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SEMIOTIC DISSONANCE OF MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE. A CASE STUDY ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE SCULPTURAL ENSEMBLE OF THE NAVE CORPUS OF THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH IN SANDOMIERZ

Abstract: The paper presents a proposal for the use of Francis Jullien's *dé-coïncidence* theory in the interpretation of the Gothic architectural sculpture images of the interior of the Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Sandomierz. The complex and multifaceted meaning of medieval symbolism that can be read through the figures of animals in architectural sculpture and the mutual relations created by the composition of these decorations create multifaceted possibilities for understanding these symbols through the semiotic dissonance created in their meanings. To investigate the phenomenon, selected animal figures from the set of decorations of the nave corpus were used.

Keywords: medieval sculpture, gothic art, bestiary, symbols, semiotic iconography, hermeneutics.

Francis Jullien's concept of *dé-coïncidence*, of transcending unambiguity, of breaking away from a state in which everything has a definite meaning (breaking up the planes) when considering medieval art, appears as a solution to be embraced¹. Jullien's concept of *dé-coïncidence*, of transcending unambiguity,

¹ F. Jullien, *Ponownie otworzyć możliwości: de-koïncydencja i kolejne życie. Wybór tekstów*, transl. E. Marynowicz-Hetka, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2024, pp. 37-60, 147-179.

of breaking away from a state in which everything has a definite meaning (breaking up the planes), when considering medieval art, appears as a solution to be embraced. For one of the characteristics of medieval art is polysemy. This is due both to the polysemy of the symbols it contains and their variability depending on the relationship in which its elements are placed in relation to one another. It is characteristic that the meaning of ideological content in medieval art is given by the Holy Bible, as well as the contemplations of the ecclesiastical fathers, or the Physiologus and bestiaries. In these texts, meaning is often stratified in the translation of the meanings of flora and fauna, and this multiple meaning goes into the iconography. The same figure can be both good and evil, depending not only on the context of its placement, but also on how it is interpreted by the interpreter himself.

I would like to consider this cognitive intricacy and additional value on selected examples from the group of 14th-century Gothic architectural sculptures decorating the interior of the nave corpus of the Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Sandomierz. This ensemble deserves special attention due to the number of representations, craftsmanship and semiotic value. The grotesque mannerization of the sculptures' form and the hybridisation of animal and anthropomorphic figures detract from their imitation of nature. The modelling of the figures, which is atypical for the sculpture of this period, shows the artists' break from the accepted pattern. Here, multiple possibilities of interpretation have been given to the work on the iconographic, semantic and formal level.

The aim of this paper is to consider the reception of the idea of de-coincidence in relation to the nature of medieval art and to apply its use to a case study. It confronts the analysis of the content of medieval art included in the medium of architectural sculpture with Francis Jullien's concept of *dé-coïncidence*. This idea opens up a discourse on new possibilities for the treatment of "past art". It can be assumed that works of art should be treated in a multifaceted way.

Works of art are considered to be set in a certain time and in a certain culture. However, they are also embedded, due to their autonomy and visionary nature, beyond time. And this is where one can see the place of the "stratification" of the planes of understanding a work of art. If it is timeless, then its understanding and experience can be undertaken by any person, regardless of temporal relations. Contemporary interpretation of past art is also a phenomenon worth rethinking. Whether the art was created for its contemporaries or how long it has lasted (art embodied in the medium: sculpture, painting, architecture) is contemporary to all those whose lives fall into its existence and who undertake to understand its meaning. There is then a relationship of the kind that is presented in the Present Perfect tense, used to describe a situation in which a phenomenon began at a certain point in the past and continues.

This reflection will be based on the case of the architectural sculpture of the collegiate church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Sandomierz. This decoration was created around 1361². An advanced analysis³ of the form of the architectural sculpture has shown that it was made by two workshops. The first one was responsible for constructing the programme of decoration in the nave corpus. This was a team of several stonemasons who made architectural sculptures in almost all churches founded by King Casimir III the Great, such as: Wiślica, Niepołomice, Nowy Korczyn⁴, or the architectural sculpture of St. Mary's Church in Kraków. The analysis has shown that the team left the site during the works after the death of Casimir the Great in 1370⁵.

Sculptural decoration of the interior of the collegiate church in Sandomierz is located within the keystones, pillar impost friezes, pillar capitals and portal friezes. It is a coherent set of decorations mostly made by one workshop, apart from a few pillar capitals at the perimeter walls of the temple⁶. The architectural decoration is divided into two zones. Within the impost friezes and the pillar capitals there are floral decorations, in which figures of animals and fantastic creatures are interwoven (the portals are decorated only with floral patterns). The keystone zone shows images of earthly coats of arms, Christological themes and leafy masks. The following reflections will be based on the meanings of the images of selected examples of animals shown in the temple's capitol zone.

The sculptures feature images of dogs, lions, goats, a deer and doe, a bear, a hare, a hedgehog, a monkey, an ostrich and two hybrids, all interwoven with rich floral decoration. Each of these figures carries multi-dimensional meanings: both good and evil. The creators of the ideological programme of the temple's sculptural decoration were probably familiar with images of animals

² O. Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, *Nowa perspektywa w badaniach architektury i rzeźby kolegiaty w Sandomierzu*, in: "Między architekturą nowoczesną a tradycją [...] między konstrukcją a formą". *Prace naukowe dedykowane Profesorowi Krzysztofowi Stefańskiemu*, eds. P. Gryglewski, T. Bernatowicz, D. Rutkowska-Siuda, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2020, p. 321.

³ This analysis was carried out as part of PhD thesis defence on 30.05.2022: *Architektura i rzeźba kolegiaty w Sandomierzu [Architecture and Sculpture of the Collegiate Church in Sandomierz]* at the Institute of Art History of the University of Łódź and the Art Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw.

⁴ *Kronika Jana z Czarnkowa*, transl. J. Żerbiłło, Universitas, Kraków 2012, p. 16; I. Długossi, *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*, ed. Z. Kozłowska-Budkowa, Państwowe Wydaw. Naukowe, Varsoviae 1978, lib. 9, pp. 264-265, 349-350; J. Długosz, *Roczniki czyli Kroniki sławnego Królestwa Polskiego*, ks. 9, 1300-1370, ed. Z. Kozłowska-Budkowa, transl. J. Mrukována, Warszawa 2009, pp. 334-335, 440-443.

⁵ O. Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, *Architektura i rzeźba architektoniczna...*, pp. 66, 93, 112-117.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-103.

created in the Physiologus and bestiaries⁷, which were based on the texts of the ecclesiastical fathers in their reflections and instructions. They presented content concerning contemporary knowledge of the surrounding world, interwoven with religious themes, particularly through the rich animal symbolism, which was also transferred into sermon copies⁸. Animal figures also appeared in richly illustrated psalters, hymns and other manuscripts, such as the decrees of canon law⁹. Wild animals from distant lands or legendary mythical creatures described in the Holy Bible found their imagery in illuminations that could approximate images of unknown animals, while carrying a rich spectrum of symbolism showing the content of moral teaching¹⁰.

The multifaceted symbolism of animals presents an interesting issue for interpretation, in the context of the symbolism and science of the medieval era. Thomas of Chobham preached that Satan does not possess a person until he has turned them into an animal: a lion, a pard, a bear, a fox, a monkey or another creature¹¹. Honorius Augustodunensis believed that demons use various

⁷ Due to the specificity of these works and their varieties, the terms bestiary and Physiologus in this study will refer to this literary genre in general, and thus the terms “Physiologus” and “bestiary” will denote these works in their various editions. For the present work, the following have been used: *Fizjolog*, transl. and ed. K. Jażdżewska, Biblioteka Antyczna, Warszawa 2003; *Fizjolog Epifaniasza, Fizjolog Bł*, in: *Fizjolog i Aviarium. Średniowieczne traktaty o symbolicznie zwierząt*, transl. and ed. S. Kobieliński, Wydawnictwo Benedyktynskie TYNIEC, Kraków 2005 (further: *Fizjolog Epifaniasza or Fizjolog Bł*); bestiary: *Bestiariusz*, transl. A. Sawicka, R. Sasor, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2005. On the division of the bestiary view: F. MacCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of Romance Studies, Chapel Hill 1962; P. Mitchell, *Tiere als Symbol und Ornament: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der ikonographischen Deutung, gezeigt am Beispiel des Zürcher Grossmünster Kreuzgangs*, Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden 1979, pp. 52-54.

⁸ L. M.C. Randall, *Exempla a Source of Gothic Marginal Illumination*, “Art Bulletin” 1957, vol. 39, pp. 97-107; T. Szostek, *Świat zwierzęcy w średniowiecznych egzemplach kaznodziejskich*, in: *Wyobrażenia średniowieczne*, ed. T. Michałowska, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, Warszawa 1996, pp. 273-284.

⁹ Comp.: R. Baxter, *Learning from Nature: Lessons in Virtue and Vice in the Physiologus and Bestiaries*, in: *Virtue and Vice: The Personifications in the Index of Christian Art*, ed. C. Hourihane, Princeton, N. J.: Index of Christian Art, Dept. of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University in association with Princeton University Press, Princeton 2000, pp. 29-41; F. Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages*, Routledge, Cambridge 1971.

¹⁰ *The Ashmole Bestiary*, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms 1511; *The Aberdeen Bestiary*, Aberdeen University Library, Ms 24. Comp. Le carnet de Villard de Honnecourt, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, MS. Fr. 19093 (the lion -XLVII, XLVIII, LII, LIII, the dog -XXXVI, LI, the hedgehog - XLIII). Comp.: Ch. Schröder, *Der Millstätter Physiologus - Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Verlag Königshausen & Neumann GmbH, Würzburg 2005; *The book of beasts: being a translation from a Latin bestiary of the twelfth century*, transl. T. Hanbury White, Cambridge University Library, New York 1960; W. Pangritz, *Tier in der Bibel*, Reinhardt, München-Basel 1963.

¹¹ Thomas de Chobham, *Sermones*, Sermo 16, l. 268.

shapes and colours to delude people. According to him, they can, like humans, give their bodies different colours, clothe themselves with robes and take on different shapes – mostly those of animals, especially a dragon or a lion, in order to cause awe or terror in humans¹². In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul conveyed: [...] *because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* (2 Cor 4, 18)¹³. Following the reflections of Origenes who, in considering the significance of the relationship between the visible and the invisible, based on the Holy Bible [Rom 1:20; 2 Cor 4:18; Heb. 9:24; Gen 1:26-27; Ps 104 (103), 24], held that in order for the invisible to become visible and intelligible to us, we will have to know the image of visible realities, since a human being who lives in the flesh cannot understand any invisible thing if he or she does not assimilate its visible image or representation. Origenes, following the Second Letter to the Corinthians, assumed in his Commentary on the Song of Songs¹⁴ that through images of figures, so strongly characterised by multifaceted symbolism, a strong moralising effect could be produced in the viewer. Although the above considerations of the ecclesiastical fathers contradict the sound of the second commandment: *You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God [...]* (Ex 20, 4), it was medieval art that brought us many paintings and sculptures carrying a multitude of invisible meanings behind their image and the figures depicted. The impact of images is of such great importance in culture that we can even talk about the language of images¹⁵, which is above iconoclasm and idolatry.

Looking at the scenes and figures in the capitol zone of the collegiate church in Sandomierz, one can see that the individual figures are not independent of each other, and their gaze is directed in a particular direction. This creates a system of interrelationships that makes a linear approach to understanding and attempting to create an interpretation of this work, which is a combined ensemble, seem impossible, in fact infinite. In mathematical

¹² Honorius Augustodunensis, *Liber duodecimquaestionum*, PL, vol. 172, p. 1183.

¹³ All Bible quotations are taken from: *The Holy Bible*, Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, London, Edinburg, Paris, Melbourne, Toronto, New York 1953.

¹⁴ Origenes, *Commentarium in Canticumcanticorum* 3, 12, *Komentarz do Pieśni nad Pieśniami; Homilie o Pieśni nad Pieśniami*, transl. S. Kalinowski, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 1994, pp. 156-158.

¹⁵ View: D. Freedberg, *Potęga wizerunków*, transl. E. Klekot, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2005; H. Belting, *Obraz i kult. Historia obrazu przed epoką sztuki*, transl. T. Zatorski, Słowo Obraz Terytoria, Gdańsk 2010; Idem, *Antropologia obrazu. Szkice do nauki o obrazie*, transl. M. Bryl, Universitas, Kraków 2012.

language, we should take the interval of meaning, ending with the symbol of infinity, as the answer. Accepting the multiplicity of directions, and therefore the multiplicity of solutions to this equation in the spirit of Jullien's theory of *dé-coïncidence*, offers the possibility of assuming the truth of the work and its multidimensionality.

Arrangements of animal figures form sets of equations with multiple unknowns, giving multiple answers. The most obvious correlation of animal images and their meanings is the ensemble showing a dog chasing a hare and a dog chasing or playing with a hedgehog¹⁶ (there used to be two dogs here, but one has been destroyed), located within the two side entrances to the collegiate church. This arrangement offers multiple possibilities for interpretation, arising from the multi-faceted and complex symbolism of each animal.

The dog is an animal¹⁷ presented in the Holy Bible more often in a pejorative sense. In the Book of Proverbs, it was identified with gluttony (Proverbs 26:11)¹⁸, in the Apocalypse of St John, dogs were excluded from entering the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 22:15), and in the parable of Christ the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18), they symbolised a warning against false prophets (Matthew 7:15). In a pejorative sense, dog behaviour is compared to that of a sinner who continually commits a sin and, despite confession, repeats it without showing any improvement¹⁹, and from this attitude we should take a lesson not to desire so much the transitory things that cannot accompany us anyway²⁰. For some of the medieval church fathers, dogs symbolised infidels persecuting the church²¹. Some of them, however, saw positive attitudes in dogs, presenting them as defenders of the faith²² and guardians²³. In the bestiary, the dog was attributed with fidelity, among other things²⁴.

¹⁶ Precisely on the description, location and form: O. Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, *O symbolice XIV-wiecznych scen rodzajowych, ukazanych w rzeźbie architektonicznej dwóch fryzów impostowych kolegiaty w Sandomierzu*, in: *Ars inspiratio. Studia dedykowane Profesor Eleonorze Jedlińskiej*, ed. A. Pawłowska, K. Stefański, M. Milerowska, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2024, pp. 41-70.

¹⁷ P. Gerlach, *Hund*, in: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. E. Kirchbaum, SJ, Darmstadt 2015 [futher: LCI], vol. 2, pp. 334-335.

¹⁸ View: *Aberdeen*, f. 19v.

¹⁹ *Bestiariusz*, pp. 51-52. Comp. *Aberdeen*, f. 18r-20v; *Ashmole*, f. 25r-29v.

²⁰ *Bestiariusz*, p. 53. Comp. *Aberdeen*, f. 19r; *Ashmole*, f. 28r; Plutarch, *Moralia. Wybór pism filozoficzno-moralnych*, transl. Z. Abramowiczówna, Biblioteka Narodowa, Wrocław 1954, p. 214.

²¹ Richardus s. Vivtoris, *In Apocalypsim Joannis*, PL, 196, 693.

²² *Bestiariusz*, pp. 51-52. Por. *Aberdeen*, f. 18r-20v; *Ashmole*, f. 25r-29v.

²³ Augustyn, *Objaśnienia Psalmów*, Ps. 58-77, PSP, XLI, p. 181. Por. A. Timmermann, *Good and Evil, Not-So-Good and Not So-Evil: Marginal Life on Gothic German Sacrament Houses*, in: *Virtue and Vice...*, p. 73.

²⁴ *Bestiariusz*, pp. 51-52. Cf. *Aberdeen*, f. 18r-20v; *Ashmole*, f. 25r-29v.

The figure of the hare also has a multi-faceted meaning. Hares have been associated with sexuality and fertility, life and the rebirth of nature, and resurrection²⁵, which has also led to their symbolism being read in multiple ways. In the Book of Proverbs, the hare is described as a small animal that makes its lair in the rocks (30, 26). Many commentaries by the ecclesiastical fathers were written in reference to this. The hare seeking refuge on a rock was said to symbolise pagans who initially wandered off but eventually took refuge on a rock symbolising Christ, while according to Physiologus, in reference to a passage in the Book of Proverbs, the hare has shorter forelegs, so that it can climb the rock and avoid pursuit²⁶. Hares have been associated with the Church as God's people who seek refuge in Christ²⁷, and their skittish nature has sometimes been interpreted as a symbol of people who, fearing God, trust in Him and not in themselves²⁸, although at the same time the animal has been seen as a symbol of a wicked man²⁹.

The genre scene with the dog chasing the hare³⁰ (Fig. 1, 2, 3) can be interpreted in many ways, depending on the assumption of which character is positive and which negative, closing in on the dependence of two arrangements: the first, where the dog is personified as the evil hunter and the hare as the faithful fleeing to the Christ-rock, and the second, where the dog is personified as the good guardian of faith and the hare as the sinful soul. The hare, also a symbol of the soul that could safely enjoy the fruits of eternal life in paradise, was depicted as the human soul pursued by Satan the hunter, as well as the good pursued by the evil in the scenes of escape from the dog³¹.

It is notable that in the Sandomierz Collegiate Church, the figure of the dog is the most common. Some of them are shown in what might be considered a guarding position, depicted with open mouths and grotesque smiles (Fig. 5, 6). Perhaps in this position they would refer to sermonisers who direct their words against evil³². This concept was often used in the propaganda of the

²⁵ Ambroży, *Hexaemeron*, PSP, t. 4, transl. W. Szoldorski, Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, Warszawa 1969, p. 181; W. Kemp, *Hase*, in: LCI, vol. 2, pp. 222-226.

²⁶ Cf. *Fizjolog*, p. 76; H. Biedermann, *Knaurs Lexikon der Symbole*, Droemer Knaur, München 1989, p. 182. V.: U. Treu, *Otterngezücht. Ein patristischer Beitrag zur Quellenkunde des Physiologus*, in: *Antaios*, 10, 1969, pp. 113-122.

²⁷ Augustyn, *Objaśnienia Psalmów*, Ps 103-123, PSP, XLI, transl. J. Sulowolski, Warszawa 1986, Kazanie III, p. 50. V.: J. B. Bauer, *Lepusculus Domini. Zum altchristlichen Hasensymbol*, "Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie" 1957, vol. 79, no. 4, p. 461.

²⁸ Rabanus Maurus, *De universo*, PL, vol. 111, p. 205.

²⁹ Idem, *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam*, PL, vol. 112, p. 984.

³⁰ *Fizjolog*, p. 76.

³¹ Ibid.; H. Biedermann, *Knaurs Lexikon...*, p. 181.

³² H. V. St-Victor, *De bestiis et aliis rebus II*, 17, *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Seria Latina, vol. 177, ed. J. P. Minge, Paris 1854, kol. 65-66; A. Timmermann, *Good and Evil...*, p. 73.

Dominican order, finding its references in the art of the late Middle Ages³³. Members of the Dominican sermonic order, in a positive sense, were called *Domini Canes*, for they defended and guarded faith. In the case of the Sandomierz sculptural decoration, this way of understanding the occurrence of dog figures would be most understandable, especially in view of the very active cult of Dominican martyrs in that city³⁴. This interpretation, however, could be called into question by the view of dogs considered as symbols of falsehood³⁵.

It should also be mentioned that the dog characters in the hare and hedgehog chase scenes are shown with their genitals clearly depicted. However, they are not to be seen by a person looking at these scenes from the floor level. They are not discernible when viewing the sculptures with modern optical tools (telescopes, telephoto lenses) and are only visible from the scaffolding. Thus, with their sexual characteristics depicted, were they meant to be pejorative figures? Perhaps this was only a humorous touch by the creators of the ideological programme, especially as only they and the stonemasons assembling the sculptures into the supporting structure of the temple vaults could see them.

Another animal involved in the configuration with the dog in the Sandomierz Collegiate Church is the hedgehog (Fig. 4). While reading the scene of dogs chasing the hare is not a problem, in the case of the dog and the hedgehog it is not so simple. It is difficult to judge whether the dog is chasing the hedgehog, playing with it or rushing it. The hedgehog is mentioned in the Holy Bible: *montes ex celsi cervis petra refugium ericiis* (Ps 103:18)³⁶ and is considered to be a shy animal but one armed by nature. Its character is also described with two opposite meanings: the hedgehog may symbolise a human being who, being saturated with sins, fears the coming of judgement and flees to Christ, the rock. At the same time, the hedgehog may signify people who will never depart from God³⁷. It was also regarded as a prudent animal, caring for its offspring, as a warning, as well as a symbol of Satan³⁸.

³³ M. Walczak, *Rzeźba architektoniczna w Małopolsce za czasów Kazimierza Wielkiego*, Universitas, Kraków 2006, p. 339; Ch. Gerhardt, *Der Hund, der Eidechsen, Schlangen und Kröten verbellt. Zum Trappen aufgang der Kanzel im Wiener Stephansdom*, "Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte" 1985, no. 38, pp. 115-132.

³⁴ K. Stopka, *Męczennicy Sandomierscy. Legenda i rzeczywistość*, "Nasza Przeszość" 1993, vol. 80, pp. 51-99.

³⁵ Comp. S. Kobielius, *Bestiarium chrześcijańskie. Zwierzęta w symbolice i interpretacji. Starożytność i średniowiecze*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa 2002, p. 260.

³⁶ V.: I. Kwielicka, *Ze studiów nad staropolskimi przekładami Biblii. Problem tłumaczenia realiów biblijnych*, "Studia z Filologii Polskiej i Słowiańskiej" 1971, vol. 10, pp. 59-89.

³⁷ Cassiodorus, *Exoisitiopsalmorum*, Cl. 0900, SL 98, Psalmus 103, l. 435-437.

³⁸ *Fizjolog Bł.*, p. 49; *Ashmole*, f. 36r-36v; *Aberdeen*, f. 24r-24v; Arystoteles, *Opowiadania zdumiewające*, in: *Dzieła wszystkie*, vol. 4, transl. L. Regner, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1993, p. 390 (831a). Comp. P. Gerlach, *Igel*, in: LCI, vol. 2, pp. 335-336; Ch. Schröder, *Der Millstätter Physiologus...*, pp. 118-120, 290-292.

If, therefore, the images of dogs from the Sandomierz Collegiate Church referred to the word of God preached by the Dominicans, or to the context of their worship, then the hedgehog could be read as the personification of evil combated by the preachers' sermons. If, on the other hand, the dog images were to personify the evil hunter, and the hedgehog was to be regarded as an example of forethought, then the overtones of the scene would be the opposite, as in the case of the scene showing the dogs' pursuit of the hare.

Among the animal figures in the architectural decoration of the nave corpus, it is possible to see not only scenes directly composed by the authors, but also relationships that can be perceived between the animal figures by their facing each other. Such a composition offers another opportunity for a multiplicity of interpretations.

The first of these relationships is the juxtaposition of two figures from opposite impost friezes within the arch: a lion (Fig. 7) and a jester with a hybrid body (Fig. 8). I will begin my consideration with the symbolism of the lion, which, like the animals described above, also embodied multidimensional symbolism based on the different intensity of two antagonistic forces: good and evil. As in the examples above, it depends on the system in which the figure is placed, as well as the will of the person interpreting it.

In the Holy Bible, the figure of the lion, on the one hand, signifies mortal danger that threatens humans (Ps 21 14, 22), so in the story of Daniel, who was thrown into a cave with lions, the closing of the lion's mouth can be interpreted as a special divine intervention (Dan 6, 16-23). At the same time, the animal is compared to the Messiah, especially in Genesis, during the blessing of Jacob, where Jesus is likened to a lion (Gen 49:9-10), in Revelation (5:5), or in the First Book of Kings, where the lion is shown as a symbol of justice and the righteous judge is King Solomon, a prefiguration of Christ³⁹. The lion was identified with the Saviour and considered a symbol of the resurrection⁴⁰. This was linked to a characteristic of this animal described in the Physiologus and bestiary books: according to them, the lion was supposed to kill its children after birth (or keep those born dead) in order to awaken them after three days with its roar, just as Christ rose from the dead after three days⁴¹, which finds its reference in the Holy Bible (Wis 10:17; Gen 49:9). According to the bestiary, the lion's behaviour also exemplifies the teaching of disregarding the transience of the material world⁴². In a negative sense, the figure of the lion was read as

³⁹ S. Kobielus, *Bestiarium chrześcijańskie...*, p. 181.

⁴⁰ Gregorius Magnus, *Homiliae in Hiezechihelam prophetam*, Cl. 1710, lib. 1, hom.4, l. 24.

⁴¹ *Fizjolog Epifaniusza*, pp. 17-18; *Fizjolog Bls*, p. 37; *Bestiariusz*, p. 61; *Aberdeen*, f. 7r-8r; *Ashmole*, f. 10r -12v; Ch. Schröder, *Der Millstätter Physiologus...*, pp. 62-66; 150-160.

⁴² *Bestiariusz*, pp. 62-63.; Ch. Schröder, *Der Millstätter Physiologus...*, pp. 62-66, 150-160.

a symbol of uncontrollable anger, violence, cruelty, as well as Satan and the antichrist⁴³. In the First Letter of St Peter (5:8) there is a warning against the devil being likened to a lion.

The multifaceted symbolism of the lion, which took form in the medieval era on the basis of the Holy Bible and the natural knowledge of the time, is not devoid of magical thinking about this powerful animal. Images of lions were placed at entrances for apotropaic purposes⁴⁴, and this interpretation is also possible, given the location of its figure at the rainbow arch of the Sandomierz Collegiate Church, as guarding the boundary between the choir (sacred) and the nave corpus (profane). The significance of the lion's location here may be related to the figure of a jester with a hybrid body, which is located on the other side of the arch, to the north. This figure, lacking front limbs, with a disproportioned body, bare rump, protruding and descending abdomen, is shown with a cartilaginous growth on top of the head, which forms a jester's cap. The figure stares at the viewer with its huge tongue extended and tucked under its chin, making one read it as an expression of derision⁴⁵. Its grotesquely playful nature may also classify this figure as a *drôleries*.

So, the question remains, should such a figure, in a mocking gesture, in a playful pose, be placed on the arch, at such an important place, on the boundary between the choir and the nave corpus? Perhaps that is why it was placed there – a boundary spot with the significance of a passage. Standing in the nave, looking east towards the chancel, one can see the lion to the right of the arch, and the mocking jester in a grotesque pose to the left. In such a configuration, the lion would signify good, the jester evil. Alternatively, each could be taken as an apotropaic symbol.

There is another hybrid among the sculptures – a hooded human figure with a wrinkled and grotesque face, with hooves and a tail sticking out from under what is probably a habit (Fig. 9.). The figure, with a grimace on its face, looks towards the scene of the dog chasing the hedgehog. Another semantic layer seems to have been constructed here. Does the hybrid look evil because it is evil in itself, or is it looking at animals that symbolise evil? Or is it because they also embody the constant struggle between good and evil, never giving up in their quest to rid themselves of sin?

The two hybrids depicted in the Collegiate are a combination of grotesque human features with their lower parts borrowed from donkeys or goats. Hybrids of man and goat in ancient culture personified Pan, satyrs and

⁴³ Augustyn, *Wybór mów*, PSP, t. XII, transl. J. Jaworski, Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, Warszawa 1973, p. 151; Gregorius I, *Moralia in Job*, PL 75, vol. 1, p. 702.

⁴⁴ P. Bloch, *Löwe*, in: LCI, vol. 3, pp. 111-119.

⁴⁵ Comp. M. Gutowski, *Komizm w polskiej sztuce gotyckiej*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1973, pp. 43-74.

fauns. The male hybrid from the frieze at the arch is also similar to these representations because of the horned jester's cap. The symbolic significance of these animals, combined with the mocking gesture of sticking out one's tongue, is indicative of the pejorative nature of this figure. Similarly, the hybrid in the hood, with a face filled with disgust, looking towards the scene of the hedgehog being chased by the dog, may symbolise hypocrisy. An example that could provide an analogous representation to the Sandomierz male hybrid is an image from the *Bohun Psalter and Hours*, where a figure of a seated jester is depicted in one of the margins. This is next to a miniature showing the scene of Christ's crucifixion between the good and bad villain. Below this scene, a creature with a human head and animal torso is shown blowing a trumpet, accompanying the scene of the piercing of Christ's wounds. In a similar arrangement, three male hybrids are shown next to the crucifixion scene, found on a page of an early 14th-century Flemish Psalter. This raises the question of whether the hybrid in the Sandomierz frieze could be a personification of unbelief or idolatry⁴⁶. The two arrangements can be understood as a representation of contrast: good and evil, believers and unbelievers. It may also refer to the choice of one of the two paths that humans face, depicted in the first Psalm: *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night* (Ps 1).

The happiness of the righteous may refer to the image of the lion, identified with Christ, while the miserable end of the ungodly may be personified by the tongue-pointing hybrid⁴⁷. At this point, it is worth noting the very gesture that this hybrid performs. The pointing out of the tongue has been interpreted in several ways: as a gesture with magical and sexual⁴⁸ overtones, as well as symbolising foolishness⁴⁹. It also refers to mockery: *Of whom are you making sport? Against whom do you open your mouth wide and put out your tongue? Are you not children of transgression, the offspring of deceit, you who burn with lust among the oaks (...)* (Isa 57,4). It would not be insignificant for this interpretation to place the figures of the jester and the lion at the arch, at the boundary between the choir and the nave corpus. Turning towards the animals of the inter-nave pillars

⁴⁶ *Collectors following Litany. Bohun Psalter and Hours*, London, BL MS Egerton 3277, f. 14; *Psalterz flamandzki*, pocz. XIV wieku, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, MS. Ny Kgl. Saml. 41.8, f. 105v 106; *Fizjolog Epifaniusza*, pp. 17-18; Ch. Schröder, *Der Millstätter Physiologus...*, pp. 62-66, 150-160.

⁴⁷ Comp. J. Pokora, *Portret skandaliczny z pokazywaniem języka (ze studiów nad semiotyką gestów)*, in: idem, *Nie tylko podobizna. Szkice o portrecie*, Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, Warszawa 2012, pp. 56-67.

⁴⁸ M. Gutowski, *Komizm...*, p. 116; M. Rożek, *Diabeł w kulturze polskie. Szkice z dziejów motywu i postaci*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa-Kraków 1993, p. 98.

⁴⁹ J. Pokora, *Portret skandaliczny...*, p. 55.

symbolising human sins and vices, and the possibility of overcoming them, also fits in with, as described in the psalm above, the choice of a way without sin.

The sculptural ensemble presents several examples of relationships which can be regarded as deliberate, ambiguous puzzles. The Sandomierz canons circle belonged to some of the most educated people in Lesser Poland at that time. Their close relations with King Casimir the Great and the fact that such an outstanding team of stonemasons was brought to the Collegiate Church also confirm the importance of this foundation.

The creators of the ideological programme created more than one relationship between the animal figures – placed side by side, or looking towards each other, offering many possibilities for interpreting the artwork that is the ensemble of these sculptures. Each of the sculptural representations of animals carries multi-level symbolism, causing semiotic dissonance, relating to both the personification of good and evil, the spiritual and the corporeal, and the struggle between these phenomena. The varied symbolism of virtues and sins developed considerably in the 14th century, the time of the Sandomierz sculptures, spread by Mendicant preachers, became considerably more complex⁵⁰, the effects of which can be experienced up to the present day in works of art from this period.

The example from Sandomierz demonstrates an important and problematic feature of the medium of architectural sculpture. The works constitute an ensemble, created over a long period of time by several creators. Moreover, sometimes, the ideological programme is completed by a different workshop, with a different material.

When describing and interpreting medieval art, and in particular architectural sculpture, we usually deal with an ensemble of sculptures. It is arranged according to a certain concept, which is not a clearly visible image, or a coherent representation, but a kind of jigsaw puzzle. It remains to be read according to a certain principle, which must be found in a hermeneutic way. This principle is to be deciphered by the researcher⁵¹.

⁵⁰ J. Wolny, *Exempla z kazań niedzielnych Peregryna z Opola*, in: *Kultura elitarna a kultura masowa w Polsce późnego średniowiecza*, ed. B. Geremek, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1978, pp. 243-247, 254-255, 261; F. Saxl, *A Spiritual Encyclopaedia of the Later Middle Ages*, "Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes" 1942, vol. 5, pp. 82-142.

⁵¹ An intriguing example of the creation of such an interpretation of how to read Gothic architectural sculpture is the concept of Tadeusz Jurkowlaniec, presented in his interpretation of the ideological programme of the architectural sculpture of the Wrocław cathedral choir. Many years of in-depth analysis led the researcher to recognise a pattern, an algorithm, a code, which is to constitute a solution by which the meaning of sculptural decoration should be read according to the principles of the calendar. V.: T. Jurkowlaniec, *Gmach pamięci. Z badań nad dekoracją rzeźbiarską prezbiterium katedry we Wrocławiu*, Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warszawa 2004.

The creators, through their work, gave space for multidimensionality and complexity of interpretation. The representation of certain phenomena through animal images, or the hybridisation of certain figures, as well as grotesque modelling, indicate that the creators of the Collegiate Church's ideological programme transcended the boundaries of unambiguity and created new aspects of existence. Through the dissonance of what is known with what is yet to be known, they went beyond the unambiguous framework, giving the viewers of their works the possibility of a multidimensional multiplicity of interpretations. Individual animals, plants and anthropomorphic hybrids, which are mediators of symbolic content, can be interpreted through their different meanings. Physiologus, bestiaries, texts of the ecclesiastical fathers and, above all, the Holy Bible, give them multiple interpretations and build a multifaceted viewerartwork relationship. The semiotic dissonance thus created gives rise to a multiplicity of solutions and meanings. The possibility of understanding these representations differently will depend on the knowledge and hermeneutic abilities of the viewer, but also on the intentions with which he or she wishes to analyse them, opening up to new ways of understanding these works.

It is particularly puzzling to understand content through symbols and in the context of the culture in which the viewer has acquired knowledge. Is the viewer able to understand what he or she sees if they are using a cultural code acquired through upbringing and education, one that separates those living today from their creators from over 650 years ago? What is the difference between experiencing and understanding, and should works of art be understood, hermeneutically analysed, and symbols broken down almost to an atomic structure – to the first philosopher, to the first church father, to the first book and to the first source? Or should works of art be allowed to be felt, to understand their impact on us, on others and on culture?

It is interesting to understand a work of art depending on the time in which it was created and in which it is interpreted, analysed, understood, or felt. Can works of art in which both the work and the viewer come from a parallel time be better understood? As they can be understood and felt, they can affect the viewer. Can works of art belonging to the collection of, so-called, past art be only hermeneutically understood and, by comparing their style, “dated”, or also felt? Can a researcher who speaks the language of the 21st century understand the language of 1000, 2000 years ago? The meaning of words blurs and changes with every century. Even when reading the original text in the original language and knowing its semiotics, we may miss something, or its knowledge is not yet fully developed. If we make one mistake in understanding a written source for a work of art from the same era, is the equation not tainted by the mistake? This problem can be seen very clearly in the understanding of the content of the Holy Bible, like in the above example of the hedgehog, sometimes translated as badger.

There are questions that “stratify” what is known: how conscious was the placement of the sculptures? Was the sculpture intended to be visible to the worshipper standing in the nave corpus or choir? Sometimes it happens that it is not visible, and we do not know whether this is due to an incorrectly chosen height of the building and size of the figural representations, or whether it was because the recognition of details (for example, the genitalia in the dog images) by the viewers did not matter. It could also have had other meanings, such as magical ones. The above thought, therefore, leads to other questions: what audience was the architectural sculpture for? Was it an apotropaic phenomenon?

The content of medieval art is based on symbols. Underneath these symbols, embodied by various visible figures and characters, are meanings that were already ambiguous at the moment of their creation. This is particularly true of architectural sculpture, which is an assemblage of multiple elements that must be arranged in order to be understood, similarly to a jigsaw piece or a jigsaw puzzle, in which one applies contemporary interpretations to figures and seeks to match them. It is as if the algorithm of this composition is structured in such a way that the analysis of the content produces several equivalent correct answers each time.

The architectural decoration of the nave corpus of the Collegiate Church in Sandomierz is an unusual example of a sculptural ensemble, due to the rich symbolism, workmanship and multiplicity of representations, showing flora, fauna, as well as anthropomorphic hybrids with multiple meanings. The architectural sculpture of the capitals and the vaulting of the nave corpus were created around 1360. The sculptors who made these works created new forms of expression and new meanings in the understanding of mature Gothic art, by giving them unusual modelling, grotesque proportions, or by placing images of animals with visible sexual characteristics in the sacred zone.

Architectural decorations of medieval temples feature works of art which, already in their nature, are created in a way that offers possibilities to go beyond unambiguous meanings, providing a multiplicity of interpretations. Based on symbols so widely interpreted by the church fathers, preachers and scientists of the time, in their complexity they offer the possibility of creating a multi-dimensional and infinite work, which, when interpreted, cannot be definitively defined, and each part of this ensemble can be seen from different perspectives: both through the multiplicity of interpretations of animal figures and plants, as well as their arrangement and the semiotic dissonance created, giving further possibilities to interpret their meaning. As mentioned at the beginning of the study, Francis Jullien's concept of *décoïncidence*, although pertaining to the necessity of stratifying meanings, has a character befitting the interpretation of art, and especially architectural sculpture, due to its specificity.



Fig. 1. Sandomierz, Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nave corpus, impost frieze, architectural sculpture, dogs chasing a hare, limestone, c. 1361, photo by Olga Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, 2019



Fig. 2. Sandomierz, Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nave corpus, impost frieze, architectural sculpture, dogs chasing a hare, view of dogs, limestone, c. 1361, photo by Olga Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, 2018



Fig. 3. Sandomierz, Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nave corpus, impost frieze, architectural sculpture, dogs chasing a hare, view of a hare, limestone, c. 1361, photo by Olga Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, 2018



Fig. 4. Sandomierz, Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nave corpus, impost frieze, architectural sculpture, dog chasing a hedgehog (formerly dogs), limestone, c. 1361, photo by Olga Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, 2018



Fig. 5. Sandomierz, Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nave corpus, servant's capitel, architectural sculpture, growling dogs, limestone, c. 1361, photo by Olga Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, 2018



Fig. 6. Sandomierz, Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nave corpus, servant's capital, architectural sculpture, guarding (and barking) dogs, limestone, c. 1361, photo by Olga Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, 2017



Fig. 7. Sandomierz, Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nave corpus, impost frieze, architectural sculpture, lion, limestone, c. 1361, photo by Olga Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, 2018



Fig. 8. Sandomierz, Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nave corpus, impost frieze, architectural sculpture, tongue-in-cheek hybrid, limestone, c. 1361, photo by Olga Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, 2018



Fig. 9. Sandomierz, Collegiate Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, nave corpus, impost frieze, architectural sculpture, hooded hybrid, limestone, c. 1361, photo by Olga Tuszyńska-Szczepaniak, 2018

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DYSONANS SEMIOTYCZNY W ŚREDNIOWIECZNEJ RZEźBIE ARCHITEKTONICZNEJ. STUDIUM PRZYPADKU NA PRZYKŁADZIE WYBRANYCH RZEźB Z ZESPOŁU DEKORACJI KORPUSU NAWOWEGO KOLEGIATY W SANDOMIERZU (streszczenie)

W artykule przedstawiona została propozycja wykorzystania teorii Francisa Juliena o de-koincydencji w interpretacji wizerunków gotyckiej rzeźby architektonicznej wnętrza kolegiaty pw. Narodzenia Najświętszej Maryi Panny w Sandomierzu. Złożone i wieloaspektowe znaczenie symboliki średniowiecznej, jaką można odczytać poprzez postaci zwierząt w rzeźbie architektonicznej i wzajemne relacje stworzone poprzez zakomponowanie tych dekoracji, tworzą wieloaspektowe możliwości rozumienia tych symboli poprzez dysonans semiotyczny tworzących się w ich znaczeniach. Dla zbadania zjawiska zostały wykorzystane wybrane postaci zwierząt z zespołu dekoracji korpusu nawowego.

Słowa kluczowe: rzeźba średniowieczna, plastyka gotycka, bestiariusze, ikonografia semiotyka, symbole, hermeneutyka

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