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The Modernity of Middle English Manuscripts: A Multimodal Investigation

Patrizia Anesa & Ilaria Fornasini

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Università degli Studi di Bergamo

Patrizia Anesa & Ilaria Fornasini

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> "We who draw do so not only to make something visible to others, but also to accompany something invisible to its incalculable destination."
> John Berger, *Bento's Sketchbook*

1. Introduction

In this study, Middle English manuscripts are investigated through the use of multimodal analytical tools. Our focus is on the interrelation between different semiotic resources, and particular attention is given to the dynamics which develop between text and image. This analysis thus aims to demonstrate the multimodal modernity of these manuscripts as complex semiotic systems. The corpus under investigation consists of documents belonging to the illuminated manuscripts collections of the British Library and of the Cambridge University Library, dating from 1350 to 1500.
Two main dimensions will be analysed: the visual positioning of the

[1] This paper has been conceived and written jointly. However, Patrizia Anesa is responsible for sections 2 and 5; Ilaria Fornasini is responsible for sections 1 and 3 and for the compilation of the corpus; the authors are equally responsible for section 4 (more specifically, Patrizia Anesa is mainly responsible for section 4.1 and Ilaria Fornasini is mainly responsible for section 4.2).

different modes and the functional dynamics which emerge between them. More specifically, visual positioning choices can be divided into three main typologies (although each of course includes a vast array of specific variations): separateness, inclusion, and integration. Instead, functional relations can be grouped into three main patterns: manifest functionality (text functional to the image, or vice versa), co-functionality, and functional unrelation.

This study stems from the assumption that modern multimodal approaches to text analysis may be fruitfully employed to investigate Middle English manuscripts and their complex iconographic apparatus. Indeed, images have a pictorial representative value as well as symbolic, and manuscripts are not simply an aesthetic juxtaposition of verses and pictures but a complex and interactive creation of meaning. Therefore, we aim to reach a more nuanced understanding of multimodality by focusing on the interpenetration of semiotic resources and reflecting upon how their complementarity characterises textual and pictorial narrations.

2. A multimodal approach to manuscripts

While current multimodal approaches are adopted predominantly to analyse digital genres, the combination and strategic juxtaposition of different semiotic resources is an ancient phenomenon. Such interaction has traditionally served a variety of purposes. Symbolic, clarifying and persuasive functions have coexisted together because of the need to transmit information to diverse audiences which may have been capable or inclined to acquire it through just one of same.[2]

Manuscripts appear to be inherently multimodal, following Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) definition of multimodality, which, in its

[2] However, it should be pointed out the literacy rate grew constantly over the Middle ages and Clanchy (1993) states that in Late Medieval England about half of the population was able to carry out some reading processes. Moreover, although clearly only an elitist minority of people had access to manuscripts, pictorial and textual resources were not employed exclusively by a specific social class in the hermeneutic process.

simplest terms, may be conceived as the outcome of the articulation in one or more semiotic modes which interact in the construction of meaning. In the case of manuscripts, the interaction between textual and pictorial modes determines specific semiotic dynamics, and elements such as visual disposition, shape, colour, size, etc. contribute to conveying a specific meaning.

As will be demonstrated, the different spatial syntagms are combined taking into account the informational value of the different items within the page. The *ordinatio* of pages is carefully planned to emphasise "the visuality of reading" (Desmond and Sheingorn 2003: 3; see also Carrol et al. 2013; Driver and Orr 2011) and often reflects complex dynamics such as theme/rheme, ideality/reality, centrality/marginality, which typify the dialogue between the different elements. In this respect, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) suggest forms of correspondence between given-new and a left-right, between ideal-real and top-bottom, and between centrality-marginality and importance-unimportance, and these relations are also evident in the visual arrangements of most of the illuminations investigated here.

The salience (i.e. the core characteristics, such as size and colour) and the framing (i.e. the visual demarcation and the reciprocal interdependence) of the iconographic elements are also central within a multimodal analysis (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006; see also Kress 2010). More specifically, salience has to be determined in order to guarantee visual balance and connection. As a consequence, shapes, colours, and sizes of the different elements are carefully evaluated in order to guarantee continuity or complementarity.

Moreover, sentences represent written frames, while borders are pictorial frames, and in each *folio* different modes are framed to convey cohesion and coherence (Kress 2010). It should also be pointed out that frames are to be seen as blurred and permeable boundaries (Bearden 2012) rather than stable entities. In particular, scribes and illustrators constantly had to make decisions about framing devices which were ultimately semantic and hermeneutic

decisions. The investigation of these aspects also allows us to observe the potential for significance and meaning of the different modes interacting within a manuscript, which is a complex multimodal semiotic unit.

Thus, this study may to some extent be placed within the Material Philology school of thought (Nichols 1990), especially in the light of its interdisciplinary nature and the specific focus on the interrelation between literary works and their physical embodiments, as well as between material forms and semiotic values. Specific emphasis is placed on the application of multimodal approaches in the hermeneutic process lying at the core of the analysis of the manuscripts, which are seen as living dynamic systems of semiotic resources, based on the principle of meaning-compression.[3]

3. *Corpus manuscriptorum*

The corpus under investigation consists of 60 illuminated manuscripts from the collections of the British Library in London and the Cambridge University Library. For the sake of homogeneity, only manuscripts dating back from the XIVth through the XVIth century were considered, for a total of 462 codices. Subsequently, the selection was restricted to manuscripts produced in England and including at least one text in Middle English, for a total of 60 codices and 487 miniatures.

The majority of texts were produced in London or East Anglia and, along with Middle English, some of them also include elements in Latin or French. From a thematic perspective, the codices are highly heterogenous; beyond devotional texts we find, for instance, scientific and philosophical treaties, travel accounts, romances, and chronicles. The types of decoration also vary and

[3] More specifically, meaning-compression is defined as "a principle of economy whereby patterned multimodal combinations of visual and verbal resources on the small, highly compressed scale […] provide semiotic models of the larger, more complex realities that individuals have to engage with" (Baldry and Thibault 2006: 19).

can range from single illuminations to complex pictorial cycles.

The works selected were produced generally in abbeys, especially those of the Benedictine order. The identity of the scribes is generally unknown, but at times annotations of their names are found on the works or are identifiable through, for example, records kept by their abbeys (Stockdale 1980: 69). Others were produced by lay scribes, who belonged to guilds such as the Textwriters' and Limners' Guild in London (Christianson 1999), or by freelance artisans working on commission (Mooney 2008: 184). It is interesting to note that the origin of the scribes was generally heterogenous, and it is estimated that one third of London scribes and illustrators actually came from other regions (Mooney 2008: 185), while another third was made up of foreigners (Rundle 2011: 284), as can be inferred from dialectic and foreign influences emerging from the texts.

It is estimated (Scott 1996: 35) that at least one quarter of surviving late Middle English manuscripts present a combination of illuminations and words. Consequently, investigating the relationship between these two semiotic modes is fundamental in order to understand how conveying meaning took place in a multimodal way. Indeed, as will be shown, the iconographic apparatus did not simply have an ornamental or aesthetic function, but also an explanatory and narrative one which worked as a cognitive device to signal the structural division of the texts. In some cases it also represented a form of gloss, providing additional details.

4. Analysis

Our analysis focuses on two forms of interaction between text and image, namely visual positioning and functionality, and their role in terms of meaning transmission.

Concerning visual positioning (see Section 4.1), three main macropatterns have been identified: separateness, inclusion, and integration. Separateness refers to a visual position of images and texts on different pages, without contact. The inclusive pattern indicates

the inclusion of different semiotic resources within the same page and can assume three main visual variants (inclusion, insertion in single or multiple columns and insertion of text within the image). Integration is not to be intended merely as a dialogic relation between image and text, which permeates, although in different ways, the corpus at large, but rather the physical compenetrating positioning of textual and pictorial resources.
In terms of functionality (see Section 4.2), we identified the following patterns: manifest functionality (with text functional to image or image functional to text), co-functionality, and apparent unrelation.

4.1. Visual arrangement

4.1.1. Separateness

The notion of visual separateness implies a detachment of picture and image. This pattern is characterised by the collocation of text and image on separate pages, without contact. The features of this pattern and the independence of the image also permitted its insertion into the manuscript at a later stage either on an existing blank page or with the addition of a *folio* subsequent to the completion of the work. Nevertheless, this form of apparent isolation did not hamper the preservation of cohesion. Indeed, with regard to the conveyance of meaning, the two opposite *folios* can often be observed as a single unit, thus creating a relationship in terms of functionality, but without a direct visual contact in terms of positioning.
In this kind of pattern, the pictorial illustration tends to occupy the entire page, a practice which has a long tradition (see the *Lindisfarne Gospels* or the *Book of Durrow*) (cf. Alexander 1978; Pächt 1994). This form of clear separateness is present in 13 manuscripts and the total number of full-page miniatures is 20.[4]
An exemplification is represented by British Library MS Harley

[4] The small figure is primarily related to the high cost that illuminations of this kind demanded.

629, including Lydgate's *The life of Our Lady* (Figure 1).[5]

Figure 1
British Library MS Harley 629, ff. 1v-2r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

This full-page illumination dates back to the second or third quarter of the XVth century and represents a nativity scene. On the opposite page, we find a framed text whose size is similar to that of the illumination, thus conveying a sense of balance. The verses represent a dedication and prologue to Lygate's text.[6]

[5] All images included in this paper were granted permission of reproduction by the British Library between April and May 2017.

[6] The first lines of the prologue recite: "This booke was compilid by John Lidgate monke of Bury at the exettacion and sterynge of oure worshipful prince kynge Henry the fifthe, in the honour glorie and worshippe of the birthe of the most glorious maide wife and mother of oure lord Jesus Christe chapterid and markyd after this table" (This book was compiled by John Lydgate, monk of Bury, upon invitation and inspiration of our worshipful king Henry the Fifth, to honour, glorify and worship the birth of the most glorious maid, wife, and mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, divided in chapters and recorded after

Especially in the case of devotional or dedicational images, the illuminations are placed at the beginning of the manuscript, assuming an anticipatory function which allows the reader to predict the contents of the following pages and also emphasises the magnificence of the decorative apparatus.
Full-page images are in some cases the only illustration of the entire work and appear in a strategic position, e.g. on the first *folio* or fronting the beginning of the text (cf. Fornasini 2012: 37). They generally represent a theme which is particularly pertinent to the manuscript at large (e.g. the protagonist, the main event, etc.).

4.1.2. Inclusion

An analogous level of apparent visual separateness is found in those cases where text and image are positioned on the same page, but in two different parts of the *folio*. We will describe this visual rendering as inclusion in that the pictorial and textual items are included within the same page or column(s).
Inclusion may assume different structural forms. The pattern which comprises text and image in a single column often characterises narrative texts, both of sacred (as in the case of hagiographies) or profane nature. It generally consists of a textual element in one single column which occupies most of the available space, and an illumination which is often placed at the beginning or alternatively at a key point within the narration.[7] This pattern is specifically found in 19 manuscripts and in 189 illuminations, thus showing an average ratio of miniatures per manuscripts of approximately 10.

A good exemplar of this arrangement is represented by the codex British Library MS Harley 4826, dating back to approximately 1450, which contains a copy of John Lydgate's *Lives of St*

this table). Unless specified otherwise, translations have been provided by Ilaria Fornasini.

[7] Generally, the height of the written-space corresponds to the total width of the page, with the presence of wide margins, which allowed them to be trimmed in case of subsequent rebinding (cf. De Hamel 2001: 42).

Edmund and St Fremund. After an introductory full-page, added after the completion of the manuscript, we find an illumination which is visually positioned at the top of the page and occupies approximately one third of the whole *folio*. It is partially framed by golden borders and a foliation stemming from the initial (Figure 2).

Figure 2
British Library MS Harley 4826, f. 4r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

The crux of the narration is the martyrdom of St Edmund and the illustration conveys a sense of harmonious balance and symmetry. The saint is pictorially represented bound to a tree, being shot to death by two archers. The significance of the character corresponds to his centrality in terms of positioning. His figure is crucial not only because it serves as an instantaneous illustration of the event, but also for the reason that it is the pictorial element that (together with the tree, seen as his visual continuation) links the components together, conveying continuity and complementarity, while also connecting the earthly and heavenly worlds. The

two bowmen create a visual composition which, thanks to the trajectories created by their bows, draws attention to the centre of the image. On the right-hand side is a gloss in Latin (*Vita Sancti Edmundi*) and the text starts below the illumination. Hence, the different elements assume specific narrative functions: the image summarises the main event, the gloss titles the story, and the writing recounts the facts (cf. Fornasini 2012).

Other magnificent examples of the inclusive pattern are found in Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.27, which was probably produced in East Anglia around 1420-1430. This superior work of art is the earliest existing comprehensive Chaucer manuscript (cf. Seymour 1997: 69) and the *Canterbury Tales* occupy a significant part of the manuscript, from f. 132r to f. 443v. Despite the excision of most of the original illuminations, some are still visible and seem to confirm that the artist made use of a magnificent range of visual devices in order to blend together text and images and create a cohesive iconographic apparatus.

Miniatures are semantically related to the story that they portray, and visually to the title of the tale. The dimension of such illuminations is quite significant, ranging from one-third to one-half of the *folio*. They generally precede the related tale, e.g. showing the protagonist mounted on horse, and are framed by flourished borders in red penwork. For instance, the Wife of Bath is shown under the rubricated red ink title of the narration, thus between title and text (written on f. 222v), while the Pardoner (f. 306r) precedes both title and account.

A similar pattern is used for the illustration of the Monk and the Manciple: in the former case, the title is written between the legs of the Monk's horse, while in the latter the rubric is placed behind the main character. These visual choices convey dynamicity and seem to emphasise the interaction between the two modes.

Another realisation of the inclusive arrangement is found in the codex British Library MS Harley 3862, produced in England in the second half of the XVth century, containing a copy of John Lydgate's *The life of Our Lady* (Figure 3).

Figure 3
British Library MS Harley 3862, f. 2r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

Unlike the first type of inclusion, in which texts and images are included on the same page but with the image in the top part, in this example (see f. 2r) the miniature is placed in the centre of the *folio*. We define this particular type of inclusion as insertion, in that the image is visually inserted within the written mode, minimizing the level of separateness.

The illumination occupies the spatial equivalent of two stanzas and represents the Tree of Jesse. Green branches spring from the sleeping character, while the Virgin and Child occupy the upper section of the image, traditionally devoted to sacred and divine elements. This is also in line with the oft-quoted ideal/real distinction according to which in western semiotics ideal elements tend to be positioned on the top half of the page (cf. Kress and Van Leuween 2006).

This is the only miniature present in the manuscript and is strategically preceded by the author's prologue and invocation to the

Virgin Mary, and followed by the beginning of the narration with the introduction of Jesse.[8] The image and illumination are visually linked thanks to the presence of a rubricated foliage which spreads from the lower tinted initial and partially borders the image, creating visual continuity.

Another visual realisation of the inclusive pattern, and more precisely of the insertion subtype, is represented by the inclusion of an image within the text which develops over multiple columns, usually two. British Library MS Egerton 1991 contains a formally perfect example of this pattern. This manuscript contains John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and was produced in London in the first quarter of the XVth century. Several decorated initials embellish this work of art, and their extended flourishing often contributes to framing the page or separating the two columns of the text, in a magnificent synergy between aesthetics and functionality.

The miniature contained in the manuscript is inserted within the textual apparatus in a strategic position in relation to the narration. On f. 7v the *Lover's Confession* is illuminated and can be interpreted as the frame story of a series of shorter poems included in the manuscript (Figure 4).

This illumination, showing The Lover kneeling in front of Venus' chaplain, Genius, is admirably linked to the written words. It is preceded by verses (book 1, vv. 198-202) which introduce the Confession and recite "[…] and I uplifte min hefd / with that and gan beholde / the selve prest which as sche wolde / was redy there and sette him doun / to hiere my confessioun".[9]

The illustration is then followed by four verses in Latin which address the popular topos of the *vulnus amoris* (the wound of love). The text subsequently describes the Genius's reaction to the

[8] "A Floure of vertue full longe kepyt in cloose / Full many yere wyth holsom levys softee / Only by grace upon the stalke aroos / Out of lesse, spryngyng fro the roote" ("A flower of virtue, kept closed for very long, many long years with healthy and sweet leaves, only by grace, springing from the root, arose upon the stalk out of Jesse") (book 1, vv. 64-67).

[9] "And I raised my head, and I gazed on this self-same priest, who was, just as she said he would be, right there prepared to speak with me and hear me make my confession".

Figure 4
British Library MS Egerton 1991, f. 7v, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

Lover's Confession (book 1, vv. 203-208): "This worthi Prest, this holy man / To me spekende thus began / And seide Benedicite / Mi Sone, of the felicite / Of love and ek of all the wo / Thou schalt thee schrive of bothe tuo".[10] It thus creates a further link with the previous image.

Another superlative example of this inclusive outline is found in British Library MS Sloane 2452, a codex produced in Bury St Edmunds between 1438 and 1450, which is a copy of Boccaccio's *Fall of Princes* translated by John Lydgate.[11] As in the manuscript described previously, some of the pages include decorated initials. From them some magnificent flourishing decorations develop and divide the layout into two columns which accommodate the text.

On f. 3v, a small miniature is placed at the top of the page. The im-

[10] "This worthy priest, this holy man thus began to speak to me and said «On you my blessings be, my son, from the joys and from the pain of love, you shall be free of them both»".

[11] Based on a translation by Laurent de Premierfait.

age is inserted within the text, as it is both preceded and followed by the written word, but at the same it is positioned at the top of one of the columns. Henceforth, we can see this arrangement as a form of inclusion which lies at the crossroads between the first inclusive pattern described in this section and the second (also defined as insertion).

It is a complex apparatus including different scenes, such as Saturn, king of Crete, devouring his children, Procne in the act of serving the head of his son to Theseus, the Pharaoh's men drowning in the attempt to cross the Red Sea, and the Athenian plague of heat during Cecrops' reign (Figure 5 - Figure 6).

The miniature is iconographically dense, but visually every scene maintains a certain level of clarity and independence. Its primary function is to introduce the following chapter which narrates the story of Saturn. Below the image the artist inserted the pen drawing reading 'The third tragedye of Satourne' (The third tragedy of Saturn), which functions both as a caption for the im-

Figure 5
British Library MS Sloane 2452, f. 3v, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

Figure 6
British Library MS Sloane 2452, f. 3v particular, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

age and a title for the following narration.

The third inclusive pattern of our typology is another form of insertion, but more specifically an arrangement in which the image is placed inside the text. In this case, the text develops all around the pictorial element. The guide for the positioning of the text is the image itself rather than a specific layout (e.g. the division into columns). The insertion of an iconographic element within a written text without any clear visual separation appears in only six manuscripts, but with a significant miniature per manuscript ratio (42:6). This pattern is typical of lengthy narrations, in which the reader could benefit from recurrent visualisation of the various episodes.

Figure 7
British Library MS Harley 326, f. 40r, particular, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

A good exemplar of this layout is the precious codex British Library MS Harley 326, which contains the only extant copy of the Middle English translation of the *Romance of the Three Kings' Sons*. The work dates back to 1475-1485 and was probably produced in London (Figure 7).

On f. 40r, the miniature illustrates the destruction of the Christian Fleet by a storm. The text narrates the scene ("Wynde and tempest arose upon the see yn such wise that the shippes tombled")[12] and surrounds the framed image.

[12] "Wind and tempest arose upon the sea in such a way that the ships tum-

4.1.3. Integration

Integration as a pattern is intended in this section as a visual compenetration of textual and pictorial elements. It is a particularly creative outline, open to a variety of aesthetic renderings. The term integration does not suggest the existence of an exclusive form of semantic interdependence, in that the other patterns also demonstrate that the conveyance of meaning is often favoured by the combination of the different modes. Rather, integration is intended as the compenetrating arrangement of an image and a narrative description from a visual perspective.

Exemplars of this pattern are found, for instance, in medieval medical texts, in that the dissemination of knowledge was enhanced by the integration of pictorial and textual elements. By means of an example, in the iconographic apparatus shown below (taken from British Library MS Harley 3719), we find a superb illustration of this pattern (Figure 8).
Ff. 158v-159r present a form of *Homo Signorum*, or Zodiac Man. It was used to illustrate the link between the different parts of the human body and the related zodiac signs which were believed to affect or control them.
In this case, the image is accompanied by text in the surrounding borders, in alternating black and red ink. Each short text is linked to the related organ via a flourished red stroke. The astronomical considerations, indicating which zodiac sign is influencing which organ, are added in blue ink, next to or even over the image. Along these lines, the *mise en page* allows for a clear consultation of the *folios*, despite their highly dense informative value.

A different organisational choice is adopted in British Library MS Sloane 442. On f. 36r, the text seems to occupy most of the empty spaces, to some extent almost oppressing the image. The direction of the writing at times changes in order to adapt to the area available. The star signs are added in red ink on the Zodiacal Man, but the whole composition does not appear well-balanced, and

bled".

the integration between the two modes does not convey clarity or immediacy in understanding (Figure 9).

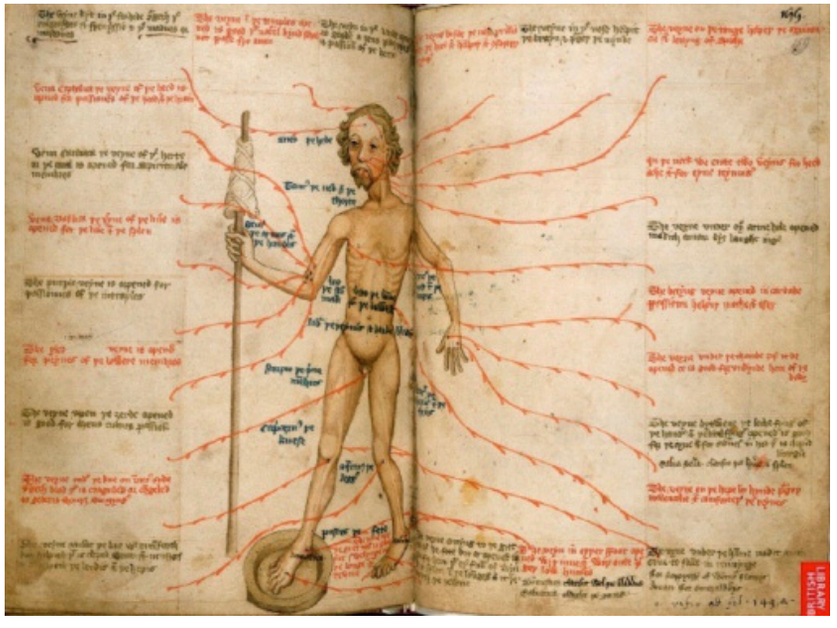

Figure 8 (above)
British Library MS Harley 3719, ff. 158v-159r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

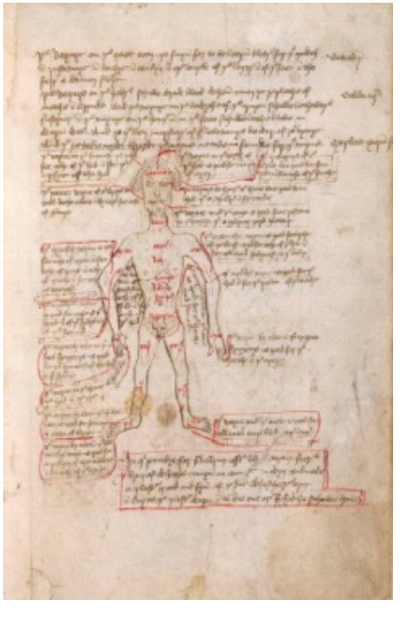

Figure 9 (right)
British Library MS Sloane 442, f. 36r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

Conversely, British Library MS Egerton 2572 includes a similar image, presented in a more schematic and balanced way, which shows the *Homo Venorum* or Vein Man. Documents of this type were generally consulted by barber surgeons as they illustrated, for instance, points for carrying out a phlebotomy (Figure 10).

Figure 10
British Library MS Egerton 2572, f. 50r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

The medical information is framed in circles surrounding the central image. The circles are connected to the corresponding parts of the body with red lines. The arrangement chosen emphasises the dynamic dialogue between the two modes and enhances the general comprehension of the text, in an attempt to achieve simplicity, intelligibility and dynamism.

Another category in which the integrative pattern emerges is that of heraldic treatises. A remarkable instance is represented by an unfinished roll of arms denominated *Anonymous verses on the kings of England, to Henry VI*, which is part of the treatise *Sir Thomas Holme's Book of Arms*. It is contained in British Library MS Harley 4205, produced in South Eastern England, probably in London between 1445 and 1450.

The first part of the manuscript includes a series of coloured drawings, with the representation of a king on each page. Both kings are wearing armour and a tabard while bearing their arms, and are holding a sceptre and sword. The textual elements are framed in a plaque presented by the king; the verses describe the life of the depicted ruler, along with their coat of arms. For instance, the illustration on f. 3v and f. 8r show King Richard I and King Henry VI respectively. The verses start with "And sithen regned his son Richard / A man that was never aferde" and "After him reigned his son ful right / the sixthe Harry that young knight" (Figure 11).[13]

On f. 3v a coat of arms is not featured. Indeed, despite the emergence of a formal English heraldry system during the XIIth century, information about Richard's escutcheon could only be of a speculative nature.[14] Conversely, f. 8r shows Henry VI's coat of arms, illustrated as the union of his own in the left-hand field with those of Margaret of Anjou, his wife, on the right.[15]

In these cases, the text is not just conceptually but also physically combined with the image. Although in terms of functionality (see Section 4.2) the textual elements may appear subordinate to the image, their visual arrangement is remarkably well integrated. The identification of the characters is immediately possible through their pictorial representation, but the text provides confirmation as well as supplementary information.

13 "And then reigned his son Richard, a man that was never afraid" and "After him reigned his rightful son, Harry the sixth, that young knight".

14 The three lions passant shown on his tabard were first used on his second Great Seal, and were then employed, painted gold on a red shield, as the Royal Arms by his successors.

15 Henry VI's own arms are represented as impaled French arms, with three fleurs-de-lis, and English arms, denoting the dual monarchy of England and France, a pattern which was also reprised on his tabard. His wife's are instead illustrated as quartered arms of the lordships of Hungary, Naples, Jerusalem, Anjou, Bar and Lorraine.

Figure 11
British Library MS Harley 4205, f. 3v (left) and f. 8r (right), (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

4.2. Functionality

The following three patterns focus on the functional relationship between image and text rather than on their spatial arrangement, although clearly these two dynamics are inherently interdependent, as will be illustrated.
The reciprocal functionality between texts and images in illuminated manuscripts is undisputable and ubiquitous. However, it is possible to identify three main patterns according to the main functional dynamics emerging. In the first pattern, one of the modes is identifiable as predominantly functional to the other, whereas the second typology includes those arrangements in which a clear co-functionality is present. The third instead embraces those cases in which image and text appear unrelated from a functional perspective.

4.2.1. Manifest functionality

Despite their inherent reciprocal functionality, in a number of the illuminations one of the modes is manifestly functional to the other. This kind of graphic disposition often presents inventive solutions for organizing visual information together with the written mode. The works presenting this common pattern belong to a vast array of literary forms, ranging from medical treatises to heraldry collections and rolls of arms, from scientific and astronomical texts to romances.
One mode often appears dependent on the other. The text could be seen as dependent on the image, filling the gaps left by the picture, giving up its own structure and adhering to the visual one, or images could be mere accompanying elements, juxtaposed to the writing almost as an addition.
Medical treatises, which frequently follow the integration arrangement in terms of composition (see section 4.1.3), often present original patterns in which the text appears functional to the image. A sublime example is British Library MS Egerton 848, produced in 1490 or 1491. It contains a medical miscellany, including an astronomical calendar (Figure 12).

Figure 12
British Library MS Egerton 848, f. 21r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

F. 21r shows a Zodiac Man (see Section 4.1.3) and in this case the text fits the blank areas on the page and is framed by thin demarcation lines which run along the margins of the image.
Another type of this outline is particularly functional to the representation of genealogies. For instance, British Library MS Lansdowne 204 is a manuscript which contains the only existent copy of the first version of the *Chronicle of Britain to Henry VI*, by John Hardyng (Figure 13).[16]

Figure 13
British Library MS Lansdowne 204, f. 196r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

On f. 196 the manuscript encompasses a miniature illustrating a number of seated kings, whose names, titles, and kinships are captioned below their portraits. Saint Louis King of France is placed at the top of the illumination, followed by his son Philip III, the Bold, and by his son Philip IV, the Fair. The penultimate row portrays his descendants, and his daughter Isabella immediately below him, to highlight their connection. Beneath her figure is that of her son Edward III of England, described as "kynge of Englonde and of Fraunce". Consequently, this illustration was particularly important to prove Edward III's right – and thus also his successors' claims – to the throne of France.

[16] A second version (survived in 16 manuscripts) was subsequently produced for the House of York, in favour of the new king, Edward IV (cf. Hiatt 2004: 130).

Another example of this functional pattern is found in British Library MS Stowe 39, produced in England during the first half of the XVth century, which is a copy of the *Debate for the Soul* commonly attributed to the English hermit and mystic Richard Rolle.
On f. 32v, a small and naked man, symbolising the soul, is depicted surrounded by other characters in front of a judging God, pictured with his hands raised. A devil is holding the soul by his hair while Death is spearing him. On the right-hand side, two angels (or possibly one archangel and Christ), the Virgin Mary, and God are represented (Figure 14).
A scroll with curved, fluctuating inscriptions runs from the head of each of these characters towards the top of the *folio*. Those inscriptions convey dynamicity as they seem to flutter in the wind.
Another typology of the pattern identified as manifest functionality is represented by arrangements in which the image is functional to the text. The pictures in this case are not generally essential to the whole iconographic apparatus, despite their semantic relation with the narration. The pictorial elements show a lower level of integration with the text and may appear as a peripheral addition, although they can also have an informative value which contributes to conveying the principal message of the work.
British Library MS Harley 4866 contains an exemplar of Thomas Hoccleve's *The Regiment of Princes* or *De Regimine Principum*, produced in Eastern England, seemingly in London or Westminster, after 1411. It is presumed that the manuscript was possibly prepared under the direct supervision of the author.
F. 88r features one of the two miniatures contained. It is placed on the right-hand side and occupies almost the equivalent area of two

Figure 14
British Library MS Stowe 39, f. 32v, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

stanzas. It shows the earliest known portrait of Geoffrey Chaucer, who is depicted at an angle and pointing at the text (Figure 15).

The verses he is pointing at refer to his own portrait and recite: "I have heere his liknesse / Do make, to this ende, in sothfastnesse, / That they that han of him lost thoght and mynde / By this peynture may ageyn fynde".[17]

This image thus has a unique relationship with the text and its artistic rendering is also exquisitely remarkable. Indeed, Chaucer's right hand breaks the boundaries of the frame and creates a sort of extension towards the stanzas of the poem.

Other exemplars derived from this copy show similar artistic choices. For instance, British Library MS Royal 17 D VI includes an analogous portrait of Chaucer, on f. 93v. This is a full-figure representation and is placed on the left-hand margin of the page, accompanied by the caption *Chauceris ymago* (Figure 16).

The main body of the page is occupied by text and the picture assumes a marginal position, without a clear division of the *folio*.

[17] "I wanted his portrait to be made here, with steadfastness, so that those whom had lost memory of him will find it again by this picture".

Figure 15
British Library MS Harley 4866, f. 88r, full page (left) and particular (right), (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

Figure 16
British Library MS Royal 17 D VI, f. 93v, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

4.2.2. Co-functionality of text, image and gloss

This kind of arrangement is characterised by a strong cohesion between textual and pictorial elements, which appear reciprocally functional to one another, and the full comprehension and appreciation of a work is strongly related to the transactive relation between these two modes.

In this case, images often run alongside the text and have an illustrative function, representing a certain passage within the narration. This pattern may also include the presence of glosses, which have an explicative function, a coeval addition on the margin of the illustration. This solution is, however, quite rare.

A significant example of co-functionality is found in British Library MS Harley 3954, a Middle English copy of the accounts of Sir John Mandeville's *Voyage d'outre mer*, produced in East Anglia in the second quarter of the XVth century. This ample iconographic cycle consists of ninety-nine drawings and miniatures, usually not framed. The illustrations are generally accompanied by a small gloss on the external margin of the page, which summarises the events being narrated.

On f. 40v and f. 42r. we can find the narration of Mandeville's travels and his encounters with monsters such as the Anthropophagi, or cannibals, and the Cynocephalies, or dog-headed people, as well as the Cyclops and the Blemmyes, acephalous creatures with eyes and mouths on their chests.

The spatial arrangement prioritises the role of the images, and the text occupies a smaller area. However, the other textual elements - the rubricated glosses - are placed next to each illustration and play an important role in the process of conveying meaning. The combination of these elements is expressly beneficial to the reader, who may derive information from the narration, pictures and glosses and combine them in order to fully understand the content of the story (Figure 17).

A similar example can be found in an earlier copy of the same

Figure 17
British Library MS Harley 3954, f. 40v (left) and f. 42r (right), (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

text, British Library MS Royal 17 C XXXVIII, produced in England between 1410 and 1420. Although the reciprocal functionality between texts, glosses and pictures is less evident, this work shows some interesting analogies with the previous one from a compositional perspective.

In particular, the two textual elements, the narration and the glosses, constantly interact. The numerous miniatures included in the manuscripts (113) generally occupy the lower section of the page. Interestingly, separate rubricated glosses also appear next to each picture.

For instance, f. 10v shows the sacred spear shafts of Mount Athos and Mount Olympus, and the narrative section is accompanied by a gloss resuming the content of that part. Similarly, in the lower half of the page, the illuminator illustrates a shaft and two

Figure 18
British Library MS Royal 17 C XXXVIII, f. 10v, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

flounced hills covered in flowers, which are also complemented by their related gloss (Figure 18).
Thus, the interaction between narration and glosses is mirrored in that between illustrations and glosses. In this way, the image is functionally connected to the related text. Indeed, although text and image seem to occupy two different areas of the page, they are actually quite interconnected, especially thanks to the use of glosses, and support one another to facilitate comprehension.
The notion of co-functionality is not related exclusively to the case of manuscripts including glosses. It is a pattern which is found throughout different codices, and especially on those *folios* characterised by the integration pattern (see section 4.1.3).

4.2.3. Functional unrelation

In this pattern the two modes display an apparent lack of functional relation. This does not imply that no interaction exists, but merely that one mode does not seem to be functional to the other and no manifest communication between them emerges. They seem to exist as two separate entities, which interact more from a graphic and aesthetic perspective rather than at a functional level.
For instance, it was not infrequent for medieval scribes to add a

Figure 19
British Library MS Lansdowne 378, ff. 30v-31r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

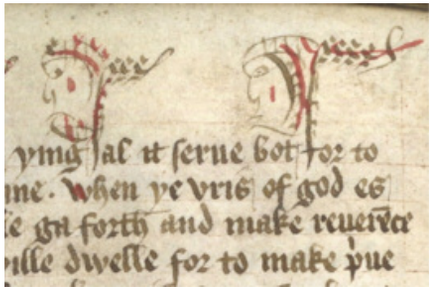

Figure 20
British Library MS Lansdowne 378, f. 30v (particular) , (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

probatio pennae or some sketches on the margins of their works. Small pictures sometimes emerged from the flourishing of some ornate letters, as we can see in British Library MS Lansdowne 378, produced in Northern England in the first half of the XVth century. This codex contains a version of the *Rule of St Benet and the ritual for the ordination of nuns* in Middle English (Figure 19).
On two facing *folios*, 30v and 31r, the scribe amused himself adding some ink drawings and created the so-called *cadel initials* or *cadels*, decorative extensions of the letter strokes. In particular, the artist embellished some of the initials of the words in the first line, drawing some hooded human heads (Figure 20).
Similar patterns can be found in British Library MS Royal 18 D II and British Library MS Stowe 950 (Figure 21).
Interestingly, some manuscripts also include some marginal drawings which do not appear to have any functional relation with the text. This is the case, for instance, of f. 28r of British Library MS

Figure 21
British Library MS Royal 18 D II, f. 2v (left) and British Library MS Stowe 950, ff. 28v-29r (right), (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

Figure 22
British Library MS Royal 17 C XXXVIII, f. 28r, (c) British Library Board. Permission for reproduction granted.

Royal 17 C XXXVIII. Two animals, probably hares, standing and playing flute and pipes, are drawn even though there is no mention of them in the text (Figure 22).
Illustrations of this kind seem to confirm the relative degree of freedom which scribes and illustrators at times enjoyed during the creation of a codex.

5. The modernity of illuminated manuscripts: Conclusions and implications

This study argues for the application of multimodality as a theoretical and methodological approach to investigate exemplars of illuminated manuscripts. Given the constraints imposed by the nature of a single paper, it was not possible to offer a meticulous description of all fascinating texts analysed. However, we delineated some main patterns emerging across a corpus of manuscripts, by investigating the complex transactional dynamics between written and pictorial modes.
Because of the sheer number of multimodal features observable, we focused exclusively on two main elements, namely the spatial significance of the illumination within the *folio* and its functional relation with the text in order to observe, beyond the purely aesthetic value, the dialogic connection between the modes and the visual and communicative processes which characterise them.
In terms of visual spatial arrangements, we demonstrated that the vast range of devices adopted by the artists can be seen as belonging to three main categories: 1) separateness; 2) inclusion (with the possibility of identifying three main forms of inclusion); 3) integration. As regards the functional relation between the modes, we suggested a typology which includes: 1) manifest functionality; 2) con-functionality; 3) functional unrelation.
This approach emphasises the need to investigate manuscripts as complete media to be observed in their entirety, and suggests the possibility of studying them with the help of contemporary theories, in order to expose common communicative traits linking our

reading experience to that of the original producers and readers of illuminated manuscripts. The analysis has also shown that the three principles of compositions (i.e. information value, salience, and framing) suggested by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 13) are visible throughout the manuscript production process and prove useful in determining the spatial syntagmatic relations emerging between the different semiotic resources.

Illuminations seem to epitomise the narrative power of images, as the order of events clearly follows patterns often quoted in modern multimodal studies. Artists were constantly developing original and ingenious devices to integrate written words and illumination creating close, powerful, transactive links between them. Indeed, the *folio* is conceived as a unitary complex of semiotic resources structured visually to fulfil a variety of functions, e.g. aesthetic and informative.

This investigation has demonstrated that multimodal approaches can be fruitfully applied to ancient documents in that multimodality is by no means a new phenomenon. Our goal was not only to describe our corpus through multimodal approaches, but also to problematise multimodality, or at least bimodality, and its position in literacy from a historical perspective. Our analysis of illuminated manuscripts construes them as significatory units and aims to embrace and operationalise multimodality as an inherent feature of such literary works. This form of 'multimodal consciousness' and its historicisation may reclaim the marginalised concept that multimodality equips us with tools to explore the constitutive meaning of a vast array of texts which go far beyond contemporary ones. Ultimately, our aim was to reach a more sophisticated understanding of the transactive dynamics between text and pictures, which can make us more adroit in investigating the modernity of illuminated manuscripts.

We also argue for the need to revise assumptions related to the image/word dualism beyond a synchronic perspective and thus for the need to open up to a broader and deeper conceptualisation of multimodality across times. More specifically, our understanding

of the coexistence of different modes is, following Rosenblatt's (1978) seminal work, not simply interactive, but rather transactive. Indeed, images and words do not merely interact but are reciprocally constitutive and simultaneously cooperate in the realization of meaning. In this perspective, both modes are seen as to reciprocally illuminate one another.

Indeed, illuminated manuscripts represent superb examples of multimodal works of art in which the textual and visual apparatus are mutually constitutive and their systematic analysis cannot be exempt from their reciprocal interpretation. Meaning is accomplished not only through the crossing of the porous boundaries of modes, but thanks to their transactive co-construction. This is in line with Fleckenstein's notion of 'imageword', which she employs in her discussion of embodied literacies to refer to the "inextricability of language and imagery in any literate act" and to the idea that "image and word are always melded in meaning" (Fleckenstein 2003: 4).

In this respect, Kress himself states that "the world of meaning has always been multimodal" (Kress 2000: 174) and subsequently confirms that "communication is always and inevitably multimodal" (Kress 2005: 5). However, many strands of multimodal research have focused exclusively on the impact of new technology on literacy. Consequently, the risk of underrating the importance that multimodality from a historical perspective is palpable.

While some multimodal scholars recognise the historicity of multimodality, this concept is often confined to an abstract level and investigations tend to be conducted with approaches which are, to a large extent, ahistorical. In particular, multimodality often focuses on recent interactional forms of literacy, especially digital, without acknowledging the contributions offered by ancient texts for the development of multimodal combinations of resources, and consequently overlooking their importance as a crucial facet of the evolution of literacy. In other words, confining multimodality to new media may indirectly lead to the negation of the historical manifestations of interactional dynamics which develop between

different modes. Indeed, an ahistorical approach to multimodality limits itself to the most recent realisations of the phenomenon and overlooks the impact that ancient forms of multimodality have had on modern genres.

An exclusive analytic focus on modern technologies and their affordances may detract attention from the notion that meaning-making processes have always been multimodal and from the inherent imbricated nature of literacy. As Haas aptly and simply remarks, "the technologies we write with are not new: They are built on layers and layers of other technologies" (Haas 1996: 219). Indeed, scribal technologies lent themselves to the creation of multimodal works of art and illuminated manuscripts constitute superb multimodal forms of literacy which developed centuries before the theorisation of multimodality.

Thus, we can argue that literacy is inherently multimodal. This not to negate the importance of the "pictorial turn" (Mitchell 2010) in contemporary communication,[18] but simply to suggest that limiting multimodal approaches to the last few decades eschews the possibility of gaining a more nuanced understanding of how contemporary literacies have been informed by ancient examples from a multimodal perspective.

In this view, the multimodal nature of current digital literacies is not seen as simply the product of a semiotic revolution (Kress 2000) but rather of a semiotic evolution, in which new products have constantly been fed by those pre-existing, also characterised by symbiotic processes involving different modes. Consequently, the investigation of historic technologies of composition can serve to appreciate the synesthetic effects of multimodality from a more comprehensive perspective and through new analytical lenses.

[18] For a comprehensive discussion of the notions of pictorial turn and iconic turn see Bartmanski 2014.

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