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**WELLESLEY MANUSCRIPT 8:
A CASE STUDY OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN
FORM AND TEXT IN A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH
MANUSCRIPT**

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Introduction

The jewels in the crown of any library are delicate medieval manuscripts. However, while they are often trotted out and shown to visitors, only the illuminated Bibles and manuscripts by famous authors such as Chaucer are often researched and analyzed. Other less famous and less decorated manuscripts are often left in the stacks, disregarded by scholars. Ironically, these little-studied manuscripts are the ones which should be studied more thoroughly because, unlike heavily-decorated bibles which would be carefully guarded and little used, these books can tell us more about everyday medieval readership. A perfect example and the subject of this thesis is Wellesley Manuscript 8. Wellesley 8 was written in the North of England, probably near Durham, in the first half of the fifteenth century, which we know based on physical and textual information which I will later address. This book contains four religious treatises in verse: “Stimulus Consciencie minor,”² “Thanksgiving to Christ” by Richard Rolle of Hampole, “Pricke of Conscience,” and “Of Absolution by the Pope.”

Once I decided to study this manuscript, there were two distinct methods of scholarship which I could use. The first and more established method is a study of the four texts from a literary point of view. The second and newer option is studying the book as an object. Both methods have their merits, but David Pearson in *Books as History* points out that while “the book as a text is something which is open to various kinds of surrogacy, the book as an object is something for which there is no complete substitute.”³ Thus, ideally a physical study of manuscripts would encompass the “various ways in which books could be interesting as artifacts,

¹ I would like to gratefully acknowledge the guidance of my advisors Ruth Rogers, Sarah Wall-Randell, and Matthew Sergi. I also thank Barbara A. Grub for exceptional proofreading and editorial notes.

² Linne R. Mooney, et. al. *Index of Middle English Verse*, Digital Edition, <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/imev/Index.html>. “Stimulus Consciencie minor” is no. 244; “Thanksgiving to Christ” is no. 1954, please see the appendix; and “Of Absolution by the Pope” is part of the *Cursor Mundi*, with more on that in Chapter Two.

³ David Pearson, *Books as History*, (London: The British Library & Oak Knoll Press, 2011), pg. 22.

as objects with individual histories and design characteristics, beyond whatever value they have in the texts they convey. The ways in which books are made, owned, written in, mutilated and bound all add something to the documentary heritage which is central to the record of human civilization.”⁴

While these two approaches are significant on their own, they have not often been used together in a multi-disciplinary study which would yield more information than they would individually. With that very combination in mind, this project has morphed into a case study of sorts. To clarify, a case study in this context is an in-depth analysis of a book from all possible angles, including chapters on its physical attributes and their significance, its texts and themes within them. I was inspired to use this method of a case study by those described by David Pearson. He focused on five printed editions of Francis Bacon’s *Reign of King Henry VII* published in 1622 and compared them as objects, not as versions of texts. Another book historian, H.J. Jackson, justified developing a case study by stating that they “present one annotated book in an appropriate historical context, establish the circumstances of annotation, and offer an estimate of the significance of the notes may be interesting in themselves.”⁵ However, he is also quick to caution case studies, stating that “historians don’t like them much, and they may make even a committed layperson uneasy because they seem not to lead anywhere...[but] the records of specific reading encounters can lead to legitimate historical generalizations.”⁶ In particular, they offer good scope for generalizations about reading patterns, and are particularly valuable with regards to provenance. But until this point, case studies have mostly been used with early printed books, incunabula, and famous manuscripts such as Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. For this case study, I chose to focus on only one manuscript to see

⁴ Ibid, 5.

⁵ H.J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 149.

⁶ Ibid, 149.

where it could lead in terms of both textual and physical studies. I did however visit the British Library to consult other manuscripts which contain some of the texts for comparative purposes, and used other databases.

Overall, I will argue that Wellesley 8, as a coherent didactic project, imagines a specific composition and audience defined by two primary aspects – aspects that the actual composition and audience of the manuscript contradict. First, the composition of Wellesley 8 is firmly rooted in the Northern English vernacular, but paradoxically it also expands the geographic scope of its physical composition and source texts, creating a manuscript that is more global than the original texts would indicate. Secondly, Wellesley 8 imagines an audience that is more homogenously male than the usual readership for its component texts, and that imagined readership, as I will show, is significantly different from the actual readership which we can deduce from the manuscript's provenance.

Chapter One: Wellesley 8 as Both an English and Global Artifact

As I will describe, Wellesley 8 is a humble manuscript. However, while it may not be elaborately decorated or richly bound, its deeper significance lies in the fact that even though the bindings are distinctly English, the substrate for the manuscript is very global.

From a physical point of view, Wellesley 8 is an unprepossessing and a rather common object. Its sheepskin binding is cracked and restored. Atypically for an extant fifteenth-century English manuscript, it is written on paper and devoid of any decoration save for a few delicate rubrications; not one decorated initial is to be found. But beyond being what may have been a more commonplace book in its era, Wellesley 8 contains some significant contradictions.

The first contradiction in Wellesley 8 is the relationship between its boards and pages.⁷ Boards were originally made of wood and leather or pigskin, so as to be heavy enough to keep the curling parchment pages flat. However, since these pages are paper, boards heavy with wood and calfskin are superfluous. The only reason to have these heavy covers then is as a concession to convention and an acknowledgement (at least monetarily) of the book's inherent worth, regardless of what the work contained. Or rather more succinctly, even cheap books were expensive in terms of effort and materials, and boards are a nod to that fact. According to Mirjam Foot, the resident expert on book bindings at the British Library, by the middle of the fifteenth century, paper was being used for pastedowns⁸ instead of parchment.⁹ However, in Wellesley 8, while the pages are paper, the pastedowns and spine-liner are parchment, taken from a fourteenth or fifteenth century choir book featuring colored Gregorian nunes. This indicates that the

⁷ Traditionally pages or leaves in manuscripts should be noted as folios. However, because a reader has marked page numbers in the manuscript I will refer to them as pages to avoid confusion.

⁸ Paper which was used to line book boards and covers.

⁹ Mirjam M. Foot, *The History of Bookbinding as a Mirror of Society*, (London: The British Library, 1998), 59.

bookbinder had easy access to used choir books, which shows that this was bound in or near a center of learning.

As for the binding itself, it is a simple dark brown sheepskin which was typical of English bindings of this era.¹⁰ Sheepskin was much less expensive than other leathers, and so we can see again that the creator of the book did not spend a lot of money on it. However, the pastedowns are dyed red with kermes, which is a dye derived from the dried bodies of the *Kermes vermilio* insect. This technique was often used to make a book look more luxurious.¹¹ While there are no end bands, there are end flaps which are typical of medieval bindings.¹² We can see clearly that, while the creator of the manuscript had little money to spend on making it, it was considered valuable enough to embellish slightly. It is remarkable that this humble book has survived the centuries, but it did not do so completely unscathed, as some pages and the edges of the boards are lightly stained from smoke, to an extent that it must have survived a fire at one point. Wellesley 8 was also originally secured with a pair of clasps spanning the boards, but these are now missing. Again, these now-absent clasps, which originally also served to hold down the curling leaves,¹³ are another feature of the book-binding sensibilities of the mid-fifteenth century.

Going from the boards to what lies between them, the very fact that this manuscript was written on paper is remarkable. In an age where parchment was the material of choice, paper was an unreliable poor man's option (as inks can bleed out and through paper).¹⁴ Therefore, this book was made with valuable boards and clasps which were fitted around cheap paper pages – a clear

¹⁰ Ernst Philip Goldschmidt, *Gothic & Renaissance Bookbindings*. (London: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 27.

¹¹ Mirjam M. Foot, *The History of Bookbinding as a Mirror of Society*, (London: The British Library, 1998), 59.

¹² End bands are decorative pieces of rope put in the spine of the book. End flaps serve a similar purpose, but are left over scraps of leather, not more expensive rope.

¹³ Ernst Philip Goldschmidt, *Gothic & Renaissance Bookbindings*. (London: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

contradiction in materials and their implications. One might assume that the paper was made locally in the North. However, “the earliest paper-mill in England was at work in Hertfordshire in 1495,”¹⁵ sixty-five years after Wellesley 8 was written and bound. This is where Wellesley 8 transcends being a typically English book and becomes a more global one.

With the importation and transportation costs, the value of Wellesley 8 would have been raised dramatically, enough to rival those of less-refined parchment, unless the paper pages were gathered in a relatively haphazard way. The latter theory is supported by a fact which has gone unnoticed for over five hundred years. The paper that was used to make the folios for Wellesley 8 did not come from one source, or even one country. In the leaves there are four distinct watermarks which are visible only with the help of a recently manufactured, paper-thin LED light. These watermarks are a crown, a fish and fleur-de-lis, three acorns, and a lamb. To identify these watermarks, I consulted the largest encyclopedia of watermarks, compiled by Charles-Moïse Briquet in 1907. However, though this is the guide that most librarians, conservators, and bibliophiles reach for first, Allan Stevenson, the editor of the 1968 Jubilee edition of *Les Filigranes*, remarked that “a researcher attempting to make an identical match of a given watermark with a published facsimile in Briquet in fact faces very slim odds of accomplishing that end.” He calculates that those odds at no more than five percent given that Briquet reproduces approximately 16,000 of an estimated 250,000 marks used prior to 1600.¹⁶ Despite this limitation, three out of four of the watermarks are reproduced exactly in *Les Filigranes*, and one is listed as a possible variation, and therefore I can identify them with a great degree of certainty.

¹⁵ D. C. Coleman, *The British Paper Industry 1495-1860*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), 4.

¹⁶ A. H. Stevenson, “Briquet and the future of paper studies,” in *Briquet's Opuscula: The Complete Works of Dr. C. M. Briquet without Les Filigranes*. (Hilversum, Holland: Paper Publications Society, 1950), XLII.

The presence of four watermarks indicates that the creator of Wellesley 8 did not order a set amount of paper from one place for this specific project, but rather he took a few pages from each shipment of paper to write them as he could. The first watermark is a crown (4637) used in Basel, Switzerland in 1430 and then in Babenhausen, Germany in 1431.¹⁷ Next is the combination of a fish and fleur-de-lis (5895), unique to one watermill in Clermont-Ferrand, France in 1431.¹⁸ The watermark of three acorns (7438), found in at least two leaves, was used in Geneva, Switzerland between 1425 and 1432.¹⁹ Though Briquet did not record an exact likeness of an inscribed lamb found on some of the leaves, he described a similar one from Cavaillon, France in 1427 with a variation from Zurich, Switzerland in 1430, the latter of which is a sound possibility for Wellesley 8's final watermark. *Figure 4* shows clearly that each quire was made from only one source of paper.

¹⁷ C.M. Briquet, *Les filigranes. Dictionnaire historique des marques du papier...*(Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1923), 285.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 343.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 407.

Figure 1: Watermarks in Wellesley 8²⁰

	Lamb	Fleur-de-lis and Fish	Acorn	Crown	Blank	Missing
Quire 2	6	0	0	0	6	0
Quire 3	6	0	0	0	8	0
Quire 4	0	7	0	0	4	3
Quire 5	0	6	0	0	8	0
Quire 6	0	6	0	0	8	0
Quire 7	0	7	0	0	6	1
Quire 8	0	0	6	0	8	0
Quire 9	0	0	5	0	11	0
Quire 10 (missing entirely)						
Quire 11	0	0	0	5	4	3
Quire 12	0	0	0	6	3	1

Due to the amount of material missing, I believe that there is more than one quire missing from the front of the manuscript. However, as we can be absolutely sure that one is missing, I have concurred with the collation described by Wellesley College cataloguer Lisa Fagin Davis and I have begun with labeling the first extant quire as Quire 2. A perplexing find is that many quires have different numbers of leaves. For instance, Quire 2 and 11 have twelve leaves, Quires 3 through 8 have fourteen, Quire 9 has sixteen, and Quire 12 has only ten. This might have indicated that the four poems within the manuscript were written at different times and in quires

²⁰ Note that, although watermarks are often not visible, this is labeled as blank because of the way watermarks would present themselves by being folded into quartos. When labeled as missing, this indicates that an entire leaf is gone.

constructed specifically for the works' respective lengths. However, none of the *incipits* or *explicitis* of the poems correspond with the beginnings and endings of the quires. Therefore, this means that the entire work was conceived as one large mass which was governed, not by the creation or compilation of the poem, but by the availability of paper. This is supported by the presence of catchwords throughout the manuscript; their presence indicates that the manuscript was meant to be made to fit together, and not left unbound or even bound out of order, but rather it must have been bound in *this* order.

As for how the paper came to be in England, there could be many possibilities. What remains sure is that, through a complex trade network that spanned Western Europe, the paper arrived in the north of England, probably through a series of stationers' stores.

Overall, from a physical point of view, Wellesley 8 is full of contradictions. The binding is typical of fifteenth-century England and alludes to the lower economic status of its owner. However, the pages have all been sourced from Western Europe. This would have increased the cost of the manuscript dramatically if the creator had imported the paper himself. However, because of the reasons stated above, that is unlikely, and so we can reconcile this international aspect of the physical manuscript with the humbleness of the materials. What is less easy to reconcile is the global interests which are expressed in "Of Absolution by the Pope."

Chapter Two: “Of Absolution by the Pope” as a Text Made Unique in Wellesley 8

The first complete text in Wellesley 8 is “Of Absolution by the Pope.” This is a small section of a larger work called the *Cursor Mundi*, an anonymous text composed around 1300.²¹ Lisa Fagin Davis, Wellesley College cataloguer, incorrectly identified this work as the “Book of Penance,” which was a more notable part of the *Cursor Mundi*; I have carefully looked this over and corrected that misattribution. Like the other works in Wellesley 8, it is comprised of rhyming couplets and is originally from the north of England. What is striking about this text in Wellesley 8 is that, as far as my research has shown, it does not appear out of the context of the *Cursor Mundi* in any other manuscript, as it does in Wellesley 8. Obviously, the creator of Wellesley 8 was particularly interested in this specific section, and so it merits careful study. But to relate this back to my thesis, within this specific version of “Of Absolution by the Pope,” the creator substituted “qu” for “wh,” which, I will show, makes this a more widely readable manuscript than the other versions, only ever compiled by Richard Morris.

Currently there are only two edited and published versions of “Of Absolution by the Pope,” which Richard Morris helpfully put side-by-side in his 1878 edition to make for easy comparisons. He [Richard Morris] used British Library Cotton Vespasian A iii and British Library Galba E ix,²² the latter of which is one of the most closely related manuscripts to our own. The two versions that Morris edited average a total of 306 lines for this section. However Wellesley 8 only has 216 lines (only 70 percent of the original lines). Furthermore, it is surprising that only 63 lines match those in Wellesley 8’s closest relative Galba, while 153 lines match those in Vespasian. This leads me to deduce that Wellesley 8 was either copied from a

²¹ Richard Morris, ed. *Cursor Mundi*, Early English Text Society, London: 1878, iv.

²² In future these will be called Vespasian and Galba respectively.

manuscript that was a hybrid of the two and is now destroyed or otherwise lost, or that Wellesley 8 is that hybrid manuscript.

The most exciting findings which I discovered are the new lines in “Of Absolution by the Pope.” It is these lines which would obviously have the most significance to a study specifically of Wellesley 8. All of these new lines occur within the last full page of the poem. For this section of the manuscript the text follows the Galba version: “All if þai be in comun here/ þaire sawles er fra god al sere.”²³ However, the next two lines should be “And cursing may be cald þat syn/ þat makes sawl fro god to twin”, but they are instead replaced by “Who has power forto curse.”²⁴ Unfortunately this does not scan at all with the next line, as indeed a reader marked in the manuscript. But it does contrast the person who can curse as having power over another, that is, “a cursed man has no pouste.”²⁵ Eight lines later and still adhering to the Galba version, after the line “When cursing es noght tald for right”²⁶ Wellesley 8 reads “And þou sall wytte on thre wyse/ When cursing es talde unrycht wyse.”²⁷ These lines only make sense when the next line is added, “And þir three words may it schaw.”²⁸ The lines from Wellesley 8 actually seem to add to the lines found in Galba, further introducing those three words which are revealed to be “Will, encheson, and unlaw.”²⁹ By the next set of line replacement, the text in Wellesley 8 is more closely following the Vespasian text. Four lines in Vespasian, “For þis kirk we be-for us se/ Mai oft sith be-suiken be/ Bot þat kirk þat o soth es þar/ Mai be-suiken be never mare”³⁰ are replaced

²³ Morris, 1584. “If they are of this group/ their souls [are hidden] from God’s sight.”

²⁴ Wellesley 8, 11. “Who has the power to curse [one].”

²⁵ Morris, 1585. A cursed man has no power.”

²⁶ Ibid, 1585. “When cursing is said to be not right.”

²⁷ Wellesley 8, 11. “And you shall know in three ways/ when cursing is told to be unwise.”

²⁸ Morris, 1585. “And these three words will indicate it.”

²⁹ Wellesley 8, 11. “Will, [?], and unlawfulness.”

³⁰ Morris, 1585. “For this church which we see before us/ May often have been sick (i.e. corrupt)/ But that church which is there/ Might it never be sick again.”

with the couplet “For here es noght bot fayland fare/ And þare? Lyfe ever mare.”³¹ The Wellesley 8 version is obviously much simpler, but also more optimistic as it focuses on ‘life ever more’ as opposed to ‘deceiving ever more’.

Not only were new additions made, but there is also evidence that many lines were excluded from the text. For instance, according to the Vespasian text, “And qua þat ever has purchad taim/ To penance bring þam to reclaym”³² is missing, which the Galba more specifically defines as “Or els falses þe papes sele/ Or witandle with silke will dele.”³³ It isn’t as though the creator of Wellesley 8 wanted to avoid the subject of forging papal bulls altogether as the preceding two lines deal with just that. Perhaps, though, these lines were considered superfluous and just the labeling of forging the bulls as a sin was considered sufficient. The following three lines are also missing from Wellesley 8, from a section where it follows Galba, “And to him þat curses, by resowne/ Falles þe absolucion/ Thre maners may men se in sight.”³⁴ However, I believe this exclusion is a mistake on the part of the scribe as both the lines that precede and follow the triad end in ‘right’.

There are also lines present which are neither wholly from Galba or Vespasian texts, but rather are a hybrid of both. For instance, what reads as “þe fift mai noght þis cursing scape” in Vespasian and “þe fift point es þis to ken”³⁵ in Galba reads as “þe fyft poynte may þai noght escape”³⁶ in Wellesley 8, a clear mixture of the previous two lines. I believe that this strongly points to a common ancestor book from which all of these were copied, because if the creator had access to both manuscripts, it would be odd for him to copy parts out of each manuscript

³¹ Wellesley 8, 11. “And who that has ever purchase them/ must perform penance to reclaim [himself]”

³² Morris, 1579. “And who that has ever purchased them/ Will be brought to penance to reclaim them.”

³³ Morris, 1579. “Or else the Pope’s soul will suffer/ Or will be [?].”

³⁴ Ibid, 1585. “And he who curses knowingly/ must do absolution/ three ways may men do this.”

³⁵ Morris, 1581. “This is the fifth point.”

³⁶ Wellesley 8, 6. “You may not escape this fifth point.”

sitting side by side. Between the splices, exclusions and inclusions it is clear that Wellesley 8 is a hybrid of both Galba and Vespasian.

“Of Absolution of the Pope” in Wellesley 8 is a hybrid of the versions found in Galba and Vespasian, but what occurs in neither of those manuscripts and does occur in Wellesley is the systematic replacement of ‘qu’ with ‘wh’.³⁷ The first time this occurs is soon after the beginning of the poem; what is written in Vespasian as “Quen man es cursd o þe dede,”³⁸ reads in Wellesley 8 as “When men ar curssed and for what deede.”³⁹ Later in Vespasian, “quen”, “Quar-for” and “quilk”⁴⁰ become respectively “when”, “Wharfore”, and “whyllle” in Wellesley 8.⁴¹ On the next page of Wellesley 8, in the space of two lines this occurs twice; “When powste es tyll oþer by taght/ Ffyrst when men are in point od dede,”⁴² which read in Vespasian, “Quen pouste es til oþer taght/ First quen man es in wath o ded.”⁴³ Similarly, “And quen”⁴⁴ becomes “Or when.”⁴⁵

The replacement of “Qua”⁴⁶ with “Who”⁴⁷ occurs from the Vespasian “For qua communs wit cursd man,”⁴⁸ to the Wellesley 8 “Ffor who so comonse with a curssed mane,”⁴⁹ “For qua honor þou aght to strijft”⁵⁰ to “Ffor whose honor þe awe to stryfe,”⁵¹ and “Quen man has noþer

³⁷ I use the word “replacement” because, while all manuscripts are technically unique, as I have shown Galba and Vespasian have similarities that Wellesley 8 does not share. Thus, I consider Galba and Vespasian together to be the standard against which Wellesley 8 is measured.

³⁸ Morris, 1578. “When man is cursed for a deed.”

³⁹ Wellesley 8, 6. “When men are cursed for a certain deed.”

⁴⁰ Morris, 1579. “When,” “wherefore,” and “which.”

⁴¹ Wellesley 8, 7.

⁴² Ibid, 9. “When power [that is, absolution] is given to another/ first when men are on the point of death.”

⁴³ Morris, 1581. “When power is given to another/ first when man is in the wrath of death.”

⁴⁴ Ibid, 1582.

⁴⁵ Wellesley 8, 10.

⁴⁶ Morris, 1579.

⁴⁷ Wellesley 8, 7.

⁴⁸ Morris, 1580. “For those who interact with cursed men.”

⁴⁹ Wellesley 8, 8. “For who so interact with cursed men.”

⁵⁰ Morris, 1582. “For whose honor you should strive.”

⁵¹ Wellesley 8, 10. “For whose honor you should strive.”

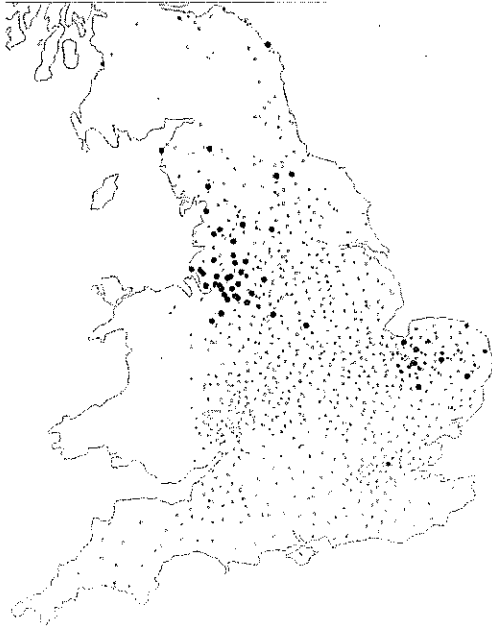
don ne said/ Quar-for sli cursing suld be laid,”⁵² to “When a man has nowthyr done ne sayde/
Wharfore swilke curssyng salde be layde.”⁵³ This initially seemed like a replacement of Latin
with English, but that is incorrect as the Middle English Dictionary shows that “qua” is a Middle
English word. Instead, Angus McIntosh’s Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English provides
an answer through the two maps in *Figure 2*.

⁵² Morris, 1585. “When a man has neither done nor said/ Wherefore such cursing should be laid.”

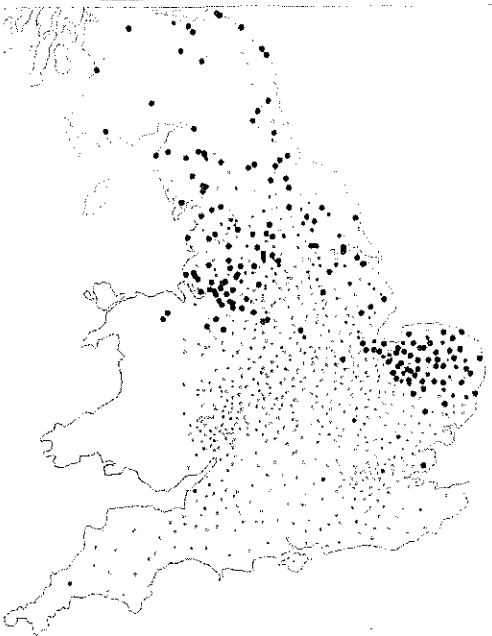
⁵³ Wellesley 8, 11. “When a man has neither done nor said/ Wherefore such cursing should be laid.”

*Figure 2: Mapping the use of 'qu.'*⁵⁴ *The dots represent the origins of manuscripts which contain 'qu'.*

⁵⁴ McIntosh, Angus, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, vol. 1, (Oxford: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), 372.



271 WH: qu + V.



270 WH: qu + V and qw + V.

As one can see, the distribution of the use of 'qu' as a substitute for 'w' is limited to the northern areas of England. Therefore, by using 'w' in this poem the author ensured that it could

be more widely read throughout England and not just in the North. This is a clear attempt by the creator to make Wellesley 8 a more widely read and transported, if not global, manuscript.

Chapter Three: Authority in the “Pricke of Conscience”

An issue which has been associated with the “Pricke of Conscience” for centuries is the question of its authorship. However, the theory as to whether or not the work was written by the hermit Richard Rolle of Hampole was disproved by Emily Hope Allen in 1910. The argument which she puts forth is that all of Rolle’s authenticated works, due to their mystical content and style, were not meant for the laity but rather other scholars. The “Pricke of Conscience,” on the other hand, is written specifically for the laity, as it states in the Prologue, “Parfore þis buke es on Ynglese drawn/ Of sere maters, þat er unknowen/ Til laude men þat er unkunnand/ Pat can na latyn understand.”⁵⁵ I raise the issue of authorship here because it plays into our idea of authority. Once I have shown how the two are loosely connected, I will then further elucidate how the authority which the creator carefully constructs with the “Pricke of Conscience” in Wellesley 8 gives him the necessary *auctoritas* to insert two lines which are utterly unique to Wellesley 8 and no other version of this poem. These two lines further enhance the international aspect of this manuscript.

Even before Allen’s thesis on the “Pricke of Conscience’s” authorship, there were doubts as to whether the hermit had indeed written the poem, as “out of a hundred and fourteen copies (perfect and imperfect, English and Latin) only eight certainly gave an ascription of authorship [and those] giving Rolle’s name can probably be dated to a few years before 1400 while about two dozen anonymous copies probably go back a few decades earlier.”⁵⁶ The only reason that Rolle was so long assumed to be the writer was because he is cited as such in five manuscripts and that the “Pricke of Conscience” often is found bound with his other works. The only other

⁵⁵“Therefore this book is written in English/ Of such matters which are unknown/ To good men that are unlearned/ That cannot understand Latin.”

⁵⁶ Emily Hope Allen, *Writings Ascribed to Richard Rolle Hermit of Hampole and Materials for His Biography* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, Heath and Company, 1927), 395.

corroboration of his authorship to be found outside of the “Pricke of Conscience” is in a single manuscript of John Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*;

In moral mateer ful notable was Gower
And so was strode in his philosophye,
In parficht lyvyng which passith poysye
Richard hermyte contemplatyff of sentence
Drowh in ynglyssh the prikke of conscience.⁵⁷

Nor am I about to support the theorizing on who the author indeed was; numerous candidates such as St. Bonaventura, Robert Grosseteste (cited in three manuscripts), William of Nassington, Thomas of Arundel, and Thomas Ashburne have been suggested over the centuries, with little or no definitive proof giving credence to these arguments.⁵⁸

Instead, I am concerned with the modern preoccupation of ascribing an author to this text. This modern fixation is what Roland Barthes dubbed the “author cult,” and emerged after the Middle Ages with English Empiricism.⁵⁹ Before then, unless a work was attributed to a saint, and thus would exude saintliness to the reader, most other works were authorless. In his article “What is an author?” Michael Foucault hypothesizes that in certain cases when authors were associated with texts, the works were considered transgressive and the authors were subject to punishment.⁶⁰ Allen’s argument concurs with Foucault’s, but in her paper takes it even further, proposing that Rolle’s name may have been used specifically as a cloak to protect the true

⁵⁷ British Museum Harley MS. 1766, f. 262 “In moral matters Gower was notable/ And was so strong in his philosophy/ And noble living which surpasses poetry/ Richard, the hermit of contemplative living/ Wrote in English the Pricke of Conscience.”

⁵⁸ Emily Hope Allen, *Writings...*, 396.

⁵⁹ Roland Barthes, “Death of the Author,” *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2001), 1466.

⁶⁰ Michael Foucault, “What is an author?,” *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2001), 1628.

author.⁶¹ If that indeed is the case, the ruse was not well transmitted, as Rolle's name appears in only five manuscripts. In any case, I would rather step away from associating the poem with any author, or even seeing its lack of authorship as a deficiency, as it would not have seemed to a medieval reader a limitation on the text's importance or authority.

While today the author affects the authority of a work, in the Middle Ages the language which was used was more responsible for a work's authority. Most texts which aspired to be authoritative were written in Latin. There are notable exceptions in cases where the author imbues texts with authority, such as hagiographies, but works which were not written by important people were often dismissed. Medieval readers did not consider the vernacular to be a language imbued with any authority, and that the only means of establishing *auctoritas* was through Latin.⁶² This was particularly important, according to Laurel Amtower, with regards to a religious treatise, such as the "Pricke of Conscience," as many thought that "by assuming the eyes of the authority, a reader might become, through him, a greater man."⁶³ By not being written in Latin, readers would have deemed the vernacular religious treatise was without merit due to its lack of authority. Tim Machan argues that this was true, to the extent that "their rhetorical strategies recognize and accept that vernacular works were precluded from authorization and vernacular writers from authorship and authoritativeness."⁶⁴

While medieval vernacular writers may have identified and accepted this problem, many authors, including the poet of the "Pricke of Conscience," were far from accepting it. To continue to write in their native tongue and still retain authority, they turned to heavily

⁶¹ Emily Hope Allen, "The Authorship of the *Pricke of Conscience*," *Radcliffe College Monographs*, 15 (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1910), 192.

⁶² Followed by Greek.

⁶³ Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages*, (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 83.

⁶⁴ Tim William Machan. *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts*, (Charlottesville, V.A.: The University Press of Virginia, 1994), 105.

integrating Latin quotations into their works. This method of lending *auctoritas* to their work by adding quotations was not new by any means, but used in conjunction with the English vernacular created an entirely new rhetorical strategy unique to this era. In “medieval England, linguistic attitudes had always been at least twofold: Latin was the language of tradition, authority, and power; the vernacular was the language of the people, impermanence, and change.”⁶⁵ Thus, a new hybrid form of *auctoritas* was born for the vernacular writer, who lent strength to his ideas by employing Latin quotations and tempered the heavy Latin prose with vernacular poetry.⁶⁶

Though in Wellesley 8 there is only immediately visible evidence of Latin and Middle English interacting, Ralph Hanna believes that the poem is actually tri-lingually engaged because it is an expanded version of the French “Les Peines de Purgatorie.”⁶⁷ If this is the case then the “Pricke of Conscience” is even more attached to the concept of vernacular authority. However, there is no evidence of French in Wellesley 8 specifically, so I leave it to Hanna to discuss the “Pricke of Conscience’s” French engagement in more detail.

Connected to the idea of language is the use of Latin quotations in an English text. In this poem we find an excellent example of how Roland Barthes described text as not “a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations.”⁶⁸ Specifically in the case of the “Pricke of Conscience”, Hood⁶⁹ described his manuscript of the “Pricke of

⁶⁵ Ibid, 145.

⁶⁶ This combination of prose and poetry, known as “prosimetrum,” as is found in late medieval literature was discussed by Dr. Eleanor Johnson of Columbia University at a lecture given by her at Wellesley College on November 18, 2011. Though she did not explore the possibilities of bilingual prosimetrum, I owe her thanks for inspiration.

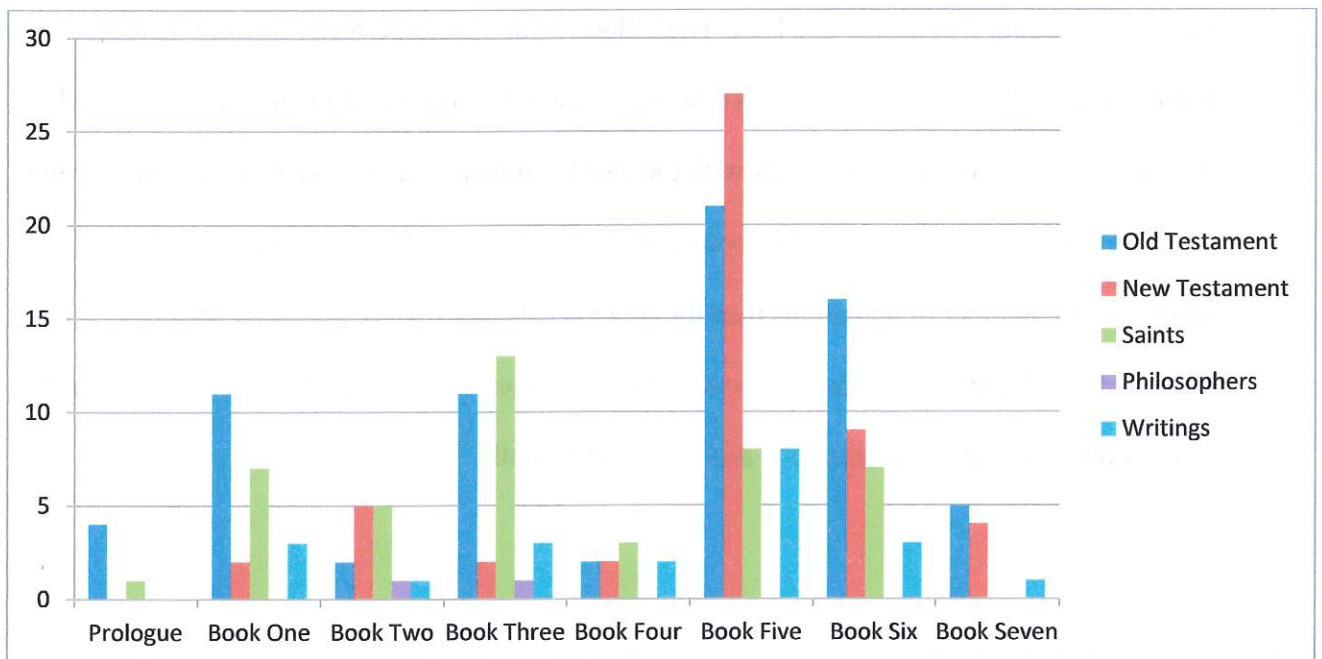
⁶⁷ Ralph Hanna, personal notes to the author, December 11, 2011.

⁶⁸ Barthes, 1468.

⁶⁹ Allen gives no further name for this historian.

“Pricke of Conscience” as “bloomingly erubricated with Latin quotations.”⁷⁰ As Emily Hope Allen observed, “there are some three hundred and fifty-four citations of authority in the ‘Pricke of Conscience’... only one hundred and twenty-six are recognizably from the Scriptures; two hundred and twenty-eight are from Church Fathers by name, or simply from ‘the boke’ or ‘clerks.’ The citations – especially those of clerical writers – become in the *Pricke of Conscience* a [notable] eccentricity.”⁷¹ However, due to the loss of quires, there are only 192 quotations in Wellesley 8. I separate these quotations into five categories: quotations from the Old Testament, the New Testament, Church Fathers and saints, ancient pagan philosophers and anonymous writers, as seen in *Figure 3*.

Figure 3: Sources of both Latin and English Quotes in the “Pricke of Conscience”



⁷⁰ Qtd. Allen, “The Authorship...” 140. Since Allen does not provide a clear source for Hood, I have not yet been able to identify his or her original work (or first name).

⁷¹ Ibid, 140.

These data which were collected from Wellesley 8 show a complex intertwining of sources. The Prologue and Books One, Three and Six⁷² all have a similar ratio of quotations, relying more heavily on the Old Testament than the writings and sayings of saints. Book Two, which addresses the World's evils and their incarnations, is among two of the books of the poem (the other is Book Three) which uses all the sources for quotations; that is, the Old and New Testaments, the saints, philosophers, and miscellaneous writings. Presumably the evils of the world were so widely written about that the poet could not confine himself to one type of source: nor should he have, since this wide variety of sources firmly establishes his authority. Book Four is a curious chapter which addresses the issue of Purgatory. It is unusual because, aside from the Prologue, it has the fewest number of quotations, and pages for that matter. It is not so much a chapter, then, as an inter-chapter which helps the reader transition from a chapter about Death to the chapters about Doomsday and Hell. Thus, Book Four's form perfectly mirrors its subject. Unsurprisingly, the apocalyptic New Testament is heavily relied on in the next chapter which describes Doomsday. Book Six deals with the Dead and their bodily resurrection. Finally, while Book Seven deals with the joys of heaven, it does so quickly and scantily, using less than a quarter of the number of quotations than the previous chapters. More generally speaking, it is obvious from the graph that the poet was particularly interested in exploring the topics of man's wretchedness, the Dead, Doomsday, and the pains of Hell.

⁷² These books deal with man's wretchedness, the dead, and the pains of Hell, respectively.

Figure 4: Wellesley 8 Latin Quotations in the “*Pricke of Conscience*”⁷³

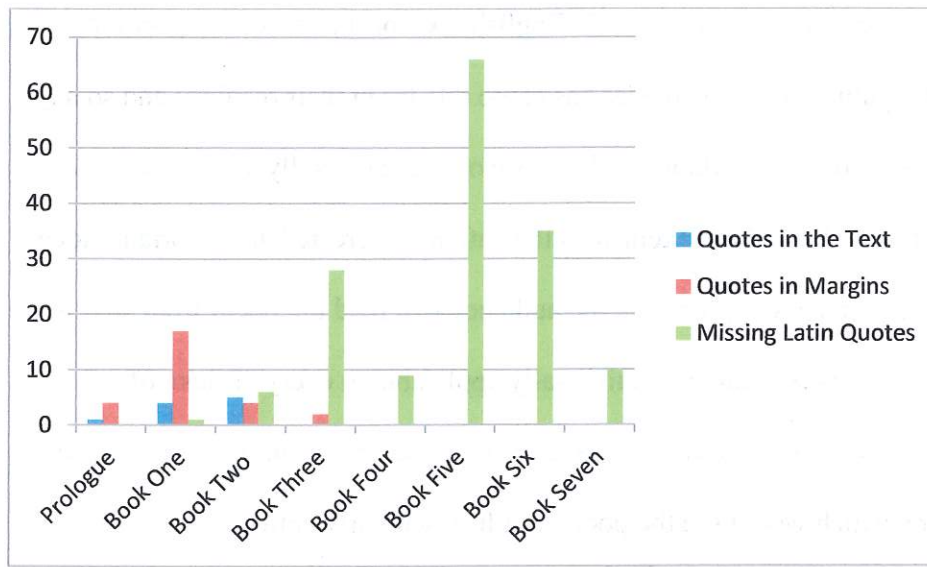


Figure 4 shows how quotations are used, and more often excluded, in Wellesley 8. This phenomenon is a feature specific to Wellesley 8; it does not occur in *Vespasian*, *Galba* or *Additional 33995*.⁷⁴ Unlike in those manuscripts where the marginalia does occur, but was written in hands other than the scribes', in Wellesley 8 there is evidence of both the scribe and readers writing in the margins. The Latin quotations which are included in the text are limited to the first three books of the poem. The effort to include Latin quotations in the margins is somewhat longer lived, though by Book Four they too are gone. It is clear that the creator of Wellesley 8 chose to exclude many Latin quotations from the text. The frequency of missing

⁷³ As compared with Richard Morris's 1863 edition.

⁷⁴ In those manuscripts, all of the quotations are in the text, in Latin. Any quotations in the margins were made by readers, and hence are a feature of their provenance, not their creation.

quotations increases chronologically; by Book Three in-text and marginal Latin quotations disappear entirely. This is because by this point the author feels that his authority has been sufficiently established through Latin quotations, and any further quotations can just as well be written only in English. He continues to remind the reader of the quotations' Latin origins through Book Three, but is concerned only with his English text for the rest of the poem. Now the author is secure in his authority (as the reader has come this far in their reading) and so any further Latin quotations would be superfluous and a waste of space (literally, as the paper was expensive for this poor book). With these exclusions the author has created an important model for reading the poem, that is, an assumption that the audience will read the poem from start to finish and in order. Since this is certainly not universally applicable to every "Pricke of Conscience," I believe this speaks strongly to support the idea that this manuscript was made for a scholarly audience, one which would see the poem as a full, scholarly entity.

Once the poet has established his authority, he is now secure enough with that authority to add a little something extra; I have discovered that Wellesley 8 has two lines buried in its text which appear in no other version of the "Pricke of Conscience." These lines are so significant because they further enhance the global aspect of this manuscript. These lines are inserted in Book Six, as the poet is describing the general pains of Hell, he introduces the couplet "Als ffurens and patryke gon telle/ Of þa paynes þat þai sawe in helle."⁷⁵ The two saints which the author describes going to Hell are St. Fursey and St. Patrick. These two saints, one world-famous and the other barely known outside of Ireland, both enhance the global character of the manuscript by bringing in a decidedly Irish aspect.

Aside from the famous myths surrounding St. Patrick bringing Christianity to Ireland and ridding it of snakes, he was also said to have gone into a cave and in there he was shown

⁷⁵ Wellesley 8, 193. "As Furens and Patrick will tell/ Of the pains that they saw in Hell."

Purgatory and Hell. After that, he allowed the cave to be opened to worthy pilgrims who wanted to experience Hell so that they could triumph over it and become holy.⁷⁶ More obscure is the mention of Furens, or rather, St. Fursey. He was also an Irish saint who travelled to England, according to Bede, in 633. There he battled with demons in Hell through a series of three visions, the last of which left him bodily scarred.⁷⁷

Thus far the creator has been concerned with making his manuscript readable outside of his domain in the North of England. There has only been evidence, according to McIntosh's maps, that it could or would be read in the Midlands and South of England. The inclusion of these Irish saints however make me think that at one point the creator would have wanted the manuscript to either be read by someone who had strong ties to Ireland, or would have the manuscript sent to Ireland. To include these two saints who are remarkable for their Irish identities could have no other explanation.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Eileen Gardiner, ed, *Visions of Heaven & Hell before Dante*, (New York: Italica Press, 1989), 242.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 242.

⁷⁸ There are many other examples of non-Irish saints who visited Purgatory, such as St. Lidwina, St. Lutgarda, St. Malachy. Taken from S.J. Fr. F.X. Schoupe, *Purgatory Explained*, (Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc, 1893), 201.

Chapter Four: The Theme of Women in Wellesley 8

While the creator of Wellesley 8 embraced the paradox of a global and local manuscript, there is no ambiguity when it comes to his position on women. To begin with, women are not mentioned often in any of the texts which were chosen, but then the creator systematically removed all but one mention of women in the texts.

Women are entirely absent from the section of the “Stimulus Conscientiae minor” which is extant in Wellesley 8. This is not because there is no room for them. On the contrary, there are many opportunities where women would further the poet’s argument. For instance, when the poet writes, “That he hym yeld, that on gode fryday”⁷⁹ the person to whom the poet is referring to is the Virgin Mary; but the poet does not name her. This lack of name detracts from Mary’s importance, relegating her to a crowd of unnamed women.

This theme of an unnamed Mary continues in the “Pricke of Conscience.” When the poet describes the role of parents, he says that even “Ne cryst hys modyr þat he luffed more/ Walde nocht fro þat sight spare.”⁸⁰ Here, the poet is keeping firmly within a popular medieval trope of showing Mary as a paragon of motherhood. But here he deviates from the norm in the poem of naming her. This occurs again when he describes Hell, which can be avoided, “Through prayere of hys moder mylde.”⁸¹ Mary is only named once in the entire manuscript; “Whar berþed was my madyr Mary/ Of whame flesch and blode for yhowe toke I.”⁸² This only occurs when the subject and speaker of the phrase is Christ; when the subject is Mary, she goes unnamed. Therefore, Mary’s importance and autonomy is diminished.

⁷⁹ Wellesley 8, 4. “Who held him on that Good Friday.”

⁸⁰ Ibid, 74. “Christ loved no one more than his mother/ who he would not spare from his sight.”

⁸¹ Ibid, 242. “Through the prayers of his gentle mother.”

⁸² Ibid, 154. “My mother Mary bore me/ Of whose flesh and blood for you I take.”

In addition to altering Mary, the creator also entirely removed her from many sections of the poems. For instance, in “Of Absolution by the Pope,” what reads originally in Galba as

Fro þat mirknes he fend us ay
þat for us died on gude Friday
And till his claret he us ken
Through prayers of his moder, Amen⁸³

becomes in Wellesley 8 “Fro þat fo he schelde us ay/ þat boght us dere on þe gode ffryday.”⁸⁴ In this version, the “mirknes” which is the subject of the sentence is omitted, and so it is unclear what Jesus was saving the reader from. Wellesley 8 leaves out the mention of the Virgin Mary, who is only referred to as his mediating “moder,” even though it seems like an appropriate place to mention her. Instead, the reader is left questioning what, if anything, can save them once they are in need of intercession. The only reference to Mary in “Of Absolution by the Pope,” occurs at the very end of the poem when, after a reference to Good Friday, the reader remains with hope of redemption: “And till his claret he us ken/ Through prayers of his moder; Amen.”⁸⁵ Without this last reference to Mary, the text not only becomes devoid of any positive images of women, but the reader now is without hope of Mary’s prayers. Similarly, in the “Pricke of Conscience,” the poet excluded a long phrase about Mary;

His blysfulle Moder Saint Mary
þat next syttes God in heven bright,
Oboven all aungels, als es right;
Ffor he chese hir tylle his moder dere⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid, 1586. “From that darkness he saved us too/ And died for us on Good Friday/ And until his [?] he will know us/ Through the prayers of his mother, Amen.”

⁸⁴ Wellesley 8, 12. “He shielded us from that too/ And bought us dearly on Good Friday.”

⁸⁵ Wellesley 8, 12. “And until his [?] he will know us/ Through the prayers of his mother, Amen.”

⁸⁶ Morris, *The Pricke of Conscience*, 234. “His blissful mother Saint Mary/ That sits next to God in bright heaven/ Above all angels, as is right/ For he chose her as his dear mother.”

Without this description, the reader is not informed that Mary sits above all the angels. This is significant because this is the only moment when her position in the cosmos is explained.

As might be expected after the few short descriptions of Mary in Wellesley 8, there are similarly few descriptions of other mothers and women in general. Often when mothers are described, it is with an emphasis on their womb. Job is quoted repeatedly as saying that he emerged naked from his mother's womb.⁸⁷ Not only does this refer to the reality of being born without clothing, but it also alludes to the fact that children were born with original sin, without the sacrament of baptism to clothe them, so to speak.

The poet continues with a theme of the dark female womb in the "Thanksgiving to Christ," when he writes "Fro a myrks dongeowne yu broght me right/ Þat es my madyr wambe to yir light."⁸⁸ The uncomfortable metaphor of a mother's womb as a dungeon occurs again in the "Pricke of Conscience," as the poet professes "Ffro þat dourowne hys moderr women/ And was borne to þis worldys light."⁸⁹ The reader is repeatedly challenged with the image of a sinful womb in this poem; man "was consaysed sinfully/ With in hys awen madyr body,"⁹⁰ and even King David is quoted as saying "And my moder has consayved me/ In synne and in kaytyfte."⁹¹

If the womb was seen as a dungeon from which one was only granted parole through baptism, then the crime for which one was imprisoned was actually Eve's sin. Indeed, as "Alle pase he saye þat come of Eve/ Þat es alle men þat here behoves leve."⁹² Eve's sins are even evident in a child's first sounds when it emerges from the womb. As a child is born,

And yf þe chylde a woman be
When it es borne it sayes e e

⁸⁷ Wellesley 8, 26; 27; 36.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 4. "From a dark dungeon you brought me right/ That is, my mother's womb into your light."

⁸⁹ Ibid, 25. "From that dungeon his mother, women/ And was born into this worldly light."

⁹⁰ Ibid, 24. "was conceived sinfully/ Within his mother's body."

⁹¹ Ibid, 25. "And my mother conceived me/ in sin and in evil."

⁹² Ibid, 25. "All those he says that come from Eve/ That is, all men that must live."

It es þe first letter and þe hede
Of þe name of one þat began ovr dede.⁹³

Here, Eve is placed in context as not only the instigator of original sin but also as the instigator of a nigh-eternal cycle of life and death which can only be ended by a man, Christ.

Though most of the references to women are as mothers throughout the manuscript, there are a few select instances when they are described as women in general. But it is in these cases when they are portrayed most severely. In "Of Absolution by the Pope," women are described in the context of whores as "Comon woman and also skalde/ All ear þere for cursed talde."⁹⁴ As these women have no honor, it is expanded that women have no sense of protecting their honor, and that it is thus up to the (male) reader to defend it

... yf þou with þy woman freende
Ffynd clerke doand deede unheende
Als modyr doghtyr syst or wife
Ffor whose honor þe awe to stryfe.⁹⁵

Women are subsequently described as "seke folk,"⁹⁶ and as when Mary went unnamed, so too when women are stripped of even that general moniker, they are taken out of the conversation. Women are taken out of the conversation again when it is implied that they cannot preserve their own honor. This occurs when they are being absolved of sin if living with a sinful man;

⁹³ Ibid, 26. "And if a child is a woman/ When it is born it says e/ It is the first letter and the head/ Of the one that began our own troubles."

⁹⁴ Ibid, 8. "Common women and other [?]/ All are here for cursed tales."

⁹⁵ Ibid, 10. "If you find your woman friend with/ A clerk doing an unholy deed/ Even if it is a mother, daughter, or wife/ For whose honor you strive."

⁹⁶ Ibid, 9.

When þou es nocht cursed þan
If comun with cursed man...
Be third case es a posed wife,
With cursed husband may lede hir life.⁹⁷

Without this opportunity for redemption and pardon, women are again limited in their possibility for salvation.

Throughout this work, women are placed into two narrow categories; mother/wife and prostitute. While the Virgin Mary is an exception to the mortal paradigm, the poet goes against the convention of expanding on her unique status as a virgin mother savior but instead almost relegates her to an unnamed position, akin to her fellow females'. By de-identifying her, the creator takes women out of the work almost entirely. This must lead to the conclusion that the creator saw his audience as more homogeneously male and male-centric than other readers of the four poems would have been.⁹⁸

The creator attempted with great effort to cater to a male audience but the provenance of Wellesley 8 shows that some of its owners were women. The first indication that we have of this is that among the inscriptions by owners and friends is the signature, "Anno dominis millesimo quintentessimo tricesimo quarto facta est conditias per Cecilia Cooke uxor Roberta Cooke de Skeibey eber uxor William."⁹⁹ It is significant that Cecilia wrote this in Latin because it reflects that she had some degree of education. On the other hand, while the other readers had defined themselves as either a friend or, in one case a Knight of the Holy Cross,¹⁰⁰ only Cecilia felt the need to categorize herself as a wife from a particular town. Thus, while she owned this book, she

⁹⁷ Morris, *Cursor Mundi*, 1583. "When you are not evil then/ If you interact with a evil man/ The third case is of a married wife/ Who may lead her life with an evil husband."

⁹⁸ It is tempting to describe the intended audience as misogynistic, but medieval and modern definitions of this are different, and it is more accurate and fair, and less judgmental to a certain degree, to call it 'male-centric'.

⁹⁹ Wellesley 8, 252. "In the year one thousand five hundred and thirty-four, was made inscribed through Cecilia Cooke, wife of Robert Cooke of Skeibey, [Yorkshire?], William's wife."

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 202.

had to show that she was more than just a reader or owner, and that she was a married woman and part of a community.

There is also further evidence of the presence of women in Wellesley 8. In the last, blank pages of the manuscript a reader has drawn a large and fairly detailed sketch of a woman, circa 1530 – 1540. I dated this sketch by the style of clothing and the darkness of the ink in comparison with other signatures in the manuscript. Ruth Rogers believes that this sketch was done by a child, and there is evidence in other manuscripts of children having practiced their writing or drawing in them. However, there is also no specific signature that would identify this as a child, and so we may be left with sketches either from a child or an adult with poor drawing skills.

Figure 5: Sketch of a woman, circa 1530-1540, pg. 249.



This drawing is the most detailed in a series of small sketches which litter the back pages in addition to sums, owner's signatures, and a simple cipher. The presence of this woman in the

manuscript further supports the idea that, although women were taken out of the text as much as possible, they were not absent from either the reader's mind or the chain of ownership.¹⁰¹

There is irony in that, while the intended audience was male-centered, the manuscript has become part of the Special Collections at a women's college. Both Wellesley 8's donor and current owner have left their marks on the book; the former with George Hebert Palmer's bookplate on the inside cover, and the latter by naming it Wellesley Manuscript 8. In this way we can see that while the creator of Wellesley 8 had intended his manuscript to reach a certain audience, it did not entirely conform to his expectations. This has resulted in a manuscript which contains two paradoxes: a global and a local scope for the texts; and a text which was male-centered but read by women.

¹⁰¹ I have also noticed that the woman could be holding a quill in her hand. If verified, this is of the utmost importance because a woman is shown in this manuscript to be literate, and gives further credence to the theory that women are further inscribed (with a quill) in the book.

Chapter Five: Wellesley 8 Today

Thus far I have looked at Wellesley 8 either in isolation or in comparison with Vespasian, Galba, or Additional 33995. This is because these three manuscripts were, in many ways, the most similar to Wellesley 8. However, with the publication of *A Descriptive Guide to the Manuscripts of the Pricke of Conscience*, Robert Lewis and Angus McIntosh have made available a comprehensive catalogue of every manuscript known to contain the “Pricke of Conscience,” either in its entirety or in fragments. This information would have been almost impossible to collect centuries ago, and so this section comes last in the chronologically sequenced chapters.

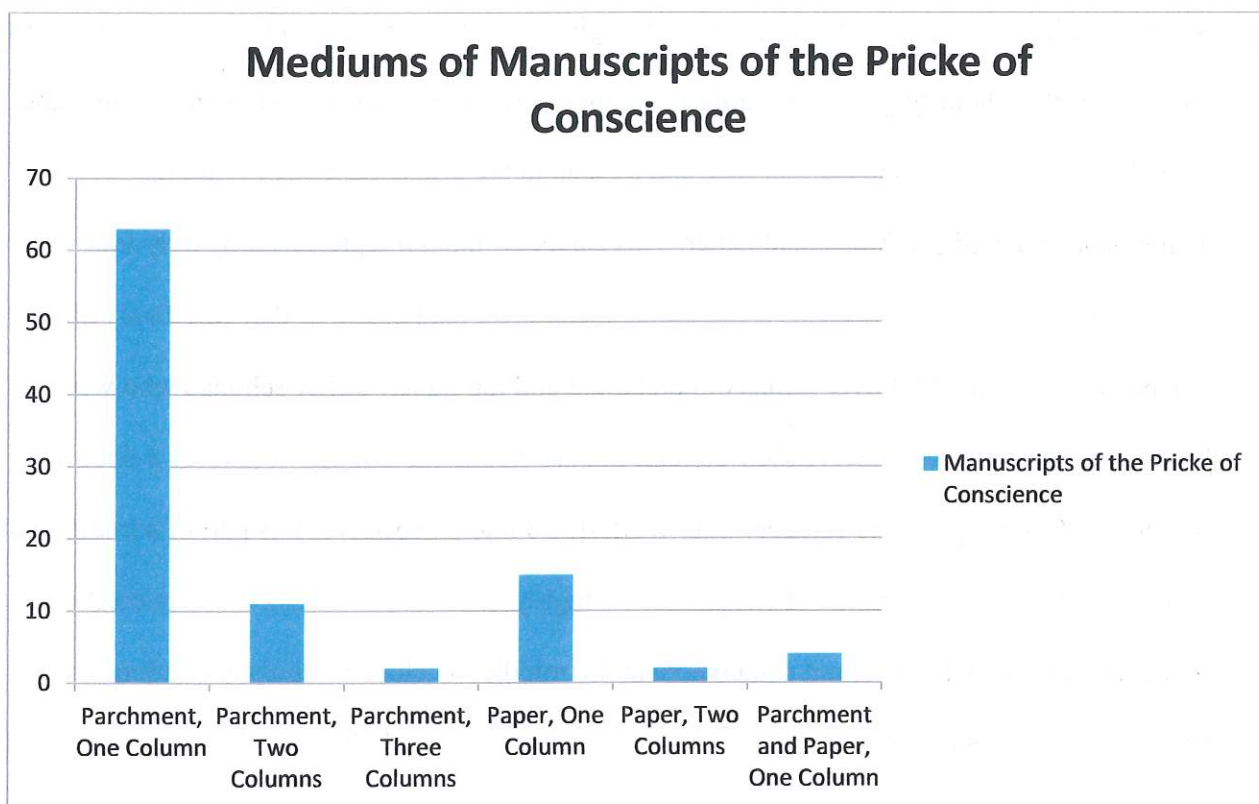
There are multiple versions of the poem; however the most popular and, as Ralph Hanna and others would suggest, earliest version is from the north of England. In their definitive catalogue, Lewis and McIntosh show that there are 97 extant northern or main versions, of the text.¹⁰² Wellesley 8 falls into this category.

One of the most exciting aspects we have previously discussed is that Wellesley 8 is written on paper. Again, one must bear in mind that this was created decades before the printing press was invented and paper became a more available necessity for printers. In these early decades of the 15th century it was still a cheap economy in the production of a very expensive product. As I have stated before, the fact that Wellesley 8 is written on paper reflects its global scope. By examining if other manuscripts of the “Pricke of Conscience” were written on paper, we will be able to see if other manuscripts were similarly constructed, and hence were meant for

¹⁰² Robert Lewis and Angus McIntosh, *A Descriptive Guide to the Manuscripts of the Pricke of Conscience*, (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1982).

similar audiences. That being said, looking at *Figure 6*, it is significant that most extant versions of the “Pricke of Conscience” are written on parchment and not paper.¹⁰³

Figure 6: Substrates of Manuscripts of the “Pricke of Conscience”



This would indicate that at the very least seventy-six times the “Pricke of Conscience” was thought important enough to expend a good deal of money copying it onto parchment. There could also be a case made for the significance of whether the poem was copied out in one, two or three text blocks. Traditionally, texts that were written on parchment were thought to be placed in two columns to reduce the amount of parchment used. However, this is obviously not the case

¹⁰³ Naturally, whether this is due to the more delicate nature of the paper and thus fewer copies survived the ages, or that as parchment was more precious it was more carefully looked after is uncertain.

with the “Pricke of Conscience” as the majority of poems on parchment were recorded in one text block. This was to facilitate easy reading, particularly reading aloud as this poem is written in couplets and in more than one instance (such as Wellesley 8 and Galba) has markings indicating an oral reading tradition.¹⁰⁴ Another possibility which is appealing is that the poem was written in one column to allow for more marginal markings, which is likely considering that this is a deeply scholarly text. The scholarly nature of the poem is reinforced by the number and type of reader’s markings in the margins, and as seen in the last category of *Figure 6*, manuscripts made of parchment and paper. This category, though represented by only four manuscripts, is significant because it represents the poorest readers, those that could only afford to have books made of leftover scraps of parchment and rag-paper: thrifty scholars who were least likely to be able to preserve their delicate manuscripts well. Though Wellesley 8 does not fit into this last category, the category puts Wellesley 8 into perspective. It is part of a tradition of manuscript that spans the range of expensive and highly-finished parchment to the poorest of the poor, and Wellesley 8 comes out somewhere in the middle. Its closest linguistic relations are Galba and Additional 33995. By examining the two manuscripts, I observed that they were written on parchment and in two columns, however the former was written in a more formal, gothic hand and was gilded, while the latter was written in a looser, anglicana script¹⁰⁵ and was only rubricated. And unlike Galba, Additional 33995 has titles indicating where each of the seven books in the “Pricke of Conscience” begins. The rubrication, loose hand and titles all suggest that Additional 33995 was instrumental in the making of Wellesley 8. Ralph Hanna believes that Additional 33995 was the primary manuscript used in making Wellesley 8. However Emily Hope Allen and Lewis and McIntosh related Wellesley 8 more closely to Galba.

¹⁰⁴ Jacques Brunet, *Manuel du libraire et de l’amateur de livres*, 5. éd (Paris: 1860-80), 14.

¹⁰⁵ Wellesley 8 was also written in anglicana, though not by the same hand.

Both cases have their merits and supporters, but I believe that Wellesley 8 was made from a manuscript now lost. This is not only because of the similarities between Wellesley 8 and Galba and Additional 33995, but also due to Wellesley 8's choices from both Vespasian and Galba in "Of Absolution by the Pope." Wellesley 8 is the product of a lost manuscript and therefore is an incredibly important asset to any study of the poems it contains as well as northern English manuscript studies.

Conclusion:

Wellesley 8 has been a remarkable manuscript to work with for many reasons. It is a manuscript full of paradoxes, some perhaps intended by the creator and others not. Though created in northern England in the early 15th century, Wellesley 8 is actually a very international book. The paper's watermarks indicate that the creator had access to paper made in France and Switzerland. The insertion of two lines about Irish saints Patrick and Fursey into the "Pricke of Conscience" show that the creator had ties to Ireland. In addition, the creator wanted the manuscript to be able to be read by those not only in the north of the country, but throughout, which is why he chose to use 'wh' instead of 'qu' in the poems.

Oftentimes readers of the past and present assume that a manuscript was either created or compiled and then it is a static entity, unchanged by its readers. As I have shown, particularly in the case with women in Wellesley 8, that is certainly not the case. The compiler may have seen his audience as a group of male scholars and monks cloistered in the carrels, but instead Wellesley 8 has been in the ownership of both male and female scholars, a wife, a knight, and a baron related to the late Queen Mother.

This is the first time the Wellesley 8 has been the subject of intense study, and it is evident to what great extent a small manuscript has to offer the academic world, both in terms of textual and book studies.¹⁰⁶ I look forward with great enthusiasm to future scholars who will study Wellesley 8, particularly in regards to the marginalia and other themes within the texts.

¹⁰⁶ Emily Hope Allen, Ralph Hanna, and Angus McIntosh have been the only ones to look at Wellesley 8, and only the first saw it in person. None of them wrote in any depth on the manuscript itself.

Appendix: "Thanksgiving to Christ"

This poem, number 1954 in the Index of Middle English Verse, has appeared twice in print, both in the 19th century.¹⁰⁷ However, the version which is in Wellesley 8 is significantly different from those versions and so I have provided a transcription and translation of it.

Wellesley 8 Transcription

Lord god thru cryste all mighty
I thanke þe Wt alle my hert haly
þat me man schope and made of noght
And of vyle matere me for the broght
And my body swa made of vyle mater
þen knitted to gyder in Joyeuxes seere
And my sawle þar to yu made of ye ayre
And gafe me lymmes seemly and fayre
Fro a myrks dongeowns yu broght me right
þat es my madyr wambe to yir light
And est gat me als yur barns newe borne
Thorgh baptyms þat was þe feendes chylde
forlorne
And fyve wyttes of body yu has gyfen me
And [?] whar wythe þai solde rewled be

Author's Translation

Lord God through Christ almighty
I thank you with all my heart, wholly,
That you shaped me and made me of naught,
And made me of vile matter,
And also made my body of vile matter ,
Then knitted together in such joys
And thereto you made my soul of air
And gave me seemly and fair limbs.
From a dark dungeon you brought me right,
That is, my mother's womb to your light,
And was given to me as your newborn baby
Through baptism, that was the fiend's child
forlorn.
And five wits of body you have given me,
And [?] with which the soul is ruled.

¹⁰⁷ Carl Horstmann, ed. *Yorkshire Writers*. 2 vols. London, Sonnenschein; New York: Macmillan, 1895-96: 1.363. and George G. Perry, ed. *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse from R. Thornton's MS. EETS* o.s. 26 (1867); repr. 1973: 75-6.

And ellys if I hafe done agayne þe lawe
þe godes þon wytt noght fra me wythdrawe
þat a fale trayts to þe es ay
And trespasses agayne þe here ilke day
þow sendes me here thorgh þi purviawnce
Ylke day here my nedfull sustynawnces
þat es to say mete and clothes free
And alle þat here war needful to me
þou has suffred me and venges þe noght
Of my synnes þat I have agayne þe wrought
And yhyt suffred and gyffes me space
To turne me to þe and take þi grace
And ay when I hafe fallen in þe feendes
bawndowne
þou has safed me fro fynalle dampnacyowne
þat I war for my wuckednes worthy
Bot þou has coverd me wt þi mercy
And ay has spared me and zytte spares
And keeps me fro þe deeneles snares
And agayne hys dartes has bene my scheelde
And has sanes me bothe in yhowthe and oolde
Ffro many perylles in many sere steeds
And fro myschawnce and sodayne dedes

And anyway if I have done against the law,
The good then will not from me withdraw.
That a false traitor to you is always,
And trespasses against you here this day.
You send me here through your providence,
That same day here my necessary sustenance,
That is to say meat and clothes, generously,
And all that here are needful to me.
You have suffered me and do not revenge
On my sins that I have wrought against you,
And yet suffer and give me space
To turn me to you and take your grace.
And also when I have fallen in the fiend's
abandon,
You have saved me from final damnation
For which I was worthy for my wickedness.
But you have covered me with your mercy,
And even have spared me and yet spare me,
And keep from the devil's snares,
And against his arrows have been my shield,
And have saved me both in youth and old age
From many perils in many various situations,
And from mischance and rash deeds.

Ffor alle þere þat I hafe rehersed here
And for alle [of] godes and benefyces sere
Þat þu to me synfull caytyfe
Has gracyowse done in þis lyfe
I thanke þe lourde wt alle lonyng
And prayes þe take me in þi keeping
And safe me forthewarde als þou has done
And grawnte my lyfe and lyffe in clenness
Þat I womne wt þe in blys endless

For all that I have rehearsed here,
And for all of such goods and beneficence
That you to me, a sinful wretch,
Have graciously done in this life,
I thank you Lord with all longing
And pray you take me in your keeping,
And save me forthwith as you have done,
And grant me love and life in purity,
That I earned with you in endless bliss.

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