ILLUMINATED MULTIMODALITY: COMMUNICATIVE DYNAMICS IN LATE MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

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Taking the cue from a question posed by Lawrence G. Duggan (“Was art really the ‘Book of the Illiterate’?”), the contribution of the visual mode inside the manuscript media will be analyzed from a particular point of view.

A significant number of British manuscripts which survived from the late Middle Ages presents illuminations in conjunction with their texts: the iconographic device was meant to ornate and embellish the page, as well as to illustrate what was explained in the text. Moreover, these illuminations often helped the reader, by clearly dividing the different chapters of the book. When set alongside the narration, the images constituted a sort of gloss, providing a visual comment to the text and even adding further details.

The integration of visual and verbal resources and their interaction inside the manuscript as a medium is currently studied by the so-called New or Material philology. This kind of integrational philology owes much to the new linguistic theories: it is defined as interdisciplinary, re-traditionalizing and relativistic, and pays particular attention to the material artefacts, focusing on the historical situations of texts and the function of texts in time and place.

This poster will analyze some examples taken from late medieval British manuscripts in order to illustrate, by means of a synchronic multimodal analysis, their peculiar communicative dynamics.

References:


