Freeze-framed: theorizing the historiated initials of the Régime du corps

Jennifer Borland

To cite this article: Jennifer Borland (2016) Freeze-framed: theorizing the historiated initials of the Régime du corps, Word & Image, 32:2, 235-250, DOI: 10.1080/02666286.2016.1172546

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2016.1172546

Published online: 22 Jun 2016.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 14

View related articles

View Crossmark data
Freeze-framed: theorizing the historiated initials of the *Régime du corps*

JENNIFER BORLAND

**Abstract** This article offers a critical apparatus for analyzing a specific pictorial form, the historiated initial, found in several illustrated copies of the late medieval health guide known as the *Régime du corps*. In many of these initials, a single moment has been selected to represent a corresponding textual chapter; often the scene depicted is a particularly unresolved moment in the process of treatment. I propose that these initials functioned as open-ended episodes, freeze-framed moments in which the results of the treatment depicted are intentionally made unclear. This specific form of the historiated initial, which is monoscenic rather than one in a series of images, may initially seem static, but it actually creates an unexpected context for narrative potentiality through in-progress scenes that remain open to the viewer’s resolution. The users of these household health guides were uniquely positioned to follow the guidance of the manuscript’s didactic text while imagining the various possibilities or endings suggested in the unresolved scenes of the initials.

**Keywords** medical manuscripts, *Régime du corps*, medieval art, historiated initials, narrative, freeze-frame

In 1256, the ambitious countess of Provence, Beatrice of Savoy, enlisted her personal physician to create a health handbook that she would be able to pass on to her four daughters, who were married to four of the most powerful kings and rulers of Europe. This health guide, most commonly known as the *Régime du corps* and written by Aldobrandino of Siena, was one of the first medical texts to be written in French rather than Latin, and it would become popular and influential, translated into at least four other languages and existing in nearly seventy copies that were made over the following two centuries.

In this article, I propose a critical apparatus for analyzing the pictorial form used in several illustrated copies of the *Régime du corps*: historiated initials that are figurative, narrative, and non-sequential, and for which there is no predetermined outcome. Engaging with narrative theory and cinema studies as well as work on medieval narrative, this article explores the narrative potential of this specific historiated initial form through three key concepts: the frame, the episode, and unresolved narrative. With this approach to understanding the structure of the *Régime* illustrations in hand, I argue that these initials functioned as open-ended episodes, freeze-framed moments in which the results of the treatment depicted are intentionally made unclear. The users of these household health guides were uniquely positioned to follow the guidance of the manuscript’s didactic text while imagining the various possibilities or endings suggested in the unresolved scenes of the initials.

The illustrations in several late medieval copies of the *Régime du corps* consist of dozens of historiated initials that introduce each chapter of this wide-ranging health guide. The historiated initial, a large capital letter within which a scene is depicted, was an extremely common illustrative form in manuscripts by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and usually introduced the beginning of a new section of text. Unlike more complex half- or full-page illustrations, historiated initials tend to be small, usually no bigger than a couple of inches (or between six and ten lines of text) tall; their compact space necessitated relatively simple compositions and artistic efficiency. For example, in the illustrated *Régime du corps* found in the British Library’s MS Sloane 2435, numerous scenes of health treatments such as bleeding, vomiting, and purging are depicted as an encounter between a patient and a medical practitioner. In the bloodletting scene, a seated figure in red submits to the knife of the surgeon in blue, as blood drips down from the patient’s arm and into the bowl provided to collect the spilt fluid (figure 1). On another folio is a female practitioner who applies heated glass bells to the back of a male patient seated in front of her, drawing out the toxins through a suction method called cupping (figure 2).

The initials in the illustrated *Régime* manuscripts each introduce a chapter of the text, but other than appearing in a series of similarly formatted scenes, they are not part of a larger, interconnected narrative in the way that a contemporaneous bible’s historiated initials might be. Why are texts like the *Régime du corps* illustrated with historiated initials? What use did these initials have? How did the creators of the manuscripts choose these scenes, and what are the consequences of those choices for the manuscripts’ users? Many of the images in the illustrated *Régime* manuscripts depict active, in-progress treatments. The particular kind of historiated initial we see in the *Régime*, while not uncommon amongst didactic compendia, encyclopedias, and similar texts, communicates narrative quite differently from the scenes of a bible or romance.
narrative. In this particular subset of the Régime initials, a single moment has been selected to represent any number of actions and outcomes discussed in the corresponding textual chapter; often the scene depicted is a particularly unresolved moment in the process of treatment. The specific form of the historiated initial may initially seem static, but it actually creates an unexpected context for narrative potentiality through in-progress scenes that remain open to the viewer’s resolution. Such potential is particularly powerful for the health-related content of the Régime du corps, and for users who engaged with these books in order to facilitate the wellbeing of their households.

The Régime du corps

Aldobrandino’s text was essentially a compendium of small excerpts culled from various established medical sources that were associated with the training of physicians in universities. But presented in a concise, general, and accessible tone, the resulting text seems more appropriate for those who oversaw households than for professional practitioners, albeit those in quite elite households. The advice it offers was intended for the maintenance of health and to combat minor illnesses, serving as a kind of self-help guide for the home. The text of the Régime includes four main sections, each with multiple chapters. Following the prologue, the first part deals with general dietetic aspects for preserving health and includes chapters on topics such as drinking, air, sleeping, bathing, sex and reproduction, care of an infant, purging, cupping, and bleeding. The second part covers care for different parts of the body. The third part is made up of “simples” or remedies that include food and beverage recommendations, and includes sections that focus on grains, beer, wine, meat, birds, legumes, fruits, herbs, fish and dairy, and spices. The final part is a short section on physiognomy, essentially listing various characteristics that would ostensibly allow one to know the nature of an individual by his or her external appearance.

Only a small number of Régime du corps copies were illustrated, six of which are illuminated with historiated initials: three from the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (British Library, MS Sloane 2435; Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), MS fr. 12323 and Arsenal MS 2510) and three from the fifteenth century (British Library, MS Sloane 2401; Cambridge University Library Ii.V.11; and Morgan Library MS M.165). Nearly seventy copies of the text survive, many in humbler form than this illustrated group, which indicates that the text itself was of interest to a wide range of audiences. Each of the illustrated copies contains dozens of historiated initials introducing each chapter, most often with a simple scene of activity (the number of historiated initials in these manuscripts ranges from thirty-seven to one hundred forty-seven). While the six illustrated Régime manuscripts all have unique characteristics and stylistic idiosyncrasies, their images share the same compositional format. These versions of the Régime do not include larger, full-page images or images other than initials. The initial sets up a form that is shared by all the Régime manuscripts and the many images within them.

Often newcomers to the representations associated with medieval medicine and health do not find the kinds of images they expect. It is true that the pictures in the Régime du corps do not conform to what many of us may think of as “medical illustrations”; in fact, very few medieval medical images do. Our expectations are deeply rooted in modern modes of med-

Figure 1. Folio 11 v, bloodletting; from Régime du corps, c.1270, France. British Library, London, Sloane MS 2435 (detail). © The British Library Board.

Figure 2. Folio 14 r, cupping; from Régime du corps, c.1270, France. British Library, London, Sloane MS 2435 (detail). © The British Library Board.
ical illustration, in which images are present to facilitate understanding of the accompanying text, to illustrate textual concepts visually. But as Peter Murray Jones points out, the relationships between medieval medical imagery and texts are significantly more complicated, and in many cases, medical images have “ambiguous or even non-existent relationships to the words of the texts.” In some cases, medical or scientific images circulated in manuscripts without any text at all; in others, it is clear that the images take significant precedence over text, which is present to help understand the image, rather than the other way around.\footnote{6}

When it comes to medical or scientific manuscripts that employ historiated initials, there is often a loose connection with the content of the text. For instance, Jones has observed “a certain literalness” on the part of some artists: “taking the first or early words of the text written alongside the space left for the illuminator to fill was a very common strategy for illuminators seeking a subject for initial pictures,” especially when there are many such pictures to fill.\footnote{8} And in cases in which books were made as luxury items, as several of the illustrated \textit{Régime} manuscripts likely were, the texts were downplayed while the images are essential for the projection of prestige and authority.\footnote{9}

The Paneth Codex, for example, a medical compendium produced in Bologna \textit{c.1300}, contains fifty-seven historiated initials, primarily scenes of the physician as seated authority gesturing towards his students. Jones suggests that because this manuscript’s artists “were not following an established canon of illustrations,” but were improvising based on existing models, Bologna was a center of law and the artists were likely working in that genre; the result is the frequent portrayal of the physician as scholastic authority, and relatively few treatment scenes. Historiated initials seem to have been a logical illustrative choice for compendia of all kinds, including encyclopedias, because they could be used to mark each new entry. The \textit{Omne Bonum}, a fourteenth-century encyclopedia of universal knowledge, is one particularly extensive example that contains over 750 initials along with full-page illuminations.\footnote{11} Its historiated initials seem derived from a number of traditions, including legal and biblical books as well as natural history. Lucy Freeman Sandler points out that as a result of the organization of the \textit{Omne Bonum} into entries, the “pictures more often refer to the theme of the text rather than to specific words or passages,” but the manuscript also includes instances where the images are based directly on a short passage of text.\footnote{12} In this encyclopedia, the topics for individual entries are most often nouns, which refer to objects and living things as well as concepts, but which are often illustrated with pictures of actions.\footnote{13} Such specificity in terms of mode of representation is also evident in the \textit{Régime}.

The different compositions of scenes within the initials in the \textit{Régime} manuscripts generally correlate to the four different sections of the text. Some chapters, especially those in the book on remedies, simply depict the item or substance that will be covered in that chapter, and rarely contain any human figures. These include various plants, animals, foods, and spices. For instance, in Sloane 2435, the initial for the chapter on \textit{fromages} consists of a large “F” with fourteen rounds of cheese, depicted as simple white circles fanned out in three rows between the two arms of the letter (figure 3). One must make a rather big stretch to suggest action taking place here (unless this cheese has been depicted in movement, in the manner of Eadweard Muybridge). However, the straightforward, literal, illustrative nature of these static images helps us see how other images in the manuscript are doing something different. The second category consists of those that depict an activity or action by a single individual, such as the images that depict making cider or one which depicts a fellow being bled via leeches on his legs. These single-figure scenes work differently from those in the third category: images that contain two figures, which include scenes of activities like bathing and copulation, those that depict a verbal exchange or discussion, and images of treatments being administered by practitioners.
Although all these images can be considered historiated initials, it is the images that represent interactions between two people—often a patient and a practitioner—that warrant particular consideration. In some ways, these treatment scenes work like other medieval narrative images. However, as single images that are not part of a narratively-connected sequence of several scenes, they also demonstrate some of the limitations of traditional narrative interpretation. Such single-scene images function in a way similar to the cinematic freeze-frame, which can conjure for the viewer the moments before and after as well as that which has been captured. The freeze-frame allows for the possibility of multiple futures, futures that are imagined by the viewer who is engaged to help construct the narrative instigated by the captured image. In the case of the *Régime du corps* and its focus on health, the viewer/reader is encouraged not only imaginatively to create the image’s outcome but also possibly corporeally to experience or even facilitate that outcome in the real world.

**What is a historiated initial?**

Historiated initials were used in manuscripts occasionally before the thirteenth century, but their prevalence increases in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, correlating with the late medieval increase in book production driven by wealthier lay clientele and the workshops that met this growing market’s demand. Indeed, even the most modest historiated initials would have marked a manuscript as elite; certainly many of the manuscripts with historiated initials that survive from this period signal additional prestige through the prevalent use of gold and a wide range of pigments. These later medieval books rarely contain just a few historiated initials; such manuscripts often display dozens of illustrated letters.

The *Régime du corps* manuscripts serve as perfect examples of this phenomenon; they are rather “normal” as far as historiated initial manuscripts go. The average initial in the *Régime du corps* manuscripts covers a relatively small amount of the page on which it appears, where the letter serves as a frame around the scene which is depicted inside. These “scenes” may include animals, plants, or one or more human figures, but they rarely include more than two figures. There may be a prop or two shown in the scene with the figures (a chair, a drinking jug); otherwise the figures are usually shown against generic, patterned backgrounds without any locational specificity. They are decorated in a conventional period style that often includes swirling plant forms extending down along many lines of text, simple but colored background patterns (that generally remain within the space of the initial), and sometimes significant amounts of gold leaf (figure 3). The initials serve as visual markers that signify the contents of each section, providing for an audience who probably used this compendium’s didactic information out of order and over a long period of time by searching for specific topics rather than reading from beginning to end.

The prevalence of manuscripts decorated with historiated initials in this period is clearly demonstrated in the vast number of examples that occur in Alison Stones’s recently published *Gothic Manuscripts: 1260–1320.* The ubiquity of manuscripts decorated with historiated initials in the later Middle Ages suggests that this was found to be an efficient pictorial form for the communication of the manuscript’s content and facilitation of the book’s use, as well as a graphic signal of the owner’s status. As a result, the convention of the historiated initial fostered significant uniformity across the illustrations of hundreds of different manuscripts, as certain kinds of content became common for use within the small pictorial field restricted by the letters. Why has the form of the historiated initial been neglected by scholars? Perhaps we have grown so accustomed to seeing historiated initials, and so confident that we understand how they work (as simple chapter headings, as static scenes), that their apparatus has been read too frequently as straightforward and obvious, and therefore unworthy of extended, theoretical consideration.

The extensive range of historiated initial types found just in the *Régime* manuscripts alone (treatment scenes in progress, conversations or encounters, single individuals engaged in making or other forms of labor, isolated animals, static images of substances) suggests much more complexity and diversity than has traditionally been granted historiated initials, despite how commonplace they seem.

I refer to all the letters in the *Régime du corps* manuscripts as historiated initials, including the overly narrative scenes of a doctor and his patient, as well as those of a man making wine and those of animals, plants, and other content. This is in part to distinguish these initials from those that I would call “decorated,” in which the decoration is not figurative nor contained within the frame of the letter. The term “decorated” usually refers to letters in which the very fabric of the letter is animated, elaborated, or embellished, as opposed to the historiated initial’s visual structure, in which the letter serves as simple linear frame creating an enclosed space for the figures and activities that take place within. Many such decorated letters not only lack a narrative scene of the kind that we find with historiated initials, but also demonstrate a blurring of the line between the architecture of the letter and the spaces within and surrounding it. In such cases, the letter does not serve as a frame containing the scene.

That basic distinction—between historiated initials and decorated initials—is the primary distinction I have found useful over the course of this project, in part because so many studies on medieval letters focus on the latter rather than the former. My use of the phrasing “historiated initial” falls in line with how Ben C. Tilghman contrasts the historiated initial, as “the letter [that] serves primarily as a frame” for a scene, from animated initials in which the “letters themselves are made up of bodies of people, animals, or other things,” or how Suzanne Lewis refers to letters with scenes of people,
animals, and other objects. However, there are also a number of additional definitions that have been articulated by scholars to describe embellished medieval letters, including “decorated,” “anthropomorphic,” “zoomorphic,” “zoom anthropomorphic,” “gymnastic,” and “inhabited,” as well as “historiated.” These terms, which emphasize the content or subject matter of the decoration rather than how it relates to the fabric of the letter, do not seem to provide sufficient insight into how the Regime initials convey meaning. Many scholars have created terms to define or categorize the historiated initial, but few have attempted to grapple with its form.

More productive is Sandler’s discussion of the historiated initials in the Omne Bonum, which closely considers the various tactics used by the manuscript’s designers for the “visual concretization of concepts,” most often through representations of action. In working through the different approaches taken by the creators to design specific images for each encyclopedia entry, she clearly demonstrates the often unrecognized complexities inherent in the use of historiated initials. Indeed, “action” can be used to describe the treatment scenes of the Regime on which I focus; however, I am also interested in thinking through how the form of the letter determines the precise moment of action.

While historiated initials, especially in terms of how they functioned formally, remain under-investigated, that does not mean there has been no scholarly interest in medieval letters; on the contrary, there are many studies that deal with the more broadly defined “decorated letter.” The majority of studies on decorated initials spotlight examples from the early Middle Ages, especially those found in the magnificent sacred manuscripts of the British Isles and Ireland made in the eighth and ninth centuries. Even in large surveys, historiated initials get little extended attention. J. J. G. Alexander states that the historiated initial signals “the decline of the decorated letter in importance,” and that by the later Middle Ages it “became subsidiary [to miniatures] in most contexts.” While decorated letters become less playful and thus more stable by the later Middle Ages, the sheer number of late medieval manuscripts that demonstrate the creative use of historiated initials, without accompanying larger miniatures, suggests that there were in fact a variety of illustrative forms being used simultaneously to perform different functions.

Building on Alexander’s work, Laura Kendrick and Cynthia Hahn have both contributed studies that explore more fully the dynamic nature of medieval letters. While Hahn and Kendrick raise important points about the complex relationship between image and writing that early medieval decorated or animated letters embody, neither study aims to elaborate on the nuances of the late historiated initial. Alongside these broader studies are contributions that focus on the decorated letters of specific manuscripts, which contribute to the broader scholarly discussions on the visuality of texts but the specificity of these studies limits their engagement with my broader concerns. In studies in which scholars have explored the extensive historiated initial programs in well-known manuscripts such as the Getty Apocalypse or the St Alban’s Psalter, the authors primarily concentrate on the nuanced relationships between the iconography of the initials and the manuscripts’ texts rather than the form of the historiated initials themselves.

The remainder of this article explores the narrative potential of a specific form of the historiated initial—that is, the in-progress treatment scenes in the Regime manuscripts—through three concepts: the frame, the episode, and unresolved narrative. Throughout these related sections I draw upon a diverse body of scholarship that deals with ideas and concepts from narrative theory and cinema studies, from outside medieval studies as well as within. Meyer Schapiro’s key article on the visual field grounds my first section on the frame as it does the work of several other medievalists and scholars of more modern material. The frame is essential to discussions of narrative and episode, because the articulation of defined units is necessary in order to read sequential images as part of a larger narrative. Of course, the notion of the frame is pertinent to how we think about all medieval historiated initials, not just the smaller subgroup of treatment scenes on which I focus; that said, thinking about how the frame is used in most historiated initials (especially in contrast with other decorated letter types) sets things up for exploring how a narrative unit or episode is constructed and how such units convey meaning in the next two sections.

Narrative theory, through the lens of both cinema studies and the work of scholars of medieval art and literature, has provided me with the language to think through concepts such as time, change, and potentiality, and to argue for historiated initials as something more than chapter markers or static scenes of inaction. As Natalie Crohn Schmitt puts it, “Images and even gestures that appear to be static […] represent movement in time.” The initials of the illustrated Regime du corps manuscripts demonstrate that isolated scenes with unresolved narratives can evoke potentiality that engages the viewer to imagine multiple conclusions simultaneously. But the Regime is just one manifestation of that potential; my larger goal with this article is to provide an approach to thinking about and analyzing a variety of historiated initial types in a much wider range of manuscripts.

The letter as frame
The narrative capacities of historiated initials begin with their form: the frame that is created by the letter itself. In the initials of the Regime manuscripts, each scene has been placed within the frame of a letter surrounding it. The image is set off or isolated from the rest of the page through such framing, which
also delimits the space devoted to the image. Werner Wolf describes the frame as an “apparatus for demarcation”; 36 according to Louis Marin the frame “renders work autonomous in visible space,” 37 making clear that the image within is different from what surrounds it and facilitating “the organization of pictorial material,” in the words of Wolfgang Kemp. 38 Thus, as Richard Phelan points out, “looking is activated by frames.” 39 The frame, defined by Schapiro as “a regular enclosure isolating a field of representation from the surrounding surfaces,” 40 contains the image and makes it visible. It is essential to the construction of narrative in part because the frame is what delineates unique episodes and helps to distinguish them from one another.

As it strictly conforms to its function, the historiated initial’s letter-as-frame clearly differs from most “decorated” initials, that is, those that integrate the letter with more extensive images or the main text block, or have an image literally spilling out of the letter and into the rest of the page’s space, such as the Chi Rho of the Book of Kells, or the E of the Windmill Psalter. The framing of historiated initials like those in the Régime manuscripts also works differently from that of larger illustrations in “picture books” 41 of the period, which are defined by rectangular, non-letter frames (such as those in the thirteenth-century Apocalypse manuscripts, or the Psalter of St Louis). Anja Grebe argues that even such rectangular, non-letter frames in medieval manuscripts function as “intermediaries” between text and image, 42 as framed image and text block are both components that share space on the same page. In the case of the historiated initial’s letter-as-frame, the link to the other written words on the page is even more pronounced, not always in terms of intertextuality, but in the sense that historiated initials like those in the Régime manuscripts are positioned as introductory images for chapters, and thus placement and the image’s relationship to the rest of the text on the page is important. As a framed space that is also a letter—in contrast with both rectangular-framed images and the messy hybridity of decorated letters—the historiated initial is unique through its combination of careful framing of the image within well-defined letter.

The framing of any image is often taken for granted; we no longer tend to see it as part of the imaging process, despite its constructed nature. 43 As Schapiro has written, the form of a sheet of paper (or, by extension, a page in a book), with its rectangular shape and smooth surface, is rarely noted, despite the fact that at some point in the past this format was invented; 44 such framing “mechanisms go essentially unnoticed.” 45 Schapiro points out how central this form of the image field has become, echoed in the shape conventions of the photograph, the television, the movie screen (and the computer monitor and iPad screen). The “artificial rectangular field” creates a definite boundary around what is depicted within and sets up a horizontal orientation. 46 In the case of the medieval historiated initial, the letter-as-frame delimits the visual field and controls the figures within it.

The frame’s status as part of the image’s space or that of the viewer can fluctuate. A letter-as-frame often works as a window onto a space that supposedly extends beyond the frame; Schapiro points out that this kind of frame belongs to the space of the observer, rather than to the illusory world depicted within. 47 The letter establishes the ground line on which the figures stand, and limits what the viewer can see of the figures’ space. But when the edge of the frame is violated or transgressed, the plane to which the frame belongs shifts, and it becomes a part of the picture’s space. For example, several figures in images from Sloane 2435 step over the frame of the letter (figures 5 and 14). In other cases the letter seems to create a room, or box, that confines the players’ movements. The figures may seem unable to move at all within such small, constricted spaces, but as Schapiro remarks, such frames seem in place precisely in order to be transgressed with figures that break out of the frames or move across them.

Such letters do more than frame the image; they also construct a line or division between different pictorial spaces as well as the contiguous space. The frame of the letter is “edge and border, boundary and limit,” 48 marking the difference between inside and outside while serving to bridge those zones. 49 The letter’s construction determines the relationship between these spaces on either side of it. In several Régime manuscripts the letter unfurls into the space of the page, into its margin, and therefore everything beyond the inner edges of the letter appears part of the same pictorial plane (figure 3). At other times, a clean, sharp outer edge clearly distinguishes the body of the letter from the margin surrounding it, creating the impression of a contained and separate space. But is that separate space shared by the framing letter and the space inside, or does the letter create a new intermediary zone between its internal pictorial space and the external margin? 50

The liminality of the letter-as-frame tends to be most pronounced when this frame is transgressed. In such violations, the letter itself may dig into the space inside, or a figure may step out onto the frame and out of its pictorial space. Indeed, according to Stuart Whatling, “as a container, the medieval picture frame often seems rather leaky.” 51 Moreover, the letter as frame or boundary is necessary for the creation of the margin, an equally active space in many manuscripts. Things and figures that wander out of the frame explicitly engage the viewer, as do other activities in the margins. In Whatling’s words, “It was in precisely this context that medieval artists devised meta-communicative strategies involving metalepsis or other forms of visual paradox to re-engage the viewer and focus his or her attention onto some key scene or other.” 52 Whatling defines metalepsis as “a deliberate and paradoxical violation of levels within the hierarchical structure of a narrative […] the deliberate and unexpected violation of conventional ontological hierarchies.” 53 The visual paradox inherent in the frame contributes to a lack of narrative resolution;
Indeed, the exclusionary quality of the frame itself opens up the narrative moment to imaginative completion, prompting the viewer’s extensive engagement in creating the scene’s meaning.

The narrative episode or freeze-frame

The frame of the letter is an essential component of the historiated initial: it isolates the scenic episode within it. It simultaneously delineates different elements of the page and connects those different spaces to one another. These active verbs like “connecting” or “delineating” highlight a key feature of the historiated initial; by framing the action inside, it can be seen as playing an active role in the narrative. Whatling has suggested that in the early Middle Ages the move away from the illusionism of Roman art “created a new role for the frame as an active participant in the narrative image.”33 I would argue this is also the case with historiated initials. Historiated initials like the treatment and exchange scenes in the Régime manuscripts capture a narrative moment in a way similar to the cinematic freeze-frame shot, in that they suggest multiple, but unknown outcomes that engage audience participation.

How can a single episode, rather than one in a series, serve a narrative function? I hope to demonstrate this through analyzing how the Régime’s historiated initial functions like a cinematic freeze-frame, exploring the notion of “monoscenic” narrative, and finally establishing how these mechanisms encourage audience participation. The ambiguity of such scenes in the Régime allowed the users to move beyond the books’ diagnosis and treatment and into the physical realities of their own time and place.

The term “episode” is commonly defined as a discrete, modular unit or event in a narrative, distinguished by boundaries, arranged in a sequence, and subject to repetition.34 Lewis, in her discussion of the narrative of the Bayeux embroidery, also states that an episode is usually experienced as “a segment of time […] its unity as a single occasion.”55 She goes on to describe such a scene that could just as easily be one of the historiated initials from the Régime manuscripts: “As the two protagonists face each other within a tightly enclosed space, the momentary closure creates an effect resembling the ‘freeze-frame’ in film, not a description but a kind of ‘concealed iteration of future behavior.’”56

Thinking about the historiated initials of the Régime manuscripts in terms of the freeze-frame brings attention to the arrested, momentary, unresolved quality of these scenes. As such, these images raise questions about what has been selected, what that selected scene is intended to convey, and how the scene relates to the content of the chapter it represents. In most of the figurative initials from the Régime manuscripts, the scene captured in the initial is the treatment as it is being administered. The roles of the patient and practitioner have been established, and their relationship is clear. What is left unresolved, however, is the result of the treatment. The events that are represented in the images are in progress, often marked as the moment of physical touch between the patient and practitioner. We are not at the beginning or the end of these sessions, and their success or failure is left unknown. Lewis argues that it is precisely that narrative “incompleteness” that “gives medieval viewers a power over the text.”57 As such, the Régime’s scenes of treatment offer moments of instability, leaving the outcome open and uncertain.

Despite the constricted space in which the figures of the Régime historiated initials reside, they are nevertheless involved in activities. They do things, in a specific place and also for a certain amount of time. Often discussions of how medieval images construct narrative involve the formulation of a relationship between images, seeing them as episodes in a larger sequence, and analyzing how the series of images is understood by a viewer.38 For example, British Library MS Sloane 1977 is a medical manuscript featuring full page miniatures made up of three registers of illustrations; the top register includes three scenes from the life of Christ, and the two lower registers are made up of six surgical scenes (figure 4). Karl Whittington has argued that although the images in the two lower registers are not actually depicting the stages of a procedure “step by step” but rather are independent scenes, they “effectively become a narrative” through their consecutive organization on the page.

and their position underneath a well-known narrative.\textsuperscript{59} However, the historiated initials of the \textit{Régime} do not appear as part of a sequence of related images that come together into a larger narrative. Instead, each image represents its own, singular mini-narrative. Time must pass for the depicted activity to transpire, but that passing of time is necessarily evoked with a single image.

Although the \textit{Régime} images are narratively independent, each as a single episode has the potential to be part of its own narrative, admittedly one that is largely left unillustrated. Kurt Weitzmann describes some narrative forms as “monoscenic,” suggesting that it is possible to construct a narrative around a single image;\textsuperscript{56} Wolf describes such images as “monophase” pictures.\textsuperscript{60} The frame as active participant suggests that a single image can be thought to create a narrative in and of itself, doing so through its ability to isolate the visual narrative.\textsuperscript{61} Kemp suggests that visual narrative deals with “heightened, intensificed life,” creating drama beyond that of real life by highlighting key moments of transformation or change.\textsuperscript{62} That “intensification” of the narrative is even further heightened when it is created through a single image. Several authors use the phrase “pregnant moment” to describe the potency possible in the moment selected for a monoscenic narrative.\textsuperscript{63} Coincidently, these notions are evocative of Nancy Siraisi’s description of the importance of lining up treatment with the “crisis” or “turning point” of an illness or injury, that is, the moment at which the patient will either improve or worsen.\textsuperscript{65} While it may seem that such a single image narrative is hardly unusual in the history of art (see Wolf’s discussion of a Jan Steen painting, for example), not all such paintings are necessarily narratively potent.\textsuperscript{66} Furthermore, the historiated initial is not the same as any single-scene image such as a freestanding painting, for the historiated initial is always part of a bigger object, the manuscript in which it appears. That manuscript will almost always provide a complex context, including the larger page of the image that usually includes text, as well as the other historiated initials that appear throughout the manuscript. For this reason—that a scene within an initial would have had multiple contexts surrounding it including text on the page and other images within the book—finding monoscenic narrative in a manuscript is somewhat rare.

The significance embedded in the selection of an episode or instance is then clear. In the context of pictures, a creator “must choose the instance most laden with significance,”\textsuperscript{67} which, as literary theorist Hayden White points out, requires us to consider the things which “might have been included but were left out.”\textsuperscript{68} With each image, a decision was made to depict a particular moment over another one, prompting us to ask what might have been excluded or silenced. A particularly compelling example of this selection is the image that accompanies the chapter on caring for a newborn in two of the \textit{Régime} manuscripts; instead of an image that includes an infant, they depict a scene in which a potential wet nurse’s body undergoes physical evaluation and judgment (\textit{figures 5} and \textit{6}). The isolation of the key moment in a narrative for visual depiction also engages the viewers to add what is not there, in this case, the infant.\textsuperscript{69} Numerous authors have pointed out the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.png}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure6.png}
\end{figure}
remarkable open-endedness of such a construction; Paul Ricoeur, for instance, suggests that this type of ambiguity allows for endless possibilities, which are then repeated and multiplied each time the narrative is revisited. The absence of an ending allows us to fill in our own, or as described by Kemp, provides an opportunity for us to anticipate the transformation between past, present, and future. By capturing an activity as it is happening, these scenes not only leave the results open and unresolved; they also allow the viewer to participate in narrative construction.

What the Régime images so forcefully illustrate is the necessary impetus for that narrative construction to move into the real world. The potentiality of a freeze-framed scene uniquely hinges not just on its form, but also on the specifics of the scene’s content and the particular moment that has been captured. When the content is medical or practical in nature, it engages the viewer beyond a simple mental construction of narrative. The viewer’s “filling-in” action selects a specific choice among a multitude of options, all of which may lead to different outcomes, and in the case of medical treatment these outcomes will potentially take place in the actual, physical world.

The potentiality of unresolved narrative

What is narratively possible for a non-serial image? Can the single image conjure a series of other scenes for the viewer (scenes that were not actually depicted)? My assertion is that yes, such an unresolved scene not only allows but also encourages audience participation, providing for the viewer a point of departure to create ideas about the potential conclusion of the depicted activities. The value of thinking about the historiated initial as a freeze-frame is that it emphasizes how a single scene of action in progress can create even more narrative potential than a pictured series of scenes, and does so expressly by engaging the viewer to make those imaginative leaps. A closer look at some examples from the illustrated Régime manuscripts will demonstrate these two qualities inherent in the images of these books: the unresolved nature of certain scenes, and how that unresolved quality prompts viewers to engage more directly with the narrative, leading eventually to a move from the realm of the book to that of the real world.

In the illustrated Régime manuscripts, each chapter is relatively short, but within that body of text there remains a wide range of information. Rarely do chapters contain more than one historiated initial, even when the details of a chapter’s text are clearly impossible to convey in a single picture. A choice was made about the subject for each chapter’s image, one that presumably considered what was most important in the chapter as well as what was most expedient to illustrate. For example, the chapter on copulation is most often represented by a couple in bed; the arrangement of this scene is similar to many other contemporaneous images of couples, including the frequently illustrated biblical scene of David and Bathsheba, and so may have been selected because an appropriate model existed already. And the long traditions of illustrated bestiaries and herbals would have made it relatively straightforward to illustrate the sections discussing foods such as plants and meat (figures 7 and 8). But for those scenes that did not have existing models, there would have been more possibilities. At first glance, many of the images from the Régime seem like logical choices for the chapters they represent: the bloodletting chapter shows someone being bled; the cupping chapter shows someone undergoing this treatment as well. But in other chapters the choice is less obvious, and the images that were chosen illuminate the motivations and concerns behind the production of these books.

In the image of purging from Sloane 2435, one man holds a cup up to the other man who drinks from it, the right figure asserting his authority with a gesture of commandment (figure 9). The particular subject of this image might be missed with only a cursory glance, but the diminutive seat and bowl depicted in the lower left of the image indicate clearly the next step in this particular narrative. In contrast, the image of this scene from Arsenal 2510 shows the patient actually sitting on the seat (figure 7, Folio 53v, grains; from Régime du corps, fifteenth century, France. British Library, London, Sloane MS 2401. © The British Library Board.)
The differences might seem subtle, but they highlight the range of nuances possible for the designer of these images. In fact, many of the images in the Arsenal manuscript veer away from the other two in the earlier group. BnF fr. 12323 introduces the chapter on vomiting with an image that shows a physician or assistant aiding a person who has presumably been given a purgative for this purpose, while the patient kneels in front of a bowl and prepares himself. Other copies depict a different moment. In Sloane 2435, the patient leans forward, assisted, while several white dashes modestly indicate his sickness (figure 11); in the Arsenal manuscript, the large, multicolored stream rushing from the man’s mouth more immediately communicates the content of the chapter (figure 12). In the later, fifteenth-century manuscript of the Régime at the Morgan Library, two figures are depicted, and this time they are both women (figure 13).

Whether clarity was necessarily the primary goal with these images is difficult to ascertain. The designers or artists producing these books may have been more interested in creating images to which a particular patron could relate by representing stand-ins for the commissioner of the book, or indicating the status of the future book owner through well-dressed patients receiving help from well-dressed physicians. This seems to be the case in several of the images for the
chapter dedicated to pregnancy, in which an upper-class woman stands across from a physician (figure 14). The woman’s pregnancy is not pronounced; instead, such depictions highlight the status of the woman, the physician’s authority (through dress and gesture), and the relationship created between them.

The range of illustrative possibilities for the same chapter of textual content is especially pronounced with the chapter on “caring for your newborn,” which begins with cleaning the child immediately after birth, feeding a newborn (including information on the selection of a wet nurse), and continues to discuss care through two to three years of age. As is the case with many of the illustrations in these two books, Sloane 2435 and BnF fr. 12323 show a similar scene, coincidentally one that does not include a child but the two women involved in the wet nurse exchange (figures 5 and 6), a complex scene to which I will return shortly. In contrast, in Arsenal 2510 the artist chose a different, perhaps more expected scene in which we see two women, presumably servants, cleaning a child in a tub (figure 15). The Arsenal image differs slightly from the scene in the fifteenth-century manuscripts; all three later copies present a relatively conventional “lying in” scene in which the mother is shown in bed with two assistants nearby, one of which washes the infant in a tub (figures 16 and 17). This variety can probably be attributed in part to factors like date and place of production, workshop and/or patron idiosyncrasies, or available models. At the same time, however, each example communicates something different about what is contained in this chapter.
and, more significantly, what is most important to take away from the chapter. So often, that takeaway message is a multivalent one, with the image engaging viewers to think about a range of possible narrative outcomes.

A closer look at the wet nurse images from Sloane 2435 and BnF fr. 12323 demonstrates the complexities of monoscenic narrative construction. In both manuscripts, a historiated “A”
introduces the chapter on caring for a newborn child, in which we see a noblewoman holding the breast of a more simply-dressed woman, presumably to assess her validity as a viable wet nurse (figures 5 and 6). In both images the wet nurse displays her left hand in a gesture of greeting or acquiescence; the wet nurse’s right hand falls limp in BnF fr. 12323 while in Sloane 2435 she holds up the breast for the noblewoman. In both manuscripts the elite figures reach with their right hands and touch the breast.\(^8^0\) Through clothing and gesture these scenes remind us of the inequitable power structure at play in the scene, even as we realize that the noblewomen also need something from the lower-class figures.

Scholarship on medieval gesture reminds us that the gestures of a scene’s actors, while ostensibly directed at their scenic partners, are really addressing the beholder of the image instead.\(^8^1\) The upward pointing by the upper-class woman in Sloane 2435, then, is directed both to her companion and to the reader/viewer. That gesture is one that we see often in the \(\text{Régime}\) manuscripts, usually by a practitioner who seems to be addressing or admonishing his patient. Such a power dynamic expressed through gesture echoes the previous chapter’s image in both these manuscripts, which depicts the pregnant woman conversing with the doctor (figure 14). But in Sloane 2435, the woman’s pointing gesture seems to direct the other woman, and us as viewers, to look above her as well.

A peculiar mouth-pulling figure stands on the letter’s upper frame, looming above the noblewoman in a dark cloak (figure 5).\(^8^2\) Although this ominous figure is perplexing and its meaning enigmatic, its position on the margin is clearly intended to relate to the scene below and to engage the audience by directly facing that viewer. Michael Camille has suggested that the messages of the margins are explicitly intended for the book’s audience, and the robed figure’s orientation, facing forward and out towards the reader, certainly seems to be an unambiguous gesture.\(^8^3\) It is true that the actions of the wet nurse and the noblewoman are directed at each other, but the latter’s gesture of pointing upward at the marginal figure seems intended to guide the viewer’s gaze to that figure as well. The marginal figure’s outward orientation, toward the viewer and parallel with the picture plane, is an unmistakable device identified in other manuscripts of this period. In fact, Richard Leson points out several examples of this in manuscripts by the Bute Painter, coincidentally the same artist as the Arsenal \(\text{Régime}\) manuscript (figures 10, 12, and 13).\(^8^4\) Furthermore, the simple existence of something extending beyond the frame, especially when that is not the norm within a given manuscript, immediately engages the audience to look more closely; it uses form to re-engage the reader and focus his or her attention.\(^8^5\) In his discussion of the relationship between initials and bas-de-page images in the Bute Psalter, Leson points out a similar instance in which “initial and margin are meaningfully differentiated,” reflecting an artist’s “commitment” to prompting a meditative reading experience.\(^8^6\) At the same time, the robed figure in Sloane 2435 can be identified as marginal only because there is a frame for the initial; the frame of the letter must be present for the marginal figure to be outside of it.\(^8^7\)

Such scenes are among the most fraught in terms of the variables associated with this important decision. These two wet nurse scenes are particularly powerful depictions of monoscopic episodes that suggest multiple actions or choices that could cause different results: will the wet nurse prove adequately nourishing for the newborn, or will this important decision result in an unsatisfactory hire and an ill child? The dark figure above the scene in Sloane 2435 further reinforces the significance of this moment, while the noblewoman’s anxious pointing—both to the other woman and for the viewer—also seems to provoke concern over this chapter’s content. Wolf has argued that the narrative created through monoscopic or monophase images cannot possibly create suspense,\(^8^8\) but on the contrary, these images capture precisely the key “crisis” moment in the administration of healthcare.\(^8^9\) After all, the noblewomen may have social power over the women whom they might employ, but they are the ones responsible for the hire, and are also ultimately at the mercy of those future wet nurses.

Toward a theory of the historiated initial

Historiated initials present visual information in medieval manuscripts differently from the way other illustrative forms do. While specific pictorial traditions developed for certain medieval textual genres over hundreds of years, and sometimes determined the later trajectory of such traditions, there was nevertheless a moment when a decision had to be made about whether or not to illuminate a text, and if so, what form that illumination would take. Furthermore, historiated initials work differently depending on their accompanying text; the isolated, independent episodes of the \(\text{Régime}\) initials differ from the seriality of the initials that illustrated a copy of a contemporary romance such the \(\text{Roman de Lancelot du Lac}\) or the \(\text{Roman de Merlin}\), or the multiple surgery scenes on a single folio in Sloane 1977.

The captured potentiality imbues the single images with narrative power and allows them to function independently from one another. It also prompts audience engagement, providing a point of departure to create ideas about the potential conclusion of the depicted activities; in the words of Schmitt, such narrative complexity in images “engages the active participation of the viewer.”\(^9^0\) The construction of a narrative out of these singular images might look something like this: a user/viewer of one of the illustrated \(\text{Régime}\) manuscripts begins by finding the section she wants, having identified the health problem for which she seeks information. This viewer sees the image in which a scene shows the solution in progress but which has an uncertain outcome: the image offers an arrested moment with multiple potential outcomes. In a comparable scene from a bible, psalter, or book of hours, audience members would generally know how the scene’s narrative was supposed to end even if the outcome were not
depicted. The initials in those other textual genres explicate what will happen in the text as opposed to what the text will direct the reader to do. With the treatment or discussion scenes in the Régime du corps, however, that outcome is not preordained. The user might also read the description in the corresponding text, which often provides directives along with the effects or outcomes that may be achieved through practicing what the text advises.

It is at this point that the reader must decide on a course of action to take, creating the sense of potentiality represented by the images, and then moves from the book into the real world where someone receives treatment. The various players in the scene—the practitioner and patient, but also the book user—enact the narrative beyond the space of the image, not unlike the way scholars have argued medieval plays and other forms of performance moved devotion or narrative action into the space of the viewer.48 In her discussion of a manuscript of Guillaume de Degulleville’s Pèlerinage de Jesucrist, Pamela Sheingorn argues that engagement of the viewer’s body heightens the books’ affective and devotional power: “the bodily response of the reader-viewer resembles the performative solo performance,” in which the reader-viewer “experiences his or her own performing body.”49 In the Régime scenes, the performative component does not just involve the reader’s body, but moves to a wider spatial sphere beyond to encapsulate possible actual treatment in the real world. The viewer of the Régime images becomes the composer of the narrative, but specifically a health-related one, initiating action in a way analogous to enacting medical care itself.

My goal has been to be as precise as possible about how the form of the historiated initial informs the meaning of the treatment and consultation scenes in the Régime du corps manuscripts, while considering how these ideas might apply more broadly. By interpreting this group of Régime initials as non-sequential and monoscopic episodes, as freeze-frame moments that emphasize open-endedness and potentiality, I have attempted to construct a method that might be useful for other kinds of non-sequential historiated initials in late medieval manuscripts as well. The historiated initial can be so much more than a chapter marker or a static scene of inaction. Non-sequential historiated initials foster unresolved narratives that suggest even more potentiality than images that are part of a series, and do so by engaging the viewer to imagine multiple conclusions simultaneously. Ultimately, these images provide for the reader the simultaneous possibilities of survival and succumbing, comfort and pain, heartbreak and celebration, indeed, a multiplicity of imaginable futures at once.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
I extend my deep appreciation to Suzanne Lewis, Asa Mittman, Louise Siddons, and Ben C. Tilghman for their thoughtful feedback and suggestions on earlier versions of this article, and to the Material Collective for their collegiality and support. The article also benefitted from the valuable comments of an anonymous reviewer. I gratefully acknowledge support from the Penn Humanities Forum at the University of Pennsylvania, the Rice University Humanities Research Center, and the College of Arts and Sciences at Oklahoma State University; the broader project has benefitted from productive conversations in all three of those communities. This research was also supported in part by grants from the Oklahoma Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

NOTES
1 – Marguerite of Provence (b. 1221) married Louis IX, King of France, in 1254; Eleanor of Provence (probably b. 1233) married Henry III, King of England, in 1256; in 1253, Sancia of Provence (probably b. 1238) married Richard, Earl of Cornwall, who became King of Germany in 1256; and in 1246, Beatrice of Provence (probably b. 1231) married Charles, Count of Anjou, who then became King of Sicily in 1266.
2 – Three manuscripts are from the late thirteenth or mid-fourteenth centuries: British Library, MS Sloane 2435 (contains 68 initials); Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 12923 (53); and Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arsenal MS 2510 (59). Three are from the fifteenth century: British Library, MS Sloane 2401 (38); Cambridge University Library, I.V.11 (142); and Morgan Library, MS M.165 (147).
4 – Another illustrated version of the Régime exists: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Reg. lat. 1256. This fifteenth-century copy, the text written in Italian, displays images in rectangular frames rather than initials, so it does not play a role in this article; Alcide Garosi, Aldelbrandino da Siena: Medico in Francia nel sec. XIII (Milan: Signorelli, 1980).
5 – In the Régime manuscripts that also include the Image du monde (Sloane 2435 and BnF fr. 12923), a contemporary encyclopedic text, the images that appear with the Image text are not historiated initials but small images of a similar scale to those in the Régime part of the manuscripts.
7 – Ibid.
8 – Ibid., 7. Jones focuses on the Paneth Codex as an example of this phenomenon (Yale University, Medical Library, MS 28), which he explores more fully in Peter Murray Jones, “Picturing Medicine in the Age of Petrarch,” in Pittura e la medicina. Atti del Convegno di Capo d’Orlando, 27–28 giugno 2003, ed. Monica Bertè, Vincenzo Fera, and Tiziana Pesenti (Messina: Centro Interdipartimentale di Studi Umanistici, 2006), 179–200.
12 – Ibid., 1: 98.
13 – Ibid.
14 – The freeze-frame is a technique used in cinema. Kristen Thompson and David Bordell explain it through the best known example: “the famous ending of The 400 Blows made the freeze-frame technique a favored device for expressing an unresolved situation”; Kristen Thompson and David Bordell, Film History: An Introduction (2nd ed.) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 445.
15 – An extensive body of scholarship demonstrates this shift. Some key publications include: Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, Manuscripts

248 JENNIFER BORLAND
Psalm One, includes four volumes and discusses several hundred manuscripts. In just recent addition to a series surveying illuminated manuscripts in France, and manuscript that discuss historiated initials but in terms of their intertextuality with the

Initials in the Getty Apocalypse, Enlivenment of the Word in Medieval Art, The Courtly and Commercial Art of the Wycliffite Bible it is traditionally ignored as solely decorative,


16 – However, this is not always the case for the later fifteenth-century manuscripts; especially for outdoor scenes, they tend to show landscapes or other environments in the background, rather than decorative patterns.


18 – Stones, Gothic Manuscripts, Part 1, vol. 1. Stones’s massive project is the recent addition to a series surveying illuminated manuscripts in France, and includes four volumes and discusses several hundred manuscripts. In just Part 1 of her study, 338 of the 898 illustrations (not including the color plates) are of historiated initials, resulting in roughly forty percent.

19 – Sandler’s Onom Baum is a notable exception. In another context, Kathleen E. Kennedy has argued that pigment line work, another form traditionally ignored as solely decorative, “functions as apparatus” and that it is “an information technology which guides the reader through the text”; Kathleen Kennedy, The Courty and Commercial Art of the Wydgifte Bible (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2014), 17.


23 – Sandler, Onom Baum, 1: 96.

24 – The studies to date that have explored medieval letters generally fall into three groups: work on earlier medieval letters (before the explosion in use of the historiated initial); studies that focus on singularly remarkable decorated letters from specific manuscripts; and a smaller group of studies that discuss historiated initials but in terms of their intertextuality with the manuscript’s text rather than considering their form on its own terms. For a recent exploration of medieval letters and script in a wide range of different media and contexts, see the issue of Word & Image on “The Iconicity of Script,” ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger: Word & Image 27, no. 3 (2011).

25 – Especially the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Book of Kells. For example, J. G. Alexander’s The Decorated Letter, an anthology of images from a wide range of medieval manuscripts, devotes the majority of space to earlier decorated letters: J. G. Alexander, The Decorated Letter (New York: G. Braziller, 1978). He includes seventy images, of which just ten date from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; among those ten, nearly all are unusually extravagant letters rather than the more ubiquitous and comparatively humble historiated initials so common in the period.

26 – Ibid., 18.


35 – In several of the Régime manuscripts, the irregularity of the letter shapes is made uniform with a box or rectangle around the outside of the letter (and also sometimes scrolling descenders or ascenders).


41 – Mackawa, Narrative and Experience.


43 – Phelan, “Picture Question.”

44 – Schapiro, “On Some Problems,” 9. Furthermore, it seems likely that the rectangular form of the page was the result of the consistent proportions (and efficient use) of animal skins for manuscript parchment.


47 – Ibid., 11.


50 – Whiting, “Narrative Art in Northern Europe,” 84.


53 – Ibid., 84.


55 – Lewis, Rhetoric of Pocer in the Bayeux Tapestry, 50.

56 – Ibid., 54; Lewis quotes Chatman, “What Novels Can Do that Films Can’t,” 130.


58 – Lewis, Reading Images; Lewis, Rhetoric of Pocer in the Bayeux Tapestry; Lewis, “Narrative”; Mackawa, Narrative and Experience; Pacht, Rise of Pictorial Narrative; Whaling, “Narrative Art in Northern Europe.” For an excellent discussion of continuous narration in several medieval examples, or multiple, sequential events depicted within the same framed space, see Schmitz, “Continuous Narration.”


69 – Lewis, Rhetoric of Pocer in the Bayeux Tapestry, 31; also Sturges, Medieval Interpretation.


71 – Harris, “Narrative,” 54.


74 – Cathleen Hoeniger cites the broader illustrated herbal tradition as the source for images dealing with plants in illuminated copies of the Tacuinum sanitatis, another medieval health guide popular in northern Italy; Cathleen Hoeniger, “The Illustrated Tacuinum Sanitatis Manuscripts from Northern Italy ca. 1360–1400: Sources, Patrons, and the Creation of a New Pictorial Genre,” in Givens et al., Visualizing Medieval Medicine and Natural History, 51–82.


78 – This image may be modeled on a scene of the Visitation, when Mary and Elizabeth meet and realize they are both pregnant (one usually touches the belly of the other). But there they are more equals; there is a significant power dynamic here.


81 – For example, see Lewis, Rhetoric of Pocer in the Bayeux Tapestry.

82 – At first glance one might assume it was a later addition, an artistic doodle intended for entertainment or commentary. But there are aspects of the artist’s rendering that are similar to the illustrations throughout this manuscript: the thin white lines articulating edges of fabric folds and other details, the rosy cheeks, the opacity of the paint. And close inspection of the manuscript itself reveals that the gold background of the letter goes around the figure’s toe.


89 – Siraisi, Medieval and Early Modern Medicine, 135.


91 – Harris, “Narrative.”