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**THE MEDIAEVAL ANTIPHONARY  
AS AN INSTANCE OF UNITY OF ARTS  
THAT EVINCES MAN'S INSIGHT INTO  
ONENESS OF EXISTENCE. STUDY IN  
COMPARATIVE AESTHETICS  
OF PERFORMING ARTS**

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The main purpose of this article is to analyse the multifarious ways wherewith the mediaeval authors were trying to render their cohesive insight into a specific subject matter in their manuscripts, here mediaeval Antiphonaries. They had used some elaborate aesthetic devices that aimed at building up a coherent semantics of the multi-media image of the manuscript's page. Parallel to it, owing to church music notes presence in antiphonary, another research issue is being considered for further investigation, namely, the one that would aim at tracking how the human gesture has been encoded in unfolding trajectory of notarum quadrātārum, square notes, representing both conducted and sung music. As an integral part of the corpus in question, it contributes significantly to constitution of the interrelated completely which is a collection of antiphons. This, however, will be approached in the wake of the present paper. The research methodology. Since the subject matter being examined is of interdisciplinary character so it is methodology applied. It is based on research tools of codicology, Gregorian semiology, plainchant history and theory, philosophy of art, semiology, and comparative aesthetics of performing arts, music and dance studies, linguistics and palaeography. The scientific novelty. The research is of a high relevance rank due to its interdisciplinary character. Not only it investigates text and image's semiotic interacting for the purpose of some ultra-meaning generation, to be inferred successively in the sacred scripture, but it examines as well ontology of the intermodal manuscript and its embodiment in the cantor's performance. Conclusions. Following from the researched antiphonaries there has been a firm claim that they mirror directly the aesthetics of the Middle Ages that is to be pivotal in bridging Antiquity with Early Modern World thereby assuring continuity of man's development in understanding nature and function of beauty in human civilisation.

*Keywords:* nota quadrata; plainchant; Gregorian semiology; correspondence of arts; manuscript; antiphonary; aesthetic experience; aesthetic integralism

*Motto:*

*Past is the time when men of perception walked aloof.*

*A thousand words in the mouth and silent the lip.*

↑ ↓ ↑

*Let your heart have no other chanting than his glorification.*

*For his heart is confidant to the angel's message.*

*Hafez*



Il.1. *De Sancto Stanislao antiphona. A hymn book.*  
15<sup>th</sup> century, Sygn. IV 3608, Ms. Czart.

## Introduction

The paper investigates some creative devices that had been used by Middle Ages antiphony manuscripts' authors: scribes and painters. They tried to convey a global concept of their worldview through interplay of their modes of artistic expression. Those in turn are known contemporarily as correspondence of arts or intermodal art. These early writing and reading techniques attempted capturing totality of spatio-temporal experience of plain song performance. I am going to analyse some editorial principles being applied there, the ones that aim at rendering multivariate cognitive process-of multidimensional artistic character – by the use of two dimensionality of writing/painting techniques on a copyist's medium, which was vellum or paper base surface. The data I gathered and will be examining derive from my first-hand studies on the High Middle Ages antiphonaries, which are kept in the Princes Czartoryski Library, National Museum in Krakow, (later as MS Czart.) Across the article I would refer to material that derive specifically from the three fourteenth century antiphonarii, Antiphonary, named of Hozius, V 3464, Antiphonary I 2417 and De Sancto Stanislao antiphona IV 3608.

It has been self-evident that interdisciplinary methodology is needed while approaching intermediality of antiphony aesthetics. The latter operates in service of eliciting the experience of sacred whose dynamics might be of sweeping profoundness, if it happens at all. What happens when content of the intended aesthetic experience is determined by form of a perceived object, here antiphony, is unification of formal and functional beauty that work across the whole process.

Although the cover term *plainchant* appears to contradict some multifaceted wealth of the aesthetic experience that might be gained through reading and performing early church liturgical music we are bound to employ it here for the sake of historical contextualisation of the research subject in question. It is fair to say that there exist many mediaeval church singing research traditions in Europe using different terms to name sacred music, which was sung and performed in the early mediaeval church. The recent proposal of the term *chant* sounds more neutral, however we cannot overlook the weight of terminology resulted from Saint Gregorius the Great's reform of liturgy, namely a notion "Gregorian Chant" which is of patronymic character, (the Pope Reformer b.540-d.604).

It is also worth noting that the earliest written records of chant indicate man's developmental endeavour to represent in writing and painting, both intelligibly and instructively, the whole spectrum of the performing reality that unfolds in time and space through creative act of praying through singing. The successful examples of such a struggle can be observed when human arts liaise with one another through aesthetic and semiotic correspondence in some creative process, which was triggered by inspired human vision and carried out by gifted or skilful hands of a copyist or team of painters and scribes.

It is a well known fact that the early Christian church music was entirely subjugated to words, the attitude having been resulting from authority of the Holy Scripture and the import of the concept of generating and causative *logos*, *Genesis* 1:1. Nevertheless many artists in the course of working with images, and non-verbal symbols were able both experience and appreciate equally powerful and expressive impact of figural or abstract representations while making or contemplating so called the iconic art.

What was needed at that moment was identifying a law of making an integrated whole out of diversity of individual and autonomous language of art, be it writing, painting and music. The device was to be shortly discovered and creatively applied; it was a polyphonic composition or *organum*. In the following stages of my paper I am going to elucidate how compositional principles of mediaeval polyphonic music might have inspired aesthetic ideas of the mediaeval antiphonarium makers.

*Analysis of recent researches and publications.* There have been so far several substantial research approaches to mediaeval manuscripts, predominantly separating *horas*, hours, from antiphonaries and differing obviously in their objectives and methodologies. Among some significant scholarly achievements in the field one mentions English, German, French and Polish contribution marked by works by David Hiley, Magnus Williamson,



Il. 2. Antiphonary, 14<sup>th</sup> century, France, Sygn 2147, Ms.Czart.

Marcel Pérés, Thomas Schmidt, Barbara Miodonska and Katarzyna Plonka-Balus. As a rule the art historians tend to analyse manuscripts as a piece of art from codicology perspective, investigating their age, binding, provenance and history, then they analyse their contents, state of preservation and decoration while musicologists or cantors delve into development of ancient musical notation and discuss vital issues ensuing, namely the ones related to time, rhythm and their semantic interplay with the text itself. However, some complementary theoretical approach to the subject matter is still to be undertaken. With invaluable and insightful endorsement of existing musicological and codicological findings, my proposal, comparative and interdisciplinary in nature, investigates the way “seamless aesthetics” is being produced through intermodal interplay of time-spatial arts (Kerrigan, 2014, p. 6).

### The purpose of the article

This research project extends far beyond the existing division of individual arts such as painting, writing and music, the latter encoded in *notis quadrātis*. Its following fact-finding strategy will seek for defining aesthetic principle of antiphony's structuring. A selection of the research data that is an interactive coexistence of the three originally autonomous arts: literature, painting and written music, presented on a flat two dimensional plane, is undergoing all-encompassing scrutiny. It is visible with a naked eye how dynamic interplay of different languages of arts (Goodman, 1976) create some virtual spatio-temporal ontology of both complex and cohesive work of art which in turn generates ‘seamless aesthetics’, here of the antiphony's material form and successively- and in reply to it – an unfolding of an immaterial aesthetic experience that serves as a vehicle carrying a perceiver, ideally, into experience of the sacred. We are bound to leave now another research issue of a vital weight, as it goes beyond the scope of this article, namely, the one concerning the nature of the cantor's aesthetic experience, the key figure in the whole performing process related to every single antiphony. Incidentally, it was he who read it or sang from it in direct bodily contact with ordinarily a huge manuscript lying on the church lectern.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless, it can still happen now with their reading or singing.

### Presentation of the main material

The research being undertaken seeks to attain theoretical insight into how a conceptual unity of the antiphony aesthetic message was structured by expanding beyond some particular single aesthetics of written words then fine arts representation and semantics of music writing. All three examined *opera* had been created in the 14th century Europe which had witnessed at that point a discovery of counterpoint following gradual transition from monody to polyphony, said *ars nova*.

Where previously only one voice could be employed at any one time, it now became possible, by means of counterpoint, to harmonise the voices, that is, to use them jointly and simultaneously. This widened the possibilities of music immeasurably. The word “counterpoint” which is derived from the dot with which a note is indicated, appears at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but the practice itself began earlier. It originated in the northern countries, which were not restricted by ancient musical tradition, when Gregorian music was still at its height. The Welshman Giraldus Cambrensis, who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, mentions the polyphonic songs, which were part of ancient local custom in England [...] Polyphony began with harmonising of two voices. To a given music theme (*cantus, cantus firmus, vox principis*), a second theme (*discantus, vox organalis*) was added.

Polyphonic music thus came to be called discantus, or from the Greek equivalent, “diaphony” (Tatarkiewicz, 2005, p. 130).

Indeed **a concept of harmony** appears to be an underlying aesthetic factor while building up an antiphony. Although *Tam multa sunt harmoniae genera/The kinds of harmony are so many*, as Hugh of St Victor proclaims (Didascalion, II, 12, PL 176, c. 821) we need, for the sake of this investigation, to restrict meaning designation of the term itself to phenomena of arts used in manuscripts' creation. Thus, *Summi Sapientia Patris Singula disponens ars, nus, ordo, decor singula componens, ludit, creat, ordinat, ornat/Thanks to the wisdom of the Almighty, art, mind, order and beauty, by arranging individual things and linking them with one another, entertain, create, order and adorn* (Alexander Neckham, De laudibus divinae sapientiae, 297, Wright,

<sup>1</sup> For the time being one might, willingly, refer to a massive and brilliant book by Jacek Szerszenowicz: Music Inspired by Visual Arts, Lodz 2008. The second chapter of this volume may be particularly informing here as it investigates „interrelations between painting and music which make possible the appropriation of content or of individual attributes of the given artistic medium by another medium” happening through aesthetic experience most evidently. (Szerszenowicz, 605:208)

p.426), or *Musica sive harmonia est plurium dissimilium in unum redactorum concordia/ Music or harmony, is a concord of many dissimilar components brought together into one.* (Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalion*, II 16 PL 176, c. 757), *Non apparent pulchra nisi ex conformitate ad repraesentatum/There is no beauty except where there is harmony of perceived with perceiver* (Bonaventure, *In Hexēm.*, coll., 14,4 Quaracch), and finally *Proportionum concordia pulchritudo est/The harmony of proportions is beauty* (Grosseteste, Pouillion, 290) and *Pulchrum congregat omnia, et hoc habet ex parte formae cujus resplendentia facit pulchrum... Secundum autem quod forma resplendet super partes materiae, sic est pulchrum habens rationem congregandi/ Beauty unites everything, and it derives this ability from form, whose resplendence determines beauty. And because form is resplendent over the parts of matter, beauty is the cause of this unity* (Albrecht the Great, *Opusculum de pulchro et bono* Mandonnet, V, 421).

It is true that for the mediaeval mind and its perceptive faculties a tangible and sensual aesthetics borders or overlaps with mystical aesthetics in consonance with overwhelming theistic world-view. Consequently unity of material artefact, here manuscript antiphonary, is meant to echo the original unity of Being.

Although a word is conferred a primary status in the Christian liturgical texts my research proposal, with the aim of proposing an analytical model construction, is to equalise the semiotic value of the three applied systems of signs in the antiphonary, whichever it is, while generalising the data aimed. They are gathered equivalently: a given text, adorned initials and neums. This compositional strategy can be clearly visible in the two examples I am going to describe now.

The first one (Il. 3A, B) shows how a scribe presents the idea of hierarchy, here embodied in the interpersonal relation between two saints wearing a halo (originally a ring of light around the sun or moon here meant as a circle of light around the head of a holy person), one bending over another. The tension between the higher and the lower goes enhanced by the repercussion of this ethical-aesthetic traction in the sequence of notarum quadrātārum or neums just above the portrayed saints.



Il. 3A. *Antiphonary*, 14<sup>th</sup> century, Sygn. 3464. MS Czart

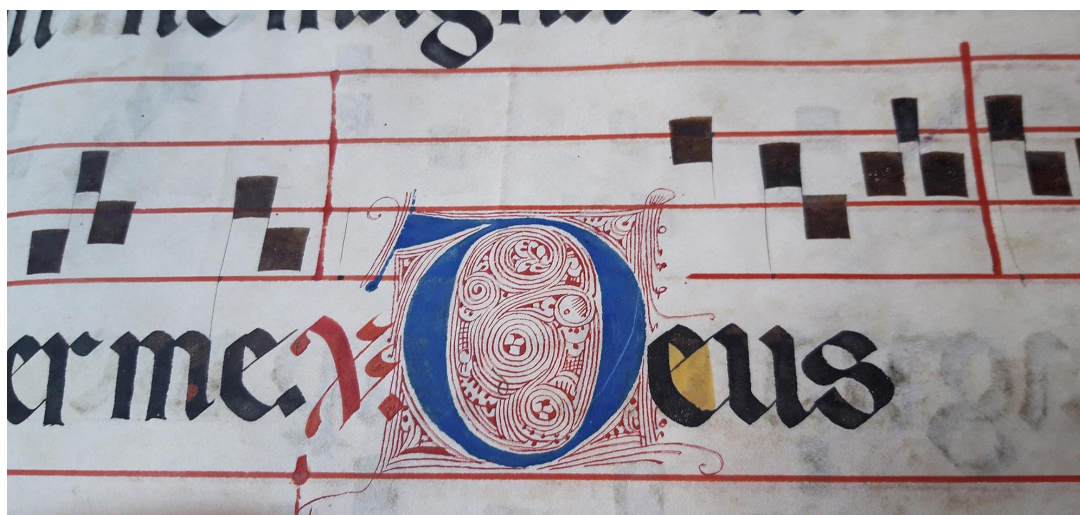


Il. 3B. *Antiphonary*, 14<sup>th</sup> century, Sygn. 3464. MS Czart.

Another evidence corroborating suggested interrelatedness of the system of signs possessing equal semantic rights is datum 4, see below illustration 4. The fragment of antiphonary shows here an endeavour to render the idea of God through intermodal act of representation. The emphasis here is on the illuminated initial D in the word *Deus*. Not only it symbolizes the dynamics of divine creation through whirling sinusoidal spiral (*la spirale de croissance harmonieuse*, Ghyka, 1998, p. 133) but overlapping with quadri-line stave it suggests as well that the picture and the word are of identical semantic status with music.

The illuminated initial illuminates, lights up the written word and notated music at the same time “in a manner that transcends history and even aesthetics” (Kerrigan, 2014, p. 7). Again, we need to leave another fascinating research issue regarding the ontic status of music when it goes compared with the written text. Concededly Carl Dahlhaus delved into this subject matter in his article “Music as a text” (Dahlhaus, 1986, pp. 251-270) still he has not provided any satisfactory cognitional solution. I claim that in the antiphonary music notation is

semantically identical with semantics of the recorded words, operating literally as its mirror image when juxtaposed with a written text. I can be decoded on two levels, firstly, as pure ideograms of unknown sound, by those who can not read music, and then as silent music, although apparently latent, yet accessible for those who possess adequate musical imagination and reading music capacities. Nonetheless, the materialisation of the musical sense of antiphony's neums is determined by the contrapuntal technique, which relates *notas quadratās* to words and pictures.



Il. 4. *Antiphony*, 14<sup>th</sup> century, 3464. MS.Czart.

As stated before my research model proposal while dealing with multimodal artefact calls for interdisciplinary approach and intermodal tools, *τα οργανα*, to describe, define and interpret creative procedures applied by the manuscripts' scribes and painters. Thus I refer accordingly to specific analytical device depending on the moment of the examination, alternately be it words, picture or neums. Obviously when it comes to final data inferring one needs to choose which epistemology one sides as for ontic aspect of a single art. From one hand the latter contributes specifically into manuscript/antiphony production on its own, from the other, it adds to intermodal *operis* construction that in due course attracts human senses. With respect to data analysis and interpretation my epistemological both choice and belief is phenomenology.



Il. 5. An example of intermodal expression in *Antiphony*, sygn, 3464, p. 130, MS Czart.

Presentation of the basic methods of the research is instanced here by a datum in the form of il.5 and its following analysis (*Antiphony*, MS. Czart. 3464, p. 130).

Now the methodology being used in this exemplary case is basically comparative aesthetic analysis of the given item. It is being carried out from perspective of theory of sign where the overall meaning is deduced from exact and detailed picture depiction, prior to its interpretation. The study analyses how different languages of art were conjointly used to liaise in creating one unique meaning. Undeniably, the procedure requires multi-competence of reading text, music and decoding symbolical meaning.

One of the remarkable things about this instance is the dynamic show of untrammelled scribe-artist's imagination and invention in language of arts equalisation, whereby the initial S is cutting into a quadri lines stave to reverberate verbatim with music. To turn into more details to polyphonic method in working we might assume that *cantus firmus* or *vox principalis* is the semantics of the word SANCTI rendered in paleographic contraction as SNCTI, plural nom. & voc. from sanctus or genitive of sanctus meaning saint. Here highly probably a noun is in plural as it begins a phrase in function of grammar subject. While the music is written in C key, lavishly illuminated letter S evokes plethora of associations related to symbolism of a spiral, cyclicity, unity of opposites, among others. The letter S pushes with its top end the key signature as if it released energy of music. The initial notes are isolated neums called *virga*, *tractulus* or *punctum* in their unfolding sequence generating a sense of

even rhythm. If we called the underlying meaning of the word Sancti as *cantus firmus*, added to it *vores organales* would be an iconic value of single letter of the word, stave lines and neums. Another *vox organalis* would be colour and its kinetic and aesthetic properties.

### Conclusions

From the stand of a comparative aesthetician, I consider the Middle Ages to be pivotal in bridging Antiquity with Early Modern World thereby assuring continuity of man's development in understanding nature and function of beauty in human civilisation. Instead of separating the old aesthetics from the new aesthetics, we rather opt for a concept of old ideas in modern aesthetics (Tatarkiewicz, 2005) thus advocating eternal cyclical return of unchangeable human core essence struggling for its alternate materialisation in a protean world.

One of the most interesting moments of this research comes in the end. While examining methods and editorial devices applied in the manuscript construction it is crucially important to realise how some intrinsic properties of single writing, music noting and painting techniques allow to arrive at universal research conclusions. Perhaps one of the most conspicuous and insightful ones reveal the nature of man's conceptual thinking that copes with idea of three dimensional representation while being restricted at the time with two dimensional media of depiction.

Following from the three researched antiphonaria there has been a firm claim that they mirror directly the aesthetics of the Middle Ages. The 14th century can be roughly considered the High Middle Ages for the Western Europe.

The official Church teaching, the all-embracing beauty of so called *Biblia pauperum* of the surrounding gothic art together with explicit theoretical indications scattered between the lines of theological writings indicate those days that God is the only true subject of artistic representation. *Deus non solum pulcher est perfecte in se in fine pulchritudinis, sed insuper est causa efficiens et exemplaris et finalis omnis creatae pulchritudinis/ God in Himself is not only perfectly beautiful and the highest degree of beauty, but is also the efficient, exemplary and final cause of all created beauty*, (Ulrich of Strassburg, De pulchro, Grabmann, 73-4) Consequently, pursuing Christian principles God and the world, nature and man, knowledge and action are to be related appropriately.

After having engulfed early Christian achievements in the domain of both empirical experience and conceptual thinking The High Middle Ages sages are now cognizant and ready for grasping in profound understanding and subtle speculation the construct of unity of Being.

The idea put by Bonaventura as an aesthetic integralism, impressively instanced by analysed research data above, witnesses that:

*Totus iste mundus ordinatissimo decursu...describitur procedere a principiosque ad finem, ad modum cuiusdam pulcherrimi carminis ordinati, ubi potest quis speculari secundum decursum temporis varietatem, multipliciter et aequitatem, ordinem, rectitudinem et pulchritudinem multorum divinorum iudiciorum... Unde sicut nullus potest videre pulchritudinem carminis, nisi aspectus eius feratur super totum versum, sic nullus videt pulchritudinem ordinis et regiminis universi, nisi eam totam speculetur/The whole world in its perfectly ordered course may be described as proceeding from beginning to end like the most beautiful poem, written in accordance with the rules, in which, depending on its temporal course, one can see multiplicity, diversity, simplicity, order, rectitude and beauty of many divine judgements. Therefore, just as no one can see the beauty of a poem unless his gaze embraces the poem in its entirety, so too no one sees the beauty which lies in the order and rule of the universe, unless he looks at it in its entirety.* (Breviloquium, prol. 2 Quaracchi, I, 38).

One may argue that contemporary mainstream intermodal art is „a cousin twice removed” of that mediaeval manuscript art, and it would be interesting to track other past manifestations bordering with such integralistic ideas over centuries. The one that goes to mind quite spontaneously is William Blake's publishing methods. David Punter, incidentally recognised worldwide as an expert on Gothic culture, indicated that Blake illuminated his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789 i 1794):

But these “illuminations”, or illustrations, were much more than that; Blake did not, as it were, dream up an illustration to go with each poem; rather, the poem and the visual material were constructed as a single entity, so that the very meaning of each poem is expanded by, and is sometimes dependent on, the artwork which originally accompanied it. (Punter, 2003, p. 3).

Indeed, it is expansion and interdependence that seem to define most relevantly the aesthetic strategies of the mediaeval visionary manuscript makers.

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**АНТИФОНАРІЙ СЕРЕДНЬОВІЧЧЯ  
ЯК ПРОЯВ ЄДНОСТІ МИСТЕЦТВ,  
ЩО ВИЯВЛЯЄ РОЗУМІННЯ  
ЛЮДИНОЮ ЦІЛІСНОСТІ БУТТЯ.  
ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ З ПОРІВНЯЛЬНОЇ  
ЕСТЕТИКИ ВИДОВИЩНИХ  
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Мета дослідження – проаналізувати різноманітні способи, за допомогою яких середньовічні автори намагалися передати своє цілісне розуміння певного явища в своїх рукописах – середньовічних антифонаріях, використовуючи деякі складні естетичні засоби, спрямовані на побудову когерентної семантики багатопланового зображення сторінки рукопису. Паралельно з цим, оскільки в антифонаріях присутні ноти церковної музики, постає ще одна проблема для подальшого дослідження – розгляд засобів кодування людського жесту в розкритті траєкторії *notarum quadratum* (квадратних нот) як при диригуванні, так і співах. Невід’ємним завданням дослідження є їх структуризація. Методологія дослідження становить такі наукові методи, як кодикологія, григоріанська семіологія, історія григоріанського хоралу, теорія та філософія мистецтва, семіологія, порівняльна естетика видовищних видів мистецтв, дослідження в галузях музики і танцю, лінгвістики та палеографії. Наукова новизна. Дослідження має міждисциплінарний характер. У статті вивчаються не тільки семіотика тексту та зображення для створення сакрального значення в священному писанні, а й онтологія інтермодальності рукописів та її виконання кантором. Висновки. Внаслідок дослідження антифонаріїв було виявлено, що вони безпосередньо відображають естетику Середньовіччя, котра є ключовою у зближенні Античності з Раннім сучасним світом, тим самим забезпечуючи розвиток розуміння людиною природи та функції краси в контексті людської цивілізації.

Ключові слова: *nota quadratum*; григоріанський хорал; григоріанська семіологія; співвідношення мистецтв; рукописи, антифонарій; естетичний досвід; естетичний інтегралізм

**АНТИФОНАРИЙ СРЕДНЕВЕКОВЬЯ  
КАК ПРОЯВЛЕНИЕ ЕДИНСТВА  
ИСКУССТВ ДЛЯ РАСКРЫТИЯ  
ПОНИМАНИЯ ЧЕЛОВЕКОМ  
ЦЕЛОСТНОСТИ БЫТИЯ.  
ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ В ОБЛАСТИ  
СРАВНИТЕЛЬНОЙ ЭСТЕТИКИ  
ЗРЕЛИЩНЫХ ВИДОВ ИСКУССТВ**

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Цель этого исследования – проанализировать различные способы, с помощью которых средневековые авторы пытались передать свое целостное понимание определенного явления в своих рукописях – средневековых антифонариях, используя некоторые сложные эстетические приемы, направленные на построение когерентной семантики многопланового изображения страницы рукописи. Параллельно с этим, так как в антифонариях присутствуют ноты церковной музыки, поднимается еще одна проблема для дальнейшего исследования – рассмотрение средств кодирования человеческого жеста в раскрытии траектории *notarum quadratum* (квадратных нот) как при дирижировании, так и пении. Неотъемлемой задачей исследования является их структурирование. Методология исследования включает такие научные методы, как кодикологии, григорианская семиология, история григорианского хорала, теория и философия искусств, семиология, сравнительная эстетика зрелищных видов искусств, исследования в области музыки и танца, лингвистики и палеографии. Научная новизна. Исследование имеет междисциплинарный характер. В статье изучаются не только семиотика текста и изображения для создания сакрального значения в священном писании, а и онтология интермодальности рукописей и ее выполнение кантором. Выводы. В результате исследования антифонариев было обнаружено, что они отражают непосредственно эстетику Средневековья, которая является ключевой в сближении Античности с Ранним современным миром, тем самым обеспечивая развитие понимания человеком природы и функции красоты в контексте человеческой цивилизации.

Ключевые слова: *nota quadratum*; григорианский хорал; григорианская семиология; соотношение искусств; рукописи; антифонарий; эстетический опыт; эстетический интегралізм