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Stylistic Tendencies in Cracow's Late Gothic Vaults: St Mary's Church and the Churches of the Augustinians and Dominicans

After a brilliant development in the 14th and early 15th c., there occurred a slowdown in the architecture of Lesser Poland. The new foundations were no longer as sumptuous as the works founded under King Casimir the Great, being generally limited to alterations, renovations, or adding chapels or porches. The phenomenon has already been described by Adam Miłobędzki, Tomasz Węclawowicz, and Marek Walczak who contrasted the modest structures from ca. mid-15th c. with both the earlier works or those created during the Cracow stay of Veit Stoss in the late 15th c.

However, over the discussed period also a number of significant vaulted structures were constructed; these, interesting in their shape, unequivocally question the negative opinion on the quality of Lesser Poland's architecture in the mid-15th c. Three most monumental of them, representing different style tendencies, are discussed in the article. The first is the vault in St. Mary's Church's chancel rebuilt in 1442 by the master mason Czysper of Kazimierz. It is based on a rich scheme of an eight-pointed star with numerous additional *lierne*-type ribs and characteristic short extensions of the ribs by the gables of the barrel vaults. The concept of such a rib-scheme may have been influenced by the vault of the Canterbury Cathedral nave; also by the slightly earlier vault in the cloister of the Franciscan Convents, as well as the one the ground floor of the Clock Tower of the Cracow Cathedral.

The choir vault of the Cracow Church of the Augustinians in Kazimierz, reconstructed after the destruction it suffered in the 1443 earthquake, most

likely financed by Jan Ligęza of Bobrek, is of a slightly later date. It displays a clear dependence on St. Mary's Church and may have been executed by the same master mason. Although the rib scheme shows similarities in many places, the structure, in fact, reveals stronger influences of the architecture of the Southern Baltic area, first of all from the territories of the Teutonic state in Prussia. The latest among the discussed group is the chancel vault in the Dominican Church depending on Parlerian prototypes, and built after the fire of 1462. It bears the so-called uniform rib net, being one of the variants of the net vault conceived in Peter Parler's Prague lodge. This vault scheme may have reached Lesser Poland via Silesia where it was implemented in a monumental form in the churches in Legnica, Środa Śląska, and Jelenia Góra. The local model for the Cracow construction may have been found in the Church in Piotrowin founded by the Cracow Bishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki, as well as the eastern wing of the Franciscans' cloister in Cracow rebuilt on his initiative. The vaulting examples analysed in the article clearly allow the conclusion that that mid-15th-c. builders of Lesser Poland did not remain indifferent to influences from other artistic regions, as it has been shown in the earlier literature. Although a slowdown in the architecture of the period could be clearly observed, this did not actually imply that the works created were not significant or interesting. The discussed vaults seem unquestionably the most interesting architectural creations in Cracow in the mid-15th c. and account for diversified artistic impacts that can be traced in them.

Translated by Magdalena Iwińska

AGNIESZKA SMOŁUCHA-SŁADKOWSKA

*Clemente da Urbino's Medal
with the Effigy of Federico de Montefeltro (1422-82):
Symbolic Contents and Political Context*

In 1467, two greatest political powers of Italy turned against one another. The troops brought at that point from almost all over the Apennine Peninsula fought a battle of Molinella. Bartolomeo Colleoni commanded the army of the Republic of Venice and its allies, while Federico da Montefeltro, ruler of Urbino in 1444–82, headed the troops of Florence, as well as those of allied Milan and Naples. Although the battle as such did not determine the victory of either side, already a year later peace was made on the initiative of Pope Paul II, this therefore called *Pax Paolina*. The events were commemorated in a stately medal of Federico de Montefeltro executed by Clemente da Urbino, the only preserved work of the artist. The medal features rich informative and symbolic layers and displays great artistry. It has to be regarded as the most beautiful and richest in contents work of the kind executed for the Urbino's ruler presented in it as a skilled politician and wise commander, continuator of Roman ideals. The contents rendered in Federico de Montefeltro's stately medal is presented in the article, the medal's symbolic dimension is analyzed, while the medal itself is placed in a specific historical context. The attitude of the condottiere of Urbino versus the ancient tradition is analyzed, with

the representation being thoroughly discussed in the cultural and political context.

The medal's obverse features Federico da Montefeltro's bust in profile all'antica with an inscription comparing the hero to outstanding Roman generals: Scipio Africanus and Julius Caesar, the latter two having become the protagonists of a heated debate, known today as a 'Scipio-Caesar Controversy'. Meanwhile, the medal's reverse contains an intricate composition combining symbolic, astrological, and mythological representations. All of them account for the condottiere's virtues, particularly praising his ability to maintain the balance between war and peace. The whole is read as a presentation of harmony among planets and their associated gods' forces: Mars, Venus, and Jupiter. The composition is completed with an inscription alluding to the fortunate conjunction of the three planets. The source of the allegoric reverse composition can be found in the spectacular astronomic phenomena at the time observed in the Italian sky and attributed symbolic meanings. The German astronomer and astrologist Jacob Spira, concurrently staying at the Urbino court, may have provided grounds for the reverse's iconographic programme.

Translated by Magdalena Iwińska

JACEK ŻUKOWSKI

*Feast of Fame. Wedding-Coronation Ingress
of Cecilia Renata of the House of Habsburg in 1637*

The present study, taking advantage of the so-far unused sources (municipal bills, printed reports, epideictic literature) aims at reconstructing the artistic setting of the marriage and coronation of Cecilia Renata Habsburg, the first wife of King Vladislaus IV Vasa of Poland.

The Author creates a parallel between the ceremonious entry of the Queen and artistic events

that enhanced the splendour of the royal wedding, combining verbal, visual, and kinetic-visual elements. The metamorphosis of cultural and social town and court lives implied the emergence of festive reality whose understanding was possible first of all through alegoresis-imbued emblematics. Festive space was perceived in the rhythm of constant exclamations, welcoming apostrophes,

emotional cries, pompous references or quasi-dramatic repetitions. Occasional architecture inscribed into that space constituted a cultural text filled with a rhetorical code combining persuasion, panegyricism and ludicity, three statement types joining performative and phatic language functions. The imagery typical of coronation entry summed up decorative, architectural, and theatrical arts; the figurative and the emblematic. The symbiosis of the iconic, plastic, and phonic signs led to treating space in a way overcoming its borders, on the principles analogical to historical narration immersed in rhetoric tradition. The sacral rite having taken place in church (marriage, coronation), opened up opportunities for court and public shows, actually not lacking the ritual dimension, the latter shaped by the very same poetical architectonics.

The panegyric enriched with complex illustrations, the triumphal gate, welcoming speech, fireworks, court ballet, opera, *barriera (giostra)*-type tournament, numismats thrown amidst the crowds or handed to special guests; *post factum*- published poetical reports: all of these media co-created one intersystemic text. Differently accentuating the same content, it was to inspire, enrapture the public, yet at the same time provide intellectual relish. In the case of the Cracow-Vilnius-Warsaw ceremonies of 1637, it was an *all'italiana* indulgence closing up a long tradition of the Renaissance feast (*fešta*) under the Sarmatian sky.

The analyzed events climaxed the propaganda campaign of the Polish monarch manifesting that he ranked among the elite of the European courts, trying to accomplish his goal of turning Warsaw into the actual capital of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and a major cultural centre. Supported by state and city officials, as well as numerous humanists and a whole team of specialists (e.g. the architects: Giovanni Battista Gisleni and Augustyn Locci Senior; painters: Tomasz Dolabella, Christian Melich, and Giacinto Campana; goldsmith Jan Jerzy Peirle; medallist Sebastian Dadler; librettist Virgilio Puccitelli; composer Marco Scacchi; choreographer Santi Ventura, etc.), the King had the biggest say on all the details of the artistic projects. He interfered when the ballet costumes were made; or decided upon opera setting details; he would choose how canopies should be placed; he supervised preparations for a fireworks show, etc. Great care was put in order to apply homogenous and loyal topic: the King's chancery even distributed a specially prepared instruction related to the welcoming speeches for the new Queen. It was purposefully decided that the ballet *La Prigion d'Amore* was going to constitute the major setting for the ceremony: since members of

the royal family participated in it directly and also as being of ritual character, it was at the top in the hierarchy of court entertainment. The staging of the musical drama *La Santa Cecilia* held in a specially prepared theatre constituted the most refined backdrop to the royal wedding.

The Author follows the large-scale preparations for the events; he accompanies their protagonist and her cortege along the triumphal procession via Cracow to Warsaw, admiring the refined triumphal gates (whose components were to continue serving Warsaw for another century) and fireworks; taking a closer look at panegyrics applying luministic, geographical-mythological (the relationship between the North and the South represented respectively by Boreas and Auster), yet particularly astral motifs. According to the latter, the King was seen as the Sun, while the Queen as Luna-Cynthia (occasionally also vice versa); meanwhile, the celestial body they established through marital alliance ('marital theatre') was to eclipse the Ottoman Crescent. The name of Cecilia Renata – Astraea was heralding the revival of the Golden Age.

The alliance of the nations (Polish and Austrian) as well as two houses (the Vasas called the Jagiellons and the Habsburgs) was expressed – not without religious-ethical connotations, references to the holy patrons of the respective states, families, and the very person; as well as to the ideas of fighting against heresy – by means of the concept of the true lover's knot; union of twin hearts; two love palm trees; personifications of Poland and Austria, as well as the Danube and Vistula extending the right hands to each other (*dextrarum iunctio*). Moreover, the vision of the alliance of heraldic eagles was applied: the Polish and imperial ones (as inhabitants of heaven); or the alliance of mythological heroes evoking sea governance. It was in the Neo-Platonic spirit that the imperial topos dominating the whole was used. A similar philosophical connotation underpinned the Herculean motif of three crowns of glory; the concept of the shared 'armour of virtues' of the nupturients; or the triumph of reason over passions; as well as the concept of the tribute of the solar system planets and four seasons: the alliance of four elements symbolizing the courtly love. It was the settings prepared by Vilnius Academy that met with a particularly emotional response, mainly those containing an allegorizing portrait of King Vladislaus (shown with his hand mysteriously arranged), possibly also expressing the monarch's aspirations for his country to become a superpower, the idea not extremely popular with his countrymen.

The political alliance of 1637 consolidated the cultural relations between the Polish and Viennese courts. The King established relations with e.g.

Frans Luycx (Luyckx *vel* Leux *alias* von Luxenstein), painter of the Austrian house of Flemish descent. Unquestionably, the multi-motif and multidimensional character of the boost of the Warsaw-Vienna artistic relations resulting from the political pact, merits further studies.

While emphasizing the practice of applying occasional and panegyric works as a peculiar kind of

a 'score' for stately ceremonies, the author proposes multidisciplinary reading of the phenomenon of the court culture in the era of Vladislaus IV, the culture shaped first of all thanks to the personal commitment of the royal patron. The title 'Feast of Fame' is thus seen first of all as the effect of the artistic policy of the Polish monarch, one of the greatest art patrons on the Polish throne.

Translated by Magdalena Iwińska

EWA MAŁKOWSKA-BIENIEK

*Tale of the Covenant and the End Times.
An Attempted Iconographic Analysis
of the Vault Paintings from the Gwoździec Synagogue*

The main prayer hall of the Gwoździec synagogue was built before 1648. In the 18th c. the vault was altered to acquire a tent-like structure. Respective polychrome parts were executed in 1652-1729. The 17th-c. paintings were by Izaak Ber and his son, while the 18th-c. ones by Icchak son of Jehuda Lejba ha Kohen and Izrael Liśnicki, both from Jaryczów.

The synagogue's vault features three circles, broken with pendentives. The first circle is formed by the Signs of the Zodiac accompanied by their names and names of the Jewish months. An assumption can be made that these refer to the moment of the world's creation. The second circle alludes to the Messianic Age, while the third continues with the praise of Adonai for his creative Power. The interpretation of the paintings has its source in two mystical texts: *Sefer Yetzirah* and *Perek Shirah*, while the structure of the whole synagogue may have been inspired by the *Zohar*.

The prayer texts featured around the vault are derived from the Babylonian Talmud. They speak of the need to pronounce the word 'Amen' prayerfully and with zeal, of the importance of collective prayer, and of offering sacrifice. The beginning of the prayer coincides with the north-eastern pendentive, hence the Author's assumption to start the interpretation from the east. Both pendentives flank the representation of the Ark of the Covenant. They feature elephants which thanks to their traditional traits such as strength, stability, and constancy, are associated with the teaching of the Torah. Parallel cartouches include Biblical quotes referring to the Ark of the Covenant. The central part of the eastern panel commemorated the God's Covenant with Israel through Moses. The background is made up of

the Tablets of the Covenant, topped with the Torah crown. The tablets are supported by two griffins equated with Biblical cherubs. Moreover, griffins were known as creatures guarding a treasure, while the peacocks placed over the Tablets of the Covenant symbolized eternity. Two cocks flanking the Tablets alluded to the Kapparot ritual: when swinging a cock over the head, one had to say a spell allowing for the bird to assume the person's sins. The ritual took place on the eve of Yom Kippur, the most important holiday preceding Rosh Hashanah. Over the middle panel three Signs of the Zodiac are shown, of which Virgo is associated with the month of *elul*, the period of fasting and atonement before the New Year.

The paintings in pendentives in subsequent corners herald the Messianic Age. They feature two beasts to be slain with the Messiah's sword to feed their meat to the righteous. The north-western corner contains the presentation of Leviathan encircling Jerusalem, while in the south-western one Behemoth is presented. The Messianic Age is additionally alluded to by unicorns presented in the western and northern panels.

The paintings from the Gwoździec synagogue vault are hard to be unequivocally interpreted. All the more so, as all the circumstantial evidence implied interpretative ambiguity. The Author's suggested interpretations stems from the praise of the Lord as creator, His mercy, and care of the Chosen People. The latter fact is presented on the eastern wall through the reference to the Tablets of the Covenant. Thanks to the Covenant, the Torah was revealed to Israel, yet in compliance with the spirit of the time, only devoted prayer guaranteed that the righteous would live to see the Messianic

Age. The quotes and animal presentations, serving as a kind of a code with the clue hidden in mystical

and cabalistic prayer-books, all made reference to devoted prayer.

Translated by Magdalena Iwińska

MARIA IRENA KWIATKOWSKA

On the Painterly Decoration of the Łazienki Grand Orangery

The Print Cabinet of the Warsaw University Library has several charts with designs of the painted decoration of the elongated interior of the Orangery (as signed on the back of one of them) associated with Falenty, the estate of the banker Piotr Ferguson Tepper, and the architect Szymon Bogumił Zug as its designer. In 1961, Marek Kwiatkowski decided that the designs had been made by the architect Jan Christian Kamsetzer and that they were meant for the Orangery rooms, today referred to as the Old Orangery found in the Łazienki Park. Two variants of the decoration design for the elongated 17-windowed interior that the Łazienki Orangery have been preserved; they show the expansion of the northern wall, a fragment of the ceiling and of the gables. According in the first version, the wall was to be painted decorations with high semicircular arcades beyond which an expansive bay landscape could be seen. In the second version, respective segments of the northern wall were to contain differentiated thanks to painting decoration. The central section was thus to resemble a colonnade with ancient sculptures standing against an Italianized landscape with water. The eastern part, in turn, namely the foyer, in this variant was given the decoration in the form of a three-arcaded loggia. The two side arcades contained the entrance to theatre boxes, while the central one was filled with a painting of a semicircular colonnade featuring a figure in the centre. Kamsetzer's drawings were made in 1786.

For many years all the above designs were considered to be plans that were never executed. In 1986, the Author of the article provided information that the paintings in the Łazienki Orangery Hall may have been executed, and executed by Wawrzyniec-Laurenty Jasiński, the latter implied by the contract with the painter (found in the archives), and regarding the 'third part' of the Hall from the side of the escarpment. The Author has recently come across one more contract commissioning Jasiński to execute paintings also in the 'third part of the Hall', but in this case in the foyer adjacent to the

theatre. Both contracts undoubtedly refer to Kamsetzer's designs in their second version.

Wawrzyniec Jasiński, a student of Szymon Czechowicz in his Warsaw's studio and later for some time a student at the Scuola del Nudo in Rome's Capitol, specialized in theatre decoration and mural painting, aptly executed the designs of other artists', mainly architects. He was only occasionally employed at the court of Stanislaus Augustus, generally as a decorator of the royal theatres, working almost exclusively as a 'contracted' artist.

The Old Orangery was designed by the royal architect Domenico Merlini who was directly involved in building it: the construction was begun in the spring of 1785 and completed in the autumn of 1788. In 1787, works were carried out on the completion and decoration of the interiors. Starting from 24 January 1787, a contract was signed with the painter Jasiński to execute paintings in the part adjacent to the theatre 'in compliance with the provided outline'. The painting described in the contract is related directly to Kamsetzer's drawing of the wall with the box entrances. The work was to be started on 1 May and completed by 31 August. The receipts for systematically received sums of money (50 ducats monthly) imply that the painter fulfilled his task. The next contract to execute paintings 'in the third part of the Orangery from the side of the escarpment' was signed by Jasiński on 26 August 1787. He was to receive 270 ducats for his work. The latter sum, higher than the previous one, suggests that the scope of work was also bigger in this case. The task included painting a colonnade with seven distant landscapes in the central section, and three broad arcades, also filled with landscapes and separated by entrance portals in the last one. It is likely that due to the accumulation of decorative works at the time, also inside the theatre, plaster copies of ancient sculptures from the royal collection were placed in the colonnade which was being painted. Jasiński received the remuneration for his work the following year.

Starting from March 1788, intense works on the painting decoration of the 'room for the audience'; were underway; carried out by the main royal decorator Jan Bogumił Plerch they included plafond paintings, trompe l'oeil boxes of the second floor of the auditorium, and all the other painted decorations. The presentations of the nine boxes differ in character from the plafond painting showing Apollo in a quadriga, the latter an undisputed work of J. B. Plerch. Is it not possible that those painted boxes constituting distinct scenes were designed by Kamsetzer, an architect and an outstanding draughtsman? Bearing in mind his drawings for paintings with much contribution of architecture presented in the illusionistic manner -decorating the Orangery Hall among others, as well as his acute powers of observation and the capacity to present human figures staffage, this could be very likely, particularly as he was involved in the works on the Orangery (apart from Merlini, he signed, e.g., a contract with the bricklayer to plaster the walls of

the Orangery Hall; he assisted in the strengthening of the statues placed in the auditorium, not to mention painting designs for the Orangery).

In July 1788, Jasiński was employed as Plerch's assistant for the auditorium decoration. By the end of July, he signed a contract to execute 'new decoration for His Majesty's Theatre at Łazienki': a landscape with eight side wings (for 100 ducats) and a 'representation of the forest' (also for 100 ducats) meant for premieres at the new orangery theatre launched in September 1788.

Jasiński's paintings in the Orangery were not likely to survive for long. The 1795 Orangery inventory states drily: 'all walls painted'; faded in the sun and damaged by humidity, they may have not attracted the inventory author's attention.

In 2012, traces of the old polychrome were discovered on the western wall from the side least of the escarpment, affected by sunshine. They were conserved the following year to bear testimony to Kamsetzer's and Jasiński's work.

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