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# Writing the Jews out of History: Pseudo-Hegesippus, Classical Historiography, and the Codification of Christian Anti-Judaism in Late Antiquity

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## Abstract

Scholarly narratives of the development of Christian anti-Jewish thinking in antiquity routinely cite a number of standard, well-known authors: from Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Justin Martyr in earlier centuries to Eusebius, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine in the fourth and early fifth centuries. The anonymous author known as Pseudo-Hegesippus, to whom is attributed a late fourth-century Latin work called *On the Destruction of Jerusalem* (*De Excidio Hierosolymitano*), rarely appears in such discussions. This has largely to do with the fact that this text and its author are effectively unknown entities within contemporary scholarship in this area (scholars familiar with Pseudo-Hegesippus tend to be specialists in medieval Latin texts and manuscripts). But “Pseudo-Hegesippus” represents a critical contribution to the mosaic of Christian anti-Jewish discourse in late antiquity. *De Excidio*’s generic identity as a Christian piece of classical historiography makes it a unique form of ancient anti-Jewish propaganda. This genre, tied to *De Excidio*’s probable context of writing—the wake of the emperor Julian’s abortive attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple, resurrect a robust Judaism, and remove Christians from public engagement with classical culture—renders *De Excidio* an important Christian artifact of both anti-Judaism and pro-classicism at the same time. This article situates Pseudo-Hegesippus in a lineage of Christian anti-Jewish historical thinking, argues that *De Excidio* codifies that discourse in a significant and singular way, frames this contribution in terms of its apparent socio-historical context, and cites *De Excidio*’s later influence and reception as testaments to its rightful place in the history of Christian anti-Judaism, a place that modern scholarship has yet to afford it. As a piece of classical historiography that mirrors not Christian historians—like Eusebius and others—but the historians of the broader “pagan” Greco-Roman world—like Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus—*De Excidio* leverages a cultural communicative medium particularly well equipped to undergird and fuel the Christian historiographical imagination and its anti-Jewish projections.

**Keywords:** Pseudo-Hegesippus; Destruction of Jerusalem; Anti-Judaism; Josephus; Ancient Christian Historiography

Of all the cultural legacies attached to Christian tradition, that of anti-Jewish thought, speech, and (sometimes) action is one of the most uncomfortable. It is also one of the

most prominent. From early on, Christianity evinced discomfort with Jews, who did not accept Jesus as their messiah, and this perceived exigency often resulted in an aggressive posture toward a people whose legacy Christians came to arrogate to themselves. As scholars like Leonard Rutgers, Paula Fredriksen, and Oded Irshai have recognized, this Christian “problem” of continued Jewishness came to a head in the late fourth century,<sup>1</sup> when Christians were settling into their role as heirs of the Roman Empire, whose reins they had by that time held for around half a century. Late fourth-century Christians dealt in diverse ways with the fact that Jews not only still existed but were thriving throughout the later Roman world—a fact that itself has only recently been recognized by scholarship<sup>2</sup>—and the concomitant fact that Christians were often very attracted to Jewish practice, ritual, and community.<sup>3</sup> John Chrysostom wrote eight *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians* in 386–387 CE, so “manifestly attracted to the synagogue and Jewish festivals” were the Christians in Antioch at that time.<sup>4</sup> Chrysostom and other prominent Christian authors—especially Eusebius and Augustine,<sup>5</sup> but also Ephrem the Syrian,<sup>6</sup> Athanasius,<sup>7</sup> Ambrose of Milan,<sup>8</sup> and Jerome<sup>9</sup>—have received concerted scholarly attention for their role in the Christian production of anti-Jewish/anti-Judaizing sentiment in the late fourth century.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, recent scholarship has largely ignored a work that constitutes a significant permutation of this cultural trend in late antiquity.

<sup>1</sup>Leonard V. Rutgers, *Making Myths: Jews in Early Christian Identity Formation* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009); and Paula Fredriksen and Oded Irshai, “Christian Anti-Judaism: Polemics and Policies,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, ed. S. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 977–1034.

<sup>2</sup>Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 3–4; Mark Edwards, *Religions of the Constantinian Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 158–75; Leonard V. Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); and Leonard V. Rutgers, *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).

<sup>3</sup>See Robert Louis Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup>Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002 [2000]), 223. See also Paul W. Harkins, *Saint John Chrysostom: Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*, Fathers of the Church 68 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1979); Christine Shepardson, “Controlling Contested Places: John Chrysostom’s *Adversus Iudaeos* Homilies and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy,” *J ECS* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 483–516; and Christine Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places: Late Antique Antioch and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019).

<sup>5</sup>Jörg Ulrich, *Euseb von Caesarea und die Juden: Studien zur Rolle der Juden in der Theologie des Eusebius von Caesarea* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999); and Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>6</sup>Christine Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem’s Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup>David Brakke, “Jewish Flesh and Christian Spirit in Athanasius of Alexandria,” *J ECS* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 453–81, which demonstrates the utility of Jews as symbols in constructing a “catholic” church in the fourth century.

<sup>8</sup>Maria Doerfler, “Ambrose’s Jews: The Creation of Judaism and Heterodox Christianity in Ambrose of Milan’s *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*,” *Church History* 80, no. 4 (December 2011): 749–772.

<sup>9</sup>Hillel I. Newman, “Jerome’s Judaizers,” *J ECS* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 421–452; and now William L. Krewson, *Jerome and the Jews: Innovative Supersessionism* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2017).

<sup>10</sup>To this list we could add Epiphanius of Cyprus: Young Richard Kim, *Epiphanius of Cyprus: Imagining an Orthodox World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 44–82, esp. 77; and Andrew S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Cyprus: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 132–175.

Sometime around 370 CE, an anonymous author known as “Pseudo-Hegesippus” wrote a work called *De Excidio Hierosolymitano* (*On the Destruction of Jerusalem*).<sup>11</sup> This Latin work rewrote the *Jewish War*, which the Jewish author Flavius Josephus had written in Greek in the late first century CE. Josephus’s *War* had described the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE by the Romans, an event which quickly became a watershed moment for Christians, who saw in it a moment of divine judgment marking a definitive break between God and his heretofore chosen people, the Jews. Cementing this understanding is the primary aim of *De Excidio*.

For various reasons, *De Excidio* has remained all but unknown to modern scholarship. It was well known in the Middle Ages and early modern period, and scholars of those periods are often familiar with the text. But it has played a negligible role in recent scholarly reconstructions of anti-Jewish rhetoric in late fourth-century Christianity.<sup>12</sup> Yet Ruth Nisse has recently stated that this text marked a seminal moment in the anti-Jewish strain of Christianity’s collective intellectual development: “*Pseudo-Hegesippus* . . . initiates the Western Christian interpretation of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE that resounds throughout medieval theology and literature.” That is, *De Excidio* “explains how the political events described by Josephus reflect God’s punishment of the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus” in a way that sets the tone for the subsequent Latin Christian West.<sup>13</sup> In fact, it was probably the second-century Hegesippus, often confused with the fourth-century author called *Pseudo-Hegesippus* and who was a main source for Eusebius, that truly initiated this trend, as Marcel Simon points out in his classic study.<sup>14</sup> Still, what the author now called Pseudo-Hegesippus did do was codify that trend within the Christian historiographical imagination at a critical juncture in Christian history. If this is so, the fact that Ps-Hegesippus remains absent from almost all scholarship on the evolution of Christian anti-Judaism in late antiquity is a gap in the research and no less in our understanding. In order to appreciate the pivotal role that *De Excidio* played in the codification of anti-Judaism (and simultaneously of classicism) within Christian late antiquity, we must look not only to how Ps-Hegesippus presents his anti-Jewish historical vision but also to the generic boundaries and historical contexts within which Ps-Hegesippus wrote—and then not least to the later reception of *De Excidio* within anti-Jewish Christian literature.

<sup>11</sup>See by way of introduction Carson Bay, “The Bible, the Classics, and the Jews in Pseudo-Hegesippus: A Literary Analysis of the Fourth-Century *De Excidio Hierosolymitano* 5.2” (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2018), 1–59; Richard Matthew Pollard, “The *De Excidio* of ‘Hegesippus’ and the Reception of Josephus in the Early Middle Ages,” *Viator* 46 (2015): 65–100; Albert A. Bell, Jr., “Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus,” in *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 349–361; and Albert A. Bell, Jr., “An Historiographical Analysis of the *De Excidio Hierosolymitano* of Pseudo-Hegesippus” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1977).

<sup>12</sup>Albert A. Bell, Jr., “Classical and Christian Traditions in the Work of Pseudo-Hegesippus,” *Indiana Social Studies Quarterly* 33 (1980): 60–64, at 60, explains why *De Excidio* “is all but unheard of except among a handful of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholars.”

<sup>13</sup>Ruth B. Nisse, *Jacob’s Shipwreck: Diaspora, Translation, and Jewish-Christian Relations in Medieval England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2017), 22.

<sup>14</sup>Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire, A.D. 135–425*, trans. H. McKeating (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996 [1948]), 67.

## I. Pseudo-Hegesippus and the Codification of Anti-Jewish Historiography

As early as the second century—and already anticipated in its earliest writings, the texts of the New Testament<sup>15</sup>—the internally diverse Jesus movement that came to be called “Christianity” often defined itself in contradistinction to, and in competition with, that which was Jewish, what Christian authors often construed as “Judaism.”<sup>16</sup> In retrospect, this development of an *adversus Iudaeos* tradition seems all but inevitable: the early Christians understood themselves to be a “race” or “nation,” one which could lay legitimate claim to the scriptural, cultural, and theological heritage of the Jews.<sup>17</sup> As the Jewish scriptures became the Christian Old Testament, the “new covenant” effectively reified a new people of God, birthing what is now called “supersessionism” or “replacement theology.”<sup>18</sup> This perspective created problems for early Christian thinkers who sought to explain history in theological terms; wherever one marked the “parting of the ways” between Christians and Jews (or Christianity and Judaism) in history, Jews did not cease to exist at the far end of that parting. Indeed, they have never ceased to exist.<sup>19</sup> If the church was *Verus Israel*, to use a term made famous by Marcel Simon more than seventy years ago, why did the Jews, the original Israel (*vetustus Israel*, as it were), still exist?<sup>20</sup> Already in the first centuries CE, therefore, Christians set to work explaining how it was that Jews, who were once God’s people, still existed as Jews but no longer as God’s people.

This focus on the logic of *Heilsgeschichte* is arguably the driving force behind all of the systems of counter- or anti-Jewish thought that Christians developed in the second and third centuries. The perpetuators of this line of thinking came to construct, as Paula

<sup>15</sup>A view popularized by Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The *Adversus Iudaeos* Tradition in the Church Fathers: The Exegesis of Christian Anti-Judaism,” in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1991 [1979]), 174–189.

<sup>16</sup>A survey exists in Stephen G. Wilson, *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, vol. 2, *Separation and Polemic* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), with dated but still relevant chapters on the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of Barnabas, Ignatius of Antioch (and others), Marcion, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, and more. On later texts, see Jeremy Cohen, ed., *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), which includes discussion of New Testament texts and earlier evidence.

<sup>17</sup>Todd Berzon, “Ethnicity and Early Christianity: New Approaches to Religious Kinship and Community,” *CBR* 16 (2018): 191–227; Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); and Aaron P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius’ Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>18</sup>On “replacement theology,” see Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 171–172.

<sup>19</sup>The argument that Jewish and Christian identities were fluid and ambiguous over the first few centuries and not substantively distinguishable before the fourth is presented in Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). See also Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Scholars are not agreed on the premise of this view. Rutgers, for one, has objected to this movement’s reliance upon “a linguistic theory of which it is unclear whether it is a relevant heuristic tool to explain human behavior.” Rutgers, *Making Myths*, 12–13, also 118. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991); James D. G. Dunn, ed., *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, AD 70–135* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); and Judith M. Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (London: T. and T. Clark, 2002), 11–29.

<sup>20</sup>Simon, *Verus Israel*; and Marcus Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 13–22.

Fredriksen has explained, a working theory of history wherein “the Jews’ trail of crimes stretched from their murder of the prophets to the murder of him who spoke through them, namely, Christ.” This resulted in “God definitively, publicly, and permanently rejecting” the Jews “by destroying their Temple.”<sup>21</sup> Within their first few centuries of existence, the early Christians had come to lay the death of Jesus at the feet of the Jews and to “read” the Jerusalem Temple’s destruction in 70 CE as proof positive of divine condemnation and rejection of this murderous people.<sup>22</sup>

Many ancient Christian writings claim that the Jews killed Jesus and that the destruction of Jerusalem and their Temple there was recompense for this collective action. But very few ancient Christian writings dedicate themselves wholly to the exposition of this historical perspective. In fact, *De Excidio* could fairly be considered the only text to do so. The prologue to *De Excidio* clarifies exactly what the text is about. To situate the larger body of work of which *De Excidio* constitutes a part, Ps-Hegesippus begins by claiming to have written “a historical version of the four Books of Kingdoms” (that is, 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings; 1–4 Kingdoms in the Septuagint)<sup>23</sup> as well as a prophetic *res gestae* of the Maccabees, the Judean hero-kings of the last two centuries BCE. He then casts his work as dealing with “what remains, up to the burning of the Temple and the spoils of Titus Caesar” (that is, the despoliation of the Temple accoutrements by Titus and the Romans in 70 CE, still memorialized on the Arch of Titus, which today stands between the Forum and the Colosseum in Rome).<sup>24</sup> In casting *De Excidio* in these terms, Ps-Hegesippus situates it within a literary corpus of his own creation that may be read as representing *all* of Jewish political history beginning at its advent as a nation under its first king, Saul, moving through its resurrection as a nation under the Hasmonean Dynasty—following a period of deportation and exile when the Jews lived under Babylonian, (Medo-) Persian, Ptolemaic, and then Seleucid rule—and coming to a definitive end at the hands of the Romans in 70 CE. In this light, *De Excidio* appears as the third volume in a three-volume work surveying the totality of Jewish history. *De Excidio* self-presents as the tail end of a totalizing historical account of the Jews. In other words, *De Excidio* presumes to narrate the end of Jewish history.

Another way that Ps-Hegesippus presents his history is as a work that both continues and corrects the tradition to which it belongs. It does this with reference to its primary source, the *Jewish War*, written by the Jewish priest-turned-general Flavius Josephus in the first century after he had been captured by the Romans during the Roman-Jewish War (66–70), which resulted in Jerusalem’s destruction. Josephus is the “famous author” (*relator egregius*) who wrote the history of the Roman Jewish War, Ps-Hegesippus claims, but though he wept for the Jews’ misfortune, which he narrated, “he did not understand its cause.” Inasmuch as Josephus, like the rest of the Jews, exhibited “faithlessness” (*perfidia*), he failed to comprehend the (Christian) truth that

<sup>21</sup>Paula Fredriksen, “The Birth of Christianity and the Origins of Christian Anti-Judaism,” in *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament After the Holocaust*, ed. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 8–30, at 27.

<sup>22</sup>Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 82, argues that “the longest-lived and (eventually) the most toxic of [the Christians’] various accusations was the charge that ‘the Jews’ killed Christ.”

<sup>23</sup>On which see now Lieve Van Hoof and Peter Van Nuffelen, *The Fragmentary Latin Histories of Late Antiquity (AD 300–620): Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 78–80.

<sup>24</sup>*De Excidio* Prol. 1. All Latin texts of *De Excidio* herein are taken from the critical edition of Vincenzo Ussani, ed., *Hegesippi qui dicitur Historiae libri V–Pt. 1: Textum criticum continens* (Leipzig: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1932). All translations are my own.

the destruction of Jerusalem, which he recorded, constituted the “punishment” (*supplicium*) of the Jews; this is ironic because Josephus himself “manifested” the “punishment” of the Jews (*de eorum supplicio manifestavit*), which he himself failed to understand (*non intellexit*). In framing his work this way, Ps-Hegesippus betrays an ancient authorial assumption, particularly characteristic of historiography, that the authority of a given writing came in part from its connection to earlier tradition.<sup>25</sup> While still writing firmly *within* the bounds of a tradition, the value of a given work would be assessed in terms of its ability to innovate, improve upon, and even correct its predecessors within that tradition. In this way, *De Excidio* presents itself as a Christian version of Josephus, already an extremely popular and important author for Christians (but not for Jews) in late antiquity.<sup>26</sup> In presenting *De Excidio* as both the last installment in a three-volume set and as an innovative “update” or “revision” of Josephus’s *Jewish War*, Ps-Hegesippus propounds *ab initio* the subject matter of his work: as the last volume of Jewish history, the reader may reasonably expect *De Excidio* to explain why and how Jewish history came to an end; and as a Christian corrective to Josephus’s Jewish version of events, *De Excidio* is explicitly interested in explicating Jerusalem’s destruction as “punishment.”

That Ps-Hegesippus is concerned with “writing the Jews out of history” becomes clearer with a wider structural overview of the work: the work’s latter bookend, its final chapter (chapter 53), ends abruptly with the infamous Jewish mass suicide instigated by the rebel leader Eleazar atop Masada.<sup>27</sup> Josephus had likewise described this horrible event, but his history had highlighted the Romans’ admiration for the Jews’ bravery in choosing death over capitulation and had then continued to narrate an ensuing series of engagements between Romans and Jewish rebel holdouts.<sup>28</sup> *De Excidio*, in contrast, ends directly after the mass suicide, with no mention of Roman awe; rather, it records only that “one lone woman survived.” She had hidden with five children during the mass suicide. When the Romans arrived, she heard them and came out of hiding to tell them what had happened. The work’s final line then states that the Jews’ “supplies, which they had put aside from themselves, had already been consumed by fire” (*De Excidio* 5.53.2). The work ends with the fiery destruction of (the last of the) Jews and their property, leaving the reader with the distinct impression that the work is about endings and not beginnings—about the death of the Jews and the destruction of what was once theirs.

This concentration on the end of the Jews in history, presaged in *De Excidio*’s prologue and inferable from its final lines, finds confirmation in the contents of the work that lie between those two poles. In several places one finds the indictment against the Jews as the party responsible for Jesus’s death and the contiguous claim of Jerusalem’s

<sup>25</sup>John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>26</sup>On Josephus’s Christian reception, begin with the old but still useful Michael E. Hardwick, *Josephus as an Historical Source in Patristic Literature Through Eusebius* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); the more thorough Heinz Schreckenberg and Kurt Schubert, *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); and now Sabrina Inowlocki, “Josephus and Patristic Literature,” in *A Companion to Josephus*, ed. Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 356–367; and Karen M. Kletter, “The Christian Reception of Josephus in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages,” in *A Companion to Josephus*, Chapman and Rodgers, 368–381.

<sup>27</sup>On this event, see now Jodi Magness, *Masada: From Jewish Revolt to Modern Myth* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2019).

<sup>28</sup>See Josephus, *War* 7.406 and 7.407–455, respectively.

destruction being divinely wrought punishment. In places this is explicit, in others slightly less so. A more vague reference to this ideology comes in the speech of Agrippa at *De Excidio* 2.9, where Ps-Hegesippus puts into the mouth of the Jewish king a hypothetical question, asking how the Jews expected to receive God's help and blessing, given that the disciples of Jesus—that is, Christians—had spread throughout the Roman world (*De Excidio* 2.9.1). The implication is that the Christians have replaced the Jews, the latter having been abandoned by God. In explaining this, Agrippa rattles off examples of Jewish sacrilege and states that, indeed, scripture had predicted the profanation of the Jerusalem Temple: "Has not scripture said that these things were to happen? Has it not been written that all the sacraments of the Temple are to be profaned?" (*De Excidio* 2.9.1). Here Ps-Hegesippus aligns with the Christian move to see the demise of the Jews as something prophesied in the Hebrew Bible and recognized by Jews themselves. This is an oblique yet poignant example of this theme in *De Excidio*. More explicit is the discussion in *De Excidio* 2.12.1, which begins by stating that "they [the Jews] suffered the punishments [*supplicia*] for their crimes [*scelerum*] who, after they had crucified Jesus, the witness of divine things [*diuinorum arbitrum*], afterwards also persecuted his disciples." What exactly that punishment consisted in is clarified by context: the preceding chapter is a discussion of how "all of Judea was on fire, and the entire province of Syria was enticed to war" (*De Excidio* 2.11.1). The ultimate form of that punishment is then presented as something that Jesus himself predicted during his life on earth; again, at *De Excidio* 2.12.1, Ps-Hegesippus states that Jesus Christ "predicted the impending destruction of the Temple" (*excidium quoque templi futurum adnuntiauit*). One should note that this chapter, *De Excidio* 2.12, revolves around Ps-Hegesippus's rendition of the (in)famous "Testimonium Flavianum," the description and putative confession of Jesus made by Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities*.<sup>29</sup> Ps-Hegesippus presents Josephus as having recorded that Jesus was an extraordinary man, a worker of miracles, who appeared to his followers after having been dead for three days; but he also presents Josephus as not having believed what he wrote about Jesus because Josephus, here a proxy for the Jews writ large, maintained his "hardness of heart" (*duritia cordis*) and "intentional faithlessness" (*intentio perfidiae*).<sup>30</sup>

The apogee of Ps-Hegesippus's anti-Jewish historical perspective appears in book 5, the last and most important book of *De Excidio*. *De Excidio* 5.2 is a striking oration that the author himself "speaks" in the second person to Jerusalem and the Jews.<sup>31</sup> There one finds an explicit link between Jerusalem's divinely sanctioned destruction and the Jews' killing of Jesus. Ps-Hegesippus charges that "with your own hands you crucified your own health [or 'savior': *salutare*], with your own hands you extinguished your life, with your own voices you banished your advocate, amid your domestic disturbances you killed your ally" (*De Excidio* 5.2.1). For this very reason, he continues, "your well-being [or 'salvation': *salus*] has abandoned you, peace has departed, serenity has ceased—rebellion has been given to you, destruction has been given." Here, in a highly charged and, frankly, emotional authorial address, Ps-Hegesippus chastises the Jews of his fictive first-century narrative, placing upon them responsibility for Jesus's death and portraying the resultant destruction as wages paid/given (*datum*) in recompense. He

<sup>29</sup>See Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.63–64; with Alice Whealey, *Josephus on Jesus: The Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

<sup>30</sup>*De Excidio* 2.12.1.

<sup>31</sup>Bay, "The Bible, the Classics, and the Jews."

actually depicts Jerusalem's downfall as a kind of mass Jewish suicide.<sup>32</sup> At the end of the speech, Ps-Hegesippus postulates that the Jews crucified the real Temple of God, the body of Jesus, and concludes by reiterating the finality of the Temple's destruction in 70 CE: "Now truly divine fire has consumed their sacred things [that is, the Temple's accoutrements]. For they were devastated by the Babylonians but were returned thereafter, destroyed by Pompey and remade again, but they have been thoroughly devastated since Jesus came, and they have vanished, melted by the heat of the divine spirit."

This confirmation of Jerusalem's divinely ordained destruction carried heavy prophetic weight for Ps-Hegesippus, as it did for most Christian writers of late antiquity. At *De Excidio* 5.31.2, in a speech directed by the narrative actor Josephus to the Jewish rebel John of Gischala, Josephus cites prophetic books (*prophetici libri*), particularly Daniel, as having predicted Jerusalem's earlier destructions, reparations, and final destruction by the Romans. This latest development corresponds with "divine protections having already abandoned" the country. In this way Ps-Hegesippus presents the destruction of Jerusalem, its Temple, and the Jews as fated, divinely determined, and predicted in scripture and thus as *something that the Jews themselves recognized* (at least some of them, as witness Josephus). This corresponds not only to Jewish and Christian notions of predictive prophecy but also to the preoccupation held by historians of the Greco-Roman world over the machinations of fate, chance, or destiny.

The most blatant and most conceptually complete iteration of Ps-Hegesippus's anti-Jewish historical understanding comes in *De Excidio* 5.32.1, near the end of the work. There, Josephus has just finished one of several speeches to his Jewish countrymen attempting to dissuade them from continued resistance to Rome. The rebels are not moved. Tellingly, Ps-Hegesippus articulates their obstinance in theological terms: "For God had by this time long since been urging on their faithless minds [*perfidias mentes*], for which reason they polluted themselves with impious parricide by crucifying Jesus [*se impio parricidio commacularunt Christum Iesum*]." This is followed by the most overt statement of Ps-Hegesippus's philosophy of historical causality in all of *De Excidio*: "This is he whose death marks the destruction of the Jews [*Hic est ille, cuius mors Iudaeorum excidium est*], born of Mary, who came to his own and his own did not receive him." Quoting the Gospel of John (1:11), Ps-Hegesippus makes a historical assertion: Jesus's death equals Jewish destruction. At the end of this short chapter, moreover, he marks the destruction of Jerusalem (that is, the Jewish *ciuitas*) as eternal, distinguished from the earlier destruction under Babylon by its finality: "This is the final destruction after which the Temple is irreparable, because they [the Jews] by their crimes turned away the leader of the Temple, the governor of restoration." As forcefully as any author in Christian history, Ps-Hegesippus imputed Jesus's death to the Jews, equated this act with the guarantee of their divinely sanctioned demise as instantiated in Jerusalem's destruction, and presented both as historical facts. This emerges from *De Excidio*'s prologue and ending, its structure, its language, and its rhetoric. The overall narrative effect of *De Excidio* is to present the Roman-Jewish War, which ended with Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE and the short epilogue of the Masada saga in 73 CE, as marking the effective end of the Jews in history.

What I call Ps-Hegesippus's "writing the Jews out of history" is not a rhetorical feature of *De Excidio* that has gone unnoticed in scholarship. Albert Bell's 1977 dissertation, one of few book-length works to treat *De Excidio* to date, identifies the central theme of *De Excidio* as the "ultimate destruction" (*supremum excidium*) of Jerusalem

<sup>32</sup>See Bay, "The Bible, the Classics, and the Jews," 148–199.



(and the Jews).<sup>33</sup> For the few who have studied *De Excidio*, the anti-Judaism of the text has been obvious and has not escaped comment (though none of these treatments analyzes Ps-Hegesippus's anti-Judaism vis-à-vis genre as medium, context, and reception as the present article does).<sup>34</sup> Nor is Ps-Hegesippus particularly novel in this regard: his equation of Jewish guilt, Jesus's death, and Jerusalem's destruction was, as already noted, a virtually ubiquitous notion among Christians in antiquity. Thus, my argument is not that Ps-Hegesippus reinvents the wheel, as it were, but that he makes the wheel "stick."<sup>35</sup> In other words, I am arguing not that *De Excidio*'s historical conception of Jewish identity, guilt, and demise is thoroughly original but that its arrangement, presentation, and intensity are such that it constitutes an important articulation of this position. This moves our discussion forward from the *content* of *De Excidio*'s formulation of anti-Jewish historiography to the *form* itself, the package in which that content appears, which in this case is the ancient literary genre of historiography.

## II. Historiography: The Power of Genre

*De Excidio* properly belongs to the genre of ancient historiography,<sup>36</sup> a Greco-Roman literary tradition generally reckoned from Herodotus's *Histories* in the fifth century BCE to the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus in the late fourth century CE.<sup>37</sup> This is to be distinguished from the most commonly discussed forms of historiography in early Christianity—that is, church history and world chronicle, both (re)invented by Eusebius in the early fourth century—by its content, form, and readership. It deals with military, political, and national events, very often a particular war or series of battles, with a special interest in geography and description.<sup>38</sup>

The significance and impact of *De Excidio* within the lineage of Christian anti-Jewish historiographical thinking follows (in part) directly from its belonging, uniquely among ancient Christian texts, to the broader Greco-Roman tradition of historiography and not the narrower Christian one. Though quite different than historiography as practiced today, history writing in the ancient world (that is, classical historiography) still tapped into an authority that presumed to dictate real, true, and therefore authoritative

<sup>33</sup>Bell, "Historiographical Analysis," 3.

<sup>34</sup>See, along with Bell, Chiara Somenzi, *Egesippo—Ambrogio: Formazione scolastica e Cristiana a Roma alla metà del IV secolo* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2009), 151–182 ("La polemica anti-giudaica," one of that work's best theoretical chapters); and Dominique Estève, "L'Oeuvre historique du Pseudo-Hégésippe: 'De Bello Iudaico,' livre I à IV," 2 vols. (PhD diss., Université Paris Nanterre, 1987), 2:441–458 ("Image du Juif"). See also Steve Mason, "Josephus's *Judaean War*," in *A Companion to Josephus*, Chapman and Rodgers, 13–35, at 13; and Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christliche Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.–11. Jh.)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1982), 310–311.

<sup>35</sup>See the discussion of the "stickiness factor" in Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 2000).

<sup>36</sup>Carson Bay, "Pseudo-Hegesippus and the Beginnings of Christian Historiography in Late Antiquity," *Studia Patristica* (forthcoming); see also Somenzi, *Egesippo—Ambrogio*; Estève, "L'Oeuvre historique du Pseudo-Hégésippe"; and Bell, "Historiographical Analysis." See also Markus Sehlmeier, *Geschichtsbilder für Pagane und Christen: Res Romanae in den spätantiken Breviarien* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 196, 219–222.

<sup>37</sup>John Marincola, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. John Marincola, 2 vols. (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 1:1–9, at 1.

<sup>38</sup>Eusebius, even if he did inevitably source classical inspirations and models, wrote not only about, but to and for, Christians: *Hist. Eccl.* 7.18.1; 8.2.3 (e.g.); see now Michael J. Hollerich, *Making Christian History: Eusebius of Caesarea and His Readers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021); and James Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 63–65.

descriptions of past events.<sup>39</sup> To modern eyes, ancient historiography may appear tendentious; in the Roman world, history was a subspecies of rhetoric. More importantly, ancient historical literature drew not just upon historical veracity but also upon moral rightness and entertainment value to wield what M. J. Wheeldon calls “the historiographical ‘truth-effect.’”<sup>40</sup> By these mechanisms, historiography provides a vehicle for making indicative statements with a high level of authority.<sup>41</sup> Averil Cameron points out an important feature of late antique Christianity when she mentions that Christians used “the deployment of narrative form to inculcate and confirm belief.”<sup>42</sup> Yet Cameron is talking about Christian stories *about themselves*, Christians writing about Christians (apocryphal acts, martyrdom stories, hagiographies); Ps-Hegesippus shows that Christians did the same thing by writing about their proximate others as well and in a classical mode. That *De Excidio* was written as Greco-Roman historiography will have lent it epistemological weight and cultural cachet.<sup>43</sup>

I suggest that much of *De Excidio*’s rhetorical power in locating an effective Jewish death in 70 CE has everything to do with Ps-Hegesippus’s chosen genre of historiography. That genre was particularly suitable for making exactly that kind of claim. Here we may draw upon a helpful concept established by Marshall McLuhan in his essay entitled “The Medium is the Message.”<sup>44</sup> McLuhan, addressing the recent communicative technologies of radio and television,<sup>45</sup> argued that the *medium* of communication may be more important than *content*: “the medium is the message.” Neil Postman later applied this idea to rational argument, that is, popular (political) discourse.<sup>46</sup> He argued that certain forms exclude certain content and that modern media such as television are fundamentally incapable of supporting the serious, sustained engagement characteristic of traditional civic discourse. Rational argumentation was compatible with print typography; television was built for entertainment. In other words, particular media are more or less suited to certain kinds of content.

<sup>39</sup>On “truth,” “reality,” and realism in historiography, see J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (Portland, Oreg.: Areopagitica, 1988) and T. P. Wiseman, *Historiography and Imagination: Eight Essays on Roman Culture* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994).

<sup>40</sup>M. J. Wheeldon, “‘True Stories’: the reception of historiography in antiquity,” in *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History*, ed. Averil Cameron (London: Duckworth, 1989), 33–63.

<sup>41</sup>On the persuasive nature of ancient historiography, see T. P. Wiseman, *Clio’s Cosmetics: Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004 [1979]).

<sup>42</sup>Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 92; and later, at 93: “The better these stories were constructed, the better they functioned as structure-maintaining narratives and the more their audiences were disposed to accept them as true.”

<sup>43</sup>That *De Excidio* was understood as historiography may be discerned from its piecemeal inclusion in a manuscript, Paris BnF Lat. 6256, that also contains excerpts from Sallust and Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* and is apparently a kind of historiographical sourcebook. My thanks to Richard Pollard for sharing his transcription of this text along with information and bibliography.

<sup>44</sup>Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message,” in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Signet, 1964).

<sup>45</sup>Fixation upon radio and tv as “new media” can make McLuhan’s work seem outdated and irrelevant. But the enduring significance of these ideas may be surmised from the fact that they inform the Pulitzer Prize finalist book by Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2010).

<sup>46</sup>Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985); see also Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture To Technology* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

The principle McLuhan and Postman endorsed can be applied to ancient literary genres as well. In the ancient Mediterranean world, historiography was particularly well suited to communicating and authorizing the kind of historical claims that Ps-Hegesippus makes about Jewish collective identity. Unlike most other ancient literary genres, historiography was written in the seemingly dispassionate indicative mood. It conjured an air of unbiased objectivity by its use of the third-person voice and its arrangement of a chronologically sequential and causally correlated series of facts. One of the genre's innate claims to persuasive power is its implicit concealment of the fact that historical indicatives amount to arguments: if *x* happened, this means that not-*x* did *not* happen, a truth claim made available for acceptance, rejection, or qualification—except that a written history does not invite response but rather dictates *the way things are* (or were). Scholars have long since recognized the special relationship between historiography as genre and cultural claims to epistemological literary authority.<sup>47</sup> Andrew Laird, for one, has considered the way historical narratives “work on us, as they enforce upon us an imaginary conception of who we are, where we are, and how we got there.”<sup>48</sup> One way historiography did this in antiquity was by its grammatical and syntactical simplicity, which democratized the interpretation and comprehension of the ideas it contained in contrast to philosophical and poetic genres. The straightforwardness and power of tense, mood, and voice in historiography render the hermeneutical process, for which genre is by definition a guide,<sup>49</sup> more accessible and feasible. Moreover, the imagined lack of artifice that adorns simple prose supported historians' portrayal of their work as unbiased, uncontrived, and thus trustworthy.

Historical narrative prose constructs *de facto* a cohesive veneer of realism over an unavoidable artificiality consisting of temporal categories (past, present, future),<sup>50</sup> spatial categories (*this* place, *that* space), and the ethnographic categories that reify collective groups (groupism) and negotiate relative identities.<sup>51</sup> In so doing, historiography garners rhetorical authority and persuasive power. In fact, there is good reason to believe that historiography, like any literary genre, has not only the capacity to organize thought but even to guide trajectories of imagination and prompt *ways* of thinking. Inasmuch as historiography creates or reinforces ideas of temporality, spatiality, and identity (see below), it taps into core mental processes whose physical effects are observable by neuroscience—that is, the cognitive formation, solidification, and recall of categories.<sup>52</sup> Given what we know of how the brain works, it seems safe to say that exposure, especially repeated exposure, to a literary form that creates and arranges knowledge the way that historiography does—that is, propositionally in terms of real

<sup>47</sup>See Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 1.

<sup>48</sup>Andrew Laird, “Fictions of Authority: Discourse and Epistemology in Historical Narrative,” in *Powers of Expression, Expressions of Power: Speech Presentation and Latin Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 116–152, at 118.

<sup>49</sup>John Frow, *Genre*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2015), 109–133.

<sup>50</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, 3 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984–1988); Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John Thompson (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991); Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge, 1978); and Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1965).

<sup>51</sup>On the tendency to assume the reality of groups as “things-in-the-world,” i.e., “groupism,” see Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 7–8.

<sup>52</sup>On how neuroscience exposes the basic biological substrates of categorization, see Daniel J. Levitin, *The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 37–76.

individuals and collectives who have acted and been acted upon in real space and time—may well cement the mind’s penchant for adopting particular narratives and taxonomies as true (biologically, this means establishing particular sequences of synapse firings) by articulating them in specific ways (which map onto human neural circuitry).<sup>53</sup> In other words, a text like *De Excidio* may have had the capacity to concretize a perspective on Jewish history and guilt within the very neural networks of its readers: Ps-Hegesippus may have codified his brand of anti-Jewish historiography not just upon *minds* but upon *brains*. This reconfigures the broader point that historiography affected (affects) the way that people thought and believed.

Ancient historiography appeared particularly well suited to saying things about specific collectives of the past. This statement finds support in the frequent collocation of the practice of ethnography and historiography in antiquity. The enduring racial stereotypes attached to the Carthaginians by Livy in his *Ab Vrbe Condita*,<sup>54</sup> the cultural Greek commonplace of Persian dissipation or ideas about the relative “hardness” and “softness” of peoples established by Herodotus in his *Histories*,<sup>55</sup> and the clichés of Jewish origins and customs collected and listed in Tacitus’s *Histories*<sup>56</sup>—all these ancient statements about particular peoples emerged within the generic confines of historiography. And late ancient Christians made various use of the cultural practice of ethnography.<sup>57</sup> But no ancient Christian author other than Ps-Hegesippus seems to have done so within the classical literary form of historiography.<sup>58</sup>

If Ps-Hegesippus’s genre of writing was as important and as idiosyncratic as I have suggested, an obvious question arises: why, and for whom, was Ps-Hegesippus so writing? As Terry Eagleton pointed out: “Readers do not . . . encounter texts in a void.”<sup>59</sup> Rather, the expectations of readers and the concomitant habits of authors are informed by various contextual factors, not least of which may be a culture’s current political situation and resultant “mood.” Moving in this vein from an examination of the power of genre to what I will call the “power of context,” we shift our analysis away from the literary form and features that render *De Excidio* a persuasive text to the broader discursive habitat and cultural ecosystem that rendered it, in its own time as well as thereafter, a timely and therefore potent one.

### III. The Emperor Julian, *De Excidio*, and the Power of Context

On June 17, 362 CE, the Emperor Julian, whom Christians would come to dub “the Apostate,” outlawed Christians from teaching secular literature within the empire.

<sup>53</sup>On correlations between culture and human physiology, neuro-biochemistry, etc., see Joseph Heinrich, *The Secret of Our Success: How Culture is Driving Human Evolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>54</sup>See D. S. Levene, *Livy on the Hannibalic War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 216–217.

<sup>55</sup>See Rosaria Vignolo Munson, ed., *Herodotus: Volume 2—Herodotus and the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>56</sup>See Carson Bay, “Judaism,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Tacitus*, ed. Victoria Emma Pagan (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming).

<sup>57</sup>See Todd S. Berzon, *Classifying Christians: Ethnography, Heresiology, and the Limits of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

<sup>58</sup>See Carson Bay, “Exemplarity, Exegesis, and Ethnography: Abraham in Pseudo-Hegesippus as a Test Case for Biblical Reception in Christian Late Antiquity,” *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* 8 (forthcoming).

<sup>59</sup>Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 72.

This resulted from Julian's identifying within Christianity—a system of thought that he knew, because he was raised in it—an “anti-culture” that “refused to believe the literature on which all education was based.”<sup>60</sup> Reaction to this legislation reverberated through subsequent Christian thought and literature,<sup>61</sup> especially since it was accompanied by a promise made by Julian to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple and restore Jewish rites there.<sup>62</sup> Julian threatened to separate the Christians from the intellectual and literary heritage of the classical world and at the same time to eclipse their religious and ethnic identity with a revivification of what Julian saw as a more legitimate one: that of the Jews. The Jews would be allowed to play in the religious game of Julian's Hellenistic world; the Christians would not. This twin threat held monumental importance for Christians of that age. Frances Young, in an essay dealing with Christian writings in the fourth and fifth centuries (the “Golden Age of Patristic Literature”), marked the aftermath of Julian's program as one of two “determinative moments for the character of Christian literature” in late antiquity.<sup>63</sup> (The first was Constantine's rise to power and patronage of the church following the empire's final attempt to eradicate Christianity.) As Albert Bell first suggested and as others have since endorsed, *De Excidio* seems to have been written at just this formative moment.<sup>64</sup> This immediate context of writing aids our understanding not only of *De Excidio*'s anti-Judaism but also of its classical form and tenor.

The place of Judaism within Julian's culture program and attack on Christianity has recently received treatment in a monograph by Ari Finkelstein.<sup>65</sup> Finkelstein shows that the Jews are a multivalent resource for Julian, serving not just to undermine Christians, whom he calls “Galileans” (thus robbing them of any ethnic status), but also to reinforce the cultural *koine* of Hellenism. Notably, Finkelstein sees Julian's “Jewish gambit” as responding to Eusebius of Caesarea's “attempt . . . to ‘historicize’ the Jews as a defunct *ethnos* whose remains could be used to authenticate and define Christianity.” As we have seen above, Ps-Hegesippus undertakes the same tack to historicize a defunct

<sup>60</sup>Frances Young, “Classical genres in Christian guise; Christian genres in classical guise,” in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 251–258, at 251.

<sup>61</sup>Julian's program was itself fundamentally reactionary, as were the Christian reactions it instigated; see Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), part 7: “Apostasy and Reaction.”

<sup>62</sup>David B. Levenson, “The Ancient and Medieval Sources for the Emperor Julian's Attempt to Rebuild the Jerusalem Temple,” *JSJ* 35 (2004): 409–460; David B. Levenson, “A Source and Tradition Critical Analysis of the Stories of the Emperor Julian's Attempt to Rebuild the Jerusalem Temple” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1980); but see also Glen W. Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978); and Averil Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire: AD 284–430* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>63</sup>Young, “Classical genres,” 251. One contribution of this article is to illustrate one specific, distinctive way in which the larger vision cast by Young, who focuses on more well-known authors, materialized.

<sup>64</sup>Bell, “Historiographical Analysis,” 3, 207; later, Bell, “Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus”; but see also Bay, “The Bible, the Classics, and the Jews,” 43–44; Somenzi, *Egesippo—Ambrogio*, 153–157; and Oded Irsahi, “Dating the Eschaton: Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Calculations in Late Antiquity,” in *Apocalyptic Time*, ed. Albert I. Baumgarten (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 113–154, at 145n94, citing Bell.

<sup>65</sup>Ari Finkelstein, *The Specter of the Jews: Emperor Julian and the Rhetoric of Ethnicity in Syrian Antioch* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 2. Even more recently, see Scott Bradbury, “Julian and the Jews,” in *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, ed. Stefan Rebenich and Hans-Ulrich Wiemer (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 267–292, at 282–289. See also Peter Van Nuffelen, “The Christian Reception of Julian,” in *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, Rebenich and Wiemer, 360–397.

Judaism, though without acknowledging any remains. This perspectival proclivity in *De Excidio* becomes more intelligible when viewed in the light of Julian's attempt to resurrect Judaism specifically as a means of delegitimizing Christianity. Julian, "by raising the specter of the Jews . . . resurrects the power of a living, breathing, efficacious, and compelling Jewish people and their laws for Christians."<sup>66</sup> Response to such shows of power can take different forms. Writing within a nascent Christian empire that understood (divine) power to be definitively on its side,<sup>67</sup> Ps-Hegesippus's response seems to have been one of outright contradiction: far from being a "living, breathing" entity, Ps-Hegesippus presents the Jews as obsolete and tacitly extinct.

Ps-Hegesippus's chosen genre of writing may well have been another means of responding to Julian's perceived reign of terror. *De Excidio*'s generic identity, as mentioned above, was that of the Greco-Roman historiography of the classical world and *not* the Christian forms of historiography emergent in late antiquity. Frances Young, discussing the Christian literary aftermath of Julian's polemical splash, has pointed to a causal connection between Julian's attempt to cordon off Christians from the world of classical education and literature and the subsequent increase in Christian authors engaging in just that classical milieu in their writings. One method of doing this, which Ps-Hegesippus adopted, was one in which "Christian rhetoricians began to produce a new literature which had classical styles and genres but Christian content."<sup>68</sup> *De Excidio*'s unlikely genre identifies it as what Young calls a "reaction" to Julian's anti-Christian (and pro-Jewish) agenda.

If the post-Julianic age does (help) explain *De Excidio*'s anti-Jewish content and classicizing format, a reasonable question could be: did *De Excidio* "work" in attempting to write the Jews out of history (while cementing the classical respectability of Christianity)? Commenting upon the fourth-century Christian tendency to respond to the threat of Jews and Judaism by recounting their divine damnation on account of the death of Christ, Andrew Jacobs avers that "this constant defeat of the Jews . . . only thinly covers over, and necessarily recalls and amplifies, Christian fears of the revival of their menacing otherness."<sup>69</sup> Thus: "Every time the conquered Jew is conjured into the Christian imagination, so, too, is the menace that necessitated conquest. The interplay of conquest and resistance that emerges from this colonialist dialectic is likewise focused on the bare Temple mount, on the threat of Jewish resurgence." Jacobs then marks the signal moment reinforcing Christian anti-Judaism in late antiquity: "This repetitive threat was made most palpable for Christians by the abortive attempt of the last pagan emperor, Julian, to permit the Jews to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem." He goes on to show that in the respective *Church Histories* of Rufinus, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, in addition to other literature (like the *Letter on the Temple* by Cyril of Alexandria), this moment became the primary fuel enlivening anti-Judaism within the Christian historiographical imagination: "The menace of the Jews and their Temple became another narrative of conquest and appropriation to be

<sup>66</sup>Finkelstein, *Specter of the Jews*, 2, continuing: "many of whom had already experienced Jews in Antioch in this way." Significantly, *De Excidio* may hail from Antioch: Carson Bay, "Pseudo-Hegesippus at Antioch? Testing a Hypothesis for the Provenance of the *De Excidio Hierosolymitano*," *BABELAO* 8 (2019): 97–128.

<sup>67</sup>On this understanding of God and state in the fourth century, see Harold A. Drake, *A Century of Miracles: Christians, Pagans, Jews, and the Supernatural* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>68</sup>Young, "Classical genres," 251.

<sup>69</sup>Andrew S. Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 193–195.

repeated by a triumphant Christian empire, one that brought the menace and fear of the colonized into sharper relief.<sup>70</sup>

Jacobs's point is that, in all these responses to Julian and/or the Jews, the Christian fixation upon and dismissal of Jewishness is always a simultaneous reminder of that same Jewishness and its "menace" (read: its power). Thus, read in the post-colonial light of nascent Christian empire, Ps-Hegesippus's insistence upon the extinction of Judaism was at the same time a testament to the Jews' enduring significance. Ps-Hegesippus thus provides a new angle on the incoherence that Todd Berzon locates within the Christian anti-Jewish discourse of late antiquity (it is no accident that the fuel for Berzon's argument consists of authors roughly contemporary to Ps-Hegesippus: for example, Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Rufinus, and the *Theodosian Code*).<sup>71</sup> Writing the Jews out of history was always a tenuous proposition.

If *De Excidio* was written *contra Iulianum*, as it were, then we may appreciate the text's anti-Jewish rhetoric and classical stylistic tendencies as a two-pronged response to Julian's doubly threatening polemic, in which Christians were cast not just as bad Jews but as bad Romans. In so doing, Ps-Hegesippus "out-Romaned a Roman Emperor" by producing a disputation on both fronts in one and the same piece of literature.<sup>72</sup> If so, were the Jews merely the necessary conceptual medium by which such an argument was to be made, or would *De Excidio*'s anti-Jewish historiography have been seen as a necessary *ad scribendum* even if Julian had never risen to power? Other Christian authors were careful to make the same overall historical points as does Ps-Hegesippus (most prominently Eusebius), but none ever took time to clothe such an argument in classical historiographical garb. In any case, *De Excidio* does the work of combining these anti-Jewish, pro-classical tendencies of late antique Christianity, and the cultural context of the aftermath of Julian's anti-Christian invective may help explain both the impetus for and the success of Ps-Hegesippus's literary endeavor.

#### IV. The Legacy of Pseudo-Hegesippus

In his brilliant journalistic endeavor, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell articulates a cogent, multifaceted argument to the effect that unusual success—whether of individuals, groups, companies, etc. —is rarely, if ever, the sole result of "genius," "brilliance," or the special abilities or capacities we may impute to those who attain exceptional achievement.<sup>73</sup> Rather, success can almost always be explained, at least in part, by the times and environs in which individuals, groups, or companies are born, develop, and live. I suggest that the exact same principle may be applied to texts. One hardly need strain the imagination to see that by historical accident certain texts become world-famous and enormously influential while others are left by the wayside and forgotten (where now are the thousands of works imputed to Origen of Alexandria?). I submit that this always has to do with what we might be tempted to

<sup>70</sup>Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews*, 196.

<sup>71</sup>Todd S. Berzon, "The Double Bind of Christianity's Judaism: Language, Law, and the Incoherence of Late Antique Discourse," *J ECS* 23 (2015): 445–480, at 445; and cf. James Carleton Paget, "Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity," *ZAC* 1 (1997): 195–225.

<sup>72</sup>My thanks to the anonymous *Church History* reviewer for pushing me to make this argument more clearly, whose turn of phrase "out-Romaning a Roman emperor" I have shamelessly stolen here.

<sup>73</sup>Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 2008).

call “chance” but that is, in fact, a partially intelligible consequence of numerous contextual factors.

As we have shown above, *De Excidio* was written at a time when Christians felt an existential need to assert their ability to deal with the classical literary and cultural tradition and to delegitimize the Jews, whose very identity and history was seen as a clear and present danger to their own. It was written at a time when major advances in the infrastructure, resources, and administrative abilities of the church and of individual Christian elites had increased significantly.<sup>74</sup> Christians could thus more adequately reproduce and thus preserve texts.<sup>75</sup> *De Excidio* was written in Latin, the vernacular of the Roman imperial world,<sup>76</sup> though it may well have been penned in Antioch,<sup>77</sup> thus reaching beyond the (construct of a) “Western, Latin” sphere that scholars of late antiquity are wont to assume. It based itself on Flavius Josephus’s *Jewish War*, a historically popular text among Christians, and produced a Christian version of this work, solidifying its importance for Christian readers. And *De Excidio* was written in a way that harnessed the rhetorical and cultural conventions of classical literature and genre to voice an anti-Jewish historical perspective in a medium more tailored to making such an argument than any other. Moreover, again, both the rationale behind the creation of such a narrative and the guarantor of its popularity may be found in the highly charged environment following Julian’s reign in which Christians needed to conceptualize a historical Jewish identity that could be subordinated and made safe for Christian apprehension. Because of what it said, how it said it, and when it said it, *De Excidio* was destined to become a powerhouse of epistemology within ancient Christian anti-Jewish thought.

The two sections above provide reasons *why* Ps-Hegesippus constitutes a critical contribution to ancient anti-Jewish Christian thought: based on its form or genre and on the historical moment at which it emerged, *De Excidio* seems to have been uniquely poised to codify anti-Jewish ideas upon the Christian historiographical imagination. Before concluding, here I briefly show that we actually can trace Ps-Hegesippus’s influence in this regard (drawing largely upon the work of Richard Matthew Pollard as well as several others).

A few centuries after *De Excidio*’s appearance, Julian of Toledo (d. 690) cribs on Ps-Hegesippus’s prologue in his anti-Jewish tract *De comprobatione aetatis sextae* (1.20).<sup>78</sup> This text plays upon the prophecy of Genesis 49:10—“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples”—to argue that the Jews missed the obvious advent of their would-be messiah, Jesus, an idea implied in *De Excidio*’s

<sup>74</sup>“Books cost money,” after all; see Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), 170.

<sup>75</sup>Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 121–122.

<sup>76</sup>On the ancient church, Roman Empire, and Latin language, see Mark E. Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1989), 57–59. Concerning the impact of Latin’s grammatical structure and classical corpus on late ancient Christian literature, see C. M. Chin, *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>77</sup>Bay, “Pseudo-Hegesippus at Antioch?”

<sup>78</sup>Pollard, “The *De Excidio*,” 89.



Prologue 3.<sup>79</sup> Probably not incidentally, this prophetic passage was also evidence that Emperor Julian, whose knowledge of Judaism was largely based in the biblical text,<sup>80</sup> marshalled in his *Against the Galileans* to refute the Christian claim to being the “true Israel.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, there is reason to believe that Ps-Hegesippus’s historical-prophetic framing of his anti-Jewish narrative, presented in a way that reflects his situation in the immediately post-Julian era, had a direct influence on later iterations of Christian anti-Jewish writing. Ps-Hegesippus may have fueled an even more aggressive anti-Jewish agenda in the text known as the *Vindicta Salvatoris* (*Vengeance of the Savior*), probably written in Aquitaine around 700.<sup>82</sup> This text relates how the Roman emperor-to-be Titus is converted in Aquitaine upon hearing the story of Jesus. Joining with his father Vespasian, he then sails with any army to Jerusalem to wipe “the enemies of Jesus” off the face of the earth.<sup>83</sup> Ps-Hegesippus provided the impetus for the extrapolation of these same themes in other works: among these is the Carolingian poem *Arve poli conditorem*, an *abecedarius* that recounts Titus’s and Vespasian’s vengeance upon the Jews for their denial/murder of Christ where every stanza ends with the line: “the princes assembled to destroy that savage [Jewish] race.”<sup>84</sup> Pollard locates “the same sort of amplified interpretation of ‘divine vengeance’” in *De Subversione Hierusalem*, a work by Walafrid Strabo in 824 that was also influenced by *De Excidio*.<sup>85</sup> This text draws upon *De Excidio* to re-present the triumphant solution to the Jews’ killing of Jesus: the divinely ordained destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Later, Paul Alvarus of Cordoba in 840 used *De Excidio* in his polemical *Letters* sent to a certain Eleazar, a convert to Judaism, to argue that not only was Jerusalem’s destruction prophesied by Daniel but that even Jews had known this to be true (!).<sup>86</sup> The ninth-century work called the *Anacephalaeosis* can also be added to the list of trenchantly anti-Jewish works that relied upon Ps-Hegesippus: this text is based primarily

<sup>79</sup>It is not impossible that *De Excidio* influenced Sozomen, who also begins his *Church History* with a mention of Gen 49:10 as a prediction that “the rulers of the Hebrews of the tribe of Judah, the tribal leader, shall fail.” Theresa Urbainczyk, “Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 46 (1997): 355–373, at 364. See Eusebius, *Church History* 1.6.1; Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 8.1; and Ronald E. Heine, *Reading the Old Testament with the Ancient Church: Exploring the Formation of Early Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 113–114.

<sup>80</sup>Günter Stemberger, *Juden und Christen im Heiligen Land: Palästina unter Konstantin und Theodosius* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1987), 260; and see the sections on “Julian und das Judentum,” 160–163, and “Der Wiederaufbau des Tempels,” 163–174.

<sup>81</sup>See Julian, *Against the Galileans* fr. 62. See Somenzi, *Egesippo—Ambrogio*, 153–157; and Finkelstein, *Specter of the Jews*, 55.

<sup>82</sup>Céline Urlacher-Becht and Rémi Gounelle, “Un développement littéraire medieval: la ‘légende’ de la Vindicta Salvatoris (Vengeance du Sauveur),” in *Les récits de la destruction de Jérusalem (70 ap. J.-C.): Contextes, représentations et enjeux, entre Antiquité et Moyen Âge*, ed. Frédéric Chapot (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 293–341.

<sup>83</sup>Pollard, “The *De Excidio*,” 93.

<sup>84</sup>“ad delendam sevam gentem [Iudeam] convenerunt principes.” See Pollard, “The *De Excidio*,” 94.

<sup>85</sup>Pollard, “The *De Excidio*,” 95.

<sup>86</sup>Paul of Cordoba, *Epistula* 16. Pollard, “The *De Excidio*,” 80; Ludwig Traube, “Zum lateinischen Iosephus,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 39 (1884): 477–478; Vincenzo Ussani, “Su le fortune medi-evali dell’Egesippo,” *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia romana di Archeologia* 9 (1933): 107–118, at 114; and Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 118.

upon *De Excidio*<sup>87</sup>—it has sometimes been confused with it<sup>88</sup>—and as such provides another example of the lasting, geographically dispersed, and rhetorically charged legacy of *De Excidio*'s historicized anti-Judaism. A final example of Ps-Hegesippus's influence on later Christian anti-Jewish literature comes from the anonymous, mid-thirteenth-century *De excidio urbis Ierosolimorum*, a poem of 1,896 verses "on the destruction of the city of Jerusalem."<sup>89</sup> This poem, which participates poetically in the medieval Christian enterprise of historical rumination over Jerusalem that bears the pockmarks of anti-Jewish perspective,<sup>90</sup> apparently drew on *De Excidio*.<sup>91</sup> In lines 1401–1402, it addresses "Judea" and asks the question: "What, Judea, did you think was going to happen to you, when you crucified him who had manifested himself as God?"<sup>92</sup> It is difficult to imagine that this line is *not* drawing upon a similar rhetorical question from *De Excidio* 5.2.1, where the author, addressing Jerusalem, asks: "What did you think was going to happen when you crucified your salvation [that is, Jesus] with your own hands?"<sup>93</sup> I suggest that, like so much earlier Christian literature, this poem draws upon one of the standard fonts of anti-Jewish material within ancient Christian literature: *De Excidio*.

More could be added to this short survey. For example, it may be no coincidence that an author like Isidore of Seville, who knew *De Excidio* well, was also an important figure in his time for perpetuating anti-Jewish ideas through literature,<sup>94</sup> or that Bede would use *De Excidio* as part of a discussion that amounts to a critique of Jewish unbelief.<sup>95</sup> The fact is that *De Excidio*, like the larger reception tradition of Flavius Josephus's works to which it is often taken to belong, was one of the most influential historiographical works of the Middle Ages, coming to hold an authority akin to that of the writings of the church fathers. Richard Pollard has shown this more thoroughly than

<sup>87</sup> Actually, the *Historiae de Excidio Hierosolymitanae urbis Anacephalaeosis*: Pollard, "The *De Excidio*," 96–98; see also Amnon Linder, "Ps. Ambrose's *Anacephalaeosis*: a Carolingian Treatise on the Destruction of Jerusalem," *Revue d'histoire des textes* 22 (1992): 145–158.

<sup>88</sup> Inaccurate and confused is the description in Irena Dorota Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 322n188.

<sup>89</sup> A critical edition and translation are in preparation by Greti Dinkova-Bruun of the Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto.

<sup>90</sup> See E. Göransson et al., eds., *The Arts of Editing Medieval Greek and Latin: A Casebook* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 100.

<sup>91</sup> Greti Dinkova-Bruun, "Latin Versifications of Josephus's Latin *Bellum*," *Medaevialia et Humanistica* 46 (2021): 37–54.

<sup>92</sup> "Quid, Iudea, tibi credebas esse futurum, / Dum crucifigis eum quem patet esse Deum."

<sup>93</sup> Ussani, *De Excidio*, 296: "Quid putabas futurum, cum tuis manibus salutare tuum crucifigeres?" Compare the following line 1404—"Since you pressed with thorns him who was a pure rose" (*Dum premis hunc spinis qui rosa pura fuit*)—to *De Excidio*'s Prologue 2, where Ps-Hegesippus characterizes his attempt to make sense of post-biblical Jewish history as something done "as though seeking a rose among thorns" (*tumquam in spinis rosam quarentes*). Cf. Matt 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, whose Latin Vulgate renderings likewise speak in terms of *spinae* (thorns).

<sup>94</sup> See Wolfram Drews, *The Unknown Neighbor: The Jew in the Thought of Isidore of Seville* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Wolfram Drews, *Juden und Judentum bei Isidor von Sevilla: Studien zum Traktat De fide catholica contra Iudaeos* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2001); and Bat-Sheva Albert, "Isidore of Seville: His Attitude Towards Judaism and His Impact on Early Medieval Canon Law," *JQR* 80 (1990): 207–220.

<sup>95</sup> Bede, *Exposition on the Acts of the Apostles* 26.27, where *De Excidio* 2.9.1 helps Bede show that Agrippa, before whom the Apostle Paul defended Christianity in Acts 26:27, knew something of Christianity's divinely ordained legitimacy but failed to believe nonetheless.

anyone.<sup>96</sup> However, we should note that “it becomes very difficult to separate the *De Excidio*, Eusebius, and Eusebius-shaped readings of Josephus after the later fourth century. Both Eusebius and the *De Excidio* offer a moralizing, Christian interpretation of the destruction of Jerusalem: that it was divine vengeance for Jewish impiety and their hand in the death of Jesus.”<sup>97</sup> In other words, even though we can see that Ps-Hegesippus had an early, significant, and widely dispersed influence in terms of anti-Jewish ideology, we are incapable of fully appreciating the extent of that influence because the ideas which Ps-Hegesippus helped codify became (and to some extent had already been) part of the Christian vernacular. However, this does not hinder our argument; rather, it complements the conclusion that as both bastion of Christian anti-Judaism and repository of historiographical Latinity, *De Excidio* had an enormous influence on subsequent Christian tradition, and we do not even know the half of it.

#### V. Conclusion

The above survey is enough to show that *De Excidio* wielded a formidable influence upon subsequent Christian thought and literature, especially of the anti-Jewish variety and particularly as concerns the historiographical articulation of anti-Judaism (wherein Christ’s killing and Jerusalem’s destruction as divine punishment are linked). This undergirds the arguments made above: (1) that *De Excidio* communicates a forceful articulation of Christian anti-Jewish thought; (2) that some of that force came from *De Excidio*’s genre of classicizing historiography; and (3) that Ps-Hegesippus’s probable context of writing, the post-Julian era, made it a particularly timely iteration of its already axiomatic claims.

Quite frankly, what we know of *De Excidio*’s ideological afterlife is probably only a drop in the bucket of the impact it actually had. In addition to being extremely anti-Jewish, the text was extremely popular and influential; it is an undeniably important point in the development of the anti-Jewish Christian historiographical imagination and its literary manifestations.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, in closing, I suggest that *De Excidio*’s routine absence from scholarly accounts of developing Christian anti-Judaism in late antiquity is not a small lacuna but a glaring omission.

<sup>96</sup>Richard Matthew Pollard, “Flavius Josephus: The Most Influential Classical Historian of the Early Middle Ages,” in *Writing the Early Medieval West: Studies in Honour of Rosamond McKitterick*, ed. Elina Screen and Charles West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 15–32, and at 29: “by every single quantifiable measure then, Josephus towered above Livy and Sallust during the early Middle Ages.” See further Pollard, “The *De Excidio*,”; and, soon, Richard Matthew Pollard, “Flavius Josephus: A Carolingian Church Father?” in *A Companion to the Latin Josephus in the Western Middle Ages*, ed. Karen M. Kletter and Paul Hillard (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). See also Heinz Schreckenberg, “Josephus und die christliche Wirkungsgeschichte seines *Bellum Judaicum*,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, vol. 2:21.1, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 1106–1217.

<sup>97</sup>Pollard, “The *De Excidio*,” 85.

<sup>98</sup>Nor is this the only kind of literature that *De Excidio* influenced. One of the most pronounced and important literary afterlives of *De Excidio* comes in the Jewish work called *Sefer Yosippon*, written in early tenth-century southern Italy. This Hebrew text uses *De Excidio* (along with the Latin translation of Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities*) as one of its main sources, following *De Excidio*’s narrative for over half of its length yet omitting *De Excidio*’s anti-Jewish rhetoric at every turn. In this, *Sefer Yosippon* constitutes a robust challenge and response to *De Excidio*. See Saskia Dönitz, “Historiography among Byzantine Jews: The Case of *Sefer Yosippon*,” in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Robert Bonfil et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 951–968. Thus, the Jews do “write back” at *De Excidio* eventually.

Ps-Hegesippus is almost never included in broader discussions of early Christian anti-Judaism today, and where he has been included in such studies in the past—for example, in Heinz Schreckenberg’s massive project in the 1980s cataloguing “Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte”—he becomes effectively lost in a vast sea of exemplars embodying the massive tradition of Christian anti-Jewish literature.<sup>99</sup> Scholars have thus either ignored or overwritten *De Excidio*’s signal importance within the tradition of Christian anti-Judaism. Ps-Hegesippus’s inclusion in such discussions is lacking because, in large part, scholars tracing the early iterations of Christian anti-Judaism cite the ancient Christian authors who are famous *today* and who thus exercise an outsized influence upon contemporary scholarly perspectives, as if the texts and authors familiar to contemporary scholars always reflect the popularity and influence of those texts and authors in (for example) the ancient and medieval worlds.

To mark out some prominent examples: David Nirenberg’s *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* is to my mind the best treatment in recent years of the development and significance of anti-Jewish thought. His chapter on “The Early Church” deals with the usual suspects: Irenaeus, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Origen, Eusebius, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.<sup>100</sup> Nirenberg’s treatment of so many ancient authors is commendable, and my point here is not to criticize Nirenberg’s work *per se*. But Nirenberg’s choice of the last five of these authors mentioned, from Eusebius to Augustine, tacitly reinforces a scholarly assumption whereby the authors who constitute known entities to modern scholars become the authors who figure in (and are thus identified as being important for) scholarly discussions.<sup>101</sup> The familiar data, not necessarily the best data, drives the research. Another popular survey is James Carroll’s *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History*, winner of the 2002 National Book Award in Jewish history.<sup>102</sup> The book has since been adapted to the big screen by Oren Jacoby as a full-length documentary film: *Constantine’s Sword* (2008). A major portion of Carroll’s history is expressly about the historicization of Jews as understood through a Christian prophetic lens as cursed and responsible for Jesus’s death. Yet, while the historicizing anti-Jewish vision which Carroll isolates is precisely that which *De Excidio* casts in a unique way and at a critical juncture in history, predictably, Ps-Hegesippus makes no appearance in the book (but Eusebius and Augustine do). The simple reason for this is that ancient works and authors with which scholars are most familiar today end up *ipso facto* becoming the *ad hoc* sources cited when dealing with Christian antiquity (I say “today” because Ps-Hegesippus was quite well known throughout the pre-modern period, and then sometimes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). To Nirenberg and Carroll could be added innumerable other works, books like Robert Chazan’s *From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism* and Jeremy Cohen’s *Christ Killers*.<sup>103</sup> At the very least, we may say that these (mostly excellent) surveys, which embody scholarly consensus, operate under an availability bias and

<sup>99</sup>Schreckenberg, *Die christliche Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*, 310–311.

<sup>100</sup>David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2013), 87–134.

<sup>101</sup>Again, see Bell, “Classical and Christian Traditions.”

<sup>102</sup>James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History* (New York: Mariner, 2002).

<sup>103</sup>Robert Chazan, *From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism: Ancient and Medieval Christian Constructions of Jewish History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); and Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

account for only a part of the relevant data.<sup>104</sup> No one knows who “Pseudo-Hegesippus” is; everyone knows Eusebius and Augustine. Thus, the latter two appear in probably every modern survey of the tradition of Christian anti-Judaism; the former almost never does.

Ps-Hegesippus postulated powerfully and exhaustively the Jewish guilt for Jesus’s death and Jerusalem’s resultant God-sanctioned demise; he did so within the guise of ancient historiography; and he did so within a critical moment of Christian late antiquity—namely, the broad-spectrum response to Julian’s anti-Christian cultural program. In and of itself, *De Excidio*’s classicizing, anti-Jewish contribution to late antique Christian literature is substantial. Moreover, it is not difficult to trace Ps-Hegesippus’s influence upon the Christian historiographical imagination—and in particular its anti-Jewish manifestations—across the centuries from late antiquity into the Middle Ages. For this reason, when we think about the tradition of Christian anti-Judaism, whether in late antiquity or over the longer *durée*, *De Excidio* properly belongs to that complex of thought. Indeed, to omit it therefrom is to prefer the truisms of convention to the actual historical manifestations of literary reception and ideological development within the anti-Jewish pockets of the tradition of Christian discourse.

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<sup>104</sup>This does not mean that the data with which they do reckon is not the most important, but I happen to believe that it is not.

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