



The *Royal Prayerbook*'s blood-staunching charms and early Insular scribal communities

EMILY KESLING

The Royal Prayerbook contains a variety of entries aimed at staunching a flow of blood, three of which are related by a shared poetic motif. An examination of the elements in these texts suggests that all three are a meditation on a scene from the gospels, the healing of the woman with the issue of blood. This article argues these texts were compiled in a learned milieu, probably within a female or double monastic house; from an Insular centre, they moved to the Continent, perhaps as a consequence of the involvement of women in the mission movement.

The Insular prayerbooks are the first known collections for private prayer. They are also and the only examples from the early Middle Ages of their genre, the themed prayerbook. Each of these prayerbooks seems to aspire to follow the same structure, beginning with extracts from the gospels, followed by a selection of prayers from varied sources. It is generally thought that these collections were compiled primarily for private devotional use and that the contents of each collection were perhaps

* I would like thank Kristen Mills who read an early draft of this paper, as well as Francesca Tinti, Susan Vincent, and the anonymous reviewers for their many perceptive comments.

chosen to reflect on different devotional themes.¹ The most famous member of this group is the *Book of Cerne* (Cambridge, University Library, MS Ll.I.10). This is the only illuminated manuscript in this genre and has drawn attention particularly for its four full-page illuminations of the evangelists, as well as an exhortation to prayer that begins the collection and may well be the earliest example of Old English prose. Two other collections are included in this same group, the *Royal Prayerbook* (British Library, MS Royal 2.A.xx), and the *Book of Nunnaminster* (British Library, MS Harley 2965), as well as a third fragmentary collection known as the *Harleian Prayerbook* (British Library, MS Harley 7653), although this is only seven folia and contains no gospel extracts.

The four collections share similar dates, with the two earliest collections, the *Royal Prayerbook* and the Harleian fragment, dating from the second half of the eighth century (or possibly even the turn of the ninth), and the *Book of Nunnaminster* and the *Book of Cerne* dating to the first half of the ninth century.² Beyond sharing a general structure, these collections are closely related by shared content and palaeographic features. All four prayerbooks were most likely produced in western England and belong to the Mercian *schriftprovinz*; the *Royal* and *Harleian* prayerbooks have been more closely localized to the diocese of Worcester.³ These collections are generally considered among the very few attributable to the kingdom of Mercia (although, depending on their date, some may have been produced in the subkingdom of the Hwicce before it became part of Mercia). They also

¹ For a general background to these texts, see M. Brown, *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage and Power in Ninth-Century England* (London, 1996); P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England: 600–800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 275–327; B. Raw, 'Anglo-Saxon Prayerbooks', in R. Gameson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Book: Volume 1: c. 400–1100* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 460–7; M. Brown, 'Mercian Manuscripts? The "Tiberius" Group and Its Historical Context', in M. Brown and C. Farr (eds), *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe* (London, 2001), pp. 281–91. For the suggestion that these collections relate to different themes, see J. Morrish, 'Dated and Datable Manuscripts Copied in England during the Ninth Century: A Preliminary List', *Medieval Studies* 50 (1988), pp. 512–38, at pp. 519–21; Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, pp. 146–55.

² Gneuss and Lapidge date the *Royal Prayerbook* (no. 450) to s. viii² or ix^{1/4}; the *Harleian Prayerbook* (no. 443) to s. viii/ix or ix in.; the *Book of Nunnaminster* (no. 432) to s. viii/ix or ix¹; the *Book of Cerne* (no. 28) to 820x840; H. Gneuss and M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Toronto, 2014). These dates are similar to those of Lowe, who dated the *Royal Prayerbook* as s. viii²; the *Harleian Prayerbook* and the *Book of Nunnaminster* as s. viii/ix; and the *Book of Cerne* as s. ix: *Codices Latini Antiquiores: A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts Prior to the Ninth Century*, ed. E.A. Lowe, vol. II (London, 1972).

³ Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 279–80; M. Brown, 'Female Book-Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence of the Ninth-Century Prayerbooks', in C.J. Kay and L.M. Sylvester (eds), *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Papers in Honour of Jane Roberts* (Amsterdam, 2001), pp. 45–68, at pp. 52–3.

count more generally among the few manuscripts surviving from the first half of the ninth century. Given this place in the manuscript record, these collections should be seen to offer not only evidence about early medieval devotional practices but also to provide an important testimony to scribal activity and intellectual culture in England during a period under-represented in the manuscript tradition.

This article will concern itself with one of these collections in particular, the *Royal Prayerbook*. Among the prayerbooks, the *Royal Prayerbook* is unique for containing a higher number of prayers drawn from the liturgy, and for its gospel readings, which differ significantly in their content from those in the other collections. While Nunnaminster and Cerne's lections differ in emphasis, both come from the end of the gospels, focussing on the crucifixion. In contrast, Royal contains selections from the beginning and end of each gospel, followed by readings related to Christ's life, specifically the so-called Comfortable Words from John's gospel and a selection of mostly healing miracles from the book of Matthew. Finally, the *Royal Prayerbook* also contains a collection of short texts related to staunching a flow of blood, which are absent from the other collections.

These texts, widely known as blood charms, have drawn attention as displaying 'erudite' interests but also for their perceived 'magical' character.⁴ Four of these texts occur in the main hands of the manuscript, with a fifth added later in a twelfth-century hand. Among the four entries existing within the main body of the manuscript, three are closely related by shared motifs but contain textual variants, suggesting a broader body of such texts was circulating in this period. While significant studies have cast these texts as marginal within the collection, or have suggested that they were viewed with suspicion by its compilers,⁵ I will suggest that these texts form a microcosm of the wider interests of the prayerbook and of its scribal community. I will further argue that these pieces provide a valuable testimony to the movement of texts in the early Insular period, and perhaps even a network of exchange among female monastic houses.

⁴ Brown described Royal as displaying a 'scholarly concern with erudition' but mentions a 'superstitious element' in Royal and the *Harleian Prayerbook*, which she saw as absent from Cerne (*The Book of Cerne*, pp. 152, 154), and Sims-Williams writes of Royal that 'particularly in the opening and closing pages [. . .] a few texts cross the boundary from religion to magic': *Religion and Literature*, p. 290. More recently, Stephanie Clark has made Royal the focus of her discussion of the concept of 'magic' in reference to early medieval prayer, even if she critiques this term's implications: *Compelling God: Theories of Prayer in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto, 2019), pp. 17–22.

⁵ Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 301–2; Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, p. 254.

The blood-staunching charms

Four texts are found in the main hands of Royal 2.A.xx that are apparently aimed at stopping a flow of blood.⁶ These texts occur in two groups in the manuscript, with the first occurring on folio 16v and the second occurring on folio 49r–v. Three of these four texts are closely related by shared content. I have labelled these as A, B, and C following their occurrence in the manuscript.⁷ A second blood charm occurs following A on folio 16v, but this belongs to a different tradition and will not be discussed in this article.⁸ I have reproduced the three texts below, with a suggested modern English translation.⁹ In some cases the meaning is difficult to decipher and has been left untranslated, but these instances will be discussed in detail below.

A [folio 16v]

Riuos cruoris toridi. contacta uestis obstruit fletu rigant(ibus) supplicis
arent fluenta sanguinis: Per illorum quae siccata dominica labante
conluno sta per d(omi)n(u)m n(ost)r(u)m.

The touch of his clothes blocks the rivers of hot blood, by the
moistening weeping of the supplicant the flows of blood dry up.
Through her [veins] which were dried by the work of the Lord, I
command you to stop. Through our Lord.

⁶ The word ‘charm’ is used in this article for consistency with earlier scholarship, yet it is not my intention to imply that these texts were seen as unorthodox by their authors or users.

⁷ These texts are labelled as A, B, and D by Alphons Barb in ‘Die Bugsegen von Fulda und London’, in G. Keil *et al.* (eds), *Fachliteratur des Mittelalters: Festschrift für Gerhard Eis* (Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 485–93. My identification of these four charms follows earlier commentators, yet it is possible, particularly in the case of C, that they may have originally represented more than one text. All four texts mentioned above occur within the body of the text and are copied in the main hands of the manuscript. There are three main hands responsible for the main text of the manuscript. The first group of blood charms (occurring on folio 16v) is written in the second hand, and the second group (occurring on folio 49r–v) is written in the third hand. For a description of the scripts and hands, see G.F. Warner and J.P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 4 vols (London, 1921), vol. I, p. 36.

⁸ The text of this charm reads: ‘Ociani inter ea motus sidera motus uertat restrige trea flumina flumen aridum ueruens flumen pallidum parens flumen rubrum acriter decorpore exiens restringe tria flumina flumen cruorem restrigantem neruos limentem cicatricis concupiscente timores fugante per d(omi)n(u)m n(ost)r(u)m ieh(su)m chr(istu)m.’

⁹ The texts below are taken from the manuscript; expansions indicated have been expanded in parenthesis. A printed edition of the *Royal Prayerbook* is found as an appendix to A.B. Kuypers’s edition of the *Book of Cerne: The Prayer Book of Aedeluald the Bishop, Commonly Called the Book of Cerne* (Cambridge, 1902), pp. 201–25.

B [folio 49r–v]

+ Crux ch(rist)i ieh(s)u d(omi)ni d(e)i n(ost)ri ingeritur. mihi. + Riuos cruoris torridi contacta. uestis obstruit. fleturigantis supplices arent. fluenta. sanguinis. Per illorum uenas cui siccato dominico lauante. coniuro sta. Per d(omi)n(u)m n(ost)r(u)m ieh(su)m ch(ristu)m filium tuum qui tecum uiuit & regnat. d(eu)s in unitate sp(iritu)s s(an)c(t)i per omnia.

+ Cross of our Lord God Jesus Christ is brought into me. + the touch of his clothes blocks the rivers of hot blood, by the moistening weeping of the suppliant the flows of blood dry up. Through her veins which were dried by the work of the Lord, I command you to stop. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son who with you, God, lives and reigns in unity with the Holy Spirit for all [times].

C [folio 49v]

+ IN nomine s(an)c(t)ae trinitatis atque omnium s(an)c(t)orum adsanguinem restringendum scribis hoc COMAPTA OCOΓMA CTY/FONTOEMA EKYTOΠIO + Beronice. Libera me de sanguinibus d(eu)s d(eu)s salutis meae CACINCACO YCAPTETE. per d(omi)n(u)m i(e)h(su)m xp(istu)m. Xp(rist)e ad iuua + Xp(rist)e adiuua + Xp(rist)e ad iuua. + Riuos cruoris torridi contacta uestis obstruit fletu rigante supplicis arent fluenta sanguinis Beronice Libera me de sanguinibus d(eu)s d(eu)s salutis meae. AMICO CAPΔINOPO/ΦΙΦIPON IΔPACACIMO fodens magnifice contextu fundauit tumulum usugma d(omi)ne adiuua.

+ In the name of the Holy Trinity and all of the saints, to draw back blood write this: COMAPTA OCOΓMA CTY/FONTOEMA EKYTOΠIO + O Veronica, deliver me from bloods, O God, God of my salvation/health. CACINCACO YCAPTETE. Through the Lord, Jesus Christ. Christ, help + Christ, help + Christ, help + the touch of his clothes blocks the rivers of hot blood, by the moistening weeping of the suppliant the flows of blood dry up. Veronica. Free me from the bloods O God, God of my salvation/health. AMICO CAPΔINOPO/ΦΙΦIPON IΔPACACIMO. fodens magnifice contextu fundauit tumulum usugma. Lord help.

Although they occur in two different places within the manuscript, these three texts are clearly interrelated. Most notably, they all incorporate the same poetic quotation (beginning *riuos cruoris*). Beyond this, other features are shared across two or more of the entries: a very

similar formula of command is given in both A and B; B and C both make use of crosses (formed in the manuscript with a small hook on the ascender), likely indicating the reader should make the sign of the cross; A and B both end with a doxology. Most importantly and most fundamentally, however, I would suggest that these three pieces are all meditations on the same scene from the gospels. While at first reading they may appear haphazard and confused, an effect increased by the presence of several corruptions (especially in A), I would argue that these are actually cohesive texts, with elements chosen carefully to reflect upon a single theme: the healing of the woman with the issue of blood.

The woman with the issue of blood

The healing of the woman with the issue of blood is recounted in the three synoptic gospels. The most detailed account of the episode is found in Mark V.25–34.¹⁰

And a woman who was under an issue of blood twelve years and had suffered many things from many physicians and had spent all that she had and was nothing the better, but rather worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the crowd behind him and touched his garment. For she said, ‘if I shall but touch his garment, I shall be whole’. And forthwith the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the evil. And immediately Jesus, knowing in himself the virtue that had proceeded from him, turning to the multitude said, ‘Who hath touched my garments?’ And his disciples said to him, thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayst thou, ‘Who hath touched me?’ And he looked about to see her who had done this. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him and told him all the truth. And he said to her, ‘Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace, and be thou whole of thy disease.’

This woman, who is sometimes called the Haemorrhissa, from the Greek for ‘bleeding woman’, is the subject of the poetic verses incorporated into all three texts given above. The quotation found in the Royal entries comes from the hymn *A solis ortus cardine* by Sedulius. Sedulius was a fifth-century Latin poet, perhaps living in

¹⁰ Cf. Luke VIII.42–8; Matthew IX.19–22. Translation from *The Vulgate Bible*, VI. *The New Testament*, ed. E. Swift with A.M. Kinney, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 21 (Cambridge, MA, 2013). This healing occurs immediately prior to the healing of Jairus’ daughter in all three gospels; the two miracles were treated as a pair in many patristic commentaries.

Rome, who is most famous for his *Carmen paschale*, a biblical epic that was extremely popular in the Anglo-Saxon period.¹¹ *A solis ortus cardine*, named by its first line, is an abecederial poem, recounting in twenty-three stanzas events in the life of Christ. The lines quoted in the charm texts (the stanza for the letter 'r') relate the healing of the bleeding woman: 'riuos cruoris toridi contacta uestis obstruit fletu rigantibus supplicis arent fluenta sanguinis' ('the touch of his clothes blocks the rivers of hot blood, by the moistening weeping of the suppliant the flows of blood dry up'). The line is written with pathos, linking the river of blood with the flowing tears of the woman, apparently emphasizing the role of the woman's penitence in her healing (although this is not mentioned in the biblical account).

Other sections of these texts also reflect on this same story. This can be seen in the command formula used in the first two charms, likely rendered most correctly in B: 'per illorum uenas cui siccato dominico lauante coniuro sta' ('through her veins which were dried by the work of the Lord, I command you to stop'). Here something – presumably a flow of blood – is commanded to stop, through analogy with and invocation of the healing of the bleeding woman. The plight of the bleeding woman is also evoked in the use of a quotation in C from Psalm 50: 'libera me de sanguinibus deus deus salutis meae' ('deliver me from blood, O God, thou God of my salvation').¹² While in its biblical context this verse probably refers to guilt from violent acts rather than physical blood, its use is appropriate here, especially given the dual meaning of *salus*, which can mean both salvation and health.

The importance of this figure, the Haemorrhissa, in these texts is also reinforced by the occurrence of the word 'Beronice' in C. Although unnamed in the gospel account, in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages the woman suffering from the flow of blood was sometimes given the name Veronica (or Βερενίκη in Greek). This identification is first found in the *Acta Pilati*, an apocryphal text of uncertain date that circulated from the fourth century.¹³ This text purports to be an account of Jesus's trial and records the testimony of a witness called

¹¹ Aldhelm and Bede were both influenced by Sedulius' verse. For discussion of this, see C.P.E. Springer, *The Manuscripts of Sedulius: A Provisional Handlist* (Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 7–8; P. McBrine, *Biblical Epics in Late Antiquity and Anglo-Saxon England: Divina in Laude Voluntas* (Toronto, 2017), pp. 223–69.

¹² *The Vulgate Bible, III. The Poetical Books*, ed. E. Swift with A.M. Kinney, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 8 (Cambridge, MA, 2011), Ps. L (LI).16–17 (translation Douay-Rheims, 1899).

¹³ An English translation of this text is available in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher and trans. R. Wilson (Louisville, 1991), revised edn, vol. I, pp. 505–26. See also T. Hall, 'The *Evangelium Nichodemi* and *Vindicta saluatoris* in Anglo-Saxon England', in J.E. Cross (ed.), *Two Old English Apocrypha and their Manuscript Source* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 36–81.

Berenice, who claims to be the woman healed of an issue of blood. This work was later combined with another text to form the *Evangelium Nichodemi* (*Gospel of Nicodemus*).¹⁴ Two later works, the *Cura sanitatis Tiberii* and the *Vindicta salvatoris* were sometimes appended to the *Evangelium Nichodemi* and also mention Veronica; they attribute to her a painting of Christ, an early version of the story that would later become the very popular legend of the veil or sudarium.¹⁵ There is no indication that this later version of the narrative was known to the author(s) of these charm texts. It is clear, however, from the other elements in these texts that the name Beronice was meant to be identified here with the bleeding woman of the gospels, and that the presence of this name further underscores that this biblical episode is the central motif of these passages.

Other elements in these texts do not specifically relate to this story but reflect a generally learned milieu of composition. It has been repeatedly noted in scholarly discussions of the early Insular prayerbooks that charm C, found on folio 49v, contains Greek text in Greek characters (although these have been occasionally confused with Latin forms by the scribe). I have discussed this Greek text in detail elsewhere, where I concluded that all three sections of Greek characters were likely taken from a medical handbook, an inheritance visible in the line ‘adsanguinem restringendum scribis hoc’ (‘to draw back blood write this’).¹⁶ I argued that the Greek was likely not understood by the scribe of the Royal manuscript, as an attempt has been made to mark out individual words in the Greek text in the manuscript but that this has been done incorrectly. However, the inclusion of these lines clearly suggests a scholarly interest in Greek and likely indicates the availability of medical material of some sort in the monastic library where this text was composed.

Another line without clear reference to the Haemorrhissa is the beginning of text B: ‘+ Crux christi iehsu domini dei nostri ingeritur. mihi.’ The closest parallel to this line that I have been able to locate occurs in Evagrius’ Latin translation of the *Life of St Anthony*. A very similar line occurs in Anthony’s debate with pagan philosophers over the merits of Christianity. Anthony argues that while the philosophers criticize the embodiment of Christ and his death on a cross, the pagan gods take on offensive bodies like that of serpents and cattle. It is in the midst of this discussion that Anthony says ‘Crux Christi Domini

¹⁴ Hall, ‘The *Evangelium Nichodemi* and *Vindicta salvatoris* in Anglo-Saxon England’, p. 37.

¹⁵ Hall dates the *Cura sanitatis Tiberii* as ‘no later than the eighth century’ and does not challenge Dobschütz’s dating of *Vindicta salvatoris* to around 700 or 720: Hall, ‘The *Evangelium Nichodemi* and *Vindicta salvatoris* in Anglo-Saxon England’, pp. 62, 75.

¹⁶ Emily Kesling, ‘A Blood-Staunching Charm of Royal 2.A.xx and its Greek Text’, *Peritia*, forthcoming.

nostri nobis ingeritur'. In the context, the line might be understood to mean 'the cross of Christ our Lord is brought before us' (i.e. the cross of Christ is brought now into the argument).¹⁷ I am uncertain if the line in the Royal manuscript should be read as a reference to the *Life of St Anthony* or if the similarity is coincidental. However, if no reference to the *Life of St Anthony* is intended, the verb *ingeritur* appears a strange choice, with the line perhaps reading something like 'the cross of Christ is brought into me'. It is possible that this piece was meant to be a separate text from the blood charm following, but were this the case it would not clarify its meaning.¹⁸ If this line does reference the *Life of St Anthony*, it is notable that the quotation has been changed from the plural form ('before us') into the more personal singular form ('before me'; 'into me'). This may reflect the personal nature of the petition involved.

Whoever compiled the earliest version(s) of these texts was part of a learned literary milieu interested in the life of Christ. Overall, the elements in these charms suggest that they were first compiled as a careful meditation on a particular gospel scene, the healing of the bleeding woman. Multiple elements across these three texts relate directly to this event. All three texts incorporate Sedulius' moving verses, and two incorporate a formula of command, invoking the power of 'her veins which were dried by the work of the Lord'; finally, in the third charm we find the apocryphal name given to this woman, Veronica, along with words in Greek, the language of the New Testament. It seems likely that the purpose of these pieces was to sooth bleeding through prayer and appeal to this miracle. Although frequently referred to as charms, there is a strong devotional element in these pieces, which bring out the pathos of the gospel scene, highlighting the woman's suffering and the power of Christ in her healing.

The Basler Blutsegen

Outside of the *Royal Prayerbook*, there is only one manuscript containing closely related blood-staunching texts, a manuscript currently held in the Basel university library: Universitätsbibliothek, MS F III 15a. This manuscript contains the only other instances where this particular stanza from Sedulius' *A solis ortus cardine* has been excerpted to form part of a charm or healing text, although sections of his *Carmen paschale* are

¹⁷ A similar interpretation is understood by Caroline White in her translation of Evagrius' text; she offers the translation: 'At this point let us bring the cross of Christ, the Lord our God, into the argument', *Early Christian Lives*, trans. and ed. C. White (London, 1998), 'Life of Antony by Athanasius', p. 75.

¹⁸ I have been unable to locate any occurrences of this verb used in the passive in a similar devotional context.

sometimes used in other charms.¹⁹ The main text of this manuscript is Isidore's *De natura rerum*. It is generally assumed that this text, which is dated to c.800, was copied in Fulda from an Anglo-Saxon exemplar (Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, F. III. 15f), which was probably brought to Francia during the period of the Anglo-Saxon mission.²⁰ After Isidore's text, a blank space in the manuscript was filled by a collection of short entries.²¹ These begin with a rubric reading 'Titulus sepulchri Paulae', apparently referring to the epitaph composed by Jerome for his friend and patroness Paula, although the text was never entered. The rubric is followed by the famous 'Basler Rezepte' (or Basel prescriptions), three medical remedies written in Latin and Old High German. After these recipes is a space where a (now erased) book list was entered and a series of blood-staunching texts known together as the 'Basler Blutsegen' (or 'Basel blood charm'); these texts occur on folia 17v and 18r. We can read what are apparently three separate texts, two of which contain the Sedulius trope. The first of these reads:

beronice beronice beronice liber me de sanguinibus d(eu)s d(eu)s
salutis meae et exultavit lingua mea iustitiam tuam riuos cruoris
torridi contacta uestis abstruit fletus rogantis supplices arent fluenta
sanguinis.

Veronica Veronica Veronica deliver me from bloods, O God, God of
my salvation/health and my tongue shall extol thy justice. The touch
of his clothes blocks the rivers of hot blood, by the moistening
weeping of the suppliant the flows of blood dry up.

This is followed by a separate (and seemingly unrelated) charm:

+a+e+n+o+l+a+s+e+n+o+l+a+g+l+u+a+ D(omi)ne ih(esu)s xr(istu)s
qui In patibulum crucis propter hoc signum sancti cruces s(anct)i
cruces digna liberare famulo tuo famulam tuam deartores febrium

¹⁹ See, for example, *Bald's Leechbook* 1.62: *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England, Being a Collection of Documents Illustrating the History of Science in this Country Before the Norman Conquest*, ed. and trans. O. Cockayne, 3 vols, RS (London, 1864–6). The quotation begins *inde salutiferis incedens*.

²⁰ In his edition of *De natura rerum*, Fontaine argues that the exemplar text (Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS F III 15f) must have been written in England, as it contains the long recension of the text which is only attested in Anglo-Saxon or German manuscripts: Isidore of Seville, *De natura rerum*, ed. J. Fontaine (Bordeaux, 1960), p. 32; see also C. Di Sciacca, *Finding the Right Words: Isidore's Synonyma in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto, 2008), pp. 55–8. MS F III 15f is dated s. viii¹ or viii med (Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no. 787).

²¹ For more information on these additions, see F. Lifshitz, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia: A Study of Manuscript Transmission and Monastic Culture* (New York, 2014), pp. 32–5.

amen amen amen s(an)c(tu)s s(an)c(tu)s s(an)c(tu)s cirioleisen
cirioleisen cirioleiso.

The first words here may be a cipher. This piece does not share any notable elements with the Royal texts, aside from displaying a general interest in liturgical words; it appears to be directed towards fever, not bleeding, and is explicitly for members of either gender. A final text occurs in this section, reading: 'ribus cruoris dorridi contacta uestis obstruit fletu rogantes suplices arrent fluenta sanguinis libera me de sanguinibus'. Here we see the familiar Sedulius lines, however quite corrupted, and the psalm verse used in C. The beginning of this final text is marked by a knobby cross that has been recopied in a darker ink. All of these charm texts appear to have been written in the same hand.

The first and third of these charms are clearly related to those found in the *Royal Prayerbook*. In particular the similarities between the first of these texts and Royal C are noteworthy. Both of these texts include the verses from Sedulius' hymn alongside the name Veronica (with a Greek influenced spelling) and the same verse from the Psalms, although this is continued in the Basel manuscript beyond the point included in the Royal text. It is possible that the Basel entry may present an image of an earlier version of the Royal text, to which additional elements were later appended, notably the formulas in Greek. However, while comparing the two pieces, it is worth noting the reading *abstruit fletus* in the Sedulius lines of the Basel text, where all three texts in Royal have the correct reading, *obstruit fletu*. This probably indicates some distance between the versions and further underlines that a considerable body of these texts may have been circulating in the early Insular period.

Although it has sometimes been suggested that these blood-staunching texts may have had a Mediterranean origin,²² it seems more likely given the extant manuscript tradition that the original version(s) of these texts were Insular. The milieu responsible for creating these texts may not be far removed from the *Royal Prayerbook* itself, as the gospel episode featuring the healing of the bleeding woman is found in the gospel selections entered at the beginning of this collection and the entire hymn, *A solis ortus cardine*, from which the verses discussed above were excerpted, follows immediately after text C in the

²² Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 300; Clark, *Compelling God*, p. 19 n. 57. This argument relates to the Greek text found in C. However, given the other extant variants of these texts, it appears much more likely that the Greek was added on to an already existing formula. See Kesling, 'A Blood Staunching Charm'.

manuscript on folio 50. This is one of the oldest extant copies of this hymn.²³ Nevertheless, the variety between the texts discussed here, as well as the presence of corruptions in some elements, indicates that these pieces must pre-date this particular manuscript. It seems possible, however, that the original version of such texts were created as part of an Insular tradition of devotional compilations or prayerbooks.²⁴ One of these collections (whether a full manuscript or a smaller booklet) may have been brought to a continental centre during the period of the Anglo-Saxon missions, before these passages were excerpted and copied into F III 15a.²⁵

Women's books?

Although the nature of the complaint suffered by the bleeding woman is not described in any detail in the gospel account, it has been typically assumed from an early period that she suffered from some type of uterine bleeding. This interpretation, widely held from the patristic period to today, relates to the account of her healing in the gospel of Mark, where we read: 'fons sanguinis eius siccatus est' ('the fountain of her blood was dried'), a description lexically echoing the terminology in Leviticus XV, which details ritual laws regarding menstruation.²⁶ This story would have held a special relevance to medieval women as it was the proof text used by Gregory the Great to support the freedom of menstruating women to enter the church and to receive the Eucharist.²⁷

I would suggest that all three texts discussed above from the Royal manuscript, as well as the two related texts from the Basel manuscript,

²³ Springer records the copy in Royal as among the three earliest copies of the poem: *The Manuscripts of Sedulius*, pp. 41–2, 55, 148.

²⁴ Michelle Brown has argued for the development of the tradition of themed prayerbooks in the late eighth and early ninth century, culminating in the *Book of Cerne*. My suggestion that these texts may have been created as part of a devotional collection need not be taken to assume fully developed themed prayerbooks of this type.

²⁵ The blood charms in the Basel manuscript are written in an Insular script.

²⁶ B. Baert, L. Kusters and E. Sidgwick, 'An Issue of Blood. The Healing of the Woman with the Haemorrhage (*Mark* 5.24b–34; *Luke* 8.42b–48; *Matthew* 9.19–22) in Early Medieval Visual Culture', in M. Horstmanshoff, H. King and C. Zittel (eds), *Blood, Sweat and Tears: The Changing Concepts of Physiology from Antiquity into Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 307–89, at 311–12. The lexical similarity can also be seen when comparing the Greek gospel text to the Septuagint reading.

²⁷ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* I.27.8. For discussion of Gregory's stance, see R. Meens, 'Ritual Purity and the Influence of Gregory the Great in the Early Middle Ages', in *Unity and Diversity in the Church*, Studies in Church History 32 (Oxford, 1995), pp. 31–43. For background on the issue of ritual purity and menstruation in early Christianity, see S. Cohen, 'Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity', in S. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill, 1991), pp. 273–98.

relate specifically to stopping uterine bleeding. This assertion finds support not only in the many allusions to the bleeding woman in these texts but also in the Greek text of Royal C, which states that blood is to be scourged 'from the place' (ἐκ τοῦ τόπου), which according to Alphons Barb is a common euphemism for female genitalia in Greek texts.²⁸ In a later tradition, the name Veronica (or versions thereof) is sometimes found in texts related to fever and other types of ailments, but in these cases the gospel narrative is never evoked in any detail and there is no reason to assume an ailment different from the most obvious here (uterine bleeding).

If this assertion is accepted, there are then at least three remedies related to uterine bleeding within the pages of Royal 2.A.xx. It is also possible that the fourth blood-staunching charm in this collection may relate to this type of disorder, especially given its position following immediately after A on folio 16v. Aside from these texts, there are no other entries relating to other disorders in the prayerbook. It is perhaps not surprising that scholars have suggested that this collection (and others among the early Insular prayerbooks) may have been written or owned by women. The most detailed overview of this topic is found in Michelle Brown's discussion of female book ownership in Anglo-Saxon England.²⁹ Brown points out that the *Harleian*, *Royal*, and *Nunnaminster* prayerbooks all 'contain textual material which might be suggestive of female patronage'.³⁰ The *Harleian Prayerbook* contains several prayers containing feminine forms as does the *Book of Nunnaminster*, while it has been suggested that some of the texts in Royal (including the gospel readings) may have been selected for a female readership.³¹ Such evidence is hardly conclusive. However, in the case of *Book of Nunnaminster*, there is more evidence of at least female ownership of the collection. A record has been added in a ninth-century hand to a blank space following the main text of the collection, detailing the boundaries of a piece of land owned by 'Ealhswith'. This entry is written in a hand tied extremely closely to texts localized in Winchester, and it is generally thought that these boundaries relate to St Mary's Abbey (later called Nunnaminster), which, according to tradition, was founded by Alfred's wife

²⁸ A. Barb, 'Die Blutsegen von Fulda und London', in G. Keil *et al.* (eds), *Fachliteratur des Mittelalters: Festschrift für Gerhard Eis* (Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 485–93, at p. 488; see also Kesling, 'A Blood-Staunching Charm'.

²⁹ Brown, 'Female Book-Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 51–60. Sims-Williams suggests that 'a double monastery would be an obvious context' for *Royal* and the *Harleian* prayerbooks: *Religion and Literature*, p. 282.

³⁰ Brown, 'Female Book-Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England', p. 51.

³¹ Brown, 'Female Book-Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 54–8.

Ealhswith.³² It is possible that Ealhswith, a Mercian noblewoman, brought this book with her to Winchester when she married King Alfred. A flyleaf addition in a feminine form indicates that the *Book of Nunnaminster* was still in female hands in the tenth century.³³ A female ownership for the *Book of Nunnaminster* strengthens the case that the *Royal Prayerbook*, a collection closely related by content, script, and geographic origin and containing a variety of blood-staunching entries directed towards feminine concerns, may have also been copied for a female audience or within a double monastic house.³⁴

It has also been suggested that the blood charms found in Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS F III 15a may have belonged at one point in a collection owned by women. While it has been long assumed that the entries occurring in the blank space were added at Fulda, where the main text of Isidore was likely copied, more recently Felice Lifshitz has argued that these additional pieces reflect texts copied from a nearby women's house, probably Kitzingen Abbey. This conclusion should be approached carefully, as her analysis assumes an identification of the Gun(t)za-group and Abirhilt-group manuscripts with the female monastic houses of Karlburg and Kitzingen, a link that remains possible but unproven.³⁵ Her more specific suggestion that these additions were added by a single monk (whom she identifies with Egil of Fulda) seems very unlikely, given the variety of hands present in these entries.³⁶ Nevertheless, the idea that these additions may have come from a women's house in the Mainz valley has some attraction,

³² This is also the first hand of the Parker Chronicle; for discussion, see M.B. Parkes, 'A Fragment of an Early Tenth-Century Manuscript and its Significance', in *Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London, 1991), pp. 171–85, at pp. 173, 177. For the text of this entry and a discussion of its implications, see A. Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester: Documents Relating to the Topography of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman City and its Minsters* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 45–9.

³³ Brown, 'Female Book-Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England', p. 54.

³⁴ The *Book of Nunnaminster* and the *Royal Prayerbook* share a very close textual relationship, much closer than either collection with Cerne; Barbara Raw lists twenty-five prayers in Nunnaminster that are related to prayers in Royal. For discussion of these correspondences, see B. Raw, 'Alfredian Piety: The *Book of Nunnaminster*', in J. Roberts and J.L. Nelson (eds), *Alfred the Wise: Studies in Honour of Janet Bately* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 145–53; see also Morrish, 'Dated and Datable Manuscripts Copied in England during the Ninth Century', p. 525.

³⁵ Lifshitz, *Religious Women*, pp. 33–4. Lifshitz argues that the fact that the list is not organized in vertical columns like other early library catalogues suggests it was not a book list itself but a copy of a list. She also argues that the erased title, previously read as 'Isti sunt nostri libri', more likely reads 'Kizinga libri' as the initial vertical stroke has 'a small hook and a short line' that 'match[es] the initial Ks and Fs in the codex'. Finally she suggests that the contents of these additions, including the blood charms, more likely reflect the interests of a women's house than of a male community. For a general criticism of Lifshitz's study, see H. Hoffmann, 'Schreiberinnen im Karolingischen Würzburg?', *Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 66 (2010), pp. 1–18.

³⁶ Lifshitz, *Religious Women*, p. 35.

especially given the female nature of the ailments treated in the blood charms.

The possibility that versions of these blood charms may have travelled from Anglo-Saxon monastic houses to female houses on the Continent is not out of keeping with what is known concerning the Anglo-Saxon mission period. A fifth-century Italian copy of Jerome's commentary on Ecclesiastes contains the inscription 'Cuthsuithae. Boec. Thaerae abbatissan.' ('a book of Cuthswith the abbess').³⁷ This inscription is written in an Anglo-Saxon majuscule which E.A. Lowe and Bernard Bischoff dated to around 700. Patrick Sims-Williams has argued that the Cuthswith mentioned here is likely an abbess of the same name at Inkberrow (located within the diocese of Worcester), who is mentioned in two charters from this period.³⁸ He also suggests this Cuthswith may have been a member of the Mercian royal family, where names beginning with C were a common feature.³⁹ This would not be surprising given the numerous connections between the royal family and monastic houses in this region. By the end of the eighth century, however, this book was on the Continent and now survives in the Würzburg University Library (MS M. p. th. q. 2).⁴⁰ Jerome's commentary was dedicated to his patron Paula and her daughter Julia Eustochium and was intended particularly for a female readership.⁴¹ Lifshitz has argued that this book may have originally arrived in Kitzingen, rather than Würzburg or any other male house; however this remains uncertain.⁴²

Boniface famously commissioned books to be made by women and personally invited two nuns from England, Thecla and Leoba, to the Continent, where he established them as heads of newly formed

³⁷ It was presumably also in England where six leaves of the original manuscript were replaced. These are in a thicker parchment and are written by someone unfamiliar with the uncial script: P. Sims-Williams, 'Cuthswith, Seventh-Century Abbess of Inkberrow, near Worcester, and the Würzburg Manuscript of Jerome on Ecclesiastes', *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976), pp. 1–21, at p. 2; cf. Wright, 'Some Notes on English Uncial', *Traditio* 17 (1961), p. 450.

³⁸ This is the only abbess known to have been named Cuthswith: Sims-Williams, 'Cuthswith, Seventh-Century Abbess of Inkberrow', p. 5.

³⁹ Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, p. 191.

⁴⁰ This can be seen by pen trials written in an eighth-century uncial script that share features with others found in another Würzburg manuscript, M. p. th. fol. 27, a copy of Origin's *Homilies on Numbers*.

⁴¹ Following this dedication, Jerome begins the preface by recounting his time spent studying the book with Blesilla, Paula's eldest daughter, who died prior to the commentary's composition. For an English translation of this text, see Jerome, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, ed. and trans. R. Goodrich and D. Miller (Mahwah, 2012).

⁴² Lifshitz, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia*, pp. 30, 33. Lifshitz also argues the Basel blood charms may have arrived through 'female networks of textual transmission'.

institutions at Kitzingen and in the Tauber valley.⁴³ Prior to settling in Francia, Leoba and Thecla were nuns at a monastery in Dorset, then in Wessex. Boniface seems to have relied very heavily on his personal and familial contacts, which were largely concentrated in Wessex, to support his mission effort. If the blood charms found in the Basel manuscript moved to the Continent during this period, it is worth considering whether they may have travelled from Wessex. Wimborne, the monastery of Leoba and Thecla, had a developed tradition of female scholarship.⁴⁴ Intriguingly, the *Life of Leoba*, written by Rudolf, a monk of Fulda, records an episode where Leoba heals a woman with ‘profluente sanguine per secreta naturae’ ‘flowing blood from [her] private parts’, although he mentions no spoken or written element to this healing.⁴⁵

If these texts did travel with Leoba or another West Saxon nun to the Continent in the eighth century, this might suggest that the texts themselves originated in a West Saxon context. This would be compatible with the character of prayerbooks, which bring together texts from varied locations.⁴⁶ However, there is also evidence for movement of books between western England and the Continent in the eighth century. We have seen a possible example of this in Cuthswith’s book, mentioned above; Mildred, bishop of Worcester, also records in a letter that he had visited Boniface the year before his

⁴³ For general background on the involvement of women in the missionary effort in Germany, see V. Garver, *Women and Aristocratic Culture in the Carolingian World* (Ithaca, 2009), pp. 104–6; Lifshitz, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia*, pp. 22–6; S. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 130–50.

⁴⁴ The correspondence of Boniface reveals that Leoba, while at Wimborne, was writing Latin verse, of which a single poem survives (*Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, ed. M. Tangl (Berlin, 1916), ep. 29). Barbara Yorke has also argued that Eadburg, from whom Boniface famously commissioned a copy of St Peter’s epistles with gold lettering, most likely was associated with Wimborne, or perhaps another West-Saxon foundation: ‘The Bonifacian Mission and Female Religious in Wessex’, *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998), pp. 145–72, at pp. 150–2. For a more general discussion of Boniface’s background, see J. Clay, *In the Shadow of Death: Saint Boniface and the Conversion of the Hesse: 721–54* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 55–118; B. Yorke, ‘The Insular Background to Boniface’s Continental Career’, in F.J. Felten *et al.* (eds), *Bonifatius – Leben und Nachwirken: die Gestaltung des christlichen Europa im Frühmittelalter* (Mainz, 2007), pp. 23–37.

⁴⁵ *Vita Leobae*, ed. G. Waitz, *MGH SS* 15.1 (Hanover, 1887), p. 128. Rudolf claims to base his text on the written accounts of Leoba’s disciples (*quattuor discipularum eius*), including Thecla.

⁴⁶ A variety of Irish material is found in the collections, most famously the *Lorica of Laidcenn*, a Hiberno-Latin hymn found in the *Book of Cerne* and the *Book of Nunnaminster*. The *Royal Prayerbook* does not include this hymn but contains the *Orationes moucani*, thought to be of Welsh origin. Northumbrian material is also found in the four collections, including hymns associated with Bede, and Alchfrith the anchorite.

martyrdom and mentions exchanging books with Lull, Boniface's successor to the bishopric at Mainz.⁴⁷ The particular route taken by these texts remains uncertain, yet, in either situation, this transfer may have happened as part of a movement between one female (or double) monastic institution to another.⁴⁸

I would also cautiously suggest that these texts may provide a special testimony to the close relationship between monastic houses and royal and noble women in the early Anglo-Saxon period. As is well known, many royal or noble women were also heads of monastic institutions. There are many examples of this from both the Hwiccan and Mercian royal families.⁴⁹ Wimborne also had royal connections, as it was founded by Cuthburh, the sister of King Ine and former wife of King Aldfrith of Northumbria; and Ruldolf, in the *Life of Leoba*, states that Tetta, the abbess at Wimborne during time of Leoba, was a sister of the king.⁵⁰ These noble monastic women would have frequently continued to have close interactions with political institutions and aristocratic life.⁵¹

The exact nature of the disorder meant to be treated in Royal's blood-staunching texts remains unclear and may very likely have encompassed a variety of disorders related to excessive or irregular uterine bleeding. Menstruation was seen as a very important physiological function in the Middle Ages and thus its disruption could be linked to a variety of other disorders such as breast cancer or heart palpitations.⁵² However, menstrual disorders were taken with great seriousness in the Middle Ages in no small part because they were seen

⁴⁷ *Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, MGH, *Epistolae selectae* 1 (Berlin, 1955), ep. cxii. A discussion and an English translation of this letter can be found in Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 229–37.

⁴⁸ This would provide a parallel for the movement of the *Book of Nunnaminster* from Mercia to a female monastic house in Winchester.

⁴⁹ In the seventh century, Osric founded a monastery at Gloucester and established his sister as abbess. In the eighth century, several of Offa's daughters entered monastic life and his queen, Cynethryth, headed a monastic house following his death. For a table documenting Anglo-Saxon royal foundations before 735, see B. Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003), appendix. For further discussion of this trend, see also Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, pp. 118–26; P. Stafford, 'Political Women in Mercia, Eighth to Early Tenth Centuries', in M. Brown and C.A. Farr (ed.), *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe* (London, 2001), pp. 35–49.

⁵⁰ *Vita Leobae*, p. 123; Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses*, p. 19.

⁵¹ For discussion, see Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses*, pp. 145–76; S. Foot, *Veiled Women I: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 44–9; J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 84–91.

⁵² M. Green, 'Flowers, Poisons and Men: Menstruation in Medieval Western Europe', in A. Shail and G. Howie (eds), *Menstruation: A Cultural History* (New York, 2005), pp. 51–64, at p. 54.

as impairing fertility.⁵³ The presence of several of these cures within the pages of the *Royal Prayerbook* could perhaps indicate that whoever compiled these texts was concerned, among other things, with promoting and ensuring female fertility.⁵⁴ While this appears at odds with the customary picture of this collection being produced and used within a monastic context, this may not be the case in a society where political and monastic realms of powers interacted very closely. As mentioned above, there is some evidence for a closely related collection (the *Book of Nunnaminster*) having been owned by a noblewoman, in this case Ealhswith, wife of King Alfred.⁵⁵ It is at least possible that the *Book of Nunnaminster* (and also the *Royal Prayerbook*) may have been compiled in monastic houses entertaining close relationships with either royalty or nobility and that women from these families offered a second readership of the texts.

The Royal Prayerbook and its authors

This article has examined several texts aimed at stopping a flow of blood, which form part of a late eighth or early ninth-century prayerbook. A close examination of these pieces reveals a variety of sophisticated and scholarly concerns – including an interest in the holy languages, alphabets, abecedarial texts, powerful words, and events in the life of Christ. The individual elements in these texts suggest they were composed in a learned centre where a variety of materials were available, while their thematic and narrative unity suggests a learned and careful compiler. I have shown in this article that the blood-staunching texts examined all relate to a specific moment in the life of Christ, the healing of the bleeding woman. Like this woman, Anglo-Saxon readers of this prayerbook must have suffered from uterine disorders, although it is imaginable that someone not suffering

⁵³ Green, 'Flowers, Poisons and Men', p. 53. See also M. Green, 'Menstruation', in M. Schaus (ed.), *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia* (New York, 2006), pp. 557–8. We can see this belief springing up in reference to the bleeding woman in the fourth-century commentator Didymus Caecus, who suggested that 'the woman, bleeding for twelve whole years, was healed of the stream of the unclean blood, because of which she was unable to conceive': R.C. Hill, *Didymus the Blind Commentary on Zecharia* (Washington, 2006), line 251, cited in A. Lefteratou, 'From Haimorrhousa to Veronica? The Weaving Imagery in the *Homeric Centos*', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 57 (2017), pp. 1085–119, at p. 1095.

⁵⁴ It is also possible that these types of cures would be seen as helpful to older, perimenopausal women within the community, who might be expected to suffer from more menstrual irregularities.

⁵⁵ Asser's *Life of King Alfred* records another example of female book ownership in this court. In his account Alfred's mother sponsors a competition among her sons for whoever can first learn a book of English verse, which is then awarded to the winner (Alfred): Asser's *Life of King Alfred: Together with the Annals of Saint Neots Erroneously Ascribed to Asser*, ed. W. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904), ch. 23.

specifically in this way could still derive comfort from this story and these texts. It does not seem far-fetched to suppose a female authorship of these female-oriented texts, especially given the variety of outside evidence suggesting that other of the early Insular prayerbooks were owned and used by women.

Because the practicality and physicality of these pieces contrasts with what some commentators expect in a devotional context, these texts have been frequently cast as marginal or non-representative of the wider prayerbook tradition to which they belong. Nevertheless, the underlying preoccupations of these texts closely reflect intellectual interests found consistently elsewhere in the *Royal Prayerbook*. Beyond text C, Greek also occurs on folio 45 in the form of a transliterated Greek doxology.⁵⁶ Other holy languages including Hebrew and Aramaic occur within the *Orationes moucani*, which occupies folia 42 to 45 of the collection. As mentioned above, Sedulius' *A solis ortus cardine*, from which the poetic lines in each blood-staunching entry are drawn, occurs in full following text C in the prayerbook; other abecederial texts occur in the collection, including *Alma fulget in celesti* (occurring on folio 51r), and a group of individual prayers have also been arranged to follow an alphabetic form.⁵⁷ More generally, an interest in the holy land and the events in the life of Christ can be seen not only in the choice of gospel extracts introducing the collection, but also in the inclusion of the 'Letter to Abgar', also known as the *Epistola salvatoris*, an apocryphal text claiming to have been written in Christ's own hand to the king of Edessa.⁵⁸ Overall, I would suggest that there is no mismatch between the intellectual interests shown within the blood-staunching texts and those found elsewhere in the Royal manuscript. It seems extremely probable that both the blood-staunching texts and the prayerbook itself were compiled in very similar milieux.

Taken in an even wider perspective, the blood charms of the *Royal Prayerbook* display characteristics present in other early Insular writing. Intellectual writing from this period is known for its interest in the

⁵⁶ Folio 45v. This reads 'Eulagumen. patera. caeyo. caeagion. pneuma. caenym. cae ia. caeiseonas nenonamini.'

⁵⁷ See also B.T. Bestul, 'Continental Sources of Anglo-Saxon Devotional Writing', in P.E. Szarmach (ed.), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture* (Kalamazoo, 1986), pp. 103–26, at p. 109.

⁵⁸ For general background on this tradition, see *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. I, pp. 492–500; see also C. Cain, 'Sacred Words, Anglo-Saxon Piety, and the Origins of the *Epistola salvatoris* in London, British Library, Royal 2.A.xx', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108 (2009), pp. 168–89.

holy languages, alphabet systems, etymology, analogy, and enumeration.⁵⁹ If these pieces were written by women, or at the very least with an intended female readership, they reveal that these women were driven by precisely the same scholarly and learned concerns held by other authors in the period. Finally, the manuscript record of these texts suggests that when monastic women travelled abroad to continental centres, they took with them books and texts according to these same interests and relevant to their concerns.

University of Oslo

⁵⁹ These methods are drawn from the Insular study of *grammatica*. For discussion, see J. Reid, “Caro Verbum Factum Est”: Incarnations of Word in Early English and Celtic Texts’, Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto (2007), pp. 123–47.