Living with Books in Early Medieval England: Solomon and Saturn, Bibliophilia, and the Globalist Red Book of Darley*

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"For Books are not absolutely dead things... I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men"

- John Milton[1]

How did tenth-century readers describe the experience of reading—or merely holding—books? The related early medieval experience of education has received much more attention, with an important new study by Irina Dumitrescu that illuminates the emotionally fraught and sometimes troubling relationships that subsisted between teachers and students.[2] In this essay, I look to the Red Book of Darley (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 422) as a window into the broader book culture that subsumed them.[3] Rather than tracing the bonds shared by schoolmasters and pupils or patrons and poets, then, I trace the

[1] John Milton, *Areopagitica*, ed. John W. Hales (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), p. 5.
[2] Irina Dumitrescu, *The Experience of Education in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[3] This manuscript is numbers 110 and 111 in Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014), 118–19.

similarly intimate, if occasionally more private, affective entanglements of early medieval English readers and their manuscripts, as embodied by the images and poems in CCCC MS 422.

Interpersonal associations no doubt filtered into the reading habits of early medieval readers in important ways, but the individual, sometimes emotional experiences of readers who coveted books *even when they did not read them* has been much less studied. Indeed, even as we have examined our own sensual and affective responses to medieval manuscripts as haptic objects,[4] we have paid less attention to the abstract bibliophilia of their makers, who envisioned Bede reclining on pillows surrounded by books and reveled in images of themselves seated cross-legged amid tottering stacks of writing, as in Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Enchiridion* and in *Solomon and Saturn II*, respectively—both images that I will return to at the end of this essay.

Of course, William H. Sherman and others have helpfully examined readers' marks, from loopy signatures, pen trials, and marginal notes to scribal reworkings of texts and full-page self-

[4] See, for instance, Rossell Hope Robbins, "Mirth in Manuscripts," *Essays and Studies* 21 (1968): 1–28; Richard A. Dwyer, "The Appreciation of Handmade Literature," *The Chaucer Review* 8.3 (1974), 221–40; Jennifer Borland, "Unruly Reading: The Consuming Role of Touch in the Experience of a Medieval Manuscript," in *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound: Materially Engaged Readings of Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. Jonathan Wilcox (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2013), 97–114; and Christopher De Hamel, *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts* (London: Penguin Books, 2016).

portraits of medieval and early modern owners and copyists,[5] and early English manuscripts with known makers and owners such as Ælfwine's Prayerbook and the Eadwine Psalter have drawn plenty of attention.[6] Indeed, 1990 ushered in the broadened approach to codicology known as the New Philology, which stipulates that literary texts exist within their material contexts, so that the physical layout of the book—its illumination, script, marginal notes, and surrounding texts—constitutes the text at hand.[7] So, just as scribal errors can reveal points of confusion, marginal additions can also testify to the way certain texts were received at various points in time.

Yet, manuscript studies has taken less stock of the kinds of entanglements that have recently come to the fore in book history writ large, as exemplified most notably by Leah Price's *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain*—that is, the study of "bookish transactions" that do not necessarily involve reading or writing at all,

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[5] William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). On scribal interventions, see also Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012).

[6] Though initially one volume, Ælfwine's Prayerbook now survives in two manuscripts: London, British Library, Cotton Titus MSS D. xxvi + xxvii. For further details, see Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no. 380, pp. 305–7. The Eadwine Psalter was copied in the mid-twelfth century and is now Cambridge, Trinity College, R. 17. 1.

[7] For an overview of the special issue that coined the term, see Stephen G. Nichols, "Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture," *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (1990): 1–10.

such as Victorian women matching their vade mecums to their gowns.[8] Or, for that matter, late fifteenth-century women, for whom beautiful books could serve as both fashionable accessories and mother-daughter heirlooms, as in the 1496 will in which a Lincolnshire father prescribed "that my doughter lady ffitzhugh have a boke of gold, enameled, that was my wiffes, whiche she was wounte to were."[9]

To be sure, such literary accessorizing doesn't foreclose actual reading. Moreover, we certainly have our own forms of not reading—most common among them the tendency to live alongside aspirational bedside reading piles or the desperate efforts put forth by many of us to read texts that continually escape us, whether due to linguistic barriers, the lack of a modern edition, or general inscrutability as in the famously unreadable Voynich manuscript with its unique, perpetually-beguiling alphabet.[10] As Amy Hungerford has observed, our present-

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[8] Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[9] The will of Sir Thomas Borough is National Archives, Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 11/10; Image Reference 553/374. Margaret Roos, his wife, had died in 1488. For more on late medieval women accessorizing with golden books, see Susan E. James, *The Feminine Dynamic in English Art, 1485-1603: Women as Consumers, Patrons and Painters* (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 82–6.

[10] For further discussion, see Raymond Clemens and Deborah E. Harkness, *The Voynich Manuscript* (New Haven: Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, 2016). For an example of the kinds of attention Voynich attracts, see Lawrence Goldstone and Nancy Bazelon Goldstone, *The Friar and the Cipher: Roger Bacon and the Unsolved Mystery of the Most Unusual Manuscript in the World* (New York: Doubleday, 2005).

day experience of reading is predominantly one of never being able to read "it all."[11]

But here, I do not mean failure or inability to read *per se*. Nor do I (or Price) have in mind "bookish transactions" in the form of the embodied traces of reading that mark the pages of medieval manuscripts, such as the enlarged illustrations of Christ's side wound, which have been almost rubbed away by medieval devotees,[12] or the less glamorous but equally bodily testaments of dirty and sometimes ragged corners, which record repeated skin-on-skin contact between sheets of parchment and their readers' thumbs and index fingers in the turning of much-loved pages.

I am thinking instead of less readerly marks, which show books forming a part of non-literary life: the incisions and burns that demonstrate that the Exeter Book served as a cutting board, a kind of trivet for a hot poker, and a coaster as well as a *mycel Englisc boc be gehwilcum þingum on leoðwisum geworht* ("large English book about

[11] Amy Hungerford, "On Not Reading," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 11, 2016, https://www.chronicle.com/article/On-Refusing-to-Read/237717.

[12] For an overview of the latter practice, see Michelle M. Sauer, "Touching Jesus: Christ's Side Wound & Medieval Manuscript Tradition," *Women's Literary Culture and the Medieval Canon*, January 5, 2016, blogs.surrey.ac.uk/medievalwomen/2016/01/05/touching-jesus-christs-side-wound-medieval-manuscript-tradition/; Nancy Thebaut, "Bleeding Pages, Bleeding Bodies: A Gendered Reading of British Library MS Egerton 1821," *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* 45, no. 2 (2009): 175–200.

diverse topics written in verse”).[13] Or the marginal note recounting the ransoming of the Codex Aureus *mid clæne golde* (“with pure gold”) and what it says about the trade value of gold-flecked parchment folded between gem-encrusted boards.[14] And even the broader associations of the embodied letters preserved in CCCC 422 and now widely consultable in Parker on the Web—those moments of bookish encounters that move beyond “merely reading,” to borrow a phrase from Kinohi Nishikawa.[15] Indeed, the aforementioned will is notable in that it bequeaths a book that is distinguishable not by its contents or its subject matter but by its luxe cover and memorial significance.

In this essay, I will thus read the so-called Red Book of Darley as a record of early medieval readerly experience as well as a record of the sometimes equally enthralling experience of not reading but of coming close not necessarily to contact relics or to lavishly illuminated codices but merely to stacks of philosophical treatises and theological tractates—that is, the cozy comfort of being surrounded by books even if only imaginatively or aspirationally, which is, after all, also the experience of perusing Parker on the Web. As I will argue, CCCC MS

[13] This entry forms a part of Leofric’s donation list, which is currently bound at the start of the Exeter Book manuscript (fols. 1–2); see Richard Gameson, “The Origin of the Exeter Book of Old English Poetry,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 25 (1996): 135–85, p. 135.
[14] Max Adams, “The Ransom of the Golden Gospel: On the Trail of the Codex Aureus,” Royal Literary Fund, June 16, 2017, https://www.rlf.org.uk/showcase/the-ransom-of-the-golden-gospel/.
[15] Kinohi Nishikawa, “Merely Reading,” *PMLA* 130, no. 3 (2015): 697–703.

422 accordingly offers a case study for early medieval thinking about books themselves and the ways in which they could shape the lives of the people who lived alongside them—as well as a testament to the global investments of early medieval English bibliophiles, who imaginatively assembled *larcræft* (‘knowledge’) from far-flung libraries in Libya, Greece, and India, as in the Old English poems now known as *Solomon and Saturn I* and *II*, which form a part of CCCC 422’s decidedly global entanglements. Indeed, I argue that MS 422 offers a fascinating lens into early medieval thinking about textuality, reading, attention, and book culture broadly conceived.

CCCC MS 422: PROVENANCE AND CONTENTS

Consisting today of two parts, MS 422 had been joined together by the twelfth century. The first section (pp. 1–26) was copied in the mid-tenth century and contains—to continue in the affective vein—one of the most delightful clusters of Old English texts: a series of dialogues, partially in poetry and partially in prose, between Solomon, the famously learned King of Israel, and the enthusiastic bookworm Saturn, a Chaldean prince. This is a fascinating early English innovation, which reshapes the long-enduring Solomon and Marcolf tradition for a North Atlantic audience.[16] In the sixteenth century, likely at the behest of

[16] For an overview of the Solomon and Marcolf tradition, see Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Solomon and Marcolf*, Harvard Studies in Medieval Latin 1 (Cambridge, MA.: Dept. of the Classics, Harvard University; distributed by Harvard University Press, 2008).

Archbishop of Canterbury Matthew Parker, this portion was gathered together at the beginning of the manuscript, where it remains, but it initially served as a substantial set of flyleaves for what is today the second part of MS 422 (pp. 27–586) but may more accurately be thought of as the original core of the book: the missal and related texts, which give MS 422 its larger nickname as "The Red Book of Darley," because of its later provenance at the church of St Helen, Darley Dale, in the Lake District. A sixteenth-century addition on the last page records this moniker as "the rede boke of darleye in peake in darbyshire," relating that "This booke was sumtime had in such reverence in darbieshire that it was comonlie beleved that whosoever should sweare untruelie uppon this booke should run madd."[17] As Daniel Anlezark observes, this manuscript is thus "exceptional among Anglo-Saxon books, in that it is known to have spent the later Middle Ages in a parish, apparently passing during the Reformation period into the custody of a parishioner, 'Margaret Rollesleye widow,'" who testifies to a mid-sixteenth-century female readership.[18] Still later, the

[17] M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College Cambridge*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), ii.315. For further background, see Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no. 111, pp. 118–19.

[18] Daniel Anlezark, *The Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, Anglo-Saxon Texts 7 (Woodbridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2009), 4, n. 20. M. R. James transcribes the signature, which was added to the bottom margins of pp. 130 and 131, as "Margaret Rollysleye wydowe" (*Descriptive Catalogue*, p. 320).

manuscript was given to Matthew Parker, who bequeathed it to Corpus Christi College in 1575.

The manuscript's earlier provenance is less clear, although the two parts had been bound together by the twelfth century—and likely by the end of the tenth. It is uncertain where the Solomon and Saturn material was initially copied, although as John Mitchell Kemble observed, "It consists of twenty-six pages, written in a close, beautiful, and, as it appears, female hand."[19] For "close" and "beautiful," M. R. James substitutes "small," "round," and "flat-topped," repeating that it is a "hand which Kemble conjectured to be that of a woman."[20] This speculation about the manuscript's "female hand" is unsurprisingly unverifiable (and, presumably, unlikely), but it provides an important reminder that even the seemingly-detached eye of the paleographer can be seduced by a "close, beautiful" hand in ways that are now uncomfortably gendered.[21] More recently, Daniel Anlezark has

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[19] John Mitchell Kemble, *The Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus: With an Historical Introduction* (London: Printed for the Aelfric Society, 1848), 132.

[20] M. R. James, *Descriptive Catalogue*, ii.315.

[21] I have not been able to find a study of this phenomenon in particular (that is, the paleographical assignation of a manuscript to a female scribe based on its supposedly-delicate script), but it appears to work in the reverse way as well (that is, manuscripts known to have been copied by women take on a delicate cast in paleographical descriptions). As Alison I. Beach helpfully summarizes, "Female hands have been described variously as delicate, irregular, nervous, and light—judgments based on attitudes toward women rather than on sound paleographical evidence. Women at a particular scribal center may have been trained to write a highly distinctive book hand, but only its demonstrated use by female copyists marks that hand as feminine." Alison I. Beach, *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic*

persuasively argued that the texts that now appear at the beginning of CCCC MS 422 were originally composed in Glastonbury in the 930s, when the monastery was home to the circle of early Benedictine reformers, including Dunstan (the future Archbishop of Canterbury) and Æthelwold (the future Bishop of Winchester).[22] Indeed, Anlezark posits that the runes in MS 422 are "likely to be a symptom of transmission in circles interested in alternative alphabetical systems."[23]

Due to some references in the liturgical calendar, the missal portion may be securely ascribed to Sherborne ca. 1061. It is possible that the conjoined manuscript may have made its way to Worcester by the late-tenth or early-eleventh century, which would let it cross paths with some of the Old English texts in CCCC MS 367, which Peter Stokes

Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5.

[22] Anlezark, *The Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, pp. 50–7. Charles D. Wright has similarly suggested the court of Athelstan, where the young Dunstan and Æthelwold both spent time, as a possible point of origin, although he also mentions the court of Alfred as a possibility—a supposition that has received support from Patrick P. O'Neill and Erik Wade. I find the Alfredian context unconvincing, however. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 267–69; Patrick P. O'Neill, "On the Date, Provenance and Relationship of the 'Solomon and Saturn' Dialogues," *Anglo-Saxon England* 26 (1997): 142–52; Erik Wade, "Language, Letters, and Augustinian Origins in the Old English Poetic *Solomon and Saturn I*," *JEGP, Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 117, no. 2 (2018): 160–84.

[23] Anlezark, *Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, 28–9. On alternative alphabets and *Solomon and Saturn I*, see also E. J. Christie, "By Means of a Secret Alphabet: Dangerous Letters and the Semantics of *Gebregdstafas* (*Solomon and Saturn I*, Line 2b)," *Modern Philology* 109, no. 2 (2011): 145–70.

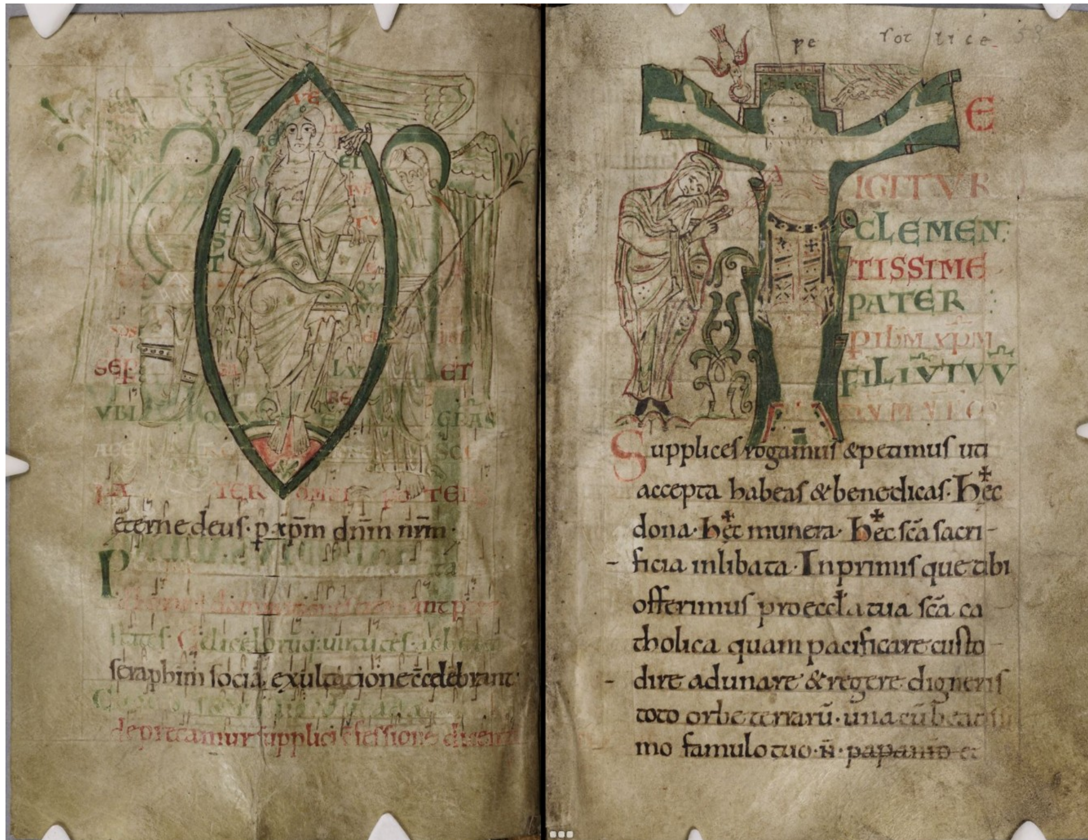
examines in greater detail in Chapter 7 of this volume. This bit of the manuscript's travels relies on similarities between an excommunication formula that was added into the margins of 422 and a contemporary Worcester manuscript, however, so it is suggestive but by no means certain.[24]

The manuscript's two sections have traditionally been viewed as an inappropriate pair, with scholars dismissing the Solomon and Saturn material as an unsuitably superstitious accompaniment to the liturgical material, but this unfairly maligns the highly learned and altogether utterly applicable poetry and prose—as well as the complex interplay of the manuscript's texts and images, which inform each other across the codex.[25] Moreover, the missal section contains a range of texts that may be productively read alongside *Solomon and Saturn I* and *II*, including computistical material, prognostics, a liturgical calendar, and Paschal tables in Old English and Latin, followed by the Order of the Mass, along with ornamental initials and two decidedly textual illustrations from the life of Christ: one depicting Christ enthroned

[24] Anlezark, *Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, 4. For further discussion, Anlezark directs readers to Mary Swan, "Mobile Libraries: Old English Manuscript Production in Worcester and the West Midlands, 1090–1215," in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 29–42, at 39.

[25] On the latter, see especially Catherine E. Karkov, "Text and Image in the Red Book of Darley," in *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Jane Roberts (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 135–48.

among angels, holding an open book (p. 52), and the other at the Crucifixion (p. 53).



Facing each other, these images introduce the Order of the Mass. The first forms a part of the Preface of the Mass, with the text fit into and around the mandorla, and the second fits into the historiated initial ‘T’ that opens the Canon of the Mass and here serves as the cross on which Christ is crucified. As Catherine E. Karvov has observed, “the way in which text and image are brought together in these two drawings is highly unusual, if not unprecedented… the opening lines of text function as a part of the images, an aspect of the manuscript that is every bit as unusual as its combination of texts or the iconography of

its drawings."[26] Together with the personified letters of the Lord's Prayer in *Solomon and Saturn I*, these illustrations are particularly helpful for thinking through textual embodiment and the experience of living with books in early medieval England.

EMBODIED LETTERS

The idea of the word made flesh, which comes to dwell among its readers as an embodied presence, of course descends from the Gospel of John, with its opening declaration that *On frymðe wæs word, and þæt word wæs mid Gode, and þæt word wæs God* ("In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and that word was God").[27] Ælfric of Eynsham muses on this corporeal manifestation of the divine word, relating that the shepherds notified of the birth of Christ agreed among themselves, *Uton gefaran to Bethleem, and geseon þæt word þe geworden is, and God us geswutelode* ("Let us go to Bethlehem, and see the word that has come to be, and that God has made known to us").[28] With his wordplay on the *word* that is *geworden*, Ælfric emphasizes the overlap of language and embodiment, naming and incarnation.

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[26] Karkov, "Text and Image," 136–7.
[27] John 1:1, quoted in Old English by Ælfric of Eynsham in his 'Nativitas Domini' ('Sermon on the Nativity of our Lord'), ll. 166–67, ed. Peter Clemoes, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, EETS s.s. 17 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 190–97.
[28] Luke 2:15. Ælfric, 'Nativitas Domini', ll. 163–65, ed. Clemoes, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*.

This is precisely the duality that the Red Book of Darley crucifixion enacts, with its conflation of text and image rendering the same lines of ink both the initial ‘t’ of “te igitur” and the cross itself. Here, the letter forms an essential part of both a living text and the holy rood at the center of Christian salvation, embedding Christ’s crucified body into literary experience and vice-versa. And this conflation resounds throughout the manuscript as a whole, for the illustrations at the beginning of the Mass enact the same textual presence of the runes in *Solomon and Saturn I*, the first text in CCCC 422, which likewise models this phenomenon of the religious text that crystalizes as a physical image projected into the lives of its readers.[29] Indeed, in both instances, the conflation of text and image is crucial. Moreover, both the Crucifixion image and the runic letters of *Solomon and Saturn I* transform the practice of reading into a practice of summoning and encountering bodies.

The poem stages an extended dialogue on the powers of the *Pater Noster* or Lord’s Prayer, which is presented as a text with

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[29] I thank Catherine Karkov for encouraging me to think more about how the illustrations in CCCC 422 relate to what I am describing in *Solomon and Saturn I*. Tiffany Beechy has traced a similar phenomenon in CCCC 41, which contains a fragment of *Solomon and Saturn I* and which, she argues, likewise explores connections between incarnational language, the divine word, and manuscript compilation. Beechy, “The Wisdom Tradition and Irish Learning in CCCC 41,” paper presented at the 53rd International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, May 12, 2018. See, too, her ‘The “Palmtwigede” Pater Noster Revisited: An Associative Network in Old English’, *Neophilologus* 99 (2015): 301–13.

talismanic protective properties that allow the runic letters of the Latin prayer's opening words to take shape as soldiers that beat demonic assailants back into Hell. As Solomon says, *þæt gepalmtwiguda Pater Noster … morðor gefilleð, / adwæsceð deofles fyr, Dryhtnes onæleð … heregeatowe wegeð* (ll. 39–52b, "That palm-twigged Pater Noster … fells murder, puts out the devil's fire, ignites the Lord's… it bears battle-gear").[30] In addition, it restores the mind of its reciter, fascinatingly making the prayer-within-the-poem an antidote to the broader manuscript's later purported ability to make the foresworn "run madd."[31] Throughout, *Solomon and Saturn I* presents the *Pater Noster* as a physical, bookish presence. As Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has demonstrated, it must be read directly from the manuscript—rather than heard aloud—for the poem's runic letterforms to be legible, since they are embedded in the page but not the poem's meter.[32] Moreover, like a book, *Godes cwide* (l. 63a, "the word of God") is *gylden* (l. 63a, "golden"), *gimmum astæned* (l. 63b, "set with gems"), and *hafað sylfren leaf* (l. 64a, "has silver leaves"). It is the ultimate image of the word made flesh, taking shape not in the body of Christ as at the outset of the Mass but as a magnificent tome likewise made of flesh.

[30] All citations of the Solomon and Saturn texts are from Anlezark, *Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, and will be cited in-text by line number.
[31] James, *Descriptive Catalogue*, ii.315.
[32] Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 58.

Even the opening letters of the prayer, which are given in both their runic and Roman forms, come to life as soldiers that resemble their inky forms. “P” and its runic counterpart peorth, for instance, enter the fray bearing weapons that resemble the Roman letterform: *hafað guðmæcga gierde lange, /gyldene gade, ond a ðone grimman feond /swiðmod sweopað* (ll. 90–92a, “that warrior holds a long staff, a golden goad, and that strong-minded one eternally scourges the fierce enemy”). The letter P’s long ascender thus becomes a long staff, and its rounded bow a goad.[33] Similarly embodied (and armed) paired letters follow suit, spelling out *pater noster qui es in caelis*, “Our Father, who art in Heaven”—the opening words to the prayer. As the poem proceeds, then, the runic and Roman letters join the fray two-by-two, stabbing the demon, grabbing him by his feet, and firing arrows into his hair. *Solomon and Saturn I* thus becomes a fearsome sort of pop-up book, wherein the letters leap out from between the pages and wage war. While John Milton may have meant “not absolutely dead” playfully, then, his notion that books are “as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth” that, at least under Medea’s direction, “may chance to spring up armed men” is vividly enacted in *Solomon and Saturn I*.[34]

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[33] Interestingly, “P,” which *Solomon and Saturn I* describes as “the fierce first letter” (ll. 88b–89a, *ierne … prologa prima*) is also given a full-page ornamental initial just before the two facing illustrations from the life of Christ. CCCC 422, p. 51.
[34] Milton, *Complete Prose Works, Volume II*, 492. See the epigraph to this essay for the full quotation.

The Old English *Prose Pater Noster Dialogue*, which follows *Solomon and Saturn I* in CCCC 422, likewise gives the prayer bodily form, presenting another skirmish between shape-shifting demonic forces, the struggling reader, and the Lord's Prayer, which is again armed to the teeth.[35] In response to Saturn's opening question, *Ac hu moniges bleos bið ðæt deofol ond se Pater Noster ðonne hie betwih him gewinnað?* (ll. 2–3, "So, how many shapes will the devil and the Pater Noster take when they when they struggle against each other?"), Solomon confidently answers *þritiges bleos* (l. 5, "thirty shapes"), before describing each of them in elaborate detail. As Solomon notes, for instance, *Pater Noster hafað gylden heafod ond sylfren feax* (ll. 53, "The Pater Noster has a golden head and silver hair"), echoing the golden coloring and silver pages of the bookishly embodied *Pater Noster* in *Solomon and Saturn I*. Rather than a gem-studded codex, however, the prayer is here imagined as an enormous head with long, luxuriantly thick hair, for, as Solomon assures Saturn, *ðeah ðe ealle eorðan wæter sien gemenged wið ðam heofonlicum wætrum uppe on ane ædran, ond hit samlice rinan onginne eall middangerd, mid eallum his gesceaftum, he mæg under ðæs Pater Nosters feaxe anum locce drige gestandan* (ll. 53–6, "even if all of earth's waters were mingled with the heavenly waters on high in one channel, and it began to rain

[35] Heide Estes has argued that this prose text should be read together with the poems that bracket it as one unified work in "Constructing the Old English Solomon and Saturn Dialogues," *English Studies* 95.5 (2014): 483–99.

in unison, the whole world, with all its creatures, could stand dry under a single lock of the Pater Noster's hair"). This protective ability further ties the Solomon and Saturn material to the devotional images that initiate the Order of the Mass in CCCC 422. As Ælfric explains in *De auguriis* ("On Auguries"), the cross was similarly thought to be capable of banishing demons, with images of the crucifixion offering protection to their viewers, so the *Pater Noster* reworkings and the illustrations could serve a similar purpose in projecting words—and words made flesh—into physical space so as to form a protective barrier for their viewers.[36]

Although the spiky combat letters may seem somewhat unsettling, these are thus ultimately texts about the comforting presence of books, whose use far surpasses acts of reading or not reading. Saturn hopes to be overwhelmed or daunted by the Lord's Prayer, describing his experiences with having *onlocen* ("unlocked") books from around the world as a preamble that has prepared him to encounter the prayer in a more bodily, immediate way (ll. 1–3). This image of books locking and unlocking knowledge is a fitting tribute to

[36] Ælfric of Eynsham, *De auguriis* ("On Auguries") lines 97–101, ed. and trans. Mary Clayton and Juliet Mullins, *Old English Lives of Saints,* Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 59 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 2019), vol. 2, pp. 118–39, at 128. On roughly contemporaneous beliefs about the cross' defensive qualities, see Helen Foxhall Forbes, "Sealed by the Cross: Protecting the Body in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Embodied Knowledge: Historical Perspectives on Belief and Technology*, ed. Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and Katharina Rebay-Salisbury (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2012), 52–66.

the now freely-available Parker on the Web, since both Solomon and Saturn poems are heavily invested in what we might think of as open-access textual circulation, but it is also a testament to the power of books and the texts they contain. Like *Solomon and Saturn II*, which I will discuss in the following section, they are texts of comfort and protection, for which the vivid imagery and violent scenes ultimately offered solace and safety.

As the Solomon and Saturn texts suggest, then, early medieval readers imbued their books with a powerful form of efficacy. Indeed, when beset by demons, early medieval saints would start reciting the *Psalms* and *poof!* Their demons would immediately disperse.[37] *Solomon and Saturn I* provides a poetic analogue. As James Paz puts it, the poem explicitly "uses the Pater Noster to show how literary knowledge can be made effective in the world."[38] In this way, it resembles not only the texts of the liturgy but also the Old English metrical charms, which Paz argues were "not simply meant to be pleasing on the ear but composed in order to enact a change in the world and, in many cases, to actively coerce nonhuman entities into a response."[39] Indeed, as scholars such as Marie Nelson and Paz have shown, the charms

[37] See, for instance, B.'s *Vita Dunstani*, ed. Michael Winterbottom and Michael Lapidge, *The Early Lives of St Dunstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012).
[38] James Paz, "Magic That Works: Performing *Scientia* in the Old English Metrical Charms and Poetic Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 45.2 (May 2015): 219–43, at 235.
[39] Paz, "Magic that Works," 225.

provide a particularly rich analog to the Solomon and Saturn poems, sometimes even requiring would-be healers to recite the Lord's Prayer or the names of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, mobilizing religious texts as healing incantations that were both physically and mentally restorative—the ultimate performatives in J. L. Austin's sense of the term.[40]

Encompassing charms for protection from a swarm of bees, charms for if your cattle fall ill, or if your land is barren, or your body wasted by illness, these remedies constitute the earliest surviving medical texts from Northern Europe, preserving Byzantine, Greek, Roman, North African, and native British practices. Like the Solomon and Saturn texts, they feature lore drawn from across the Mediterranean from the 3rd to the 9th centuries, weaving early medieval England into a broader culture of bookish scientific exchange. *Solomon and Saturn II* likewise promises far-flung knowledge, introducing Saturn as a world traveler, who has assembled what I like to think of as a kind of early medieval world literature anthology. In pursuit of books on books from across the globe, he:

> *Land eall geondhwearf,*
>
> *Indea mere, East Corsias,*
>
> *Persea rice, Palestinion,*

[40] For their alternative treatments, see Nelson, "King Solomon's Magic" and Paz, "Magic that Works." J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

Niniuen ceastre, ond Norð Predan,

Meda maððumselas, Marculfes eard,

Saulus rice, swa he suð ligeð

ymb Geador norð,

Filistina flet, fæsten Creta,

wudu Egipta, wæter Mathea,

cludas Coreffes, Caldea rice,

Creca cræftas, cynn Arabia,

lare Libia, lond Syria,

Pitðinia, Buðanasan,

Pamhpilia, Pores gemære,

Macedonia, Mesopotamie,

Cappadocia, Cristes eðel

Hieryhco, Galilea, Hierusalem.

(ll. 7b–23, "traveled through all the lands: the Indian ocean; East Cossias; the Persians' kingdom; Palestine; the city Nineveh; and the North Parthians; the Medes' precious halls; Marcolf's land; Saul's kingdom, where it lies near Gilboa to the south and near Gadara to the north; the Philistines' home; the stronghold of the Cretans; the woods of the Egyptians; the waters of the Midians; Mount Horeb; the realm of the Chaldeans; the Greeks' skills; the people of Arabia; the learning of Libya; the land of Syria; Bythinia;

> Bashan; Pamphilia; the edge of Porus; Macedonia; Mesopotamia; Cappadocia; Christ’s homeland, Jericho, Galilee, Jerusalem”)

Here, it is interesting to note that, testifying to a similarly expansive network of trade and travel, some of the herbs mentioned in the Old English charms were only available around the Mediterranean, with directions for the use of ingredients traded from distant areas, including frankincense, pepper, silk, ginger, and myrrh—much as the Saturn of *Solomon and Saturn I* boasts that he has read books from Libya, Greece, and India.

Yet, the charms relate not only to *Solomon and Saturn I* but also to the prognostics, which are preserved elsewhere in the Red Book of Darley and provide another intriguing point of overlap that suggests that CCCC 422 was assembled as a devotional miscellany combining scientific and literary learning—or, the general fruits of book culture—from around the world. While I do not wish to argue for any intentionality in their inclusion in MS 422, I thus argue that the Solomon and Saturn material is of a piece with the devotional practice embodied by the missal and the prognostics. Rather than superstitious texts that were at odds with the devotional material of the liturgical calendar and the Mass, the Solomon and Saturn triad, prognostics, and other texts were highly learned works, representing cutting-edge research brought to England from far beyond its borders. Here, I

advocate for the globalism of the Old English Solomon and Saturn texts—and thus the globalism of the Red Book of Darley as a whole and the bibliophilia to which it testifies.[41]

GETTING COZY

While these books are, of course, most helpful when they are actually read, *Solomon and Saturn II* also underscores the cheering prospect of a stack of manuscripts and the ways in which books give us pleasure even when we merely anticipate reading them. As I have argued above, the Red Book of Darley was a highly learned, worldly manuscript, but it is also a manuscript that is resolutely engaged with the comforts of staying home surrounded by books. Focusing on the affective benefits of books, Solomon declares, *Bec sindon breme, bodiað geneahhe / weotodne willan ðam ðe wiht hygeð, / gestrangað hie ond gestaðeliað staðolfæstne geðoht, / amyrgað modsefan manna gehwylces / of ðreamedlan ðisses lifes* (*SolSatII*, ll. 60–64a, "Books are glorious, they instantly make known a sure will to the one who attends [to them]. They strengthen and firm up unwavering thought, cheer the

[41] In highlighting the globalism of CCCC 422, I am in no way rehearsing a rejected "Eastern" origin for *Solomon and Saturn* and am mindful of Kathryn Powell, 'Orientalist Fantasy in the Poetic Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn', *Anglo-Saxon England* 34 (2005): 117–43; and Tristan Major, 'Saturn's First Riddle in *Solomon and Saturn II*: An Orientalist Conflation', *Neophilologus* 96.2 (2012): 301–13; as well as the generative synthesis of Tiffany Beechy, 'Wisdom and the Poetics of Laughter in the Old English Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 116.2 (2017): 131–55.

mind of each man against the anxieties of this life”). Books are restorative and strengthening. They act *geneahhe* (‘instantly’). And, like the divine word made flesh, they make things known when they come to dwell among us.

Moreover, as the *Solomon and Saturn* poet relates and as Rossell Hope Robbins has argued, manuscripts are also sources of true mirth, encompassing alchemists’ “hocus-pocus” rolls, which were sometimes over twenty feet long and three feet wide; coaching in how “to make a woman daunce naked”; and instructions for a number of practical jokes among a wide array of other topics.[42] Ultimately, books of all kinds offer *hælo hyðe, ðam ðe hie lufað* (*SolSatII*, l. 68, “the harbor of salvation to those who love them”). They are not only sources of protection—even, for early medieval believers, salvation—but also of humbler comfort and nearer harbors. As the later English poet John Skelton remarked, the sight of a particularly well-bound book “would have made a man whole that had been right sickly.”[43]

There is something about their presence in our physical space that is, itself, a consolation, so in closing, I turn now to thinking about the affective dimensions of their digital surrogates. Whereas *Solomon*

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[42] Robbins, “Mirth in Manuscripts.” For examples of each of these things, Robbins directs curious readers to Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 276, a sixteenth-century paper roll that provides instructions for preparing the Philosopher’s Stone; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1378, Part III (SC 7798), p. 73; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 257 (SC 21831).

[43] Philip Henderson, ed., *The Complete Poems of John Skelton, Laureate* (London: J.M. Dent, 1964), 385.

and Saturn II revels in stacks of books that cheer all those who live alongside them, *Solomon and Saturn I* and the illustrations of Christ in majesty and Christ crucified imagine texts themselves as physical presences, with a string of letters conjuring and themselves becoming a series of firmly embodied, anthropomorphized beings. CCCC 422 thus provides a number of particularly striking analogues for the relationship between a material object and its surrogates, whether they take shape in our imaginations or on our screens. Indeed, *Solomon and Saturn I* imagines itself as a corporeal presence in the same way that we must remember that our flattened screens are stand-ins for sometimes-heavy, often unwieldy objects. The old continuum between orality and literacy, or between the page and the "real" embodiment of the text in the lives of its readers, is here echoed in the new continuum between material codex and digital facsimile.

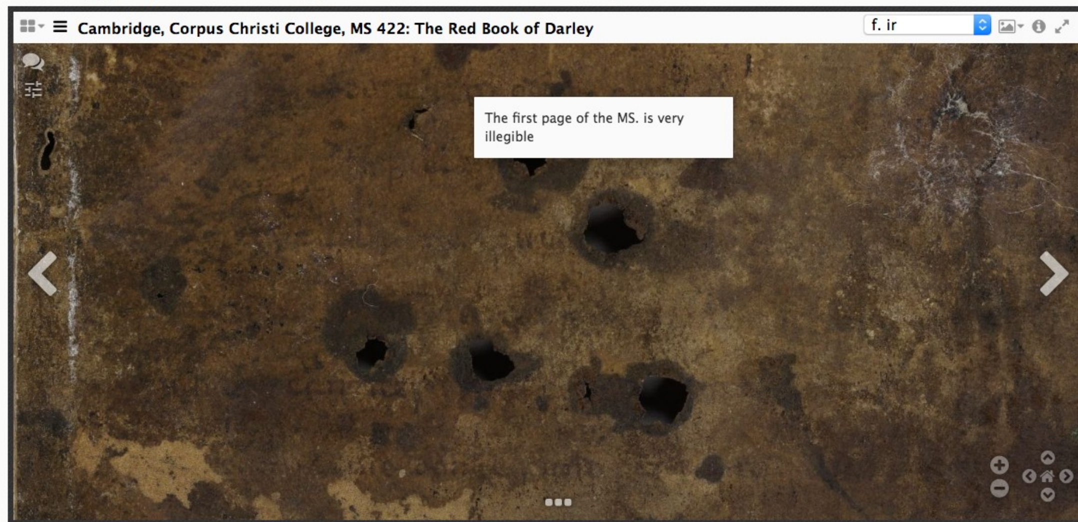
Because I have not yet had a chance to examine the codex in-person even though I have examined its edited texts many times, I had not realized just how badly damaged, battered, and generally worn the opening to *Solomon and Saturn I* is until zooming in on its ragged margins and battered opening page in the digital viewer. Here, our capacity to zoom and scroll through the Parker database brings its own joy—not in the physical act of actually touching the past, but in the pleasure of the highly technical, of the scientific and exact practice of looking closely, with better lighting and more intense magnification

than we could easily secure in a reading room. And so, instead of close reading, here we have a kind of close looking that, in turn, reminds us not only of the text/image synthesis in MS 422 but also of all of the earlier readers of the manuscript, who marked these poems not with any marginal notes or signes-de-renvoi but with their sweat and the smoke from their fires.

The digital simulacram is thus somewhat paradoxically itself a reminder of the bookishness of the Red Book of Darley and of the ways in which it was stained and passed about by the readers whose use has all but erased the first lines of text. Indeed, the first folio is in M. R. James' terms "very illegible," with the opening of *Solomon and Saturn I* usually recovered from Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 41, where the first 95 lines of the poem were added into the margins of the Old English *Bede*—two very different textual records that we don't get a sense of at all when reading the poem in a modern edition but which we can conveniently unite both in the reading room and on our screens.[44] Moreover, with Parker on the Web, we see James' catalog description overlaid on the folio as a digital annotation that fuses text and paratext:

[44] James, *Descriptive Catalogue*, ii.316.

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 422: The Red Book of Darley.



Even as Parker on the Web has helped to give me a better sense of the text as it actually circulated across hundreds of years, however, I still have no idea how large MS 422 is and certainly not how heavy it would be to hold it in my hands, or perhaps in my lap—something that I was reminded of when rereading *Solomon and Saturn II* with its manuscript context in mind. Towards the end of the poem, Saturn recalls witnessing earlier debates about fate and foreknowledge, remembering how *sægdon me geara / Filistina witan, ðonne we on geflitum sæton, / bocum tobræddon ond on bearm legdon, / meðelcwidas mengdon, moniges fengon* (“they told me long ago, the wise men of the Philistines, when we sat in debate, piled up books and spread them in our laps, interposed our comments, took up many topics,” ll. 252b–55). The intimacy of this moment, as they sit talking together beneath a pile of books exchanging ideas, perhaps roughly turning the pages or gesturing wildly in their excitement, is a poignant

reminder of the lives of early medieval books as they were imagined in active use and circulation. It is also a reminder of another bookish dream from the early Middle Ages: that of abundance—of books numerous enough to be stacked in piles and of books spread open and texts circulating widely and freely. In actuality, the typical early medieval English “library” could be contained in a single trunk, and Michael Lapidge has surmised that “when an Anglo-Saxon scholar wished to consult a book,” he didn’t so much sequester himself in a wood-paneled room as “he got down on his hands and knees and rummaged around in the chest until he came upon the book he required.”[45]

Whether in fantasy or in actuality, however, wise people come together around books. Similarly, Byrhtferth of Ramsey envisions Bede *fægere gebolstrod* (“pleasantly propped up with pillows”) and enjoins his students and readers, *We lætað þæt se getiddusta wer her sitte, nu we his gewritu smeagað* (“Let’s pretend that this most skilled person is sitting here, now that we are scrutinizing his writings”).[46] This imaginative intimacy enables Bede, like the runes in *Solomon and Saturn I*, to come forth from his books and sit among them, just as Byrhtferth’s text itself ripples into our own world when we reread it—in

[45] Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 62.
[46] Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *Enchiridion*, ed. Peter S. Baker and Michael Lapidge, *Byrhtferth’s Enchiridion*, Early English Text Society S.S. 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 66.

part thanks to Byrhtferth's own signature admonitions. Throughout, he enjoins both us and his pupils: *Gemun þu, la rædere!* ("Remember, oh you Reader!", 64). As Rachel Moss has observed, "This kind of empathetic identification with people in the past can be discouraged as an unprofessional response for a professional historian, as if our vulnerable bodies are not a powerful means of connecting with a past that exists otherwise only in archives, in libraries, on paper; or on parchment, skin stripped of its vulnerability, flesh smoothed out of imperfect hairy life into something flat."[47] Yet, it is a kind of identification that we need more of and one that CCCC 422 and the other manuscripts discussed in this volume can offer, particularly in their newly accessible second home, Parker on the Web.

Indeed, the ability for anyone with an internet connection to relate to the early medieval past through books with globetrotting poems, vivid illustrations, and cheerful images of an international body of scholars in passionate debate is a means of disrupting other, darker kinds of identification with the past, and especially racist fantasies of a static, all-white early medieval England. Above all, the so-called "Red

[47] Rachel Moss, "The Vulnerable Academic Body," *Avidly: A Channel of the Los Angeles Review of Books*, June 21, 2018, http://avidly.lareviewofbooks.org/2018/06/21/the-vulnerable-academic-body/. Here, I am reminded, too, of Carolyn Dinshaw's model of queer historiography, in which a reader "desires an affective, even tactile relation to the past" in her *Getting Medieval: Sexualties and Communities Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 142; and as she develops these desirous touches further in *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

Book of Darley" and Parker on the Web writ large enable viewers to trace a wider early medieval world and "to draw lovingly out of fragmentary evidence what it might have meant to be a person in the past," as Moss beautifully describes the impulse of historical work.[48]

It also gives us the freedom to relate to the books of the past in a way that we otherwise cannot: sitting cross-legged, with our laptops in our laps and these books on our screens. Like their earliest readers, we can now bring them to our own classroom debates and conferences as well as our private nooks. We can even read them in our pajamas or leave them carelessly pulled up while we pour a drink or leave the room—a practice of casually living alongside our manuscripts that early medieval readers would have recognized.

[48] Moss, "The Vulnerable Academic Body."

For helping me think through the force—and modes—of intimacy we can cultivate with old (and particularly with Old English) texts and manuscripts, I thank my co-editor and co-author, Daniel C. Remein, as well as our intimates in *Dating Beowulf: Studies in Intimacy*, ed. Remein and Weaver (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).