

FUNCTIONAL, SEMANTIC AND LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF  
LATIN TEXT ON VANITAS WORKS OF FINE ART

## Abstract

The article presents the results of a study of Latin inscriptions on paintings and engravings of the Vanitas genre. The sources of borrowing citations, their functional-semantic and linguistic load are analysed. The research proves that texts in Latin are an integral part of paintings and engravings of the Vanitas genre, and their use is conditioned by the specifics of the origin and historical development of the genre. The analysis of Latin inscriptions helps form a generalised vision and perception of the world's vanity, the transience of life, and the inevitability of death, which is laid down by artists in their works. The contemplation of such works is designed to inspire viewers with the idea that everything that surrounds and accompanies a person in this life is vanity. Also, there is a significant difference between the death of a person who lives righteously and the death of a sinner. The artists used Latin quotes from various sources to enhance their influence on the audience (the quotes from the Bible and works of ancient authors). Quotes from the works of contemporaries are used less frequently. Artists were relatively free with the quoted phrases: they shortened, supplemented, and combined expressions.

*Keywords:* Vanitas genre, Latin inscriptions, semantic and functional features, linguistic features, sources of borrowing.

## Introduction

The Latin language, which was dominant in the European cultural space for an extended period, ensured the continuity of traditions and translation of knowledge, contributed to the cultural integration of Europe. Latin was used rather sparsely after the Roman Empire's fall and was studied mainly in monastic schools. At the same time, it remained the language of state communication, the language of the new Christian religion, literature, and education. It contributed to the retention and expansion of the use of Latin in the European cultural space: it united all educated people in Europe and was a kind of cultural code. Latin also had a special status of *lingua sacra*, which was explained primarily by the Christian tradition's influence. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century,

the translation of the Bible into Latin was made, and the language of translation was sanctified by the unconditional authority of the Holy Scripture. When religious culture gave way to secular culture, the sacralisation of the most important secular institutions and cultural phenomena occurred, which led to the emergence of a specific phenomenon – “secular holiness”, reflected on the language level: Latin received an additional valuable content.

Over the centuries, ancient and biblical themes formed the type of European culture, including fine arts. However, for a modern person, the perceiving of artwork is often complicated by limitations of knowledge in classical languages.

The content of Latin inscriptions, which sometimes play a decisive role in establishing the work's true meaning, is locked down rather tight.

“If we do not know what a painting or series of paintings represents, our attention soon wanders, and our so-called ‘aesthetic experience’ is curtailed” (Hall, 1974, pp. VII-VIII). So, the study of functional and semantic characteristics of Latin inscriptions in the visual arts is a relevant issue of our time. The particular interest is devoted to the works of the Vanitas genre – a kind of still life of the Baroque epoch, “which includes various symbolic objects designed to remind the viewer of their mortality and the worthlessness of worldly goods and pleasures” (Vanitas, n. d.). A specific feature of these works is the presence of a large number of Latin inscriptions of a subsidiary, explicative, or affective nature.

#### From the History of the Vanitas’ Study

The works of the Vanitas genre attracted the attention of many scholars. However, attention was paid mainly to the study of the deep symbolism of such paintings or the role of individual objects and images depicted on them (Cheney, 2018; Gruznova, 2018; Knöll & Oosterwijk, 2011; Mori, 1996; Shherbinina, 2019); on the definition of historical prerequisites for the formation and development of the genre as a whole (Woodall & Porras, 2015); on the specifics of the creative heritage or even individual works of a particular artist (Merrill, 1960; Piorko, 2014). Ju performs a cursory analysis of individual inscriptions. Shherbinina (2019) in the context of symbolism analysis of the book in Vanitas paintings. Simultaneously, the analysis of Latin inscriptions’ functional and semantic load on Vanitas paintings and engravings was not the subject of special study.

#### Methodology

The research object is Latin inscriptions on paintings and engravings of the Vanitas genre. The research subject is the sources of borrowing of Latin inscriptions, their functional and semantic load, and linguistic features.

We selected the online catalogues of museums as the study data (the Vatican Museums, Borghese Gallery and Museum, the Louvre Museum et al.), and also collected works of fine art in WikiArt, GettyImages, DeviantArt. Using the continuous sampling method, we selected the paintings and engravings of the Vanitas genre among the presented works, which contained Latin inscriptions. The works of fine art without inscriptions listed in the catalogues under the name *Vanitas* have gone unheeded. Thus, 139 paintings and engravings of the Vanitas genre created in the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries were selected. Individual works of contemporary authors were also used for the comparative analysis.

#### Theoretical Background

To understand the specifics of Vanitas works of art and features of the Latin inscriptions, the prerequisites for forming this genre and factors of its development must be defined. As A. Gruznova (2018) indicates, significant influence on the development of the Vanitas theme on paintings of the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries had “religious and philosophical context with strong moralizing guidelines”, which is also reflected in the literary works of that time (in particular, Erasmus of Rotterdam, J. Cats). Consequently, the heart of Vanitas genre development was the Dutch city of Leiden, which was one of the centres of Calvinism – the theological system of Calvin and his followers marked by a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the depravity of humankind, and the doctrine of predestination (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The genre was called *Vanitas*, because the statement from Ecclesiastes *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Ecc. 1.2) “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.) fully reflected the essence of the worldview of that time.

Each object depicted in Vanitas painting or engraving contains a unique semantic code, a special symbolic meaning. Its understanding allows the viewer to discover the worldview of

that time: a skull or skeleton, shells, attributes of power (crown, sceptre, laurel wreath, papal tiara) and weapons, soap bubbles, hourglass, musical instruments and notes, a fireless candle, books, scrolls and sheets of paper with inscriptions, fresh and rotten fruits, withered flowers, gambling, a globe, money and jewellery. The Vanitas genre is rightly called “the most intelligent kind of still life” (Ozerov, n. d.), which involves more reflection than contemplation (Shherbinina, 2019). The viewer needs knowledge of ancient literature, the Bible, religious symbolism, and Latin language to understand it.

#### Description of the Issue

The analysis of Latin inscriptions on Vanitas paintings allowed to divide them into separate groups according to the meaning, to determine a generalised vision and perception of the world vanity, the transience of life and the inevitability of death, which artists embed in their works and through these works influence the consciousness of observers and form their life views.

The consistent thought through all works of the Vanitas genre is the understanding that everything that surrounds and accompanies a person in this life – beauty, fame, wealth, honours, power – is vanity. The statement of Ecclesiastes *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas* is the most commonly used by artists on Vanitas paintings Latin inscriptions. Among the analysed 139 works, we found 14 cases when a statement was mentioned in full wording (P. van Steenwijk, E. Collier, D. Bailly, J. van Winghe, A. Bloemaert, D. Vinckboons, G. M. Mitelli, J. de Gheyn II). V. Wagner uses the abovementioned quote with another frequently used expression *Memento mori: Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas ergo memento mori* “Vanity of vanities and all vanity, so remember about death”. On paintings, the expression is quite often mentioned partly: *Omnia vanitas* (4 cases: V. Lefebvre, two paintings by unknown artists of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and a painting by a contemporary artist R. Don-

ley), *Vanitas Vanitatum* (G. Schalcken and J. M. Gutwein) or only *Vanitas* (usually in the headlines: K. M. Manning, R. Robinson, E. Collier, D. Matham). The personification of vanity is presented on B. Luini’s engraving signed *Moderata et Vanitas*.

The earthly life of a person is fleeting, and all achievements are perishable. In particular, attention is focused on this phrase on a painting by an unknown author from Stary Sącz, where there is a quote from the Psalms written above the image of the coffin, which actually conveys the essence of the entire image: *Universa Vanitas Omnis Homo vivens* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Ps. 38:6) “All things are vanity: every man living” (Parallel Latin / English Psalter, n. d.). It is also underlined by a quote borrowed from Horace’s work *Mortalia facta peribunt* (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Hor. Ars 44.68) “Mortal works will vanish”, which was used as a name of the engraving by an unknown artist of the Italian school at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

H. Wierx also emphasizes the transience of hedonistic pleasures, using a quote as an inscription to an engraving of a skeleton sitting on top of three women *Omne quod est in mundo, concupiscentia carnis est, et concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitae* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., 1 Ioan. 2:16) “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.). The author uses the abridged form of a quote, taken out of the context; however, for his contemporaries in this inscription, there is implicitly embedded information about the need to give up hedonistic pleasures because love for such pleasures “is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d., 1 Ioan. 2:16).

In the works of Vanitas genre, the main content is embedded in the image of various objects, which metaphorically represent the fluidity of all that exists. The same methods of metaphorical

verbalization of the fleetingness of life are often used in Latin inscriptions. So, the anonymous painting of 18<sup>th</sup> century from Sary Sącz contains a part of the quote from Iob, in which human life is compared with a flower: *Qui quasi flos egreditur et conteritur* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Iob 14:2) “He comes forth like a flower, and withers” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.). Following the content, this inscription is placed above the image of a blooming rose bush. On this painting, above the image of an extinguished candle, there is a quote from the Psalms, which represents the widely used metaphorical meaning of smoke as a symbol of the fluidity of life: *Defecerunt sicut Fumus dies mei* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Ps. 101:4) “my days are vanished like smoke” (Parallel Latin / English Psalter, n. d.).

The similarity of human life to such fleeting and ephemeral things as smoke and shadow is emphasized in Latin phrase *Humana cuncta fumus, umbra, vanitas, et scenae imago* “All that is human is smoke, shadow, vanity and the painting of a stage”, which was engraved on the tomb of famous Dutch humanist of the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century J. Lipsius (Ruíz Sánchez, 2006, pp. 317-326). This expression is also found on J. Falk’s painting (written on a sheet of paper on the backside of the table, on which two skulls and a rose lie), and in abridged form *Humana cuncta Fumus, Umbra, Vanitas* as the name-subscription to A. van. Halen’s engraving.

An allegorical depiction of life’s fluidity in the form of a soap bubble, enhanced by appropriate inscriptions, is widespread. The metaphor *Homo Bulla* is given in the first book of Varro’s *Rerum Rusticarum Libri Tres: quod, ut dicitur, si est homo bulla, eo magis senex* (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Varro Re. Rust. I.1.1) “for if, as they say, man is a bubble, all the more so is an old man”. A similar comparison is also found in the works of Lucian (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Luc. Merc. Cond. 22): *αἱ μὲν χρυσαῖ ἐκεῖναι ἐλπιδες οὐδὲν ἄλλ’ ἢ φῶσαι τινες ἦσαν* “those golden hopes were neither more nor less than gilded bubbles” and Petronius: *nos non plu-*

*ris sumus quam bullae* (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Petr. 42) “we are nothing but bubbles”. Later Erasmus of Rotterdam used it in *Adagia*, expression *Homo bulla est* and symbol of a soap bubble as a sign of life ephemerality gained popularity, in particular, in the Vanitas genre. So, engravings of K. van Sichem and J. de Gheyn II are named *Homo bulla* “Man is a bubble”, and paintings of E. Collier and his follower (whose name is unknown) – *Homo est similis bullae*. The image of a soap bubble is the main in the verse, which serves as a subscription to H. Wierix’s engraving, with a little Jesus (among other characters) playing with soap bubbles, where the following is stated: *Dic, o Puer; Homo Bulla, Res tam levis non est vlla, Bulla nil fragilius...* “Tell me, oh Son; Man is a bubble, there is no other thing so light, there is nothing more fragile than a bubble...”.

On the painting of J. V. Leal, a quote from 1 Corinthians is used to emphasize the transience, in which life is hyperbolically compared with a passing moment: *in ictu oculi* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., 1 Cor. 15:52) “twinkling of an Eye” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.).

Full of art images that metaphorically represent the fluidity of human life (flower, soap bubble, smoke) verses are used as a subscription to the engraving of H. Goltzius *Quis evadet?* “Who will be spared?”, which depicts a putto playing with soap bubbles, leaning his left hand on the skull: *Flos novus, et verna fragrans argenteus aura Marcescit subito, perit, ali, perit illa venustas. Sic et vita hominum iam, nunc nascentibus, eheu, Instar abit bullae vanique elapsa vaporis* “The fresh silvery flower, fragrant with the breath of spring, Withers once its beauty wanes; Likewise the life of man, already ebbing in the newborn babe, Vanishes like a bubble or like fleeting smoke”. The author of this and many other verses, given as captions to the engravings of G. Goltsius, is his friend F. Estius, a humanist and Neo-Latinist.

For an artistic representation of the life fluidity on D. Matham’s and J. Griffier’s engravings,

J. A. Ban's verse lines from a poem were used as a subscription: *Quid mundus? quid deliciae? quid vana voluptas? Foetor, tristitiae fumus et umbra. Nihil. Non aurum nec ebur, cibus et potus, organa, plausus, Cum pereant celeri tempore, juncta beant ...* "What's the world? What luxury? What is the pleasure of vanity? They are a stench, a smoke and a shadow of sadness. Nothing. No gold, no ivory, food, drinks, tools or applause do not make people happy together, as they quickly disappear..."

The traditional metaphorical representation of human life as a soap bubble, a gust of wind, a shadow, or a flower is also in the verses that accompany the engraving of R. Sadeler: *Vita quid est nisi bulla levis? nisi transitus aurae? Quae uelut umbra fugit, quae uelut herba perit...* "What else is life than a light bubble? Than a passing breeze Which flees like a shadow, which passes away like vegetation..."

As noted above, in the works of Vanitas, in addition to the transience of human life, attention was also focused on the ephemerality of such human achievements as power and glory. The expression *Sic transit gloria mundi* was presented on paintings and engravings for which the theme of the transience of power and glory is the main one. Initially, it appears in the theological treatise of Thomas Kempinsky *De Imitatione Christi* (15<sup>th</sup> century): *O quam cito transit gloria mundi* (Kempis, n. d., I.3.6) "Thus passes the glory of the world!" (in particular, on engravings of M. Snijders and C. Meyer, as well as on the painting of E. Collier). J. V. Leal uses a slightly modified version on the painting: *Finis gloriae mundi* "The End of Worldly Glory". It is worth mentioning that these words are proclaimed at the time of the Pope's ordination, reminding us that worldly glory is perishable.

Perishability and transience are comprehensive phenomena, and therefore death is inevitable. It is emphasized by the authors in a rhetorical question – *Quis evadet?* – used as a title or inscription to their works. This is the title of two G. Goltsius's engravings and a painting by an

artist from the circle of H. von Aachen; this inscription is used among many others on J. de Gheyn's engraving.

Death is the typical end of earthly life for all people, regardless of their wealth, status or ephemeral achievements. It wins everything. It is stated in the Latin inscription on J. van der Molen's painting: *Mors omnia vincit* "Death conquers all". The inscription is a paraphrase of Virgil's words *Omnia vincit amor* (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Verg. Ecl. 10.69) "Love conquers all things" and is often used on tombstones.

J. F. Carión and an unknown artist of the Spanish school emphasize the inevitability of death in their paintings, which contain the traditional composition of a skull that lies on a book. It is accompanied by an inscription – the first line from Genesis: *Hic est liber generationis Adam* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Gn. 5:1) "This is the written account of Adam's family line" (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.), which is applied either on the tape depicted on top of the composition or at the end of the book, respectively. The image of a skull and a book with such an inscription gives the viewer an understanding and awareness that humankind will be nothing but ashes. Such reminder to each person is given by T. de Bry on behalf of God (because God uttered these words at the time of Adam and Eve's expulsion from paradise). On the engraving, the artist puts to God's hands a ribbon with an inscription – a quote from Genesis: *Memento homo, quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Gn. 3:19) "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.). H. Memling tries to convey the same idea to the audience, using in one of the polyptych panels *Earthly Vanity and Divine Salvation* paraphrase of a biblical quote. In the hands of the Skeleton, which is the personification of death, there is a ribbon with an inscription: *Ecce finis hominis comparatus sum luto et assimilatus sum faville et cineri* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Iob 30:19) "This is the end of Man; He has cast me

into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.).

Death is introduced as an extreme limit: the expected end of everything. It is represented on E. van Panderen engraving by a quote from Horace’s *Epistles: Mors ultima linea rerum* (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Hor. Ep. I.16.73-79) “Death, the final boundary of things”. B. Bruyn the Elder uses the exact quote on the painting but adds an initial phrase: *Omnia morte cadunt, mors ultima linia rerum* “Everything passes with death, death is the ultimate limit of all things”.

The use of the Neo-Latin proverb *Hodie mihi, cras tibi* “Today it’s me, tomorrow it will be you” is also traditional to emphasize the inevitability of death. The proverb is put into the mouth of Death (allegorically depicted in the image of a skeleton). This statement is a paraphrase from the Book of Sirach: *Memor esto iudicii mei: sic enim erit et tuum: mihi heri, et tibi hodie* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Sir. 38:23) “Remember my doom, for yours is like it: yesterday it was mine, and today it is yours” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.). Since the Middle Ages, it has been placed on tombstones to warn and remind people that all are mortal. During the analysis, we found 5 cases of its use: on an engraving by an unknown author, on W. Altzenbach’s engraving, on an anonymous painting from Sary Sącz, on a painting by an unknown Italian artist of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and by the contemporary artist R. Donley. Besides, in abbreviated form *Cras tibi*, we see it on J. M. Gutwein’s engraving (the inscription is visible on scraps of paper in the hands of skeletons).

Awareness that everyone is equal before death existed long before the Vanitas genre’s appearance. The first use of the expression *Mors omnia aequat* “Death makes equal everything” was noticed in works of the poet Claudian (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Claud. R. Pros. 2.300). In the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the context of European cultural development in general and the Vanitas genre in particular, it had become especially relevant. We meet this phrase in a poem by an unknown poet of the middle

15<sup>th</sup> century *De vatibus non immerita querela*. Exactly such inscription we found on two works of the Vanitas genre of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century: on the painting of J. Ligozzi (*Mors omnia equat*) and, in a more extended form, on unknown author’s engraving (*Mors omnia aequat ideo vigilate* “Death makes equal everything, watch therefore”). In the poem *De morte* of Hildebertus Turonensis Episcopus (n. d.), we find the statement that *Mors sceptris ligonibus aequat* (p. 1442) “Death makes sceptres and hoes equal”. Later it appears in the P. Blesensis letters (Blesensis, 1847, p. 119, 131, 159). In the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the expression does not lose its relevance, so it is used on the engravings of J. de Gheyn II, E. van Panderen, and G. Maes. On F. Andriot’s engraving, a phrase is carved on the pedestal, and the emphasis is on equality of people in different property requirements before the death: *Ingredimur cuncti, dives cum paupere mixtus* “We all go in together, rich and poor combined”.

Death itself speaks to the audience from J. J. Ridinger’s engraving: on the tombstone, which is held in the right hand by a skeleton (allegorical personification of death), there are verse lines where the first person outlines the attitude to all people, regardless of wealth, regalia, and mental abilities, as *Omnia mihi subdita* “Everything succumbs to me”: *Sum qui non curat quis aut qualis / Nil mihi dignitas Papali / Nec valet majestas Regalis / Stultus et sapiens aequalis / Dives et pauper est mortalis ...* “I’m the one who doesn’t care who or what, / For me, papal honours are nothing / The royal majesty is worthless. / Stupid and clever – equal, / Rich and poor are mortals...”.

Also, a relatively high emotional load carries subscription to P. Galle’s engraving *The Triumph of Death*, in which again Death, allegorically depicted in the image of the Skeleton – Triumpher, speaks in words from the H. Junius poem *In mortem triumphantem* (1598, p. 169): *Ferrea, cruda, rapax, et ineluctabilis, unca falce meto et victrix quaecunqve mihi obvia sterno*

*pontifices, regum sceptris, et sine nomine vulgus dissipato, proculco tauris invecta proteruis* “I am cruel, rude, predatory and inevitable, I reap with a crooked slant and triumphantly destroy everything, whatever happens to me along the way pontiffs, sceptres of kings and an unnamed crowd I scatter, crush, chasing unrestrained bulls”.

Thus, death completes the earthly existence of man. In this context, the Latin expression acquires an entirely different meaning *Finis coronat opus* “The end crowns the work”, which we can see on two paintings of E. Collier. Death provides an opportunity to sum up and do what is impossible until the end of life: evaluate how it was. On the paintings of E. Collier, the phrase *Nemo ante mortem beatus dici potest* “No one can be called happy before his death” occurs twice. The origin of the maxim is associated with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, namely with a plot about the life of Cadmus (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Ov. Met. 3.95.136-137).

E. van Panderen places at the top and bottom of the engraving, depicting a bust of a skeleton, a quote from Romans (with reference to the source), significantly reduces and divides it into two parts: *Per peccatum Mors In omnes homines Mors* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Rom. 5:12) “Death through sin Death to all men” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.). Thus, he not only emphasizes the inevitability of death but also warns about the direct connection between a person’s way of life (righteous or sinful) and death. In fact, for sinners, death is a punishment. *Stipendium peccati MORS* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Rom. 6:23) “For the wages of sin is DEATH” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.) is indicated on W. Altzenbach’s engraving (1680).

Moreover, although the man is destined to die only once, as the unknown author of the engraving of 1598 emphasizes, placing the quote from Hebrews in the upper part of the centre: *Statutum est hominibus semel mori* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Heb. 9:27) “It is appointed for men to die once” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.), there is a

significant difference between the death of a righteous person and the death of a sinner. This difference is outlined in an unknown author’s engraving (1598), who gives (on the right and left side of the image of the skeleton) quotes representing the idea of the death of the righteous and the sinner. Thus, in the lower corners, two quotes from different psalms *mors peccatorum pessima* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Ps. 33:22) “the death of sinners is the worst” and *praetiosa est sanctorum mors* (Parallel Latin / English Psalter, n. d.) are placed. They correlate with two more quotes below. One of them, located in the central part to the left of the skeleton, is from the Psalms: *Circumdederunt me dolores mortis* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Ps. 114:3) “They have compassed me, the sorrows of death” (Parallel Latin / English Psalter, n. d.), the other from Proverbs is on the right: *Sperat iustus in morte sua* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Pr. 14:32) “But the righteous finds refuge in his death” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.).

As a warning, Matthew’s quote is also used on the mentioned unknown author’s engraving (1598) (barely noticeable inscription on the handle of the scythe), and H. Cock’s engraving: *Vigilate itaque, quia nescitis diem, neque horam* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Mt. 25:13) “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.).

In three works, as a warning, the authors use a quote borrowed from the Book of Sirach: *In omnibus operibus tuis memorare novissima tua et in aeternum non peccabis* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Sir. 7:40) “In all of your deeds, remember your end, and you will never sin” (Common English Bible, n. d.). On J. V. Masip’s painting, it is given in full, and on M. Platte-Montagne’s engraving and J. Ligozzi’s painting is in an abridged form: *Memorare novissima, et in aeternum non peccabis* and *Memorare novissima tua et in n eternvm non pechabis* respectively. On M. Snijders’s engraving, only the quote’s beginning is used as the title: *Memorare novissima tua*. An unknown artist of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a Spanish

school representative, uses a paraphrase of this quote as a caption to the painting. He combines it with the traditional *Memento mori*, as if putting it into the mouth of Death (direct speech, in the first person): *Memento mei et nunquam pecabis*.

The call to remember the death (*Memento mori*) is quite common in Vanitas paintings. This phrase's origin is associated with a tradition that dates back to ancient Rome: during the victorious triumphs, the Roman commander was accompanied by a slave, who had to remind him from time to time that he was a mortal, despite his glory and victories. This expression is used on 14 of analysed works, in particular, on the paintings of E. Collier, H. Hess, H. Hondius, J. de Gheyn II, J. A. Graff, C. Meyer, S. van de Passe, J. J. Scheuchzer, as well as on the photo of the contemporary artist D. Amelina. On the painting of the unknown author of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, there is also a slightly modified version of the expression: *Memento finis*. On his painting, H. Memling uses the verb *mori* in the form *Morieris*, and on unknown artist's painting, it is the expression *Omnes morimur*. Unlike the paintings with the inscription *Memento Mori*, it is stated only human mortality, without any warning or prevention to the audience.

However, not only death but also life itself depends on the person himself. Because during the life, everyone can incur the wrath of God, and then, as shown on the anonymous painting from Stary Sącz, *Erit tibi pro suavi odore foetor et pro crispanti crine Calvitium* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Is. 3:24) "Instead of perfume there will be rotteness; ... and instead of well-set hair, baldness" (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.). Only those who follow such advice and act under the warnings can easily overcome all the worldly temptations that life prepares and thus can live righteously. This message is mentioned on one of the panels of J. Gossart's *Carondelet Diptych*, where a ribbon is placed with a Latin inscription *Facile contemnit omnia qui se semper cogitat moriturum* "He easily despises everything who always ponders on the approach of death" (Hier-

onymus, n. d., 53.II.3) above the image of the skull.

On one of the panels *Braque Family Triptych*, R. Van der Weyden uses a quote from the Book of Sirach, which outlines the idea of the death of the person who lives in luxury and wealth. The cross depicted in this painting has an inscription *O mors quam amara est memoria tua homin(i) iniusto et pacem habente in substanciis suis viro quieto et cuius die directe sunt in omnibus et ad huc valenti accipere cibum* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Sir. 41:1-4) "How bitter, death, is the thought of you to those who are at peace among their possessions, to those who aren't anxiously distracted, who prosper at everything and still have the strength to enjoy good food" (Common English Bible, n. d.). For R. Van der Weyden's contemporaries, the context of using this quote was clear, namely its continuation: *O mors, bonum est iudicium tuum homini indigenti, et qui minoratur viribus, defecto aetate, et cui de omnibus cura est, et incredibili, qui perdit patientiam!* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Sir. 41: 2) "Your sentence looks good, death, to a person who is needy and lacks strength, who is extremely old and anxious about everything, who is not compliant and whose endurance has failed" (Common English Bible, n. d.).

The emphasis on the perishability of all things can be put through describing what will happen to a person after death. Some authors show the physical transformations of the body, emphasizing the meaning of the depicting by Latin quote. To give more emotional content to paintings and engravings of the Vanitas genre, the expression from Job is often used: *Quae prius nolebat tangere anima mea, nunc, prae angustia, cibi mei sunt* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Iob 6:7) "My appetite refuses to touch them; they are as food that is loathsome to me" (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.). It occurs in three of the analysed works, however, in a slightly modified form. On J. Ligozzi's painting, the word order was changed, and some words were left out: *Qu(a)e prius anima mea tangere nolebat nunc cibi mei*

*sunt*. On one of the two paintings of J. Ligozzi's followers, this quote (to enhance the depressing impression of the image of a severed head) is presented together with another quote from Job: *Pelli meae, consumptis carnibus, adhaesit os meum* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Job 19:20) "My bones cleave to my skin and to my flesh" (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.). The Book of Sirach's quote is used as a title on W. Altzenbach's engraving. Under the image of a skeleton lying in a coffin, there is an inscription *Cum morietur homo, haereditabit serpentes et bestias et vermes* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Sir. 10:13) "When people are dead, they inherit maggots, beasts, and worms" (Common English Bible, n. d.). On the anonymous painting of 1620, the author did not go into a detailed description of what will happen to a person after death but concisely signed a painting with the image of a skull with the following expression: *Quod sum eris – "You will be what I am"*.

Others emphasize the possibility of obtaining eternal blissed life. Thus, H. Memling embellishes one of six parts of the polyptych *Earthly Vanity and Divine Salvation* with an optimistic quote from Job: *Scio enim quod redemptor meus vivit et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sum et rursum circumdabor pelle mea et in carne mea videbo Deum salvatorem meum* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Job 19: 25-26) "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth, and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God" (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.).

Subscriptions to engravings, usually quite lengthy (from two to twelve lines), allow the artist to outline his attitude to the transience of life and his vision of death. So, G. Goltius uses the following verses as a subscription to the engraving of *Quis Evadet?: Momento brevis haec, certa obnoxia morti Vita, quali fumus, bullula, flosae perit... Excusa blandaie carnis, dum vita superstes, Compede, post mortem liberiore gradu Spiritus astra petet, iam sedem ubi fixerat ante, Ciuemqae agnoscet cativa turba suum* "Briefly

remember these things: life is subject to certain death Just as smoke, a bubble, and a flower perish... With the shackle of the winsome flesh shaken off, Whilst life still remains, after death with a freer pace, The soul will seek the stars, where they has already placed a seat And the Christian throng will acknowledge their citizen". In these lines, there are traditional images of Vanitas (life as smoke, soap bubble, flowers), and death is regarded as a certain liberation of the soul from the shackles in which it is bound during life. The emphasis is on what awaits a person after death.

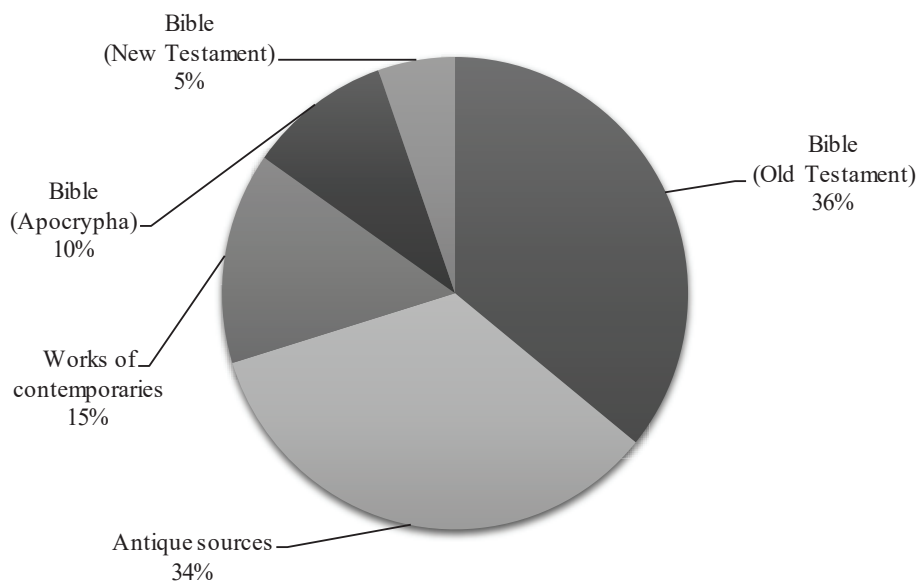
H. Hondius's engraving contains a subscription with the verse *Post funera vita* "After burial life", which presents a complex personalised image of *Pallida Mors* "Pale Death" (borrowed from Horace's *Odes* (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Hor. Od. 1.4.13)): *Pallida Mors omnes petit. huic parere necesse est. Non Color hic ullus, non juvat ullus Honos. Qui bene vixerunt, horum est POST FUNERA VITA Qui bene pinxerunt vivere Morte puta. Ad vivum pictis tabulas nova vita paratur. Post mortem ut possit vivere quisque parent* "Pale Death attacks all. We have to obey it. No Colour or Honour is of any help here. For those who have lived well, there is LIFE AFTER BURIAL. Those who have painted well consider that they live in death. A new life is set out in lifelike paintings: Let each set out to be able to live after death". However, the emphasis is not on the fluidity of life but on the happy wish for everyone to live life after death as he can.

Some Latin quotes are somewhat out of the general concept of death, reproduced by images and inscriptions on the Vanitas genre's works. So, we have confirmed the use of the original quote from Virgil *Omnia vincit amor* (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Verg. Ecl. 10.69) on the Vanitas painting (E. Collier). Generally, it does not fit into the general concept of this genre's paintings but is presented next to the inscription *Vanitas*, in our opinion, to create a particular contrast. On another painting by the same author,

we find the inscription *Vita brevis ars longa* (Latin translation of the beginning of the statement of Hippocrates), which only partially reflects the essence of the Vanitas paintings in the part where the transience of life is asserted. The main semantic load in this painting is carried by images of objects and symbols characteristic of this genre.

### Sources of Latin Quotations Borrowing

Among analysed Latin inscriptions used on Vanitas artworks, the vast majority represent the Bible's quotes (51.88%). Most of them are quotes from the Old Testament (Ecclesiastes – 29, Job – 7, Genesis – 3, and one quote from Proverbs and Isaiah) (*Figure 1*).



*Figure 1.* Sources of Latin quotations borrowing (in %)

It is common to use quotes from the Psalms (6 cases) as inscriptions for Vanitas works because various feelings of believers, including complaints of pain and suffering, prayers to God for mercy and protection from disasters, awareness of the inevitability of death, and retribution for sins, gratitude to God for affection and care are expressed in the Psalms. Much less often (only 7 cases), the authors used quotes from the New Testament (two quotes from Matthew and Romans, one quote from John, 1 Corinthians, and Hebrews). Only Ecclesiasticus (Book of Sirach) is cited from the Apocrypha (13 cases).

Quotes related to antiquity are rarely used in the analysed works (33.83%). Among them are catchphrases (19 cases), the authorship of which are difficult to establish (among them is the most common *Memento mori*, as well as inscriptions

on tombstones and clock in Rome); the expression of Hippocrates in Latin translation, which became a famous quote; citations of classical Roman authors – Horace (4), Ovid (4), Virgil (3) and Varro (3), as well as later authors: Marcus Manilius (1), Seneca (1), Curtius Rufus (1), Claudian (3).

Among the quotes, the authorships of which were established, there were 19 cases of use of poetic lines (mainly on engravings) belonging to contemporary poets and artists (14.29%). Among them are Thomas à Kempis (4), V. Hildebertus Turonensis Episcopus (3), J. A. Ban (2), one case of use of quotes belonging to Thomas More, H. Junius, L. Brechtus, F. Estius, H. Grotius, B. Genga. Some inscriptions are presented on the graves of contemporaries (3).

It should be noted that the authors of paint-

ings and engravings took liberties with the quoted phrases even from the Bible, changing them and composing according to needs or artistic intent.

On Vanitas paintings and engravings, the authors often use (in the image or the subscription) several inscriptions – quotes from different sources, which are placed according to the content (such as unknown author's painting from Stary Sącz, J. Ligozzi's paintings, engravings by an unknown author *Speculum humanae vitae*, W. Altzenbach, J. J. Ridinger, J. M. Gutwein).

Some of the authors combine quotes from different sources into one continuous text. Thus, the central component of the painting of an unknown Italian artist of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is a text fragment on the pages of an open book together with the skull. This fragment firstly contains a phrase from the Bible: *Homo natus de muliere brevi vivens tempore* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Iob 14:1) "Man that is born of a woman is of few days" (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.), then – the words of Solon in response to the question "What is a human?": *putredo in exortu, Bulla in omni vira, Esca vermium in morte* (Granada, 1582), and at the end – a quote from Horace's *Odes: pallida Mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas regumque turris* (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Hor. Od. 1.4) "Pale Death kicks in the huts of paupers just as it does the towers of kings". In such a manner, the author speaks about the ephemerality of human life (in particular, he mentions the metaphor of a soap bubble), what happens after death, and the equality of all before death.

On W. Altzenbach's engraving, two quotations are combined in the subscription to reflect the complete author's vision of death:

- from L. Brechtus's tragedy *Euripus: Luxus, deliciae, pompaque saeculi, Fasces, nobilitas, stemmata, purpura, Nomen divitiae, fluxaque gloria, Ecquid sunt aliud, quam breve somnium?* (1556, p. 119) "Luxury, pleasure, and splendour of the world, Power, nobility, family tree, purple, Family treasures, and fleeting

fame, Is it nothing but a short dream?", in which the fleetingness of all things is compared to a short sleep;

- excerpt from Seneca's tragedy *Hercules Furcens: Certo veniunt ordine Parcae. Nulli iusso cessare licet. Nulli scriptum proferre diem. Recipit populos urna citatos*" (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Senec. Herc. fur. 188–191) "at the appointed time the Parcae come. No one may linger when they command, and no one may postpone the allotted day; the urn receives the nations hurried to their doom".

On the painting, V. Wagner combines two quotations: the quintessence of the whole genre Vanitas: *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas ergo memento mori*.

#### Linguistic Features of Latin Inscriptions

The artists often use a much-abridged version of a quote or one and two words needed to complete a painting or engraving and enhance the viewer's emotional impact. The most common quote on Vanitas paintings and engravings is *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas*, which occurs in the full version (on an anonymous engraving of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, engravings by A. Bloemaert, D. Vinckboons, on paintings by E. Collier, D. Bailly, J. Van Winghe, et al.), and in abridged ones: *Vanitas* (on K. M. Manning's paintings, engravings by R. Robinson, D. Matham, et al.), *Omnia vanitas* (unknown French artist of 1670), *Vanitas Vanitatum* (on engravings by G. Schalcken, J. M. Gutwein).

Different variants of the quote from the Book of Sirach are used: *In omnibus operibus tuis memorare novissima tua et in aeternum non peccabis* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Sir. 7:40) (J. V. Masip's painting), *Memorare novissima, et in aeternum non peccabis* (M. Platte-Montagne's engraving; J. Ligozzi's painting), *Memorare novissima tua* (M. Snijders's engraving). J. A. Ban's verse is presented in full on D. Matham's engraving and only the first two lines on J. Griffler's engraving: *Quid Mundus? quid Deliciae?*

*quid vana voluptas? Foetor, tristitiae, fumus et umbra, nihil.*

E. van Panderen uses a much-abridged quote from Romans on the engraving (actually, he needs two phrases according to the image): *Per peccatum Mors* and *In omnes homines Mors pertransiit*. On the anonymous painting from Sary Sącz, addressing the audience, the author uses only separate word combinations from the original quote of Isaiah, distinguishing them according to his own opinion: *Erit tibi pro svavi odore foetor et pro crispanti crine Calvitium* instead of *Et erit pro suavi odore foetor, et pro zona funiculus, et pro crispanti crine calvitium, et pro fascia pectorali cilicium* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Is. 3:24) “Instead of perfume there will be rotteness; and instead of a girdle, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; instead of beauty, shame” (The Holy Bible: RSVCE, n. d.).

J. M. Gutwein uses only the second part of the phrase on the engraving *Hodie mihi, cras tibi*. The phrase *Homo bulla* is shown in abridged form (the engravings by J. de Gheyn II and K. van Sichem) and extended one: *Homo est similis bullae* (the paintings by E. Collier and unknown follower). The extended version of *Humana cuncta fumus, umbra, vanitas, et scenae imago* (J. Falk’s painting) goes along with the abridged *Humana cuncta Fumus, Umbra, Vanitas* (A. van Halen’s engraving).

There is a possible reduction of quotes by an ellipse of secondary sentence parts: on W. Altzenbach’s engraving in the quote *Cum enim morietur homo, haereditabit serpentes, et bestias et vermes* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Sir. 10:13) *enim* is missed. On engravings by unknown author (1598) and by H. Cock, a quote from Matthew *Vigilate itaque, quia nescitis diem, neque horam* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Mt. 25:13) is given without *itaque*.

We have denoted the opposite phenomenon: artists sometimes supplement the original quotes with individual words or phrases. Thus, H. Memling uses a modified biblical quote on

one of the panels of the polyptych *Earthly Vanity and Divine Salvation*, adding the initial phrase to enhance: *Ecce finis hominis*. On the painting of B. Bruyn the Elder, a quote from the Horace’s *Epistles* (Greek and Roman Materials, n. d., Hor. Ep. I.16.73-79) is supplemented by the phrase: *Omnia morte cadunt*. On unknown author’s engraving (1598), the phrase *Mors omnia aequat* is supplemented by the phrase *ideo vigilate*, thus referring the audience to a famous quote from the Bible: *Vigilate itaque, quia nescitis diem, neque horam* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Mt. 25:13).

Some paintings and engravings contain expressions and quotes when the speech is conducted in the first person, or well-known quotes are supplemented or paraphrased in such a way as to create the impression of direct speech. This *oratio recta* seems to fit into the mouth of Death, allegorically represented in the Skeleton’s image. On the painting of an unknown Spanish school artist, the quote *In omnibus operibus tuis memorare novissima tua et in aeternum non peccabis* (Biblia Sacra Vulgata, n. d., Sir. 7:40) is paraphrased and given in the form of *Memento mei et nunquam pecabis*. Some artists supplement the original quotes with the address to enhance the audience’s emotional impact. On an anonymous painting from Sary Sącz, the artist significantly shortened the original quote from Isaia and made it sound more individualised. Each viewer could feel that it directly affected him personally. The artist also added the pronoun of the second person singular *tibi*, as if addressing each personally. On an engraving, T. de Bry supplements an address *Memento homo* to the quote from Genesis.

Another way to attract attention and enhance the emotional impact on the viewer is, in our opinion, the use of graphic features of texts, namely capital letters. So, E. van Panderen engraves the quotes, highlighting the word *Mors* by an initial capital letter: *Per peccatum Mors* and *In omnes homines Mors pertransiit*. W. Altzenbach also uses this tool, applying the word

*MORS*, from Romans' quote, in capital letters (*Stipendium peccati MORS*). On the engraving of J. A. Graff, the word *MORI* (*Memento MORI*) is emphasised by capital letters in the Latin inscription. A. van Halen's engraving contains Latin inscription in which the words *Fumus*, *Umbra*, *Vanitas* are capitalized.

An essential linguistic feature of Latin inscriptions and captions to engravings and paintings of Vanitas genre, which we cannot ignore, is Latin-writing mistakes.

Classical Latin digraph 'ae' is often represented by letter 'e', which reflects the peculiarities of pronunciation in writing. On a painting by an unknown Italian artist of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, *eternitas* is used instead of *aeternitas*. On J. Ligozzi's painting, *eternum* is used instead of *aeternum* and *equat* – instead of *aequat*. On J. J. Ridinger's engraving, on arrows held by a skeleton, there are such inscriptions: *Presens* (instead of *Praesens*) and *Preteritum* (instead of *Praeteritum*). The pronoun *quae* in the expression *Quae prius anima mea tangere nolebat nunc cibi mei sunt* is used on J. Ligozzi's painting in the form of *que*, while on the paintings of his two followers, it is *quae*.

The emergence of spelling variants of the expression *Mors ultima linea rerum* is also connected with the peculiarities of pronunciation: on the painting by B. Bruyn the Elder *linia* is mentioned, on E. van Panderen's engraving *linea* is used.

There is also a common mistake in the writing of double consonants *-cc-* in the verb *peccare* and words derived from it: on one of J. Ligozzi's paintings *pechabis* is used, on a painting by an unknown artist of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a representative of the Spanish school *pecabis* is mentioned, on an anonymous painting from Stary Sącz it is *pecatum*. On the painting of an unknown author from Stary Sącz, we also find a misspelling of *michi* instead of *mihī*.

Mistakes are found even in the writing of such a familiar statement to all authors as *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas*: on J. van Win-

ghe's painting and engravings by D. Vinckboons and G. M. Mitelli the inscription *Vanitas vanitatem et omnia vanitas* is mentioned.

Examples of syntactic errors were found in some Latin inscriptions. Proper noun *Adam* in a modified form *Adami* (genitive singular) occurs on a painting by an unknown author of the 18<sup>th</sup> century from Stary Sącz only once: *Creatio et peccatum Originale, Adami et Eva*. In contrast, the noun *Eva* remains unchanged in this sentence. On two paintings (J. F. Carrión and an anonymous author of a Spanish school of the 17<sup>th</sup> century) in the phrase *Generatio Adam*, the noun *Adam* remains unchanged. It is worth noting that all nouns in the expression *Liber Generatio Adam* are used unchanged.

Variability is also observed in the use of the phrase from paintings and engravings of the Vanitas genre and inscribed on a clock in Rome: *Ex momento pendet eternitas* (unknown Italian artist, 17<sup>th</sup> century) and *In hoc momento pendet eternitas* (unknown Flemish School artist, 17<sup>th</sup> century).

## Conclusion

Thus, based on the analysis of Latin inscriptions used in the works of Vanitas genre, we can draw the following conclusions and generalizations.

The specifics of the origin, formation, and historical development of the Vanitas genre determined the widespread use of Latin inscriptions as an integral part of this genre's paintings and engravings. Such inscriptions sometimes carry the main semantic load, so their understanding is crucial for perceiving the meaning that the author puts into the work.

Analysis of Latin inscription semantics on paintings and engravings of the Vanitas genre allows us to assert that the main theses on vanity, the transience of human life, and the comprehensive power of death, which the authors emphasized, were the following:

- everything that surrounds and accompanies a

person in this life – beauty, fame, wealth, honour, power – is vanity. Such meaning is often metaphorically represented in the inscriptions with the same symbolic images, which were typical for paintings and engravings of Vanitas genre: soap bubbles, withered flowers, smoke, shadow, etc.;

- perishability and transience – a pervasive phenomenon, and therefore death is inevitable;
- there is a significant difference between the death of a righteous person and the death of a sinner.

Authors of paintings and engravings widely used quotations from sources of different epochs. The most common are quotations from the Bible (51%) and ancient authors' works (34%), which is related to the recognition of these quotes for viewers because of targeting the education system of that epoch on the corresponding samples. Works of contemporaries are used not so often (15%).

It should be noted that the authors of paintings and engravings took liberties with the quoted phrases. They got shortened (abridged) (removing secondary parts of the sentence, without which the general meaning is not lost), supplemented (e.g., for individualization), combined from various sources into one, capitalized words and phrases that needed to be emphasized. We also found a significant number of spelling and sometimes syntactic errors connected with the influence of the author's native language.

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