



Shifting grounds and shifting perspectives in the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges (Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale MS Y 6 [274])

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A drawn horizontal line and the parchment substrate, iconographic setting, and colorful pigments: considering ‘ground’ for an illuminated manuscript takes us through formal, material and conceptual aspects. These, in turn, are usually covered by distinct (art) historical and theoretical approaches. In a formal pictorial and very concrete sense, ground can mean groundlines or backgrounds anchoring figures within a scene; these grounds are discussed as part of planning, iconographic tradition and visual structure. Ground in a material sense considers the preparation of the manuscript page, and the addition of inks and pigments, leading to questions about the physicality of the manuscript as an artifact, but also to questions about artistic techniques of drawing and painting. Finally, the conceptual distinguishes figure and ground as variables of images more fundamentally and has the longest discursive history within both ontology and aesthetics.[1] Ground (*fond*) has been described by Jean-Luc Nancy as characteristic of a picture, especially of a painting, which is “detached” and “cut out within a ground [...] pulled away and clipped.”[2] The way in which contrast, formal definition and spatial separation appear in Nancy’s language already suggest that the three approaches might be difficult to distinguish

consistently in art historical practice, but also that they raise questions vital to that practice.

The following paper considers grounds in the miniatures of an early eleventh-century manuscript, the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges.^[3] In examining where groundlines and figures are placed in pictorial narrative and the application of paint, it also deals with foundations for art historical analysis arising from a close reading. With some formal analyses and new readings of iconographies and motifs, I may be on familiar and firm ground, while interpretation of color and its opposite, lack of pigment, is notoriously uncertain and generates consideration of the material and more unconventional impact of images. Likewise, the height and shape of a groundline, for example, may be explained by reference to the artists' exemplar in the Middle Ages, tracing a long solid line of precursors, but allusive and narrating functions of paint work in ways that are specific to one manuscript and not easily connected to other works of art. Considering grounds therefore shows up the limits of focusing on iconography and style, which moreover have often been split in the discussion of early medieval manuscripts, especially with regard to their historical contextualization. In art-historical discourse, the Rouen Sacramentary's lavish coloristic effects seem to separate it from its medieval milieu altogether, forging connections with much later art instead. Scholars have borrowed period terms to refer to its visual impact: Elżbieta Temple sees the "swathes and splashes of paint" covering the Crucifixion and Deposition applied with "baroque freedom".^[4] In a specific comparison, Jonathan J.G. Alexander attributes to the colors "something of the expressionistic quality of a painting by Munch."^[5] The comparisons, which are matched in studies of other individual early medieval manuscripts,^[6] voice a perceived dichotomy between the narrative function of the images within the manuscript and its liturgical use, and their coloristic expression. They constitute a self-consciously contemporary reaction to the visuality of a specific manuscript otherwise firmly historicized and contextualized as a member of schools, styles, and iconographies,^[7] allying it with autonomous art forms of later painting. In lifting an early medieval manuscript from its historical context, these comparisons might wish to emphasize its style, singularity or originality – its status as art. By resorting to different grounds for comparison for certain aspects, they implicitly also draw attention to the uneasy fit, for medieval art, of distinctions and opposing terms such as figurative and non-figurative, color and narrative, painting and drawing.

Through studying the Rouen Sacramentary's grounds, I return to a case study to examine how these categories and terms work in a close analysis, exploring the implications of how firmly we tether historical artifacts to notions of tradition,

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precursors and style. An introduction to the manuscript's contents and codicology is followed by a consideration of the functions of groundlines and backgrounds in the pictorial narrative of the manuscript and the way in which distinguishing between figure and ground impacts how we may read scenes. Focusing on the sequence concentrated on Christ's Passion, the third part of my article presents a close study of these four miniatures and the pivotal role ground in its different shades of meaning plays within them. The example therefore also demonstrates the necessity of complicating and querying seemingly fundamental art-historical categories.

Fundamentals: The manuscript

The Rouen Sacramentary was given by Robert of Jumièges during his time as bishop of London between 1044 and 1050, to the ducal monastery at Jumièges, where he had been abbot from 1037. The manuscript itself was written and illuminated at Winchester, Canterbury, Peterborough or Ely around or before 1020.[8] Scholars disagree not only on its place of production within England, but also on the date, for which internal evidence only gives rough guidelines.[9] There is no way of knowing who the lavishly illuminated manuscript was made for, as its contents are "at once extremely full and somewhat individual," as Richard Pfaff put it.[10] The book remained at Jumièges until the dissolution of the monastery in 1791, when it passed to the Bibliothèque municipale in Rouen. While the name associated with the manuscript is a big one – Robert of Jumièges was an important figure in the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England – he did not commission the manuscript, nor was it made for his use. His donation to Jumièges some twenty years after its production, however, was recorded on the last leaf of the book:

Notum sit omnibus [...] Quod ego . Rotb(er)tus abba gemmetesium prius post modu(m) uero sancta londonioru(m) sedis presul factus dederim librum hunc S(an)C(t)E MARIE in hoc michi comisso monachorum S(an)C(t)I PETRI cenobio ad honore(m) sanctoru(m) [...] et ob memoriale mei ut hic in p(er)petuum habeatur.[11]

As a liturgical service book, a sacramentary,[12] the manuscript contains those texts spoken at masses by the celebrant throughout the liturgical year. It does not contain material spoken by other parties within the liturgy, such as gospel readings and antiphons, and is therefore not a full missal. In the Rouen Sacramentary this material is structured into three parts, typically preceded by the calendar and tables for calculating Easter (fols. 5v–24v): the Book of Sacraments in the order of the year's

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cycle with its moveable feasts (*Temporale*), beginning with Christmas and ending with Pentecost (fols. 25–104); the prayers for the feasts of saints (*Sanctorale*; fols. 105–173; added fols. 1–4); and a third part with shorter specific consecrations, blessings, votive masses and prayers (fols. 174–227). It contains pontifical elements for episcopal use, but the selection of material in the third part suggests that the book was equally intended for use by an abbot and monastic community.[13]



Figure 1. Nativity, Annunciation to the Shepherds, and Flight from Egypt. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fols. 32v–33r, folio 340 x 220 mm. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

The manuscript has thirteen full-page miniatures in arched or rectangular frames overflowing with acanthus leaves in the same colors as the pictures they surround, and twelve pages with similar frames for corresponding text beginnings and important masses. At least two leaves probably containing further miniatures have been excised.[14] Apart from that for All Saints' (fol. 158v), the miniatures in the *Sanctorale* show individual figures, St Peter for the feast day of Sts Peter and Paul (fol. 132v) and St Andrew (fol. 164v). In contrast, the miniatures preceding the principal feasts in the *Temporale* show scenes from the Life of Christ, which in two cases have

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been arranged across an opening. Narrative illustrations from the Life of Christ have been, in the terminology of Richard Gameson, “interspersed”, that is, “positioned intermittently in the body of the text” for the Masses for Christmas (32v–33r), Epiphany (36v–37r), and Holy Saturday (71r–72v).[15] Christmas is prefaced by an opening presenting the Nativity, Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Flight into Egypt (Fig. 1). For Epiphany, four scenes are combined across an opening: On the verso, Herod consults the Jewish priests, and the Magi are shown below, following the star which has been placed near the gutter at the top of the page. The recto depicts the Adoration of the Magi, and an angel warning them in their dream. Preceding the Mass for Holy Saturday, a bifolium is inserted to present four miniatures depicting the Betrayal of Christ, the Crucifixion, the Deposition, and the Three Marys at the Tomb. Single full-page miniatures precede the texts for Ascension (81v) and Pentecost (84v). The extant miniatures in the Temporale section are always placed on conjoint leaves of a bifolium, which was then either retained as a standalone bifolium within the gathering, as in the Crucifixion sequence (fols. 71 and 72 in XI), or subsequently separated by further leaves in the bound quire (fols. 32v and 37r–33r and 36v in VI; fols. 81v and 84v in XII).[16] In the bifolium containing the miniatures for the Passion sequence, this is evident in the frames: the Betrayal and the Resurrection frames have the same shape. The collation with its versatile quire structure demonstrates careful planning at the same time as suggesting that the illuminators’ and the scribes’ tasks could easily be consecutively, even separately, fulfilled.[17]

Grounding pictorial narrative

The pictorial narrative has often been neglected in this manuscript known for its flamboyant ‘Winchester’ style rather than its iconography, which in turn is thought to derive mainly from Carolingian sources.[18] By studying placement, structuring and color, it becomes apparent that a range of techniques has been employed to create clear focal points, adding details and motifs to expand topics or to emphasize a particular register of meaning. As is often the case in early medieval art, groundlines are particularly emphasized where they double as divisions into registers, for example anchoring Mary’s bed at the Nativity mid-page (a structural division of one scene, fol. 32v), or separating the Annunciation to the Shepherds from the Flight of the holy family (a narrative division of two scenes, fol. 33r, Fig. 1). Groundlines and backgrounds can do similar work within an image: In the Nativity, color is used to distinguish different areas of one scene, while on the opposite page, the semantically unconnected scenes of the Annunciation to the shepherds and the Flight are aligned by way of their similar background treatment. This is the first indication that

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grounds in the pictorial, visible sense are part of processes of production. Groundlines and backgrounds were usually added later to figures outlined first in early medieval manuscripts.[19]



Figure 2. Flight from Egypt. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fol. 33r detail. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

The Flight into Egypt demonstrates the range and use of motifs (Fig. 2). There are two unusual details: The golden reins by which Joseph leads the donkey pass in front of a multicolored tree bearing a fruit or flower on one of its branches, and in a chiasmic gesture, Joseph points across his shoulder, his finger connecting with a blue object or element. In the earliest published description of the scene by Thomas Frognall Dibdin in *A Bibliographical, antiquarian and picturesque tour in France and Germany* (1821), the latter was interpreted as Mary's distaff, carried by Joseph.[20] The Christ child seated on Mary's lap gestures towards both tree and the blue element beyond it with extended hands. For the tree, Brandon Hawk has convincingly argued that it visually renders a miracle worked by Jesus on the journey into Egypt as narrated in the apocryphal gospel of *Pseudo-Matthew*, in which he commands a palm tree to "bend down and refresh my mother with your fruit"

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(*Flectere, arbor, et de fructibus tuis refice matrem meam*).[21] In the same way, the blue element may be read as a stream of water issuing from a cusped opening, therefore referring to the spring Jesus causes to gush forth from the roots of the palm tree to quench Joseph's thirst in the same apocryphal miracle.[22] It has been moved above the tree on the page in order to show Joseph receiving the water at the same time as retaining the recognizable iconography of the Flight. The placement makes use of the gravitational pull of the page, allowing fruit and spring to be closely associated with the tree. Later (canonical) miracles worked by Jesus tend to consider food and drink together, and Eucharistic references are strong here, with the tree, fruit and water prefiguring the cross and its associated miraculous sustenance.[23] The scene's unusual orientation with movement to the left may be due to how it is conceived as working together with the facing Nativity: In both, Joseph is placed near the inside frame bar, recipient and mediator of the miraculous events around him, a typical viewer figure (*Betrachterfigur*). He points to his face in the Nativity and towards the spring in the Flight, clearly demonstrating that sensory perception is an adequate reaction to the miraculous events pictorially told here and those which they prefigure.[24] A scene which at first glance seems atypical and awkwardly compressed can upon closer examination stand as an example of multiple stories and levels of meaning carefully combined and structured by the illuminator(s).

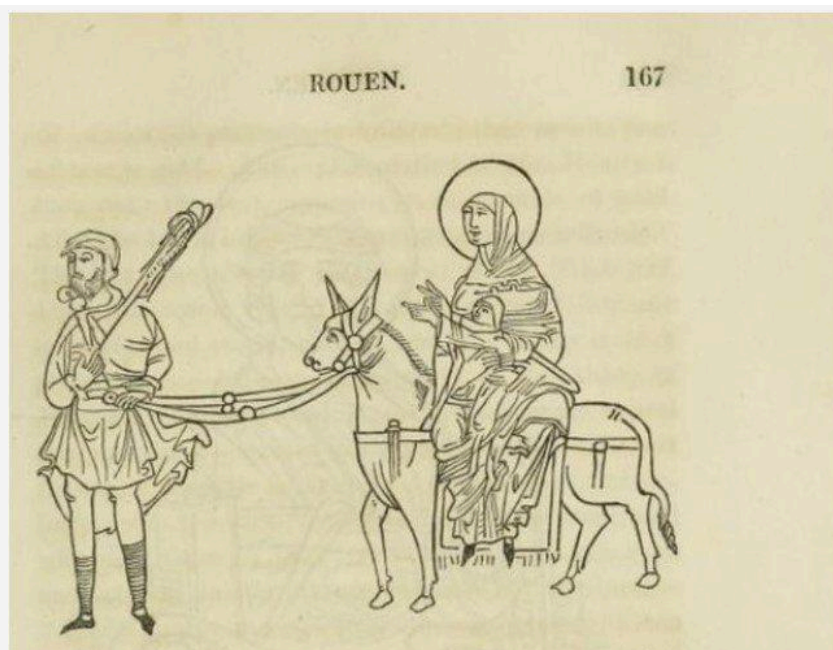


Figure 3. Illustration from Thomas Frognall Dibdin: A bibliographical, antiquarian and picturesque tour in France and Germany, Vol. I, London 1821, p. 167. Image in the public domain (google books).

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Iconographic interpretation means making decisions about what is essential to the comprehension of a scene and what is added as part of the setting. The drawing included in Dibdin's *Picturesque Tour* demonstrates that this often involves distinguishing between figure and ground to a certain extent (Fig. 3). Both the straps dangling from the donkey's reins and the tree have been omitted – the former probably a “correction” of detail regarded as superfluous or erroneous, the latter making a distinction between figure and background. As an element of the natural world, the tree is considered background or setting, while the “distaff” overlapping the figure of Joseph is interpreted as an object and attribute carried by Joseph for this very reason. The reduction to outline for reasons of illustration, clarity but also – importantly – reproducibility all contribute to hardening the distinction between active figures and uninvolved backgrounds. Consequently, the drawing turns Jesus' gesture into that of an infant reaching for his father,[25] rather than the young savior working two miracles at the same time. The misunderstanding of what is depicted is further compacted by the modern idea at work in this illustrative drawing, that



Figure 4. Ascension of Christ. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fols. 81v-82r. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

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images, and especially supposedly naïve medieval ones, allow an easy distinction between line and field, drawing and painting, *disegno* and *colore*. Quite to the contrary, it will become clear that figure and ground are blended together and distinguished to very specific effect by the Rouen Sacramentary's illuminator(s).

The connection between ground in the sense of standing ground, pictorially creating gravity for the figures' actions, and the chromatic background is particularly clear in the miniature of the Ascension (fol. 81v; Fig. 4), a scene that is essentially about the defiance of gravity. It follows the iconography of the 'disappearing Christ motif', which Meyer Schapiro regarded as an invention of early English manuscript painting around 1000, and which is extant in several manuscripts of the time[26]: At the top of the picture field, only Christ's legs are visible within the lower part of a mandorla as the rest of his body disappears into clouds and a strip of bright blue above. Two angels mediate spatially and gesturally between this scene and the Apostles and Mary below, who have raised their faces, providing visual testimony to the miracle. The motif's themes of visibility and vision have been discussed in depth in terms of theology and image theory.[27] What interests me here is the kind of work that the (back)ground does within the image. The extant manuscripts have different solutions for the space in between the last of Christ's visible body and the spectators. Despite its oblong format, the artist of the Caligula Troper has managed to compress the space, filling it with the angels' drapery and suspended scroll, the raised hands below and three mounds firmly outlined and clearly labeled as 'Mons Oliveti' (Fig. 5).[28] In the Odbert Gospels and the Bury Psalter, where the scene frames the text field, we can see the page's text block functioning as a sort of graphical Mount of Olives, clearly emphasizing Christ's vertical movement.[29] In the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges, by contrast, there is an area of painted parchment between the figures. Subtle colors and line washes orchestrate a visual rhythm changing from pink to purple to yellow ochre. If we want to, we can see an allusion to the Mount of Olives in the pink orb above the group of figures, and yet this is "not clearly a solid ground and [...] affiliated by color with the cloud-like background".[30] The example encapsulates perfectly the way in which the Rouen Sacramentary's grounds oscillate between firm setting and wispy atmosphere, place and evocation.

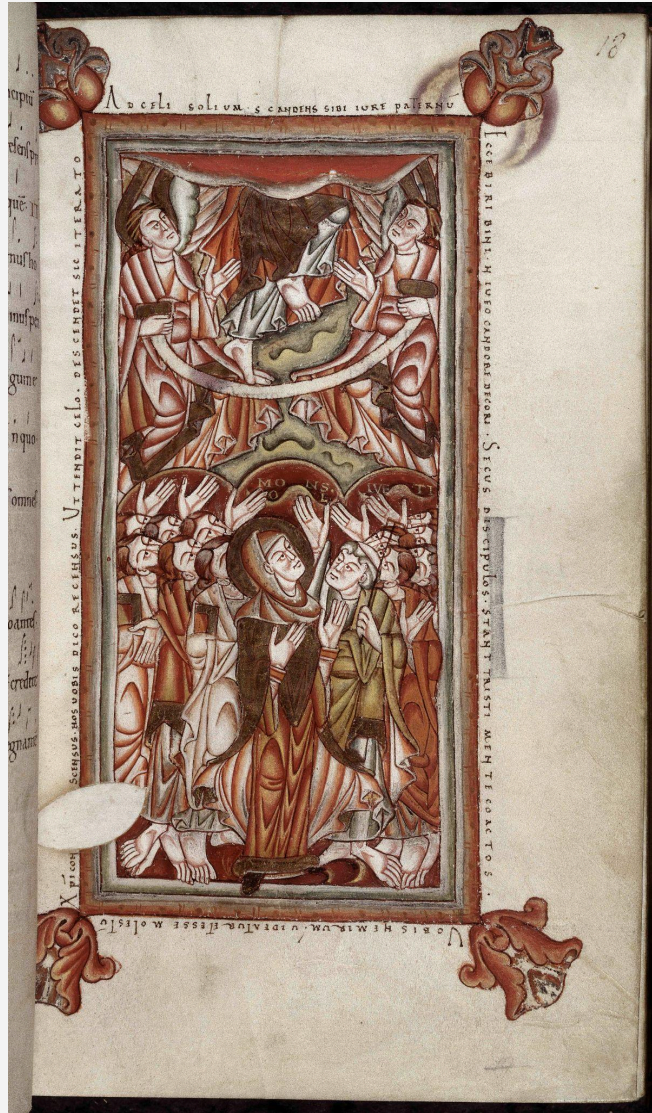


Figure 5. Ascension of Christ. Caligula Troper, Hereford (?), Canterbury (?), 2nd quarter of the 11th century. London, British Library, Cotton MS Caligula A.XIV, fol. 18r. 220 x 132 mm. © British Library Board, Cotton MS Caligula A.XIV, fol. 18r.

The comparison with the Caligula Troper's decidedly oblong, and yet compressed Ascension should make it very clear that the expansive areas of background colors in the Rouen Sacramentary cannot simply be dismissed as a side-effect of transposing horizontally arranged scenes from a supposed exemplar into a more vertical format.^[31] Rather than just filling the space, the color and movement of the miniatures' backgrounds contribute specific narrative points, values and effects to the images, as well as being suggestive of place and time. Herod's consultation of

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the priests (fol. 36v; Fig. 6a) is set in front of a dull blue background painted with animated curving waves of a darker blue, while the Magi below journey in front of a sky lit in a yellowish-brown, a backdrop further brightened and enlivened on the opposite page, when they have arrived to face Mary and the Christ child at the Epiphany (Fig. 6b).

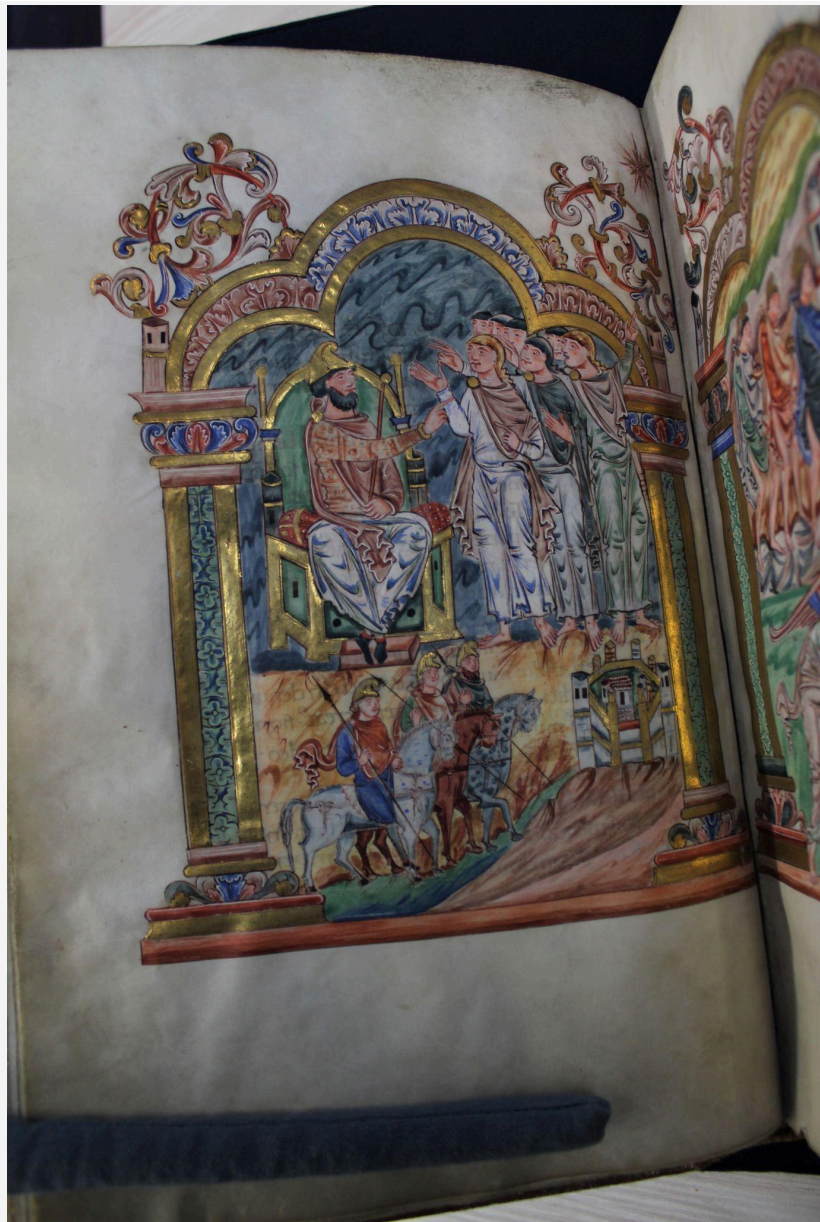


Figure 6a. The three Magi before Herod, their journey. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fol. 36v. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

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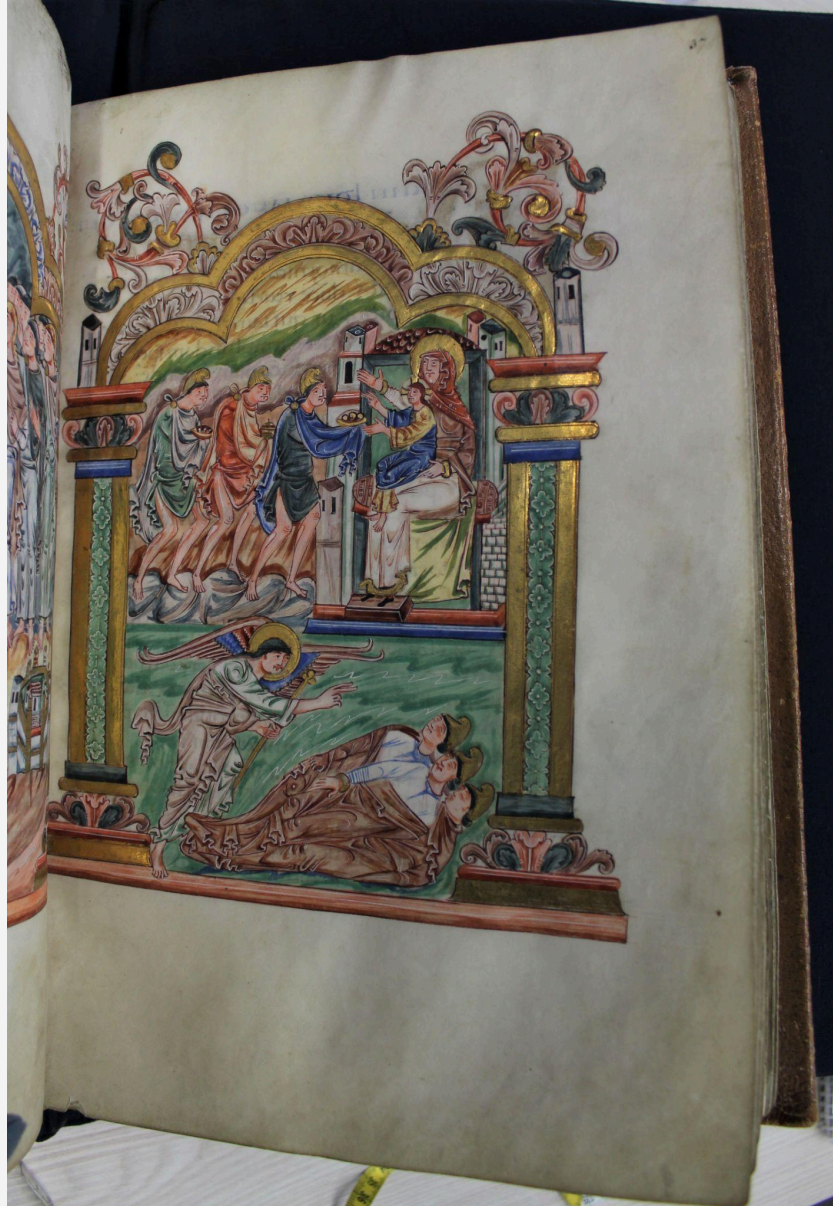


Figure 6b. The Adoration and Dream of the Magi. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fol. 37r. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

The contrast of darkness and light makes sense in the context of the star to which one of Herod's advisors gestures: situated outside the frame in the inner margin of the page, it offers visible guidance to the Magi, linking their journey with its destination, iconographically as well as spatially across the opening. The same star, however, is unheeded by Herod, who consequently remains surrounded by darkness.[32] Both composition and background of the Adoration and the Dream of

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the Magi continue the sweeping lines which lead the eye away from Herod on the page opposite. The choice of the green color enclosing the dreaming Magi underscores the difference in the type of darkness that distinguishes them from Herod: Theirs is a physical darkness, night, which does not reduce their receptiveness to the angel's message, while Herod's is a spiritual blindness. In the backgrounds, hue is therefore as important as the degree of opacity, and lines, daubs and strokes of the brush add a third component. The Passion sequence showcases the illuminators' employment of these three techniques most fully.

Epicenter and Aftershock: The Crucifixion miniature in context

The highpoint of the sequence, the miniature of the Crucifixion centers on Christ, who has his eyes open, and the grieving Mary and John (Fig. 7). This figure group is placed high up within the space available, with a third of the picture field taken up by the ground below the cross. The picture is both earthy in color and very earthly in content. The iconography is reduced – Stephaton and Longinus are omitted, and there are no personifications of sun and moon or Ecclesia, nor other motifs found in contemporary English manuscript pictures or ivories such as the hand of god, chalice, snake or angels.[33] Accordingly, it lacks any of the motifs that give the Crucifixion a clear regal, triumphant or eucharistic meaning. Instead, it “concentrates attention on a single point: the grief of Mary and John”, underscoring the human element of the Crucifixion.[34] In terms of composition and motifs, the miniature is even more reduced than the famous Crucifixion in the Ramsey Psalter, a manuscript produced around 40 years earlier at Winchester, which features text and the motif of John writing his testimony under the cross (Fig. 8).[35] This image likewise centers Mary's sorrow at Christ's death, and her compassion for her dying son.[36] While the figures of Christ and Mary in the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges are very similar in shape and outline to those in the Ramsey Psalter, Christ has his eyes open, and Mary buries her face in her hands completely. Barbara C. Raw sees the main difference between the two miniatures in the way in which the Ramsey picture draws in the viewer for testimony with the figure of the writing John.[37]



Figure 7. Crucifixion. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fol. 71v. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

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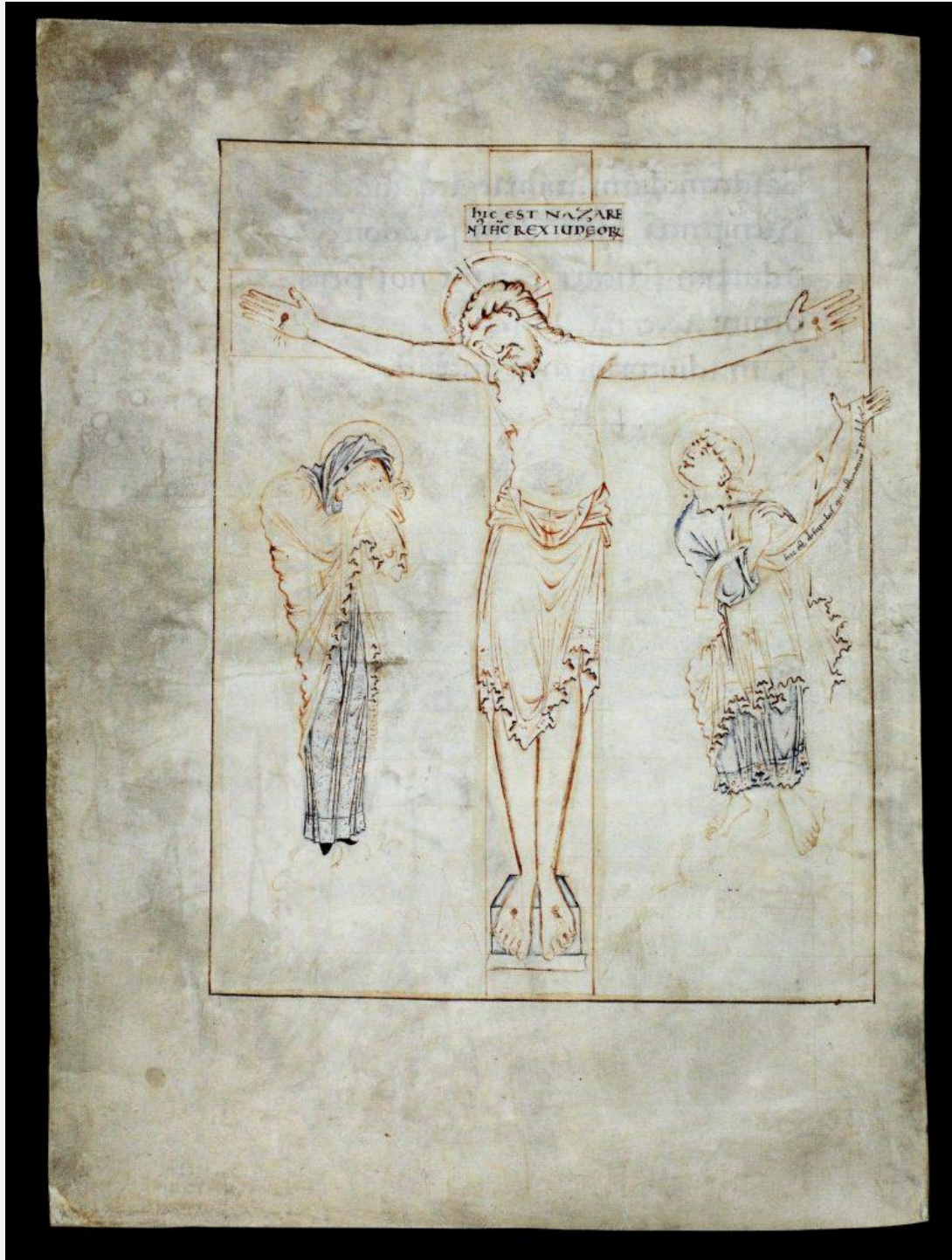


Figure 8. Crucifixion. Ramsey Psalter, Winchester or Ramsey, 4th quarter of the 10th century. London, British Library, Harley MS 2904, fol. 3v, folio 285 x 242 mm. © British Library Board, Harley MS 2904, fol. 3v.

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The complex message of the Ramsey Psalter Crucifixion owes its subtlety to its drawing technique, perfected in English manuscripts of the time and here heightening the sense of compassion and testimony. Sally Dormer describes the effect as directly connected to the technique, a combination of tinted and shadowed outline drawing: “A series of fluttering, nervous outlines in translucent colors merge together, endowing each figure with a fragile sensitivity.”[38] The frame is reduced to a simple tinted outline, interrupted only by John’s hand and his scroll, a gesture which forges a connection between his act of writing and the written manuscript in front of us. Indeed, the parchment ground has been prepared for and is used by script and image in the same way. The palms of the crucified Christ land precisely upon the rulings for the vertical columns framing the text block. The corpus is therefore fixed not only to the drawn cross, but also connected to the first graphic step of manuscript production, the ruling grid prepared to receive the Psalter text. At first glance, the Rouen Sacramentary Crucifixion could not be more different, with its strong color fields and highlights, inserted on a bifolium especially prepared for images rather than text. The layout of the miniatures follows that of the text-block, however, and artistic rendering likewise enhances the theme of the Crucifixion, with paint and colors geared to affect viewers, and their absence drawing awareness to the raw substrate in key places. We can observe this most convincingly in the figure of Mary (Fig. 9): Her features are obscured completely by her hands, which she has raised to her face under her mantle.[39]



Figure 9. Crucifixion. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fol. 71v, detail. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

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Between her veil and her covered hands, where one might expect some of her jaw, neck, cheek or forehead to be indicated, there is simply a portion of unpainted parchment, aligning her flesh with the cross close by, likewise reserve parchment. As 'vessels' enabling and mediating the entry and exit of Christ's life on earth, the alignment of Mary with the cross makes theological sense. The framed parchment of the cross visually intensifies the contrast between cross and background and the figure of Christ and the cross respectively, anchoring the miniature on the page. In Mary's case, the parchment face is part of her visual and material cloaking. Under her mantle, her dress has the same colors as the surrounding area. Were it not for the brown shading around the outline of her figure or the subtle white highlights on the folds of her dress, the effect of Mary blending into the background would be even stronger, the ephemeral quality enhanced by the way her body reduces down to a point, with feet barely indicated under the knot-like bunch of her hem.[40] Where the background makes the figure of Mary partially disappear, something else is produced: Between her and the cross, delicate tendrils of a plant rise up. Like Mary, the plant seems more a product of the background colors rather than firmly anchored to the ground.[41] The immediate area surrounding the cross and the ground supporting it are very allusive in this regard, and I will return to them.

The way Mary hides her face, her figure dissolving upon and with parchment and paint powerfully conveys her grief. Depicting John's despair is an unusual choice, but his gesture is a conventional motif for this emotion, at least a traditional rendering compared to Mary's becoming ground and background.[42] The Ramsey Psalter and Rouen Sacramentary Crucifixion scenes demonstrate that there are diverse ways of addressing viewers and eliciting emotions on different registers from compassion and sorrow to sadness and obliterating grief, suggesting the pronounced emotional literacy of viewers at the time. These images seem to pave the way for the *Crux patiens* idea by focusing on the way Christ's suffering affects those around him rather than making any significant formal iconographic changes to the figure of the crucified Christ itself.[43] In addition to figural and gestural content, artists can employ the relation of figure to ground and diverse drawing and painting techniques to this end. Both Crucifixion pictures capitalize on the effect of parchment itself by either reducing its visibility to specific areas or maximizing its impact, and it has been suggested that the willingness to consider the parchment itself might be the defining feature of artistic techniques around 1000, a concern which may have been occluded by trying to apply modern genre distinctions of drawing and painting.[44]

The Crucifixion, of course, is not a standalone image paired with text, as in the Ramsey Psalter, but part of a sequence of four miniatures. In addition, it forms a

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diptych with the Deposition on the recto opposite. Within the whole sequence, the groundlines upon which actions take place vary considerably in placement. They contribute to the narrative effect of Christ's passion rendered as an itinerary of descent and ascent. On a comparatively low groundline, Judas betrays Christ just to the left of a hollow which could allude to the cave in which Christ prays in the garden on the mount of Olives according to some accounts (Fig. 10).



Figure 10. The Betrayal of Christ. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fol. 71r. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

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It also prefigures the main act commemorated on Holy Saturday, the Harrowing of Hell, especially since the gesture of the soldier on the right grasping Christ's arm mimics that of Christ freeing Adam in pictures of the Harrowing of Hell, also an important gesture in the Maundy Thursday rites.[45] For the Crucifixion, the cross is then raised high up upon a groundline lowered again for the Deposition on the facing page, in accordance with the downward movement of Christ lifted from the cross (Fig. 11).



Figure 11. Crucifixion and Deposition. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fols. 71v-72r. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

The final scene of the three women at the tomb (Fig. 12) is set almost directly on the bottom line of the frame, gravitating significantly compared to related miniatures in the Rouen Benedictional (Fig. 13) and the Benedictional of Aethelwold, and thereby leaving space to imagine Christ's journey heavenward on the page.[46]

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Figure 12. The three women at the tomb. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fols. 72v-73r. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

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Figure 13. The three women at the tomb. Rouen Benedictional, Winchester, c.980 or c.1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 7 (369), fol. 21v. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

The color scheme and the composition of the scenes add both a temporal and an atmospheric aspect to this Passion itinerary. In the account of the passion given by the synoptic gospels, the Betrayal takes place in the evening or at night, whereas the three Marys visit the tomb early in the morning. The red sky in the background in both miniatures can therefore be taken to refer to both low light and first light.[47] A lantern dangling from the hand of one of the soldiers in the Betrayal miniature might account for the flecks of red in the background around the figures' feet – another example of “individualization of the light situation which one would not

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believe to expect in a non-naturalistic style”?[48] In terms of liturgical time, these two scenes provide a large bracket for the text of the Easter Vigil which the illuminated bifolium precedes: they start with the events commemorated two days before, on Maundy Thursday, and conclude with an event parallel to or slightly later than the Harrowing of Hell commemorated with the Mass on Holy Saturday. The Crucifixion and Deposition, commemorated in the Good Friday liturgy of the *Adoratio crucis*, have a different color scheme from the other miniatures in the cycle and probably refer to the elements of the theophany described by the evangelists, the falling of darkness during the crucifixion at midday (Mt 27,45; Mk 15,33; Lk 23,44-45), and the earthquake mentioned by Matthew (Mt 27,52-54). Interconnecting images with biblical and liturgical temporalities was a concern of liturgical books in the eleventh century, and one of the pictorial ways to achieve this was using color to reference light.[49]

Placing the Crucifixion and the Deposition side by side is a way of emphasizing the two natures of Christ, God and man, by showing him triumphant on the Cross and his dead body taken down from it.[50] Here, Joseph supports the slumped body of Christ, while Nicodemus removes the last nail with pliers – a tool often very clearly rendered at this time, particularly in reliefs.[51] As Elizabeth Parker demonstrates in her analysis of the Descent from the Cross, the Deposition is essentially a liturgical theme.[52] Taking down a cross, shrouding it and laying it in a tomb were all actions that were also part of the Easter liturgy practiced in England at this time.[53] In a liturgical book such as the sacramentary, employed as part of these enactments, we might particularly expect some reference to its changed status, therefore: Beatrice Kitzinger has shown that the cross as an object was frequently highlighted by early medieval illuminators.[54] In the Rouen Deposition, a brown wash and shadowing has been added to its borders, gently sculpting an object out of the area which on the facing page was no more – and no less – than framed parchment. This signals the cross’ own presence, a transition from support to an entity with the potential to be considered separately from the corpus, subtly paralleling its reception in the liturgy.[55]

Although both miniatures of the diptych have the same color scheme and color is distributed across the page in a similar rhythm, there are significant differences, particularly in the treatment of both the ground beneath the cross and the background. An area of lighter ochre envelops the figures of Mary and John and the cross shaft between them on the verso, not clearly delineated as a background area, and therefore giving the appearance of a cloud of light.[56] On the right, the light color around the cross shaft has been maintained, but appears more like a landscape

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of two hills, shaped by linear distinction from a darker purple-brown area above. This may remind viewers of the setting of Golgotha as it was often represented, between the two mounds upon which the thieves Gestas and Dismas were crucified with Christ. The principle is the same as in the Ascension miniature analyzed above, allowing for place to become identifiable and yet dissolve again, but it is explored via the framing afforded by the diptych structure of the opening. The background is crucial to the tone set by the images, the allusive way color is employed enabling both the creation of an emotive image of the Crucifixion and a Deposition scene returning to both biblical setting and a more tangible liturgical context.

There are additional elements of the picture that also work this way. Beneath the cross of the Crucifixion, there is a band of darker purple, bunched up on the left of the cross shaft and a corner slightly folding back on the right, between two lobes of acanthus from the frame. Distinguished from the areas both above and below with a black outline, we can read this as Christ's undivided garment (Mt 27,35; Mk 15,24; Lk 23,34), often depicted in this very position in contemporary examples, though always accompanied by the soldiers.[57] Without its identifying figures, this ground prepared for the cross, Mary, and John is semantically more undefined. Seen as Christ's garment or the temple veil rent at the crucifixion, it can just as easily turn back into earth or rock in our eyes. Thus, one comparative glance across the opening at the Deposition sheds some doubt on the supposedly telltale characteristics of textile seen in the folded corner and bunched middle: There is also an outlined purple area here, which supports Nicodemus as he performs his task. Christ's garment is not part of this scene, so it would have to be explained differently. Arranged loosely in waves, this ground on fol. 72r has lost all textile features, by extension calling into question a textile reading for the element placed in the same position on the page opposite. Processes of reading and interpretation are revealed as unstable by the way the opening invites us to compare and balance the two miniatures, allowing for possibilities of shapes shifting and transitions of meaning.

Interpretation of the final segment of ground at the bottom of either miniature likewise depends on the visual and thematic contrast of images provided by the diptych format. On the verso, this segment is characterized by lines describing high slanting waves shaded with a bright orange, which has a dynamic, almost violent effect. In the corresponding segment on the recto the waves are smaller and more regular on a lighter and less varied ground, lending the image a calmer appearance. The contrast suggests reading the ground under the cross as trembling, a representation of the earthquake during the crucifixion according to Matthew's narrative (Mt 27,52-54), which caused rocks to burst open and reveal graves.[58]

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Iconographically, the effect of this theophany is usually referenced pictorially with the motif of Adam's skull appearing at the hypocenter below the cross or—in later medieval art—a fissure in the rock of Golgotha, creating strong ties with the actual pilgrimage site in the Holy Land.[59]

This concept of actual and to some extent formal place, however, seems not to be the one intended by the artist of the Rouen Sacramentary. The ground beneath the cross in the Crucifixion is not a hill or rock by virtue of its shape, the cross achieves height only in relation to the picture field and the preceding and following miniatures; the perturbed ground is not rendered by shape or figure, but by line alone. Likewise, raising the cross on the page creates the depth of the ground encasing its shaft, a notion equally expounded by early medieval authors such as Isidore and Bede, who indeed conceptualized the earth obscuring some of the cross shaft as counterpart to its revelatory role.[60] Here, it plays out through the contrast of bare parchment cross and its ground of pigment covering. The ground beneath the cross is significant, then, but this significance is comprehensible only to viewers willing to 'read' not only form but also color, not only paint but also parchment.

Conclusion: shifting grounds

Traditionally, English manuscripts around 1000 have been discussed along the opposing views of being concerned with surface patterning rather than narrative, or a kind of illusionism based on 'optical realism'. [61] Color, as well as placement of pictorial elements on the page, have been key concerns for both arguments. My analysis of grounds in the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges means that I can agree with these observations of key pictorial concerns at the time, but not with either of the conclusions, as they present snapshots of a more complex image. Color is the main vehicle for connecting the miniatures with biblical and liturgical time and value. It also serves alongside gestures and motifs to set the emotional tone. Far from overwhelming the pictorial narrative, color grounds add to and develop it; it is not a question of either/or. Conceptually, it has become clear that ground in the formal sense of groundline or background is inseparable from ground in the material sense of page preparation, and that the grounds prepared in this sense moreover have an ambiguous relationship with figures. The Crucifixion miniature in particular shows careful consideration of the potential of both pigment-laden and bare parchment ground to camouflage figural content or throw it into relief, to emphasize outline and containment (the corpus), or indeed lack of outline and features (Mary's face). Retaining the parchment surface of the cross allows the stark presentation of Christ and explores figural contrasts of creating positive and negative areas of color

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(cf. Fig. 13), while blending Mary and the chromatic shapelessness around her dissolves contrasts and creates a possibility to approach and comprehend her sorrow. Sharpening and reducing contrast and definition likewise characterizes other artistic choices, enabling meaning to fluctuate and oscillate. In this way, areas of variegated color are imbued with the potential of turning into sky, textile, earth and rock, but these definitions can just as quickly collapse again, depending on how and in what context we look at them. The purple layer below the cross shifts between a *groundline* enabling the silhouette of the cross to rise above, *ground* in terms of density and opacity within which the cross is planted, and an identifiable *figure* itself (Christ's garment or the temple veil). Ground is therefore truly explored as a "vehicle of cognition and experience," analyzable in theoretical and conceptual terms.[62] It is precisely the gradations between identifiable shapes and substantiated figures and places on the one hand, and emotive, evocative atmospheres to be experienced on the other which are explored in the pictures of the Rouen Sacramentary. The mutable shades of certainty do not only concern the relationship between figure and ground, which is never one of simple contrast, being dependent on the process of viewing itself, during which figure can turn into ground and vice versa.[63] They also worry an all-too assertive practice of those methods which rely on certainty, on the "visible and legible" – identifiable figures, scenes and motifs –, with which Georges Didi-Huberman has paired the visual.[64]

The frames of the miniatures themselves contribute to and complicate the relationship between figure and ground. Hefty golden constructions sharply silhouetted against the parchment of the page, they are woven through with acanthus leaves which tend to optically interfere with the miniature's figures. The frames are figures themselves, "cut away" in Nancy's terminology from the ground of the folio.[65] For manuscripts, this is a valid description in a double sense, for the frames provide not only an outline capable of creating the picture field,[66] but at the same time they adhere to the page layout of the book which was at this time usually incised in drypoint. Furthermore, frames like these, in parallel to their metalworked material counterparts with their cut gems and stones, are often sites of fragmented objects and evocations of different materials. The four roundels set in the frames for the diptych of Crucifixion and Deposition are a case in point. Set against an opaque background dappled with flecks of red and white possibly intended to evoke porphyry, the figures near the inner margins point towards the adjacent Passion scene, while the outer figures have covered one hand and open one palm in a gesture of invitation. In their evoked materiality, the medallions work towards aligning the frame with precious metalwork, adding to the tangibility and firmness of the frames in contrast to the physical quaking and emotional upheaval of

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crucifixion and deposition within. The figures' gestures, however, seldom seen on real medallions, remind us of and mediate the narrative context of these scenes. In the frames for the opening for All Saints', the mediating figures appear again, but this time on parchment tinted with a light brown wash, the ones flanking the beginning of the text on fol. 159r carrying books marked with a cross (Fig. 14).



Figure 14. All Saints. Rouen Sacramentary, England, around or before 1020. Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), fol. 158v. Photo: author (2017), with kind permission.

Treated in the same way as the medallions set in the frame, the clipeus of the lamb is held aloft by angels and directly borders the frame. In contrast to its supposed manuscript precursors, sacramentaries from Fulda, the Rouen Sacramentary groups the saints together on one ground line rather than distinguishing different groups into registers flanking the Lamb, thus drawing a distinction between the saints (who do not look up) and heaven.[67] The golden structure of the frame adds a third level,

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connecting the *Agnus Dei* with the spectator figures of the roundels, turning this into an image in its own right. Reminiscent of the Benedictional of Aethelwold and Codeman's poem within it, the ambiguity of the formulation "figures filling the frame" becomes evident, which may apply to the figures within or of the frame.[68]

Illuminated manuscripts might be considered a particularly fruitful medium for pushing a theoretical discourse of grounds, precisely because they multiply and thereby complicate an easy dichotomy of figure and ground. The typical full-page miniature format of medieval manuscript art, that is, the individual folio with its tripartite structure of parchment ground, upon which a frame delineates a picture field, already presents a more nested set of figure-ground relationships. This graphic scaffolding is partly due to the process of production with its preparation of several grounds: Parchment ground as writing substrate, graphic field for script and image by ruling. As Alexander has shown, the remaining steps of construction for images were taken in differing sequence, in the early Middle Ages, figures were plotted first, using the ruled grid as an orientation which later the frame affirmed.[69] Ground lines and background colors took the figures as their compass, which did not necessarily result in a hierarchy, but rather in the possibility of using pigment to build and blend their chromatic integration. These different graphic and material levels, then, were interrelated and built upon one another, but each retains the potential to remain visible, become palpable and hold significance. Moving even deeper into the materiality of parchment, Sarah Kay and others have explored the latency of animal skin as manuscript ground.[70] Moving laterally through the object instead, consideration of the fact that in a manuscript individual images were hardly ever intended to be singled out for reception furthermore allows for grounds to become mobile and activated to a much higher degree: Thus, the groundline becomes an "operative category" in the sense of Gottfried Boehm, bound to perception and experience: When the Passion bifolium is viewed as a sequence of four miniatures, the level of action rises and drops.[71] Likewise, the diptych format of Crucifixion and Deposition showcases the contrast between the solid, gold-decked frames and the atmospheric pictures harnessed by them, both equally enabled by the raw parchment ground and reduced to it in places. Picture format, technique and perception play into manuscript grounds, strongly contradicting the idea of medieval art's supposedly simplistic celebration of figure in opposition to anything else informing the modern view represented by Dibdin above. To the conceptual, image-theoretical discussion of figure and ground(s), manuscripts may therefore add complexity because of their multiplicity of potential grounds (from animal skin to picture field) and frames (from page sequence to simple outline) in material and formal terms. To art theoretical concepts developed principally with individual

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autonomous pictures in mind, manuscripts add material and spatial dimensions, while at the same time complicating supposedly easy distinctions and terms. These grounds are continuously shifting.

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London, British Library, Add. MS 49598. Benedictional of Aethelwold.
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https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.12

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- 1 The term has different connotations in different languages, which has impacted theoretical discussion, perhaps most clearly in German, where *Grund* means both ground and reason, and is therefore tied into philosophical discourse (compare *begründen* – explain; *gründlich* – thorough, etc.), but also in French where *fond* retains some of its legal connotations (as in *fondation*), or in the Italian *campo*, which strongly suggests the picture field. On the philosophical and art historical discourse, see the papers in Gottfried Boehm and Matteo Burioni, eds., *Der Grund: Das Feld des Sichtbaren* (Munich: Fink, 2012); esp. Matteo Burioni, “Grund und *campo*. Die Metaphorik des Bildgrundes in der frühen Neuzeit oder: Paolo Uccello’s *Schlacht von San Romano*”, 95–149, on language 95–99. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*, translated by Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). Original edition: *Au fond des images* (Paris 2003). Jeroen Stumpel, “On grounds and backgrounds: Some remarks about composition in Renaissance painting”, *Simiolus* 18/4 (1988): 219–43. https://doi.org/10.30965/9783846750742_004
- 2 Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*, p. 7.
- 3 Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 (274), folio 340 x 220 mm. Sometimes referred to as the Missal of Robert of Jumièges or, in older literature, Missal or Book of St. Guthlac (Guthlac is the saint whose feast is celebrated by the material on the first folio). In the following, I use “Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges” and “Rouen Sacramentary”.
- 4 Elżbieta Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles*, II (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), Cat. No. 72, p. 90.
- 5 J. J. G. Alexander, “Some Aesthetic Principles in the Use of Colour in Anglo-Saxon Art,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 4 (1975): 145–54, here pp. 149–150. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675100002751>

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- 6 Cf. Otto Pächt, *Buchmalerei des Mittelalters: Eine Einführung* (München: Prestel, 1984), p. 178, seeing the Carolingian Ebo Gospels as “an example of medieval expressionism, a medieval precursor of van Gogh, as it were” (“ein Beispiel mittelalterlichen Expressionismus, sozusagen ein mittelalterlicher Vorläufer van Goghs”). Charles R. Dodwell, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800–1200* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 150, on ‘expressionist’ Cologne painting such as the Crucifixion in the Giessen Gospels from Cologne, c.1000: Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek Hs. 660, fol. 188r. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations into English from German and Latin are my own.
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- 7 Two publications exclusively dedicated to the Rouen Sacramentary bookend these concerns, dating over a century apart: Wilson’s edition and discussion of 1896, and Heslop’s study of 2019: Henry A. Wilson, ed., *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, Henry Bradshaw Society 11 (London: Harrison, 1896); T.A. Heslop, “The ‘Missal’ of Robert of Jumièges and manuscript illumination at Peterborough c. 1015–1035,” in *Peterborough and the Soke, Art, Architecture and Archaeology*, eds. Ron Baxter, Jackie Hall and Claudia Marx (London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 89–112. The manuscript is mentioned in most surveys of early medieval (English) art. Individual themes to which its illuminations contribute have likewise been considered, such as the ‘disappearing Christ’ type of the Ascension considered first by Meyer Schapiro, the Crucifixion by Barbara Raw and the Deposition by Elizabeth Parker (on all of these, see further below). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429056420-6>
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- 8 The Fenland houses at Ely and Peterborough have been preferred by scholars writing most recently: Richard Gameson, “Book decoration in England, c.871–c.1100,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 1 c.400–1100, ed. Richard Gameson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 249–293, here p. 270. Arguing in favor of Peterborough on the basis of the saints invoked in the litany prayer and the scribe (‘Scribe B’): Heslop, “The ‘Missal’”, esp. pp. 90–95.
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- 9 The Easter tables start at the year 1000 and continue to 1095; there are two masses of St. Edward, whose feast of martyrdom decreed 1008: Wilson, *The*
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Missal, p. xxv. M. Bradford Bedingfield dates it to “before 1013”: Martin Bradford Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge and Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2002), p. 15.

- 10 Richard W. Pfaff, “Liturgical books,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 1 c.400–1100, ed. Richard Gameson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 449–459, here p. 457. Among notable features are rubrics written in Old English for ministering to the sick in the *Missal pro infirmis*, see Wilson, *The Missal*, pp. 286–295.
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- 11 “[Let it be known to all that] I Robert, firstly abbot of Jumièges and subsequently created bishop of the holy see of the Londoners, have given this book to St Mary in this [my] joint (*comisso*) monastery of the monks of St Peter [in honor of the saints ... and as a memorial for me to be held here forever].” Translation, see Heslop, “The ‘Missal’”, p. 89 (with my own additions; Heslop’s transcription *ibid* n1, p. 108 omits *michi*, but has a qualification of “*comisso*”). Transcription, cf. Wilson, *The Missal*, p. 316. I have transcribed the abbreviations according to the original. For a different translation of *comisso* as “entrusted to me”, see Brandon W. Hawk, *Preaching Apocrypha in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), p. 157. I am grateful to Anna Dorofeeva (Göttingen) for a discussion of the meaning of *michi* and the translation.
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- 12 As to the text, Pfaff defines it as “fundamentally a late Gregorian sacramentary with many Young Gelasian traces and with the Benedict of Aniane Supplement thoroughly integrated.” Richard W. Pfaff, *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 90.
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- 13 Its use by a bishop would have been complemented by a separate Benedictional, as the blessings are missing. Cf. Pfaff, *The liturgy*, p. 89; Heslop, “The ‘Missal’”, p. 90.
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- 14 Probably the Presentation in the Temple (between fol. 113 and fol. 114), and Entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday between fols. 56 and 57). Cf. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, cat. No. 72, p. 89.
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- 15 Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 30–35 on “interspersed imagery”, with pp. 34–35 on the Rouen Sacramentary, here p. 30.
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- 16 Collation, see Wilson, *The Missal*, p. xx. The three miniatures of the sanctorale are the only miniatures within their respective quires. The 31 quires of the manuscript are mostly quaternions; accommodating the illumination has led to irregularities in two cases: the eleventh quire (containing the Crucifixion sequence) has an inserted single leaf (fol. 74), and the twelfth quire (containing the Ascension and Pentecost) is a quinion. There are some needle holes and threads left visible on fol. 71r, where a protective textile was probably once attached, further emphasizing the value of the one standalone illuminated bifolium. Maybe it was also possible to use it separately? There is a later example (1200) of a bifolium with similar subject matter in a mass book, which Anna Boreczky (Budapest) is working on: Pray codex, Budapest, Széchényi National Library, MNY 1. I thank Anna Boreczky for discussing both bifolia with me.
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- 17 In light of the manuscript’s being partly written by ‘Scribe B’, who also contributed to several deluxe gospel books illuminated by different artists (cf. Gameson, “Book decoration in England”, p. 283 with n.118), the working method in the Rouen Sacramentary in my opinion supports the idea of illumination being “farmed out” rather than the scriptorium’s “rapid turnover of artists”: Heslop, “The ‘Missal’”, p. 94. The idea that the collaboration between scribes and artists was not necessarily based at the same working place is confirmed by several books produced in Northern France at the beginning of the 11th century, for example the famous “Boulogne 11” artist, who is regarded responsible for the illumination in – amongst others – the gospel book Boulogne-sur-mer, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 11 and the Anhalt-Morgan Gospels, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.827, written (and partly illuminated) in different places.
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- 18 Both assessments may be traced back to Otto Homburger: Otto Homburger, *Die Anfänge der Malerschule von Winchester im X. Jahrhundert*, PhD thesis Halle-Wittenberg, Halle an der Saale 1912, esp. pp. 60f, 65–68; Otto Homburger, “L’Art carolingien de Metz et l’école de Winchester,” in *Essais en l’honneur de Jean Porcher*, ed. Otto Pächt, *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 62, ser. 6 (1963): 35–46. They have been repeated since, e.g. Barbara C. Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography and the Art of the Monastic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 94; Heslop, “The ‘Missal’”, p. 95.
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- 19 Jonathan J. G. Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and their Methods of Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
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- 20 Cf. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *A bibliographical, antiquarian and picturesque tour in France and Germany*, Vol. I (London: Shakespeare Press, 1821), p. 166: “Flight of Egypt is thus singularly presented; Joseph being made to carry the distaff of Mary”; Hawk, *Preaching Apocrypha*, p. 151 cites the same interpretation as formulated by another 19th-century writer (Westwood). 20th-century descriptions of the miniature do not even mention this detail. I am not aware of any images of Joseph holding one of Mary’s prime attributes, which is moreover strongly linked to the Annunciation, and would think the idea highly unlikely.
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- 21 On the integration of *Pseudo-Matthew* narrative into the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges: Hawk, *Preaching Apocrypha*, pp. 144–155; for the text, see p. 151. Hawk uses the term “translation” to explain the reference to the text (*ibid.* section “Multimedia Translation”, p. 136ff.). In my view, it is more loosely based than “translation” implies, as the details of the tree bending down and water gushing forth are described in other apocryphal narratives, for example the Irish tradition in *Leabhar Breac* (cf. James K. Elliott, *A Synopsis of the Apocryphal Nativity and Infancy Narratives* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 114, 122f.) and the pictorial description is changed significantly in the case of the water not issuing out from under the tree but above it.
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- 22 On this part of the miracle: Elliott, *A Synopsis of the Apocryphal Nativity*, pp. 113–116. For a discussion of the apocrypha in art generally, see David R. Cartlidge and J. Keith Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha* (London: Routledge, 2001).
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- 23 The way in which both tree-fruit and water are directed at Joseph rather than Mary (as suggested by the apocryphal texts), subjugates these ‘additional’ events to the more hieratic group of Mary and Christ on the donkey.
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- 24 Joseph plays a more important role in the apocryphal nativity and infancy narratives than in the canonical gospels. As far as I am aware, the early medieval pictorial repercussions of this have yet to be researched, but manuscripts illuminated around the time of the Rouen Sacramentary may be a good place to start: The Boulogne 11 gospel book and the Benedictional of Aethelwold each have a Nativity very similar to that of the Rouen Sacramentary in the way that it includes a midwife (cf. Heslop, “The ‘Missal’”, p. 99), probably the apocryphal midwife Zachel/Zelomi rather than the doubting Salome (cf. Elliott, *A Synopsis of the Apocryphal Nativity*, p. 79; cf. Robert Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 18–19). Joseph is depicted twice in Boulogne 11, once even captioned (Boulogne-sur-mer, Bibliothèque municipale MS 11, fol. 12r). Joseph’s relative importance in England at the time may also be seen in his inclusion in the Rouen Sacramentary’s calendar for 19 March (cf. Heslop, “The ‘Missal’”, p. 99, and p. 111 n.42).
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- 25 Hawk, *Preaching Apocrypha*, p. 151, cites Westwood with the misled – and very modern – interpretation of Jesus “stretching out his hands to Joseph”. I have been unable to consult J.O. Westwood: *Facsimiles of the Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish Manuscripts* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1868), pp. 136–7 (page numbers cited by Hawk).
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- 26 Meyer Schapiro, “The Image of the Disappearing Christ: The Ascension in English Art around the Year 1000,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 23 (1943): 133–52. Other manuscripts containing the motif: Tiberius Psalter, London, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius C.IV, fol. 15r. Caligula Troper, London, BL, Cotton MS Caligula A.XIV,
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fol. 18r. Bury St. Edmunds Psalter, Vatican, BAV, MS Reg. Lat. 12, fol. 73v. Odbert Gospels, New York, PML, MS M.333, fol. 85r.

27 Cf. Robert Deshman, "Another Look at the Disappearing Christ: Corporeal and Spiritual Vision in Early Medieval Images," *Art Bulletin* 97 (1997): 518–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3046264>; Jennifer P. Kingsley, "To Touch the Image: Embodying Christ in the Bernward Gospels," *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 3, 1 (2010): 138–73, esp. pp. 142–8, <https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol3/iss1/5>; Johanna Kramer, *Between Earth and Heaven: Liminality and the Ascension of Christ in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), esp. Ch. 5, pp. 201–18. <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526110619>

28 Caligula Troper, London, BL, Cotton MS Caligula A.XIV, fol. 18r.

29 Bury St. Edmunds Psalter, Vatican, BAV, MS Reg. Lat. 12, fol. 73v: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.12; Odbert Gospels, New York, PML, MS M.333, fol. 85r. <http://ica.themorgan.org/manuscript/page/7/77221>.

30 Kramer, *Between Earth and Heaven*, p. 206.

31 This was suggested for the Baptism of Christ in the Benedictional of Aethelwold, derived from the Metz ivory casket (Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Inv. No. MA 59) by Pächt, *Buchmalerei des Mittelalters*, p. 181. Dodwell discusses this kind of "editing" for the Rouen Benedictional: Dodwell, *The Pictorial Arts of the West*, p. 107. Implied also by Heslop for the Rouen Sacramentary: Heslop, "The 'Missal'", p. 104. For the group of Cologne manuscripts comprising the Hitda-Codex (Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Hs. 1640), the Giessen Gospels (Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 660), the Sacramentary from St Gereon (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 817) and Milan Gospels (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C. 53 Sup.), it is asserted by Thomas Labusiak, "Zum Stil des Hitda-Codex," in *Äbtissin Hitda und der Hitda-Codex: Forschungen zu einem*

Tina Bawden, "Shifting Grounds and Shifting Perspectives: The Crucifixion Sequence in the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges (Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Y 6 [274])," *Different Visions: New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 9 (2023): 1–42. <https://doi.org/10.61302/BBMD8532>

Hauptwerk der ottonischen Kölner Buchmalerei, edited by Klaus Gereon Beuckers (Darmstadt: WBG 2013), pp. 75–87, here p. 76.

32 For a similar reading, see Alexander, “Some Aesthetic Principles”, p. 150.

33 On other English examples (14 miniatures, 13 ivory carvings, and stone carvings), see Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, pp. 91–110, p. 158. Most include at least the hand of God or books held by Mary and/or John.

34 Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, p. 158. Cf. Heslop, “The ‘Missal’”, p. 97.

35 4th quarter 10th century, Winchester or Ramsey. London, British Library, Harley MS 2904, fol. 3v, 285 x 242 mm.

36 Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, p. 97.

37 They are therefore only “superficially similar”: Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, p. 158.

38 Sally Dormer, *Drawing in English manuscripts c.950–c.1385*, unpublished PhD thesis, London: Courtauld Institute, 1991, p. 73.

39 Mary is evidently the emotive entrance point even for later viewers: Dibdin considers her “rather touchingly executed,” and does not award any other

single figures with his attention: Dibdin, *A bibliographical, antiquarian and picturesque tour*, p. 167.

40 With the crucifixion drawing in the Ramsey Psalter, there is a famous precursor (and probable exemplar) for the technique of heightening the contrast between Mary and John in the firmness of their stance, with Mary's pointed shoes a fraction of the size of John's naked feet and her whole figure and drapery from the hunched shoulders downwards narrowing to a point.

41 Delicate plants simply drawn with a brush are a feature of Carolingian book illumination also explored for expressive effect by Ottonian illuminators, particularly in Cologne.

42 On gestures of despair generally, see Moshe Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1976).

43 This focus on Christ's suffering became more important from the second half of the 11th century: Robin M. Jensen, *The Cross: History, Art, and Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass., London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 150–78, esp. pp. 164–65.

44 Melanie Holcomb, "Strokes of Genius: The Draftsman's Art in the Middle Ages," in *Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages*, ed. Melanie Holcomb (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 3–34, here p. 32, referring to Dormer, *Drawing in English manuscripts*.

45 Performed at the entrance to the church, the gesture of reconciliation on Maundy Thursday had numerous echoes in portal sculpture and carved church doors: cf. Tina Bawden, *Die Schwelle im Mittelalter: Bildmotiv und Bildort*, Sensus. Studien zur mittelalterlichen Kunst, vol. 4 (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau,

2014), esp. pp. 203, 354–56. For the liturgy practiced in England: Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy*, p. 83f.

46 These two manuscripts are therefore the main examples for Pächt's narrative of English "ponderation" (*Ponderierung*) of miniatures in which "the equilibrium of the page is prioritized over the requirements of the illusion of space" ("das Gleichgewicht der Seite hat Priorität über die Erfordernisse der Raumillusion"): Pächt, *Buchmalerei des Mittelalters*, p. 182.

47 Cf. Alexander, "Some Aesthetic Principles", p. 150, calls the sky at the Betrayal an "angry sunset," and that of the Resurrection scene with slightly pinker tones a "dawn of hope".

48 Pächt, *Buchmalerei des Mittelalters*, p. 178, referring to the sunrise on fol. 72v: "Eine Individualisierung der Beleuchtungssituation, wie man sie in einem nicht-naturalistischen Stil gar nicht glaubt erwarten zu können."

49 I have discussed this for the narrative Peter miniature in the Caligula Troper mentioned above (fol. 22r), and for the Mark miniature in the Pembroke 302 gospel lectionary (Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 302, fol. 38r): Tina Bawden, "Observations on the Topological Functions of Color in Early Medieval Christian Illuminated Manuscripts," In *Clothing Sacred Scriptures: Book Art and Book Religion in Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Cultures*, eds. David Ganz and Barbara Schellewald. Manuscripta Biblica Vol. 2 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 187–203, here pp. 193–97.

50 Elizabeth Parker, *The Descent from the Cross, its Relation to the Extra-Liturgical "Depositio" Drama* (New York/London: Garland, 1978), p. 33.

51 Compare the pear wood Deposition from Trier (mid-11th century) in Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche

Museen zu Berlin, Inv. No. 3145, or the ivory from England (c. 1150), London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. No. 3-1872. In the Rouen Sacramentary, the pliers have two sets of hinges, essentially robbing them of practical function as a tool, but that was probably not the point.

52 Parker, *The Descent from the Cross*.

53 Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy*, pp. 130–1.

54 Beatrice Kitzinger, *The Cross, the Gospels and the Work of Art in the Carolingian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). I am grateful to Beatrice Kitzinger for discussing her argument with me regarding the diptych here.

55 For a staging of such a transition of the role of the cross between Crucifixion and Deposition across an opening, see the Angers Gospels, late 9th/early 10th c. Angers, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 24, fols. 7v–8r. Beatrice Kitzinger, “The Liturgical Cross and the Space of the Passion: The Diptych of Angers MS 24,” in *Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the Early Medieval West*, eds. Juliet Mullins, Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh and Richard Hawtree (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 141–59.

56 In Old English treatments of the cross, its power was often conceived of in terms of light conquering darkness: For examples, see Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy*, pp. 129, 134–7. In the neoplatonic pictorial theology of the Hitda-Codex (Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Ms 1640), parchment according to Christoph Winterer is “one of the possible equivalents for light”, especially in the Crucifixion on fol. 207v: Christoph Winterer, *Das Evangeliar der Äbtissin Hitda: Eine ottonische Prachthandschrift aus Köln* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2010), here p. 43.

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- 57 E.g. Angers Gospels. Kitzinger, "The Diptych of Angers MS 24". Kitzinger, *The Cross, the Gospels and the Work of Art*, pp. 176–96. Gospels of Otto III, Reichenau c.1000. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4453, fols. 250v–251r. An instruction for the reading of the gospel Passion included in Aelfric's Eynsham letter instructed to strip the cloth from underneath the gospel book "in the manner of a thief" so the cloth evidently played an important role in the Good Friday *Adoratio Crucis* liturgy, cf. Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy*, p. 126.
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- 58 The idea that "the upheaval of the cosmos described in the gospels" may be suggested by these "frantic zigzags" is noted – exclusively to my knowledge – by Alexander, "Some Aesthetic Principles", p. 150.
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- 59 For the legend of Adam's skull, traceable to the 2nd century, see Bruno Reudenbach, "Golgotha: Etablierung, Transfer und Transformation. Die Kreuzigungsorte im frühen Christentum und im Mittelalter," in *Räume der Passion: Raumvisionen, Erinnerungsorte und Topographien des Leidens Christi in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Hans Aurenhammer and Daniela Bohde (Bern: Lang, 2015), pp. 13–28, here p. 20. For a discussion of the rock of Golgotha and its ruptures and holes in textual sources, see Yamit Rachman-Schrire, "The Rock of Golgotha in Jerusalem and western imagination," in *Räume der Passion: Raumvisionen, Erinnerungsorte und Topographien des Leidens Christi in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, eds. Hans Aurenhammer and Daniela Bohde (Bern: Lang 2015), pp. 29–48, esp. 36–44. Adam's bearded head is shown below the thorn of the cross in the Angers Gospels Crucifixion, the theological context discussed by Kitzinger, *The Cross, the Gospels and the Work of Art*, pp. 183–5.
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- 60 Cf. Kitzinger, *The Cross, the Gospels and the Work of Art*, p. 187 for a discussion with regard to the Angers Crucifixion. The way this depth is explored by way of a broad ground layer for the cross in the Ottonian book illumination from Cologne around the year 1000 suggests widespread pictorial repercussions of this notion: Cf. the Giessen Gospels, Giessen, Universitätsbibliothek Hs. 660, fol. 188r.
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- 61 The clearest formulation of the former is probably found in Pächt, *Buchmalerei des Mittelalters*, esp. p. 182. For the presentation of the idea that the artists strove to “show Christ as he looked to the apostles” in the ‘disappearing Christ’-type of the Ascension, see Schapiro, “The Image of the Disappearing Christ,” p. 135. Deshman analyzed this in depth, “Another Look at the Disappearing Christ,” pp. 519-20, 529-30.
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- 62 Gottfried Boehm and Matteo Burioni, “Einleitung. Nichts ist ohne Grund,” In *Der Grund: Das Feld des Sichtbaren*, edited by Gottfried Boehm and Matteo Burioni (Munich: Fink, 2012), pp. 11-24, here p. 17.
https://doi.org/10.30965/9783846750742_002
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- 63 Cf. Burioni, “Grund und *campo*,” p. 96.
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- 64 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the ends of a certain history of art*, translated by John Goodman (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2005), here p. 11ff. Original edition: *Devant l’image: Question posée aux fin d’une histoire d’art*, 1990. This is an idea first explored for manuscript grounds by Silke Tammen, “Blut ist ein ganz besonderer ‘Grund’: Bilder, Texte und die Farbe Rot in einem kartäusischen Andachtsbüchlein (British Library, Ms. Egerton 1821),” In *Bild und Text im Mittelalter*, edited by Karin Krause and Barbara Schellewald (Köln / Weimar / Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2011), pp. 229–51.
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- 65 As n.2 above, Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*, p. 7.
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- 66 Cf. Schapiro, “Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art”.
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- 67 Cf. Heslop, "The 'Missal'," pp. 97–99. Eric Palazzo, *Les sacramentaires de Fulda: études sur l'iconographie et la liturgie à l'époque ottonienne* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1994).
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- 68 Benedictional of Aethelwold, Winchester(?), between 971 and 984, 293 mm x 225 mm. London, British Library, Add. MS 49598, fol. 4v: "circos quoque multos in hoc precepit fieri libro bene comptos, completos quoque agalmatibus uariis decoratis multigenis miniis pulchris necnon simul auro" ("He commanded also to be made in this book many frames well adorned and filled with various figures decorated with numerous beautiful colors and with gold"). Quoted from F. Wormald, *The Benedictional of St. Ethelwold* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), p. 7.
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- 69 Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*.
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- 70 Especially: Sarah Kay, "Legible skins: Animals and the ethics of medieval reading," *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 2 (2011): 13–32. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pmed.2010.48>
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- 71 Gottfried Boehm, "Der Grund. Über das ikonische Kontinuum," In eds., *Der Grund: Das Feld des Sichtbaren*, edited by Gottfried Boehm and Matteo Burioni (Munich: Fink, 2012), pp. 29-92, here p. 70.