



Word and Image. Polish Medieval and Renaissance Religious Writings in the European Context

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Abstract: The article presents the Polish religious writing of the Middle Ages and Renaissance as an expression of correspondence between the word and image. It also demonstrates the impact of European graphics, including Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts, upon Polish religious works of the period (such as the works by Pseudo-Bonaventura in his rendering of Baltazar Opec's *Żywot Pana Jezusa Krysta* and Jan Sandecki's *Historie biblijne* or *Rozmyślenia dominikańskie*). The article also emphasizes that it was Dürer who paved the way for the book illustration, thus turning woodcuts into an art form in their own right. The fifteenth century was a watershed in book culture. As new illustration techniques at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries encouraged the growth of illustrated printed books, the codex became obsolete.

Keywords: Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts, Stanisław Samostrzelnik, word and image in books from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, illumination and book graphics, woodcuts, miniatures, *Postylla* by Mikołaj Rej, *Biblia Leopolda*, Jakub Wujek's *Postylla katolicka*, *Rozmyślenia dominikańskie*

This article discusses the Polish religious writing of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, which unites the complementary aspects of verbal and pictorial content. It seeks to emphasize the common Polish and European heritage. It also demonstrates the impact of biblical graphics, including Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts, on the Polish religious works, for instance, on Pseudo-Bonaventura's rendering of Baltazar Opec's *Żywot Pana Jezusa Krysta* [The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ] and Jan Sandecki's *Historie biblijne* [Biblical Stories] or *Rozmyślenia dominikańskie* [Dominican Meditations]. The article also discusses medieval illuminated manuscripts (*Ewangeliarz gnieźnieński* [The Gniezno Gospels], *Ewangelistarz płocki* [The Płock Evangelary], *Biblia czerwińska* [The Czerwińsk Bible], *Psalterz trzebnicki* [The Trzebnica Psalter]) and sixteenth-century prints (*Postylla* [Postilla] by Mikołaj Rej, *Biblia* by Jan Leopolda [Leopolda's Bible] and *Postylla* [Postilla] by Jakub Wujek) illustrated with biblical woodcuts. Further, it emphasizes that the early Polish illustrated books were initially printed in Cracow, and graphics were a medium of a universal visual language.

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1. The Book in Polish Medieval Culture – Outlining the Problems

In the Polish medieval culture, the book was highly privileged.¹ It was valued both for its spiritual merit and material worth. In addition to religious books, there existed texts indispensable to practicing trade, education, and acquiring general knowledge.² The book attracted not only the clergy and court but also the Cracow academic circles and wealthier bourgeois.

In Europe during the last century of the Middle Ages, there were three types of books: manuscripts, xylographic or block books, and typographic books. Until the fourteenth century, books were written and illuminated by hand, but from the sixteenth century onwards, most were printed using movable metal blocks in printing presses. In addition to these two methods of book production, the fifteenth century also brought xylographic or block books, printed entirely or partially with woodcut blocks. These books consisted of a series of wood engravings with hand-written or block-printed captions. After the invention and development of metal movable type along with the printing press, these texts came to be pressed typographically. In this way, the xylographic book gradually transformed into the modern illustrated book.³

The concurrence of three printing techniques in the fifteenth century can be attributed to the growing demand for religious, moralizing, educational, and entertaining texts. Additionally, from the opinions found in the fourteenth-century manuscripts, it transpires that the illustration was also gaining significance.⁴

But before these books emerged, the hand-copying of books intensified in the fourteenth century. In Western Europe, the highest demand was for educational and specialist texts, liturgical and common prayer books, religious works, and the common vernacular books of an “entertaining” sort.⁵ The scribes worked in church *scriptoria* (monastic, cathedral, and collegiate), as well as in offices and courts. In addition to the output of specialized *scriptoria*, there was also individual demand. Furthermore, texts were ordered by universities, schools, and monasteries (*ars dictandi*) to exchange or sell. The evidence for this last intention of

¹ Manuscripts and prints in the Polish medieval culture are discussed in multiple sources. On this topic see, for example, Birkenmajer, “Książka rękopiśmienna,” 17–36 [1936]; Birkenmajer, “Książka rękopiśmienna,” 264–283 [Reprint 1975]; Bienkowska, *Staropolski świat książek*; Głombiowski – Szwejkowska, *Książka rękopiśmienna*; Szwejkowska, *Książka drukowana*; Potkowski, *Książka rękopiśmienna*; Moulin, *Życie codzienne zakonników*; Bienkowska, *Książka na przestrzeni dziejów*; Świderkówna – Nowicka, *Książka się rozwija*.

² Bienkowska, *Książka na przestrzeni dziejów* (n. 1 above), 57.

³ See Kocowski, *Drzeworytowe książki średniowiecza*, 11.

⁴ “What an educated man can learn from letters (that is written words), the uneducated man can learn from illustrated books”; see Kocowski, *Drzeworytowe książki średniowiecza* (n. 3 above), 12.

⁵ Potkowski, *Książka rękopiśmienna* (n. 1 above), 81–82.

the manuscript process can be found in final remarks about payment for works and scribes' dedications.⁶

The medieval monks played an essential role in the process of translating and copying. They read, conserved, copied, and illuminated books in service to God and for inner improvement. In the Early Medieval period and the High Middle Ages, the Benedictine order was carried out by the process of codex transcription. Other monasteries, such as the Augustinians, Cistercians, Dominicans, canons regular, and Carthusians, also maintained significant *scriptoria* and libraries. In Poland, monastic *scriptoria* were operated by the Cistercian order in Mogiła near Cracow, canons regular at the Corpus Christi church in Cracow and Trzemeszno, and the Benedictine order on the mountain Łysa Góra, as well as by other monastic centers.⁷ In monastic *scriptoria*, *ars dictandi* converged with *ars scribendi*.⁸ At the same time, calligraphic and illuminating workshops flourished throughout the medieval towns.⁹

In the Late Middle Ages, the hand-crafted manuscript was a common instrument of social communication and a saleable (and profitable) material product. At the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the book emerged as an indispensable tool for information and came to be recognized as the commonly accessible work of art that shaped the readers' imagination.¹⁰

2. The Correlation between Text and Image in Medieval Books

The medieval period was characterized by a strong unity of word and image, ornament and letter.¹¹ This perspective is rooted in Horace's famous Latin phrase "*ut pictura poesis*," as well as in Plutarch's popularization of the words of Simonides of

⁶ These are Latin inscriptions from the following manuscripts in the Jagiellonian Library, Cracow: MS from the year 1409, written by Tomasz of Zamberk, BJ 2146, fol. 228v; MS from the 15th century, BJ 2075, fol. 177; MS from the early 15th century, BJ 2042, 394. Many inscriptions of this kind are discussed in Wattenbach, *Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter*, 511–513.

⁷ Pieńkowska, *Średniowieczna pracownia miniatorska*.

⁸ Marszałska, "Skryptoria klasztorne," 72.

⁹ Bieńkowska, *Książka na przestrzeni dziejów* (n. 1 above), 64.

¹⁰ Chojecka, *Ilustracja polskiej książki*, 10.

¹¹ Numerous critical works from the fields of literary studies, bibliography, history, and art history discuss the subject of word and image in the Polish medieval writings. On this topic see, for instance, Banach, *Pismo i obraz*; Kocowski, *Drzeworytowe książki średniowiecza*; Chojecka, *Ilustracja polskiej książki* (n. 10 above); Praz, *Mnemosyne*; Dziechcińska, *Oglądanie i słuchanie*; Hojdis, *O współistnieniu słów i obrazów*; Pelc, *Słowo i obraz*; Wyslouch, "Ut pictura poesis," 5–17; Biała, *Literatura i malarstwo*. Among the English-language publications from recent years, they deserve attention, among others: Fransen – Reinhart, "The Practice of Copying," 211–222; Dackerman, *Painted Prints*; Dackerman, "Dürer's Etchings," 37–51; Armstrong, "Book Decoration," 297–314.

Ceos, who named painting a silent poetry, and poetry a speaking painting.¹² Among the most significant medieval books that united the semantics of word and image is the missing *Ordo Romanus*. It was a gift given by Matilda of Swabia, wife of Frederick II of Lorraine, to King Mieszko II, together with the letter to the Polish ruler, around the year 1026/1027, shortly after his coronation in 1025. The laconic dedication was matched by an ornamental miniature depicting the moment when the Polish king received the book.¹³ At the same time, the number of illustrated codices in Poland was gradually increasing. The books were crafted at home or brought from abroad. The so-called *Codex aureus* (*Złoty kodeks*), also known as *Ewangeliarz gnieźnieński* (ca. 1050), heavily illuminated with gold leaf, had a Czech origin, similar to *Ewangeliarz płocki*, also known as *Kodeks pułtowski* [The Pułtusk Codex] (end of the eleventh century). *Mały ewangeliarz płocki* [The Little Płock Gospels] (ca. 1150) and the biblical *Liber geneseos* (second half of the twelfth century), also known as *Biblia czerwńska*, represented the Mosan art. The latter book displayed decorative initials of intertwining plant ornaments and a single, page-size miniature depicting the creation myth in connected medallions. *Psalterz trzebnicki* (first half of the thirteenth century) is exceptional, with page-size miniatures depicting the life of Christ and his mother, St Mary. Similar illuminations also characterized other indices that contained psalters (for instance, those of Głogów and the Wrocław Clarisses), gradu-als, and antiphonaries.¹⁴

The manuscript decoration was an integral part of the text. The medieval scribes specialized in copying, illuminating, and bookbinding. Their hand-crafted books had the status of art.¹⁵ The work attempted to imitate divine beauty by visual means, which Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite conveyed in the following statement: “I tell you the truth, visible things are the images of invisible.”¹⁶

The illustrative figures aimed to convey the textual message and, as such, functioned not only as decorative elements but as part of the lesson. Without a doubt, they made reading easier, more diverse, and visually appealing.¹⁷

¹² Citation after Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki*, I, 52.

¹³ This miniature is characterized and reproduced in Walicki, *Sztuka polska przedromańska*, 254 and figure 744; see Michałowska, *Średniowiecze*, 46, 65.

¹⁴ See Dobrowolski – Tatarkiewicz, *Historia sztuki polskiej w zarysie*, 129; Walicki, *Sztuka polska przedromańska i romańska*, 251–276; Pelc, *Obraz – słowo – znak*, 38–40; Michałowska, *Średniowiecze* (n. 13 above), 46, 213.

¹⁵ See Karłowska-Kamzowa – Wiesiołowski – Wetesko, *Średniowieczna książka*.

¹⁶ Pseudo-Dionizy, *Epistola X*, citation after Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki*, II, 37. Quote in the Polish version: “Zaprawdę, rzeczy widzialne są obrazami niewidzialnych.”

¹⁷ This subject is discussed in reference to the oldest illustrated scrolls by Anna Świderkówna and Maria Nowicka (*Książka się rozwija* [n. 1 above], 142–145).

3. Polish Graphics at the Turn of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries – the European Context

The graphic art of book illustration was well established in Europe at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁸ In Poland, the most vibrant graphics center throughout the sixteenth century was in Cracow, and in the second half of the century, centers emerged in Poznań, Toruń, Gdańsk, and Lviv. The key figures who decided on the final output of graphic production were engravers and typographers, as well as the text's author. In this period, Polish woodcut illustrations were heavily influenced by European graphic art, especially that of Albrecht Dürer.

The sixteenth century witnessed unprecedented growth in the number of graphic prints, which, by that time, had established itself as the form that was most accessible to wide audiences. In fact, such was the increase in scope that it far exceeded the illuminated manuscripts or panel paintings.¹⁹ The illustrations were subordinate to the printed text, but they often functioned as autonomous works.

By way of example, the hand-crafted books illuminated by Stanisław Samostrzelnik (ca. 1480–1541), a Cistercian monk from Mogiła, stand out among the high-quality liturgical manuscripts and prayer books. He received commissions from the king and royal courtiers, for instance, Chancellor Krzysztof Szydłowiecki and Deputy Chancellor Bishop Piotr Tomicki.²⁰ The manuscripts signed by Samostrzelnik came from the years 1524–1535 and were thus created in the period when the Italian Renaissance, especially in its Florentine as well as various northern varieties,²¹ had already reached Cracow. His major works contain illuminations for four prayer books (Polish *modlitewnik*): *Modlitewnik Zygmunta I Starego* [Prayer Book of Sigismund I the Old] (1524), *Modlitewnik Krzysztofa Szydłowieckiego* [Prayer Book of Krzysztof Szydłowiecki] (1524), *Modlitewnik królowej Bony* [Prayer Book of Queen Bona] (1527–1528), and *Modlitewnik Wojciecha Gasztołda* [Prayer Book of Wojciech Gasztołd] (1528). Moreover, he also illuminated *Liber geneleos illustris familiae Schidloviciae* (1532), *Katalog arcybiskupów gnieźnieńskich* [Catalogue of Gniezno Bishops] and *Żywoty biskupów krakowskich* [The Lives of Cracow Bishops] (1530–1535) by Jan Długosz, and *Ewangeliarz* [Evangelion] (1533–1534) by Piotr Tomicki.

¹⁸ The subject of Polish graphic art of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance is discussed by the art historian Ewa Chojecka ("Znaczenie kulturowe grafiki polskiej," 86–114); Chojecka, *Ilustracja polskiej książki* (n. 10 above).

¹⁹ Chojecka, "Znaczenie kulturowe grafiki polskiej" (n. 18 above), 89.

²⁰ Chojecka, *Ilustracja polskiej książki* (n. 10 above), 11, 13; Bieńkowska, *Książka na przestrzeni dziejów* (n. 1 above), 96.

²¹ Miodońska, *Miniatury Stanisława Samostrzelnika*, 6.



Fig. 1. *Modlitewnik Zygmunta I Starego* [Prayer Book of Sigismund I the Old], 1524
(public domain, <https://kulturaupodstaw.pl/modlitewniki-krolow/> [access: 25.03.2021]).

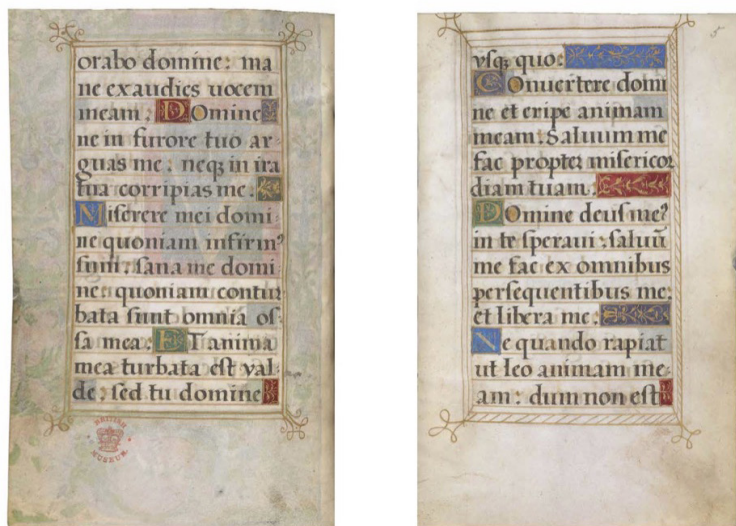


Fig. 2. *Modlitewnik Zygmunta I Starego* [Prayer Book of Sigismund I the Old], 1524
(public domain, <https://kulturaupodstaw.pl/modlitewniki-krolow/> [access: 25.03.2021]).

Samostrzelnik's prayer books testified to the connections with the late-gothic Cracow school of book illumination and were arguably impacted by the German artists, Albrecht Altdorfer and Albrecht Dürer, and the Danube School. In addition to Austrian influences, there were also some minor influences from Netherlandish art and, indirectly, Italian painting (ornamental and heraldic motifs).²²

The illustrated printed book, despite its late-medieval provenance, quickly became part of the new intellectual trends. Polish woodcuts emerged in the early sixteenth century, in 1507. These pioneering works, appearing alongside known innovations introduced by Hieronymus Vietor, were characterized by their high quality and richly ornamental woodcut frontispieces.²³ The new genre of mass illustration came from the printing shop of Florian Ungler.²⁴

The numerous biblical woodcuts were used to illustrate, for instance, Chelidonius's *Passio Jesu Christi* (Cracow 1514, Ungler-Lern), a Pseudo-Bonaventuran devotional piece reworked by Baltazar Opec *Żywot Pana Jezu Krysta* (Cracow 1522, H. Vietor), and Jan Sandecki's *Historie biblijne* (Cracow 1527/1528, F. Ungler). The visible inspiration of Albrecht Dürer's art was, nonetheless, reduced to its simplest form and subject to the repetition of the composition scheme. The works rarely displayed ornamental book borders and primarily represented mass devotional graphics, which relied on formal simplicity and uncomplicated textual content.²⁵

An interesting example of graphic illustration can be found in the Calvinist *Postylla* by Mikołaj Rej (Cracow 1557, M. Wirzbięta), published in the printing house of Maciej Wirzbięta.²⁶ This collection of sermons for Sundays and holidays remains one of the most masterfully crafted books of the sixteenth century. Its frontispiece formally alluded to a manneristic retablo and was followed by half-page New Testament woodcuts created by an anonymous artist and signed with the initials ICB.²⁷ Inspired by Dürer's graphics, the author depicted the biblical stories in a natural landscape and architectural space. The second impression of *Postylla* (1560) showed the biblical parable about false prophets, presenting high-ranking clerics with wolf faces. The motif referred to the ideological controversy between dissenters and

²² See: Miodońska, *Miniatury Stanisława Samostrzelnika*, 5–23.

²³ Szwejkowska, *Książka drukowana* (n. 1 above), 103, 105.

²⁴ Chojecka, "Znaczenie kulturowe grafiki polskiej" (n. 18 above), 101; Szwejkowska, *Książka drukowana* (n. 23 above), 102.

²⁵ Chojecka, "Znaczenie kulturowe grafiki polskiej" (n. 18 above), 102–103.

²⁶ *Postylla* by M. Rej was printed three times in his life in 1557, 1560, and 1566.

²⁷ Chojecka, "Znaczenie kulturowe grafiki polskiej" (n. 18 above), 106; Chojecka, *Ilustracja polskiej książki* (n. 10 above), 30. According to Konrad Górski, editor and publisher of Rej's *Postylla*, his woodcuts from Dürer's school were crafted especially for this work and adjusted to evangelical texts and to their interpretation by Rej. In addition, the scholar assumed that they must have been prepared in one of the Cracow print shops. This assumption is based on the high quality of the printed books in the early Renaissance. Okoniowa – Okoń, "Albrecht Dürer," 75.

The first issue of *Biblia Leopoldy* (from 1561) had numerous woodcut initials and 284 illustrations made using the same technique (in the second edition, there are 285). The most interesting graphics in *Biblia Leopoldy* belong to a collection of 87 woodcuts, with some of them replicated more than once. Their maker was not native as before his art made it to the Szarfenberger print, they decorated earlier a few issues of the *Luther Bible* (ed. 1534, 1535, 1536, 1539, 1541 and 1545) and the Czech translations: *Severýn's Bible* of 1537 and *Melantrich's Bible* of 1549 and 1560.³⁰

As already mentioned, the first edition of *Biblia Leopoldy* used a series of original woodcuts from Martin Luther's *Bible*, published in Wittenberg in 1534. In the 1575 and 1577 editions, copies of Jost Amman's woodcuts were added to the illustrations. They were crafted in Cracow, as evidenced by the initials of Cracow artists. Therefore, there are two stylistic variants of *Biblia Leopoldy*: one including the Wittenberg woodcuts from the 1530s, the other based on the Late Renaissance artwork of Jost Amman.

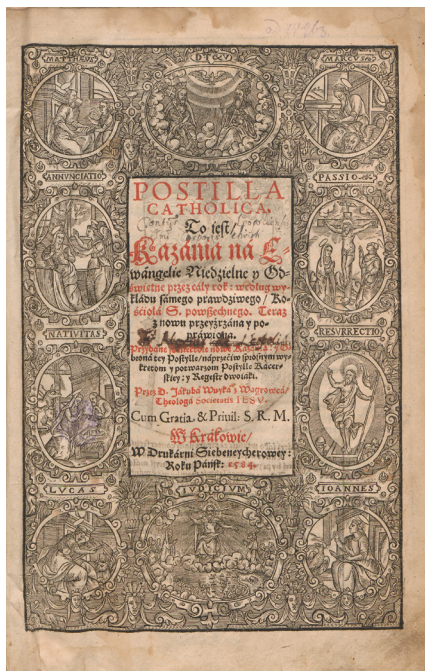


Fig. 4. *Postylla katolicka* Jakuba Wujka [Jakub Wujek's *Postilla Catholica*] from 1584, title page

(public domain; from the collection of the Ossoliński National Institute, <https://www.dbc.wroc.pl/dlibra/publication/9664/> [access: 29.10.2021]).

³⁰ Zob. Krzak-Weiss, "Garść uwag," 4.

The first edition of Jakub Wujek's *Postylla katolicka* [*Postilla Catholica*] (Cracow 1573, print M. Siebeneicher) contained less meticulous illustrations. It used three types of woodcuts: small drawings depicting the life of Jesus; drawings borrowed from the Polish prayer book entitled *Hortulus animae*; and over a dozen woodcuts by Kryspin Scharffenberg from Baltazar Opec's *Żywot Pana Jezusa Krysta*.³¹ Its subsequent impression from 1584 (Cracow, print Jakub Siebeneicher) significantly improved the quality of illustrations and used original woodcuts by Jost Amman from his popular work, the *Icones Novi Testamenti*, published in Frankfurt am Main in 1571.

It is interesting to note that the printmaker Andrzej Piotrkowczyk bought the blocks used for illustrating postills by Rej from Maciej Wirzbięta and those for Grzegorz from Żarnowiec, in order to use them in the first impression of *Postylla mniejsza* [The Smaller Postilla] (Cracow 1590, print A. Piotrkowczyk). This reuse of prints caused a controversy, but it can hardly be held against Wujek, as certain editorial decisions may have been beyond his control.³² The second impression of *Postylla mniejsza* (Cracow 1596), on the other hand, used earlier illustrations, which came from *Postylla większa* [The Larger Postilla] by Jost Amman.³³

Other interesting examples of the Late Renaissance illustrations can also be found in the impressions of *Postylla*, this time printed not in Cracow but in Poznań (ed. Jan Wolrab, 1579–1580) and Toruń (Jan Kottenius, 1594).

3. "May everybody know that there are a hundred and twenty-one images here..." – Word and Image in *Rozmyślania dominikańskie*

As is well known, the power of the image was used in the Early Middle Ages to educate people and teach them biblical stories. The *Biblia pauperum*, a message of Christianity expressed in words and images, was a specific tool of catechesis for the clergy. The homilies or teachings they preached could be better understood by the faithful thanks to the visual aids placed in the churches. These representations served the preachers as an illustration of the truths of faith because the mutual complementation of word and image strengthened their message.³⁴ Some medieval *historiae passionis* were decorated with illustrations showing the viewer what was mentioned in the text. One example is the *Meditations* of John de Caulibus, which are accompanied by illustrations. In the introduction, the author wrote about the need for and importance of pictorial representations for meditations on the Passion, pointing out

³¹ Kawecka-Gryczowa, *Drukarze dawnej Polski*, 212.

³² Kuran, *Retoryka jako narzędzie perswazji*, 88–89.

³³ Górski, "Pochodzenie tekstu," 11; Okoniowa – Okoń, "Albrecht Dürer" (n. 27 above), 74–75.

³⁴ See Kaczor-Scheitler, "Biblia pauperum," 17–46.

that thanks to paintings, one can imagine events as if one were present at them.³⁵ Ludolf of Saxony, in his introduction to the *Vita Christi*,³⁶ and Peter of Alcantara, in *De meditatione*,³⁷ spoke about this subject in similar ways.

Rozmyślenia dominikańskie best illustrates the amalgam of word and image. The codex is kept in the library of the Carmelite Order in Cracow under shelf number 287.³⁸ The work was identified by the distinguished historian Karol Górski (1903–1988), who discovered the text and co-edited it in 1965. Its anonymous author³⁹ must have completed the work by the year 1532 in the Dominican Order of Holy Trinity in Cracow, given the title of the text. The anonymous scribe used the fifteenth-century ductus. In 1532, alterations were introduced in different handwriting, and, after the first page was erased, a preface was added with the date of November 4, which was the Monday after All Saints' Day. Later, somebody else introduced more corrections and recorded the codex's history before it finally came to be stored in the Carmelite library in Cracow in 1721.

There is an abundance of critical analyses concerning *Rozmyślenia dominikańskie*, the text's significance to sixteenth-century Polish culture, and its role in shaping religious veneration in the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance.⁴⁰ The discovery of *Rozmyślenia* led to the formulation of the assumption that word and image are mutually dependent.⁴¹

³⁵ See Dobrzeniecki, "Rozmyślenia dominikańskie' na tle średniowiecznej literatury," XLI.

³⁶ "Necessarium enim erit, ut aliquando ita cogites te praesentem cogitatione tua, ac si tunc temporis ibi praesens fuisses quando passus fuit," quoted after: Dobrzeniecki, "Rozmyślenia dominikańskie' na tle średniowiecznej literatury," XLII.

³⁷ "Non vero considera haec tanquam dudum et ante multa saecula gesta, sed imaginare tibi tamquam praesentia sint et coram oculis tuis gerantur," quoted after: Dobrzeniecki, "Rozmyślenia dominikańskie' na tle średniowiecznej literatury," XLII.

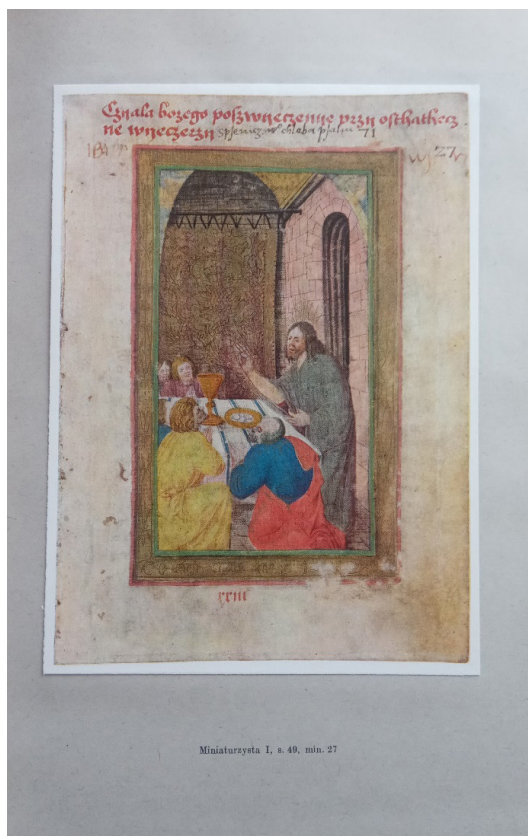
³⁸ Wydra – Rzepka, *Chrestomatia staropolska*.

³⁹ Górski, "Analiza pisarska," XI, XIV.

⁴⁰ See, for example, the following works concerning *Rozmyślenia dominikańskie*: Dobrzeniecki, "Rozmyślenia dominikańskie. Próba charakterystyki," 319–339; Dobrzeniecki, "Rozmyślenia dominikańskie' na tle średniowiecznej literatury," XXXIX–XLII; Górski, "Analiza pisarska" (n. 39 above), V–XIV; Górski, "Uwagi o 'Rozmyśleniach dominikańskich,'" 303–321; Górski, "Prądy religijne," 128–129; Górski, "Znaczenie 'Rozmyślań dominikańskich,'" 203–207; Górski, "Duchowość polska," 161–175; Rozanow, "Miniatury i iluminacje," XVIII–XXXVIII; Kopeć, *Męka Pańska*; Kopeć, "Nurt pasyjny," 55; Smosarski, "Męka Pańska," 97–98; Adamczyk, "Religijna proza narracyjna," 14 (n. 21), 39; Nowicka-Jeżowa, "Tradycja średniowieczna," 195–196, 214–215; Obiedzińska, "Topografia wizerunków," 109–113; Obiedzińska, "Symbolika Krzyża," 259–262; Czyż, "Obraz ciała i mowa uczuć," 46–49; Michałowska, *Średniowiecze* (n. 13 above), 611–614; Kopania, "Słowo – obraz – teatr," 7–48; Cybulska-Bohuszewicz, "Perwersyjny rdzeń," 5–23; Kiszowski, "Wątek 'Mater Dolorosa,'" 227–243; Stramczewska, "Obecność miniatur," 59–69.

⁴¹ See Kuraszkiewicz, "Uwagi o języku," XV–XVII; Rozanow, "Miniatury i iluminacje" (n. 40 above), XVIII–XXXVIII; Stryniak, "Sposoby wprowadzania przytoczeń," 420–427. Some scholars presented different views, for example, Smosarski, "Męka Pańska" (n. 40 above), 97–98; Stramczewska, "Obecność miniatur" (n. 40 above), 63–69.

The manuscript of *Rozmyślania dominikańskie* consists of 122 sheets,⁴² which, in addition to the text, contain exceptionally rich and diverse illustrations and decorative material. It includes 117 miniatures and the initials and coat of arms of the Wolski family (Belina).⁴³ Based on the painting technique analysis conducted by Zofia Rozanow, it can be affirmed that the miniatures are heterogeneous.⁴⁴ They were created by two artists. The first drew 33 illustrations and was inspired by Albrecht Dürer; the second created 84, and the miniatures resemble the production of the sixteenth-century Cracow print shops in style.



Miniaturzysta I, s. 49, min. 27

Fig. 5. Miniaturist I, p. 49, min. 27.

Source: Górski – Kuraszkiewicz, *Rozmyślania dominikańskie* [Dominican Meditations].

⁴² The manuscript shows the signs of damage and incompleteness. Four sheets, and possibly the frontispiece, are missing. See Górski, “Analiza pisarska” (n. 39 above), V–IX.

⁴³ The coat of arms (on p. 6) gives grounds for the speculations as to the first owner or commissioner of the manuscript. It was placed overleaf miniature 1 after it was assembled. See Górski, “Analiza pisarska” (n. 39 above), VIII.

⁴⁴ Rozanow, “Miniatury i iluminacje” (n. 40 above), XVIII–XXXVIII.

The first artist endowed the depicted figures with unique features, showed the events against varied backgrounds, and used lively colors and multiple contrasts.⁴⁵ Zofia Rozanow also noticed that many of the motifs used by the first artist appear in Dürer's *Mała pasja* [The Small Passion], *Duża pasja* [The Large Passion], and *Żywot Marii* [Life of the Virgin], as well as in *Mszal* [The Missal], commissioned by Erazm Ciołek.⁴⁶ Rozanow connected the first miniature artist with the print shop of Stanisław Samostrzelnik of its early years.⁴⁷

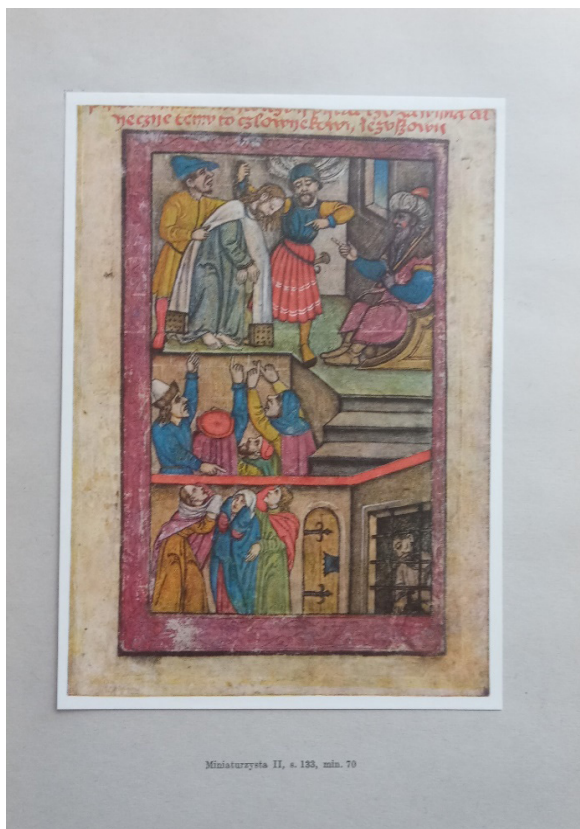


Fig. 6. Miniaturist II, p. 133, min. 70.

Source: Górski – Kuraszkiewicz, *Rozmyślenia dominikańskie* [Dominican Meditations].

⁴⁵ Rozanow, "Miniatury i iluminacje" (n. 40 above), XXIV–XXX.

⁴⁶ Erazm Ciołek, *Mszal*, retrieved at: <https://polona.pl/item/mszal-z-cysterskim-kalendarzem-liturgicznym,NjI4MDkxMjA/18/#info:metadata> [access: 28.07.2020].

⁴⁷ Rozanow, "Miniatury i iluminacje," XXX, XXXVIII.

The style of the second artist, on the other hand, can be distinguished by a naturalist presentation of figures, dynamic depiction of movement, pronounced black contouring, patches of coloring, and a narrow color range. Rozanow suggested that the second artist's likely inspiration was *Żywot Pana Jezusa Krysta* (1522) by Baltazar Opec.⁴⁸ The scholar connected this artist with the “drawing” style of the Cracow illumination techniques, pointing out, however, that he represented “the so far unique instance of the local, dramatic dynamism, and formal brutality.”⁴⁹

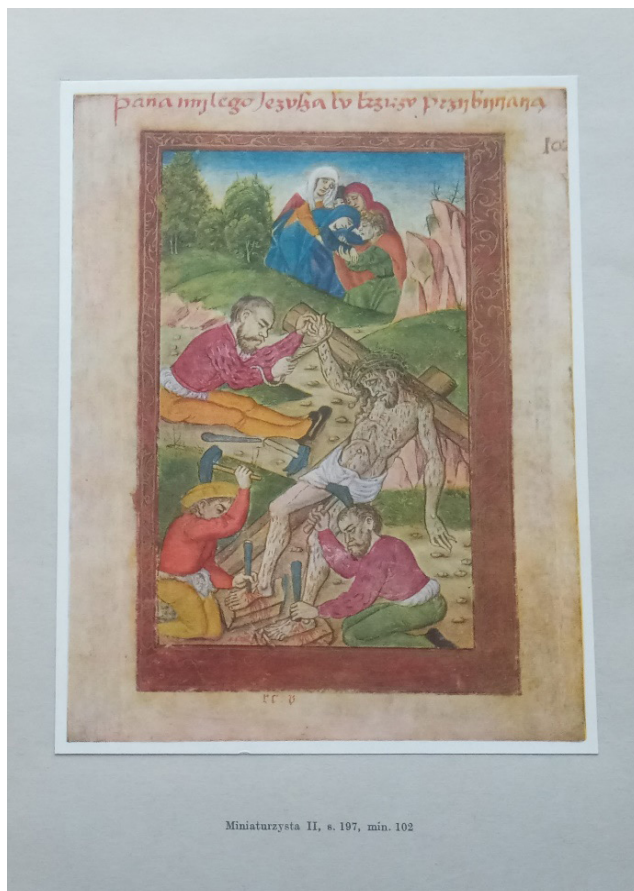


Fig. 7. Miniaturist II, p. 197, min. 102.

Source: Górski – Kuraszkiewicz, *Rozmyślenia dominikańskie* [Dominican Meditations].

⁴⁸ Rozanow, “Miniatury i iluminacje,” XXX–XXXVIII.

⁴⁹ Rozanow, “Miniatury i iluminacje,” XXXVIII.

Another scholar, Barbara Miodońska, referred to the first artist as the “Master of Gethsemane” in her commentary on *Rozmyślania dominikańskie*. However, rather than discussing his stylistic dependence on Stanisław Samostrzelnik’s print shop, she concentrated on the impact of Albrecht Dürer’s art. She referred to the second miniaturist as the “Master of Passion” and developed Rozanow’s initial idea that his style relied on the Cracow illuminating techniques from the first quarter of the sixteenth century, highlighting his graphic style in particular.⁵⁰

The miniatures used in *Rozmyślania* were not merely a simple illustrated attachment. Since they presented the Passion’s chronology, they constituted “a particular outline, parallel with the verbal narrative,”⁵¹ intended to enhance the message. The following passage from the Preface of *Rozmyślania* demonstrates how its anonymous author understood the illustrations’ complementary and collaborative function in the biblical-apocryphal narrative.

May everybody know that there are a hundred and twenty-one images here, which can work immensely upon each man’s pious meditation about the bitter and innocent passion of gracious Jesus. And for each of them by the grace of God almighty and innocent passion of gracious Jesus, four bishops gave forty days of indulgence. Who attends the mass and says his prayers and Hail Mary before, and meditates on the bitter and innocent passion of gracious Jesus, shall be rewarded for each picture a hundred and sixty days of indulgence. And if someone should, in front of each picture, say one prayer and Hail Mary and meditate on the bitter and innocent passion of gracious Jesus, he shall receive the indulgence of a hundred and nineteen thousand, six hundred and sixty days.⁵²

In addition to the Preface and the indulgence promises contained in it, the author’s appeals to the recipients, scattered throughout *Rozmyślania*, encouraged them to activate their sense of sight and to meditate on the images, which were meant to persuade them to pursue spiritual activity and inspire their sensitivity and imagination (“May every soul see the things that happened on Maundy Thursday, wake your

⁵⁰ See Miodońska, *Małopolskie malarstwo*, 182–185, 189–192.

⁵¹ Michałowska, *Średniowiecze* (n. 13 above), 611.

⁵² All citation comes from Górski – Kuraszkiewicz, *Rozmyślania dominikańskie*, II. Polish version: “Wiedz każdy, iż tu jest obrazków sto i dwadzieścia i jeden, które człowieka wielce mogą pobudzić ku nabożnemu rozmyślaniu męki gorzkiej i niewinnej Jezusa miłościwego. A od każdego z nich osobliwie z łaski Pana Boga Wszechmogącego i z skarbu męki niewinnej Jezusa miłościwego czterzej biskupowie dali po czterdzieści dni odpustów. Kto by z nabożeństwem przed kotem znowił Pacierz i Zdrowę Maryją, rozmyślając mękę gorzką i niewinną Jezusa miłościwego, a tak to czyniąc, od jednego obrazka otrzyma sto dni i sześćdziesiąt dni odpustów. A jeśliby kto przed każdym obrazkiem, ile ich, znowił jeden Pacierz i Zdrowę Maryją z rozmyślaniem męki gorzkiej i niewinnej Jezusa miłościwego, taki otrzyma odpustów dni dziewiętnaście tysięcy trzysta i sześćdziesiąt dni.” Quotations in my transcription.

sorrow and weep with the sad mother...!"; "May every soul see what the savior suffered to redeem you!")⁵³

The meticulously detailed descriptions of Christ's Passion went well beyond the original evangelical content, privileging the gory naturalism and cruelty ("... on each post they crushed his head forcefully and his head bumped against each post"; "and they hurled stones at him, and poured foul waste on him from above, ...on to Jesus's head"; "they slapped his face, ...punched blows between his eyes"; "...they used those sticks to hammer the crown on his head, ...and as his head lay on his back, ...the thorns pierced through bones to his brain").⁵⁴ Yet, the text also displayed a "conspicuous exaltation of emotionality"⁵⁵ ("Jesus' head hurt so much and suffered enormous violence"; "No writing is needed here, reason alone shows that here Jesus suffered torment").⁵⁶

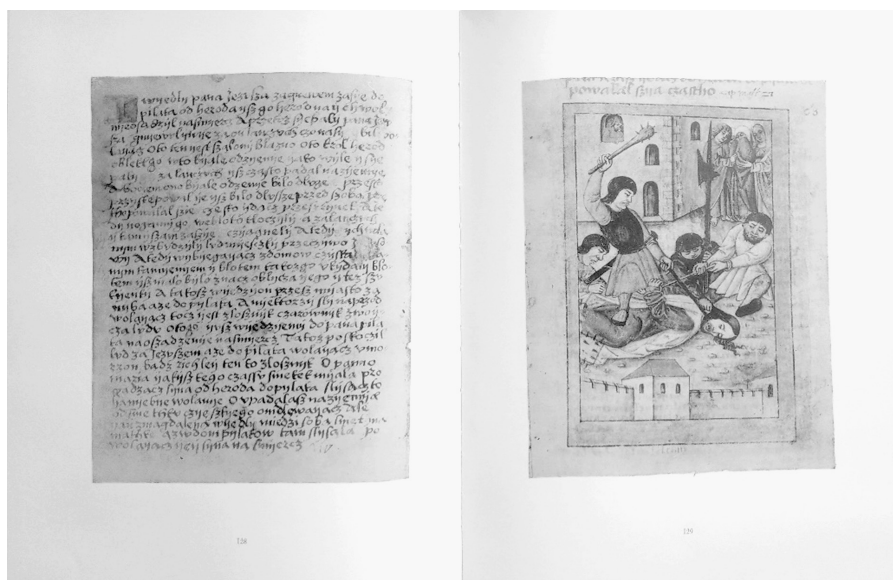


Fig. 8. *Rozmyślenia dominikańskie* [Dominican Meditations].

Source: Górski – Kuraszkiewicz, *Rozmyślenia dominikańskie*, 128–129.

⁵³ Polish version "O, oglądaj, duszo wszelka, ty rzeczy, które się działy [w] Wielki Czwartek, pobudź się ku żałości i płacz z matką smętną [...]"; "O, oglądaj, duszo wszelka, co miłośnik cierpiał twój za cie, odkupując ciebie!"

⁵⁴ Polish version: "[...] na każdym słopieniu główkę i czoło jego silno roztrzęśli i tłukli się główka jego o każdy słopień"; "I ciskali nań kamieniem, z góry lali nań nieczystości śmierdzące, [...] błąli na głowę Jezusową"; "dawali Jezusowi silne policzki, [...] bili pięściami między oczy jego"; "[...] przybijali onymi laskami koronę w główkę, [...] aże leżała główka jego na plecach, [...] i wbieżały ostrożyny przez kości aże do mózgu."

⁵⁵ Michałowski, *Sredniowiecze* (n. 13 above), 611–612.

⁵⁶ Polish version: "O, jakoż tu bolała główka Pana Jezusa i silny gwałt cierpiał"; "Tu pisma nie trzeba, rozum to ukazuje, iż tu była silna boleć Pana Jezusowa."

Ewa Cybulska-Bohuszewicz noted that in creating these “extreme images,” the author of *Rozmyślania* showed a propensity for hyperbole.

The perversity of the work in question, however, crosses the expected rhetorical boundaries. It rather amounts to what can be called a macabre ‘hyper-hyperbolization,’ which in fact organizes all levels of the literary realm. It is due to this macabre-hyperbolic representation, rooted in the fascination with suffering and death, that I talk about the pervasive imagination of the author (authors) of *Rozmyślania dominikańskie*...⁵⁷

The text exhibited not only the physical suffering of Jesus but also the pain and despair of Mary accompanying her son. The parallelism of the “bodily” injuries inflicted on the son and the suffering of the “soul and heart” of the mother was reflected in both the verbal and graphic representations.

However, it is worth mentioning that although there are miniatures in *Rozmyślania*, there is no direct reference to them in the entire work, apart from the introduction. Therefore, it can be assumed that the linguistic element referring to images, as pointed out by Olga Stramczewska, could be demonstrative pronouns fulfilling a double function: an anaphoric reference to the text and an indication of the elements presented in the image.⁵⁸ The accumulation of demonstrative pronouns appeared in several fragments of *Rozmyślania* (e.g., “the villains,” “the fierce crown,” “with these favors”). In the manuscript, the text almost always preceded the thumbnail. For example, on page 5, there is a thumbnail about the text from page 4. This layout of the codex made it possible to read and contemplate the thumbnail in parallel. However, the presence of pronouns in the text is not a sufficient argument to conclude that the scribe wrote the text by looking at the thumbnails.⁵⁹

Another issue relating to the miniatures is the laconic mention of colors in *Rozmyślania*. Information on this topic appeared several times in the manuscript, for example, when it speaks about the white robe of Jesus. The colors of the other elements can only be imagined by the reader on the basis of the miniatures. One gets the impression that the scribe deliberately omitted duplicate information because he was aware that the recipient would be able to use the thumbnail. However, such a conclusion would be rash, as noted by Stramczewska. A comparison of similar parts of the text of *Rozmyślania* with the text of the non-illustrated *Sprawa chędogo o męce*

⁵⁷ Cybulska-Bohuszewicz, “Perwersyjny rdzeń” (n. 40 above), 6. Original quote: “Perwersyjność omawianego dzieła przekracza jednak nawet spodziewane ramy tego zjawiska. Mamy tu wręcz do czynienia z czymś, co można by nazwać makabryczną ‘hiper-hyperbolizacją,’ która organizuje świat przedstawiony tego dzieła na praktycznie wszystkich jego poziomach. To ze względu na ów makabryczno-hyperboliczny charakter świata przedstawionego, powstałego w wyniku fascynacji cierpieniem i śmiercią, mówię o perwersyjnej wyobraźni twórcy (twórców) *Rozmyślań dominikańskich* [...]”

⁵⁸ See Stramczewska, “Obecność miniatur” (n. 40 above), 63.

⁵⁹ Stramczewska, “Obecność miniatur,” 64.

Pana Chrystusowej [The Cause of the Passion of Christ] from the same period shows that not describing colors was not a characteristic feature of that manuscript alone and was independent of the presence of miniatures.⁶⁰

It is important at this point to remember the remarks of Karol Górski that almost all “the miniatures were placed on the manuscript *recto*; ...the overleaf texts were certainly placed there after the sheet binding process.”⁶¹ Given these remarks, it is impossible to assert unambiguously that the text was influenced by the miniatures. Olga Stramczewska offers a critical approach to the existing hypothesis about the mutual dependence of text and image in *Rozmyślania*. Her conclusions are presented below.

In all likelihood *Rozmyślania dominikańskie* were originally intended as an illustrated *historiae passionis*, but the text and pictures were created independently. They were integrated only in the final stage of the creative process, and are not as much complementary as they function next to each other. The reader could follow the text only, or, in case he could not read, contemplate the image. The hypothesis about the strong influence of the image on the shape of the text should be therefore approached with caution.⁶²

According to scholarly consensus, the description of the two-dimensional pain in *Rozmyślania* – the torment of Christ and the helplessness of Mary witnessing her son’s disgraceful death – was complemented by visual means. For instance, Antoni Czyż remarked on the function of color illustrations in the reception of the apocryphon.

All things considered, the text speaks plastically, like a ‘painting’, and the adjacent image makes it more precise, illustrates. The illustrated books were, after all, known in the Middle Ages, including the holy ones (such as *Biblia pauperum*), and *Rozmyślania dominikańskie* approaches this fine tradition as – to phrase it anachronistically, but to distinguish precisely – a passion ‘comic book’.

We can feel the peculiar and extreme power of the work. ...Here the torturers tie Jesus’ hands and legs on the cross, they insert splinters under his fingernails, his body flinching. ...Here are the parts, the specimens of these images. There is always an illustration alongside. So if I am not imagining the inserting of splinters clearly enough, the picture will make it more vivid...⁶³

⁶⁰ Vrtel-Wierczyński, *Sprawa chędogo o męce Pana Chrystusowej*.

⁶¹ Górski, “Analiza pisarska” (n. 39 above), VI.

⁶² Stramczewska, “Obecność miniatur” (n. 40 above), 68–69. Original quote: “Istnieje zatem prawdopodobieństwo, że *Rozmyślania dominikańskie* zostały od początku pomyślane jako ilustrowana *historiae passionis*, ale tekst i ilustracje powstawały niezależnie od siebie. Dopiero w końcowym etapie tworzenia kodeksu zostały połączone w jedno dzieło i nie tyle dopełniają się wzajemnie, co funkcjonują obok siebie. Odbiorca mógł tylko czytać tekst lub – jeżeli nie potrafił czytać – tylko kontemplować obraz. Do hipotezy o silnym wpływie obrazu na językowe ukształtowanie tekstu należy podchodzić zatem sceptycznie.”

⁶³ Czyż, “Obraz ciała i mowa uczuć” (n. 40 above), 47–48. Original quote: “Ostatecznie zatem tekst mówi plastycznie, ‘malarzsko’, a obrazek obok jeszcze to dookreśla, najdosłowniej ilustruje. Średniowiecze znało

Certainly, the miniatures in *Rozmyślania* were a means of persuasion. They worked on the audience's imagination and sensitivity, stimulating a contemplative engagement.

Conclusion

Medieval and Renaissance religious writings abound in the examples of the correlation between verbal expression and visual art. The book artists valued content and artistic merit equally. The medieval illuminated manuscripts, which served as prayer books for daily meditation, contained multiple decorative woodcuts. Following the invention of print, the image became an indispensable element of almost all books – not only as illustration but as a tool of persuasion in its own right. The Bible was decorated with colorful initials, miniatures, floral and zoomorphic symbolism, or interlace and geometric elements.⁶⁴ In illuminated woodcut books, the correspondence between image and word had a didactic function, in which it reflected the *Biblia pauperum*.⁶⁵ Broadly speaking, this correlation turned the image into written speech.⁶⁶

The woodcuts used in the sixteenth-century prints functioned as illustrations. This practice confirmed the unity of the two systems – graphic and verbal. In the Early Renaissance, Cracow artists created high-quality woodcut art. The craft also owed its quick advancement to German artisans who sought work in Poland. By and large, Polish woodcuts were derived mainly from Dürer's school or borrowed directly from the German artist.

przecież książki ilustrowane, także święte (tym była *Biblia pauperum*), a *Rozmyślania dominikańskie* zbliżają się do tej świetnej tradycji, jako – powiedzmy anachronicznie, aby jednak dobitniej to określić – 'komiks' pasyjny. Czujemy osobiłą i skrajną moc dzieła. [...] Oto oprawcy wiążą Jezusowi ręce i nogi na krzyż, po czym – skulonemu wbijają drzazgi w paznokcie. [...] Oto są części, próbki tych obrazów. Zawsze im towarzyszy ilustracja. Jeśli więc nie dość dobitnie wyobrażam sobie wbijanie drzazg pod paznokcie, barwny obrazek obok pokaże mi to konkretnie [...]."

⁶⁴ Knapieński, "Biblia w sztuce," 292.

⁶⁵ Knapieński, "Biblia w sztuce," 279–296.

⁶⁶ Banach, *Pismo i obraz* (n. 11 above), 30.

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