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Saint George Between Media and Functions

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Abstract

The figure and story of Saint George, one of the most popular Christian saints of all time, has been represented in many places and in several historical periods. The cult of the saint has even transcended the confessional borders of Christianity, and his martyrdom was an exemplary manifestation of Christian belief, associated with the fight against older religions, perceived by Christians as pagan idolatry. His battle against the dragon, even if it was only later included in his legends, can be interpreted as an important archetypal image, embodying some of the

basic tendencies of the human psyche. The current article focuses on this issue in the context of the visual art of a short period – the second decade of the sixteenth century – and of the geographical area of Central Europe. It is an attempt to compare several ways in which narratives about the saint were constructed and used for the purposes of political or religious propaganda. The construction of narratives was closely associated with the unwritten rules of a system of representation, valid in a particular medium.

Keywords: *Saint George, visual art, media, second decade of the 16th century, Central Europe*

The figure and story of Saint George, one of the most popular Christian saints of all time, has been represented in many places and in several historical periods. Even if he is hard to pin down in terms of historical facts, the story that has been constructed around this saint, which represents the substantial values of martyrdom, has kept its power of fascination in various contexts.¹ This cult has even transcended the confessional borders of Christianity. A very similar, if not identical, archetypal figure has been venerated in several religious traditions, including Al-Khidr, who is worshipped by Palestinian Muslims.² Leaving to one side the problematic historicity of the figure of Saint George, his martyrdom was an exemplary manifestation of Christian belief, associated with the fight against older religions, perceived by Christians as pagan idolatry. His fight against the dragon, even if it was only later included in his legends, can be interpreted as an important archetypal image, embodying some of the basic tendencies of the human psyche.³ In individual artworks, these basic meanings were associated with many more specific references and connotations. Basically, the meanings of this militant saint and of his fight can be classified into two groups: (1) spiritual meanings, associated with religious traditions, neo-platonic thought, or even individual psychology, and (2) political meanings, aimed at causing a particular effect in real situations and power struggles in the social

world and its hierarchies. These meanings have resonated in propaganda battles, which were related to past or present military activities, and with the ideologies of holy war. Even if there are intersections between these two groups, it can be said that various sources place more emphasis on either one group or another. The present article focuses on this issue in the context of the visual art of a short period (the second decade of the sixteenth century) and of a particular geographical area (Central Europe). Among the German speaking population of this area, George's legend was known mostly through the "Heiligenleben", very popular collections of legends, which had been published in 41 printed editions by 1521.⁴ This paper is an attempt to compare several ways in which the narratives about the saint were constructed and used for the purposes of political or religious propaganda. The construction of narratives was closely associated with the unwritten rules of a system of representation, valid in a particular medium.

The visual culture of the early modern period operated with several systems of representation. For example, traditional representations of religious narratives and of venerated people, which were frequently associated with mystical inspiration, existed side by side with a new kind of representation focusing on the values of the empirical world, based on

careful observation and sober rational thinking. The greatest artistic geniuses of the period, most importantly Albrecht Dürer, whose work will be briefly discussed in this article, were able to remain connected with traditional culture, to reflect and to contemplate its surviving values and its current developments, but they simultaneously offered important creative impulses for the second sphere, which is frequently considered to be purely secular.⁵

This psychological and cultural tension between spiritual and secular perspectives has stimulated a good deal of reflection, including several important methodological discussions among art historians. This article will look at some of the results of these dialogical processes without considering previous methodological discussions. Instead of looking at the complicated pathways on which art historical thought developed into its rich present form, attention will be devoted to a cluster of paradoxes, associated with the archetypal image of the saint in the media landscape of early modern Central Europe. Not all the media that will be discussed in this article offered a free space for reflection; some of them were subjected to supervision by their patrons and their spiritual counsellors, who wanted to guarantee the proper functioning of visual images in the public or semi-public spheres.

Altarpieces, the dominant medium for decorating liturgical spaces at the time, tended to remain true to medieval traditions of promoting spiritual power in accordance with the wishes of their patrons.⁶ The clerics and the people who closely collaborated when commissioning these artworks wanted to see their religious values properly represented. Nevertheless, the painters and sculptors who created the final form of these objects had to deal with a new situation, caused by new developments within their own media.⁷ Both painting and sculpture were working with new developments in visual language, which acquired a greater power to persuasively represent visual characteristics of objects in this world, including human bodies, their blossoming beauty, but also their problems, such as suffering, ageing, and posthumous decay. It was an adventurous task to use these new languages for delivering a persuasive representation of traditional religious values.

The new medium of printed images posed different questions. Generally speaking, it was created in the private space of the artist, without immediate supervision, which might discourage the will to produce genuine, honest images. It was also very close to drawings, which were used for studying empirical objects as well as for keeping records of unexpected inspirations rooted in the spiritual world. The result could also be destined for perusal in a private context. In this way, printed images had the potential to address questions and problems that were important in the intimate world of the individual. Nevertheless, they could also be used for the propagation of the ideas of a ruler whose private imagination was not concentrated on intimate psychological issues, but more on his political or military power. Therefore, it could provoke the creation of complex image configurations that were destined for presentation to a broader public. These creative developments raise many questions. How far did

the new political propaganda operate with traditional values such as promoting a reverence towards interventions by a divine power? Conversely, how far did the new media configuration change traditional values in favour of more mundane questions such as personal fame or practical ways of achieving military and political power? The different structures of visual media substantially influenced the artistic search for a delicate balance of the spiritual, political, and military meanings of images.

Political meanings of George's fight between the media

The early depictions of Saint George could carry explicitly anti-imperial political meanings. On a silver plate from Iprari in Georgia, the mounted saint stabs an armed man who is lying on the ground. The defeated knight is identified by an inscription next to his head as "Diocletian, king-unbeliever".⁸ This personalized anti-imperial point might be quite complexly understood in Split, where Diocletian was a well-known historical figure who had built a great palace, but for the Georgians, who were fighting the Byzantines, he was just a generic embodiment of the evil Empire. They wanted to see him defeated by the saintly patron of their land. The original viewer in Georgia could ignore the difference between the persecutor of Christians and the Christian ruler of a neighbouring country. The saint represented the power of their small land in a confrontation with the mighty Empire.⁹ The inscription over Diocletian's figure on the Georgian plate claims that the icon was commissioned by a certain Marush "as a prayer for and protection to my soul on the day of Last Judgement".¹⁰ In subsequent centuries, the tyrant, attacked by the saint, was replaced by the dragon. In predominantly religious contexts, the political meanings of the iconography became even less explicit, but they could return swiftly. Even a Christian ruler of a mighty empire in early modern times, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian, wanted to see himself represented almost as a new incarnation of the saint. His wish was deeply rooted in the traditions of his family, where a special devotion to the saint had been expressed through political decisions and their corresponding rituals, which made sense in the context of military confrontations with the Turkish threat. Maximilian's father and predecessor, Emperor Frederick III, had founded the Order of Saint George, which was approved by Pope Paul II in 1469.¹¹ Around 1510, this event was represented in a large panel painting.¹² Maximilian himself established the secular Confraternity of Saint George, which was approved by Alexander VI in 1494. The primary aim of this confraternity was to create a unified front of Christian leaders for the fight against the Ottomans.¹³ Additionally, the Emperor established the Society of Saint George in 1503. Maximilian's close relationship with chivalric societies patronised by the saint became clearly manifest in the Arch of Honour for Maximilian (c. 1517–1518) (Fig. 1). This complex artwork, a new medium of public political representation, followed the tradition of ancient Roman triumphal arches in its basic structure and partly in its size, but it also substantially trans-



1. Jörg Kölderer, Johannes Stabius, Albrecht Dürer and the workshop, *The Triumphal Arch of Maximilian*, 1515–1518

Jörg Kölderer, Johannes Stabius, *Albrecht Dürer i radionica*, Maksimilijanov trijumfalni luk, 1515.–1518.

formed this tradition by using the new technique of printing on paper. Compared to a stone construction, the woodcuts were much more vulnerable, but they could be produced on a large scale – according to a disputed testimony by Stabius, there were 700 printed copies of this artwork around 1520.¹⁴ It is possible that this number meant around 20 complete structures, each of them printed on 36 sheets.¹⁵ In the outer left column, this monumental artwork included a pair of woodcuts by Albrecht Altdorfer, representing Maximilian's continued support for the Order of Saint George. The first woodcut represents Maximilian's strengthening of the Order. The Emperor, seated on a throne in the centre of the image, bestows a model of a church on four kneeling knights. The scene is flanked by two nuns, kneeling in prayer and bearing the banners of the Order. The large inscription in the image celebrates the generous donor. His support of the Order is seen as a tool for strengthening the comradeship among Christian knights: "Beset by danger and worries great / He proved his valour, bravery innate. / And grateful was he to the Lord / For what in life he could afford. / Knightly friendships he did forge / By strengthening the Order of Saint George."¹⁶ In the second image, the Emperor stands in front of kneeling knights with the cruciform banner of St George in his hand. The text in the image explains the depicted event as a call to a new crusade: "With earnestness and diligence / he came to Christendom's defence / For soon he planned a new Crusade / and asked all princes for their aid. / Pray God that very soon

each nation / obeys the call for Christendom's salvation."¹⁷ The idea of a crusade, closely associated with the Order of Saint George, reappeared and was widely propagated at several stages of Maximilian's political career, but the action never got off the ground.¹⁸

The plan (which probably began in 1503) to propagate Maximilian as the leader of Christian warriors through a monumental equestrian statue was related to a medium traditionally associated with Roman emperors.¹⁹ In Italy, it was known not only owing to the surviving Roman equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, but also through Renaissance reincarnations made by Donatello (*Gattamelata* in Padua, 1453) or by Andrea Verrocchio (*Bartolomeo Colleoni* in Venice, after 1483). Even if the equestrian monument for Maximilian never materialized, we do have some preparatory drawings by Hans Burgkmair. In 1508, the same artist produced a pair of woodcuts representing Maximilian on horseback as a pendant to the mounted saint slaying the dragon.²⁰ Even the saint was identified as a leader of Christian warriors – *Christianorum militum propugnator*.²¹ The defeated dragon lies under his horse, stabbed by George's broken lance. The kneeling princess represents the gratitude owed to victorious military heroes. The inspiring force of the monumental statue is still felt in the form of the rider's body, whose dynamism has been inspired by Verrocchio's *condottiere*. In the woodcut, the military propaganda is much more prominent than the traditional Christian symbols – the pelican shedding its blood to nourish its offspring, or the monogram IHS, placed inconspicuously to the side of the triumphal arch above the saint.²² A special feature of this pair of images is that in some cases the inexpensive nature of the medium was transformed by printing a very thin layer of gold on the sheet.²³

Drawings, prints, and other media for a private or semi-private context

Maximilian was obsessed with the idea of becoming a leader of Christian soldiers. As a leading military figure, he identified with the victorious saint as his knightly role model to give his military activities a nobility in line with older medieval traditions. Nevertheless, Maximilian's self-identification with the saint related to only a relatively small part of his complex self-fashioning, realised with the help of learned humanists. This complex campaign included several ways of sacralising or of celebrating the Emperor's heroic and knightly features, and operated mostly using elaborate literary narratives, typically expressed through the medium of printed books with narrative woodcut illustrations.²⁴

Maximilian's desire to follow the example of Saint George is further reflected in an etching by Daniel Hopfer, which is much closer to a traditional portrait, as it took inspiration from the portrayal of the Emperor by Bernard Strigel.²⁵ The dragon is reduced to a small attribute on the lower right edge of the image, so that the parallel between the Emperor and the saint is not immediately noticeable. The two angels,

bearing a banner and a shield with a cruciform insignia, refer to the Order of Saint George. Without these attributes, the voluminous figure of the elderly Emperor in rich civilian clothing would have nothing in common with his heroic saintly patron. What was the real motivation for commissioning these images? It is frequently said that they expressed the special devotion of the Emperor to the saint, but it is equally possible that they were produced to promote devotion to the Emperor, identified with George. This representational strategy was limited to official courtly circles and would not be followed in the traditional rural devotion to the saint.

As the identification of the Emperor with the saint could carry political meanings, this idea could be propagated by media addressing a broader public, for example by sculptures or reliefs carved from stone. Around 1522, Hans Daucher produced a limestone relief, in which the similarity to Saint George is immediately legible, because the mounted Emperor has a conquered dragon beneath his horse.²⁶ Nevertheless, this artwork was too small to properly function in a larger space (22.9 × 15.6 × 2.8 cm). Daucher created more works of approximately the same height that celebrated the Emperor in the context of classical mythology or medieval sagas.²⁷ As their main topics – “Albrecht Dürer fighting Apelles” or Arthurian legends – were best known to the learned humanists, it is very probable that this whole group of works was made for enjoyment in a private or semi-private context.

The private devotion of Maximilian to Saint George was also clearly present in Maximilian’s copy of the prayer book printed in 1513 for the Order of Saint George and decorated with ink drawings by Albrecht Dürer.²⁸ There is a special page devoted to Saint George; the drawing on it fully occupies the outer and lower edges. The robust mounted knight, whose body is completely covered with plate armour, holds a large lance, which, without any visible effort, is stuck into the tail of the large dragon that lies under the horse’s hooves. The rider resembles the knight from Burgkmair’s sketch for the equestrian monument.²⁹ The horse is covered by an elaborately decorated coverlet; the only recognizable representation on it is a sun. There are no visible heraldic signs. In the private context, the political aspects of representation were suspended. The saint appears as a successful protector from the dangerous animal – several human bones represent the fate of its previous victims. It seems that the danger was not removed completely, as the bones are approached by another dragon, who is smaller, but seems to be much more aggressive than his pacified parent. In this sense, the psychology of the image avoids a simplistic triumphalism, which can occasionally be found in religious works. Dürer had devoted his attention to the saint several times before. Firstly, his interest could have been motivated by the anonymous patron of the stained-glass window for which a young Dürer produced a preparatory drawing, representing the height of the dramatic confrontation between the mounted saint and the dragon under the heels of his horse.³⁰ It is not known whether the window was ever completed. Another window that several authors associated with an unknown sketch by Dürer, the one in Saint Sebald in Nuremberg, shows Saint George standing in its lower right section.³¹ This image is



2. Albrecht Dürer, *St George Standing*, c. 1502
Albrecht Dürer, *Sv. Juraj*, oko 1502.

very similar to the copperplate print from 1502/1503 featuring the saint standing immediately in front of the dead dragon (Fig. 2). The helmet, which had previously covered his head, is thrown down to the ground, so that the observer can see the bearded face of the middle-aged man. The flag fluttering on a large lance in his right hand bears a cross in a circle – the emblem of the Order of Saint George.³² The second copperplate print from 1508 is characterized by an even more triumphalist atmosphere, with the mounted saint looking upwards to heaven, and a dead dragon lying on the ground.³³

Nevertheless, it is far less sophisticated than Dürer’s famous print *Knight, Death, and the Devil*, which is “a veritable playing field for interpretation”, providing “enough signposts to stimulate contemplation and conversation” (Fig. 3).³⁴ However the individual motifs and details are interpreted, this image always carries a very complex testimony about the human condition and the state of chivalric ideals at the time. The polyvalence of meanings resulted from the artist’s free dialogue with the tradition and with the world around him. The space for an unbiased meditation was not limited



3. Albrecht Dürer, *Knight, Death, and the Devil*, 1513
Albrecht Dürer, Vitez, smrt i đavao, 1513.

by the religious function that still dominated in the prayer book. In addition, this knight was not defined as a saint, so the hagiographic topoi did not have to enter the meditation, and the secular humanist motifs could prevail. The fear of death, which seemed to be completely overcome in the pictorial cycles with the courageous and heroic martyr George, became an intense psychological reality, personified by the skeleton. Such a representation of the saint marks a substantial shift when compared with a prayer book commissioned around 1471 by Charles the Bold, Maximilian's father-in-law. This manuscript contains two illuminations, in which the patron, kneeling in prayer, is presented to the heavenly powers by Saint George, who is standing behind him.³⁵ Maximilian counted on the saint's help even when thinking about his posthumous fate.

These expectations, which Maximilian as a private person might associate with Saint George, are embodied in a woodcut by Hans Springinklee.³⁶ The image shows the saint as a prominent member of the group of heavenly patrons, who are recommending the kneeling Emperor to the blessing Christ. This print embodies the eschatological hopes that

might have been associated with the saint in the private imagination of the Emperor. This group of meanings was very important for the medium of altarpieces, as was mentioned in the introduction of this article.

The Altarpieces

Most altarpieces devoted to Saint George in the early sixteenth century combined sculptures and paintings within a monumental whole with predominantly religious functions.³⁷ Nevertheless, the medium of the altarpiece was also undergoing some changes, which in some cases transformed its form and structure. Therefore, it was not only the iconography and the general political contexts in which it was perceived that were modified (even if the extent of this modification varied). In some cases, the very structure of the medium included smaller or greater changes, which contributed to shifts in the perception of the saint.

The saint's cult was primarily motivated by the final goal of Christian existence – the salvation. The presence of political meanings, more specifically political meanings concerning real power struggles coordinated by the highest strata of society, such as real military campaigns, was rare. One older example from the Iberian Peninsula shows how this concept, which was not clearly present in the art of Central Europe, might be represented, which was not clearly present in the art of Central Europe.

The altarpiece from Valencia (around 1420), today in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, features two of the saint's battles at its centre. Above the traditional battle with a dragon, there is a large image depicting the victory of James the Conqueror, the King of Aragon, over the Moors in the Battle of the Puig. Saint George, who supposedly appeared to James in the battle, is represented immediately behind the king. His activity – killing his Muslim adversary – is also similar. Both men are identified by the textiles which cover them and their horses: the saint has his typical red cross on a white background, and the king's red and gold stripes represent the colours of Aragon.³⁸

One of the Central European altarpieces devoted to Saint George – the retable from Ambras Castle – was probably commissioned by the Emperor Maximilian.³⁹ The sculptural group in the centre of this retable depicts the saint's battle against the dragon. The *corpus* is opened, as its artists calculated, with a view from all directions.⁴⁰ Around 1500, when the altarpiece was produced, probably for a small chapel in the castle garden founded by Maximilian's father Frederick III, such a solution was new. Another innovation was the integration of seven heraldic shields into the upper part of the *corpus*. The coat of arms in the middle represented the Emperor Maximilian. The others stood for Austria, Hungary, Portugal, England, Bohemia, and Naples. The same heraldic program was used for the gallery of the Emperor's ancestors on his sepulchral monument in Innsbruck. On the altarpiece, the saint is represented fighting the dragon without anything miraculous occurring. The small figures of the princess on



4. *St George fighting the dragon*, 1516, Spišská Sobota (Mons Sancti Georgii, Georgenberg, Szepesszombat), high altar, detail
Sv. Juraj u borbi sa zmajem, 1516., Spišská Sobota (Mons Sancti Georgii, Georgenberg, Szepesszombat), glavni oltar, detalj



5. *St George Survives the Attempted Poisoning*, 1516, the altarpiece from Spišská Sobota (Mons Sancti Georgii, Georgenberg, Szepesszombat)
Sv. Juraj preživljava pokušaj trovanja, 1516., oltarna slika, Spišská Sobota (Mons Sancti Georgii, Georgenberg, Szepesszombat)

the left and of her parents on the right observe the impressive actions of the young knight in contemporary armour in the centre. The wings of the altarpiece represent only standing saints, not events. It is not clear how far Maximilian believed in the power of the saint to intervene in a real military action.

Many battles were represented on the Triumphal Arch of Maximilian, but none of them was decided by the miraculous intervention of Saint George. The power to dominate in a military confrontation was primarily associated with understandable earthly circumstances, such as the size, training, and armament of an army, as well as strategy, tactics, or even diplomatic efforts. In this context, several prints of the arch depict Maximilian as a master of the martial arts. The focus on technological knowledge, whether historically true or legendary, replaced older religious narratives. Instead, the stylised autobiographical narratives about the wise white king celebrated the ability and expertise of Maximilian in these purely secular matters. For example, the woodcut by Hans Burgkmair shows Maximilian as supervising or otherwise helping a smith, who is working to create a set of armour in a workshop.⁴¹

The altarpiece from Cologne – a large set of panel paintings created around 1460 by a painter named after this visual story of Saint George as the “Master of the Legend of St George”, tells a completely different story. In the background of the

central image, the saint is given armour by an apparition of the Virgin Mary.⁴² It is possible that stories like this one were no longer believable in the circles around Maximilian. The miracles, such as the miraculous destruction of the wheels on which the saint was supposed to be tortured, or the punishment of the saint’s adversaries by a heavenly fire or burning stones, seem to be completely missing from the courtly artworks, even if they used to be represented on altarpieces in smaller towns of the region. A telling example is offered by the high altar of Saint George in Spišská Sobota (1516), where a whole panel painting was devoted to each of these miracles (Fig. 4).⁴³ Nevertheless, Saint George helping in a military confrontation is not represented in any of his retables preserved in Central Europe.

On these altarpieces, the memory of the saint and Emperor Diocletian as representatives of contrasting worlds still survives in numerous scenes of torture. In several of these scenes, Diocletian appears with the imperial crown on his head as the leader of the torturers. For example, a grey-bearded emperor (identified by the imperial crown on his head) stands on the left side of the scene that represents the attempted poisoning of Saint George on the Saint George retable in Spišská Sobota (1516) (Fig. 5).⁴⁴ As far as I know, the painters never attempted to identify this evil emperor with Maximilian. A similar identification strategy was possible on the altarpieces, but it



6. The High Altar of St George, 1519, Svätý Jur, parish church
Glavni oltar sv. Jurja, 1519., Svätý Jur, župna crkva

happened only in the context of the legends of other saints, where the emperor had played a positive role. One example is a panel painting by Wilhelm Ziegler from the high altarpiece of the Church of Saint Wolfgang in Rothenburg ob der Tauber (1514).⁴⁵ The figure of Otto I, who is transferring the bishopric of Regensburg to Saint Wolfgang, stands close to the saint and watches him carefully, perhaps even with a hint of doubt, but with no evil intentions.

The conservative iconography of the retables was probably conditioned by their placement on the altar, which was in the centre of a space with dominant liturgical functions. This functional connection remained constant even if the basic material and structural aspects of the medium changed substantially, as demonstrated by the high altar of the Saint George Church in Svätý Jur (1519) (Fig. 6).⁴⁶ This retable was carved from a fine limestone, so that there was no longer any possibility of creating movable wings. Thus, a separation of the two aspects seen in Spišská Sobota – the triumph over the dragon in the central body of the opened structure (*corpus*) and the scenes of the martyrdom on the outer sides of the retable wings, which was visible when the retable was closed – no longer existed. Viewers had to contemplate the

saint's victory over the dragon simultaneously with his heroic martyrdom. In this context, none of the four flanking reliefs presents the suffering in its full intensity. Instead, we see George being supported by heavenly powers even during his repeated confrontations with the adversaries of the Christian faith. The introductory scene features a kneeling saint in the middle, observed from the right by an angry military figure, but the column with an idol in the centre of the background is clearly falling down. Thus, the scene can be read as a symbolic presentation, standing for all George's fights against idolatry. In the centre of the image depicting the boiling in the cauldron, the saint is depicted with his hands clasped in a calm prayer, even though the tormentors around him are very active, especially the figure on the left side who is stretching his mouth in a mocking gesture. The mind of the contemplating saint is safely in heaven. The attempt to break the saint on the wheel ended before it even began. George, kneeling in prayer, observes the bodies of his tormentors, killed by stones which have fallen from the sky. Finally, George is decapitated during a prayer, so he can count on reaching his salvation soon. All the scenes can be found – with greater or minor alterations – on older altarpieces devoted to the saint. The material and structural changes of the medium did not produce any substantial iconographic innovations.

Conclusion

The landscape of visual media in the years around 1515 was quite differentiated, so that the media presentation of the saint took various forms. Even if the altarpieces, as a traditional medium in principle, kept a lot of the iconographic and formal solutions of previous periods, they had to compete with the increased importance of self-presentation, which had influenced the highest circles of society. When placed in a palace chapel, an altarpiece could transform to create another place for heraldic self-presentation. Nevertheless, this form of self-presentation did not influence the image of the saint in such a measure as the media which served the purposes of political representation of the courtly circles. The new medium of the printed image enabled artists to develop several creative strategies for representing power by means of visual media. The Emperor could be identified with the saint, or such an identification could be at least implied in the order of images. In the context of political ideology and rituals, for which the Order of Saint George was a crucial institution, this identification performed functions that reached far beyond the realm of private religious practices. These were served by more intimate private media such as prayer books, small carved reliefs, and prints. The medium of print offered a wide spectrum of new possibilities for a reflection on the person of the saint. These were most differentiated in the oeuvre of the most prominent artists, such as Albrecht Dürer, who devoted several images to the saint, but simultaneously developed a new space for a more secular meditation on the ideals of chivalry. Side by side with his private reflection on the person of the saint, he was a central figure in creating a

new medium of political propaganda with the help of print. The Triumphal Arch of the Emperor focused more on secular aspects of power, including a representation of the Order of Saint George (but not the saint himself). The new sense for

reality was manifested in the placing of a greater emphasis on a rational understanding of military, technological, and diplomatic mastery, instead of traditional celebrations of the miracles associated with the saint.

Notes

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1.

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I would like to thank Lado Mirianashvili for reading and translating the inscriptions.

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Sažetak

Ivan Gerát

Sv. Juraj između medija i funkcija

Lik sv. Jurja, jednoga od najpopularnijih kršćanskih svetaca svih vremena, prikazivan je u vizualnim medijima na mnogim mjestima i u mnogim povijesnim razdobljima. Njegov kult, duboko ukorijenjen u temeljnim vrijednostima mučeništva, nadmašio je i konfesionalne granice kršćanstva. Njegova borba sa zmajem, premda poslije uključena u legendu o tome svecu, može se tumačiti kao važan arhetip koji utjelovljuje neke osnovne aspekte ljudske psihe. U osnovi, značenja ovoga militantnog sveca i njegove borbe mogu se razvrstati u dvije skupine: 1. duhovna značenja – povezana s religijskim tradicijama, neoplatonskom mišlju ili čak individualnom psihologijom; 2. politička značenja – usmjerena na postizanje određenog učinka u stvarnim situacijama i borbama moći u društvenom svijetu i njegovim hijerarhijama. Ta su značenja našla odjek u propagandnim bitkama, povezanim s prošlim ili sadašnjim vojnim aktivnostima i ideologijama Svetog rata. Članak razmatra ta pitanja u kontekstu vizualne umjetnosti u kraćem razdoblju drugog desetljeća 16. stoljeća i na ponešto suženom geografskom području središnje Europe. Pokušaj je usporedbe nekoliko načina na koje su u svrhu političke ili vjerske propagande ti narativi bivali konstruirani i korišteni. Konstrukcija narativa bila je usko povezana s nepisanim pravilima sustava reprezentacije vezanog uz određeni medij.

Vizualna kultura ranoga novog vijeka koristila je nekoliko sustava reprezentacije. Tradicionalno predstavljanje vjer-

skih narativa i štovanih osoba, često povezanih s mističnim nadahnućem, postojalo je rame uz rame s novom vrstom reprezentacije usmjerene na vrijednosti empirijskog svijeta, utemeljenog na pomnom promatranju i trezvenom racionalnom promišljanju. Najveći umjetnički geniji tog razdoblja, ponajviše Albrecht Dürer na čiji se rad ukoliko osvrćemo u ovom članku, mogli su ostati povezani s tradicionalnom kulturom, prenositi i razmatrati njezine vrijednosti i njihov onodobni razvoj, ponudivši istovremeno važne kreativne poticaje za drugu sferu, koja se često smatra isključivo sekularnom.

Članak sagledava i neke od rezultata tih dijaloških procesa, bez razmatranja prethodnih metodoloških rasprava. Umjesto sagledavanja kompleksnih putova kojima se povijesnoumjetnička misao razvila u svoju bogatu sadašnju formu, pozornost je usmjerena prema nizu paradoksa povezanih s arhetipskim ‘imidžom’ sveca u medijskom prostoru novovjekovne srednje Europe. No nisu svi mediji o kojima se ovdje raspravlja ponudili slobodan prostor za takvo razmišljanje, neki od njih bili su pod nadzorom patrona i njihovih duhovnih savjetnika koji su željeli jamčiti pravilno funkcioniranje vizualnih prikaza u javnim ili polujavnim sferama.

Ključne riječi: sv. Juraj, vizualne umjetnosti, mediji, drugo desetljeće 16. stoljeća, Albrecht Dürer, srednja Europa

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