

## Apple (apple tree) - symbolism, meaning, contexts.

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### Article History

Received: 08/05/2023

Accepted: 12/05/2023

Published: 13/05/2023

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### Abstract

The apple, thank to its centuries-old presence in European culture, has gained a number of symbols and references, both with negative and positive connotations. On one hand it is a symbol of eternity, wholeness, immortality, health, and on the other end, death and autumn. It refers to royal power, fertility, secular temptation, but also to redemption, salvation, divine presence, initiation at the religious level. It is often confused with pomegranate and used interchangeably, which causes differences in the reception of religious and mythological texts.

**Keywords:** Apple, apple tree, symbolism, art.

## INTRODUCTION

The apple, thanks to its centuries-old presence in European culture, has gained a number of symbols and references, both with negative and positive connotations. On one hand, it is a symbol of eternity, wholeness, immortality, health, and on the other end, death, and autumn. It refers to royal power, fertility, secular temptation, but also to redemption, salvation, divine presence, initiation at the religious level. It is often confused with pomegranate and used interchangeably, which causes differences in the reception of religious and mythological texts.

In addition to the symbolism resulting from ancient or Christian traditions, the etymological layer of the apple itself brings interesting observations. The Greek word "melon" (μήλον), and the later Latin term "malum" derived from it, define not only an apple but any larger fruit, which was specified by adding a proper name, e.g. *malum granatum* - pomegranate, *malumpersicum* - peach, *malum aureum* - orange or *malum cydonium* - quince<sup>1</sup>. The Latin language also uses other terms for fruit, e.g. *pomum*, from which the French name of the apple comes from - *pomme*, and the more widely known word *fructus*, used in "Angel's Greeting". In Slavic (*jabolko*, *jabluko*, *яблоко*) and Celtic (*aiapple*, *ubhal*) languages, the

prototype was the word *haebl*, meaning "something juicy, moist". The ancient custom of naming fruit by adding terms was also present in modern Europe, where new, exotic fruit were named using the word "apple". And so *pomo d'oro* (*pomodoro*), literally "apple of gold" in Italian means a *tomato*, and *pomme de terre* - "earth apples" - mean *potatoes* in French<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> E. Piwowarczyk, *Fruit symbolism - Plant symbolism, Heraldry and Christian symbolism*, ed. J. Marecki, L. Rotter, Kraków 2007, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> In German *Apfelsine* - literally "the apple from China" - means *orange*.

From a biological point of view, the apple or the apple tree ( as a plant itself ) is classified as a collective species connected with the domestic apple tree (*Malum domestica*). Currently, there are about 10,000 different varieties of this plant in the world, cultivated varieties created in the course of centuries-old breed crossing of species, including low, wild, and Sieviere's apple trees. The apple tree came to Europe from Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Minor Asia. The oldest archaeological traces of apples come from

Anatolia, where charred remains of apples were found dating back to 6500 BC. A common method of storing apples at the time was drying halved fruit. The real apple, from which all other apples today are derived, was to be found in the mountains of Kazakhstan. The apple trees from Kazakhstan, with their two-meter-wide trunks, are up to 20 m - 30 m high. Approximately 4000 years ago in the Middle East, the first sweet varieties of apples were created, and along with the migration of peoples, the fruit was also becoming popular in Greece and Rome. Ancient Egyptian and ancient Greek literature describes gardens with apple trees, fig-trees, olive trees, pomegranates, and grapes. In the *Odyssey*, i.e. the period around 1200 B.C. Homer, describing Odysseus' orchard on the island of Ithaca, mentions 10 varieties of apple trees<sup>3</sup>. Roman authors, such as Pliny the Elder in his monumental work *Historia naturalis* states that 26 varieties of apples were grown in Rome, including Syrian and Persian ones<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup>Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. L. Siemieński, p. 67, 143.

<sup>4</sup>In "Rozmaitości" An additional letter to *Gazeta Lwowska* (no. 28/1828, p. 241) an article entitled "The origin of fruit trees and other garden herbs and plants" was posted. There we read: "Apples come from Syria, Egypt, and Numidia, from where to Greece, and from Greece to Italy they were carried. The first types of these trees were brought to Rome by Sixtus Papinianus. The Romans knew 29 such species. Appius transplanted the first small red apples (Api) to Italy, and from him, they are called *apples* in the German language *Appel* or *Aepfel*, because this type of apple was first planted under the German zone.

In Poland, several dozen varieties of apples are currently grown, which makes our country the 5th producer in the world. In Poland, apple seeds were found among fossil finds in Biskupin dating back to 800 BC. Medieval monks, especially Benedictines and Cistercians, contributed to the improvement and expansion of fruit tree cultivation in Poland. According to Jan Długosz, apple trees were brought to Poland by the Cistercians (abbot Florenty) in the 12th century from Porta in Thuringia to the abbey in Lubiąż in Lower Silesia. The type of apples they cultivated was called 'depurts', and later 'japurts', a variety known to this day<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> "The first species of apples and pears under various names were introduced to Poland, and apparently first to Tyniec, by the Benedictines from Kluniak and other places in France and Germany, which are still around Sandomierz, from where they were sent to Mazowsze and Prussia, and now usually to Warsaw, where there was a sufficient demand for galaras that arrived with fruit (...). Apples from the forest, used for cabbagepickling, the oldest are Daports, or departs, today called oports, which were brought by the Cistercians to the Lubuskie monastery under the Duke of Wrocław Bolesław's reign and became popular in other parts of Poland. (...) There were also - still unknown today - winniczki, indyczki, balsamiki jestonki, cyganki, wierzbówki, maryjki, pierzgnięta, S. jańskie, rzepne, mucyany, lautule, sorby and now visible in color: white, green, golden, i.e. yellow, red, gray, as far as the taste was concerned: *sweet* or *winelike*, as far as

the season and durability were concerned: *summer* or *winter*, local *zory* and *szklanki*, assimilated ones called: borsztówki, wanatki, szczecinki, renetki, there are so many species such as : calville, pomme d 'apis, cytrynki and countless others. (Ł. Gołębiowski, Houses, and manors, also described the first-aid kits, kitchens, tables, feasts, drinks and binge drinking, baths, beds, bedding, gardens, carriages and horses, buffoons, dwarfs, all court customs and various custom details, Warsaw 1830, pp. 147-148).

During the reign of the Jagiellonian dynasty, fruit-growing flourished. At Jagiełło's court, fruit becomes an everyday delicacy. Jagiełło himself, however, did not like apples, not even their smell, as noted by Jan Długosz, but he loved pears. Various jams made from apples and sour apples with iron filings were used as a medicine *Extractum ferri pomatum* against anemia. King Jan III Sobieski is associated with the story of the oldest Polish variety of apple trees - Kosztela. Tradition says that King Jan III Sobieski brought his wife Marysieńka a crop of apples from one tree in a basket. Marysieńka, surprised that there were only very few of them said: „Kosz telo” meaning "Only a basket". This is where the name of the variety - Koszykela came from<sup>6</sup>.

Turning to the symbolic and cultural meaning of apples, it should be noted that this fruit is present in all beliefs, mythologies, and cultures of Europe and Asia. Therefore, it is impossible to discuss all the contexts and meanings of the apple. The tree itself – the apple tree – has a much poorer symbolism, appearing mostly in the context of an apple, and not as an independent symbol.

In Greek mythology, apples symbolized immortality. Just at the beginning of the world, Mother Earth - Gaia created the first apple tree and ordered the three Hesperides - daughters of Atlas, nymphs of the Setting Sun - to guard the garden of the gods, where there were trees bearing golden apples. The great value and importance of these apples is also evidenced by the fact that the hundred-headed dragon Ladon (a symbol of vigilance and stinginess) sat on the tree – it was a creature that never fell asleep. Gaia gave a tree from this garden to Hera as a wedding present<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Another tradition says that Sobieski personally supervised the fruit harvest. One summer, when it was reported to him that there were only a few apples, he was to exclaim, "The basket only? There are not enough of these *costers*, and my Marysieńka likes them so much".

<sup>7</sup> J. Parandowski, *Mythology. Beliefs and legends of Greeks and Romans*, Warsaw 1967, p. 119.

The acquisition of these apples was the penultimate Heracles' labors, who went on foot to the end of the world to reach the garden of the Hesperides. Heracles, thank to the advice of Prometheus, asked Atlas to bring these apples, for what he would hold the heavenly vault. The most famous myth associated with the apple, however, is the myth of the apple of discord. The goddess of discord and quarrels, Eris, arriving uninvited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, threw an apple among the goddesses Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena present at the feast, with the inscription "For the most beautiful". This dispute indirectly caused the Trojan War, preceded by the judgment of Paris and the choice of

Aphrodite as the most beautiful goddess, and consequently the kidnapping of Helen of Troy. Therefore, the attribute of Aphrodite and her servants of the three Graces is the apple, as well as Demeter, called Malophoros - "The Giver of Apples". The apples from the garden of the Hesperides also appear in the myth of Atalanta, the winner of the Calydonian Hunt. Her father Iasos wanted to marry her off, but Atalanta made a condition - she would only marry a man who could beat her in the race, or he would be killed. Her extraordinary skills and lightness of running meant that all her suitors were killed by her, pierced with a spear. Finally, Melanion (or in other versions Hippomenes), her cousin, joined the competition and used a trick, knowing about the woman's competitive advantages. During the race, the young man tricked her with golden apples, which Atalanta could not resist. Each time she picked up a golden apple, thus Melanion was the first to reach the finish line and receive the hand of his beloved<sup>8</sup>. In another story, Melos, the priest of Aphrodite, adoptive father of Adonis, was said to have hanged himself in an apple tree in despair after having heard about the boy's death, and then he was turned into a fruit named after him, i.e. an apple.

<sup>8</sup>P. Grimal, Dictionary of Greek and Roman mythology, Wrocław 1987, p. 46.

In Roman mythology, there was a goddess of orchards, gardens, and fruit trees, Pomona, who had no Greek equivalent (although she was associated with Demeter). Previously, she was a nymph, deceitfully married to the god Vertumnus, one of the vegetation deities. She became a goddess after having eaten a miraculous apple given to her by her husband. She was especially revered by the Romans themselves, she even had her own priest (*flamen Pomonalis*) and a sacred grove outside Rome, near Ostia<sup>9</sup>. In art, she is depicted with an apple branch or the apple itself, in reference to her name itself, meaning fruit.

Norse mythology also has its apple goddess. The goddess of spring Idun (Iduna)<sup>10</sup>, the wife of the god of poetry Bragi, always took care of a full basket of golden apples, which ensured immortality and eternal youth to those who ate them. They were served only at divine feasts in Asgard, one of the Nine Realms inhabited by the gods. One day, the giant Thyazi grabbed the apples and the goddess herself, which caused the gods' aging. However, she was freed by Loki and brought to Asgard along with the apples.

Apples have this different symbolism and meaning in Celtic mythology, in which paradise or the land of the dead is called Avalon - "Island of Apples". A wonderful apple tree grew there, the fruit of which gave immortality and youth, saved lives. In the Celtic tradition, it was the fruit of magic, revelation, and knowledge. According to the legend, King Arthur was buried on the island, the Holy Grail was also hidden there, hence the search for the Apple Island has been continued. The apple was also an attribute of the Celtic goddess Epona, a symbol of fertility and abundance.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>A. Krawczuk, Mythology of ancient Italy, Warsaw 1984, p. 200.

<sup>10</sup>L.P. Słupecki, Scandinavian mythology in the Viking Age, Kraków 2003, p. 260.

<sup>11</sup>S. Kobieliński, Florarium christianum. Symbolism of plants - Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages, Kraków 2006, p. 92.

In the Christian world, the apple is a symbol of initiation and knowledge. In the Holy Scriptures, the word apple itself does not appear, unless as a description of a pomegranate, among others in the Book of Numbers, in a fragment of an interview in the land of Canaan<sup>12</sup>, or in the Book of Chronicles, in the description of the temple interior. The example from the Book of Numbers shows that there were quite a lot of pomegranates in Palestine and they were among the best fruit, and the Book of Chronicles, somewhat confirming this, speaks of the unusual decorations of Salomon's Temple with two hundred pomegranates.<sup>13</sup> The word apple tree appears several times, e.g. in the Song of Songs, where the Bride compares the Bridegroom to an apple tree, thus distinguishing him from other trees.<sup>14</sup> Origen interpreted the apple tree as Christ himself, and in the Book of Joel, where a plague of locusts is mentioned<sup>15</sup>. In the story of Eve's temptation in Genesis, there is no mention of an apple at all, only of "the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden"<sup>16</sup>. The forbidden fruit was associated with the apple, possibly because the Latin words for "apple" and "evil" are identical in spelling - *malum*<sup>17</sup>. This is seen in the Gospel of St. Mathew, in which Christ explains good and evil using the tree and fruit motif: *Aut facite arborem bonam et fructum eius bonum, aut facite arborem malam et fructum eius malum: si quidem ex fructu arbor agnoscitur.* ("Either you consider the tree to be good, then its fruit is good, or you consider the tree to be bad, then its fruit is bad; therefore a tree is known by its fruit"<sup>18</sup>). After tasting the fruit by the first parents, the apple - *malum* became the image of sin, the fruit that brings destruction, the source of evil, the leaven of corruption, temptation, and death. Beda the Venerable and Raban Maur believed that the apple tree was distinguished from other trees by its particularly beautiful appearance and smell, thus metaphorically pointing to Christ, who is superior to all saints<sup>19</sup>. A medieval proverb of monks refers to the symbolism of this apple - *mala mali malo mala contulit omnia mundo* - the apple brought all the evil of the world. According to legend, a piece of the forbidden fruit that got stuck in Adam's throat is a remnant up till now for all the sons of Adam, the so-called *pomum Adami*.

<sup>12</sup> (...) They came as far as the Valley of Eshkol. There they cut off a branch of the vine with the grapes, and carried it on a pole in two, and [they took] some more pomegranates and figs (Numbers 13:23).

<sup>13</sup> 2 Krn 3,16; 4,13.

<sup>14</sup> Like an apple tree among forest trees, so beloved among young men.

In its longed-for shade, I sat down,  
and its fruit is sweet to my palate.  
He brought me to the house of wine  
and his banner over me is love  
Feed me with raisin cakes,  
strengthen me with apples,  
because I am sick with love. (Song 2:3-5).

<sup>15</sup> The vine has dried up,  
and the fig tree withered,  
pomegranate tree and date palm and apple tree -

all the trees of the field are withered.

And the joy was gone from among the sons of men. (Joel 1:12).

<sup>16</sup> Rdz 3,2.

<sup>17</sup>E. C. Hagen, *Symbols. Our Universal Language*, McCormick-Armstrong Co., 1962, s. 36.

<sup>18</sup>Mt 12,33.

<sup>19</sup>S. Kobielus, *Florarium christianum...*, p. 90.

In the Septuagint, the tree of paradise is the fig. The Hebrew tradition sees the tree as a vine in the center of the garden. According to another Talmudic and Midrashic interpretation, the tree was a fig or lemon tree, or even a stalk of wheat. Enoch says it's a date palm. The same thesis is put forward by some interpreters of the Koran, defining the tree of knowledge pertaining good and evil through various plants. Here, too, the fruit (apple) is a symbol of death, evil. When a man is about to die, a leaf is plucked from the tree in front of God's throne and falls on his name. Within 40 days, this man's soul must be separated from his body. If a man does not want to die voluntarily, the angel of death Azrail sends him an apple of paradise with the inscription: "In the name of the merciful, compassionate God", and then death is irrevocable. Azrail rips the souls out of the body. And he does it in a very cruel way if the dying person is a sinner, a wizard, or a magician. That is why people most often die suffering terribly. For believers, however, he does it in a gentle and painless way. His function as the angel of death is associated with the myth of man's creation. <sup>20</sup> Allah intended to create the highest being, a man, from the dust of the earth. He sent angels to earth to bring him clay. The first messenger was Jibril, but he was begged by the earth and came back empty-handed. Only Azrael, saying "I will not disobey the commands of my Lord", took handfuls of each type of earth, the earth of all colors and shades (this is how the myth explains the diversity of the human species). As a reward, God gave him the power over people's souls after their death.

<sup>20</sup> G. Davidson, *Dictionary of angels, including fallen angels*, Poznań 1998, p. 71.

Returning to the Christian tradition, the apple in Mary's hand is a symbol of Christ - not only the fruit of her womb but also the fruit that corrected the evil of the fruit of paradise. When Jesus sits on his Mother's lap with an apple in his hand, he appears as the Second Adam, the New Adam, the survivor of the original sin. The metaphor of the fruit of the cross - Christ and the shadow of the apple tree - also developed on the literary level among the Fathers of the Church. St. Ambrose of Milan wrote, commenting on Psalm 118: *The Church turns to Christ: "Here is my good Friend. Behold, he is as good as the fruit on the trees of the forest." This kind of fruit has the fragrance of grace to overcome the odors of the rest of the fruit. Therefore, Christ nailed to the tree of the cross like an apple hanging on a tree, spread the good fragrance of the salvation of the world, because he dispelled the intoxicating smell of sin and spilled the oil of the life-giving drink.*<sup>21</sup> Origen wrote: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, if there was a shadow of the Highest at the conception of Christ, it is right that his shadow will

give lives to men. And rightly his bride, the Church, wants to sit in the shade of the apple tree, to share in the life which is in his shadow."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ambrosius Milanensis, *Expositio in Psalmum CXVIII - CSEL 62* (translated from S. Kobielus, *Florarium christianum. Plant symbolism - Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Kraków 2006, p. 91).

<sup>22</sup> Orygenes, *In caticum canticorum lib. III, cap.2* (za: D. Forstner, *Świat symboliki chrześcijańskiej*, s. 167).

The symbol of the sin and the falsehood are the apples of Sodom or the apples of the Dead Sea, described in „Wojna Żydowska” (The Jewish War) by Józef Flawiusz, in which the ashes are formed and when picked by a hand they disintegrate becoming the smoke and the ashes.<sup>23</sup> The story of Sodom's fruit returns in the works of medieval travelers describing the Holy Land and biblical lands, e.g. Sir John Madeville, an English knight, was writing about the exotic lands of the East. In the description of the Dead Sea we read: "By this sea grow trees bearing apples of beautiful color and wonderful appearance, but when they are crushed or cut, there are only ashes, dust, and slag inside as a sign of the vengeance that God has wrought upon these five cities and around them, burning them with the flames of hell."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Józef Flawiusz, „Wojna Żydowska”, translated, with an introduction and commentary of J. Radożycki, pub. 2, Warsaw 1991, p. 295.

<sup>24</sup> The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, transl. C.W.R.D. Moseley, Harmondsworth 1983, p. 90. The Polish traveler Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł Sierotka also writes about apples from Sodom: "About the fruit that was supposed to be wonderful there by the lake, and when he plucks them, they will turn to ashes, like the same Iosephus writes (lib. 5 De bello iudaico, cap. 5), I didn't see it there, nay, and now you have nothing; Also, that the statue of Lot's wife should be made of salt, which, although they take away, is still whole, nothing is heard at that time, and I asked this Arab, my commander, who is aware of it, and other Arabs: they agreed that you have nothing (M. K. Radziwiłł, *Journey to the Holy Land, Syria and Egypt. 1582-1584*, edited by L. Kukulski, Warsaw 1962, pp. 96-97).

The medieval mystic, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, saw the Holy Trinity in the apple tree, from which she plucks the green, white, and red apples of Christ's humanity.<sup>25</sup> The apple was a cosmic symbol due to its shape, and its roundness resulted from the causative power of God, as St. Augustine writes in *the City of God*: "This divine creative power - so to speak, a power that does not arise itself, but calls everything to arise - gave the round shape of the heavens and the sun at the creation of the world; the same power of God, not made but making, gave the round shape to the eye, the apple."<sup>26</sup>

In medieval bestiaries, the apple appears in the context of many animals, e.g. hedgehogs or salamanders. The hedgehog carrying apples on its spines appears for the first time in "Natural History" by Pliny the Elder, but already in "Etymologies" by Isidore of Seville, the hedgehog impales not apples, but grapes on its spines.<sup>27</sup> The vineyard is placed here because of the Christian symbolism. The salamander, on the other hand, poisoned entire apple trees with its venom, causing the death of people eating the fruit from these trees.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Mechtild of Magdeburg, "Strumień Światła Boskości", vol. I, Kraków 2004, p. 112.

<sup>26</sup> Augustyn, *Państwo Boże*, edited by W Kubicki, Kęty 1998, p. 471.

<sup>27</sup> S. Kobielus, *Bestiarium chrześcijańskie. Zwierzęta w symbolice i interpretacji. Starożytność i średniowiecze*, Warszawa 2002, p. 135.

<sup>28</sup>S. Kobielus, *Florarium...*, s. 93.

Hagiography knows many saints who were attributed an apple as a peculiarity.<sup>29</sup> The attribute of St. Dorothy of Caesarea, who lived in the 3rd century, must be associated with a legendary event in her life. While being interrogated, she asked for a sign confirming that she was telling the truth, an angel, who brought three roses and three apples straight from the paradise, appeared. This miraculous event caused the conversion of Theophilus, who was listening to the trial and later he became a martyr.<sup>30</sup> The apple is also an attribute of St. Herman Joseph from the Premonstratensian Order at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries, who as a child prayed in the church at the figure of Mary with the Child, and willing to share what he had with Jesus, gave him an apple held in his hand. Then Jesus stretched out his hand and took the gift.<sup>31</sup> In the iconography, he is depicted as kneeling in front of Mary with the Child, holding a lily and an apple in his hand.

In the sphere of power, the apple (*globus cruciger*) symbolized domination. In antiquity, deities were depicted with a sphere in their hands, an image of the earth, symbolizing their universal nature of power. The culmination of the globe in ancient Rome was the personification of Victoria (Nike), in Christian times it was replaced with a cross, emphasizing that the world is ruled by Christ. Hence, the royal apple is a combination of what is earthly (sphere) and what is divine (cross).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The apple tree is an attribute only of the biblical figures of Adam and Eve.

<sup>30</sup>L. Rotter, *Plants as attributes of saints [ ... ] Symbolism of plants. Heraldry and Christian symbolism*, ed. J. Marecki, L. Rotter, Kraków 2007, p. 61

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>32</sup> S. Kobielus, *Florarium...*, p. 92.

Until the 10th century, the apple was used only by Roman emperors (also Frankish and German), with the fall of imperial universalism, other European rulers also adopted the scepter for their signs of power - regalia. In Vienna, there is still the golden

apple on top of St. Stephen's Cathedral. During the Turks' invasion of Vienna, their most important goal was to "get the golden apple". Often, the royal apple is held by Christ himself, as in Jan van Eyck's painting *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin* from around 1435. Jesus is holding a crystal apple topped with a disproportionately large cross with precious stones. The royal apple was to be received by Christ himself from one of the three Wise Men, Melchior. It was supposed to be an apple, belonging to King Alexander the Great, made of fine particles of gold from all the king's lands, symbolizing the whole world and dominion over the whole.<sup>33</sup> Another medieval legend says that Alexander of Macedon, looking for the water of life in India, saw an orchard of apple trees which fruit extended the life of priests to four hundred years.

Secular heraldry willingly uses the emblem of apple and apple tree, for example, Polish noble coats of arms: Herburt with an apple pierced by three swords: diagonally, diagonally left and opposite, and the Baum coat of arms granted in the Austrian partition with a quadruple shield in a cross in fields I and IV apple tree with a green crown, brown trunk, and red fruit. In fields II and III, there is a black eagle in a golden background. The crest has two helmets. The jewel on the right helmet: an eagle as in the emblem, and on the left helmet - an apple tree as in the emblem. Labras on the right helmet are black, lined with gold, on the left helmet they are green, lined with silver. The apple tree is a talking emblem - the German *Baum* means "tree".

<sup>33</sup> S. Kobielus, *Florarium...*, p.93. (The full text of the legend of the Wise Men: *Historia Trzech Króli [ ... ]* The whole world would not contain books. Old Polish tales and apocryphal messages, published by W.R. Rzepka, W. Wydra, Warszawa-Poznań 1996, pp. 213-231).

It can also be seen in the coats of arms of Gierałt and Wąż. In monastic heraldry, it appears indirectly in the coat of arms of the Carthusian Order, in which the globe crowned with a cross (referring to the royal apple) is surrounded by seven stars, and below the sphere, there is a ribbon with the motto: *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis* ("The world is passing away, but the cross lasts").<sup>34</sup> The royal apple held in the Child's hands appears in the emblems of the female orders of the Carmelites of the Infant Jesus and the Loreto Sisters.

In the sphere of general symbolism, the apple meant both the beginning, spring, the beginning of love, and the end of the year, autumn, the end of life. In Roman custom, the meal lasted from the egg - appetizer to apples - dessert, hence the saying *ab ovo usque ad mala*<sup>35</sup>, meaning "from the beginning till the end". It is also associated with danger. Tradition says that Wilhelm Tell, the Swiss national hero, refused to bow before the symbol of imperial power, for which he was punished by the Habsburg mayor Hermann Geßler. Tell had to shoot an apple set on the head of his son Walter with a crossbow. If he missed, death awaited both of them. William emerged victorious from this test, later also killing the mayor, which started the uprising of the cantons against the imperial authority.

Art has been using the apple motif since antiquity, in reference to mythology and religion. The representations of Adam and Eve show the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as well as the fruit, which in European culture is the fruit of an apple tree. In this case, they are a symbol of sin and the fall of man. But when the apple appears in the context of Christ, then it is the fruit of life.

<sup>34</sup> W. Kolak, J. Marecki, *Leksykon godel zakonnych*, Kraków 1994, p.62.

<sup>35</sup> Horacy, *Satyry*, I, 3, 6.

The motif of paradise, and at the same time the apple of paradise, appears in the paintings of modern artists (Lucas Cranach the Elder, Titian, Rubens, Jan Brueghl), where the very moment of original sin was most often depicted. The first people stand naked around the tree, reaching for the fruit, which will soon be the beginning of their misfortunes and doom. Apart from scenes from the Book of Genesis, apples appear in mythological scenes, especially in the context of the myth of Paris, the twelve labors of Heracles, or the Roman goddess Pomona. Raphael dedicated his first female act to the Three Graces holding apples in their hands. Venus de Milo (Aphrodite of Milos) probably held an apple given to her by Paris. Venus was discovered in 1820 by a peasant near the ruins of the theater on the island of Milos and sold to the French ambassador in Constantinople. The statue was then presented to Louis XVIII, who donated it to the Louvre. A fragment of an arm with an apple was also discovered near the ruins of the theater.

In secular painting during the Renaissance, the apple appears for the first time as a symbol of health, life, harvest, fertility, love, abundance, longevity, and immortality. Examples include Raphael's paintings - "Portrait of a Man Holding an Apple" at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, and Pieter de Hooch's "Woman Peeling Apples". In Impressionism, the apple in still lifes is no longer a symbol, it is an object that was used in various ways. Paul Cezanne himself announced at the beginning of his creative career that he wanted to amaze Paris with an apple. And indeed, over 270 still lifes composed mostly of apples and pears, amaze with the lack of linear perspective, setting a new direction in art.

Apples were also painted by other great art reformers at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries: Auguste Renoir, Vincent van Gogh, and Paul Gauguin. Also, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and other artists working in the first twenty years of the 20th century willingly portrayed apples.

In conclusion, the multi-layered symbolism of the Apple (a symbol of life and death, spring and autumn, youth and old age, unity, and discord), should often be stated bipolar. It is present in all spheres of man, in the sphere of faith as a Christological symbol, a symbol of sin and rebirth, the pursuit of knowledge and initiation (Christianity), greed and fraud (mythology). At the historical level, it symbolizes the power over the world held in the king's hand and the love of the Christian faith held in the left hand - on the side of the heart. Art, hagiography, and heraldry willingly use this motif. The apple tree as a fruiting tree is known from the biblical story of original sin and the mythological story of the garden of the

Hesperides. However, the motif of the apple tree has not gained such a wide reception and significance in high culture, but it is known in the sphere of folklore and customs, as evidenced by the huge number of proverbs, sayings, and fortune-telling associated with this tree.