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Narrative Metamorphosis Through Images: The Case of Opening Miniatures in the *Estoire del Saint Graal* in BnF, fr. 105 and fr. 9123*

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Introduction

In this article, I will analyse the opening pages of two Arthurian manuscripts, today kept in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* under the shelfmarks MS fr. 105 and MS fr. 9123.¹ I choose to compare these two because they were made at the same time and by the same circle of people: both were created in Paris in the second quarter of the fourteenth century by scribes, pen-flourishers and painters associated with the work of the Parisian *libraire*, Thomas de Maubeuge.² All of MS fr. 105 was painted by the (Sub-)Fauvel Master,³

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1 In both manuscripts, the *Estoire del saint Graal*, *Merlin* and *Suite Vulgate* of the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle are included ("Chronological and Geographical Distribution of Lancelot-Grail Manuscripts", *The Lancelot-Graal Project*). Both manuscripts are fully digitized and can be accessed through Gallica, for fr. 105 see <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90591425>, for fr. 9123 see <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9060848j>.

2 See Middleton, 2006, 53; Rouse and Rouse 2000, I, 184. Alison Stones dates them to c. 1320-1330 (*The Lancelot-Graal Project*), c. 1315-1335 (2000, 365). See also Fabry-Tehranchi, 2011, 194-199, 261-266.

3 The provisional name Fauvel Master denotes the anonymous illuminator of the version of the *Roman de Fauvel*, interpolated in BnF, MS fr. 146 (Stones, 1998, 529; Rouse and Rouse 2000, I, 208). Referring to MSS fr. 105 and fr. 9123, Rouse and Rouse (2000, 185) and Middleton (2006, 53) speak only of the Fauvel Master, while Stones distinguishes between the Fauvel Master and the Sub-Fauvel Master, "primarily by qualitative criteria", adding that it is not clear "[w]hether the same artist – the Fauvel Master [...] – also painted the manuscripts of the second group himself" (1998, 532, 533; for characteristics of the Sub-Fauvel style, see also 1970, 288-292 (named only as style (2) here), and for the differences to Fauvel, 1970, 289-290). In short, Stones' position is that it is not clear whether the Fauvel and the Sub-Fauvel Masters are one or two persons, but the use of two provisional names maintains the qualitative distinction between the books in the stylistic circle of the BnF, fr. 146 (for further thoughts on the Fauvel and Sub-Fauvel artistic personalities, also in a broader context of medieval painting, and on the problem of relative quality in manuscript illumination in the late thirteenth and the early fourteenth centuries, see Stones, 1998, 534-537). Rouse and Rouse think differently and base their argument on another manuscript illuminated by the Fauvel Master, Rouen BM 1044, containing the rhymed *Ovide moralisé*. The illuminations in it show the Fauvel Master both at his best and at his worst; consequently, the Rouses suggest that we are not dealing with two different artists, but with a change in the practice of a single artist, which was progressive, but not



and, although the (Sub-)Fauvel Master collaborated⁴ with the Master of Thomas de Maubeuge in the creation of pictorial parts of MS fr. 9123,⁵ the opening page of MS fr. 9123 is also the work of the (Sub-)Fauvel Master.⁶

The comparison of these two opening pages of the *Estoire del saint Graal* thus promises a great deal, since the fact that they were made by the same people at the same time does not imply that there are no considerable differences between their pictorial programmes – some of these I address in the following pages. As Stones and Kennedy (2009, 153) put it, the differences “are most likely indications that several different selection strategies were at work, even among copies made, as these were, in the same artistic environment or workshop and that observation is further substantiated when the subjects of the illustrations are compared.” The opening pages of MS fr. 105 and MS fr. 9123 present a particularly good basis for comparison of the above mentioned “selection strategies” because they are constructed in a similar way: in both cases, the opening miniature is a multi-compartmentalised one, filling the full breadth of the writing space and consisting of several images in which episodes from the narrative are depicted.⁷

In this study, I aim to show how the selection of episodes to be depicted on the opening page reveals a particular reading of the *Estoire*, accentuating one of its narrative/ideological lines. I will start by considering how, in MS fr. 105, two images included in the frontispiece were semantically emphasised by means of their repetition later in the manuscript, exploring the hypothesis that they were thus presented as more important in narrative terms than the other four from the opening miniature, thus revealing its “main idea”: that a command, received from God, must be fulfilled.⁸ Afterwards I will turn to the remaining four scenes from the frontispiece and analyse their pictorial elements,

irrevocable, and reasons for which can only be speculated about. Their point is that Rouen 1044 shows “the range in quality of one painter’s work at a given period in his career” (2000, I, 208-211). Stones reaffirms her distinction in 2013, I/2, 131.

- 4 “In practice, collaboration meant that the *libraire* distributed quires first to one artist and then to another, to speed up the job” (Rouse and Rouse, 2000, I, 185).
- 5 Vitzthum distinguishes between two styles in MS fr. 9123 (1907, 176). With regard to the two different styles in MS fr. 9123, see Stones, 1970, 283, 286; Stones, 1998, 542, 557; Rouse and Rouse, 2000, I, 185, 216; Middleton, 2006, 53. For further information on the Maubeuge painter see Stones, 1970, 287; Stones, 1998, 545-549, and Rouse and Rouse, 2000, I, 184-187.
- 6 See Stones, 1998, 533; Rouse and Rouse, 2000, II, 178. It was a common practice to employ the same painter as the illustrator of the same text for a second or third time (Rouse and Rouse, 2000, I, 213).
- 7 See Vitzthum, 1907, 175-176; Stones 1970, 288-289. The elaborate presentation of the opening page is one of the differences between the Maubeuge and the Sub-Fauvel Masters (or, as she designated them earlier, styles (1) and (2); see Stones, 1970, 290). The multi-compartmentalised formal construction of the opening page is one of the innovative features of the Sub-Fauvel Master (see Stones, 1998, 533). Rouse and Rouse speak of the frequent use of “a six- or eight-compartment frontispiece or large opening miniature” (2000, I, 213).
- 8 For the summary of the episodes from the *Estoire* dealt with in this article, see Appendix. I shall refer to the events summarised in the Appendix throughout this study.

exploring how they conform to the main idea and support the pictorial narrative of the opening page. I will then turn to the opening page of MS fr. 9123, where the selection strategy at work was quite different. Of the four images present, only one depicts an episode from the prologue to the *Estoire* (the one which has an equivalent on the opening page of MS fr. 105 - the hermit receiving the book), and the other three illustrate events from what I term the “Joseph in Judea” episode.⁹ Similarly important, however, is that one of these three (the healing of Vespasian by the veil of Veronica) has an equivalent in MS fr. 105, but not on the opening page, which shows that the importance ascribed to this event was far greater in case of MS fr. 9123, and thus needs to be considered when trying to decipher the “main idea” of its frontispiece. To establish this, I will demonstrate how the image of Vespasian’s healing in MS fr. 9123 semantically corresponds to i) the first image of the opening page (the hermit receiving the book) and ii) the two images that follow it in the opening miniature. I aim to demonstrate that this opening miniature accentuates the transition of official (political or spiritual) power from father to son. I underpin this hypothesis by briefly describing other instances in the pictorial narrative of MS fr. 9123 (also comparatively with MS fr. 105) where the images draw attention to a son instead of a father. Finally, I will consider another group of miniatures: the puzzling first image on f. 1r of MS fr. 9123, placed at the beginning of a list of rubrics, and the two miniatures near the end of the *Estoire* in MS fr. 105, on f. 121v and 122r. I analyse them in connection to the opening pages for two reasons: i) iconographical: the presence of the book Christ gave to the hermit (which is depicted in both opening pages, and a book (perhaps meant to be the same) is depicted also on f. 1r of MS fr. 9123 and f. 121v of MS fr. 105) and ii) compositional (great resemblance in formal construction of the images in f. 1r of MS fr. 9123 and f. 122r of MS fr. 105). This article will therefore contribute an enriched understanding of how the opening pages in MS fr. 105 and MS fr. 9123 functioned as miniatures in their own right, as well as with regard to the subsequent images in the *Estoire* parts of these manuscripts.

The pictorial narrative of the opening page in BNF, fr. 105 and fr. 9123

In order to describe the pictorial narrative of the multi-compartmentalised miniatures in the opening pages of MSS fr. 105 and fr. 9123, two things need to be considered: i) which episodes were chosen for depiction,¹⁰ and ii) how they were sequentially ordered in one miniature.

9 See summary.

10 Chase (2005, 126) notes that in surviving manuscripts the conventionally-used image, that of the hermit receiving the little book, might have been expanded in three different ways, by adding scenes i) of the hermit’s quest, ii) from the rest of *Estoire* or the rest of the cycle or, iii) of religious elements of the prologue. The first two possibilities were used in MS fr. 9123 and MS fr. 105, respectively.

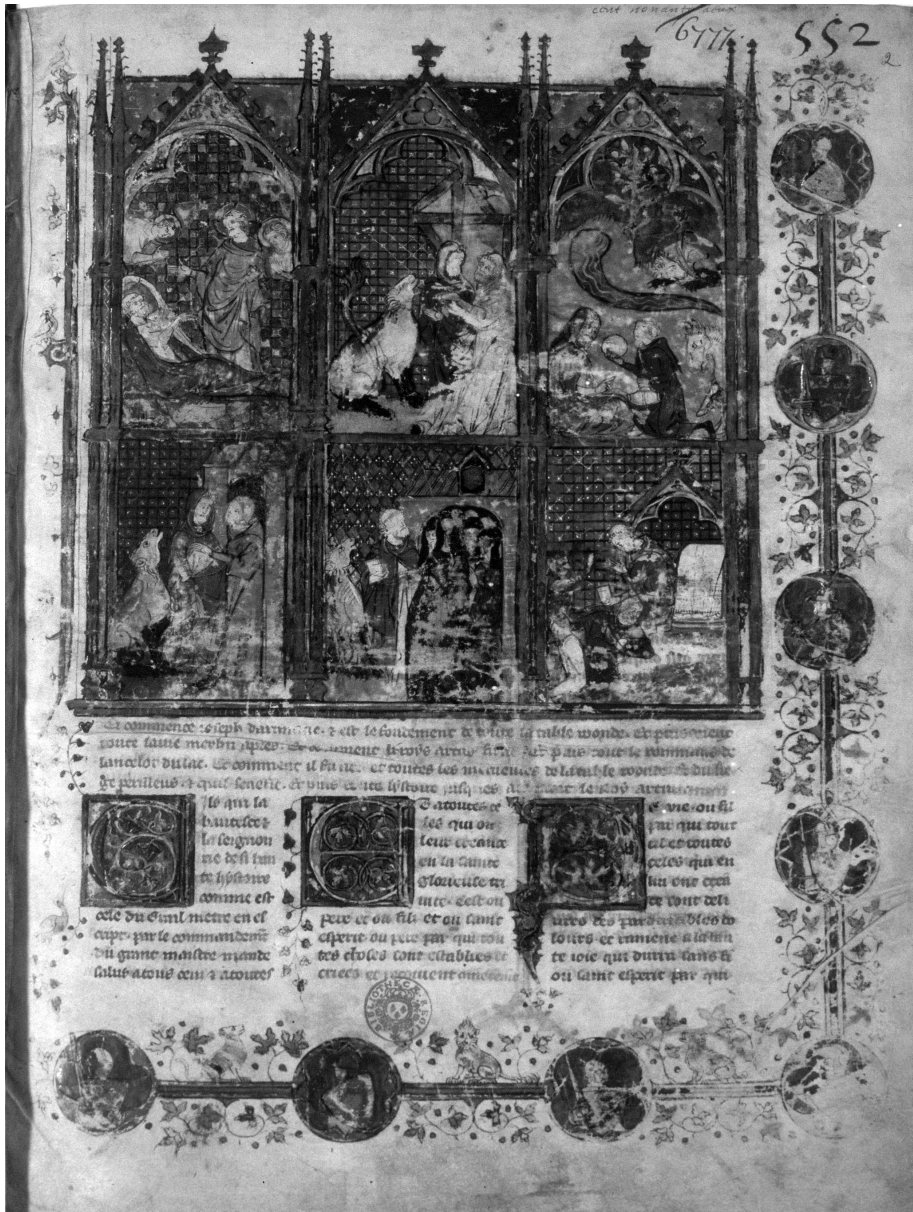


Figure 1: Sub-Fauvel Master, The opening page to the *Estoire del saint Graal*, scenes from the Prologue, from left to right: Christ's apparition to the hermit; the hermit and the religious man; the hermit rests at the fountain, a young man brings him food and greetings from his lady; the hermit and the knight; the hermit and the nuns; the exorcism; ca. 1320-1330, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 105, f. 2r.

In MS fr. 105, the first and the last episode of the prologue are in the top left and the bottom right corner of the multi-compartmentalised miniature (f. 2r, Figure 1): at the top is 1) Christ's apparition to the hermit,¹¹ at the bottom 6) the exorcism of the devil from the possessed hermit. These two episodes are additionally stressed by two later variant depictions on two independent miniatures: the apparition on f. 2v (it is a variant form of the same motif, though Christ is not depicted; there is only an angel bringing the book to the hermit in his bed)¹² and the exorcism on f. 5r¹³. Returning to the first page, the other episodes follow from the middle of the upper register to the middle of the bottom one: 2) the hermit bids farewell to the religious man, residing in the valley; 3) the hermit rests at the fountain and a young man on a horse brings him food, drink and greetings from his lady; 4) the hermit says goodbye to the knight who hosted him; 5) the hermit takes his leave from the nuns.¹⁴ Images 2), 4), 5) can be argued as depicting taking leave because in all of them the hybrid animal is present, and if we follow the narrative, it always disappears (or at least is not seen) at the moment of the hermit's arrival.¹⁵ This might well have been intentional, since it nuances rather specifically the episodes that lead the hermit towards rescuing the possessed man from the hands of the devil: he is depicted in a constant forwards movement towards the achievement of his mission.¹⁶ Additionally, the farewells have further religious meaning: at these

- 11 Two angels are accompanying Christ in this image. This might have been intended as a way of amalgamating more of the episodes (Christ's apparition, visions of heaven, hearing angels' voices) in one image, but this question is beyond the scope of the present study.
- 12 This is, of course, a variation with regard to the narrative, where the book is given to the hermit by Christ explicitly. The image of Christ and the hermit is the typical liminary illumination of the *Estoire* manuscripts (see Chase, 2005, 126; 2012, 118), the intention behind the choice being to underscore the authority of the following narrative (see 2005, 127-128). See also Stones, 1996, 303-305.
- 13 The exorcism on f. 5r is compositionally executed in practically the same way as on the first page, but there are also some other differences: i) on f. 5r, no book is visible in hermit's hands, while on f. 2r it is clearly visible; ii) the devil is oriented differently and the gesture of hermit's right hand is different: on f. 2r the devil and the hermit seem still to be arguing, while on f. 5r the devil is fleeing. However, iii) the possessed man's backside is uncovered on f. 2r and so it is clear where the devil is coming from, while the man is not naked on f. 5r. These details are all the more interesting since the combination of pictorial elements is not in complete accordance with the narrative in either of the two images: in the narrative it is clear that the dispute lasted as long as the devil would remain inside the man or until he could leave him through his mouth, but when he realized that he did not stand a chance against the powers of the little book, he fled immediately (possibly as depicted in f. 5r). That means that the pictorial elements that would go together are the book, the fleeing devil and the naked backside of the possessed hermit, but they are not present in either of the images: on f. 2r, the book and the fleeing devil are depicted, but no naked backside; on f. 5r, there is no book and the devil does not appear to be fleeing away in terror.
- 14 Image 2) I interpret as I do because of the green ground, which could mean the natural environment (a forest grows in the valley), and image 4) is depiction of the knight because of the architecture, which could be sort of a castle.
- 15 Chase (2005, 127) states that the ability to see the animal is a sign of hermit's saintliness, since no one but him can see it – but this is not the case: others see it as well, but only when the hermit is leaving them.
- 16 Another interesting detail is that in all cases when buildings (the old hermit's lodge, the castle, the

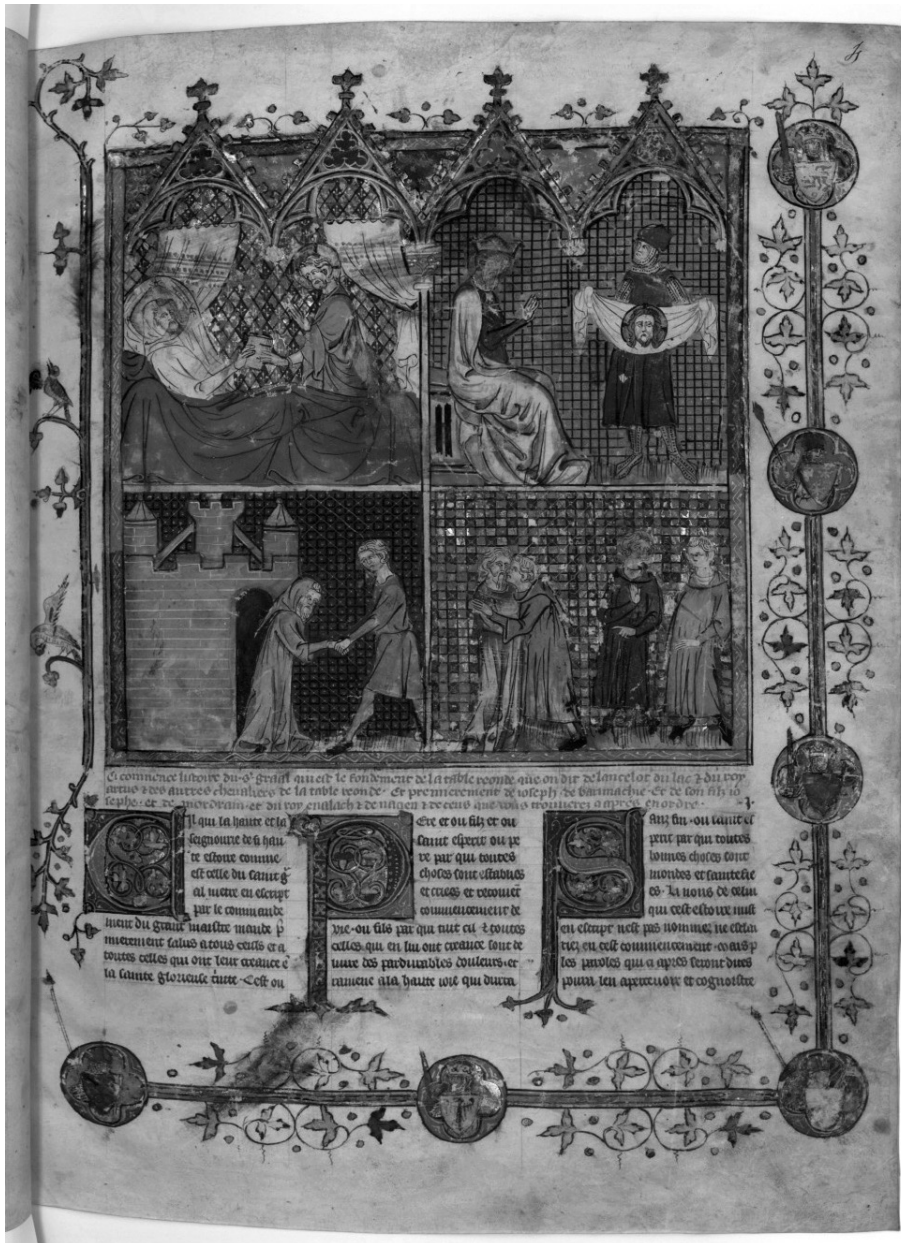


Figure 2: Sub-Fauvel Master, The opening page to the *Estoire del saint Graal*, scenes from the Prologue and 'Joseph in Judea' episode, from left to right: Christ's apparition to the hermit; Vespasian cured of leprosy by the veil of Veronica, held by the knight; Vespasian frees Joseph of Arimathea from prison; Joseph and Josephé embrace; ca. 1320-1330, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 9123, f. 4r.

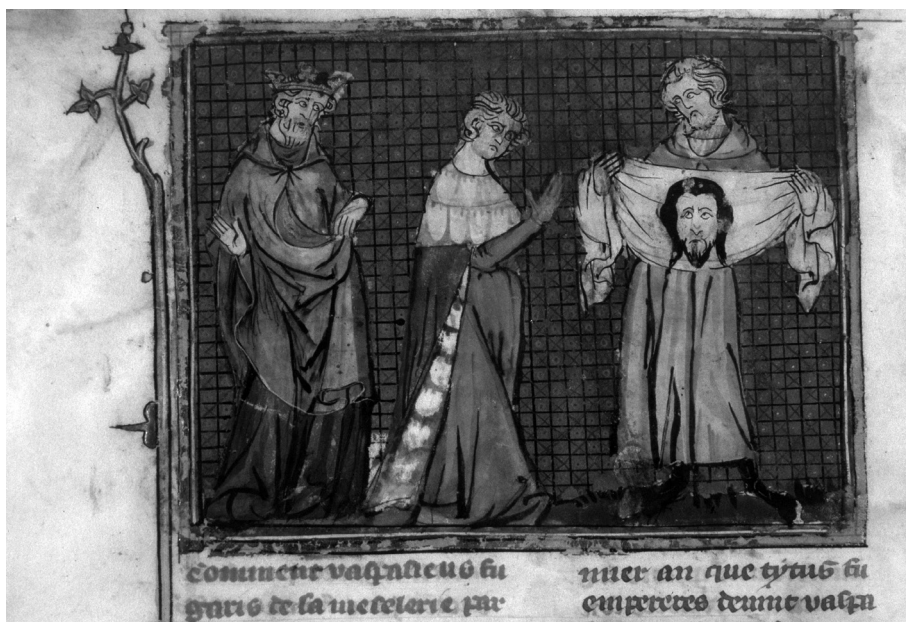


Figure 3: Sub-Fauvel Master, Vespasian cured of leprosy by the veil of Veronica, held by the knight, emperor Titus is present; ca. 1320-1330, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 105, f. 8v.

points in the story the hermit asks others to pray for him or is asked to pray for them (or something along the same lines).¹⁷

MS fr. 9123 (f. 4r, Figure 2) pays much less attention to the prologue, only 1) Christ's apparition to the hermit is depicted in upper left corner.¹⁸ The right image in the upper register shows 2) Vespasian being cured of leprosy by the veil of Veronica, held by the knight who brought it from Jerusalem.¹⁹ A similar image is present also in fr. 105 (f. 8v, fig. 3), but with an important difference: Vespasian's father, emperor Titus, is depicted in it.²⁰

convent) are depicted, the hermit is standing outside – apart from the last image, where he is inside the chapel and the possessed man is outside.

17 When he takes leave from the old religious man in the valley, the latter asks him to pray for him. The hermit asks him the same in return. After the hermit finishes the meal sent by the lady, he tells the messenger to thank his lady and promises God's reward for her. Before the hermit parts from the knight, they bid each other Godspeed. See Ponceau, 1997, § 21 (l. 5-8), §22 (19-21), § 24 (l. 1-3).

18 See n. 10 and n. 12.

19 Irène Fabry-Tehranchi (2011, 264) suggested that Titus, the emperor, is depicted and not his son Vespasian, presumably because of the crown on the sitting person's head. However, his hands, lifted in a pious gesture of prayer, are full of spots which might suggest leprosy, which is why I believe the person must be Vespasian.

20 On f. 8v in MS fr. 105, from left to right there is Titus with his crown on his head, then Vespasian

The scenes in the lower register of the opening page in fr. 9123 are rather ambiguous. In her study on the Fauvel Master, Alison Stones defines the episodes as “Eualach is released from prison” and “he greets his followers”.²¹ On her web-page of *Lancelot-Graal Project* the description is vaguer: the left image is defined simply as “hooded hermit in grey shakes hand of man in short tunic outside building”, and the right one as “two men embrace, two more look on”.²² Carol J. Chase (2005, 132) believes that the scenes in the lower register “may represent Lancelot's ancestor, Celidoine”, but admits that identification is difficult because the images are too generic.²³ Irène Fabry-Tehranchi (2011, 264) defines these images as connected to the earliest part of the “proper” story of the Grail (“Joseph d'Armathie délivré”, “Joseph d'Armathie et Josephé”); this seems plausible because it is a logical continuation of the second image, that is the one on the right side of the upper register. So, the episodes depicted in the lower register are, I suggest, 3) Vespasian frees Joseph from prison and 4) Joseph and Josephé embrace while the other two figures probably depict other people present, astonished by the fact that Joseph has not changed at all.²⁴

Narrative links between images 2), 3) and 4) are clear enough, but the question remains as to why the image 1) was included, especially if we compare this choice to

(he is younger than Titus, with no beard, but dressed in a precious robe) and finally the knight, but here he does not wear the chainmail as in MS fr. 9123, only a tunic, and he holds the veil in his open arms in the same way as in MS fr. 9123. The relationship between Vespasian and the knight is more or less identical in both manuscripts: the only difference is that in MS fr. 105 Vespasian is standing, apparently walking towards the knight, while in MS fr. 9123 he is sitting (this could speak for his hierarchical superiority over the knight, see Garnier, 1982, 113); his hands, however, are lifted in the same pious gesture in both images. The knight's gesture is also repeated: he holds the veil in the way the baptismal (remember that Vespasian had himself baptised in the narrative, see the summary in the appendix) cloth was held when it was symbolically presented as a sign of a new life. Between Vespasian and the knight, there appears to exist the kind of relationship that is usually depicted as existing between one who is bringing something and the one who desires it and who accepts it – in these kinds of scenes, it is quite characteristic that the “donor” is placed at a somewhat higher level than the receiver (see Garnier, 1982, 237-241).

21 See Stones, 1998, 533, n. 15.

22 *The Lancelot-Graal Project*.

23 Chase's suggestion is based on the rubric under the miniature which places the *Estoire* in the *Lancelot-Graal* cycle by mentioning the round table, Lancelot, king Arthur and his knights. She also mentions the continuation of the rubric, which lists (some of) the main characters in the *Estoire*: Joseph and Josephé, “Mordrain – or King Evalac (who is listed as two separate characters), and Nascien” (2005, 132). I believe the latter part of the rubric has greater bearing on the opening miniature than does the former, which appears to deal with questions of government (Vespasian as a ruler working in the name of God, see n. 52) and the relationship between father(s) and son(s), particularly in terms of (political) power (see below). The rubric under the opening miniature in MS fr. 105 also mentions the round table, king Arthur and Lancelot, and there it had no obvious influence on the selection of images for the opening page. See Figs. 1 and 2.

24 The two men are depicted in conversation: the one closer to the father and the son turns his head towards the one behind him; his right hand is lifted with its palm opened in the direction of his partner in conversation, and he points with the index finger of his left hand to the pair in front of him in order to bring attention to Joseph and Josephé.

the distribution of images in the opening page of MS fr. 105.²⁵ There, the attention is clearly focused on the little book and its powers as demonstrated in the episodes of the prologue. In MS fr. 9123 the prologue, as mentioned, does not seem to matter as much (with the exception of its first episode, which was in any case depicted conventionally in the manuscript tradition).²⁶

The link between the first image and the other three can also be explored on a more abstract level. In both images of the upper register, there is a dialogue between two people happening and, in both, one of these people holds something that is important to the other, an item which is, above all, supernatural: it comes from God. The book and the veil also have similar powers: they can both restore an ailing person's health.²⁷ As a result, the connection between the first image and the second is established, and the images in the lower register succeed them appropriately, since they are the episodes rooted in the healing of Vespasian. Nevertheless, there is something peculiar about the selection of images for the lower register. Image 4) depicts an episode that is an immediate successor to image 3), and yet, to the best of my knowledge, the depiction in MS fr. 9123 is unique among the surviving manuscripts of the *Estoire*. So what is its meaning in the context of the opening miniature? One possibility is rather plain: it represents a tidy method of closure for a chapter (a ruler-to-be, healed by the grace of God, restores a father to his son). But there is another possible explanation and this has to do with the differences in importance of each of the figures involved in the further development of the narrative.

Quite soon after the arrival of Christians to the location of their first “missionary activities”, Sarras, Josephé is installed by Christ as the first Christian bishop and thus becomes the leader of Christians in the place of his father.²⁸ Could their embrace imply the transition of “power” rather than a loving reunion of father and son? Perella (1969, 12) notes that “in the Christian tradition [...] the kiss apparently had an important ritualistic and sacramental function from the beginning”, and for Camille (1991, 158-159) “[t]he kiss [...] is a crucial integer in the symbolism of exchange and social power”. In the case of MS fr. 9123, the kiss between Joseph and Josephé could be a variant of the legal kiss, which “ratifies and legitimates a feudal agreement [...] and unites in

25 Chase (2012, 118-119) has shown that, if we are to establish how the story was read/intended to be presented, it is important to understand how conventional image(s) in a multi-compartmentalised miniature are linked to non-conventional one(s).

26 See n. 10 and n. 12.

27 In the story, the book's extraordinary powers are presented (or constructed) in several ways: it is small in size, but contains enormous amount of writing; it can revive a man and drive a devil from a man's body; it is associated with Christ's body/Blessed Sacrament; and it can be kept after it is “won” through a completed quest (see Pickens, 1994, 101). For the qualities attributed to the vessel in Robert de Boron's *Joseph d'Armathie* and the *Estoire del saint Graal*, see Chase, 2001, 292-293, 298.

28 See Chase, 2001, 294. For the text, see Ponceau, 1997, §§ 124-133.

perpetuity the two participants”, and in which the reciprocity of the relationship is of prime importance (Camille, 1991, 161).²⁹ If we are dealing with a legal kiss here, the absence of Joseph's wife from the image would be accounted for as well – Camille notes that “women seemed to have been exempted from this rite [...]: lacking the kiss, they lacked power” (Camille, 1991, 161).³⁰

The hypothesis that the kiss between Joseph and Josephé is actually a depiction of Josephé's succession may be supported by the fact that Joseph is only depicted in two further miniatures in MS fr. 9123, which are placed at the very early stages of the narrative (ff. 11r and 16r); even in these, he is not depicted as a leader.³¹ Joseph's importance is also diminished by the absence of the ark from the pictorial programme of MS fr. 9123;³² by contrast, the ark is depicted in MS fr. 105 (f. 19r).³³ Furthermore,

29 On a kiss as an expression of “communion and union between two human creatures”, see Perella, 1969, 5.

30 However, elements from other types of kisses Camille analyses could be recognised in our image: Josephé's face overlapping that of Joseph and the gesture of his hand could suggest the former's dominance (see Camille, 1991, 160, 163), or the kiss between them could be a form of the kiss of peace, which “represents the values of the social body as unity” (Camille, 1991, 169) – since in the subsequent story a great deal is narrated about establishing the early Church, and Joseph's and particularly Josephé's involvement in it (as its first bishop) is huge, the symbolism of the kiss of peace would not be left without a reference in the story. On the kiss of peace, also for its scriptural and theological background, see Perella, 1969, 12-18. Lastly, elements of the treacherous kiss can also be recognised, which is not surprising, since the treacherous kiss combines traits of the aforementioned types: “[t]he two figures have the elegant, attenuated gestures of feudal and courtly lovers. [...] The one who is kissed stands passive, like the female *sponsa*, but taller than the upward-looking, adoring traitor, whose arm often curls around the shoulder of his beloved” (Camille, 1991, 165; see also Perella, 1969, 27-29). The bottom line here must be that it is impossible to determine unequivocally which of these elements were consciously included in the image by the illuminator, if any at all, and it is equally impossible to know which would have been recognized by the reader/viewer; it is important, however, to bear them in mind, for “[d]uring the Middle Ages the kiss was paradigmatic of the rich potentiality of the sign since it always led directly to something else.” (Camille, 1991, 151; see also pp. 154 on the ambivalence of visual signs, and 162 on how images can be constructed “out of fragmented connotational authority of other [i.e. ideologically different] systems”).

31 On f. 11r there is a scene of baptism; on f. 16r Joseph is being addressed by an angel. In contrast, on MS fr. 105, f. 11r, Christ appears to Joseph who is clearly the leader of a group of Christians following him; on f. 17r he is again the “frontman” in a group of three. The fact that in MS fr. 9123 Joseph sees an angel, while in MS fr. 105 Christ himself appears to him, may have particular meaning: only a few folia later, on f. 17v, Josephé's vision is depicted, and he is conversing with Christ, not “merely” acting as a messenger. Chase (2005, 131) notes that the narrative of *Estoire* repeats the scene of Christ's apparition (first to the hermit, then to Joseph), thus establishing a link between the two of them, as well as with Christ, and so a trio of holy figures is created – this seems to be manipulated in the pictorial narrative of MS fr. 9123, so that Josephé is one of the three, not his father. The omission of Christ's apparition to Joseph is all the more peculiar because Christ appeared to him several times (see the summary in the appendix).

32 The ark was made for the bowl to be kept/hidden in it at God's command, on the way from Judea: “The ark [...] serves to hide the bowl from the view of all save the leaders of the Christians.” (Chase, 2001, 294). The motif itself was an invention of the *Estoire* author, one of the parallels between Joseph and Moses, a reference to the Old Testament, which is not known in earlier *Joseph d'Armathie* by Robert de Boron. In the development of the narrative, when Josephé becomes the leader, it disappears from *Estoire* as well and is replaced by a table for the vessel, which is also a reference to the New Testament. On this see Chase, 2001, 298.

33 A short overview of the iconography of the ark is in Stones, 1996, 310-311.

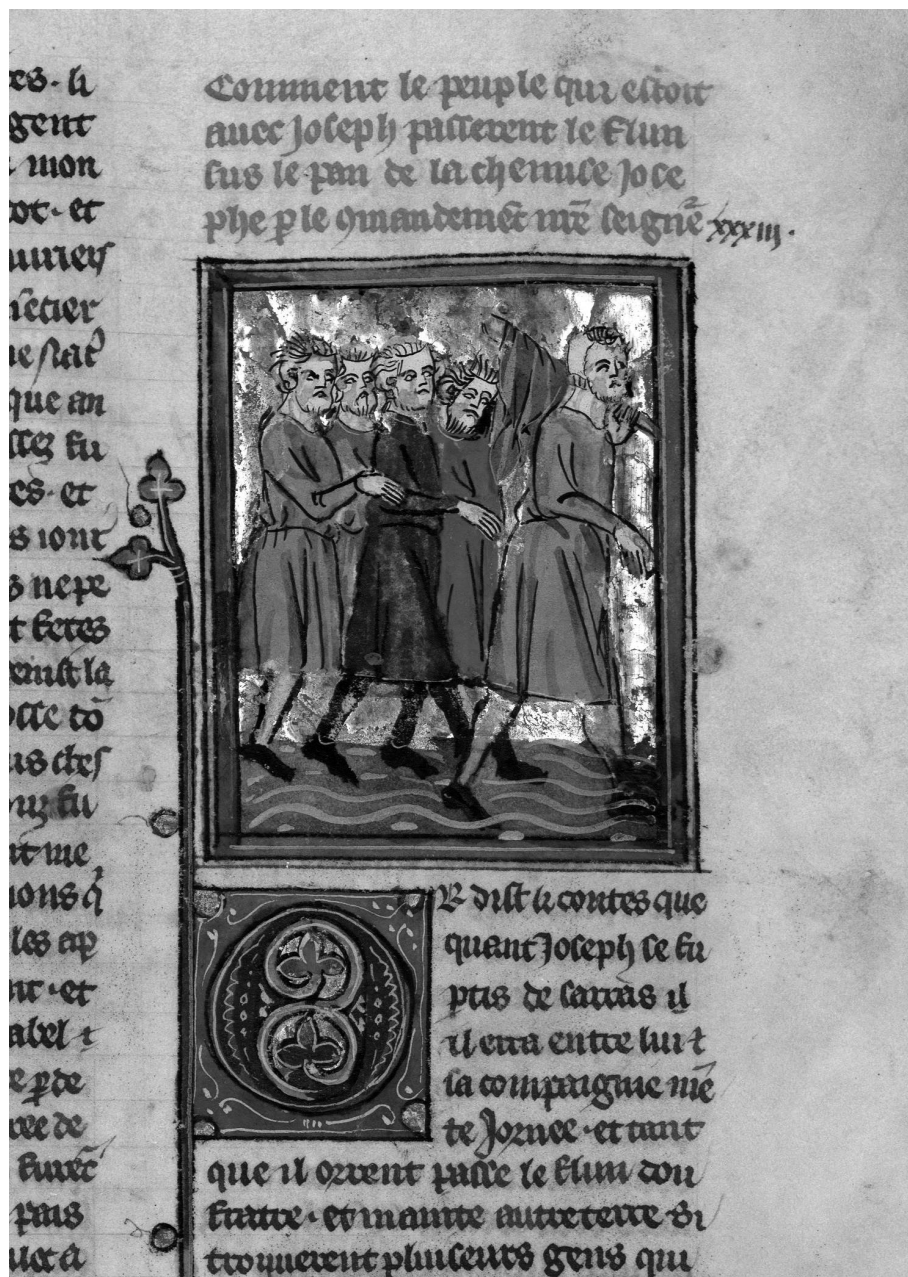


Figure 4: Master of Thomas de Maubeuge, Christians walking on the sea;
ca. 1320-1330,
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 9123, f. 79r.



Figure 5: Sub-Fauvel Master, Christians walking on the sea, being led by Joseph and Josephé; ca. 1320-1330, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 105, f. 94r.

in none of the subsequent miniatures in MS fr. 9123 does Joseph appear again, not even when he is mentioned in the accompanying rubric.³⁴ For example, the depictions of the episode of the crossing of the sea, which brings the Christians to England, are essentially different in the two manuscripts under scrutiny here: in MS fr. 9123 (f. 79r, Figure 4) a group of people walking on water is depicted and no one can be identified as a specific person; in MS fr. 105 (f. 94r, Figure 5), however, two people are leading the way, only they already walk on water, while the rest remain standing on firm ground. Furthermore, the rubrics for both images differ: in MS fr. 105, the rubric mentions Joseph and Josephé together, as two people in charge, and in MS fr. 9123 it does not.³⁵ Additionally, the absence of Titus in the image of Vespasian's healing (by contrast with the same scene in MS fr. 105 (see above)) fits well with the “anti-paternal” sentiment of MS fr. 9123.

Pictorial programmes of MSS fr. 105 and fr. 9123 also differ with regard to another important element. In spite of establishing a pictorial and, through it, a semantic

34 On the importance of rubrics for understanding what a medieval user found important, see Chase, 2012, 114-117.

35 The rubric for MS fr. 105 reads: “comment Josephe et Joseph son pere viendrent a la mer et grant people avec eux”, and for fr. 9123: “comment le people qui estoit avec Joseph passerent le flum sur le pan de la chemise Josephe par le commendement de nostre seigneur”.

parallel between the book and the veil of Veronica in the opening miniature of MS fr. 9123, the little book itself seems not to have mattered a great deal in the planning of its pictorial programme: there are only two images in which a book is present³⁶ in this manuscript, while in MS fr. 105 a book appears four times in all: twice on the opening folio (images 1) and 6)), then again on f. 2v when the angel brings it to the hermit, and then for the fourth time near the end of the narrative, on f. 121v (Figure 6), where Josephé holds a book in his hand while drawing a red cross with his blood on the shield of king Mordrain.³⁷ If the first three instances are unproblematic and in accordance with what the narrative says, the presence of a book on f. 121v is not unequivocal at all. It cannot be explained by referring to the narrative, since there is no such reference in the text. A parallel in MS fr. 9213 exists, though, if we consider this image in relation to the next one, that on f. 122r (Figure 7), where the transfer of the Grail from Alain to king Alphasem is depicted.³⁸ It is noteworthy to remember that these two images appear on the same opening and were thus seen as a pair by a medieval user³⁹ of the manuscript. If we consider the elements depicted in a formal, rather than iconographical, way, both images show a man in communication with a king: in the first (f. 121v), the man explaining something to the king holds a book in his right hand; in the second (f. 122r), the king kneels before the man who holds a bowl in his hands, offering it to the king. The comparable image in MS fr. 9123 is the one on f. 1r (fig. 8). It shows a hermit/a monk sitting in a chair behind a writing desk, holding a book in his left hand and a bowl in his right hand, extending both hands towards a king that kneels in front of him and raises his hands to accept the objects.⁴⁰ In short, in the two images in MS fr. 105 that a medieval user could view almost as two subsequent images in a multi-compartmentalised miniature, both the book and the bowl are presented as objects that somehow influence the relationship between the clergyman/the scholar⁴¹ and the king – and the same holds true for the image in MS fr. 9123. Another parallel may be suggested. As shown above, in the opening miniature in MS fr. 9123 the book received by the hermit is linked to the veil of Veronica, by the power of which Vespasian is healed of leprosy. The vessel that

36 In the opening miniature and in the miniature placed above the list of rubrics on f. 1r, to which I turn below.

37 See Ponceau, 1997, §§ 874-875.

38 The episodes concerning King Alphasem (for the text, see Ponceau, 1997, §§ 880-887) are not commonly illustrated in the manuscript tradition, for an overview see Stones 1996, 320-321, Stones, 1999, 80-84.

39 Either a reader or perhaps even an illuminator making a copy.

40 The gestures themselves do not allow for a clear interpretation, as Chase has observed (2005, 131, f. 14). She also notes that the interpretation of this image is highly difficult, and lists a few suggestions (2005, 131-132).

41 Josephé, “the man” in the images in MS fr. 105, is designated as such by his cap; the hermit in MS fr. 9123 is designated as such by being positioned behind a writing desk.

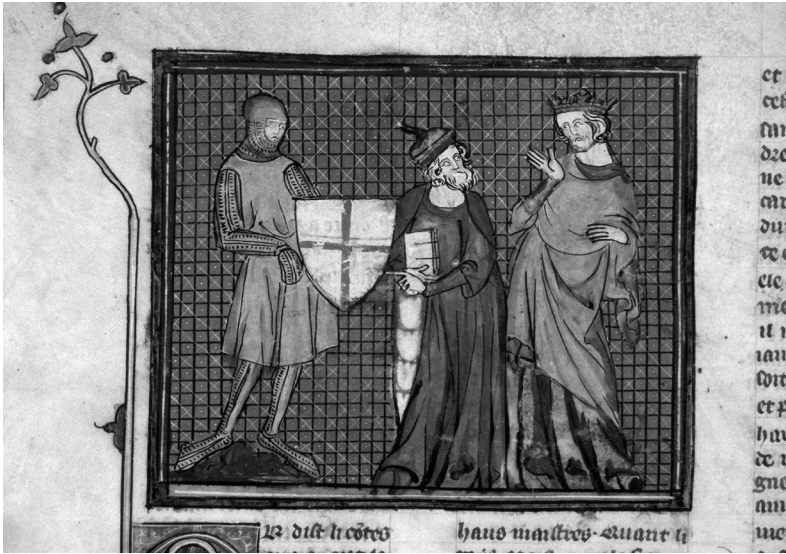


Figure 6: Sub-Fauvel Master, Josephé draws a red cross with his blood on Mordrain's shield; ca. 1320-1330, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 105, f. 121v.



Figure 7: Sub-Fauvel Master, Alain gives the Grail to king Alphasem; ca. 1320-1330, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 105, f. 122r.

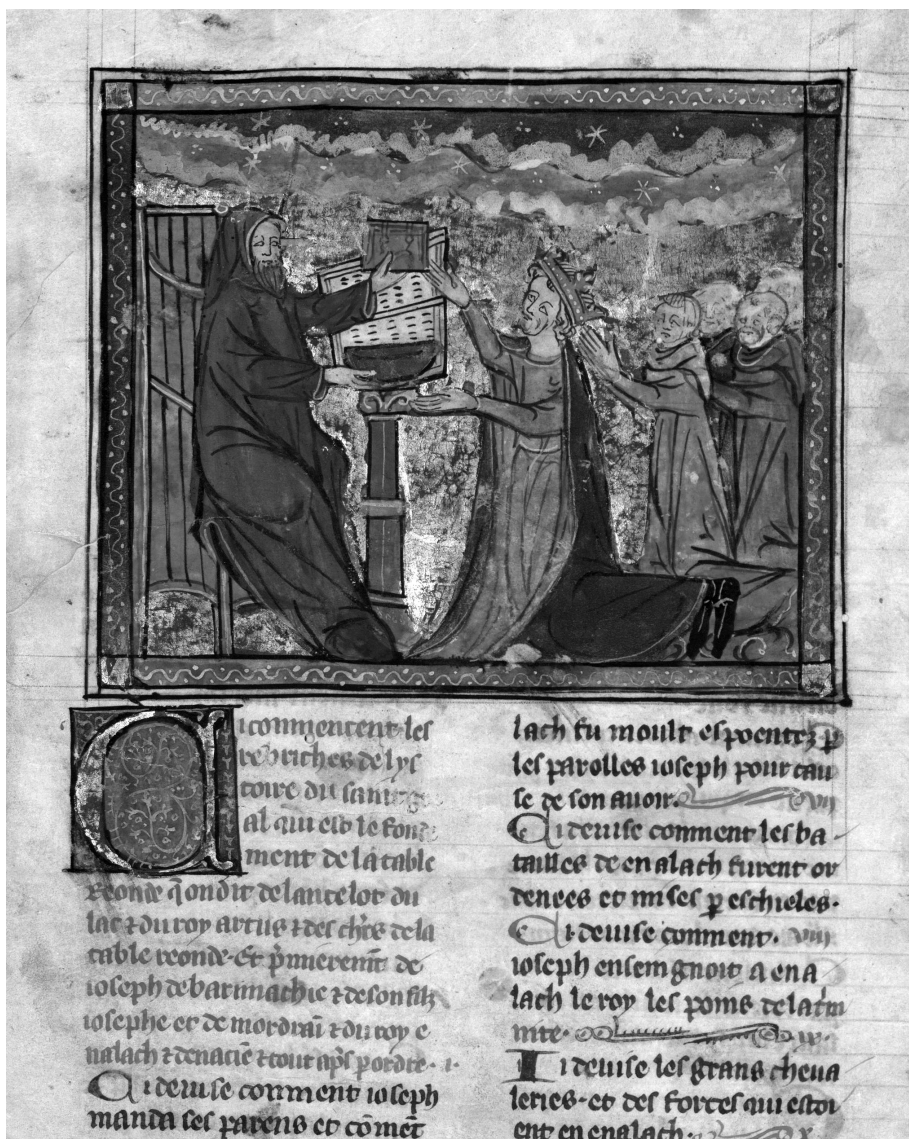


Figure 8: Master of Thomas de Maubeuge, A hermit/a monk with a book and a bowl in his hands, a king and his escort kneeling in front of him; ca. 1320-1330, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 9123, f. 1r.

king Alphasem receives in MS fr. 105, kneeling before Josephé in the same way as the king is kneeling before the hermit/the monk on f. 1r in MS fr. 9123, is the object that healed *him* of leprosy.⁴² It is unfortunately not possible to provide firmer evidence that the image in MS fr. 9123 is in any way related to the two in MS fr. 105 – at least not of any other sort than in the ways suggested here: the similarity of composition (a king kneels before a religious man or at least some sort of a scholar) and the presence of both a book and a bowl as objects somehow related to the relationship between the two persons.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding textual similarity,⁴³ the analysis of pictorial narration in two early 14th-century manuscripts of the *Estoire del saint Graal* proves that the reading of the narrative could have been conducted with very different results. The miniatures show us the metamorphosis that occurred in the understanding of the narrative, for they enable us to establish which episodes were considered important and, in this respect, formative for the creation of meaning. In other words, the analysis of multi-compartmentalised opening miniatures has revealed the differences in the contemporary understanding of the meaning of the text. Crucial to these discoveries were the selection of the episodes for depiction, the formal and semantic relations between images in the same multi-compartmentalised opening miniature, and the formal and semantic relations between the images on the opening page and the images in other parts of the manuscript.

Appendix

A summary of the Prologue⁴⁴ to the *Estoire del saint Graal* and the "Joseph in Judea"⁴⁵ episode

The narrator firstly informs the reader that he is writing down the story of the Grail at the command of the Great Master, Jesus Christ. Then he greets all those who believe in the Holy Trinity.⁴⁶

42 Carol Chase (2001, 300) interprets the image in f. 122r in fr. 105 as the healing of Alphasan.

43 See Stones, Kennedy, 2009, 153.

44 For the text, see Ponceau, 1997, §§ 1-30.

45 See Ponceau, 1997, §§ 31-57.

46 "This vernacular romance is thus presented as a sacred text set squarely in the Christian tradition." (Chase, 2005, 126).

The proper story of the prologue begins 717 years after the Passion of Christ when the narrator, a hermit, is lying in a small hut in a remote place somewhere in Britain; it is the night between Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. While dozing, a voice calls to him and the hermit wakes up. In front of himself he sees a man standing, who tells him that he has come to bring him the knowledge about the Trinity. He adds that all who would hear these things told through the hermit would understand them. When saying these words, the visitor, identified as Christ, puts a small book in the hermit's hand and explained its content to him.

Small episodes follow which are not pictorially narrated in the manuscripts I deal with in this paper, therefore I will not summarise them in detail. In short, these are the hermit's reading of the book and his contemplation of its content; the text also names the title of what follows: the book that of the Holy Grail.⁴⁷ Then there are some unusual atmospheric phenomena and two further visions, and the hermit is reminded by a voice from heaven not to forget to fulfil his duties: praying and celebrating the liturgy of the Holy Week. As mentioned, none of this finds pictorial expression in MSS fr. 105 and fr. 9123.

After the Easter service the hermit is in great hurry to start reading again, but the book has disappeared.⁴⁸ Quickly he is told by a voice from heaven that he will see it again, but only after he leaves his recluse and embarks on a quest, at the beginning of which he will encounter a marvellous animal which he should follow; at the end of his journey, he will understand why he was being sent there by Christ.

The next day the hermit departs.⁴⁹ When he meets the animal, he cannot establish what kind of animal it is, for it has parts of a sheep, a dog, a fox and of a lion. The two arrive at the bottom of a valley, where the hermit finds a lodge, inhabited by an old hermit. The following morning the old hermit asks the travelling hermit to say Mass, after which he accompanies him to the gate, where the hybrid animal appears once again. Next the animal and the hermit stop under a pine tree with a spring underneath. A young man rides towards the hermit. He dismounts, kneels before the hermit and extends to him the greetings of his lady, and then he offers to the hermit some food and drink sent by her. When the travellers continue their journey, they come to a crossroads where they meet a knight and two other men. The knight invites the hermit to his home. In the morning the hermit resumes his journey and,

47 See Ponceau, 1997, § 9, l. 1-2.

48 He stored it in a "casket [that] also holds the *corpus domini*; the book is thus associated with Christ's body." (Chase, 2005, 126). According to Alexandre Leupin (1982, 28), the book's disappearance is a metaphor for Christ's disappearance from the tomb.

49 The episodes that follow on from here are depicted in great detail in MS fr. 105; I therefore summarise them somewhat more extensively.

again, he finds the animal waiting only as he takes his leave from the knight. Next, the hermit and the animal reach a nuns' convent. After the hermit has celebrated Mass and had breakfast, the travellers re-enter the forest and in the evening the hermit (the animal has disappeared by now) comes to a little chapel, whence he heard a horrible cry. At the threshold of the chapel a man lies in faint, with his eyes turned in his head, for he had been possessed by the devil. The hermit runs to him and makes the sign of the cross over his face, ordering the devil to leave the man in Christ's name. The devil replies that he had not seen the opening through which he could leave. The hermit enters the chapel where on the altar he finds the little book. He steps outside again and the devil cries loudly, saying to the hermit not to come closer, for the little book is the only thing that can force him to leave the man's body. He cannot, however, depart from his body through the man's mouth, for the hermit has closed that door by the sign of the cross he had made. After a short exchange of words, the hermit tells the devil that he will need to leave through the man's bottom. He approaches the senseless man and puts the book before his mouth, and the devil is thus forced to leave through the man's backside. The hermit stays with the man until he is completely cured. When he returns home, in his sleep the Great Master, Christ, visits him again, and orders him to start copying the book on the following Monday and finish the work before Ascension, for then the book would disappear forever.⁵⁰ Thus ends the prologue.

The story of the Holy Grail proper starts on the day of Christ's Crucifixion. The narrative says that at that point there were very few who believed in Jesus. Among them, a special place is given to a noble knight, Joseph of Arimathea, who is described as a highly virtuous man who lives in Jerusalem with his wife and his son Josephé, who is named as the one who brought his father's lineage to Britain in a miraculous way, using nothing but his under-tunic.

When Christ was crucified, Joseph decided to obtain some of the things Christ used while alive. That is why he went to the Cenacle and got the dish from which Christ had eaten before he established the Eucharist. After Jesus's death, Joseph went to Pontius Pilate and asked for Jesus's body in return for his past seven years of service. Joseph then went to the Calvary, took Christ's body from the cross, laid him in a sepulchre, went home to get the bowl he took from the Cenacle, returned to the sepulchre and collected the Saviour's blood in the bowl. He wrapped Christ's body in precious cloth, laid it in the sepulchre and placed a heavy rock at its entrance. When the Jews learned of the dignity of the treatment Joseph gave to Christ's body, they decided to seize him in the night and take him to a place where he could never be found.

50 This is another parallel between the book and Christ's body, see n. 45.

Joseph was taken out of Jerusalem to a fortress belonging to the (Jewish) bishop Caiaphas, inside which there was a secret prison. When Christ's body disappeared – when he rose from the dead –, the Jews became even angrier at Joseph, and Caiaphas ordered that from then on he should be given nothing to eat, so he would soon die of hunger. However, the risen Christ visited Joseph in prison and brought him the bowl with his blood, and with it Joseph received comfort, life and company of the Lord. Joseph was, according to the narrative, the first person to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection.

Joseph stayed in prison for forty-two years and was liberated from it in the third year of emperor Titus's reign. Two years earlier, the emperor's son, Vespasian, fell ill with leprosy, and the emperor declared that whoever could provide a cure for his son would be richly rewarded. A knight who arrived from Capernaum in Galilee told the prince that he himself had had leprosy in his childhood, and that he had been cured by a prophet whom the Jews wrongly killed. He explained that he was cured merely by being touched by Jesus; he added that he believed the emperor's son would be cured if he would be given something Christ had touched while alive. Vespasian promised that if he were cured, he would have vengeance for the death of the Prophet.

Thus emperor Titus sent the knight to Judea where it was announced that anyone in possession of anything Jesus had touched while alive should bring that object forward. An old woman named Veronica came forth. She brought the cloth with which she had wiped Christ's face on his way to the Calvary, on which the Saviour's face had remained as if it had been painted. The knight took this cloth to Rome and brought it to Vespasian who was immediately cured, and then they went to Judea together, for Vespasian was determined to avenge Jesus's death.

In Judea, Vespasian ordered the people responsible for murdering Christ to be arrested and burned. This was learned by Joseph's wife and she came to the prince, asking him for justice for her disappeared husband. The prince learned from Caiaphas, who was convinced that Joseph must have been dead for a long time, where he had been imprisoned. When they came to the secret prison, Vespasian liberated Joseph, who thought only three days had passed since he had been brought to prison. When he was pulled up from the prison (just after being visited by Christ another time) and the others saw him, it seemed to them he had not aged. On the other hand, Joseph did not recognise Caiaphas, who was now an old man, nor his own son, who came to kiss him; neither did he know his wife at first. When they all returned to Jerusalem, Vespasian had imprisoned and burnt all those who Joseph had named as being involved in Christ's murder, except Caiaphas, to whom he had made a promise of not killing him in such a manner and who was instead put in a boat which would

be taken to the open sea where it would be left to drift; thus it would be left to God whether Caiaphas lived or died.⁵¹

After all that being accomplished, Vespasian needed to return to Rome. The night before his departure, Joseph had another vision in his sleep. Christ told him that he would go to other lands to preach in his name, and instructed him to have himself baptised the next day. The next day Joseph was baptised by Saint Philip. Vespasian asked him the meaning of this and, after it being explained to him, he wanted to be baptised as well, although secretly. His household followed their master and their conversion was not known until the time that Vespasian and Titus came to lay Jerusalem waste. Titus was very angry when hearing about his son's conversion, but the narrative of the *Estoire* does not expand upon it.

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**Metamorfoza literarne naracije
v likovnih podobah: primer naslovnih miniatur
k Zgodbi o svetem Graalu
v rokopisih BnF, fr. 105 in fr. 9123**

Ključne besede: *Estoire del saint Graal*, naslovna miniatura, francosko gotsko rokopisno slikarstvo, BnF, fr. 105, fr. 9123

Članek se ukvarja s slikovno preobrazbo literarnega besedila, kot je razvidna iz miniatur na naslovnici dveh rokopisov romance *Estoire del saint Graal*, nastalih v zgodnjem 14. stoletju. Najprej so epizode, ki so upodobljene na naslovni miniaturi, sestavljeni iz več razdelkov, analizirane ikonografsko in formalno. Nato članek predstavi načine, na katere je iz številnih podob, ki so združene v miniaturo na naslovnici, ustvarjena zaokrožena pripoved. Nazadnje pojasni še, kako se podobe na naslovni miniaturi in naslovnica kot celota povezujejo z drugimi miniaturami v rokopisu in kako se interpretativna zaznamovanost, ki jo slikovni pripovedi podeli naslovnica, potrjuje v izbiri epizod za upodobitev v nadaljevanju in v njihovi slikovni interpretaciji literarnega besedila.

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Narrative Metamorphosis Through Images: The Case of Opening Miniatures in the *Estoire del Saint Graal* in BnF, fr. 105 and fr. 9123

Keywords: *Estoire del saint Graal*, opening miniature, French Gothic manuscript painting, BnF, fr. 105, fr. 9123

The article deals with pictorial metamorphosis in the opening pages of two early 14th-century manuscripts of the *Estoire del saint Graal*. Firstly, the episodes depicted are analysed iconographically and formally. Secondly, it explores how pictorial narrative is established in the multi-compartmentalised miniature, that is how the images are linked internally in order to convey a narrative that has its beginning and its ending. Thirdly, it is shown how the images in the opening miniature communicate with other miniatures in the manuscript and how the course of interpretation, signaled by the opening miniature, is succeeded and confirmed by the selection of episodes which are subsequently depicted, as well as by the way in which the episodes depicted are pictorially interpreted.