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## The image of oneself in a medieval fine art tradition: features of artistic interpretation

**Богдана Гринда. Образ себе у середньовічній мистецькій традиції: особливості художньої інтерпретації.** Реальне й символічне, історичне й сучасне, релігійне й секулярне в середньовічній іконографії тісно «взаємодіють». Завдяки візуальному перекладу, процесу через який зображення впливали на оповідь, на здатність пристосувати її до іншого часу або незнайомої культурної географії і, таким чином, ставали зрозумілими середньовічному читачеві, формуються механізми для прочитання образу самого себе, якою бачила себе людина Середньовіччя, і якою вона зображала себе мистецькими засобами в координатах символіко-художнього простору.

**Ключові слова:** Середньовіччя, візуальний переклад, ілюміновані манускрипти, образ.

The Middle Ages have its unique, very recognizable face, a representative system of visual coordinates that help in the attempts to reconstruct worldview, symbolic and, eventually, cultural and everyday ideas of medieval man. The iconography of medieval Western art is an extremely broad phenomenon that embraces different forms of imagery - both in terms of subject matter and relatively different genres of art of that era. Illuminated manuscripts from this point of view are of particular interest to us, because of their typological diversity, breadth of themes and subjects, which include numerous illustrative cycles and reflect excellent stylistic and iconographic traditions, they are an excellent source for re-readings of imagery and ideological structures.

The categories of oneself/another, I/they belong to the fundamental concepts in the study of cultures. Ways and features of cultural and mental self-identification, the definition of one's and another's long been the subject of study within different time coordinates. This topic is thoroughly researched in the context of medieval studies. In particular, representatives of the so-called new historiography of the French school Jacques Le Hoff [40-41], George Duby [46-47], German school – Peter Dinzelbacher [48] and their followers in the former Soviet Union, who created an alternative system of research on history – Aron Gurevich [42-45], Dmitry Kharitonovich, Mikhail Boytsov, Maria Paramonova [56-59], Julia Arnautova, Svetlana Luchitskaya [50-55], Nikolai Noskov and others. Studying the dichotomy of oneself/others is especially productive in the context of studying the problems of the shaping and development of the idea of personality and individualism. This topic is also devoted to extensive and thorough historiography, among authors working with it W. Ullman [37], C. Morris [27], C. Bruck [39], J.F. Benton [1], M.-D. Chenu [8], A. Macfarlane [26], G. Kunel [49], and A. Gurevich [43], and contemporary scholars appeal to their studies as fundamental in this area. In the art studies of medievalism, the problem of oneself/others is often conceived through the prism of studying the image of the past, in which the image of a contemporary appears. Examples of this review are the works of well-known scholars Anne D. Hedeman [16-20], Keith Busby [3-4], Gabrielle M. Spiegel [31], Joyce Coleman [11] etc.

The iconographic and anthropological aspects of our study touch on a wide range of topics and subjects, the tradition of studying which also has a developed historiography. So, studies of religious identity in artistic imagery belong to the following authors Justin Clegg [9], Aden Kumler [21], Sigrid Danielson, Evan A. Gatti [13], the ideas of unknown and unexplored, magical and dangerous are being studied by Alixe Bovey [2], Ann Payne [30], Michael Camille [5-6], Jeffery Cohen [10], Sophie Page [28-29]. The features of the figurative self-identification of medieval knighthood are explored in particular by Sophie Cassagne-Brouquet [7], Keith Busby [3], Alison Stones [32-36], Irène Fabry-Tehranchi [15], Barbara Lupack [25], and others.

The article aims to sum up and generalize the peculiarities of creating a self-image in different cultural categories represented in medieval art, to reveal the mechanisms of transformation of the idea through the word into the images used to guide the medieval manuscripts. To achieve the goal, combined scholar methods, involving an interdisciplinary approach

to the subject of research, are used. The author's interpretation model is based both on subjective conclusions and on objective empirical research of primary sources – illuminated manuscripts, as synthetic works, where a visual and verbal narrative is combined. Thus, it is possible to achieve the novelty of the research and to ensure its relevance in the field of studies over the text and image in the medieval cultural tradition.

Medieval imagery is a phenomenon in which the real and symbolic, religious and secular, past and present, history and mythology closely interact. At first glance, these dichotomous pairs represent concepts that would differentiate both at the level of the ideological and the level of visual, but instead, the medieval art was offering to the spectators, then and now, and a very holistic picture in which there are no random puzzles, each supposed to be a fragment, filled with symbolic meaning, the understanding of which in the sum and gives the image of "self", "self-presentation", which we discuss in the paper.

First of all, it should be noted that in the context of medieval imagery, the concept of temporal and geographical separation is rather conditional. The usual way of images' representation – either historical, mythological or foreign – is the unequivocal use of the familiar "native" entourage, and the delineation of "self / other" occurs through the introduction of some specific features, which, however, mainly do not violate, do not destroy the homogeneity of this so to speak "Western iconographic standard".

So, what were the ways of interpreting the visual material? How did the translation process goes from the idea through a word to an visual image, in which the image of itself appears in medieval culture.

The visual translation, the process through which the image affects the narrative, the ability to adapt it to another time or unfamiliar cultural geography and, thus, become clear to the medieval reader, representing image of oneself, is possible to a large extent precisely in the context of studying the history of the handwritten book and illuminations. The way the message was shaped, the image of the medieval book was littered, obliges the researcher to equally apply to the study of the manuscript as a purely physical object, as well as the connection between all the links directly involved in the process of creation and consumption. Medieval book making, in particular in France, has been thoroughly studied and described in modern historical science. For the most part, so-called libraires, that is, "publishers" and sellers of manuscripts, discussed in detail with comissioners, that is, sponsors, the number and size of images, the type of decor, which directly determined the cost of the finished book. Approving

the structure, they turned to the scribes, who left blank spaces for future illustrations. At the next stage, they went on to collaborate with artists who used either written ready-made instructions for creating illustrations, or developed sketches that filled the fields of manuscript folios. Consequently, a large number of people were involved in the process, who would have to share a common understanding of the visual language in order to jointly create effective artistic communication mechanisms.

By studying the relationship between the customer / artist / seller and the expectations of the audience, one can see an obvious role and significance of the audience in the process of forming and understanding the image of oneself, its past and present, and its artistic-like equivalents. In this context, it is important to answer first and foremost two questions: what is the significance of images in translations of texts distant from the audience historically or geographically? and what is the significance of visual rhetoric in the process of structuring the text itself – that is, how are the illustrations in the role of the translation agent functioning? In medieval manuscripts, it is possible to outline three effective ways, used by illuminators for translating figurative constructions into a modern semantically understandable language: through inter-visual and intertextual borrowings, through the structuring of visual cycles, and by the use of particular visual rhetoric [17, 70-72].

When creating new texts that were first illustrated, libraries have worked closely with artists to develop new literary allusions or to rebuild to a greater or lesser extent existing ones. Whether accidental, or intentional adaptation of a popular recognizable visual model associated with a certain text, to illustrate another material puts both texts in the lace of allusions, thus forming the mechanisms for their reading and understanding. The semantically related manuscripts are, for example, the *Grand Chroniques de France* (Paris, 1274) (II.1) and *Roman de Troie* (II.2), which was also illuminated in Paris ten years earlier than the chronicles [18]. The illuminators of *Chroniques* in the opposite way interpret the same subjects: yes, the episode with the abduction of Helen the Great in the 1264 manuscript is presented in the romantic key, where Paris is depicted "afflicted by love," but the illustration from the *Chronicles* represents the scene in an aggressive way, depicting violence through the use of characteristic symbolic gestures understood by the modern reader. This feed causes a much stronger resonance than the previous way of depicting the episode, but despite this, the illustrators retain a visual affinity with the novel, which is treated as a kind of prologue to the *Grand chroniques*.

Also, inter-invoicing is often used not so much for the "fusion of" texts as to enhance the credibility of one of them. For example, the image of Adam and Eve, along with scenes of frontispieces' creation in the Boccaccio manuscript, are intended to reinforce Boccaccio's texts with biblical authority [16, 115-124]. In some cases, the image completely replaces the text. Thus, illustrations for the *Historia de la destruction de Troye la grant* by Guido del Colonne replace certain parts of the Latin text, which the translator deliberately reduced (ll. 3).

By creating visual cycles, artists and libraires attentively and carefully structured them, defining their iconographic future, checking the size and ways of placing in the text, influencing the way of reading and perceiving the audience. One of the best examples of this design practice is the *Grand Chroniques* of 1375 that belonged to Charles V. The method of arrangement and the size of the illustrations were intended to guide and instruct the reader, to give him the keys to understanding the symbolic images [4]. Certain illuminations can be presented as illustrations of events that occurred at a specific time in a specific place, but they can also be considered as a tool for additional, parallel reading of the text they accompany. Echoing with other miniatures in the manuscript, they serve as a kind of encouragement to return to reading the previously described events, their symbolic comparison with the events of the present. Obvious in this interaction is the desire to cause chronological displacement, which assimilates the past events of the modern life of the king with the moments that he lived in the past. Thanks to the mechanisms for structuring the manuscript through visual cycles (scaling, location of images), the chronicles also created a negative image of the modern English monarchy, which is opposed to the French (under the influence of the political situation and the Hundred Years War, during which the chronicles were created). An effective tool in shaping desirable perception of its own image, its history is also the interruption of illustrative cycles, the refusal of the rendering of certain themes and plots. This method has been applied to Jean Kreton's *Livre de la Prinse et Mortar du Roy Richart* in order to reformat the history of the English King Richard II to the French audience [31, 45-49], drawing parallels with political and moral literature as an important example of the influence of fortune on the fate of those in power.

Consequently, the visual translation is carried out through textual and pictorial borrowings and their reinterpretation, as well as through the creation of new narratives by the structuring of a figurative series.

Another effective and often used in medieval illumination is the use

of illustrative rhetoric as a way of visual translation. In the illuminations of the XIV – XV centuries, prevails the simplistic approach to historical translation by means of visualization: artists mostly appeal to a sign system based on the use of semantics medieval costume. Distant events, historical characters on the pages of manuscripts embodied the medieval actors dressed in the usual outfit and operated in recognizable scenery. Oxford's Bodleian Library has a rare manuscript with instructions for artists on how to use clothing images, a peculiar vocabulary of costume symbols [17, 79-81]. Examples of such visual rhetoric show illustrative cycles to Conspiracy of Catiline, Comedies, and others.

These thoughtfully dressed images are often associated with one another through the use of yet different means of dealing with visual rhetoric: visual enhancement, or doubling, of images that would seem to have a familiar narrative in the unexpected direction. To enhance the effect libraires togetherwith artists work on contrasting familiar, classical scenes with new stories that complement their meanings. These visual pairs extend the experience of spectators in the perception of certain scenarios to create markers for specific moral messages in dense, pictorial cycles.

Often, the artist both uses costume rhetoric and rhetoric of amplification, mostly in the manuscripts of the early fifteenth century, so that composition, clothes, gestures together create a symbolic moral narrative (Il.4).

Thus, the collaboration between authors, libraries, artists, patrons and audiences who created illuminated stories also generated a community of readers and spectators who perceived the past as an integral part of the present, organically integrated with it. The key role in shaping this vision is played first and foremost by the illustrations. Illuminations establish links between individual manuscripts, combining their texts into one historical chain, affirming the authority of the Bible, or, in some cases, even replacing the text itself and turning into a self-sufficient narrative. Individual images guide readers among unknown characters, depicting them in a recognizable, well-known every dress. They also drew readers' attention to the most important parts of the text through the reproduction of numerous, so-called mass images or visually reinforced sequences. The structure of visual cycles invited readers to actively group and interpret various scalable images, read them both as an illustration of past events that they accompanied, and as a reflection of current events.

Features of forming the image of self in medieval illumination can be traced both to the iconography of the sacred, and to the secular. But both in this and in the other case the common desire is to extrapolate and

broadcast the ideas inherent in a medieval cultural paradigm. In general, the problems of visual self-reflection are clearly outlined in images that develop ideas of spatiality and temporality, familiar features, signs of the daily recognizable environment of a medieval man are transferred, for example, to extraterrestrial space, or to an unknown geography. At the same time, the image, so to speak, of the Western European Middle Ages, is endowed with features of exclusiveness, choice, righteousness. Figurative spatial toposes, for example, embody the idea of a Christian ecumene, in which the Latin world pretends to play a dominant role. In this sense, very representative example can be found in the iconography of paradise in late medieval illuminated manuscripts. On the one hand, this is the Old Testament Garden of Adam and Eve, Eden, on the other, heaven, the city of heavenly Jerusalem, where Christ is with the righteous (here it is interesting to note that in the Bible the image of the city evolved from the personification of evil, the city of Cain, Babylon, Sodom and Gomorrah, to the personification of the eternal future of rescued humanity, Heavenly Jerusalem). The idea of Heavenly Jerusalem is embodied in the image of the divine throne, and also used the allegorical image of the medieval city-fortress. The idea of the Old Testament paradise of Eden is visualized in plots of the Book of Genesis, in particular, in scenes depicting the creation of man, the fall and exile from paradise. Eden is usually depicted as a garden, but the composition must necessarily introduce architectural motifs and elements, which in general are a hallmark of Gothic illumination. That is, sacred, invisible, and unknown geography acquires medieval imagery of forms and meanings that are understood by contemporaries, through these specific forms and meanings it not only recognizes, but also asserts itself, structures the world, real and illusionary, imaginative.

An important and eloquent form of imaginative self-presentation is the visualization of the religious identity of medieval man. From this point of view very representative case can be considered – iconography of Church as an idea and as an institution, and as a defining concept that shaped medieval mindset. The iconographic tradition of Western European illumination involves the formation of a branched and multidimensional image of the Church, which is revealed in the theme of sacred spiritualism (images of apostles, evangelists, saints), in the theme of divine power and its earthly dominion (the image of papacy), in the theme of priesthood and visually representative rituals (liturgy, the fulfillment of miracles, holy sacraments). That is, the image of the Church is revealed through the image of expressive actions, active practices in different situations and

environments. Another clearly defined tendency in western illumination is the desire to anthropomorphize images and ideas, actively involving them in the earth's, human's space, and even more so in a concrete environment of the existence of the medieval community. Developing of the principles of individualism and shaping of the idea of personality, in fact, reflected on the iconography of the image of the Western Church. Illustrations of religious and secular manuscripts include not only the image of the apostles, evangelists, saints, who represent, so to speak, biblical circle characters; most of the images are miniatures with medieval popes, priests, monks who have been beatified. On the other hand, the traditional image of ancient events and figures is entirely in the entourage of the Middle Ages, which has been emphasized more than once. Thus, the image of the Church of the time existed simultaneously in different time coordinates, but in one form of visual representation.

The next equally important form of self-presentation of medieval Latin Western culture is through the imagery of the secular, mostly associated with the ideas of chivalry and courtly aristocratic culture.

The knight's cultural model in its artistic expression is subordinated to the norms of the ideal, ethical, behavioral and aesthetic, dictated by the requirements of the code of honor and theatrical representations of beauty in its essence. The secular literature of the Gothic Middle Ages was intended to materialize and decorate this ideal, to introduce an ideal knight in a plane of extraordinary, fairy-tale, and miraculous. It is in these conditions that his victory, courage, dedication and willingness to overcome obstacles in the name of serving the ideal – whether it is a love for the Fair Lady, or an unconditional loyalty to the lord, are properly implemented. The courtly romance consistently reveals and supports the image of a courtoise knight – a typical and predictable image, at the same time distinctly individual: the actions of the hero are subordinated to the norms and requirements of the chivalric ethos, but the motivation and realization are grounded on the principles of individualism.

Cultural self-identification of knighthood, therefore, is closely linked with the idea of serving to the lord, fair war and constant warrior victory, curiosity, adventure and, eventually, magic, involvement in the world of miraculous and supernatural. These ideal value orientations were reflected in illustrations to numerous variational novel cycles. There we can find an image created within principles and ideas of chivalry code in the limits of courtly culture, and the image was willingly supported by and as well consumed by it.



Summing up, we can say that medieval artistic practice unified in general the "own" and "alien" iconography, and the differences were shown in small but symbolically meaningful details. "Another" provided the feature of "one's own" recognizable, because the image was primarily a symbol and did not require realistic interpretations. Images of historically or geographically distant subjects were interpreted in a modern, recognizable entourage. Costumes, landscapes, and architectural space scenes were medieval. It was not necessary to develop a separate iconography in the images of foreigners. In the scenes of battles, sieges, and illustrative cycles associated with the Crusades, Christians and foreigners were showed in the same cloth, very look alike armory and with the same weapons, against the background of a medium that could be characterized as European – with castles, fortress walls, forests and lakes.

Medieval imagery, therefore, was at the same time a means and an effective way of visual self-reflection. Iconography of themes and subjects in this context has wide possibilities and numerous variants for artistic realization of representations about oneself. This image can be read in the images of the religious narrative, and the secular narrative. And visual self-reflection in medieval imagery was based primarily on permanent autoscapy, on the subjectivization of the external, third-party, and unknown.

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#### ANNOTATION

**Bohdan Grynda. The image of oneself in a medieval fine art tradition: features of artistic interpretation.** The real and symbolic, historical and modern, religious and secular in the medieval iconography are closely interacting. Through visual translation, the process through which the image influenced the narrative, the ability to adapt it to another time or unfamiliar cultural geography, and thus became clear to the medieval reader, mechanisms were created for reading the image of self that medieval man kept in his/her mind, and how the image of self was depicted with artistic means in the coordinates of the symbolic-artistic space.

**Keywords:** Middle Ages, visual translation, illuminated manuscripts, image.

#### АННОТАЦИЯ

**Богдана Грында. Образ себя в средневековой художественной традиции: особенности интерпретации.** Реальное и символическое, историческое и современное, религиозное и секулярное в средневе-

ковой иконографии тесно «взаимодействуют». Благодаря визуальному переводу, процессу через который изображения влияли на рассказ, на способность приспособить его к другому времени или незнакомой культурной географии и, таким образом, становились понятными средневековому читателю, формируются механизмы для прочтения образа самого себя, каким видел себя человек Средневековья, и каким он изображала себя художественными средствами в координатах символично-художественного пространства.

**Ключевые слова:** Средневековье, визуальный перевод, иллюминированные манускрипты, образ.



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