

## Cassia Carataca

### Documentation for the 2023 Ice Dragon Pentathlon First Prize Scroll Scribal Arts category

This scroll is based on the March folio of the "Hampson" Metrical Calendar, f.5r of Cotton MS Galba A. XVIII in the British Library. The exemplar is a 10th century Anglo-Saxon addition to a 9th century continental manuscript. Certain letterforms and rubrication styles were taken from other pages in the calendar, the latter because this particular page's rubrication looks like it was unfinished, or removed or otherwise damaged.

This is the second scroll I have illuminated, and the third I have calligraphed.

**Materials:** The substrate is parchment, the ink for the calligraphy is Fox and Quill Red Wine iron gall applied with a metal crowquill nib, the rubrication is Winsor & Newton Scarlet Calligraphy Ink (because it is lightfast) applied with a Mitchell #5 square metal nib, the line art is lampblack applied with a 10/0 round brush, and the illumination is done with M. Graham and Winsor & Newton gouache using 2/0 and 3/0 round brushes (because I have no experience with period pigments, I had a little over a month to do this, and there are also small children that rampage through the house.)

**Reasons:** My initial reason for picking this page was because I liked the fish in the Pisces roundel and the weirdness of the zoomorphic decoration, and then the period size of the manuscript fit within the size of the piece of parchment. Other selling points were, first, that the exemplar itself is in verse, and I'm a sucker for verse. Second, calligraphically, its script is a very tiny hybrid Carolingian hand with some half-Uncial letterforms and some Anglo-Saxon pointed minuscule habits (and liberal use of the letter yogh), there are tall-E ligatures, and on pages where there are Anglo-Saxon names, there are also the letters wynn and edh. I am also a sucker for the above.

**Wordsmithing:** The original verse was a line per day, commemorating saints' feast days and events -- including obituaries for King Alfred and Queen Ealhswith -- but I didn't follow the calendar that way because this is a prize scroll instead of a calendar. Instead, I wrote the body of the text in iambic pentameter blank verse.

**Calligraphy:** When I was making an exemplar alphabet for reference and practice, I took note not only of the x-height and those of the ascenders and descenders, but also of which letters were used when, and which letterforms: there was no strict pattern, but the Uncial-ish D form seemed to show up when the script approached cursive, which led me to believe that the scribe (indicated in the British Library's documentation as Anglo-Saxon) was trying to copy some letterforms from the Carolingian script of

the rest of the (older) manuscript (as opposed to the calendar they were adding later) and fell back on their own hand sometimes, possibly when tired or rushed.

I used wynn for W because it appears in the Anglo-Saxon queen Ealhswith's name (on a later page), and edh as an occasional space-saver for th, because there are multiple space-saving sigla and other abbreviations throughout the exemplar but I couldn't use them in the scroll (due to the scroll being in English instead of Latin), and edh also appears in the queen's name. I used yogh for Y in some cases and I in others, primarily as word-enders since that's where yogh appears the most in the exemplar.

When doing a practice round of the body of the text on paper, I tried using two different brands of iron gall and settled on the Fox and Quill because it looked more black and less purple than the KWZ. I also tried four different nibs: first the Mitchell #5 metal nib, which was too big, then a goose quill someone else made for me which I inexpertly cut down and still couldn't get quite small enough, then a metal G pen which was ALMOST small enough, and then I finally settled on the metal crowquill because it could get the letters small enough to fit in the available space.

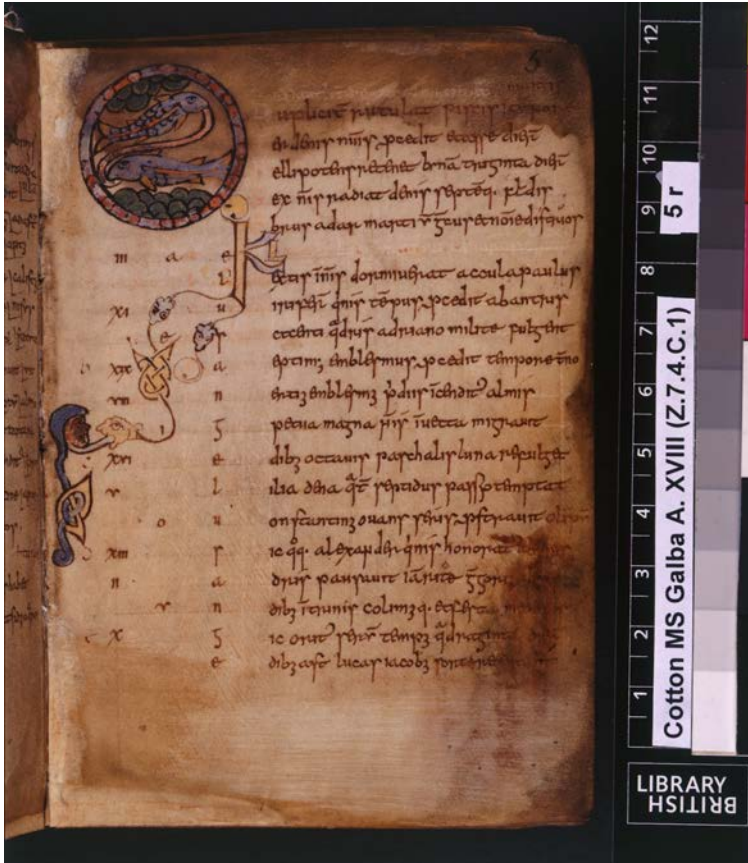
**Yikes:** While I was doing the calligraphy, I spilled iron gall all over the lower half of the parchment, then blotted up and damp-cloth rinsed it within five seconds in a screeching panic because I know iron gall ink is a chemical reaction. It still looked like an ink wash, so I took my panic to Mistress Cori, who also enlisted the help of Gail Kellogg Hope on facebook, and thereafter I learned how to remove surface stains from parchment. (For the record, it turned out to be typewriter eraser, light sanding with 600-grit sandpaper, and then a bunch of gum sandarac.)

**Illumination:** The painting was difficult to determine and easy to apply! The exemplar has fire and water damage, and it initially looked like the color in the border of the roundel was red with gold dots and some silvery-blue fish paint smeared on it (or possibly alternating somehow with silvery-blue paint), and like the colors on the fish fins were mixed yellow and red.

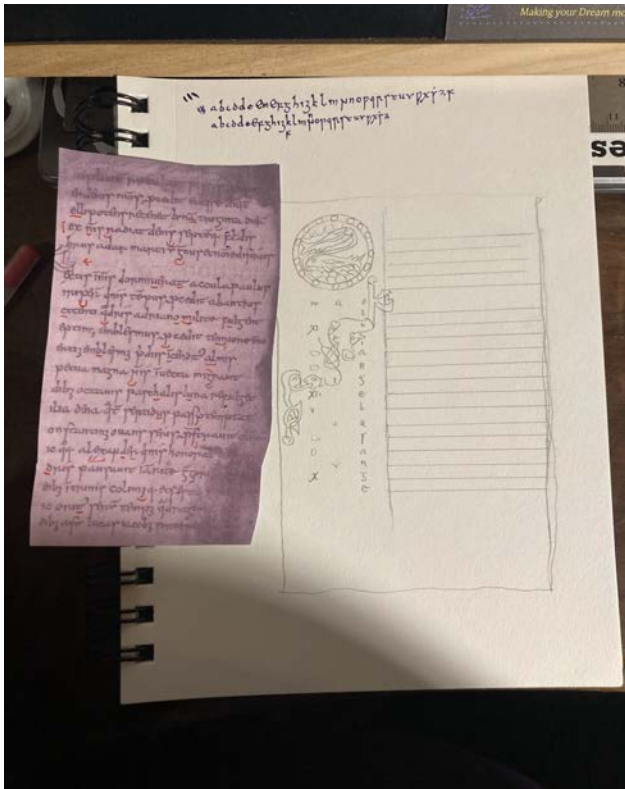
First I tried painting a test version of it on a parchment trading card but it looked wrong. So with help from Edith of Winterton and Brother Bobby in examining the photo of the exemplar, I decided to paint as if the red was left from colored gesso underneath places where there was shell gold (or was originally supposed to be gilded but wasn't). I couldn't tell precisely which shade of yellow the initial K was supposed to be, so I used mixed yellow ochre and azo yellow.

**Other:** I've bottom-loaded process photos, and there are some references quoted at the end.

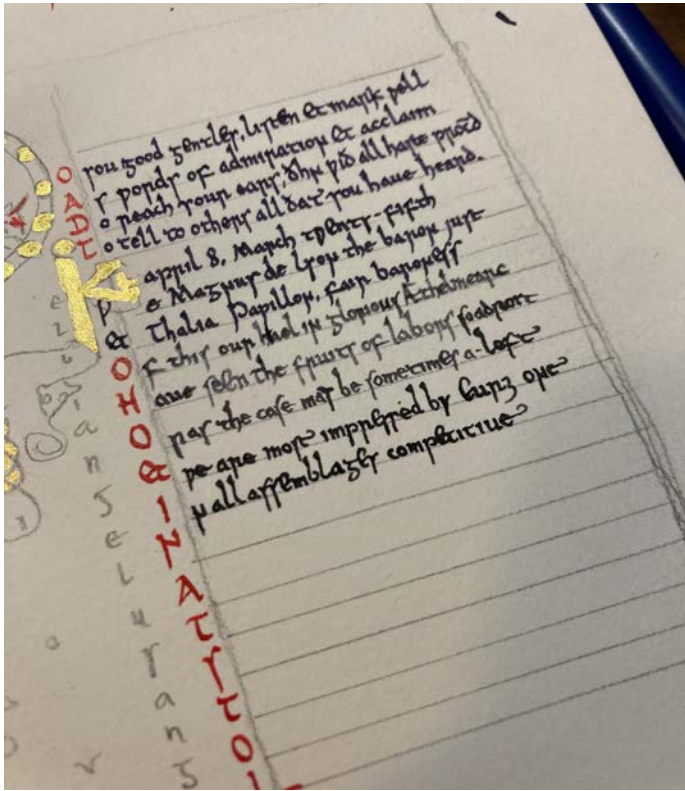
Exemplar at the British Library's digital manuscript collection.



Creating an exemplar alphabet at close to actual size.



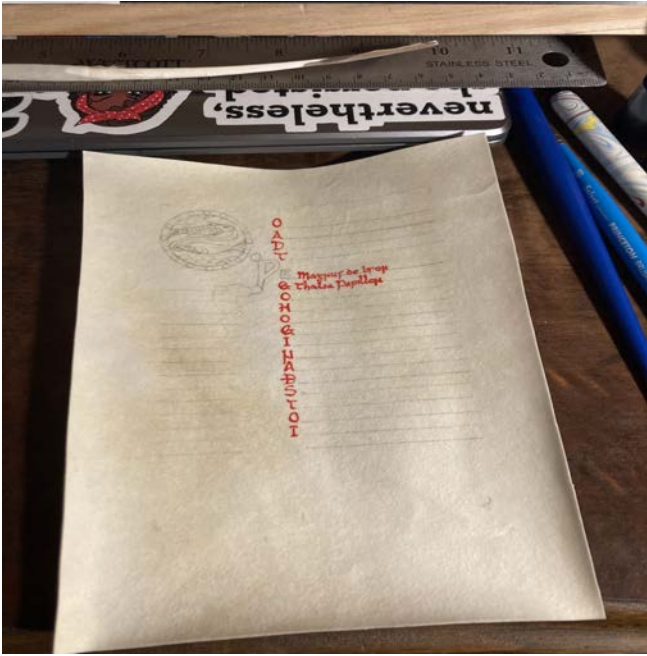
Testing different inks and nibs on paper.



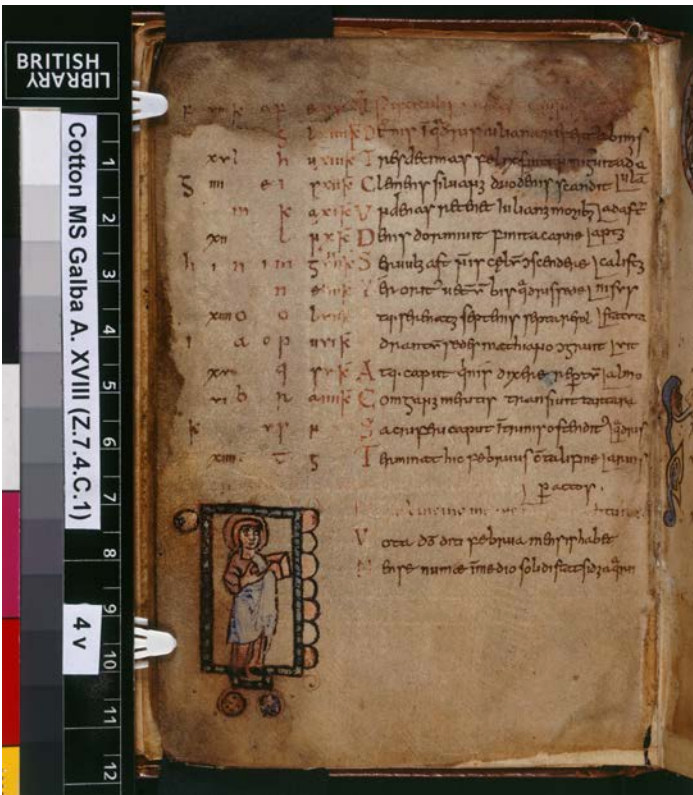
Trying out different colors for the fishie roundel.



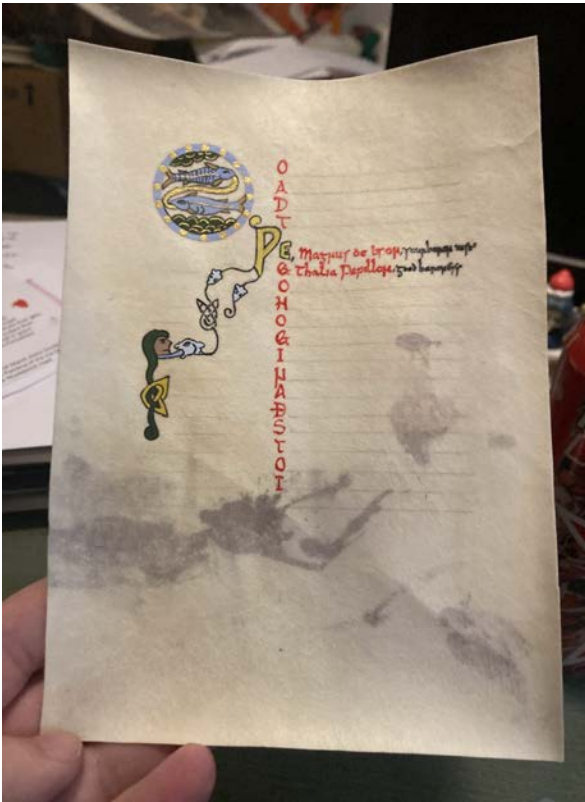
Laying out the page on parchment and rubricating.



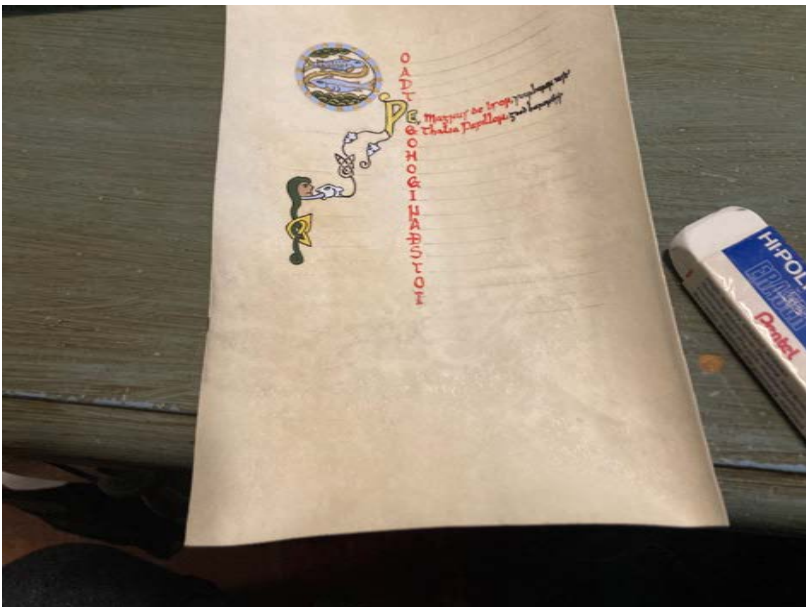
Rubrication example from f.4v of the manuscript (because it was missing in the exemplar.)

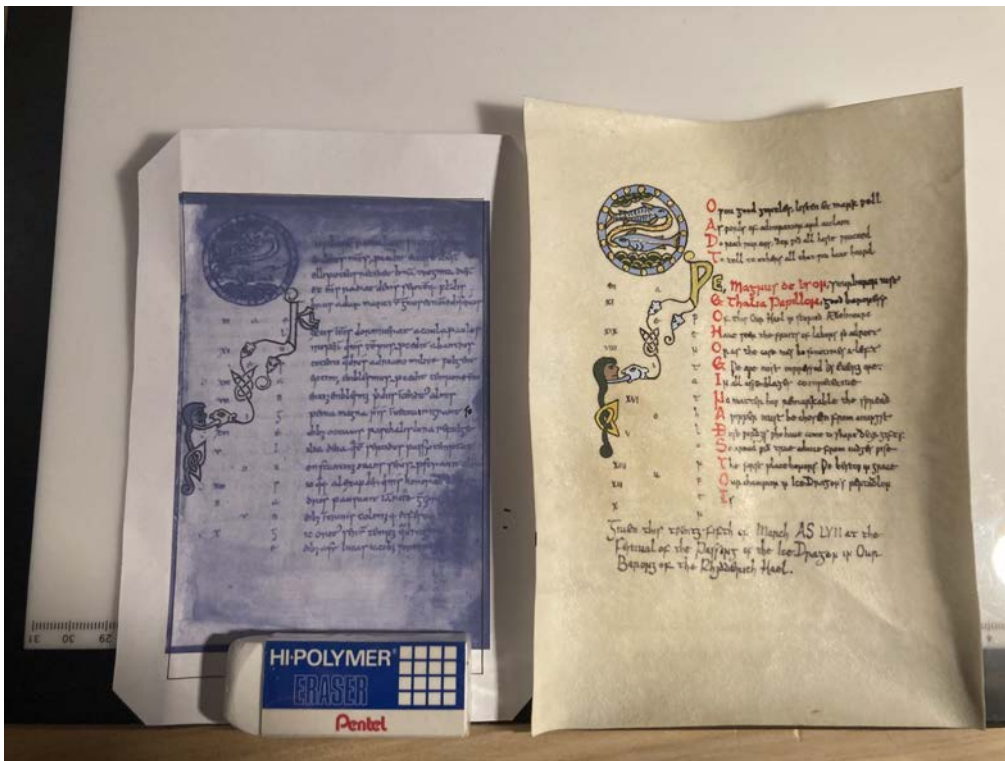


Panicking like nobody's business because I splattered iron gall on the page. (PANIC)



THE TYPEWRITER ERASER WORKED! (not the eraser in the pic.)





Quoted information on the exemplar from the British Library at [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton\\_MS\\_Galba\\_A\\_XVIII:](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Galba_A_XVIII:)

The Gallican Psalter, f. 2v-200v, was copied in the 1st half of the 9th century. Additions made in the 1st half of the 10th century: ff. 2v, 21r and 120v: Three full-page images. ff. 3r-14v: Metrical calendar of saints' days, the 'Hampson calendar' (see McGurk 'Metrical Calendar' (1986), 79-125), with part of a short poem on the months and with the death of King Alfred recorded on 26th October and his wife Ealswith on 5th December 902. [The decorations include] 12 roundels with signs of the Zodiac, images of saints in square frames and initials with zoomorphic and foliate decoration, one for each month of the calendar (ff. 3r-14v).

Materials: Parchment. The outer edges of leaves damaged by fire, 1731.

Dimensions: 130 × 90 mm (text space 105 × 55/65 mm, written in 1 column of 19 lines per page).

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Quoted information from a Cambridge University Press journal article on the manuscript:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/anglo-saxon-england/article/abs/galba-psalter-pictures-texts-and-context-in-an-early-medieval-prayerbook/D5A9C9E36D19F6B17045F3BE251B9680>

The 'Galba Psalter' (London, British Library, Cotton Galba A. xviii) is a pocket-sized (128 × 88 mm.), early-ninth-century Carolingian book, perhaps made in the region of Liège, that was originally decorated with only ornamental initials.

By the early tenth century the manuscript had reached England, where an Anglo-Saxon scriptorium added two prefatory quires (1r–19v) containing a metrical calendar illuminated with zodiac signs, KL monograms and single figures (pls. IX–X), and five full-page pictures. [...]

Obits for King Alfred (d. 899) and his consort Ealhswith (d. 902) provide a terminus post quem for the calendar and the coeval illumination. The Insular minuscule script of the calendar indicates a West Saxon origin during the first decade of the tenth century. On the grounds of the Psalter's style and later provenance, the additions were very likely made at Winchester.