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Saints' Lives in BL MS Harley 2253 and Their Local and National Importance¹

When considering the debate over British Library MS Harley 2253's status as anthology or miscellany it is useful to consider what is at stake in deciding in favour of one over the other. Arguments from both sides make salient points. Regardless, however, of the compilation's organizational status by modern standards, it remains that this manuscript is of importance not only because of the Harley Lyrics it contains – as some modern anthologies and their anthologists might lead students to believe – but also the world whence it came and connections within the compilation which point to an England that was, in the fourteenth-century, becoming a nation in its own right and asserting its place before God and the world as an important part of those histories. Harley 2253 includes many works besides the extant English lyrics; the lyrics themselves encompass only a small portion of the contents. There are other types of secular and religious verse and prose in Latin, Anglo-Norman, and English. Of the latter genre, a wide variety including Bible stories (both sanctioned and apocryphal), selections from the *Vitae Patrum*, devotional poetry, passion stories, and saints' lives provide a sufficient amount of material that warrants further consideration. Because it is a generally accepted position that the manuscript was compiled by a single person (most likely the main or so-called Harley Scribe of fols. 49 – 141)², the choice of which texts to include in the codex and their placement is partly the responsibility of the compiler with input from possible patron(s). In

¹ It should be noted that this essay is a small part of a larger project on Harley 2253 that I plan to submit for publication. The present work reproduces brief selections from the larger work.

² Carter Revard, 'Scribe and Provenance', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. by Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 2000), pp. 21-110 (and Theo Stemmler 'Miscellany or Anthology? The Structure of Medieval Manuscripts: MS Harley 2253, for Example', also in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, pp. 111 – 121 (p. 113)

the case of Harley 2253, the main scribe (henceforth Scribe B) has been all but given the title of compiler of the manuscript so he is also the one ultimately responsible for the organization of texts, though he may or may not have acted on his own advice and it is likely there was outside input. In light of the person or persons who compiled the manuscript and collated it in a certain way, it remains that is in the codex was put there purposely if not purposefully.

I take as a guiding principle in this study that the manuscript's contents tell a kind of story, regardless of their physical placement within the codex, and, specifically, a reading of the included saints' lives perform an important kind of work that memorializes the importance of Ludlow, Herefordshire, and the surrounding areas in historical, geographical, and religious/metaphysical manners. Although the first forty-eight folios³ are in an earlier hand by a different scribe, the contents inform all that follows in the hand of Scribe B. Scribe A's contribution to Harley 2253 is wholly comprised of religious works in Anglo-Norman and I will, of course, focus on the included saints' lives: John the Evangelist (fol. 41^v), John the Baptist (fol. 43^v), Bartholomew (fol. 45^v), and Peter (fol. 47^v). I have used Carter Revard's extensive palaeographical evidence that shows Scribe B's hand in red in the nine rubrics of the seven texts of fols. 1 – 48⁴ and which engenders his (the scribe's) intent that they be part of the codex.⁵ Scribe B shows further intent by adding four more saints' lives in addition to those found in Scribe A's folios. While Scribe B's saints' lives, Ethelbert (fol. 53^v); Marina (fol. 64^v); Etfred (fol. 132^v); and Wistan (fol. 140^v) are mostly saints of local importance to the areas in which he is known to have worked, namely, Ludlow, Herefordshire⁶, there are connections to be made with the earlier lives of the manuscript on local and grander levels. The codicological evidence presents us with Scribe B's deliberate integration of these other saints' lives which wants a

³ Quires 1 – 4.

⁴ Revard, 'Scribe and Provenance', pp. 21-110 (p. 98)

⁵ See Appendix Figure 1

⁶ Revard, 'Scribe and Provenance', pp. 21-110 (p. 98)

recasting of the understanding of Harley 2253 from a more universal Christian historical text to one that maintains as its focus England the nation in general, and Ludlow the holy site specifically.

Codicology and Compilation

The work of Scribe A is divided into four quires and written in rhyming verse couplets in two columns of text with large initials. It ends with the Saint Peter piece on fol. 48 which, along with fol. 47, is a singleton. The first text of quire 5 in Scribe B's hand follows, which is the French poem '*ABC à Femmes*' and then a French debate between summer and winter. The debate ends quire 5 and gives way to quire 6 on which begins, in red rubrication, the Latin life of St. Ethelbert in Scribe B's hand that replicates the style of Scribe A's saints' lives with its rubrication, two column structure, and two-line initials;⁷ the large initials are not found anywhere else in the manuscript with the exception of '*ABC à Femmes*' in which they are used to denote the letters of the alphabet in each 'rule' for women and in the texts of quire 6 including 'The Harrowing of Hell'. While the question of quiring is debated by pre-eminent early scholars of Harley 2253 (Humphrey Wanley, the Harleian librarian; G.L. Brook, editor of the lyrics; and N.R. Ker, editor of the facsimile) the internal evidence that Scribe B, following the style of Scribe A, placed a significant amount of importance on the earlier scribe's work as part of the manuscript and added to it something of local importance to present a more cohesive collection that would showcase Ludlow as a significant manifestation of God in much the same way that the 12th century poem 'Durham' portrays explicitly the divine importance of that British city⁸.

A didactic purpose is evident already in the *Vitas Patrum* and the other texts found in fols. 1-48. The *Vitas Patrum*, as written by the original translator of the texts into French, are for laypeople who would otherwise not have access to the myths and wisdom of the so-called

⁷ See Appendix Figure 5

⁸ Seth Lerer, 'Old English and its Afterlife', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 1 – 34 for a more extensive discussion of 'Durham'.

eastern fathers of the church which proved quite popular in the middle ages⁹. In addition, the Passion of Christ story in this early vernacular translation by French poet Herman de Valenciennes of the accounts by Matthew, Luke, and John would have been extremely popular and well known to Scribe A and his potential readers in the late 13th century on account of its 'respectable pedigree' – having been patronized by Henry II – 'ensuring it became a favourite target for literary anthologists keen to provide their listeners and readers with material from a high quality biblical adaptation as part of a larger and more varied vernacular reading program'¹⁰. Its didactic purpose for speakers of the vernacular on both sides of the English Channel meant that it was a prudent choice on both the part of Scribe A initially and B after him.

As mentioned above, Harley 2253 begins with the *Vitas Patrum* which make up the first twenty-two folios (quires 1 and 2); the remaining folios and two quires which make up Scribe A's contribution contain saints' lives and passion stories: St. John the Evangelist, St. John the Baptist, St. Bartholomew, and the Passion stories of both Jesus and St. Peter.¹¹ These selections of French verse and prose make up the beginning of Harley 2253 and Scribe A's complete contribution. The collation of quires 1 – 4 is a relatively straightforward matter until quire 4 and, specifically, fols. 47 and 48. These two folios are two singletons which complete the life of St. Bartholomew (45^v - 47^r) and the entire passion of St. Peter story (47^v – 48^v). Humfrey Wanley, who originally catalogued the manuscript wrote of these folios that 'After this, two Leaves have been cutt out; wherein, probably, other like Receipts were written'¹²; G.L. Brook furthered this claim, though with more detail, and came to the conclusion in his 1948 lyric anthology that:

'The editors of the publications of the New Palaeographical Society and Hall say that the present manuscript consists of two manuscripts bound together, the second one

⁹ Michael P. Kuczynski, 'An "Electric Stream": The Religious Contents', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, ed. by Fein, pp. 123 – 161, (p. 125)

¹⁰ John Thompson, 'Frankis rimes here I redd', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, ed. by Fein, pp. 271 - 288 (p. 279)

¹¹ See Appendix Figure 2 for a more complete index

¹² Humfrey Wanley *et al*, *A Catalogue of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts in Two Volumes* (London: British Library Press, 1759)

beginning at fol. 49, where the second hand begins. This view cannot be correct, since fols. 47 to 52 belong to the same gathering of leaves'¹³

As outlined above the first four quires contain the *Vitas Patrum* as well as saints' lives in French. John J. Thompson has put forward the theory that, codicologically, these quires comprise a mini Biblical anthology. The evidence for this anthology is compelling. Thompson notes that 'Scribe A's disposition of material in these quires...suggests the manner in which he approached the task of providing a religious reading program for an English audience'¹⁴; by adding the material in quires 3 and 4, specific saints' lives and a verse extract from Herman's Passion story, Thompson links Scribe A's mini-anthology with those found in BL MS Egerton 2710 and Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MS fr. 19525¹⁵ as having a 'strong shared interest in the same vernacular biblical and legendary items'.¹⁶ More than anything Thompson makes a convincing case for the texts chosen by Scribe A as a didactic tool to share with the laity.

The compilation of Harley 2253 has been questioned and the theory that its quires are made up of a number of booklets that were copied over an extensive period of time and that the present organization is not necessarily the original or intended one has been suggested by Jason O'Rourke. O'Rourke's suggestion is that the 'quires...in the Harley scribe's manuscripts do not necessarily appear in the order in which he copied or obtained them' and the relative scarcity of exemplars, especially in the vernacular, with which the Harley scribe would have been faced meant that he would have 'collected and copied booklets while exemplars were available to him, which were incorporated into codices when there was sufficient material to construct a decent

¹³ G.L. Brook, *The Harley Lyrics*, Introduction.

¹⁴ Thompson, 'Frankis rimes here I redd', pp. 271 - 288 (p. 275)

¹⁵ These MSS date from the first and second half of the 13th century, respectively, making them contemporaneous with Scribe A. While Scribe A's text has not been affixed an exact date, Ker places it in the late 13th century based on the hand (xvi).

¹⁶ John Thompson, 'Frankis rimes here I redd', pp. 271-288 (p. 276)

sized book'.¹⁷ This theory works well with the notion that, organizationally, Harley 2253's quires are open to interpretation and perhaps even reorganization. As Harley 2253 is organized at the present, with the so-called mini-Bible anthology at the beginning with other saints' lives spread throughout the rest of the manuscript, points to a compilation with at least one purpose. Of course, organization and placement of texts only tells one part of the story. Language, dialect, close readings of themes embedded within the manuscript, physical evidence, and other factors must be taken into account before ascertaining the exact purpose(s) of the Harley collection of texts. I am of the opinion that Harley 2253 has a strong religious bent, but it goes farther than simply retelling Bible stories and saints' lives.

The Saints – Scribe A

In establishing an overarching significance to the saints' lives included in Harley 2253, it is important that they be treated in the order in which they appear in the manuscript's current collation. As mentioned above, the manuscript begins with Anglo-Norman selections from the *Vitas Patrum* that may serve a didactic function for the laity for whom vernacular translations of such stories were a relatively new phenomenon. To focus strictly on the saints' lives of the opening section copied by Scribe A, I believe that it is apparent the Harley compiler had specific intent to situate the lives of biblical saints in conjunction with the area of Herefordshire to help establish it as a place of holy importance within the burgeoning nation of England.

Although none of the stories claim that the biblical saints had any direct contact with the geographical area of Herefordshire, the importance of their influence is evident in and around that locality. For instance, St. John the Evangelist was the patron of the Palmers' Gild in Ludlow Parish Church of St. Lawrence. In the fourteenth-century in Ludlow, a legend surrounding pilgrims from Ludlow who had been to the Holy Land and returned with a ring supposedly from

¹⁷ Jason O'Rourke, 'Imagining Book Production in Fourteenth-Century Herefordshire: The Scribe of British Library, MS Harley 2253 and his 'Organizing Principles'', in *Imagining the Book*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), pp. 45-60 (p. 54)

St. John the Evangelist had given it to Edward the Confessor was being formulated. These pilgrims, it is said, founded the Palmers' Gild in the name of St. John the Evangelist; the Gild, officially known as 'the Palmers' Gild of the Brotherhood of the Blessed Mary'¹⁸ until 1329 when St. John the Evangelist was included, presumably, to strengthen the link between the legend of the saint and the Gild. This date is well after the copying of Scribe A's portion of Harley 2253, but a rather convenient one for a compiler to find the texts that will help to establish Ludlow as a place associated with saints' legends. Even though the legend itself was not firmly established until 1525, it is likely that versions were circulating in the prior centuries lending significance to St. John the Evangelist and the very powerful and important Palmers' Gild at Ludlow.¹⁹

The Gild, itself a quasi-religious organization, had been established in Ludlow in the eleventh-century, but there was no proper religious house in Ludlow. Thomas Wright has remarked that 'the insignificance of the town of Ludlow during the twelfth century is evident from the circumstance that it appeared to have possessed no religious house'.²⁰ He asserts, then, that it was most likely at the end of the reign of King John or early in that of Henry III [ca. 1216] 'that Peter Undergod founded the hospital of St. John the Baptist...and furnished it with friars of the order of St. Augustine'²¹ thus making St. John the Baptist a patron saint of Ludlow and another important piece of the story of Harley 2253's saints' lives.

The other two saints in Scribe A's portion of the manuscript, St. Bartholomew and Saint Peter are not, strictly speaking, within Ludlow itself, but the immediate surrounding areas. In the first instance, the parish church of St. Bartholomew was located three miles south of Ludlow at Richard's Castle, close enough to be an important and significant place in relation to Ludlow. Revard has concluded that it is likely Scribe B 'served as parish chaplain in Virgin's Chapel in the

¹⁸ Michael Faraday, *Ludlow 1085 – 1660: A Social, Economic and Political History* (Sussex: Phillimore, 1991), p. 80

¹⁹ *Ibid* p. 77.

²⁰ Thomas Wright, *History of Ludlow* (London: R. Jones, 1852), p. 98

²¹ *Ibid*.

parish Church of St. Bartholomew²² based on his documentary, holographic, and manuscript evidence. This would indeed make Scribe B interested in promoting the importance of Ludlow and Herefordshire as a holy place as well as allowing him access to materials to copy.

The Church of St. Peter, although located further away from Ludlow than St. Bartholomew's parish, was a place of great importance to the manuscript, Ludlow, and perhaps Scribe B himself. St. Peter's parish was – and still is – located at Leominster Priory. The legend of St. Etfrid in the later saints' lives places Leominster Priory within the same kind of important holy site with the help of a, likely, fabricated legend involving the king of Mercia. It has been suggested that Scribe B, in addition to serving at St. Bartholomew's, had a close personal and professional association with Leominster Priory. In their various local roles, the saints' lives copied by Scribe A represented those with a special importance to Ludlow.

The Saints – Scribe B

Ethelbert

The passion story of St. Ethelbert is earliest extant in the early twelfth-century Corpus Christi College MS 308; however, the earliest mention of Ethelbert is in the A-manuscript's 792 CE entry of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: 'Here Offa, king of the Mercians, ordered King Æthelbert's head to be struck off²³. Ethelbert, according to his passion stories, was 'a king of East Anglia who, although predisposed to chastity and celibacy, was persuaded by his courtiers to seek a wife in the interests of his dynasty and his kingdom, and resolved to seek the hand in marriage of the Ælflæd, daughter of King Offa of Mercia'²⁴, but the king was persuaded by his wife, Cwoenthryth, that Ethelbert posed a threat to Offa's kingdom and persuaded him to kill the suitor. After his beheading, Ethelbert was thrown into a swamp only to show his saintliness via a beam of light in the spot he was interred; his body was excavated and buried at a site that

²² Revard, 'Scribe and Provenance', pp. 21-110 (p. 98)

²³ David Rollason, *St. Æthelbert of Hereford and the Cults of European Royal Saints*, (transcribed lecture)

²⁴ *Ibid.*

came to be called Hereford. A king from a far off kingdom called Milfrith heard about this and built a cathedral at the new burial site, which is regarded as a predecessor to Hereford Cathedral that still stands and bears the name of St. Ethelbert the King.²⁵ As Rollason points out, the veracity of the St. Ethelbert martyr legend is highly in doubt since he is largely an unknown figure before the twelfth-century except in the above line of the AS Chronicle. Even Corpus Christi 308 holds no real claim to any kind of 'veracity or even plausibility', Rollason continues, 'aside from the single annal in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, all we know of Æthelbert as a king of East Anglia comes from our passions'²⁶.

Although Ethelbert's story lacks veracity, his life and martyrdom have especial significance in relation to Scribe A's contribution of other saints' lives that are also connected to the area. To include St. Ethelbert's life directly after the lives of great biblical saints in Scribe A's portion of Harley lends itself to Herefordshire and Ludlow being important places in the burgeoning nation of England as well as the eyes of God. The cult of Ethelbert was popular in medieval England and Herefordshire was second only to Canterbury as a popular site of pilgrimage²⁷. It has also been noted that the placement of the Ethelbert legend within Harley points to a significance of the story in a broader context. Kuczynski points to the interesting fact that the *Anima Cristi Santifica Me* (Soul of Christ Sanctify Me) prayer appears in a lighter ink in the blank space after Ethelbert's legend on fol. 54^v, pointing to, perhaps, more than simply local interest in the saint's life:

This prayer, in its emotional simplicity, reminds us that medieval saints' lives often reenact the Passion of Christ himself and invite readers to participate in the Passion by

²⁵ David Rollason, *St. Æthelbert of Hereford*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ David Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 3rd Edition (London: OUP), p. 163.

following the path of humility.²⁸

The reenactment of Christ's Passion – or at least martyrdom through other passions – appears to be a theme running throughout most of Harley's included saints' lives, though it is by no means the only thread tying them together. What I would argue instead is that the lives taken as a whole in the manuscript tell the story of the providence of the area whence it came, some overarching reason that these events transpired in and around Herefordshire and that biblical saints were chosen to represent various aspects of the area. The idea I perpetually come back to is that somebody – either the compiler or patron of Harley 2253 – is making the case for Herefordshire being somehow chosen by God as a holy place of importance and pilgrimage to rival any found in the older biblical traditions. There is a sense, when reading these saints' lives, that God's work continues to be done in southwest England.

Marina

The legend of St. Marina (fol. 64^v) appears to be of no real local importance, though it does echo Christ's suffering and there is a compelling case to be made for its inclusion based on the legend of Thaïs in the *Vitas Patrum* of fols. 1 – 22. Fein has described the *Vitas Patrum* as 'holy exemplums with sometimes salacious subtexts'²⁹ and the stories of Thaïs and Marina, from the same Latin source, both contain salacious subtexts in the manner of misrepresentations of gender and prevailing innocence of the saints. Marina's legend, as told in Harley and by Daher of the Maronite Church of Lebanon, is that her father escaped to a monastery upon being widowed by Marina's mother. So bereaved was he, that he begged abbot to accept his daughter Marina, at age seven, into the monastery as well. The abbot agreed on the condition that her gender would remain a secret and that outwardly she would be male. Marina was raised as Marinos and nobody

²⁸ Michael Kuczynski, 'An 'Electric Stream': The Religious Contents', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, ed. By Fein, pp. 123-162 (p. 140)

²⁹ Susanna Fein "A Saint 'Geyst under Gore'", in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, ed. By Fein, pp. 351 - 376 (p. 369)

knew the secret until the death of the monk many years later after 'he' had been accused of raping and impregnating a young girl. The girl's father gave the baby to Marinos to raise and he did so for four years until the day of his death, all the while keeping the shame associated with the act he could not have committed. When Marinos' body was to be buried, the secret was discovered by the other monks of the monastery and the sanctity of her body spread throughout the ancient world and her tomb became a source for pilgrimages, cures, and graces.³⁰

While Marina's legend is not, strictly speaking, the type of martyrdom or passion thus far included in the saints' lives of Harley, it does speak to a kind of importance that warranted its inclusion in the codex. The story is perhaps meant to be read in conjunction with the other *Vitas Patrum* stories whence it came and was a part of the didactic purpose of Harley 2253. It is also of intriguing note to mention that Marina's legend appears in the same quire as many of the lyrics, which centre on matters of the sexes, but this is merely conjecture that requires an expanded reading of the texts for which I do not have room for in this study. If we take Marina's legend strictly as part of the chosen saints' lives, it is much more fruitful to conclude that, although she appears to have no local significance, her story interpellates the audience as to the manifest purposes of the saints' lives on the whole.

Etfrid

Scribe B also included other saints' lives later in the manuscript that have been dated later than the life of St. Ethelbert on account of the palaeographic changes in his hand.³¹ They are notable, however, for their local importance as much as St. Ethelbert. The life of St. Etfrid, '*Incipit legenda de sancto Etfrido presbitero de Leominstra*' (fols. 132 – 133) is of extreme importance to Ludlow. Etfrid was a Northumbrian priest of the 7th century CE known for his abilities as a

³⁰ B. Daher, 'The Synaxarium According to the Maronite Church,' in *Marina the Monk* <http://maroniteinstitute.org/MARI/JMS/january00/Saint_Marina_the_Monk.htm> [accessed 10 December 2011]

³¹ Revard, 'Scribe and Provenance'

preacher and he had succeeded in converting King Merewald of Mercia from paganism to Christianity. As the story goes, the king, so grateful for Etfrid's gift of the true faith, established *Leof-minster*, or *the beloved abbey*,³² in 660 and established Etfrid as the first head abbot there until his death circa 675.³³ The name was Latinised later on when the legend of St. Etfrid – the one contained in Harley – was invented that as the saint was on his way to the court at Merewald, he arrived at the future site of Leominster around dusk, tired and weary from his travels. Resting beneath a tree, a fierce lion approached Etfrid with, Etfrid thought, intent to devour him. When Etfrid offered the lion bread, the animal became tame and Etfrid accepted this lion and his act as a good omen for his missionary work and continued onward to Merewald court; when he got there, the king had had a vision of Etfrid's encounter with the lion and was easily converted to Christianity. To show his gratitude Merewald erected Leominster Priory at the site of the encounter and, again, established Etfrid as abbot there.³⁴

What is most intriguing about the inclusion of St. Etfrid's life in Harley is that there has been speculation that Scribe B himself served at Leominster Priory and that the folio which contains the text also contains the only decoration, in the form of a red cross, in the entire Harley manuscript.³⁵ There is some debate about what exactly the cross is meant to signify – it may work as a marker to indicate the beginning of the saint's life; the end of the previous Latin prose listing of all the *ara* preserved at Oviedo; or a symbol somehow linking the two. Also unique to the St. Etfrid text is the amount of *ordinatio*, in the form of 'reader-friendly marginal apparatus'³⁶ such as the gloss on fol. 133^r indicating the date of Leominster's founding.³⁷ but whatever its purpose, it does not take away from the continuing importance of the local saints' lives.

³² Wright, *The History of Ludlow*, pp. 8 - 9

³³ Kuczynski, p. 138

³⁴ Wright, pp. 8 - 9

³⁵ See Appendix Figure 3

³⁶ Kuczynski, p. 139

³⁷ London, British Library, MS Harley 2253, fol. 133^r. Also See Appendix Figure 4

Wistan

The last saint's life, and major religious text, in Harley is again Latin prose, '*De Martirio sancti Wistani*' (the martyrdom of St. Wistan). This is not so much a saint's life as it is an account of his martyrdom, as the title would suggest. It is claimed Wistan was martyred in nearby Leicestershire in 849 CE. The Harley version is simply the martyrdom episode of Wistan's life and does not contain the full details that are contained in *Chronicon abbatae de Evesham*. St. Wistan's story has local significance, not only because of his connection with the small village of Wistanstow ten miles northwest of Ludlow, but because of his genealogy as son of the ninth-century king of Mercia, Wigmund. Wistan, so the story goes, refused the kingship upon his father's death, preferring instead a religious life. When his godfather, Beorhtfrith, asked for his permission to marry the widowed queen, Wistan refused and Beorhtfrith had him murdered, thus making Wistan a martyr.³⁸

Wistan's story ends the Harley saints' lives and it also points to an interesting intersection of readings of these local saints in terms of their royal status as well as their sanctity. A case for godly royal assent in the lives of St. Ethelbert, St. Etfrid, and St. Wistan could be made which would go a long way in the medieval mind to establishing the plausibility that England and its royalty were somehow divinely sanctioned. The local saints' stories attest to a nation-building 'idea of "England" as the protagonist of a gripping national tale of precocious birth in the Anglo-Saxon period'³⁹ that has been romanticized and subsequently dismissed by modern scholars, but Harley 2253 comes from a period when these stories were being assembled and disseminated for the purposes of imagining a nation bequeathed by God. It would be in a compiler's best interests to try and include as much local significance as possible in order to assure audiences that it is God's will that they listen intently and praise the land which he has

³⁸ ODNB entry for Wigstan.

³⁹ *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*, ed. by Kathy Lavezzo (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp. XII – XXXIV, (p. XIII)

given them as a special place to house those who have added to His plan and will continue His work.

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Appendix

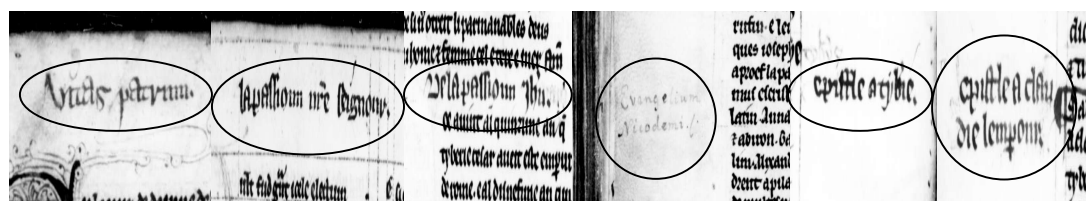


Fig. 1

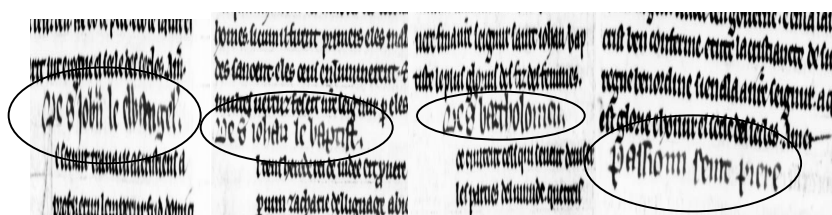


Figure 1: Scribe B's rubrications in red from ff 1-48 (from the top, left to right): f1 *Vitas Patrum*, f23 *La passioun nostre seignour*, f 33v *De la passioun Ihesu*, f 33v a later unknown hand's writing of *Evangelium Nicodemi* in the margin, f 39 *epistle a tyb[er]ie*, f 39v *epistle a clau die lempour*, f41v *De S' Iohan le ewangel*, f43v *De S' Iohan le Baptist*, f 45v *De S' bartholomeu*, f 47v *Passioun seint pierre*.

Scribe A	Scribe B
<p>Quire 1⁶ (fols. 1-12)</p> <p>Quire 2⁵ (fols. 13-22) Contents: French verse <i>Vitas Patrum</i>. Various 'desert fathers' of the church with the life of St. Thaïs attached at the end.</p> <p>Quire 3⁶ (fols. 23-34) Contents: Fols. 22-33r French verse <i>La Passioun Nostre Seignour</i> (the Passion story from Herman de Valenciennes 12th C. vernacular Bible) Fols. 33v-41r French prose <i>De Le Passioun Ihesu</i> (the Passion of Christ translated from the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus concomitant with the Harrowing of Hell)</p> <p>Quire 4⁶⁺² (fols. 35-48) Contents: Fols. 35-41r French prose <i>De Le Passioun Ihesu</i> (the Passion translated from the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus also known as the Harrowing of Hell) Fols. 41v-43r French prose <i>De S' Iohan Ewangel</i> (Of St. John the Evangelist) Fols. 43v-45r French prose <i>De S' Iohan Baptist</i> (Of St. John the Baptist) Fols. 45v-47r French prose <i>De S' Bartholomeu</i> (Of St. Bartholomew) Fols. 47v-48v French prose <i>La Passioun S' Peter</i> (the Martyrdom of St. Peter)</p>	<p>Quire 6⁵ (fols. 53-62) Contents: f53-54r Latin prose. <i>Incipit Vita Sancti Ethelberti</i> (Life of St. Ethelbert)</p> <p>Quire 7⁴ (fols. 63-69) Contents: Fols. 64v-65v English Verse. Life of St. Marina.</p> <p>Quire 14⁶ (fols. 122-133) Contents: Fols. 132r-133r Latin Prose. <i>Incipit legenda de Sancto Etfrido presbitero de Leominstria</i> (Here begins the holy legend of St. Etfrid)</p> <p>Quire 15 (seven singletons) (fols. 134-140) Contents: Fol. 140v Latin Prose. <i>De Martirio sancti Wistani</i> (the Martyrdom of Saint Wistan)</p>

Figure 2: Complete listing of saints' lives in Harley 2253

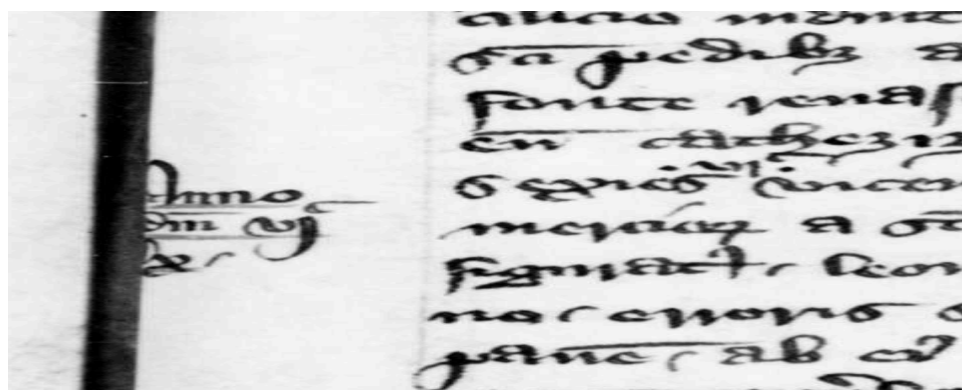


Figure 4
Detail of fol. 133^r showing the
date of Leominster Priory in the

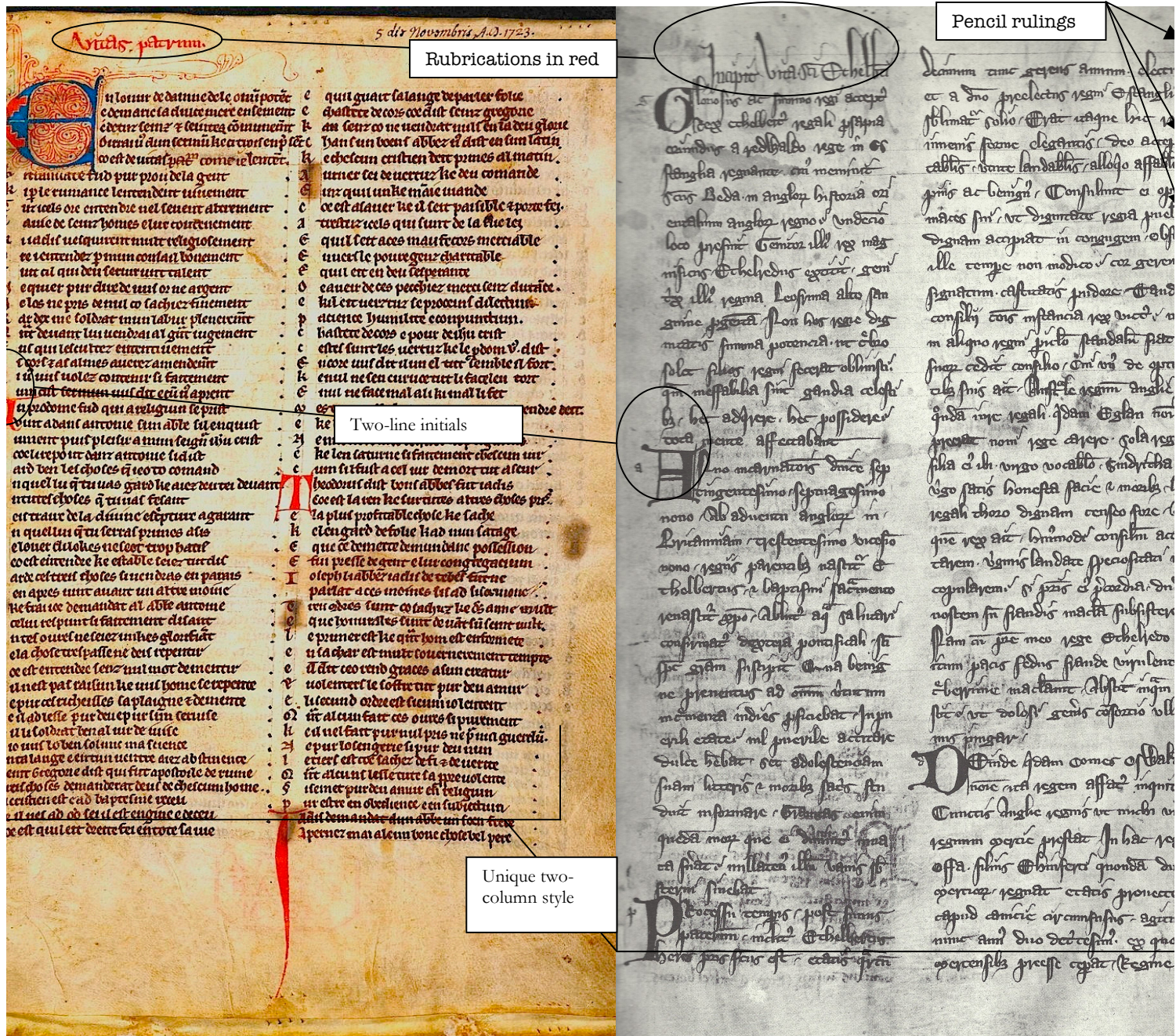


Figure 5
Scribe B mimicking Scribe A's style
(left) Fol. 1 *Vitas Patrum*
(right) fol. 53 *St. Ethelbert*

