cosmic that, I will argue, characterises the artistic endeavour in Anglo-Saxon poetry and often signals meta-poetic reflection within that corpus. Artefacts appearing at that intersection are often *spolia*, reused fragments of past material culture, which I discuss in some detail later in this introduction, or akin to it. The inanimate acquires not only life but also invigorating mobility from being touched by the animate; it then energises the text which it inhabits before leaving it behind, and enables the text to move its focus from a bounded, concrete object (itself) to a region far outwards, to jump from the micro- to the macro-level. At the conclusion of *The Ruin*, at least in the state in which it survives, we catch

glimpses of such a dynamic. The observer depicts the baths in admiring, or at least non-negative terms.⁸ From his contemplation of the materials, stones that retain their colours, he imagines gushing, streaming hot water. These images, rather than seeming strange and perverse for an Anglo-Saxon (whose people did not share the communal bathing culture of the Romans⁹), bring about sensations of warmth, bodily comfort that can connect, however briefly and intermittently, embodied human beings across time. The walls protect all in their bright embrace, while the baths, hot to their very core, fulfil their pleasant purpose. Architectural features unite with bodies and elements. Everything is proper, fitting, even royal (*hyðelic* has the first two meanings, *cynelic* all of them). Here the author imprints the image of the circle onto the text both with the wonderfully specific *hringmere* [ring-pool], and the repeated plainest of statements '(the place) where the baths were'. Gaston Bachelard's insight comes to mind that 'images of *full roundness* help us to collect ourselves, permit us to confer an initial constitution on ourselves, and to confirm our being intimately, inside'.¹⁰ After a quick series of heated images internalised and shored against ruin, we encounter two simple words (admittedly only after the ravages of time on the manuscript), *hus*, *burh*, waiting to be filled with future imaginings.

Despite the distance that separates them from later observers, evocative objects, remnants from other times and places, bring with themselves an indication of their use. They allow for historicisation and, at the same time, a more anachronistic use: in the case of *The Ruin*, for a reconstruction of a Roman bath, and for a projection of an Anglo-Saxon literary staple, the treasure hall. That the early medieval English could identify and employ certain aspects of hermeneutically charged material culture in their verse-making testifies to a high level of consciousness about the artful interweaving of people and things in general, and the place of the Other in that interweaving in particular. It also shows some measure of awareness that in time their own work will become fragmented and in need of creative refurbishing, like a ruin.

In this monograph I investigate artefacts handled and animated by the human and/or the divine in seven Old English riddles (numbered 14, 20, 29, 40, 49, 60, and 95)¹¹ and four longer poems (three biblical: *Exodus*, *Andreas*, and *Judith*, and one not: *Beowulf*). These artefacts create a particular force in the texts, but do not remain in sight for long, thus preserving the mystery enveloping them. These objects, usually shaped like and named after a

recognisable, contained, metonymic item, such as a horn, a pillar, a head, a bed, or a sword, break out of the narrative in order to connect it to other worlds. They occur in image clusters with individuals or enclosures, at crucial junctures in the story, at a turning point or near the end. When there exist sources or analogues in three out of four of the longer poems and at least one enigma that I discuss, comparison reveals that the artefacts in the Anglo-Saxon versions receive much more attention. Investigating the role and place of evocative objects might, therefore, provide clues towards recovery of one important aspect of Old English poetics. This book, moreover, intends to reveal some ways in which the sense of affinity and competition could develop between literary artists and their visual-arts colleagues. On an even larger level, it will become clear that art for the Anglo-Saxons, whether textual or plastic, represents an encounter of a person, or a group of people, not with an abstraction but with a thing.

I begin this book with a consideration of several Exeter Riddles that take on *spolia* and accumulation in different ways. My goal there is to prepare the reader for later invocations of the enigmatic, in the longer poems. The riddles could provide a guide for reading other verse while remaining quite distinct from the epics, in terms of their form, tone, and sheer diversity and rarity of their subject matter. I examine *Exodus*, *Andreas*, and *Judith* because they are all versions of biblical or apocryphal narratives, and they are stylistically distinct from each other and other poems. All three of them foreground the issue of translation, in its literal sense of carrying across and also more broadly. They thus show a range of possibilities for an Old English poetics rooted in its own time and language, but extending to the wider world, spatially and temporarily. These texts all deal with the past, acts of war, and cataclysmic changes. They include fragments in motion, objects come to life, and bodies turned to objects. While other poems sometimes have similar motifs, the ones I have chosen stand apart from the extant corpus more explicitly. For instance, these poems present such images in clusters (*burh*-woman-pillar; sculpture-pillar; bed-head-*burh*). *Exodus*, *Andreas*, and *Judith* all weave back and forth between references to heroic individuals and masses of people (the Israelites, the pre- and post-Conversion Mermedonians) that attempt to incorporate them, the way an artist would try to make a *spolium* fit into its surroundings. *Beowulf* always stands apart among the surviving Old English poetry, even though the scholarship often treats it as paradigmatic. It accumulates, even hoards, references to war plunder. *Beowulf*

comes at the end because it follows the thematic and structural patterns described above, but, unlike the religious verse in *Borrowed Objects*, has a cloud of uncertainty hanging over it: the narrator cannot say what happens to his heroic pagan characters after death. The order of *Exodus* and *Andreas* in the book is mostly chronological according to the events depicted therein, while *Judith* comes before *Beowulf* to underline their proximity in the manuscript and their protagonists' more problematic status than Moses or Andrew. I argue that the riddles, *Exodus*, *Andreas*, *Judith*, and *Beowulf* show that the Anglo-Saxon vernacular verse, often considered conventional and doctrinally unswerving, not only allows for great variation and divergence, but also foregrounds and thinks deeply about them.

Concepts of 'art' in Old English

The question of what the Anglo-Saxons thought about art is still open. No extensive treatise on visual arts survives from early medieval Britain. Paul Szarmach considers a few passages from St Augustine, Gregory, and Bede, but none of them offers specific information. The most they do is to allow for some use of images in churches, to help the congregation recall biblical stories from memory or to encourage a simple typological exercise with juxtaposed pictures from the Old and New Testament.¹² In the first chapter of his book on pre-Conquest English art, C. R. Dodwell states with some frustration that '[n]o written material which relates to the Anglo-Saxon period has primary or even significant interest in art'. A search through a variety of materials, including chronicles, hagiographies, verse, legal and theological writings, and correspondence yields only a 'few references ... usually made *en passant*'.¹³ These references often give much less than a scholar might desire, and tend to express the object's splendour, value, or association with a particular, usually sacred personage.¹⁴ The artworks that survive from early medieval England indicate that people made, commissioned, appreciated, and used artefacts; they just did not write about them in ways recognisable to us. Catherine Karkov emphasises that our involvement with Anglo-Saxon art would not have appeared so alien to its creators. She writes that 'Anglo-Saxons themselves viewed works of art as existing within a continuing process of creation, recreation and changing meanings.'¹⁵ Elsewhere, Karkov notes that text and image flow into each other more in this period than any other time in the Middle Ages, moving beyond the illuminated manuscript

to other kinds of material culture, including even buildings.¹⁶ If what we consider distinct artistic expressions are so thoroughly integrated, perhaps we can look to poetry for oblique insight on other branches of art. Benjamin C. Tilghman turns to the Exeter Riddles with their persistent suggestion of ultimate obscurity of all matter to conclude that modern art historians studying Anglo-Saxon England are not at fault for being baffled: 'the continuing elusiveness of our objects of study comes not from our inability to master them, but from their innate resistance to disclosure'.¹⁷ A lack of a larger, unified, explicit meta-discourse on art enables rather than prevents poets from engaging with the topic in creative, complex, and multifold ways.

Many possibilities that the Anglo-Saxons imagined art to afford come through lexicographic evidence, another extant source for a recovery of their attitudes. Searching through *A Thesaurus of Old English* for 'art' words, one encounters the term *cræft* in its several incarnations: *acræftan*, 'to think out/up, devise, design'; *leoþcræft*, *scopcræft*, *wordcræft*, 'art of poetry'; *cræft(e)lic*, 'skilful, skilled'; *cræftig*, 'crafty, cunning, skilful, artful'; *(ge)cræftan*, 'to construct, form, fashion'.¹⁸ The *Dictionary of Old English* remarks, before giving their definitions:

The most frequent Latin equivalent of *cræft* is *ars*, yet neither 'craft' nor 'art' adequately conveys the wide range of meanings of *cræft*. 'Skill' may be the single most useful translation for *cræft*, but the senses of the word reach out to 'strength,' 'resources,' 'virtue' and other meanings in such a way that it is often not possible to assign an occurrence in one sense in [Modern English] without arbitrariness and the attendant loss of semantic richness.¹⁹

Some idea of the complex attitude towards art and the artificial can be gleaned from this 'semantic richness'. The word can have neutral ('strength, power, might'), negative ('vice'; 'a trick; stratagem, wile'), or positive implications ('skill, ability, dexterity, facility [physical]'). In compounds it joins with *woruld*, to form *woruldcræftig*, 'Skilled in secular arts', and *sundor* and *wundur* to make *sundor-* and *wundurcræftlice*, 'with special/wondrous skill'.²⁰ The semantic range of *cræft* suggests that the Anglo-Saxons thought of skill, ability for good or evil, potency, craft, and art as being so related that they could be expressed by the same word. They used the term for divine ('God's skill in creating and maintaining the world'), human ('trade, work, livelihood'), and demonic (*deofles/feondes cræft*, 'devil's cunning') endeavours. Danger, excitement, and potential – these

are some responses to artful speech or creation in general, and to the enchanted artefact in particular.²¹

Another word, the adjective *wraetlic*, ‘wondrous, awe-inspiring’ helps us uncover a certain characteristic Anglo-Saxon aesthetic sensibility. Peter Ramey dedicates an entire essay to the term.²² He concludes by listing and discussing the four elements that he discovers the word implies: materiality, intricacy, singularity, and mystery. All four elements work well with the objects considered in *Borrowed Objects*, and the first and last components illustrate the paradox which I trace throughout, of something concrete but elusive, clear yet perplexing. With reference to Hans Robert Jauss’s theory of reception, Ramey discusses how *wraetlic* functions as a force in the Exeter Riddles, a collection of poems conscious of their craft. A textual artefact contains within itself not only that which the maker places in it, but also that which the viewer or reader derives from it; in other words, *wraetlic* as a quality results from authorial intention and audience reception.²³ This mutually constitutive process closely resembles the effect that people and things have on each other, as discussed in recent theory. Such an effect requires strenuous cogitation on the part of humans, which brings about pleasure as well as a sense of danger, according to Irina Dumitrescu. Dumitrescu’s preferred translations of *wraetlic* include ‘astonishing’, ‘striking’, ‘staggering’, ‘stupefying’, and simply ‘awful’. ‘[A] mixture of horror and admiration that provokes reflection’, *wraetlic* implies an ongoing challenge, an intense force that can turn either way.²⁴

Theories of things

By exploring the forms of interaction between people and objects in Old English verse, I hope not only to illuminate one overlooked aspect of an old, incompletely theorised poetics, but also to make a contribution to the emergent body of criticism focusing on materiality. In the first decade of the new millennium, as various theories beginning with thing theory were gaining ground, scholars turned mostly to later artistic expression. More recently, Anglo-Saxon literature (especially *Beowulf*) and visual art have had their turn, and I will briefly discuss two instances of this response later in this section.

Several general conclusions by various critics interested in objects apply well to the depiction of artefacts within Old English verse. In her essay ‘What Makes an Object Evocative?’ Sherry Turkle discusses how objects help people ‘by bringing the world within’.

From a very early age, humans enrich and give expression to both their emotional and intellectual lives by focusing on toys. 'Far from being silent companions', Turkle writes, 'objects infuse learning with libido.'²⁵ One can recall the sensuous ending of *The Ruin*, where fragments of a Roman bathhouse inspire visions of corporeal pleasure in the Anglo-Saxon poet, leading him to a fairly faithful recovery of a building alien to his own culture. But we need not take 'libido' in strictly limited, psychoanalytic terms. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton prefer to see a Nuer warrior's close attachment to his spear and a twentieth-century Westerner's to his car not as 'a libidinal, phallic fixation', but rather as 'an expression of Eros in the broadest sense, a need to demonstrate that one is alive, that one matters, that one makes a difference in the world'.²⁶ The manipulation of artefacts by Anglo-Saxon heroes and their poets has a very similar effect. Consolation to the Israelites in *Exodus* and *Judith*, and to Andrew and the Mermedonians in *Andreas*, arrives from the things that burst in from the past or a different place, or both. In *Beowulf*, that consolation is mixed with intimations of destruction, and loss and survival come together in the final image of the hoard-turned-barrow. By means of an instrument, an agent leaves a trace on the world, but also, through this process, the instrument becomes a part of the agent. The horn in Riddle 14 helps bring together the aristocratic world of art-making, feasting, and warfare that had removed it from a bovine's head. '[A]ll sentient beings', Ian Hodder reminds us, 'depend on things to bring their sentience into being', and are 'entangled' with each other.²⁷

The intimate association of individuals with objects has great implications for human imagination. While for ethical and philosophical reasons the separation of thing and people within a society is tantamount, in art rigid lines need not be drawn; here, invocation of one often brings the other to the fore. Moreover, artefacts often ensure survival of the trace of the human because they have much longer temporalities. Bruno Latour claims that we read persons in terms of objects, and vice versa: 'Consider humans, and you are by that very act interested in things. Bring your attention to bear on hard things, and see them become gentle, soft or human. Turn your attention to humans, and see them become electric circuits, automatic gears or softwares.'²⁸ Latour's examples come from more recent technological discoveries (electricity, machines, computers), but they might also include robots, or animated sculptures, like the one in *Andreas*. Latour goes so far as to state that the modern period created the distinction between 'inanimate object and human

subjects', falsifying the world in which 'quasi-objects' and 'quasi-subjects' proliferate.²⁹ Early medieval literature might provide an abundant hunting ground for such hybrids, or at least set us to talking around and about them. Lorraine Daston finds 'things' so central to human linguistic production that she declares that '[w]ithout things, we would stop talking'.³⁰ Approximately one half of the Exeter Riddles, about forty-six in number, feature non-human speakers, out of which fifteen challenge the listener or reader to say what they are called ('saga hwæt ic hatte'), thus asking for more speech.³¹

The anthropologist Carl Knappett discusses twentieth-century French stoneware that moves from an obsolete mundane commodity to a sought-after antique item to articulate the existence of 'different registers of objecthood' into and out of which artefacts move. The discussion takes him to three important conclusions:

to see the status of objects as transitory rather than fixed; to imagine that the status of objects relies not only on the objects themselves but on the manner of their articulation within human-nonhuman networks; and to conceive of objects as leading lives that may be eventful and multiphased.³²

The pillar in *Andreas* does not move from its place, but its status definitely changes. Even though it is, at the moment when the apostle meets it, one of the many architectural supports in a Mermedonian prison, St Andrew recognises its past incarnation as the tablet on which God wrote the Ten Commandments. Its role as a vessel for the cleansing flood brings up questions of its future use. It continues to live, as does the angel-shaped sculpture from earlier in the narrative. Knappett argues that objects move easily on a continuum between the mundane and the magical, and that human engagement with either kind demonstrates that mind and cognition do not remain limited to the brain, but 'seep out into the body and the world'.³³ In his own work on twentieth-century French stoneware and ancient Minoan drinking vessels, Knappett draws on the contiguity of the objects he studies, in order to discover their resonance; he investigates with what other objects they were found, and near what spaces. A carinated cup, for instance, may 'nest' in a particular room, which is in a particular building, which is in a particular region.³⁴ Thinking-with-objects necessarily involves the surrounding environment, architectural, geographical, and cosmic. The artefacts I am interested in draw their power and associations from their backgrounds, even while they break out of

them. The narrators of the Exeter Riddles insist on the subjects' connection to the larger material context, whether of forging and recycling of swords, manuscript production, or the entire cosmos, while distracting us sufficiently to prevent an easy answer. Though the biblical poems do not envision the exact past or future of these objects, they acknowledge that they were activated before and will be again, somewhere outside the text, as the text itself would be. *Beowulf* works somewhat differently, since it reveals the past and future of a number of its important treasures, but it often suggests further depth or further continuation, which it cannot address because they are veiled in mystery.

Scholars have recently turned to the body of twenty-first-century theory dealing with materiality to illuminate how certain enigmatic things operate in *Beowulf*. James Paz draws our attention to 'riddle-like things' (both objects like the famed swords and creatures treated as such like Grendel's mother) to demonstrate that artefacts commonly thwart the attempts of people to place them within an interpretative frame;³⁵ in this dynamic lies their frustrating usefulness. Aaron Hostetter acknowledges Paz's 'sense of material recalcitrance', but prefers to look at moments of productive interaction between human characters and material culture.³⁶ He employs Jane Bennett's notion of 'thing-power' to explain the draw enigmatic objects have on characters of *Beowulf*. Though he emphasises the interdependence of the two – people create things, which influence people who then have to maintain them – Hostetter still notes that a certain excess or surplus resides in artefacts 'that exceeds the human social activity that constitutes the commodity'.³⁷ In *Borrowed Objects* I am interested precisely in this central paradox, whereby physical objects that both depend on and constitute their creators and users refuse full incorporation, whether textual or architectural. This phenomenon further ensures their survival and relevance: mysteries keep their currency until they are satisfactorily solved. Due to their resistance and flexibility alike, the evocative artefacts play a crucial role not only for Anglo-Saxon poetry but also for its implicit poetics.

Relics

If these theoretical discussions still seem removed from the Middle Ages, one well-known medieval category exists that blends the animate and the inanimate; appeals to the elemental and the cosmic;

brings together the near and the far; and incites discussions of origins and purpose of especially marked material culture. Relics are small, compact fragments, either body parts belonging to Christ or a saint, or objects owned or touched by them, ‘around which boundless associations clustered’. They serve as visual proofs of spiritual triumph over time and place, and thus over human mortality.³⁸ Patrick Geary, having remarked that relics belong to ‘that category ... of objects that are both persons and things’, invents the word ‘person-objects’ to refer to them.³⁹ The spiritual certainty surrounding a martyr’s nail, his sandals, or cup does not extend to an animated sculpture of an angel or a tyrant’s decapitated head; one type of fragment inhabits a stable sacred context for eternity, while the other seems only momentarily tamed. However, the transfer of immense power occurs in both types along spatial lines. ‘Previously peripheral region[s]’, including Central Europe and Anglo-Saxon England, show their increased political significance by bringing into their midst relics from the Mediterranean lands, like Italy.⁴⁰ But, by virtue of already being Christian, such relics need not be subjugated or wrestled with in the same way that other numinous artefacts do. Peter Brown writes that ‘[b]ehind every relic that was newly installed in its shrine throughout the Mediterranean, there had to lie some precise gesture of good will and solidarity’. ‘Good will and solidarity’ are often missing, or complicated, in the things discussed in *Borrowed Objects*, as is the precision. Unlike the bits or effects of holy persons, evocative objects in the riddles of the plunder cluster, *Exodus*, *Andreas*, *Judith*, and *Beowulf* do not inspire extended accounts of their ‘discovery, translation, and installation’;⁴¹ like the Old English texts that house them, they incorporate clarity and obscurity. Finally, if relics serve as ‘instruments of approach in communicating with the godhead’,⁴² our artefacts both inspire and question communication, without always involving the divine.

When a relic emerges in an Anglo-Saxon poem, the author positions it explicitly with regard to its past, present, and future, similarly to the way that *The Ruin* poet does the ruin, as we have seen earlier in this introduction. *The Dream of the Rood*, a work that survives, like *Andreas*, only in the late tenth-century Vercelli Book, is known for being the first extended dream-vision in the Anglophone tradition. It is also famous for repeating – or providing – parts of the early eighth-century Northumbrian Ruthwell Cross. The text features the voice of the narrator-visionary alongside that

of his envisioned object, the True Cross in its many manifestations. The latter speaks of its origins thus:

Ongan þa word sprecan wudu selesta:
 'þæt wæs geara iu, (ic þæt gyta geman),
 þæt ic wæs aheawen holtes on ende,
 astyred of stefne minum. Genaman me ðær strange feondas,
 geworhton him þær to wæfersyne, heton me heora wergas hebban.
 Bæron me ðær beornas on eaxlum, oððæt hie me on beorg asetton,
 gefæstnodon me þær feondas genoge.' (27–33)⁴³
 [Then the most chosen of wood began to speak these words: 'It was long ago (I still remember it) when I was cut down at the edge of the forest, pulled from my root. Strong enemies took me from there, put me on display for themselves, ordered me to lift up their outlaws (or: they ordered their outlaws to lift me up).⁴⁴ Men carried me on their shoulders until they set me down on a hill. So many foes fastened me there.']

The Rood gives an account of the Crucifixion, Christ's removal from the Cross, and his entombment. Then it relates how men cut it down, buried it and its colleagues (the two crosses of the thieves crucified with Jesus) in a deep pit, and how, later, 'Dryhtnes þegnas, / freondas gefrunon, [a missing line] / gyredon me golde ond seolfre' [the Lord's thanes, his friends found out (where I was), they adorned me with gold and silver] (75–7). Not only do we learn the entire story – the one that we presumably already know, since the Cross expects the audience to understand a hint like 'God's friends'⁴⁵ – but we also hear it from the artefact itself. The artwork provides its own caption, or, to use an apt medieval term, its own *titulus*.⁴⁶ Szarmach singles out *The Dream of the Rood* as an unusual case of Anglo-Saxon ekphrasis because it describes more than Bede and Gregory could theorise about uses of art: the typically un-described, aesthetically appealing details of the artefact's physical appearance and the emotional reaction of the viewer. Furthermore, *The Dream of the Rood* in Szarmach's estimation moves beyond what the poets of *Andreas* and *Beowulf* could offer with their meditations on the animated sculpture and the inscribed giant-made hilt, respectively. His conclusion is suggestive: 'Ultimately, this paper suggests the triumph of art over criticism or, more sharply, ekphrasis and the experience of the verbal description of the visual over the discursive formulation of any particular ekphrastic moment.'⁴⁷

The wholeness and groundedness of the vision presented in and by the Rood cannot be paralleled in textual moments of exhibited

artworks in the Exeter Riddles, *Exodus*, *Andreas*, *Judith*, and *Beowulf*, and not merely because the coherent, well-known narrative does not exist for each case of artefactual manipulation in Old English verse. *The Ruin* teasingly invites comparisons with existing Roman ruins in Britain, and *The Dream of the Rood* interacts in some inter-media way with the objects we have at hand, the Ruthwell Cross and the eleventh-century silver reliquary called the Brussels Cross.⁴⁸ On the contrary, no real fragment could be retrieved, at this or probably any future point, that corresponds to the bookcase/oven of Riddle 49, the shape-shifting pillar in *Exodus*, the angel-sculpture in *Andreas*, or the golden net in *Judith*. The things that speak and are spoken about in the short vernacular enigmas typically do not allude to a specific item of material culture but to concepts more generally, sometimes even words covering more than one particular referent.⁴⁹ The sheer number of artefacts mentioned in *Beowulf* has led many scholars to find equivalents in the early Germanic archaeological record, which is an understandable but problematic endeavour; more careful analyses of material culture in the poem by Roberta Frank and Emily Thornbury demonstrate a greater adherence to imagination and blending of various material contexts.⁵⁰ In working with evocative objects, three different Anglo-Saxon biblical poems seek to distance the specific-visual from the textual while, at the same time, taking advantage of the specific charge of physical artefacts that combine the elemental and the cosmic, the concrete and the abstract. *Beowulf* reproduces the same dynamic, but with a larger number of things that it displays, hoards, and buries out of sight. The riddles in their sheer diversity combine these two approaches.

The fleeting nature of the image, coupled with its materiality, comes up both in the depiction of the Rood and the less contextualised objects from the poems I discuss in subsequent chapters. We need only recall the resplendent scene of the Cross changing ‘wædum ond bleom’ [garments and colours], being, one moment, ‘mid wætan bestemed, / beswyled mid swates gange’ [wet with moisture, drenched with blood-flow], and the next, ‘mid since / gegyrwed’ [adorned with treasure] (22–3). But a crucial difference emerges, as well. Chaganti argues that the object in the poem moves between the two poles represented, respectively, by the Brussels Cross and the Ruthwell Cross: a small, portable keepsake versus a large, fixed monument; private reading versus a more communal engagement. *The Dream of the Rood* synthesises ‘the inscriptional and performative modes elucidated in its metal

and stone manifestations'.⁵¹ The artefacts that I shall discuss do not compare to the Brussels Cross, the Ruthwell Cross, or the Rood in the effect they have on the viewers. They urge contemplation of more intimate, mysterious, and fleeting uses of art rather than public, illuminated, and fixed. They may manifest themselves in front of groups of people, but they are manipulated by a special individual (a craftsperson, Moses, God, St Andrew, Beowulf, Judith); they are exhibited (at a feast; on the city streets; on the road to Canaan; in an uncovered hoard and as they burn in a funeral pyre; on the edge between the sea, sky, and earth), but they easily vanish from our view.

One similarity between the Cross in *The Dream of the Rood* and various instances of evocative objects in Old English verse is that they do what ekphrasis, 'the verbal representation of the visual',⁵² usually does: show the desire of the verbal to incorporate and extend the visual. Putting aside the question of whether Anglo-Saxon texts even provide examples of the phenomenon considered in pre- and post-medieval rhetoric as ekphrasis, we can turn to theories developed to explain more conventional cases of the figure to illuminate Old English poetics, even if only to provide contrast. In her book on *The Stone Sleeper* by Mak Dizdar, a twentieth-century Bosnian poet, Adijata Ibrišimović-Šabić gives the definition of the third type of ekphrasis following Maria Rubins, a Russian literary scholar of nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry. According to Ibrišimović-Šabić, in the psychological or expressive ekphrasis, 'the artefact itself does not receive the focus of attention as much as the poet's experience of the given object ... Ekphrases of this type are actually a modified text, not a text that imitates but one that reworks creatively ...'⁵³ The critic then discusses a particular poem as an example of the expressive ekphrasis, in order to conclude that 'it is only with words, with speech that one can completely reveal, supplement, or adequately communicate the meaning and sense of an artwork'. 'Without mediation of the words', Ibrišimović-Šabić continues, 'the medieval tombstone [as depicted by Dizdar's text] would become mute and unnecessary, alien and incomprehensible to a modern person', and potentially cause the past to be forgotten.⁵⁴ We cannot claim the same for the Cross, which does not lose its currency with time, and it would be challenging to argue for individualised poetic experience of a non-existent artefact in entirely anonymous Old English works. Still, the ideas of reworking the visual to enrich a text and of preserving the past by speaking around a fraught and incomplete object

from it are extremely helpful in reading poetry from pre-Conquest England.

Spolia

Relics are not the only examples of early medieval intellectual and artistic fascination with significant artefacts that complicate the boundary between temporal layers, elements, global and local, textual and visual, and animate and inanimate forces. An entire discourse, permeating religious, political, and artistic culture, arises around the idea of *spolia* in the Middle Ages. The earliest meaning of *spolium*, ‘the skin or hide stripped off an animal’, already shows the melding of bodies and things. From there, the word becomes generalised as ‘the spoils of war’, possessions taken from an enemy for reuse by the vanquishing force.⁵⁵ In the language of art history, *spolia* refer to artefacts in a new, physical context, especially in a manner that highlights their Otherness, their difference. For instance, one could take a capital from an antique pillar and put it to the same structural use in a post-antique building, or turn it into a receptacle for holy water; in either case, the capital stands out as an object from the past which carries a particular charge despite and because of its new position.⁵⁶ Foregrounding questions of continuity and discontinuity, this practice has a long history. The earliest examples of architectural *spolia* in Greece occur in the foundations of the Acropolis, while some of the latest, in St Photeine in the Peloponnesus, appear in a church dating from 1970.⁵⁷ The Roman theatre in the centre of Apt (the south of France) decreased in size over the ages, as it provided materials for the building of the Apt Cathedral in the twelfth century in addition to its expansion between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, until not a trace of the theatre remained in 1870.⁵⁸

While pre-sixteenth century texts never employ the term *spolia*, but rather speak of specific artefacts,⁵⁹ the art-historical practice of spoliation was widespread throughout the Middle Ages, from after the fall of Rome (that is, the conventional end of the classical period), to the time of the Anglo-Saxons in England, and beyond. One can follow the power shifts from the south to the north of Europe by looking at paradigmatic instances of this practice. The first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine, took the ideological manipulation of material fragments belonging to his predecessors to a new level in the process of building his triumphal arch and the Lateran Basilica.⁶⁰ As the seat of power moved from Rome

northwards, grand imperial statements of this type followed. One ruler attempted to upstage another. Charles the Great had pillars and marble removed from Rome and Ravenna to uphold and adorn his chapter at Aachen; he also took along the equestrian statue of Theodoric. The long-distance transportation of construction materials from Theodoric's Italian palace to Charlemagne's residence at Ingelheim struck the latter emperor's contemporaries as such an unprecedented move that it immediately became 'stylized into a literary topos'.⁶¹ Artefacts wrenched from their past contexts contributed to the larger project of *renovatio*, later dubbed the Carolingian Renaissance, which had as its goal nothing less than the creation of 'a new Athens ... in France' in the words of Charlemagne's *magister* the Englishman Alcuin.⁶² Transferring Rome to Aachen or turning France into a second Athens does more than appropriate the power of one's predecessors: it contests the status of a major contemporary rival, Byzantium, as the new Rome.⁶³ Ottonians, another people proximate to Anglo-Saxons, went a step further when they incorporated *spolia* from backgrounds other than Roman. In the so-called Egbert shrine, a jewelled reliquary from the late tenth century (also known as the portable altar of St Andrew), scholars have identified earlier 'Fatimid (?), Anglo-Saxon, Merovingian, and Byzantine' fragments. Such a conglomeration reveals a larger appetite for power, a *culminatio* rather than a *renovatio*.⁶⁴

The Anglo-Saxons who headed on pilgrimage to Rome certainly observed the results of spoliation on the Continent as they crossed the realms of the Carolingians and Ottonians; Nicholas Howe notes that, just as Paris was the capital of Europe before the Second World War, so Rome can be considered the capital of early medieval England.⁶⁵ But *spolia* are amply attested in the British Isles, as well. Tim Eaton's detailed study *Plundering the Past: Roman Stonework in Medieval Britain* reveals such items as a Roman altar from St Oswald-in-Lee (Northumberland) re-contextualised as a cross base at the marketplace in Corbridge, and a relief of a spear-wielding warrior (or god) from a Roman monument reused in Hexham Abbey.⁶⁶ One mid-seventh-century work, the church of St Peter from Bradwell-on-Sea (Essex) was compiled almost entirely of *spolia*.⁶⁷ Pagan figures did not necessarily suffer demotion in their new backgrounds. Richard Morris reports that a sculpture of a Roman *genius* graces the outside of the south wall of St John's church at Tockenham (Wiltshire); he speculates that this figure gained such prominence because of its resemblance to a saint or even Christ.⁶⁸ Ordinary Anglo-Saxons would not only encounter

re-contextualised fragments from late antiquity or the classical past in and outside churches and in other public places, such as the St Oswald-in-Lee marketplace with its Roman altar, but would also sometimes directly interact with them in the rural landscape. Human engagement with plundered artefacts did not always need to be grand, politically or aesthetically. Pre-Roman monoliths appeared as boundary-markers, way-markers, and gate-posts, and as such seem difficult to distinguish from more recent objects serving the same function.⁶⁹ Recycled Roman inscriptions, *spolia* that powerfully combine the textual with the visual, seem more upfront about their former identity. One inscription, on a Roman altar repurposed as a stoup at St Michael's church at Michaelchurch (Herefordshire) reads, 'DEO TRIDAM ... | BELLICUS DON | AURIT ARA[M]', 'To the god Tridam ... Bellicus presented this'. Another stoup from St Andrew's at Corbridge, features a Greek text, 'To Heracles of Tyre Diadora the priestess (set this up)'.⁷⁰ Educated Anglo-Saxons could read the Latin inscriptions at least.

Physical spoliation might have become a literary trope among some Anglo-Saxons. St Augustine⁷¹ writes in *On Christian Teaching* (Book Two, section 44ff.) that Christians should appropriate the learning of pagans that does not clash with their faith. To speak of this process, he focuses on a key scene from the Book of Exodus:

Like the treasures of the ancient Egyptians, who possessed not only idols and heavy burdens, which the people of Israel hated and shunned, but also vessels and ornaments of silver and gold, and clothes, which on leaving Egypt the people of Israel, in order to make better use of them, surreptitiously claimed for themselves (they did this not on their own authority but at God's command, and the Egyptians in their ignorance actually gave them the things of which they had made poor use) [Exod. 3:21–2, 12:35–6] – similarly all the branches of pagan learning contain not only false and superstitious fantasies and burdensome studies that involve unnecessary effort, which each of us must loathe and avoid as under Christ's guidance we abandon the company of pagans, but also studies for liberated minds which are more appropriate to the service of the truth, and some very useful moral instruction, as well as the various truths about monotheism to be found in their writers.⁷²

Augustine then compares this pagan scholarship again to the two precious metals, and likens the Egyptian clothing to 'human institutions' ('hominum quidem instituta') grudgingly allowed because they are indispensable for earthy life. He goes on to list several names, among them Cyprian, Hilary, and '[some] people

still alive, and countless Greek scholars' ('... vivis ... innumerabiles Graeci') as beneficiaries of Egyptian gold, silver, and textiles.⁷³ The enemies of the believers would not have willingly allowed them to take up their arts if they had known that those would be employed to overturn heathenism; therefore, Augustine claims, it is all the more important to engage in such a process to facilitate the triumph of the one true religion. Finally, Augustine summarises his argument by calling the act of spoliation in Exodus a foreshadowing of Christian appropriation of pagan knowledge. He quickly adds, 'I say this without prejudice to any other interpretation of equal or greater importance' ('Quod sine praeiudicio alterius aut paris aut melioris intelligentiae dixerim').⁷⁴ Throughout this discussion, Augustine suggests that some artefacts are not tarnished by association with previous users, yet he does not address the difficulty of separating the useful from the dangerous. He does mention the existence of other readings, although he does not explore them in any detail. The scene of spoliation in Exodus encourages a certain mystery alongside interpretive proliferation.

The transformation of pagan learning into Christian has another textual equivalent, with extremely corporeal images, in claiming classical and Old Testament figures for Christianity. When Augustine speaks of foreshadowing, he means typology, that is, taking certain events in the Hebrew scriptures as looking ahead to Christ, his deeds, and the actions of his followers. The phenomenon begins in the New Testament itself, where Moses's raising of the snake in the wilderness is interpreted as a type of Christ's 'exaltation on the cross' (John 3:14) and Jonah's three-day sojourn in the innards of the whale becomes Christ's three-day journey through death (Matthew 12:39 ff).⁷⁵ Reading the Old Testament with an eye to the New Dispensation allows for recuperation of much of the older narrative, which might otherwise appear strange or unacceptable to an orthodox Christian;⁷⁶ through typology unusual situations continue to live on in a new context.

Spoliation in the New Testament flows into the apocryphal story of the Harrowing of Hell, a theme popular in Anglo-Saxon England, 'widely adopted but never fully or consistently elaborated'. During the three days between his death and resurrection, Christ journeys into the underworld to release 'Adam, the patriarchs, and the prophets, including John the Baptist' from infernal suffering.⁷⁷ An Old English poetic account surviving in the Exeter Book mentions by name Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, Zachariah, and John the Baptist.⁷⁸ Several Anglo-Saxon homilies concern themselves with

the subject. There exists a prose translation as well as references to the theme in *Christ I and II*, *Phoenix*, Riddle 55, *Elene*, and *The Dream of the Rood*, just to list the most famous texts.⁷⁹ Additionally, at least one manuscript from pre-Conquest England visually depicts the Harrowing. The Tiberius Psalter, or MS, BL Cotton Tiberius C vi, from the mid-eleventh century, features the drawing of Jesus's rescue of Adam and Eve and other figures from Hell's mouth and crushing of the shackled devil with his foot; this image 'not only explicitly portrays the battle between Christ and Satan', but it also provides 'the visual key to the whole group of images' in the Psalter.⁸⁰ The Old English word for 'harrowing', *hergung*, covers a variety of meanings that connect Christ's attack with spoils of war, his action with its results: 'Harrying, harrowing, plundering, devastation, waging war, an irruption, incursion, invasion, a raid, plunder'.⁸¹ Indeed, medieval England (and elsewhere) envisioned Jesus 'both breaking down [the] gates [of hell] ... and robbing Satan of its spoils, the souls of the righteous'.⁸²

The centrality of plundering in Anglo-Saxon imagination becomes apparent in another common word for the practice. *Reafian*, 'to plunder', comes from *reofan*, 'to tear apart', deriving from the same Indo-European root as *rupture*; *reaf*, 'garment', also means 'spoils'.⁸³ Spoils signify something snatched away and employed to cover one's body. If we wished to find an approximate translation of *spolia*, broadly conceived, in Old English, we could turn to *laf*. Phyllis Portnoy has extensively argued that this polysemic noun plays a key role in Anglo-Saxon vernacular poetry, from biblical verse to Exeter Riddles.⁸⁴ She gives the following definitions: 'what is left', 'remnant', 'survivor', 'widow', 'treasure', 'heirloom', 'sword', and 'relic'. Like *spolia*, the concept applies to both terms of the human/non-human and live/dead binaries; it could refer to either side of a conflict, the attacker or the attacked, as well as to a male or female individual; it fuses creativity with deadliness (resembling in this aspect the idea of *wratlic*). Portnoy elegantly articulates the striking effectiveness of *laf*: 'the one word adds several layers to a simple subject'.⁸⁵ Reused artefacts, whether architectural or textual, contribute to and highlight compositeness of the larger structure that they are harnessed to uphold.

In late antique poetry, Christian and pagan, we see the metaphor of plundering the ancients alongside statements that the ancients plundered the ancients, as well. Prudentius creates his *Psychomachia* out of verses from Virgil in a technique called the *cento*, lifting verses wholesale and fitting them into a new text. Macrobius, in the sixth

book of his *Saturnalia*, uses the metaphor of ‘plundering a library’ to refer to the work of Roman *auctores* who helped themselves to ‘a deposit of texts, both Latin and Greek’.⁸⁶ Isidore of Seville, in his *Etymologies*, refers to Virgil’s being called a plunderer (*compilator*).⁸⁷ The metaphor comes to Anglo-Saxon England through the *grammatica* tradition. Bede knew that the Augustinian trope of plundering the Egyptians could be used to ‘defend the value of grammatical studies’, something he could have learnt from the *Anonymous ad Cuimmanum*, an eighth-century commentary to Donatus’s *Ars maior*.⁸⁸ Two centuries later, King Alfred speaks of writing as *compilatio* in his English translation of St Augustine’s *Soliloquies*. An author, he says, cuts down some remarkable trees from the woods, and transports the materials in wagons to the site where he can ‘windan manigne smicerne wah, and manig ænlic hus settan, and fegerne tun timbrian’ [‘weave many a beautiful wall and build many an excellent house and build a fine town’], in which one can live in comfort with one’s kin throughout the year, ‘swa swa ic nu ne gyt ne dyde’ [‘as I have not yet done’].⁸⁹ One last Anglo-Saxon example of material reuse and textual production appearing together is also associated with Alfred. The remarkable Alfred Jewel, which probably contains a repurposed Roman crystal, formed the top part of a pointer and could have ‘mirror[ed]’ *The Pastoral Care*, Gregory the Great’s canonical text that Alfred translated into his vernacular.⁹⁰

Drawing parallels between textual production and spoliation continues to our day. In conversation with the poet Robert Hass, Seamus Heaney discusses two types of translation: the raid, in which a poet-translator like Robert Lowell plunders various languages to ‘end up with booty that you call *Imitations*’, and the settlement, in which someone like Robert Fitzgerald ‘stayed with Homer’, or Heaney himself, who ‘settled with *Beowulf* and stayed with it, formed a kind of conjugal relation for years’.⁹¹ Another translator of *Beowulf*, Roy M. Liuzza, goes even further, comparing the structure of the poem to ‘an Anglo-Saxon church made from the salvaged stones of a Roman temple’.⁹² The scholar Haruko Momma speaks similarly when she likens an Old English poem to composite medieval architecture ‘whose construct has been repeatedly altered by renovations, additions, and demolitions’.⁹³ The ultimate source for Liuzza and Momma’s analogies may well be Tolkien’s allegory of a man who uses ancient stones found in an inherited field to build a tower from which he can ‘look out upon the sea’.⁹⁴

Both textual and architectural *spolia* contribute to the larger medieval aesthetic called *varietas* in Latin and *poikilia* in Greek

that delights in juxtaposed difference and richness of materials. For instance, ancient sculptures built into a wall of a Byzantine church ‘endowed it with variety (*poikilia*), prerequisite of any building of high repute in Byzantium’, which requires ‘surfaces ... [to] glitter and walls [to] gleam and an embroidery-like texture [to appear] in facades’.⁹⁵ *Varietas* pervades textuality, manifests itself in the ‘jeweled style’ of late antiquity, and finds its biblical justification in the multivocal modes of the psalms and the miraculous speaking of tongues in the story of the Pentecost.⁹⁶ In opposition to classical ideals of homogeneity, symmetry, and harmony in styles, this aesthetic champions heterogeneity, rupture, and mixing of styles, and, as a result, early medieval art moves away from a certain ‘corporeality and coherence’ to a new type of sensibility focused on the spiritual and mystical.⁹⁷ Maria Fabricius Hansen explains a significant effect of such a change: ‘This new mental habit contained an awareness of rhythm, punctuation, and intervals, of pauses and space, an awareness alien to the ancient Greek and Roman cultures.’⁹⁸ *Varietas* highlights gaps and breaks, marking a rearrangement of the pagan heritage and leaving spaces for contemplation of the divine. At the same time, it celebrates unity in multiplicity, the bewildering richness of God’s creation that comes from a single, all-powerful source.⁹⁹ It is a powerful, paradoxical dynamic, a result of coming together of Christianity and paganism, of Latin learning and ‘barbarian’ artists and authors. A certain affinity seems to exist between *varietas/poikilia* and later aesthetic developments in colonial and post-colonial contexts. Indigenous and colonial influences fuse to produce intricate, variegated new forms in literature, visual arts, music, and so on.¹⁰⁰ *Spolia* are useful as a conceptual framework for a number of reasons. Strategically recycled artefacts, textual and architectural, add depth and texture. They invoke, metonymically, different times and places; they break down the boundary between life and death; they carry enormous, nearly cosmic energy, often appearing at the intersection of various elements or under extreme weather conditions in poems under discussion in *Borrowed Objects*. They simultaneously suggest rupture and continuity, utter loss and palpable lingering presence.

Chapter summaries

The book opens with the first chapter dedicated to a selection of Exeter Riddles that deal with *spolia* or their effects. While their solutions are not always certain, they cover a wide swathe of the

Anglo-Saxon world that does not emerge in any other surviving poetic source. Participating in the larger Latinate textual tradition of riddles, yet distinct from them, these vernacular riddles speak of weather events, flora and fauna, everyday implements, writing utensils, and even sexual organs and activities. While they differ from the rest of the poems under consideration, they do illuminate the enigmatic force of fragmented artefacts in biblical verse and *Beowulf*. The riddles speak to each other; they often come in larger thematic clusters, sometimes in pairs and triads and oppositional groups. Like *spolia*, they gain their meaning and allure from juxtaposition, mystery, and elusiveness, and they contain multitudes in a small space. In this chapter, I identify a 'plunder cluster' within the collection, consisting of, at least, Riddles 14, 20, and 29, those with the proposed solutions of 'Horn', 'Sword', and 'Moon and Sun'. Then I proceed to four other riddles, numbered 49, 40, 60, and 95 ('Bookcase/Oven', 'Creation', 'Creation', 'Book'), that, like *Beowulf*, ponder accumulation. The selected Exeter Riddles begin to reveal traces of a sophisticated *ars poetica*, at once playful and deeply serious, that conceives of texts as remnants that paradoxically communicate while holding back.

In the second chapter, I look at the Old English *Exodus*. I begin with a sudden, enigmatic appearance that has puzzled the scholars, that of an African woman, who helps the Israelites divide the treasure stripped from the drowned Egyptian army. I frame this episode with the repeated figure of *burh* [city or enclosure] that follows Moses and his people in their journey, and the metamorphosing pillar of cloud, a biblical element largely expanded in Old English. Both iconic images exhibit *spolia*-like effects due to their specific relationship to space and time. Functioning at once as a memory of old cities and a premonition of future cities for the Israelites, the *burh* constantly changes and acquires new meanings. The pillar, on the other hand, functions as a fragment of the future, able to suggest on its own the larger protective structure of the Christian church. These three remarkable textual moments together provide the key to the work's *modus operandi*. *Exodus* seems to encourage both exegetical and political readings, as scholars have repeatedly shown, but it also produces an excess of meaning, indicating that something irreducibly strange always remains.

The third chapter concerns itself with *Andreas*, a poetic version of the apocryphal narrative about the Apostle Andrew's journey to Mermedonia, an island of cannibals, and his subsequent martyrdom

and conversion of Mermedonians. Two clear examples of architectural *spolia* emerge in *Andreas*. They are unique to the Old English poem, diverging greatly from its Latin and Greek analogues. In the first scene, Jesus animates an angel sculpture in a Jerusalem temple to manifest his divinity to the unbelievers. In the second passage, Andrew speaks to a stone pillar in his prison cell, causing it to issue a flood that drowns – and baptises – the violent Mermedonians. I argue that both artefacts come to life thanks to powerful figures, Jesus and Andrew, who function as the author's alter egos as they animate artefacts from the past. Their status as material fragments in search of a new integration fits with the larger pattern in *Andreas*. This pattern occurs twice more: the hero's bodily fragmentation caused by the Mermedonians, and the metatextual excursus in which the narrator admits to his method of presenting the material 'lytlum sticcum' [in little bits]. Far from reading *Andreas* as an incompetent poem, I argue that attending to *spolia* and other textual and physical fragments found in the text helps us uncover sophisticated, self-conscious poetics behind the work.

The fourth chapter focuses on *Judith*. This poem describes the eponymous Hebrew heroine's successful decapitation of the evil Assyrian king Holofernes. Holofernes's head provides a literal example of plunder. Unlike her biblical inspiration, Judith accepts the Assyrian's gore-smeared armour as an offering from her people. The irony of this instance of *spolia* increases because the woman whom Holofernes wishes to claim as his plunder in the end plunders him. Two sets of opposing methods surface regarding *spolia* and similar objects. Certain passages in *Judith* feature zooming out and quickening of the narrative pace, while in others zooming in and slower rhythm predominate. The narrative allows us neither to neglect the dangerous, seductive detail (often a type of *spolium*) nor to linger too long on it. The foreshortened narrative itself invites and resists appropriation through allegorisation, whether religious (as a Christian typological exercise) or political (as a statement about the eighth-century Viking attacks). I argue that *Judith* thus complicates two common, contrasting theoretical approaches to it: the psychoanalytical criticism emphasising the heroine's subversion and the exegetical interpretations that contain the protagonist and her actions within orthodox medieval belief.

Beowulf is the subject of the fifth chapter. Although the poem features too much plunder to fully enumerate, I look at several memorable and representative examples in which objects escape

human efforts to contain them. They include the torque that the Danish queen Wealhtheow gives to Beowulf, and the sword carried by a Dane but formerly belonging to a Heathobard that will bring about discord, according to Beowulf's prophecy. The chapter then turns to the hoard at the end of the poem. Acts of hoarding would seek to deactivate individual objects, but even so some of their previous change remains. The interplay between hoards and plunder, or the subsuming and the subsumed, highlights the paradox at the heart of *Beowulf*: a poignant, pervasive sense of loss seems to carry a material weight. Rather than arbitrate between positive (Germanic/heroic) and negative (Christian/spiritual) interpretations of use of treasure in the poem, I show the poet's ambivalence towards pagan material culture, which he can neither fully embrace nor condemn.

In the afterword, I bring together my texts, suggesting that the riddle might be added to the list of Martin Irvine's macrogenres that constitute early medieval literature (such as gloss, lexicon, compilation, encyclopedia, and library).¹⁰¹ I further argue that the *spolia* contribute to the larger Old English poetics of challenging and playful obliqueness, and prove the sophistication of Anglo-Saxon poets and their generosity in leaving gaps for their readers to fill. Finally, the afterword draws on the work of both medievalists and scholars working on more recent time periods to identify any transhistorical echoes.

The issue that relics and *spolia* dramatically put forward is the relationship of the specific to the general.¹⁰² What does the movement in and out of the narrative of a material object tell us about the world at large? The physical artefact that breaks out of the temporal and spatial boundaries inside a text urges the readers to estrange their own world, or the world of the text. Additionally, it encourages them to see that the object hints at another world above, alongside, before, beyond, within the new architectural or textual structure that houses it. The need in the medieval (and post-medieval) periods to move beyond the present moment, and to do so through animated and animating objects, signifies more than a shiver of aesthetic pleasure. Writing on relics, Sobin states that 'the quest – by the intermediary of bone, splinter, or effigy – [for] a dimension *past themselves*' can help people transcend 'the often dire circumstances of their day-to-day lives'.¹⁰³ A certain hope seems implied by this belief: the hope that some fragment of us, or the work of our hands – or, better, both blended together – would survive and be sufficient in recreation of the contours of our entire world, all that was lost with our death. Still, paradoxically, the fragment by its nature

would leave something out, creating a space, maybe even a ruin, to be filled pleasurably with future imaginings.

Notes

- 1 Parts of this chapter appeared, in different form, in Denis Ferhatović, 'Burh & Beam, Burning Bright: A Study in the Poetic Imagination of the Old English *Exodus*', *Neophilologus*, 94:3 (2010), 509–22; and 'Spolia-Inflected Poetics of the Old English *Andreas*', *Studies in Philology*, 111 (2013), 199–219.
- 2 I quote *The Ruin* according to George P. Krapp and Elliot V. Dobbie's edition of *The Exeter Book*, ASPR 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), pp. 227–9. Another reading of the last line is 'hu se ... burh' [how that city ...]. See *The Ruin* in Bernard J. Muir (ed.), *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), pp. 360–1. All translations from Old English are mine unless otherwise noted.
- 3 For specific references, see note 3 in Eileen Joy, 'On the Hither Side of Time: Tony Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* and the Old English *Ruin*', *Medieval Perspectives*, 19 (2005).
- 4 Bruce Mitchell and Fred Robinson, *A Guide to Old English: Fifth Edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 252.
- 5 Alain Renoir, 'The Old English *Ruin*: Contrastive Structure and Affective Impact', in Martin Green (ed.), *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1983), pp. 148–73, at 149.
- 6 Joy, 'On the Hither Side of Time', p. 11.
- 7 See Joshua Davies's discussion of the poem in his 'The Literary Languages of Old English: Words, Styles, Voices', in Clare Lees (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 257–77, esp. pp. 273–7.
- 8 Joy, 'On the Hither Side of Time', p. 8.
- 9 Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 48.
- 10 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 234. The italics are in the original.
- 11 While agreeing that the riddles are often not exhausted by a single solution, I accept the following solutions, respectively: 'Horn', 'Sword', 'Moon and Sun', 'Creation', 'Bookcase/Oven', 'Creation', and 'Book'. For more, see Chapter 1 below. I take the numbering from Krapp and Dobbie's edition, *The Exeter Book*, ASPR 3. Because of Craig Williamson's influential edition and commentary, from which I have benefited, I here give his numbering for the riddles under discussion, as well: 12, 18, 27, 38, 47, 64, 91. Craig Williamson (ed.), *The Old*

- English Riddles of the Exeter Book* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).
- 12 Paul Szarmach, 'The Dream of the Rood as Ekphrasis', in Alastair Minnis and Jane Roberts (eds), *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 267–88.
 - 13 C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 15–16.
 - 14 Ibid.
 - 15 Catherine Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), p. 9.
 - 16 Catherine Karkov, 'Art and Writing: Voice, Image, Object', in Clare A. Lees (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 73–98, at 73.
 - 17 Benjamin C. Tilghman, 'On the Enigmatic Nature of Things in Anglo-Saxon Art', *Different Visions: A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art*, 4 (2014), 1–43, at 9.
 - 18 s.v. *art* in Jane Roberts et al., *A Thesaurus of Old English*, vol. 1 (New York: Rodopi, 2000).
 - 19 *DOE*, s.v. *craft*.
 - 20 Ibid. for the examples of 'semantic richness'. The information about the *woruld*, *sundor*, and *wundor* constructions is taken from Roberts et al, *A Thesaurus*.
 - 21 For a thorough treatment of usage of *craft*, see Helen Price, 'Human and NonHuman in Anglo-Saxon and British Postwar Poetry: Reshaping Literary Ecology' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leeds, September 2013), pp. 54–82.
 - 22 Peter Ramey, 'The Riddle of Beauty: The Aesthetics of *Wrætlic* in Old English Verse', *Modern Philology*, 114 (2017), 457–81.
 - 23 Ibid., p. 467.
 - 24 Irina Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 128.
 - 25 Sherry Turkle, 'What Makes an Object Evocative?', in Sherry Turkle (ed.), *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2007), pp. 307–26, at 307 (within) and 309 (libido).
 - 26 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 27.
 - 27 Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), p. 9.
 - 28 Bruno Latour, 'The Berlin Key or How to Do Words with Things', in Paul M. Graves-Brown (ed.), *Matter, Materiality, and Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 10–21, at 20.
 - 29 Bill Brown, 'Thing Theory', in Bill Brown (ed.), *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 1–16, at 12.

- 30 Lorraine Daston, 'Introduction: Speechless', in Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004), pp. 9–24, at 9.
- 31 I use Wim Tigges's numbers. Wim Tigges, 'Snakes and Ladders: Ambiguity and Coherence in the Exeter Book Riddles and Maxims', in Henk Aersten and Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr (eds), *Companion to Old English Poetry* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Press, 1994), pp. 95–118, at 109. Craig Williamson calls the first-person category 'projective riddles', as they result from humans giving a description of non-human subjects in human terms (*The Old English Riddles*, p. 25).
- 32 Carl Knappett, *Thinking Through Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 118.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 138–9.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- 35 James Paz, *Nonhuman Voices in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 34.
- 36 Aaron Hostetter, 'Disruptive Things in *Beowulf*', *New Medieval Literatures*, 17 (2017), 34–61, at 37.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 38 Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 78. Brown writes about the late classical/early medieval period, but his assertion applies to later practices, too. See, for instance, Caroline Walker Bynum, who characterises the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Western Europe as 'a period in which the overcoming of partition and putrefaction – either through reunion of parts into a whole or through assertion of part *as part to be* the whole – was the image of paradise' (her italics). 'In Praise of Fragments: History in the Comic Mode', in Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 13.
- 39 Patrick Geary, 'Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 169–91. When he defines the category on page 169, Geary says that it is 'unusual in Western society', yet, on page 188, he explains that while relics, slaves, icons, regalia, and art qualify as 'objects of commerce', they look more like persons 'under other circumstances'.
- 40 Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, n. 17 on p. 163.
- 41 *Ibid.*, pp. 89 ('precise gesture'), 92 ('discovery...').
- 42 Gustaf Sobin, *Ladder of Shadows: Reflecting on Medieval Vestige in Provence and Languedoc* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 37.
- 43 I quote the text from Michael Swanton's edition, *The Dream of the Rood*, new edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996).

- 44 Swanton explains that ‘either *me* or *wergas* might be understood as the object of either *heton* or *hebban*. [The first possibility,] representing normal OE word order, accords well with the dramatic sense in *wæfersyn*’ (p. 116).
- 45 It refers to Constantine’s mother Helen and Cyriacus, whose efforts at uncovering the True Cross are told in another Old English poem, Cynewulf’s *Elene*.
- 46 Szarmach makes this point well: ‘[The Rood’s] narration becomes in effect its own *titulus*, describing what the dreamer is presumably perceiving as art (as if on the walls) and offering the more or less full *historia* that explains all that is seen.’ In a footnote, Szarmach gives evidence, from an article by Elizabeth C. Teviotdale, for *tituli* in Anglo-Saxon art, both Latin and vernacular (*The Dream of the Rood* as Ekphrasis’, p. 286). Importance of captions (*superscriptio, inscriptio*) becomes apparent in the story from *Libri Carolini*, in which two identical pictures receive a diametrically opposed treatment because one of them is labelled Venus, the other Mary. *Libri Carolini*, IV, 16 (PL 98, c.1219), quoted and translated in Władisław Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, II, *Medieval Aesthetics*, trans. R. M. Montgomery (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1970), p. 100.
- 47 Szarmach, ‘*The Dream of the Rood* as Ekphrasis’, p. 287.
- 48 For a fascinating look at interaction between stone, metal, and text in relation to these two physical artefacts and the lyric, see Seeta Chaganti, ‘Vestigial Signs: Inscription, Performance, and The Dream of the Rood’, *PMLA*, 125 (2010), 48–72. Chaganti summarises her argument thus: ‘Rather than construct a historical narrative linking these verse manifestations ... I shall ultimately read all three as containing vestiges of one another, each existing both inside and outside the time of the others’ (p. 51).
- 49 Mercedes Salvador-Bello, *Isidorean Perceptions of Order: The Exeter Book Riddles and Medieval Latin Enigmata* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2015), p. 328. The ‘polysemic term’ that Salvador-Bello mentions is *beam*, ‘tree, log, ship, and cross’, identified as such by Franco A. Blackburn, in reference to Riddle 30a.
- 50 Roberta Frank, ‘*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: The Odd Couple’, in Calvin B. Kendall and Peter S. Wells (eds), *Voyage to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 47–64; Emily V. Thornbury, ‘*Eald enta geweorc* and the Relics of Empire: Revisiting the Dragon’s Lair in *Beowulf*’, *Quaestio*, 1 (2000), 82–92.
- 51 Chaganti, ‘Vestigial Signs’, p. 60.
- 52 I borrow here Szarmach’s definition (*The Dream of the Rood* as Ekphrasis’, p. 267).
- 53 Adijata Ibrišimović-Šabić, ‘*Kameni spavač*’ *Maka Dizdara i ruska književna avangarda* [*Mak Dizdar’s ‘Stone Sleeper’ and the Russian Literary Avant-garde*] (Sarajevo: Slavistički komitet, 2010), p. 66. ‘Njegova glavna odlika sastoji se u tome da u centru pažnje više nije

- toliko sam umjetnički objekt, koliko pjesnikov doživljaj datog predmeta ... *Ekfrazisi* ovog tipa zapravo su modificirani tekst, tekst koji ne imitira, već stvaralački prerađuje ...' The translation is mine.
- 54 '... zaključak da se jedino riječju, govorom može do kraja razotkriti, dopuniti ili adekvatno prenijeti značenje i smisao nekog djela likovne umjetnosti. Bez posredništva riječi, stečak bi se pretvorio u nijemi i nepotrebn predmet, tuđ i nerazumljiv savremenom čovjeku, prijeteći zaboravom prošlosti' (p. 68).
- 55 Maria Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation: Prolegomena to an Understanding of Spolia in Early Christian Rome* (Rome: 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 2003), p. 14.
- 56 Arnold Esch, 'Spolien', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 51 (1969), 1–64, at 3.
- 57 Helen Saradi, 'The Use of Ancient Spolia in Byzantine Monuments: The Archaeological and Literary Evidence', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 3 (1997), 395–423, at 395 (the Acropolis) and 421 (St Photéine). Saradi notes that in present-day Greece and Turkey 'antique *spolia* are still used in some houses, churches, and monasteries, especially in the countryside' (Ibid., 419).
- 58 Sobin, *Ladder of Shadows*, p. 13.
- 59 Dale Kinney, 'The Concept of Spolia', in Conrad Rudolph (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 233–52, at 233.
- 60 Beat Brenk, 'Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology', *Dumbarton Oak Papers*, 41 (1987), pp. 103–9, at 105.
- 61 Ibid., p. 109.
- 62 Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 311; Esch, 'Spolien', pp. 50–1.
- 63 Esch describes the competitive cross-Mediterranean *spolia* shuffle wittily: 'Karl der Große und Aachen, die Spolie als Ausweis seiner Anspruch gegenüber Byzanz, die Spolie gleichsam ein "in Teilstücken transferiertes" Rom – Rom transferiert nach Aachen, Rom transferiert aber auch in die (geographische wie politische) Gegenrichtung, nach Byzanz, Byzanz wiederum in Teilstücken transferiert nach Venedig, wenn schon nicht (das bekannte, wenngleich apokryphe Projekt von etwa 1220) das ganze Venedig transferiert nach Byzanz' [Charles the Great and Aachen: the *spolia* as a demonstration of his claims against Byzantium, the *spolia*, so to speak, a Rome transferred in pieces – Rome transferred to Aachen, and also Rome transferred in (geographical as well as political) opposition to Byzantium, Byzantium in turn transferred to Venice, if not yet (as in the well-known albeit apocryphal project of around 1220) all Venice transferred to Byzantium] (my translation)] (pp. 50–1).
- 64 Ilene H. Forsyth, 'Art with History: The Role of Spolia in the Cumulative Work of Art', in Christopher Moss and Katherine Kiefer

- (eds), *Byzantine East, Latin West. Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann* (Princeton: Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, 1995), pp. 153–62, at 155 (origin of the fragments), 158 (*culminatio*).
- 65 Nicholas Howe, 'Rome: Capital of Anglo-Saxon England', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 34 (2004), 147–72. Later reworked and printed in his *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 101–24.
- 66 Tim Eaton, *Plundering the Past: Roman Stonework in Medieval Britain* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2000). Illustrations number 32 (p. 73) and 64 (p. 119). Hexham Abbey, built in the seventh century, has a twelfth-century addition called Wilfred's Church, but most of the Roman *spolia* was incorporated by the Anglo-Saxons (p. 11).
- 67 St Peter from Bradwell-on-Sea is featured on the cover of Eaton's book, and in the colour plate (number 3).
- 68 Richard Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1989), p. 72.
- 69 Eaton, *Plundering the Past*, p. 157.
- 70 *Ibid.*, pp. 68–9; the translations as given there.
- 71 Previous scholars' excessive zeal in applying Augustinian exegesis to all Anglo-Saxon texts has recently come under scrutiny. Leslie Lockett warns us not to assume 'that Augustine's opinion on a given topic, or a watered-down version thereof, was the "default" opinion for any early medieval individual'. Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011), p. 214. In these three paragraphs, I am not making such an assumption. I do not privilege Augustine's thinking in this chapter or anywhere else in the book, but rather offer it as one of many possible, suggestive frameworks. We do not have, as Lockett says, 'any reason to think that the typical Anglo-Saxon poet or homilist or hagiographer had access to a patristic library of the calibre of Bede's or Ælfric's' (p. 181), but I do mention Bede and Alfred, who interacted with Augustine's works, later in the chapter. See below for Alfred's introduction to his translation of Augustine's *Soliloquys*.
- 72 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 64–5. The scriptural references are added by Green. The Latin reads: 'Sicut enim Aegyptii non tantum idola habebant et onera gravia quae populus Israel detestaretur et fugeret sed etiam vasa atque ornamenta de auro et de argento et vestem, quae ille populus exiens de Aegypto sibi potius tamquam ad usum meliorem clanculo vindicavit, non auctoritate propria sed praecepto dei, ipsis Aegyptiis nescienter commodantibus ea quibus non bene utebantur, – 145. sic doctrinae omnes gentilium non solum simulata et superstitiosa figmenta gravesque sarcinas supervacanei laboris habent, quae unusquisque nostrum duce Christo de societate gentilium exiens debet abominari atque devitare, sed etiam liberales disciplinas usui veritatis aptiores et quaedam morum praecepta

- utilissima continent, deque ipso uno deo colendo nonnulla vera inveniuntur apud eos.' Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 124.
- 73 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, p. 65; Augustine, *De doctrina*, p. 126.
- 74 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, p. 66; Augustine, *De doctrina*, p. 126.
- 75 James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), pp. 133–4. Typology, 'understood as relating old to new', is often confused with allegory, 'understood as relating earthly to heavenly' (ibid.).
- 76 *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross, 3rd edn rev., ed. E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 1660–1.
- 77 William S. Babcock, 'Harrowing of Hell', in Everett Ferguson (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, vol. 1 (New York: Garland, 1997), pp. 509–11, at 511 ('widely adopted...') and 510 (the list).
- 78 Edited by Krapp and Dobbie and called *The Descent into Hell* (in *The Exeter Book*, pp. 219–23).
- 79 See S. A. J. Bradley's introduction to his translation of *The Descent into Hell* (*Anglo-Saxon Poetry: An Anthology of Old English Poems in Prose Translation* (London: J. M. Dent, 1982), p. 391).
- 80 K. M. Openshaw, 'The Battle between Christ and Satan in the Tiberius Psalter', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 52 (1989), 14–33, at 19. She gives the illustration as plate 8a.
- 81 These definitions come from Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (London: Oxford Press, 1954).
- 82 Karl Tamburr, *The Harrowing of Hell in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), p. 1.
- 83 Definitions and etymology from George Sherman Lane, 'Words for Clothing in the Principal Indo-European Languages', *Language*, 7 (1931), 3–44, at 10.
- 84 Most recently in Phyllis Portnoy, 'Laf-Craft in Five Old English Riddles (K-D 5, 20, 56, 71, 91)', *Neophilologus*, 97 (2013), 555–79.
- 85 Ibid., p. 556.
- 86 Included among them is Virgil, who pillaged Homer, Ennius, and others. Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, p. 147 (from whence the quote); also see Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, pp. 168–9.
- 87 Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, p. 242
- 88 Ibid., pp. 277, 515 (n. 24).
- 89 The text and translation come from ibid., p. 436. Alfred elaborates on, and brings into the vernacular, the convention of *sylva* (*hyle* in Greek), the forest of classical authors from which one gathers materials for his text, known to such luminaries as Isidore of Seville, Aldhelm, and Boniface (p. 437).
- 90 Tilghman, 'On the Enigmatic Nature of Things', p. 22.

- 91 Seamus Heaney and Robert Hass, 'Sounding Lines: The Art of Translating Poetry/ Seamus Heaney and Robert Hass in Conversation', February 1999, <http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=townsend>, accessed 15 March 2017, pp. 1–2.
- 92 R. M. Liuzza (trans.), *Beowulf* (Petersborough, ON: Broadview, 2000), p. 31.
- 93 Haruko Momma, 'Old English Poetic Form: Genre, Style, Prosody', in Clare A. Lees (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 278–308, at 279.
- 94 This inspiration, in the case of Momma, was noted by Tiffany Beechy in her review of Lees's volume <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/tmr/article/view/18571/24684>, accessed 15 March 2017. Tolkien's allegory comes from his famous essay 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics' (1936), partially reprinted in Daniel Donoghue (ed.), *Beowulf: A Verse Translation*, trans. Seamus Heaney, (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 103–29, at 105–6.
- 95 Amy Papalexandrou, 'Memory Tattered and Torn: *Spolia* in the Heartland of Byzantine Hellenism', in Ruth M. Van Dyke and Susan E. Alcock (eds), *Archaeologies of Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 56–80, at 61.
- 96 Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 145–6.
- 97 Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, p. 119 (mixing of styles); 178 (coherence, pauses).
- 98 *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- 99 Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*, p. 146.
- 100 For a call to uncover a 'contra-modern aesthetic' that encompasses both medieval and post-colonial works, and an example of such an endeavour, see Ananya Jahanara Kabir, 'Towards a Contra-Modern Aesthetics: Reading the Old English *Andreas* Against an Image of the Virgin of Guadalupe', in Nils Holger Petersen et al. (eds), *Signs of Change: Transformations of Christian Traditions and Their Representation in the Arts, 1000–2000* (New York: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 31–50. For brilliant explorations of the links between Mediterranean medieval and post-colonial American hemispheric literatures and music, see María Rosa Menocal, *Shards of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).
- 101 Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture*, p. 426.
- 102 In medieval material culture, relics might appear in reliquaries and crosses made with *spolia* 'in the form of ancient gems, cameos, or seals' (Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation*, p. 153).
- 103 Sobin, *Ladder of Shadows*, pp. 1–2 (his italics). Though the writer here speaks of 'the thousand years that [his] study touches upon' (from the third to the thirteenth centuries), it is clear from the foreword by Michael Ignatieff that much of this desire for transfiguration also characterises Sobin himself (see, for instance, p. xx).