THE PICTURE CYCLES OF THE RYLANDS HAGGADAH AND THE SO-CALLED BROTHER HAGGADAH AND THEIR RELATION TO THE WESTERN TRADITION OF OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION

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The Sephardic Haggadah in the John Rylands University Library in Manchester is a manuscript of Catalan provenance produced in the middle of the fourteenth century. Another Haggadah, the so-called 'Brother Haggadah' in the British Library, is so closely related to it stylistically and iconographically that it may well have been executed in the same workshop. As in most illuminated Sephardic Haggadot cycles of biblical episodes precede the text, to which they bear no direct relation. The cycles of the Rylands and Brother Haggadot focus on events specifically related to the story of the Exodus beginning with Moses before the burning bush and ending with the crossing of the Red Sea, and are therefore especially relevant to the Passover ceremony. Other Catalan Haggadot lack this narrow focus: they contain longer cycles with illustrations related to Moses's childhood, and even include extensive Genesis cycles. Both manuscripts have been described, dated and localized in previous research, but they have not yet been iconographically analysed. Although it has been frequently observed that the iconography of medieval Hebrew manuscripts depends to a significant degree on the Jewish tradition,

1 Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS Hebr. 6, Facsimile: The Rylands Haggadah (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988).
2 British Library, MS Or. 1404.
this is less true of the Rylands and Brother Haggadot than of other Hebrew picture cycles. Their iconography is generally faithful to the biblical text, and extrabiblical interpretations are rare.

The aim of this paper is to ascertain the iconographic roots of these two biblical cycles. Other Catalan Haggadot are clearly related to specific Western iconographic traditions. For example, the cycles of the Golden Haggadah (Barcelona, c. 1320)\(^5\) and a closely related manuscript, known as the ‘Sister Haggadah’ (c. 1350)\(^6\) reflect a similar tradition as a group of works of art whose Genesis illustrations belong to the so-called Cotton Genesis family.\(^7\) A Western Exodus tradition can therefore be traced in the cycles associated with the Cotton group, and it has been assumed that this tradition was grounded in a late antique illustrated Pentateuch.\(^8\) However, it is clear from the late medieval Sephardic cycles that models reflecting late antique prototypes were handled rather freely. Models of different origin and character were frequently combined, and the iconography was adjusted to the specific needs and conditions of the manuscripts’ Jewish owners.

Only one manuscript containing an extensive Exodus cycle, the Ashburnham Pentateuch (late sixth – seventh century), has come down to us from late Antiquity.\(^9\) Other Exodus cycles are known from late antique Roman mosaics and wall paintings, such as those in the basilicas of Santa Maria Maggiore,\(^10\) San Paolo Fuori le Mura\(^11\) and

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\(^6\) London, British Library, MS Or. 2884; Narkiss, *British Isles*, 67 ff and figs 155 ff.
\(^11\) These wall paintings are known to us only from Baroque copies. See Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Cod. barb. lat. 4406, S. Waetzold, *Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom* (München Wien, 1964).
Old St Peter's. The Eastern biblical cycles survive in the group of the Byzantine Octateuchs of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. According to Kurt Weitzmann these cycles reflect a late prototype, a conclusion which has recently been challenged by John Lowden, who believes the Octateuch cycle to be a creation of the eleventh century. Weitzmann's recension method for reconstructing late antique prototypes from medieval picture cycles, which postulates that medieval cycles derive from late antique prototypes, leaving little scope for fresh creation and innovation, has been challenged in recent years. There can be no doubt that there are many iconographic similarities among cycles of different origins and dates throughout the Middle Ages, and that similarities occur in cycles in various media, not just in illuminated manuscripts. We still do not know enough about what these models and iconographic traditions meant to the medieval illuminator and his audience. In most cases direct copying can be ruled out: rather, the illuminators seem to have been inspired by a certain repertory of iconographic types and formulas transmitted in a number of different ways and subject to dynamics and developments that have not yet been adequately elucidated.

As I shall demonstrate, the Rylands and Brother Haggadot reflect a specific Western iconographic tradition and show little evidence of Byzantine influence. As in other Sephardic cycles, we find an iconographic relationship with works whose Genesis cycles


14 Ibid.


16 This method was developed in K. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in roll and codex: a study of the origin and method of text illustration* (Princeton, 1948).

are believed to belong to the Cotton group. Therefore these two manuscripts, containing Exodus cycles only, may well reflect the tradition of the above-mentioned late antique Pentateuch.

Both cycles begin with Moses before the burning bush (Ex. 3, Rylands Haggadah, fig. 1; Brother Haggadah, fol. 1v). The narrative is conveyed in two consecutive scenes to be read from right to left. Moses is seen on the right, bearded and dressed in a knee-long tunic and black chausses. In the landscape setting behind him we discern his flock. He appears again in the left-hand picture, bending down and lifting a leg in order to remove one of his shoes. He has already removed the other shoe which is standing next to him. He turns his face toward the upper left corner, where the burning bush is represented. In the Brother Haggadah the face of an angel can be discerned within the flames; in the Rylands Haggadah this part of the picture is damaged, and we cannot determine whether an angel appeared there or not. This scene occurs in all Sephardic Haggadot as well as in many Christian cycles, a basic difference between Christian and Jewish versions being the direction of the narrative. With the exception of the Sarajevo Haggadah18 (fol. 21v) Jewish depictions always place Moses on the right and the burning bush on the left, a scheme already apparent in a wall-painting in the synagogue of Dura Europos (245 C. E., fig. 2). This painting is situated to the right of the Thora shrine, and this arrangement seems to have dictated the direction of the narrative: Moses not only turns towards the bush, but also towards the shrine. A similar arrangement appears in the apse decoration of the churches of St Catharina on Mount Sinai19 and of St Vitale in Ravenna20 – both from the Justinian era –, and on a bronze cross of the same period in St Catharina.21 On the cross the narrative follows the same right-to-

18 Sarajevo, Nationalmuseum. Since the beginning of the Bosnian war this manuscript has been preserved in the vaults of the National Bank in Sarajevo. After a period of three years, during which nothing was known about the manuscript, it was displayed in the Sarajevo synagogue on the eve of Passover, April 14, 1995. A facsimile was published by C. Roth, The Sarajevo Haggadah (New York, 1969). For an examination of its iconographic roots see Kogman-Appel, 'Sarajevo-Haggada'.


20 F.W. Deichmann, Die frühchristlichen Bauten von Ravenna (Baden-Baden, 1958), fig. 316.

left scheme as Dura; in the mosaics, however, it has been reversed. In St Vitale the hand of God appears to the left, but Moses turns his head and looks over his shoulder, while the burning bush appears on the right. This explains why Jewish versions of this scene are usually mirror images of the Christian ones: the direction of the narrative reflects the reading direction of the culture in which the picture was created, rather than a model. There are only a few exceptions in Christian art that show Moses turning to the left, among them a Roman sarcophagus from the fourth century (fig. 3) and an ivory relief on the antependium of Salerno from the late eleventh or early twelfth century (fig. 4), where – again – the arrangement of the scenes dictated the direction of the narrative. The relief with the burning bush appears to the right of the centrepiece, therefore Moses turns to the left. In the later Middle Ages the right-to-left narrative structure becomes extremely rare in Christian depictions. The Genesis scenes of the antependium have frequently been regarded as belonging to the Cotton tradition.

The substitution of an angel for the anthropomorphic figure of the Logos in the burning bush is typical for Jewish manuscripts. Parallels can be found in a few exceptional Christian examples from the Middle Ages. A relief on the wooden doors of the basilica of St Sabina in Rome (fifth century) provide a late antique example, though here the angel appears next to the bush rather than between its branches. Angels sometimes occur in Byzantine representations of the scene, but are far from being typical. The Canterbury Psalter in Paris (thirteenth century) furnishes a later Western example. According to Heimann this is due to Byzantine influence; however, since the type is rare in Byzantine art, it is more likely that there was an independent tradition in the West that

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24 See for example the Golden Haggadah, fol. 9r and in the Sister Haggadah, fol. 13r.
25 For example the Pamplona Bibles, Spain, c. 1200, Amiens, Bibliothèque Communale, MS lat. 108; Augsburg, University Library, formerly Harburg, collection Ottingen-Wallerstein, MS 1 2 Lat 4° 15, F. Bucher, *The Pamplona Bibles* (New Haven London, 1970), fig. 102. For the relationship between the Pamplona Bibles and the Cotton group see vol. 2, 97 ff; Kessler and Weitzmann, *Cotton Genesis*, 28, n. 147. It should be noted, however, that this relationship is an extremely remote one.
27 For example in one of the Octateuchs, Vat. gr. 747, fol. 75r.
replaced the bust of the Logos with an angel in the flames of the burning bush.

Moses's appearance as a bearded old man with long hair is frequent in Western art, while the youthful Moses is typical for late antique and Byzantine examples. Among the Sephardic Haggadot, only the Golden and Sister Haggadot reflect this latter tradition. All others follow the Western tradition, as represented by such cycles as those in the Carolingian Bible in San Paolo Fuori le Mura (ninth century), the old English Hexateuch (eleventh century), the Pamplona Bibles and the Padua picture Bible (c. 1400). The Genesis cycles in these manuscripts have been related to the Cotton tradition.

As in the Golden and the Sister Haggadot, Moses is shown unlacing his shoes. In the Rylands and Brother Haggadot, however, he is not seated, but bends down and lifts one of his legs. This is the common position in late Antiquity: it appears on the above mentioned bronze cross on Mount Sinai, in the mosaic on Mount Sinai, in St Vitale and in an ivory relief on the Brescia casket (late fourth century). It figures frequently in catacomb paintings from the third and fourth centuries as well as on various sarcophagi. It is noteworthy that on one of the sarcophagi Moses is shown

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29 For parallels see Kogman-Appel, Goldene Haggada.
30 Rome, San Paolo Fuori le Mura, fol. 21v, J. Gaehde, 'Carolingian interpretations of an early Christian picture cycle to the Octateuch in the Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura', Frühmittelalterliche Studien, viii (1974), 381 ff, fig. 64.
32 Augsburg, fol. 50v, Bucher, Pamplona Bibles, fig. 102.
33 The Exodus cycle belongs to the part of the manuscript that is housed in London, British Library, Add. MS 15277, G. Polena and G.L. Mellini, Bibbia Istoriana Padovana della Fine del Trecento (Venezia, 1963); see Arensberg-MacMillan, Padua Bible; the Genesis cycle is preserved in Rovigo, Biblioteca dell' Accademia dei Concordi, MS 212.
34 For the Carolingian Bible see Kessler, Early Pentateuch. Gaehde, Carolingian interpretations, believes in a strong Byzantine influence on the cycle of the San Paolo Bible. This, however, seems to be due to an overestimation of the influence of the Octateuchs in the West, see Arensberg-MacMillan. For the old English Hexateuch see G. Henderson, 'Late antique influence in some English mediaeval illustrations of Genesis' JWCI, xxv (1962), 173 ff; H.L. Kessler, The Bibles from Tours (Princeton, 1977), 13 ff; Kessler, Early Pentateuch, Kessler and Weitzmann, Cotton Genesis, 25 ff. Dodwell, rejects the assumption of late antique roots for the old English cycle, which he considers to be a new creation of the eleventh century. However, even if the Hexateuch is not a direct copy of any known earlier cycle, an analysis of its illustrations makes it clear that its illuminators borrowed from earlier traditions, and modified their models in accordance with the old English text version. For the Padua Bible see O. Pacht, 'A Giottesque episode in English mediaeval art', JWCI, vi (1943), 51 ff; Kessler, Early Pentateuch, and Arensberg-MacMillan, Padua Bible, Weitzmann and Kessler, Cotton Genesis, 26.
35 Brescia, Museo dell' età cristiana, W. Volbach, Early Christian art (München 1958), pl. 87; J. Kollwitz, Die Lipsanothek von Brescia (Studien zur europäischen Kunstgeschichte 7), 1933; R. Delbrueck, Probleme der Lipsanothek in Brescia (Theophaneia 7), 1952.
longhaired and bearded; he also turns to the left, thereby departing from the common type in Roman funeral art and recalling the compositions of the Rylands and Brother Haggadot (fig. 3). Moses also turns to the left, bends down, and unlaces his sandals on the Salerno antependium, though there he is depicted as a youthful figure according to the late antique tradition. It should be noted that in the Western Middle Ages Moses’s sandals were usually replaced by high shoes. Shoes can already be seen in the synagogue of Dura Europos and in the Ashburnham Pentateuch;\(^{37}\) they appear in many medieval examples, among them the Sarajevo Haggadah, the old English Hexateuch, the Morgan picture Bible in New York (Paris, thirteenth century)\(^{38}\) and the St Louis Psalter from the same period.\(^{39}\) The Rylands and Brother Haggadot therefore represent a basically late antique type that underwent various modifications.

A final element which deserves discussion is Moses’s rod. Byzantine versions of this scene usually depict Moses without it, but it is never omitted in Jewish representations. In the Golden and Sister Haggadot it is a straight rod, whereas in the Sarajevo, Rylands, and Brother Haggadot it assumes the form of a shepherd’s staff, curved at the bottom. The shepherd’s staff has many Western parallels, in the Pamplona Bibles, the Morgan picture Bible and others.

The next episode in the story of Moses – the miracle of the serpent (Ex. 4: 1–5) – is depicted in the Rylands Haggadah (fol. 13v) and the Brother Haggadah (fig. 5) in a sequence of three scenes to be read once again, from right to left. In the first scene Moses is seen holding his staff, which is about to turn into a serpent. In the second, the staff having been completely transformed into a serpent, hovers in a vertical position in front of Moses, who has let go of it and turns away with an expression of terror. In the Brother Haggadah he raises both arms; in the Rylands Haggadah only his left arm is raised. In the third scene, Moses grasps the serpent, the upper part of which is about to turn into a staff again. The middle scene has a very close parallel in an ivory on the Salerno antependium (fig. 6). There, the serpent hovers in a similarly vertical position in the centre of the composition. Particularly close is the way Moses is depicted. Although the ivory differs from the Haggadot in giving him a youthful appearance, the upper part of his

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body turns towards the spectator while the position of his twisted legs seems to indicate a movement to the right; his head turns back and faces the staff to the left. As in the Brother Haggadah, both arms are raised. The figure in the Rylands Haggadah raises only one arm, but his posture is otherwise a mirror image of that in the ivory. A further difference between the ivory and the Hebrew manuscripts—the latter replace the anthropomorphic God of the former with a segment of sky—is more striking than significant. The model of the Rylands and Brother Haggadot may well have included an anthropomorphic figure of the Logos which their illuminators, bound by the Jewish prohibition against representing God, were obliged to omit.

A similar composition of the miracle of the serpent can be found as early as the fifth century in a wall painting in the basilica of San Paolo Fuori le Mura in Rome (fig. 7). The serpent is in a vertical position. Moses raises his arms and turns away in fear. The Padua picture Bible contains a mirror image of the same basic type (fig. 8) which agrees with the Sephardic examples in showing Moses as a bearded, older man. Here again Moses raises his arms, though in a less expressive manner than in the other examples. In conclusion, we are able to trace the history of a frequently repeated iconographic type from late Antiquity to the late Middle Ages.

Both manuscripts contain depictions of the second miracle that took place in front of the burning bush (Brother Haggadah, fol. 2, Rylands Haggadah, fig. 9): God turns Moses’s arm leprous and then restores it to health (Ex. 4:6–8). This scene, relatively rare in both Christian and Jewish picture cycles, occurs in an ivory in Salerno (fig. 10), the old English Hexateuch (fig. 11), the Padua picture Bible (fol. 3) and the Bible Moralisée. In the Sephardic cycles this episode is depicted in four consecutive scenes to be read from right to left: (1) Moses appears to the right, holding his staff in his left hand and about to draw his leprous right hand from the neck opening of his robe; (2) he displays his leprous hand; (3) he replaces his hand in the neck opening again; (4) he displays his healthy hand. The Bible Moralisée depicts this event in two consecutive scenes; the Salerno ivory in only one scene, that of Moses displaying the leprous hand. The old English Hexateuch represents Moses putting his hand into the neck opening of his robe. This suggests that each of the Christian images was selected from an originally longer sequence, which survives intact in the

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40 For the iconography of this relief see Bergman, Salerno ivories, 40.
Hebrew manuscripts. Another interesting observation can be made in regard to the old English Hexateuch: there the scene appears as part of a longer sequence within the same frame that shows the entire story of the calling of Moses, and is to be read from right to left as in the Haggadot. This is only one of several sequences in the Hexateuch that needs to be read from right to left, suggesting that some of the roots of this cycle are to be sought in a Jewish milieu. The Byzantine Octateuchs juxtapose both miracles within a single frame and bear no iconographic similarities to the Sephardic examples, which seem to represent a purely Western tradition.

The following picture of the cycle (Rylands Haggadah, fig. 12, Brother Haggadah, fol. 2r) shows Moses and his family on their way to Egypt (Ex. 4:20), a subject also depicted in the Golden Haggadah (fol. 10v). To a great extent these compositions recall Christian images of Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt. Moses’s journey to Egypt was represented as early as the fifth century in a lost mosaic in the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, whose appearance is known to us from a Baroque copy. In the Middle Ages, this episode occurs in the cycles of the old English Hexateuch (fol. 78v) and the Padua picture Bible (fol. 3v). It seems that this subject, already depicted in late Antiquity, was modified in the Middle Ages under the influence of the Flight to Egypt. In the Rylands and Brother Haggadot, the journey to Egypt is accompanied at the left by Sephora circumcising her younger son (Ex. 4:25). Although this episode is rarely depicted in medieval manuscripts, parallels can be found in the Padua picture Bible (fol. 4r) and the Octateuchs.

The next illustration in the cycle represents the meeting between Moses and Aaron (Ex. 4:27, Rylands Haggadah, fig. 13, Brother Haggadah, fol. 2v). A parallel exists in the Golden Haggadah, where this scene is juxtaposed with the journey to Egypt. This juxtaposition is rooted in the Rabbinic tradition, according to which Aaron advised Moses to send Sephora and her children back to his father-in-law. By omitting it, the Rylands and Brother Haggadot eliminate any allusion to the Rabbinic commentary, and restrict themselves to the biblical narrative. The brothers are shown embracing each other, a motif typical for this scene since the fifth century when it appeared in a wall painting in the basilica of San

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42 See Kogman-Appel, Goldene Haggada.
43 For example Vat. gr. 747, fol. 76v; Vat. gr. 746, fol. 162r, Bergman, Salerno ivories, fig. 96.
44 Sed-Rajna, Hebrew Bible, 94.
45 Waetzold, Kopien, fig. 258.
46 Vat. gr. 747, fol. 77r; Vat. gr. 756, fol. 165v.
Paolo Fuori le Mura (fig. 14). It was later used in the old English Hexateuch (fig. 15), the Pamplona Bibles, the Padua picture Bible (fol. 4r) and the Octateuchs.

Ex. 4: 30ff. reports the miracles Moses and Aaron performed before the Israelites in Egypt. Scenes related to this narrative appear in the Rylands (fig. 16) and Brother Haggadot (fol. 2v). As in a parallel in the Golden Haggadah (fol. 10v) Aaron is shown about to turn his rod into a serpent. He faces the Israelites, some of whom have fallen to their knees. Moses appears behind his brother, pointing to the serpent with his right hand. The motif of the kneeling Israelites is known from the old English Hexateuch (fig. 17) and the Morgan picture Bible (fol. 7v), while the depiction of Aaron holding the rod recalls Western parallels, such as those in the old English Hexateuch and the Pamplona Bibles. This scene also occurs in the cycles of the Byzantine Octateuchs, but with a different iconography: the Israelites, instead of having fallen to their knees, are standing upright, and Aaron does not hold the serpent, which instead crawls on the ground at the centre of the composition. Stahl has argued that the kneeling Israelites in the Morgan Bible are due to Byzantine influence, on the grounds that this motif is rare in Western examples but frequent in Byzantine ones; however, its absence from the Octateuchs suggests that his conclusion reflects an overestimation of the influence of Byzantine iconography in the West.

The following pictures show Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh (Ex. 51 1; Rylands Haggadah, fol. 15v and Brother Haggadah, fol. 3r). The king's throne appears at the right, a deviation from most of the Christian parallels, which place Pharaoh in the centre of the composition. In the old English Hexateuch (fol. 7v), however, where the narrative is to be read from right to left, Moses and Aaron appear in the centre. In the Brother Haggadah the throne is adorned with a baldachin. This motif, which appears in the Golden Haggadah (fol. 10v) is frequent in Christian art and certainly has antique roots. In a relief on the so-called Exodus sarcophagus in Aix-en-Provence (fourth century) a similar baldachin decorates the king's throne in the same scene. Later, it frequently appears in cycles related to the

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49 Augsburg, fol. 51v, Bucher, Pamplona Bibles fig. 103.
50 Vat. gr. 747, fol. 78r; Vat. gr. 746, fol. 166r.
51 Augsburg, fol. 51v, Bucher, Pamplona Bibles fig. 104.
52 For example Vat. gr. 746, fol. 76v; Vat. gr. 746, fol. 163v.
Cotton group, as well as in the Octateuchs. To the left we see Pharaoh’s counsellors, a motif also known from the old English Hexateuch, the Padua picture Bible, and one of the Octateuchs.

The following page contains a picture of Moses and Aaron performing the miracle of the serpents before Pharaoh (Ex. 7:12, Rylands Haggadah, fol. 15v, Brother Haggadah, fol. 3v). As in the previous picture, Pharaoh’s throne with its baldachin is shown to the right, while Moses and Aaron stand in front of him in the foreground. Aaron’s serpent is about to swallow those of the magicians, who stand to the left. In the Golden Haggadah (fol. 11r) Moses, Aaron, and the magicians all hold their serpents, an element omitted from the Rylands and Brother Haggadot. This imagery is known from both Western and Byzantine depictions of this scene. In a relief on the wooden doors of the basilica of Santa Sabina, we find a version of this episode whose interpretation is somewhat problematic. A figure with a staff – probably Moses or Aaron – appears at the left and Pharaoh at the right; the magicians, however, seem to have been omitted. Two serpents hover at the centre of the composition, untouched by the participants. This episode was also depicted in a wall painting in the basilica of San Paolo Fuori le Mura. Pharaoh sits enthroned at the centre of the composition, flanked by Aaron and Moses on the left and the magicians on the right. Four serpents appear in the foreground before the throne, none of them held by a figure. There are similar versions in the Sarajevo Haggadah (fol. 21v) and in a closely related manuscript in Bologna (fol. 1v).

A major difference between Christian and Sephardic Exodus cycles is that the former often illustrate only a few of the plagues while the latter invariably include all ten, devoting an entire picture to each. The plague compositions in the Haggadot typically follow a scheme that first appeared in the basilicas of San Paolo and Old St Peter’s: Pharaoh is seated on a throne at one side, Moses and

55 For example in the Padua picture Bible, fol. 4v.
56 For example Vat. gr. 746, fol. 166v.
57 Ibid.
58 Both Haggadot also contain depictions of the increasing of the labour (Rylands Haggadah, fol. 15v, Brother Haggadah, fol. 3v). The iconography of this subject has been dealt with by U. Schubert, Egyptian bondage.
59 For example in the Pamplona Bibles as in Augsburg, fol. 52r; Bucher, Pamplona Bibles, fig. 105, and in the Octateuchs, for example Vat. gr. 747, fol. 80r or Vat. gr. 746, fol. 170r.
60 Jeremias, Holzstir der Basilika Santa Sabina, 28, pl. 27.
61 Waetzold, Kopien, fig. 358.
62 Here Aaron’s serpent resembles a dragon, a feature omitted in the Rylands and Brother Haggadot. For this motif see J. Gutmann, ‘Josephus’ Jewish Antiquities in 12th century art: renovatio or creatio?’, Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, xlviii (1985), 439.
64 Waetzold, Kopien, figs 360ff.
65 Kessler, Passover in St Peter’s, fig. 2.
Aaron stand on the opposite side, and the plagues are shown in the centre. However, the depiction of the first plague, the plague of blood (Ex. 7: 19ff), in the Rylands (fig. 18) and Brother Haggadot (fol. 3r) is an exception to this. Whereas the Golden (fol. 11r) and Sarajevo Haggadot (fol. 22r), for example, show this plague according to the usual scheme, the Rylands and Brother Haggadot show Pharaoh riding on a horse, accompanied by a group of horsemen, while Moses and Aaron are seen standing next to a river. This is an accurate representation of the narrative in Ex. 7: 15: ‘Go to him in the morning, behold he will go out to the waters. And you shall meet him on the bank of the river’. The Octateuchs and the Canterbury Psalter in Paris also provide an outdoor setting for this scene, but omit the detail of Pharaoh on horseback. The Octateuchs give outdoor settings to all the plague scenes, so it is by no means clear that there is a specific relation to the above-quoted Bible verse. In the Rylands and Brother Haggadot this is the only plague depicted outdoors. An interesting variation is found in the old English Hexateuch (fol. 82r): Pharaoh appears in a doorway, a detail which is also literally related to the text, either Ex. 7: 15 (see above) or Ex. 7: 23: ‘And he turned himself away and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to it this time also’. This variety of elements relevant to the first plague suggests that there was originally a richer sequence of scenes associated with this episode.

The plague of blood is followed by the plague of frogs (Rylands Haggadah, fig. 19, Brother Haggadah, fol. 4r). It is typical for most Jewish illustrations of the plagues to portray Pharaoh as a victim of the plagues, not just an observer, and our manuscripts are no exception: the frogs jump on him and his entourage. A similar composition appears in the old English Hexateuch (fig. 20). Kessler has already demonstrated the relationship between the English miniature, a late antique wall painting in the basilica of Old St Peter, and a group of later Italian frescoes.

The picture of the fourth plague provides one of the few instances of the Rylands (fol. 16r) and Brother Haggadot (fol. 4r) adhering to the Rabbinic tradition. As in most other depictions of the plagues, Pharaoh’s throne is shown on the right, with two counsellors behind it. Moses, Aaron and three Israelites are on the left. The Egyptians are being attacked not by insects, as in Christian versions of this episode, but by wild beasts. According to the Hebrew text, the fourth plague consisted of arava (Ex. 8: 21ff, Hebrew 8: 17ff), a word interpreted in the Rabbinic commentaries.

66 Vat. gr. 747, fol. 80r or Vat. gr. 746, fol. 170r.
67 Heimann, *Last copy*, fig. 12.
68 Kessler, *Pictures as scripture*. 
as 'wild beasts', whereas in the Vulgate as 'insects'. Because of this disagreement, Jewish depictions of the fourth plague follow a different iconographic tradition than their Christian parallels.69 Nevertheless, the depiction of the plague of darkness (Ex. 10: 22ff) demonstrates how little our two manuscripts were influenced by the Rabbinic tradition compared to other Sephardic examples (Rylands Haggadah, fol. 17v, Brother Haggadah, fol. 5v). In the Golden (fol. 13v) and Sister Haggadot (fol. 15v) the plague of darkness is juxtaposed with the despoiling of the Egyptians by the Israelites (Ex. 12: 36). According to the Rabbinic tradition, it was during the days of the darkness that the Israelites had access to the treasures of the Egyptians.70 The Rylands and Brother Haggadot, however, make no reference to this commentary. The two episodes appear as entirely separate pictures.71

Before the tenth plague, the Christian cycles usually show the slaughter of the Passover lamb and the marking of the doorposts with blood (Ex. 12: 3ff). In the Haggadah cycles this scene is included in a group of pictures that follows the biblical cycle, depicting preparations for the holiday. The slaughter and preparation of the lamb appears in both the Rylands (fig. 21) and Brother Haggadot (fol. 7v). The slaughter takes place next to the door of a house; the blood gushes into a bowl near to the threshold. Outside the house, a figure marks the doorposts with blood. This imagery was apparently influenced by the Rabbinic tradition.72 The Hebrew term saph can mean both 'threshold' and 'bowl' (or any kind of vessel for fluids). Early Midrashim contained discussions on the interpretation of the text,73 and we may assume that they influenced the iconography of the present depictions. However, no reference to this Rabbinic interpretation occurs in other Jewish versions of this scene. The Padua picture Bible has two different illustrations relating to this episode (fig. 22), the first showing the marking of the doorposts; the second the Passover meal. It is noteworthy that in the marking of the doorposts there is no indication of the 'T'-sign found in the majority of Christian parallels. Moreover, the bowls containing the blood appear near the thresholds, like those in the Rylands and Brother Haggadot. Only the

70 Exodus Rabbah 14: 3 on Ex. 10: 22-23, A. Shinan, Midrash Shmot Rabbah – paraschot 1–14 (Jerusalem Tel Aviv, 1984), 264.
71 The search for the treasures appears in the Rylands Haggadah on fol. 18r, in the Brother Haggadah on fol. 6r.
73 For example, Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, pisha 6; J. Neusner, Mekhilta according to Rabbi Ishmael: an analytical translation (Atlanta, 1988), vol. 1, 36.
figure at the upper right holds the bowl in his hands because the threshold is hidden by the house in the foreground. Certain similarities to our manuscripts can also be observed in the general arrangement of the pictorial elements, the shape of the buildings, and the position of the figures.

Both manuscripts (Rylands Haggadah, fol. 18r, Brother Haggadah, fol. 6r) include depictions of the tenth plague (Ex. 12: 29ff) following an iconographic type known from the Octateuchs 74 and a few Western examples. The firstborn are lying in their beds within small compartments arranged in two vertical rows. A similar composition appears in the Sarajevo Haggadah (fol. 26v); however the Golden Haggadah (fol. 14r) adheres to the more common Western iconography, showing the angel of death slaying the firstborn. Western counterparts of the version in the Rylands, Brother and Sarajevo Haggadot, occur in the Ashburnham Pentateuch 75 and in the old English Hexateuch (fol. 89v).

The departure from Egypt is the central episode of the Haggadah and of all Jewish picture cycles (Ex. 13: 18). Sephardic depictions of this event including the Rylands (fol. 18v) and Brother Haggadot (fig. 23) share a number of basic elements. The land of Egypt is represented as an architectural setting, a convention typical of most Jewish representations of the Exodus and already established in a wall painting in the synagogue of Dura Europos. 76 It also appears in the Ashburnham Pentateuch, which is believed to depend on a Jewish prototype. 77 In all Sephardic Haggadot, as well as the Ashburnham Pentateuch the Egyptians are shown waving while observing the departing Israelites, who are armed in accordance with a frequent Rabbinic interpretation of the biblical narrative. 78 This motif can be traced back as far as the Dura synagogue. An apparent reminiscence of it appears in the old English Hexateuch (fol. 90v) where a figure with helmet and shield is included. The Pamplona Bibles represent depictions of the Israelites on their way to the sea as ten armed men. 79 As in numerous representations of this scene from late Antiquity onwards,

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74 Vat. gr. 747, fol. 86v; Vat. gr. 746, fol. 185v.
75 Fol. 65r, U. Schubert, Egyptian bondage, fig. 11.
76 E. Goodenough, Jewish symbols in the Greco-Roman period (New York, 1968), vol. 11, pl. 14.
79 Augsburg, fol. 56v, Bucher, fig. 113.
the Israelites carry bundles with unleavened dough on their shoulders. This motif is also known from Dura and from a slightly later group of sarcophagi showing the crossing of the Red Sea, as well as the old English Hexateuch and the Morgan Bible (fol. 8v). There are no observable similarities to the parallels in the Octateuchs. One element that often occurs in other Sephardic Haggadot – the Israelites are shown with raised hands – is missing from the Rylands and Brother Haggadot. A specifically Jewish motif, it is also missing in all Christian versions of this scene.

The biblical cycle of the Rylands (fol. 19r) and Brother Haggadot (fol. 7r) concludes with of the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 14: 21ff). The composition shows a number of horizontal stripes; it therefore departs from the scheme of the late antique sarcophagi which also appears in the Golden Haggadah (fol. 14r) and in Byzantine examples. In the Rylands and Brother Haggadot the Israelites cross the sea on two dry paths; between them, the Egyptians are seen drowning in the water. These paths probably have their roots in Rabbinic commentaries which explain that the sea was divided into twelve paths, one for each tribe. There is, however, no indication of twelve stripes, although this would be of some importance regarding the Rabbinic context. The arrangement of horizontal stripes recall to some extent a composition found in a relief on the wooden doors of the basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome. Depictions of the crossing of the Red Sea in the Castilian Bibles from Leon and San Millan also show a dry path between the waves, and a similar iconography is found in the Crusader Bible in the Arsenal Library in Paris. Two other elements, frequent in Sephardic cycles and related to the Rabbinic tradition, are missing in the Rylands and Brother Haggadot. The Sarajevo Haggadah (fol. 28r), for example, shows two curved paths, a detail inspired by

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80 For example Arles, Musée de l’art chrétien, Wilpert, Sarcofagocristiani, vol. 2, pl. 209, 3. For a general discussion of this group of sarcophagi see C. Rizzardi, I sarcofagi paleocristiani con rappresentazione del pasaggio del Mar Rosso (Fuenza, 1970).

81 For the differentiation between these two types, which can be observed from late Antiquity on, Jeremias, Holztür der Basilika Santa Sabina, 29.


83 Jeremias, Holztür der Basilika Santa Sabina, pl. 26.

84 Leon, San Isidoro, Cod. 2, fol. 39r, J. Williams, The illustrations of the Leon Bible of the Year 960 an iconographic analysis’ (Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, 1963), 64; Leon, San Isidoro, Cod. 3, fol. 38; Madrid, Museum der Real Academia de la Historia II/III, fol. 44; J. Williams, ‘A Castilian tradition of Bible illustration: the romaneseque Bible from San Millán’, JWCI, xxviii (1968), 66–85.

Maimonides, who explained that the paths were curved in order to allow the Israelites to observe the drowning of the Egyptians.\textsuperscript{86} Our manuscripts also omit the frequent motif of Pharaoh's survival in consequence of his penitence.\textsuperscript{87}

The forgoing iconographic analysis of the biblical cycles of the Rylands and Brother \textit{Haggadot} allows us to draw a number of interesting conclusions about them. They are, as we have seen, relatively uninfluenced by the Rabbinic tradition. Although a few elements of this tradition do exist, they are far from constituting a dominant characteristic as in other Sephardic cycles. The manuscripts belong to a widespread Western tradition of Exodus illustration that developed from late Antiquity to the fourteenth century. Reminiscences of late antique types can frequently be discerned in their compositions and there is a clear relationship to cycles containing Genesis illustrations related to the iconographic family of the Cotton Genesis group, which includes the antependium of Salerno, the old English Hexateuch and the Padua picture Bible. No relationship to the Byzantine Octateuchs, believed to have been influential in the West, can be established: elements that recall the iconography of the Octateuchs are also commonly found in Western cycles and can be attributed to shared ancient roots. The relationship to the Cotton group of biblical cycles points to the existence of an iconographic tradition which included not only the book of Genesis, but the entire Pentateuch. This suggests that the Cotton Genesis, though related to this tradition has been expanded from a shorter cycle, since it contains too many scenes for a single book of a complete Pentateuch.\textsuperscript{88} If such a Pentateuch existed it certainly contained smaller cycles of each biblical book than did the Cotton manuscript.

The relationships between the cycles associated with the Cotton group are extremely complex. Because these cycles are subject to dynamics and development, innovation and the use of models outside the group, parallel scenes can differ to a considerable degree. The Golden \textit{Haggadah} and its sister manuscript reflect a similar iconographic repertory;\textsuperscript{89} however, they bear no significant similarities to the Rylands and Brother \textit{Haggadot} that would suggest a direct iconographic relationship. Similarly remote relationships can be observed in the other cycles related to the Cotton tradition, which can be defined as 'family resemblances' rather than as direct dependence.

\textsuperscript{86} Narkiss, \textit{Pharao}, 9.

\textsuperscript{87} For textual sources and examples see ibid.; for examples in Byzantine art see Nordström, \textit{Water miracles}, 286 ff.

\textsuperscript{88} Kessler, \textit{Early Pentateuch}.

\textsuperscript{89} Kogman-Appel, \textit{Goldene Haggada}.
A relationship to Exodus scenes in cycles whose Genesis part belongs to the Cotton group can be observed in most cases. The illuminators of the Rylands and Brother Haggadot probably used models representing a fairly late stage in the development of the Exodus tradition. This would account for the dissimilarities to other Sephardic cycles and to other members of the Cotton family. However, our manuscripts exhibit very few similarities to high medieval French and English cycles. Even the Golden Haggadah and its sister cycle seem to have been inspired to a greater extent by high medieval illustrations than the Rylands and Brother Haggadot, suggesting that the latter reflect a slightly earlier stage of the Exodus tradition than the former.
Figure 11

Figure 12