

Color and meaning in medieval art: the case of the Missal of Henry of Chichester

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ENG Abstract: This paper discusses the question of color iconography in medieval art. It begins with a brief overview of the historiography of the subject considering methodological issues and discusses the topic of color classification incorporating a discussion of colour notes in English medieval manuscripts. In the second part, there is an extended discussion of the use of colour in a thirteenth-century English manuscript, the Missal of Henry of Chichester. Its color scheme is discussed with reference to color iconography focusing on blue, red and green (especially its use in the depiction of the cross). This is followed by a discussion of the taxonomy and symbolism of skin colors, especially dark skin, which it is argued in this context is intended as a signifier of Jewish people. In conclusion, the use of colour in the Missal is related to broader developments in art and society of the period specifically its identity politics.

Keywords: color, its meaning and symbolism, skin color.

ES Color y significado en el arte medieval: el caso del Misal de Enrique de Chichester

ES Resumen: Este artículo aborda la cuestión de la iconografía del color en el arte medieval. Comienza con un breve repaso de la historiografía del tema, considerando cuestiones metodológicas, y aborda el tema de la clasificación de los colores incorporando un análisis de las notas de color en los manuscritos medievales ingleses. En la segunda parte, se analiza el uso del color en un manuscrito inglés del siglo XIII, el Misal de Enrique de Chichester. Se analiza su esquema cromático con referencia a la iconografía del color, centrándose en el azul, el rojo y el verde (especialmente su uso en la representación de la cruz). A continuación, se analizan la taxonomía y el simbolismo de los colores de la piel, especialmente la piel oscura, que en este contexto se utiliza para designar a los judíos. En conclusión, el uso del color en el Misal está relacionado con la evolución más amplia del arte y la sociedad de la época, en concreto con su política de identidad.

Palabras clave: color, significado, simbolismo, piel.

Summary: 1.Introduction. 2.Methodology. 3.Case study: Missal of Henry of Chichester. 3.1.Introduction. 3.2.Color scheme. 3.3. Skin color. 4. Conclusion 5. References. 5.1. sources. 5.2. Bibliography

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1. Introduction

The study of color in medieval art has attracted increasing attention in recent years. This has chiefly been in the area of the analysis of materials and pigments¹. This technical analysis deserves to be integrated more closely into the mainstream of art historical discourse. Another resource which has opened up new opportunities for more detailed research in the area of color has been ambitious digitisation projects, which provide high-quality reproductions, especially in the area of illuminated manuscripts. Less attention, however, has been given to the question of color and its meaning in art, which is the subject of this paper.

To examine this topic, I intend firstly to discuss certain methodological issues which make the reconstruction of color iconography a problematic exercise but nevertheless one potentially of value. Color iconography may be defined as the capacity of colors when found in artistic contexts to have meanings, interpretations, or associations attached to them. The focus here is on the High Middle Ages (twelfth and thirteenth centuries) and English manuscript illumination, and the discussion draws on the resources and new research mentioned above. In the second part, I discuss a specific case study, a cycle of miniatures in a mid-thirteenth century English Missal, the Missal of Henry of Chichester, painted by one of the most outstanding painters of the thirteenth century to whom the name the Sarum Master has been given².

2. Methodology

An interest in color and its meaning in medieval art can be traced back to the early nineteenth century. An important early study is that of Frederic de Portal on symbolic colors³ which in its line of enquiry reflects religious developments in the first half of the nineteenth century⁴. The subject was one, however, largely ignored in twentieth century historiography until the pioneering work of John Gage and Michel Pastoureau. Their work has transformed the subject raising important, though not entirely unproblematic, methodological issues. Gage⁵ adopted an historicist approach drawing upon pre-Newtonian concepts of colour theory, where colors are arranged on a linear scale from dark to light, as opposed to our post-Newtonian one, where colour is analysed in terms of the three dimensions of hue, saturation and lightness, with primacy given to hue. But would artists have known this theory and how does it relate to artistic practise? Or is it simply a matter of ideas that were in common circulation at the time, as reflected in encyclopaedias⁶, which by a process of osmosis influenced artists and their patrons. Another important aspect of Gage's approach, reflecting the linguistic turn in academic discourse, was his interest on what was then the recent pioneering linguistic research on color classification, most importantly the work of Berlin and Kay⁷. The practicalities of this are, for example, that the parameters of what was understood by purple in the early medieval period extended to dark blue and dark red, with the common denominator being darkness, and this is reflected in the artistic usage of the period⁸.

Gage rejected the idea of an iconography of color based on hue in the early Middle Ages. How colours were classified and their terminology must have determined medieval color perception, concepts and categories, but to what extent was this terminology based on materials, abstract color terms or color terms which had concrete referents? The use of these terms would in any case have been far less standardised and abstracted than our own. But it may be that Gage went too far, and his formulations were too generalised and require to be modified in the light of more recent linguistic research and correlated more closely with the visual and material culture of the time. Heather Pulliam has, for example, perceptively commented that: "while hue is less important in a number of medieval cultures, it is neither unimportant nor non-existent"⁹. There is also evidence that as we enter into the later Middle Ages, with the development of vernacular languages, a more hue based conception of color emerges, and this has ramifications for color iconography. One linguist has recently noted, for example: "that in the late Middle Ages a new sensibility to hues emerged along with a tendency to separate hue terms from brightness

¹In the context of English manuscript illumination, see most importantly Richard Gameson, *The pigments of British medieval illuminators: a scientific and cultural study* (London: Archetype Publications, 2023), who provides a diachronic survey of developments in relation to pigment usage, the findings of which are utilised here. See also the important work done at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Stella Panayotova, et al, *The art and science of illuminated manuscripts: a handbook* (Harvey Miller Publishers, 2020).

²Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS.Lat.24. N. J. Morgan, *Early Gothic manuscripts*, vol. 2 (London: Harvey Miller, 1988), no. 100; R. Marks and N. J. Morgan, *The golden age of English manuscript painting, 1200-1500* (London, 1981), pls. 8-9. The manuscript has been entirely digitised: Manchester Digital Collections (Text and Image: Missal (Sarum) (Manchester.ac.uk). See also Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), vol. 1, 129 and vol.2, VII.34 and VII.35.

³Frédéric baron de Portal, *Des couleurs symboliques dans l'antiquité, le moyen age, et les temps modernes* (Paris, 1837). Another influential text is that of A. Jameson, *Sacred and legendary art*, 2 vols. (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1857), which contains a section entitled: "of the significance of colours".

A later important text is J G Haupt, *Die Farbensymbolik in der sakralen Kunst des abendländischen Mittelalters* (Dresden, 1941).

⁴On this see Charlotte Ribeyrol, "Religion and Ritual," in *A Cultural History of Color in the Age of Industry*, ed. Loske, A. (2024), 89-109.

⁵John Gage, *Colour and culture: practice and meaning from antiquity to abstraction*, 1993, London: Thames and Hudson; *Colour and meaning: art, science and symbolism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999).

⁶In the context of English art see James Le Palmer's fourteenth century text, Lucy Freeman Sandler, *Omne bonum: a fourteenth-century encyclopedia of universal knowledge: British Library MSS Royal 6E VI - 6E VII* (London: Harvey Miller, 1996). This contains an entry on "color" with an accompanying illustrations of an illuminator at work

⁷Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, *Basic color terms: their universality and evolution* (London, 1969).

⁸This was the subject of a recent conference at the University of Zurich. Shades of purple: purple ornament in medieval manuscripts ([shades_of_purple.pdf \(textures-of-scripture.ch\)](#))

⁹Heather Pulliam, "Color," *Studies in iconography* 33 (2012).

terms”¹⁰. In the context of Old (c.600-1150) and Middle English (c.1150-1500), a shift has been noted from brightness to hue based color terms: “in the evolution of English color terms, a gradual semantic shift occurred from largely brightness color concepts to almost exclusively hue concepts”¹¹. This shift appears to be reflected in a greater standardisation in color iconographic conventions as we move into the later Middle Ages, which is especially marked in northern European art¹². As a trajectory, this is exemplified in the work of the Flemish artist, Rogier van der Weyden. Exemplary in this respect is the *Miraflores* altarpiece in Berlin (c.1442-5), originally made for the Carthusian *Miraflores* Charterhouse in Burgos, where the Virgin Mary is represented respectively in the Nativity, Pieta and Resurrection scenes in white (perhaps under the influence of the writings of St. Bridget), red, and blue, which have a symbolic dimension to them reinforcing pictorially her three predominant virtues of purity, compassion and perseverance¹³. Similarly in Duccio’s *Maesta*, completed in 1311, color iconographic conventions are used in a systematic way as an aid to recognition of key figures¹⁴.

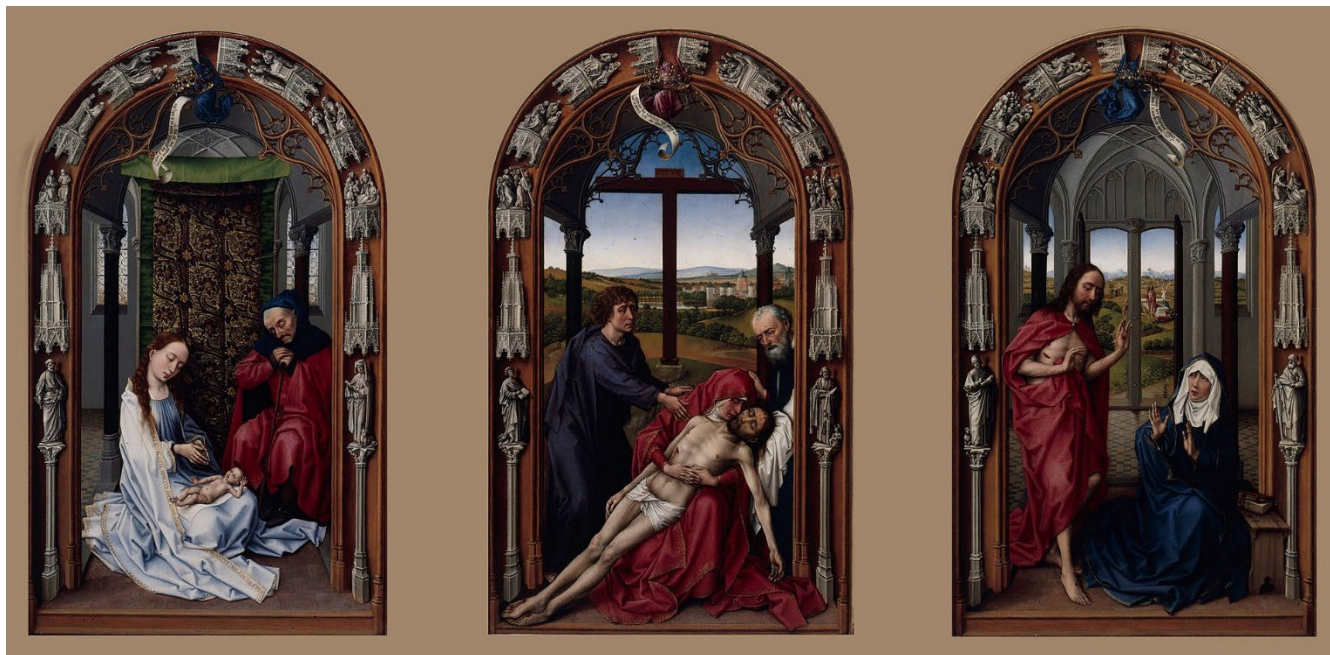


Fig. 1. Rogier van der Weyden. *Miraflores* Altarpiece, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Recent research¹⁵ on the subject of color notes in the field of medieval manuscript illumination appears to support a more nuanced view than that of John Gage and to suggest that, by the twelfth century at least, colors were increasingly identified by their abstract color name rather than by their pigment or material one. These color notes typically consist of an initial or abbreviation, written in lead point and placed in the margin adjacent to a coloured initial. An “r”, for example, in a twelfth century English manuscript adjacent to a red initial, may refer to either the Latin term “rubeus”, the French “rouge”, or even perhaps the English “red” (fig. 1), reflecting the trilingualism prevalent in twelfth century England, but not, as one might expect, to the pigment terms used in its painting, such as “minium” (red lead), or “vermiculum” or “cenobrium” (the Latin terms used for vermillion, the use of which became increasingly prevalent at this period).

¹⁰ P. Molinelli, “Language and Psychology,” in *A Cultural History of Color in the Medieval Age*, ed. C. P. Biggam and K. Wolf (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 124. Pastoreau has also drawn a correlation with broader developments in language commenting that this “evolution seems to have occurred over the course of the twelfth century, a time when vernacular language replaced Latin and began to use colour terms as true nouns”. On this see: Michel Pastoreau, *Yellow: the history of a color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

¹¹ Ronald W Casson, “Color shift: evolution of English color terms from brightness to hue,” in *Color categories in thought and language* (1997), 224.

¹² As reflected, for example, in the illustrations in Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*.

¹³ Robert Koch, “The Getty Annunciation by Dieric Bouts,” *The Burlington Magazine* 130, no. 1024 (1988): 513. For colored illustration see: [Der Miraflores-Altar](#)

¹⁴ On this, see John White, *Duccio: Tuscan art and the medieval workshop* (London, 1979), 133, who discusses “the use of colour for iconographic recognition”

¹⁵ On this subject see above all the pioneering work of Patricia Danz Stirnemann, “Nouvelles pratiques en matière d’enluminure au temps de Philippe Auguste,” in *La France de Philippe Auguste. Le temps des mutations*, ed. R. Bautier (Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1982). See also in the context of English Romanesque manuscript illumination Andreas Petzold, “Colour Notes in English Romanesque Manuscripts,” *The British Library Journal* 16, no. 1 (1990). Tantalizingly, color notes have recently been detected under the paint surfaces of some of the illustrations in the Bury Bible - Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 2, Panayotova, *The art and science of illuminated manuscripts: a handbook*. Gage discussed color notes: John Gage, “Colour words in the high Middle Ages,” in *Looking through paintings: the study of painting techniques and materials in support of art historical research* (1998).

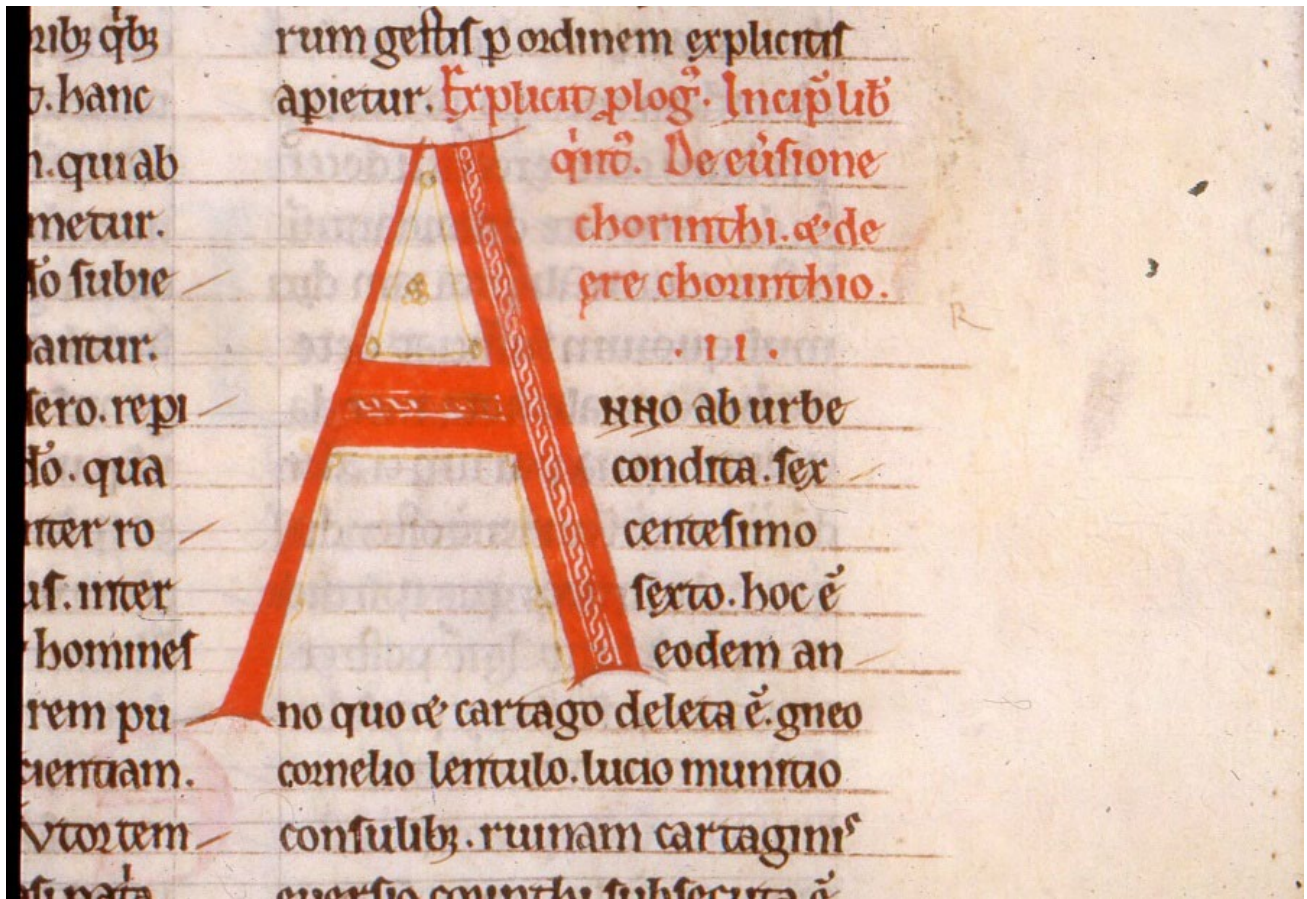


Fig.2 Color note in British Library, MS.6, Royal MS. 6 C. VIII, f.59- an "R" in the right margin adjacent to red arabesque initial. Source: British Library.

Pastoureaux's approach is a very different one, and one that is anchored in anthropology, and social and cultural history, rather than art history. He has published extensively on the subject of color in the Middle Ages, but is best known to English-speaking audiences through a series of semi-popular books which take as their subject a single color, beginning with a volume on blue¹⁶, which may be taken as representative and from our standpoint is one of the most interesting as he isolates a paradigm shift in the status of blue in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the so-called blue revolution. Recent support for this viewpoint is provided by the findings of Team Pigment's investigation of English manuscript illumination under the leadership of Richard Gameson in which it has been demonstrated that there is a trend to use saturated, dark blue far more extensively in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries in English manuscript illumination than in previous periods¹⁷. Pastoureaux's book has, however, attracted considerable criticism. Heather Pulliam¹⁸ has, for example, taken issue with his downplaying of the use of blue in Insular manuscript illumination, the use of which can be seen, for example, in both the Books of Kells and Lindisfarne, and in the Stockholm Codex Aureus¹⁹ made at Canterbury in the eighth century, though in these cases the blue is lighter and produced from woad or indigo rather than the precious and intense blue pigment, ultramarine, the use of which only became prevalent in manuscript illumination from the eleventh century.

A more recent approach is to mine the rich vein of allegorical interpretations given to color, first and foremost, relating to Scripture and the exegesis it generated²⁰, but also reflected in other medieval texts, most importantly, encyclopaedias and lapidaries²¹ (an important text at the time concerned with precious stones and their interpretation). These texts would have potentially been known, and we know in certain cases, were copied and presumably consulted in monasteries and universities at the time and formed common knowledge amongst their elites. This knowledge may potentially have informed the interpretation and use of color in artistic applications.

¹⁶ Michel Pastoureaux, *Blue: the history of a color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). See also Michel Pastoureaux, "La promotion de la couleur bleue au XIIIe siècle: le témoignage de l'héraldique et de l'emblématique" (paper presented at the *Colore nel Medioevo: arte simbolo tecnica*, 1996).

¹⁷ Gameson, *The pigments of British medieval illuminators: a scientific and cultural study*.

¹⁸ Pulliam, "Color."

¹⁹ Stockholm, National Library of Sweden, MS. A. 135, f.9v. Richard Gameson, *The Codex aureus: an eighth-century Gospel book*, Stockholm, Kungliga Bibliotek, A. 135 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 2002).

²⁰ Exponents of this approach include Meier-Staubach and Rudolf Suntrup, *Handbuch der Farbenbedeutung im Mittelalter* (2012). They have produced an important resource of commentaries on relevant passages in the Bible arranged according to their Latin material name.

²¹ Most recently on this see Brigitte Buettner, *The mineral and the visual: precious stones in medieval secular culture* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022), 9, and especially, chapter 5, who notes that the meanings attached to precious stones in lapidaries, which includes their color, are not fixed. That these lapidaries were consulted is attested to by Hildegard of Bingen who produced her own text.

Herbert Kessler²² has, for example, commented that: “color acquired symbolic meaning associated with natural qualities and references in Scripture and lapidaries, Suger, Hildegard of Bingen, and other commentators attest to its significance.”

I will sum up this section by providing some guidelines for considering this question. First, the medieval conception of color was one very different from our own. It would not have been as abstracted, but more closely related to nature and concrete referents in the outside world. Nor (and this appears to be the case to a greater extent in the early Middle Ages at least) is the conception one primarily based on hue, as in our own post-Newtonian one, but one more dependent on the dimension of lightness and darkness, as well as the associations attached to materials, especially precious stones. There appears to be a greater progression in the later Middle Age in language to a hue based conception, which appears to be mirrored in the visual arts. Secondly, the study of color iconography needs to be diachronic and related to specific contexts, both physical, geographic and cultural. Thirdly, the question of the linguistic codification and classification of colors needs to be considered²³. Finally, the study of color iconography needs to be an interdisciplinary one, drawing upon a wide range of texts and subject specialisms.

3. Case study: Missal of Henry of Chichester

3.1 Introduction

In this section, the focus is on the role of color in the cycle of miniatures in a mid-thirteenth century English Missal, with specific reference given to the taxonomy of skin color. The Missal is generally thought to have been made at Salisbury in southern England. The sequence of miniatures, which are in a separate gathering and prefix the Canon of the mass, begins with an image of the Annunciation (f.149) and includes a donor portrait (f.150), depicting the Virgin and child, at the feet of whom kneels a tonsured cleric, who has been identified as Henry of Chichester. He is thought to have been a Precentor (a senior functionary in the church) at Crediton in Devon and a canon at Exeter Cathedral. There is no precedent for having a set of full-page miniatures in a Missal prefixing the Canon of the mass in English manuscript illumination, which is normally a feature of personal psalters, and together with the donor portrait, would suggest that the manuscript was a hybrid product intended for the personal use of Henry when he was officiating at the mass. An inscription on f.1 ascribed to c.1300 values the Missal at 60 shillings, which indicates that it was perceived to be valuable at the time, and that its production must have been expensive²⁴. The miniatures reflect a rise in affective piety in art at the time, in emphasising Christ's suffering, and contrasting this with the cruelty of his persecutors. This affective dimension can be seen in the emaciated figure of Christ with his wounds and rib cage prominently displayed in the Resurrection scene (f.152 v. and fig. 4). The miniatures would presumably have been intended to aid the personal devotion of the donor, who is so prominently displayed, for whom they must have been tailored, and who would have provided their first audience. Given his position in the Church, one can assume a relatively high degree of education and erudition on his part.

²² Herbert L. Kessler, *Experiencing medieval art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 53. See also the recent important study of Alberto Virdis, *Colors in Medieval art: theories, matter, and light from Suger to Grosseteste (1100-1250)* (Rome: Masaryk University Press, 2023).

²³ A systematic study of color terms in the Middle Ages is a desideratum.

²⁴ There is a list in Latin of the cost of pigments in an early fourteenth century manuscript from the abbey of St. Augustine's, Canterbury: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. 301, f.75v. ([Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 301: Annals of St Augustine's, Canterbury, Canterbury Documents, etc - Parker Library On the Web - Spotlight at Stanford](#)). In the list there is an entry for blue, which not surprisingly is the most expensive pigment, with 2 grades specified- the most expensive one is 20 shillings and the less expensive 5 shillings. 100 gold leaves are valued at 4 shillings and vermilion at 14 pence. On the cost of pigments at the time see also Tim Ayers, *The fabric accounts of St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, 1292-1396* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020).



Fig.3 Missal of Henry of Chichester: Donor Portrait with Virgin and Child (f.150). [Source:](#)

The miniatures were painted by one of the most distinctive and talented artists of the period in England to whom the name, the Sarum Master, has been given. His hand has been identified in other manuscripts (the most important of which is the Amesbury Psalter)²⁵, and he may have been active as well as a wall painter. The Amesbury Psalter in terms of the use of colour presents parallels with the Missal of Henry of Chichester though there are differences. Morgan sees the roots of the Sarum Master's style to be in that of the Glazier Psalter (Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, MS.Glazier 25) but there is no obvious affinity in the use of color between the two works²⁶. The Missal reflects in its imagery a high degree of identity politics as reflected in the prominence given to the representation of Jewish figures who are highlighted by their dress, appearance and especially their dark complexions as discussed later. This is in line with the injunctions of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215²⁷, which required in canon sixty-seven that Jews should be distinguished from Christians by the color of their clothing. In another canon (sixteen), on the subject of clerical dress, it is specified that: "let them not indulge in red or green clothes" (apparently these colors had secular connotations). In the secular sphere, heraldry also in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries emerges as a distinct visual language²⁸, as is reflected in the Resurrection scene (fig. 4), where proto-heraldic motifs may be seen on the shields of the soldiers and the flags. Color allegory was increasingly becoming part of the universal language of the Church by the thirteenth century, as reflected in a treatise written at the end of the twelfth century by Innocent III when he was Cardinal Lothar of Segni²⁹ on the subject of the mass entitled *De sacro altaris mysterio* ("On the Sacred Mystery of the Altar"), which specifies the liturgical colors according to the Roman rite, and enumerates and elucidates their relevant color symbolism. It should be noted, however, that in artistic usage iconographic color conventions tend to trump liturgical ones, a classic example of which is that of the Virgin Mary whose liturgical color was white but who is usually represented in saturated, dark blue or sometimes deep red or in a combination of these colors, at least from the mid twelfth century.

²⁵ Oxford, All Souls College, MS.6. Morgan, *Early Gothic manuscripts*, 2, no. 101. Another important manuscript illuminated by this artist is Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS.Fr. 403 (Morgan, *Early Gothic manuscripts*, 2, no. 103.) A wallpainting with a blue background, in a similar style to that of the Sarum Master, if not by him, can be seen in the chapel of the Bishop's Palace at Chichester, on which Michael Michael is preparing a publication.

²⁶ [Psalter | MS G.25 | Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts | The Morgan Library & Museum](#)

²⁷ Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the ecumenical councils* (London: 1990).

For an English translation see [Fourth Lateran Council : 1215 \(documentacatholicaomnia.eu\)](#)

²⁸ Michel Pastoureau, *L'art héraldique au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 2009).

²⁹ For a commentary and French translation see Michel Pastoureau, "Ordo Colorum: notes sur la naissance des couleurs liturgiques in Quand la liturgie donne à voir," *La Maison-Dieu*, no. 176, no.4 (1988). It should be noted, however, that the Sarum use differed from the Roman rite in certain respects, nor is the use of color standardised within English liturgical practise. On this see William Henry St John Hope, *English liturgical colours* (London: S.P.C.K, 1918), passim, summarised on 161-3. The English usage is far from standardised and blue is mentioned. It could be used, for example, as a alternative to black for funerals and requiem masses. The late thirteenth-century, Clare Chasuble in the Victoria and Albert Museum (673-1864) is an example of a liturgical vestment made of dark blue silk.

3.2 Color scheme

The miniatures have recently been the subject of a pigment analysis within the larger Team Pigment project³⁰ which aims to provide a diachronic survey of pigments and materials used in English manuscript illumination. In terms of developmental patterns, the authors of this project have seen the color scheme of early and mid-thirteenth century English manuscript illumination as dominated by gold, reds and blues, and this is directly reflected in the Missal of Henry of Chichester³¹. Red, blue and gold are also assigned to the rubrics and display script in the main text and calendar³², where they are combined with black ink, and the frames in the double page openings also alternate in color between red and blue (see fig. 13). The Sarum Master clearly uses color for an aesthetic effect, as has been underlined in the pigment analysis. But colors are also deployed to make interesting visual and possibly semiotic links across the page, or pages in the case of double page openings, and he also demonstrates an awareness of its semiotic dimension with colors frequently used with a symbolic or conceptual dimension to them, drawing on the rich reservoir of interpretations attached to specific colors at the time³³. The use of color is, thus, intended to trigger memories and can be read like a text with intertextual references, both literary and visual.

The background colors in the miniatures consist of gold (leaf gold), pale pink (vermilion and lead white) and saturated blue. An inventory dated 1327, which refers to the miniatures in the missal, specifically highlights the use of gold in the image. The gold is both intended to be symbolic of divine light and would have reflected the actual light of candles and oil lamps on the altar and its surroundings. The trend to use gold backgrounds in English manuscript illumination is one that developed from the late twelfth century, as can be seen in the Westminster Psalter (London, British Library, Royal MS. 2 A XXII). The pale pink background can be seen in both the Betrayal (f.150 v.) and Resurrection (f.152 v. and fig. 4) images, in the latter it may be a reference to the dawn. In the case of the Resurrection, a relatively new image in English art, with Christ stepping out of the mottled, porphyry tomb of various colors and with a green lining, the pink background acts as an appropriate coda to the sequence of images³⁴.

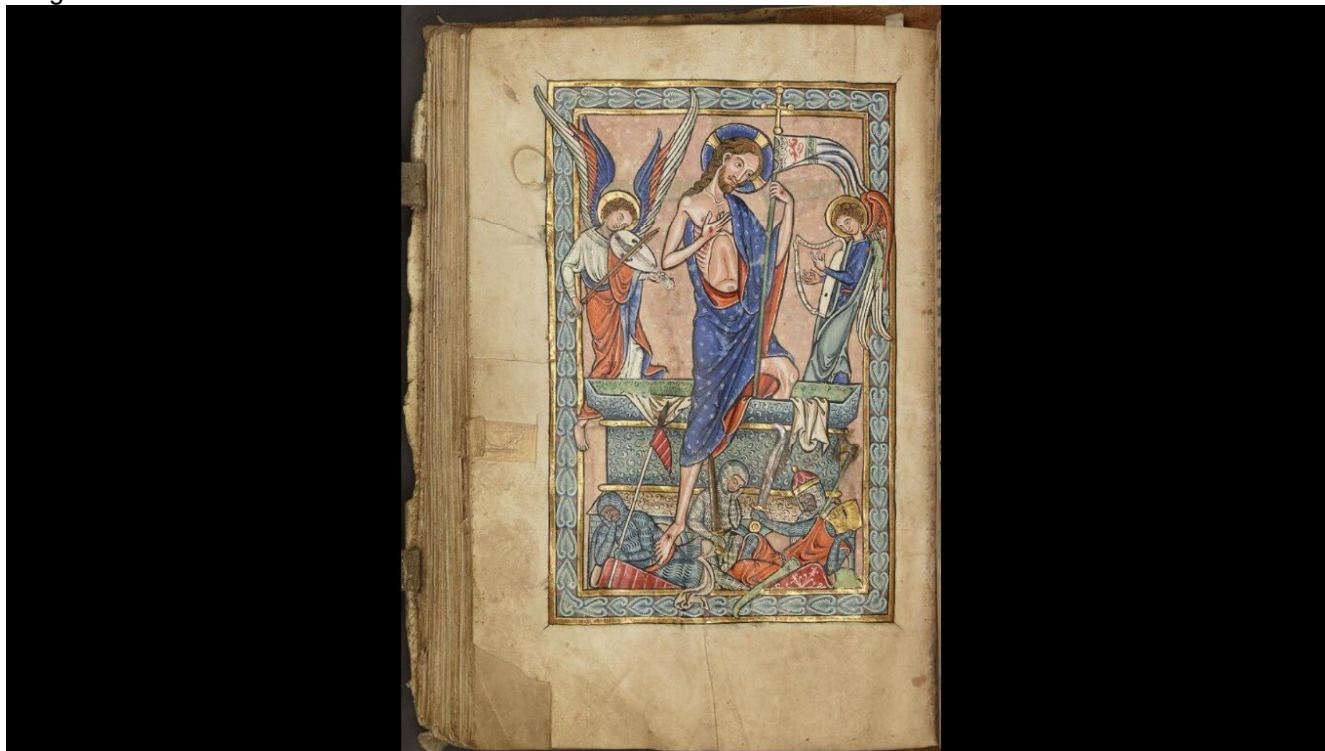


Fig.4. Missal of Henry of Chichester: Resurrection (f. 152 v.). **Source:**

The saturated blue is a marked color accent not only in the background but also on garments. It is reserved only for the most important figures and is never used for the garments of Christ's tormentors. For the richest blues, ultramarine has been identified as the pigment³⁵, as can be seen on the outside of the Virgin Mary's mantle in the donor portrait (f.150 and fig. 3), though for its lining the artist has used a combination of ultramarine, azurite

³⁰ Gameson, *The pigments of British medieval illuminators: a scientific and cultural study*.

³¹ Gameson, *The pigments of British medieval illuminators*, 166.

³² For an interesting discussion of the use of color in the pages of calendars including their text and mise en page see Jean-Baptiste Lebigue, "Rites et couleurs. Acronymie et chromonomie des calendriers liturgiques au Moyen Âge," in *Le manuscrit enluminé: études réunies en hommage à Patricia Stirnemann*, ed. Claudia Rabel (Paris: Le Léopard d'or, 2014).

³³ On the hierarchy of colour in medieval art see this important discussion Grazia Maria Fachechi and Alberto Virdis, "Visible materials, invisible meanings: colour-based hierarchies in the Middle Ages," *Conservar Património* (2025). <https://conservarpatrimonio.pt/article/view/36110>.

³⁴ According to Adamnan and Bede, Christ's tomb and sepulchre were made of marble and in color a mixture of red and white (Saint Adamnan, *Adamnan's De locis sanctis*, ed. Denis Meehan (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983).

³⁵ Gameson, *The pigments of British medieval illuminators: a scientific and cultural study*, 168-69 and 204 with full list of pigments, though azurite and indigo have also been identified.

and indigo giving a contrasting, and aesthetically pleasing, chromatic effect of grey or greenish blue. In this case there appears to be a correlation between the use of the expensive material, ultramarine, and the high status figures to which it is assigned³⁶.



Fig. 5. Missal of Henry of Chichester: Crucifixion. Source: Author

The greater use of saturated blue as a valorised color reflects a change in its status in the twelfth century when it superseded purple as the prestige color, a trend highlighted by Michel Pastoureau and identified by him as the blue revolution³⁷, which is anticipated in the blue backgrounds in French stained glass (the “*materia saphirorum*”³⁸ mentioned by Abbot Suger) and later replicated in French manuscript illumination such as the Ingeborg Psalter (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS. 9 Olim 1695) as well as English manuscripts. Saturated blue is used in the miniatures for the mantle of Christ in the Betrayal (fig. 10), Flagellation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection (figs. 4 and 5), and for the Virgin Mary in the Annunciation, Virgin and child (fig. 3) and Crucifixion (fig. 5). In the case of the Virgin Mary, the blue is combined with either bright red (vermilion), as in the Annunciation (fig. 9), or in the Nativity (see fig. 6) she is dressed purely in pale red (presumably as she has disrobed), but also emphasising the

³⁶ Gameson, however, comments on the widespread use of ultramarine in English art in the twelfth century in both manuscripts and wallpaintings as suggestive that it was not prohibitively expensive at this time.

³⁷ Pastoureau, *Blue: the history of a color*.

³⁸ Viridis, *Colors in Medieval art: theories, matter, and light from Suger to Grosseteste (1100-1250)*, 153ff.

earthiness of the event further suggested by the Virgo Lactans motif which in the context of English art is an early example of this iconography. The white for the linen on her bed would have been echoed by that on the altar cloth. This color combination of blue and red and more often blue on its own is to become conventional³⁹ in art by the Renaissance, though this is by no means the case at this period, and it references both her heavenly and earthly natures respectively. The color convention may have its roots in Byzantine⁴⁰ painting practise but presumably by this date had been filtered through a western intermediary.



Fig.6 Nativity Detail. Source: Author

The use of blue for the Virgin Mary first occurs in Byzantine art, and from the eleventh century it increasingly becomes the favoured color for her, superseding the earlier purple, as can be seen in the eleventh-century mosaic of the crucifixion at Daphni, and it may be that Western artists adopted this convention from a Byzantine source, given the prestige of Byzantine art in the West at the time. An early example of its use in a Roman church is in the apse of the church of Santa Maria in Domnica dated to the early ninth century⁴¹. An early example of its use in

³⁹ On the use of the term "convention" in connection with color in Renaissance art, which may equally be applied to earlier periods, see Moshe Barasch, "Renaissance color conventions: liturgy, humanism, workshops," in *Imago hominis: studies in the language of art*, New York (1991). He comments that: "convention relies on prior awareness and widespread acceptance". Cennino Cennini in his artists' handbook specifies that: "if you wish to make a mantle for Our Lady...you want to make it solid blue". Barasch has suggested that one reason for her association with blue was a Renaissance humanist association that connected the color with elevation of the mind and faithfulness. He also notes that faith was a traditional attribute of the sapphire, the most highly prized precious stone in the Middle Ages.

⁴⁰ On color symbolism in Byzantine art see Klaus Wessel, "Farbensymbolik," in *Reallexikon zur Byzantinischen Kunst* (1971), vol. 2, 102-5.

⁴¹ Francesca Dell'Acqua, *Iconophilia: politics, religion, preaching, and the use of images in Rome, c. 680-880* (London: Routledge, 2020), plate 32. See also plates 27 (Chludov Psalter) and 9 (Chapel of S. Zeno, Rome, S. Prassede).

Western art can be seen in the image of the Virgin and child in the apse of the church of S.Maria in Tahull dated c.1123, where she is represented in a dark blue mantle and red tunic⁴².

But in the thirteenth century the use of saturated blue for the Virgin's Mary's mantle is far from systematic with bright red another favoured color as can be seen in the early thirteenth-century Berthold Sacramentary (Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, MS.M.710, f.10v., f. 16v., 19v., f. 61r., f. 83r., f. 86v., f.107r. , and f. 112r.) where she is consistently represented in a bright red mantle usually combined with a blue tunic⁴³. In the Annunciation (f.149- fig. 9) in the Missal of Henry of Chichester, which begins the sequence of images with the incarnation, she has a bright red mantle with the blue reserved for her undergarment, and this use of red can be related to and be seen symbolically as a prefiguration of Christ's Passion.

Interestingly the donor, Henry of Chichester (fig. 7), a high ranking functionary in the Church, is depicted in a cope of the same blue⁴⁴, with the hood edged in gold, underneath which he wears an appropriately white alb. The color, thus, sets up a link within the page between the Virgin Mary, who was both divine and seen as a symbol of Ecclesia (the Church), and one of her functionaries on earth, on whom she looks favourably in response to his intercessionary prayer.



Fig.7. Missal of Henry of Chichester. Donor. Source: Author

⁴² Manuel Castiñeiras, *Romanesque art in the MNAC collections* (Barcelona: Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya : Lunewerg, 2008). According to Pastoureau, the Virgin Mary was not always dressed in blue, in images until the twelfth century, and her clothing was relatively varied but almost always dark, because she was mourning for her son, but he provides no references for this claim (Michel Pastoureau, *Black: the history of a color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 60).

⁴³William M. Voelke et al., *Das Berthold-Sakramentar: MS. M. 710, New York, Morgan Library & Museum* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 2013).

⁴⁴ On f. 117v. and f.147v. of the Missal., the priest officiating at the mass is also represented in a blue cope. Bishops and priests are frequently represented dressed in blue in art. An earlier example is Bishop Aethelwold in the Aethelwold Benedictional (British Library, Add. 49598, fol. 118v.). British Library's collection of digitised manuscripts.

Blue is frequently seen as a clerical color associated with Jewish priests, though it is not one of the liturgical colours listed by Innocent III⁴⁵. In the Old Testament, the tunic of the ephod for high priests is described as totally blue (Exodus 28:31: *tunicam...totam hyacinthinum*). The Latin term "hyacinthinus" is usually interpreted as blue, literally the color of hyacinths, though it was also a term used for a precious stone. Hugh of St. Victor writing in the early twelfth century stated that "hyacinthinus" signified the hope of heaven⁴⁶. The Carthusian monk, Adam of Dryburgh, in his treatise *On the Tripartite Tabernacle*, written in the late twelfth century, equates the clerical and contemplative life with the color blue⁴⁷. Henry of Chichester's devotion to the animated infant Christ is reflected not only in the inscription ("O Son of God have mercy on me") which he holds, but also in the color of his complexion, which, as with that of Christ, is white and pale pink, as discussed later.

The other contrasting strong colour accent is the preference for various tints of red: orange (red lead), vermilion, and pale red. Red is allegorically the richest of all colours. The preponderance of reds in the color scheme would have been especially relevant to the performance of the mass, in which the Missal would have been used, which is reinforced in the Virgin and Child image (fig. 3) by the presence of the censuring angels (introducing the sense of smell) with their censers swinging above the towering figure of the Virgin Mary, the colors of their garments linking them to both her and Christ. The use of red would appear to draw on both negative and positive valences attached to the color. On the positive side, red was linked to Christ's Passion and sacrifice (and hence the eucharist), earthiness, the fire of the Holy Spirit, and divine love. Orange⁴⁸ is used, for example, for the infant Christ's garment in the Virgin and child image (fig. 7). This appears to be mainly for an aesthetic intent as it contrasts with the Virgin's blue and pale red garments, but may also refer to his Passion and his dual natures, both earthly and divine (Christ also has a blue nimbus with a gold cross in it to indicate his divinity). It is also used for the garments of both St. John in the Crucifixion (fig. 5- in this case his undergarment, but combined with a dark red nimbus) and for St. Peter in the Betrayal (possibly a reference to his anger as he is in the act of cutting of Malchus' ear) where it is combined with the more conventional blue (figs. 9 and 10). In the case of St. John, it may be a reference to the apostle's capacity for divine love. In a letter written by Pope Innocent III to Richard I accompanying the gift of four rings, the Pope interprets the red of the garnet stone as a symbol of divine love⁴⁹. The use of red, frequently combined with green, became conventionalised for St. John from at least the eleventh century, though in the Crucifixion scene he wears a blue mantle⁵⁰.

But red can also have a negative aspect to it. The primary associations are with sin, judgment, anger, the judiciary, and hellfire. The Old Testament figure Cain, the first murderer who slayed his brother, is frequently represented accordingly in red⁵¹. The associations with hellfire and judgment frequently underlie its use in Last Judgment scenes for demons. In the Missal, it is frequently used for the clothing of miscreants and persecutors of Christ.

Green is not a major accent and is used sparingly in the Missal, but one conspicuous example of its use is for the crucifix in the Carrying of the Cross (fig. 7) and the Crucifixion (fig. 4). The same motif can be found in the Crucifixion miniature in the Amesbury Psalter but there the cross has lopped off edges⁵². Green crucifixes, though not unique to English art, are a distinctive feature. A spectacular, surviving example of a wooden cross painted green to which an effigy of Christ is attached, and which retains its original polychromy, is that of the early thirteenth-century triumphal cross suspended above the screen at Halberstadt Cathedral which may have followed English examples⁵³. Green crosses have, moreover, a distinct lineage in English manuscript illumination and may have a symbolic significance attached to them. The color may be linked with the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, as described in the Book of Genesis, the wood of which was thought to have been re-used for the cross on which Christ was crucified, and can also be seen as a symbol for the resurrection. Hugh of St. Victor in the twelfth century describes green as "an image of future resurrection"⁵⁴. Thoby in discussing the green

⁴⁵ For an important discussion of the light blue tunics in the St. Albans Psalter and their possible color symbolism, which has bearing on the present discussion, see Harold Robert Stirrup, "A Change of Clothes on the Morgan Leaf: the Apocrypha Master's Illustration of the Transition of Saul," in *The Art, Literature and Material Culture of the Medieval World, Four Courts*, ed. Meg Boulton, Jane Hawkes, and Melisa Herman (Dublin: 2015), 236-39.

⁴⁶ Hugh of St. Victor, *Sermones* 5, Migne *Patrologia Latina* 177, 912: "Hyacinthina spem caelestium designat, eo quod colorem caeli et aeris purioris in demonstrate".

⁴⁷ Adam of Dryburgh, *De tripartito tabernaculo*, Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 198, 727: "Color etenim sapphirinus, qui coelo similis est, coelestem et contemplativam vitam designat clericorum".

⁴⁸ The term Orange was used in Old French by the twelfth century and was ultimately derived from the Arabic: [orange | Search Online Etymology Dictionary](#). It was borrowed into Middle English in the fourteenth century. Casson, "Color shift: evolution of English color terms from brightness to hue," 231.

⁴⁹ C. R. Cheney and Mary G. Cheney, eds., *The letters of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) concerning England and Wales: a calendar with an appendix of texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 5, no. 21. See also PL, 214, col.180: "granati rubicunditas charitatem". In the illustrated copy of the *Liber divinorum operum* by Hildegard of Bingen in Lucca (Biblioteca statale, Lucca, MS 1942, f.1v) the personification of divine love is represented as entirely bright red. [Collections - Biblioteca Statale di Lucca \(beniculturali.it\)](#)

⁵⁰ For example, in the Crucifixion miniature in the Gospels of Judith of Flanders (Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, MS. M.709, f.1 v.). In the Amesbury Psalter, St. John is similarly represented in the crucifixion scene (f.5) as in the Missal, but the colors are reversed with a blue undergarment and a red/orange mantle. This convention remained in use well into the seventeenth century.

⁵¹ On this see Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, vol. 1, 47 and vol. 2, fig. II, 27.

⁵² Oxford, All Souls College, MS.6, f. 5, where the lopped off cross is set against a straight edged one which is pale red (Morgan, *Early Gothic manuscripts*, 2, for coloured illustration, pl. 29.)

⁵³ On this see John Munns, *Cross and culture in Anglo-Norman England: theology, imagery, devotion* (Woodbridge, 2016), 121, who also discusses a group of images with green crosses in Anglo-Norman illumination.

⁵⁴ Peter Dronke, "Tradition and innovation in medieval Western color-imagery," *Eranos Jahrbuch* (1972): 84.

crosses in the mid-twelfth-century Passion window at Chartres has suggested that the green is a reference to a passage in Luke (23: 31), where Christ states: "For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dead." He connects this verse with the liturgy of the time, noting that an antiphon based on this passage was used in the Adoration of the Cross during the Good Friday liturgy: *O crux, viride lignum, quia in te pependit Redemptor gentium* ("O, cross, green wood, because on you the Redeemer of the gentiles hung")⁵⁵. Green crosses were also used in the rites associated with the Easter Sepulchre in England⁵⁶.

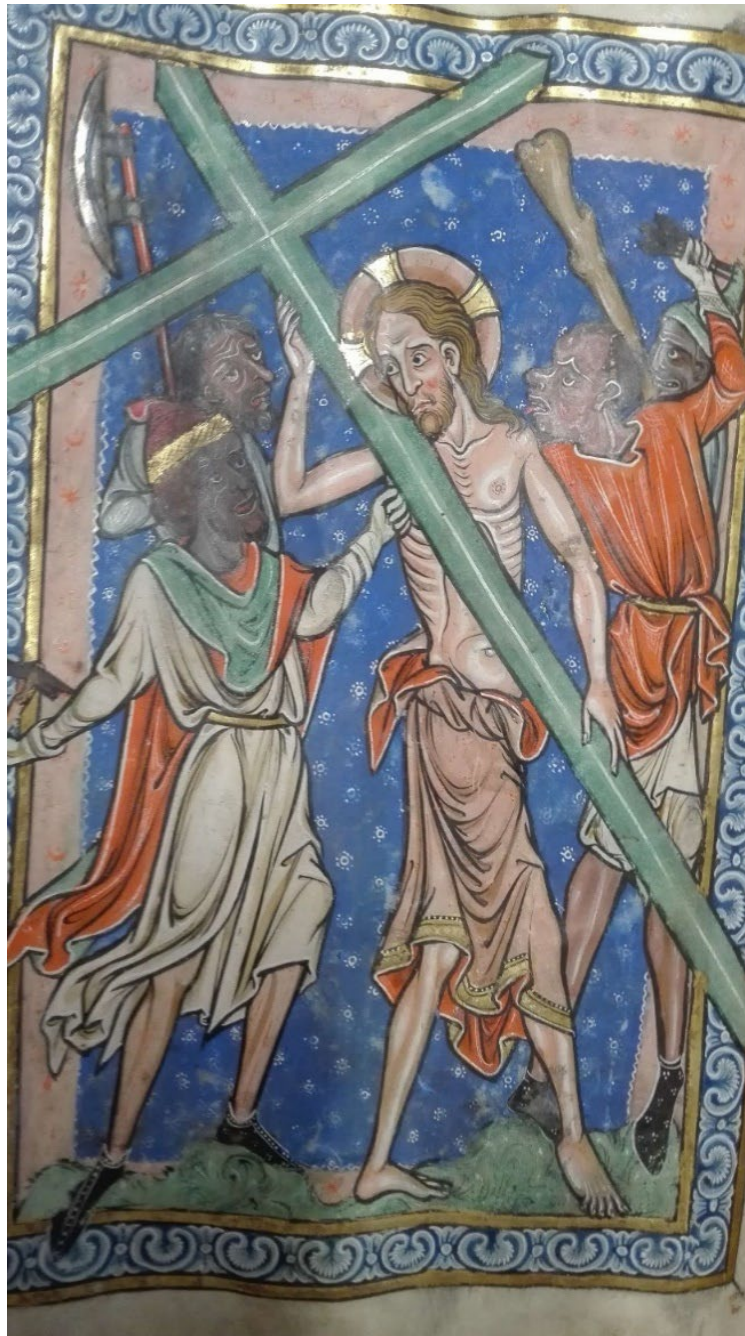


Fig. 8 Missal of Henry of Chichester: Carrying of the Cross. Source: Author

3.3 Skin color

The subject of skin color in medieval art has attracted little attention. Within the cycle of miniatures in the Missal, a distinct, consistent and coherent taxonomy of skin colors can be identified⁵⁷. Three facial colors may be isolated: first, pure white (figs. 8, and) produced from the pigment lead-white (reserved for the Virgin Mary, her attendants and angels); secondly, an admixture of pale pink (produced from either a mixture of vermilion or red lead to lead white) interlaced with passages of white, used for Christ (fig. 10), his disciples and the donor (fig. 7); and finally,

⁵⁵ Paul Thoby, *Le Crucifix des origines au Concile de Trente* (Nantes, 1959), 120.

⁵⁶ David Park, "The Polychromy of English Medieval Sculpture," in *Wonder: painted sculpture from medieval England* (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2002), 46.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of skin color in thirteenth century art see Madeline Caviness, "From the Self-Invention of the Whiteman in the Thirteenth Century to the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," *Different Visions: A Journal of New Perspectives on Medieval Art* 1, no. 1 (2008). See also for the earlier period specifically in the context of manuscript illumination Marie Aschehoug-Clauteaux, *Les couleurs du corps: pour une méthodologie de la couleur dans le manuscrit enluminé (Xe-XIIe siècle)* (Paris: Le Léopard d'or, 2018).

the dark (figs. 8, 10 and 11) skins (produced from either carbon or ochre).

The first of these, the pure white, references the traditional associations attached to the color white at this period with purity, innocence, goodness, righteousness and chastity. White was also one of the four liturgical colors specified by Lothar of Segni in his tract on the mass, and associated with the Virgin Mary and specified for her feast days. White was seen by him as a symbol of purity, joy, and glory. Its use would be particularly appropriate in the Crucifixion where the Virgin Mary is represented as having fainted- one of the earliest examples of this iconography in English art (fig. 5). According to Durandus, Bishop of Mende (1285-96), writing slightly later in the thirteenth century, white liturgical garments were worn by clerics so that men performing liturgical duties "might imitate the angels, the servants of God, through the purity of chastity, and that they might be associated with them in their glorified flesh, through the workings of the Spirit, which is shown in white garments"⁵⁸. The white dove in the Annunciation (f. 149 and fig. 9), symbolising the Holy Spirit, is represented as entirely white except for its red nimbus with a cross in it. The white would also provide a link with the eucharistic wafer and the white linen of the altar cloth.



Fig. 9. Missal of Henry of Chichester: Virgin Mary in the Annunciation. Source: Author

The use of pale pink combined with white for the skin colour of Christ, his disciples, and the donor portrait (fig. 7), may possibly reference the description of the Beloved (who in exegesis is typologically related to Christ) in the Song of Songs (5:10) as having a complexion, which is both "candidus et rubicundus", having the whiteness of the lily, and the redness of the rose (Song of Songs: 2:1), and also references the dual natures of Christ as both divine and human⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ T. M. Thibodeau, ed., *The rationale divinarum officiorum of William Durand of Mende: (a new translation of the prologue and book one)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); T. M. Thibodeau, ed., *William Durand on the clergy and their vestments: a new translation of books 2 and 3 of The rationale divinarum officiorum* (University of Scranton Press, 2010).

⁵⁹ On this verse see Jennifer O'Reilly, "«Candidus et Rubicundus» an Image of Martyrdom in the «Lives» of Thomas Becket," *Analecta Bollandiana* 99, no. 3-4 (1981). This was a very influential verse. It has been convincingly argued that the alternating white and pink columns in the Trinity Chapel at Canterbury Cathedral (built in the late twelfth century to house the shrine of Thomas Becket) also refer to this verse. This binary colour scheme is taken up in the tiles on the floor as well as the walls, which were originally painted blood red. It served as a reminder of the spilling of Becket's white brains and red blood which is dwelled on in early accounts of Becket's martyrdom, a chain of



Fig.10. Missal of Henry of Chichester Detail from the Betrayal. Source:

The third skin colour is that of black⁶⁰ or dark brown reserved for miscreants and the tormenters and persecutors of Christ. Four of the miniatures have figures represented with dark-brown or pale black faces and skins: these are the Betrayal (f.150 v., figs. 10 and 11), Flagellation (f.151), Carrying of the Cross (f.151v. and fig. 8), and the Resurrection (f.152v.- fig. 4)). The dark-brown was probably intended to be read as black given the looseness of abstract color terms at this time, especially in the region of black and white. Nigel Morgan sees the dark faces as reflecting "an interest in depicting negroid and dark-skinned people"⁶¹, though apart from the dark skin there are no distinctive somatic features identifying them as black people, and, I will argue, that they are intended to represent Jewish people, though there may be a degree of slippage in ethnic identification⁶². The representation of faces as dark at this time may not necessarily be a signifier of black, ethnic identity, and its use may equally have a conceptual or metaphorical dimension to it, drawing on the negative associations attached to the color⁶³, and the metaphorical dichotomy of light and darkness which is central to Christian theology. The characterisation of these miscreant figures, which have stereotypical, antisemitic, somatic markers such as the hooked nose (fig. 11), would appear to support the view that they are intended to represent Jewish rather than black people. Other distinctive negative somatic features are the use of the profile, bulbous noses, lolling red tongues and open mouths with teeth displayed, and these are combined with the wearing of Phrygian and skull

associations which may have been intended to be invoked in the mind of the pilgrim when visiting the site. On this see Paul Binski, *Becket's crown : art and imagination in Gothic England, 1170-1350* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 8-9.

⁶⁰ The subject of the representation of black people in medieval art, especially in relation to issues to do with racial identity, has generated a considerable degree of interest in recent research. A seminal article on this is that by Dorothy Verkerk, "Black Servant, Black Demon: Color Ideology in the Ashburnham Pentateuch," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001). In this, she discusses depictions of black people in the early Christian, Ashburnham Pentateuch. She contrasts the antique discourse in which black skin was equated with the exotic to that which emerged in the early Christian period where black skin became a metonym for evil, a characterisation which is reflected in the portrayal of black figures in the Ashburnham Pentateuch. Black skin color has also been discussed by Pamela Patton in the context of Iberian culture: Pamela A Patton, "Demons and Diversity in León," in *The Medieval Iberian Treasury in the Context of Cultural Interchange (Expanded Edition)* (Brill, 2020); "Color, Culture, and the Making of Difference in the Vidal Mayor," *Toward a global Middle Ages* (2019). "An Ethiopian-Headed Serpent in the Cantigas de Santa María: Sin, Sex, and Color in Late Medieval Castile," *Gesta* 55, no. 2 (2016). See also Jean Devisse and Michel Mollat, *The image of the Black in Western art* (Cambridge, 1979).

⁶¹Morgan, *Early Gothic manuscripts*, 2., 58.

⁶² A similar conclusion is arrived at by Ruth Melinkoff *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, vol. 1, 129: "yet none of the black-skinned figures has other features commonly associated with blacks".

⁶³ On this see, Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, demons, & Jews: making monsters in Medieval art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 83.

caps. Similar caricatured figures can be seen in an illustrated Apocalypse⁶⁴ of the same date which, it has been persuasively argued, is by the same hand as the Sarum Master, though its illustrations are in the tinted drawing technique. The pair of scenes on folio 2 of this manuscript representing St. John before Emperor Domitian and St. John in the cauldron of boiling oil contain several caricatured Jewish faces very similar to those in the Missal. These have been discussed by Sara Lipton⁶⁵ who places them within the broader context of early thirteenth-century, scientific developments under the influence of newly translated Aristotelian texts. She cites a thirteenth-century German Jewish text which specifies that "Jews are dark and ugly" which would provide a justification for representing Jews as dark skinned. Earlier comparanda for these Jewish, caricatured faces may be found in a cartoon in the upper margin of an English exchequer tax receipt roll dated to 1233⁶⁶. Judas, however, whose name was etymologically linked to the Jews, in the Betrayal scene (figs. 10 and 11) is not placed in the same camp, nor identified as specifically Jewish, and is neither represented with dark features nor has a caricatured face, and the only distinctive antisemitic trope in his portrayal is representing him with red hair, one of the earliest examples of this visual feature first discussed in a seminal article by Ruth Mellinkoff⁶⁷. Representing him in a white tunic is very unusual at this period. Despite the emotional response which the figures of the persecutors and miscreants invokes in the spectator, there is no evidence of defacement or iconoclasm as can be seen in other manuscript illumination of the period⁶⁸.



Fig. 11 Detail from the Missal of Henry of Chichester, the Betrayal. Note, on the right, Judas' red hair, with one of his garments white.

[Source:](#)

⁶⁴ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS.Fr. 403; Marks and Morgan, *The golden age of English manuscript painting, 1200-1500*, for coloured images of these pages pls.10-11.

⁶⁵ S. Lipton, *Dark mirror: the medieval origins of anti-Jewish iconography* (New York, 2014).

⁶⁶ London, National Archives, E 401/1565 M1. For a discussion on this see Lipton, *Dark mirror*, 189.

⁶⁷ Ruth Mellinkoff, "Judas's red hair and the Jews," *Journal of Jewish Art* 9, no. 1 (1982); on the iconography of Judas see Peter Dinzelbacher, *Judastraditionen* (Wien: Selbstverlag des Österreichischen Museums für Volkskunde, 1977).

⁶⁸ Kristen M. Collins, Peter Kidd, and Nancy Turner, *The St. Albans psalter: painting and prayer in medieval England* (Los Angeles, California: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2013), 56; Michael Camille, "Obscenity under erasure: Censorship in medieval illuminated manuscripts," in *Obscenity* (Brill, 1998). For a twelfth century example see the Flagellation scene in the Psalter of Saint Robert, f. 8 v. where the faces of the two flagellants have been defaced. [Dijon. Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 30 | Biblissima](#)

A precedent and close parallel for representing miscreant figures as dark skinned can be found in the Christological scenes in two related, earlier thirteenth-century English psalters⁶⁹ thought to have been made at Oxford, the compositions of which are so close to those of the Sarum Master that he may have had access to them or a similar cycle, though the figures are not as caricatured. In the Betrayal scene in one of these (Royal Ms. 1 D. X, f.5 v.), Judas is also similarly dressed in a white garment⁷⁰.

Lindsay Kaplan⁷¹ has interpreted the depiction of dark-skin in these two manuscripts as intended to represent Jewish rather than black identity, and related their portrayal to rising anti-Semitism in England at the time. She concludes that: "the images embody the Jews' spiritual abjection by representing it as dark and infernal: not only hellish, but inferior"⁷². This portrayal of Christ's persecutors, thus, draws upon traditional tropes of blackness with sin, evil, and the demonic, and Kaplan argues also with death, illness, injury, and damnation.

An interesting earlier image which has black figures in it is that of the Baptism (fig. 13) in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias* (Know the Ways of God) which was originally produced in the Rhineland in Germany in the mid-twelfth century⁷³. We now only know this manuscript through a painted facsimile made in the 1920's as the original disappeared in the war. In the illustration of the Baptism, the would-be converts are represented as "black children" ("nigros infantes" - an equation is made between blackness and sin) and enter the womb of a female figure who is represented as entirely gold and may be identified as Ecclesia (the Church). Her womb is perforated like a fishing net. They re-emerge from her mouth clothed, according to the text, in the "pure white garments" (the Latin is "candidus" meaning gleaming white) of initiation having lost their dark skin, though they are represented in the image as entirely in gold like the figure of Ecclesia.



Fig. 12 Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, illustration to the Baptism. Source: Wikimedia Commons

⁶⁹ British Library, MS.Arundel 157 and Royal MS 1 D. X. Morgan, *Early Gothic manuscripts*, 2, no.s 24 and 28.

⁷⁰ For colored illustration see British Library Digital Collections (<https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/>)

⁷¹ L. Kaplan, *Figuring racism in medieval Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁷² L. Kaplan, *Figuring racism in medieval Christianity* 13.

⁷³ For colored image see Sara Salvadori, *Hildegard von Bingen: a journey into the images* (Milan: Skira, 2019), 62 and 63; for a discussion of the use of color in the work of Hildegard of Bingen see C. Meier, "Die Bedeutung der Farben im Werk Hildegards von Bingen," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 6, no. 1972 (1972).

4. Conclusion

The Sarum Master reveals himself to be a sophisticated practitioner in the use of color, both aesthetically, conceptually, and symbolically. He uses it as much to generate meaning as to have an aesthetic effect. He both draws on traditional associations attached to colors but also is aware of more recent developments. These include the valorisation of the color blue, the greater role given to affective piety in art, and the tendency to identify, label and vilify groups in society specifically the Jews. The dressing of the donor in a blue cope is used to reinforce his identification as a loyal functionary of the Christian Church, aligned to the Virgin Mary (traditionally seen as a symbol of the Church) at whose feet he kneels, and his facial complexion and coloring relates him to the Infant Christ whose blessing he beseeches, in contrast to Christ's persecutors who are represented as damned and in their facial appearance literally blackened. This contrast is made explicit in the initial of the Crucifixion (with Christ attached to a green cross) which prefixes the text of the Canon of the Mass (f. 153 r. and fig. 13) where, on Christ's right, is the figure of Ecclesia (dressed in a blue tunic and pale red mantle, with pure white skin, thus associating her with the depictions of the Virgin Mary in the miniatures, and also holding a chalice and a banner thus linking her with the resurrected Christ with his resurrection banner depicted on the adjacent page) and, on his left, Synagoga with broken crescent banner, and an inverted vessel whose contents she pours out, and dressed in red (orange red lead) and green, precisely the colors that the clergy were forbidden to wear in canon 16 of the edicts of the Fourth Lateran Council.



Fig. 13. Missal of Henry of Chichester Crucifixion initial prefacing the canon. Photo: Author

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