

## Summary

### JOANNA DOBKOWSKA-KUBACKA (University of Lodz) / Animals as symbols of heretics in Latin European literature and art from the 9th to the 16th century

Medieval heresies, posing a threat and competition for the official Church mobilized it to counter-attack, which was reflected in the animal symbolism both in literature and in the visual arts. In the period from the 9th to the 16th century, heretics were most often symbolized by wolves (the phenomenon of heresy itself was also represented in the form of a wolf, whose hellish origins were to be seen in the flames surrounding it) and foxes. Both served also as symbols of Satan himself. They owed their anti-heretical meaning to the exegesis of biblical verses and comparisons taken from literature, especially patristic one. The problem of sects has been discussed in the writings since the beginnings of Christianity, and later polemicists have often been inspired by the works of old Christian writers. Given the traditional association of foxes and wolves with the realm of evil, their choice of symbols of heretics emphasized Satanic origin and the character of heresy. However, its purpose was also to emphasize the specific character traits attributed to apostates from the Church: rapacity and deceitfulness associated with these animals. A variant of this deceitfulness was *species pietatis* – “false piety” attributed to heretics and associated with the Bible’s motif of “sheepskin” hiding the evil intentions of false prophets. In art this “sheepskin” took the form of a habit in which foxes were often dressed. The phenomenon of merging the fox figures from the fables of Aesop and their adaptations and symbols of the fox taken from the Bible took place. Attributing a “fox cunning” to heretics served to discredit them in the eyes of the rest of society, and to warn against them, so it was largely instrumental. Especially in the Late Middle Ages there is a great convergence between the image of heretic in art and the psychological stereotype of heretic existing in literature, especially in preaching. Occasional sermons about heresy using a simplified and prepared for the anti-heretic campaign image of heretic did not go into details of doctrinal differences between followers of different sects, treating all heresy as one offence. Catholic art was obviously not interested in objectively reflecting beliefs or depicting the real rites of heretics, the stereotypical features of character and the role of enemies of Christianity and mankind attributed to them were sufficient. From this point of view, animal symbols, as a tool for fighting heresy, could prove highly effective.