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HOMINES IMMORTALES: *FOUR PORTRAITS OF HISTORIC GIANTS*

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Abstract: *The paper analyses the socio-cultural dimension of the portraiture of significant historic personalities in the period of Late Antiquity, Middle Ages and Renaissance. In that regard, the choice has fallen on four distinctive individuals who have changed the path of social, political or religious development of Europe. The aim of the paper is to show how their psychological character and its social constitution have influenced the approach to their artistic representation by the painters, i.e. what was the impact of their historic roles on the painterly expression formatted as their portrayal.*

Key words: Emperor Justinian I, San Vitale in Ravenna, Despot Jovan Oliver, Lesnovo monastery, King Marko, King Henry VIII.

When one talks portraits, one usually means a recognizable image of a significant character, historical or contemporary, pictured with accentuated traits of their physical attractiveness, designed to emanate their undeniable visual individuality and permeated with delicate hints of their psychological virtues or peculiarities.¹ Yet, the portrait as a painterly category, is much more than that; it actually discloses not only the way in which the model intended to be visualized, but the manner in which the painter has seen and experienced the model, as well as the imagination born out of their meeting and interexchange of social convention and personal ideas. In that regard, when we observe some of the most popular portraits executed by some of the most talented painters, we do not have to put too much effort to grasp that tiny visual thread that remained as an unspoken relation between the portrayed and the portraitist: the warm sentiments of Leonardo picturing the young, inexperienced and adorable

¹ I. Winter, *What/When is a portrait?* Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia 2009, 153.

Cecilia Gallerani² with no accompanying details whatsoever to hinder her ultra feminine beauty before leaving the court of the Duce of Milan; the soft, tender and affectionate approach of Modigliani in an attempt to picture the soul of Jeanne Hebuterne³ through her deep, elusive and dramatically melancholic eyes; the enchanted Sandro Boticelli by the graciousness of his muse, the young, vibrant and gorgeous Simonetta Vespucci⁴ portrayed as a nymph; or, one of the most beautiful feminine portraits – the Weeping woman by Picasso⁵ representing an abandoned lover with a broken heart and only tears left for the last goodbye so everyone can see how much Dora Maar suffered after the breakup with her vain lover.

However, not all portraits are inspired by love and affection, hence not all of them are idealized; in other words, many of them are ideologically very often far from visually likable and/or aesthetically captivating. Yet, one's portrait can be intriguing in multifold connotations: alluring or distorted facial features depending on one's historic background, particular facial expression determined by one's historic role, extravagant costume and accessories resting on one's distinctive social position, highlighted stance or posture deriving from someone's individual character, etc.⁶ This, of course, refers to the portraiture of highly significant historic figures, high profile nobility, reputable individuals and politically influential characters whose role in the society was marked by general approval of their importance as creators of social structures, ecclesiastic constellations and/or cultural models beneficial for the entire community under their supremacy. In that regard, this paper will encompass four archetypal portraits of historic celebrities from the period 6th-16th century who have changed the path of historic and/or ecclesiastic progress of humanity: a Roman emperor who was an epitome of Late Antiquity, two medieval characters known for their courage, insolence and political compromises, as well as an omnipotent Renaissance man recognized for his ambition and ferocity.

➤ First portrait: *Giant of Christian Antiquity*

- Location of portrait: *the church of San Vitale in Ravenna*
- Date of portrait: Anno Domini 547

The first portrait belongs to a colossal character of the Christian Antiquity who managed to be wise, as well as courageous, decisive, as well as reconcilable, vain, as well as self-critical, mainstream devotee, as well as libertarian, but

² F. Zöllner, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* (Anniversary ed.). Cologne, 2019, 226.

³ J. Lassigne, *Une Rétrospective Modigliani*, Panorama des arts, Paris 1946, 11.

⁴ S. Malaguzzi, *Botticelli*, Florence, 2004, 73.

⁵ J. Freeman, *Picasso and the Weeping Women: The Years of Marie-Thérèse Walter & Dora Maar*, Los Angeles 1994, 61.

⁶ See: P.Guyer, *Portraits, Persons, Poses*, in: *Portraits and Philosophy* (H. Maes ed.), Routledge 2020.

most of all proud and appreciative of the vast and opulent Empire he has adroitly governed for almost four decades and the Christian landscape of edifices and art works he has fervently maintain to commission.⁷ More than skilful in diplomatic enterprises, well educated and receptive to socio-cultural changes, politically stubborn, yet objective in moments of historic turbulences, Emperor Justinian I is the most self-authorized celebrity of Christian Antiquity and the One who has largely enabled the continuous flow of this progressive, productive and prolific period.⁸ Although remarkably talented and highly successful in foreign affairs and state reforms which enabled the continuous growth of the Empire both territorially and economically, Justinian was somewhat helpless in his efforts to cope with alternative religious ideas, particularly with those of the Monophysites. Nevertheless, he succeeded to manage good relationship with the Papal throne in Rome and in order to keep religious climate under control, he built up a new archbishopric in the heart of the Balkans, known to us as Iustiniana Prima.⁹ His portrait in the presbytery of San Vitale in Ravenna (Fig. 1) has been discussed and debated much more than all the other portraits of Early Christian characters combined;¹⁰ yet, no one has disclosed its design and iconography in an academically satisfying manner. As a

⁷ P. Ure, *Justinian and his Age*, Harmondsworth 1951; J. W. Barker, *Justinian and the Later Roman Empire*. Madison 1966; J. Moorhead, *Justinian*. London 1994; M. Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians. Kontingenz Erfahrung und Kontingenzbewältigung im 6. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2003; Idem, *Justinian. Herrschaft, Reich, und Religion*, Munich 2004; J. A. Evans, *The Emperor Justinian and the Byzantine Empire*, Westport 2005; P. Sarris, *Economy and society in the age of Justinian*, Cambridge 2006.

⁸ The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian (M. Maas, ed), Cambridge 2005, particularly: M. Maas, *Roman Questions, Byzantine Answers, Contours of the age of Justinian*, 3-27; J. F. Haldon, *Economy and Administration. How did the Empire work*, 28-59; L. Brubaker, *The Age of Justinian, Gender and Society*, 427-447.

⁹ В. Петковић, М. Јевтић, *Јустинијана Прима*, Преглед црквене епархије Нишке XVII, 11-12, Ниш 1936, 391-396; А. Grabar, *Les monuments de Tsaritchin Grad et Iustiniana Prima*, Cahiers Archéologiques III, Paris 1948, 49-63; Ђ. Мано-Зиси, *Iustiniana Prima, Царичин Град, Лебане, античка архитектура*, Археолошки преглед 6, Београд 1964, 72-73; Б. Баван и В. Иванишевић, *Iustiniana Prima – Царичин Град*, Лесковац 2006, 17-46. А. J. Evans, *Antiquarian Researches in Illyricum Part IV, Scupi, Scopia and the Birthplace of Justinian*, Archaeology, Vol 49/ 1, London 1885, 235-248; Т. Томоски, *Таорско градиште, Taurisium – Bederiana – Iustiniana Prima*, Жива Антика XVII, Скопје 1967, 233-235; И. Микулчиќ, *Ушће еднаш за Таурисион и Бедериана*, Годишен зборник на Филозофскиот факултет 3/29, Скопје 1977, 94-106; А. Шукарова, *Јустинијана Прима*, Скопје 1994, 93-116; К. Ристов, *Градиште Таор, прелиминарен извештај од истражувањата во 2000-2004 година*, Macedonia Acta Archaeologica 17, Скопје 2006, 215-230. М. Милинковић, *О употреби научно истражувања локалитетата Злаќа – Кале, Niš & Byzantium Symposium, The Collection of scientific works V*, Niš 2007, 191-202; Е. Dimitrova, О. Zorova, *The Paralel Universes of Macedonian Cultural Multiverse, Niš & Byzantium Symposium, The Collection of scientific works XVII*, Niš 2019, 368-372.

¹⁰ А. Grabar, *L'age d'or de Justinien*, Paris 1966, 157; F. W. Deichmann, *Ravenna. Hauptstat der spätantiken Abenlandes I, Geschichte und Monumente*, Wiesbaden 1969, 226; E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making. Main lines of stylistic development in Mediterranean art 3rd – 7th Century*, London 1977, 81-87; J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, New Haven and

part of a mosaic *diptique* with representation of Empress Theodora (Fig. 2) on the other panel situated across the presbytery (Fig. 3), Justinian is depicted with his closest entourage in a ceremonially festal portrait.

In our opinion, the investigation of the iconographic constellation of the scene should be based on three accounts confirmed by historic sources: first of all, Justinian has never visited Ravenna in the course of his reign; second of all – he was the main supporter of bishop Maximianus in his ambition to ascend to the archbishopric throne and third of all, considerable treasury of valuable assets was sent from Constantinople to Ravenna on the occasion of the consecration of San Vitale, courtesy of the imperial couple.¹¹ If one looks at the panel with Justinian's portrait, one will notice that he is holding a golden bowl in a shape of a paten, while Maximianus is holding a golden cross ornamented with precious stones. Slightly behind him, the two deacons are also holding luxuriously produced church items - an opulently ornamented gospel book and a silver censer. Accompanied by their closest associates as representatives of the state and the ecclesiastic institution, the emperor and the archbishop create an impression as if they are participating in an officiating service.¹² Of course, there is no such possibility since the bowl is empty, while the center of the scene is occupied by the ruler instead of the church dignitary. Furthermore, one cannot forget that in the course of the first half of the 6th century, the bishop did not participate in the Great Entrance, thus the Eucharistic offerings were carried by the deacons, while the entrance of the Emperor in the sacral space of the altar was preceded by the gesture of taking the imperial crown off.¹³

On the other panel Theodora is holding a golden chalice, also empty, surrounded by her ladies in waiting, a nobleman and a servant who is opening the way for the empress to go in direction towards the panel with the image of her husband. It seems that many centuries prior to the brilliantly incorporated detail in Velasquez' painting of *Las Meninas*,¹⁴ where the servant opens the way for the little princes Margareta to join her parents, somebody invented a manner to depict an episode of motion and represent an act that is about to take place in the next moment. Not forgetting the motif of the golden embroidery on Theodora's dress which shows the three kings bringing presents to the new

London 1993, 113-116; R. Cormack, *Byzantine Art*, Oxford, 2000, 60-61; J. Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, London 2003, 133; G. Bovini, *Ravenna. Art and History*, Ravenna, 2008, 26; E. Dimitrova, *Byzantium at Display: Six Mosaic Images from the Age of Justinian I*, *Folia Archaeologica Balkanica II*, Skopje 2012, 425-428.

¹¹ J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, 116; J. Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, 134.

¹² Л. Мирковић, *Мозаици у цркви San Vitale у Равени*, Иконографске студије, Нови Сад 1974, 154-156

¹³ T. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, Univer-

¹⁴ See: J. Brown, *On the Meaning of Las Meninas*, in: *Images and Ideas in Seventeenth-Century Spanish Painting*, Princeton, 1978, Fig. 23; D. Arasse, *The Eye of the Master: Las Meninas, Velázquez*, in: *Take a Closer Look*, Princeton and Oxford 2013.

born Jesus,¹⁵ one can only conclude that the two panels represent the imaginative *presence* of the imperial couple at the consecration of the church through the luxurious gifts they have donated to the archbishop. Furthermore, the inclusion of the entourage of powerful individuals, one of which is thought to be the general Belisarius,¹⁶ should reflect the full support of the state and the imperial court to the Ravenna's archbishopric seat and its politically calculative and ecclesiastically rigid head Maximianus.

➤ Second portrait: *Giant of feudal nobility*

- Location of portrait: *the church of Saint Archangel Michael in the village of Lesново*
- Date of portrait: Anno Domini 1343

The second portrait belongs to a mid-14th century feudal lord, politician, financial mogul and diplomat with a successful career of a respected nobleman, as well as a highly elusive origin – sebastocrator Jovan Oliver, commissioner of the Lesново monastery.¹⁷ Remarkable as an athletically built up male, easily over six feet tall, long haired and trimmed, gorgeously handsome and almost exotically attractive, Jovan Oliver is probably the owner of the most charismatic portrait in Medieval Balkans (Fig. 4). He has no entourage or companions, except for the inscription that enumerates all feudal titles and/or noble ranks he has acquired, even the one which he received several years after the portrait has been finished, which means – in advance.¹⁸ Such an ambition and

¹⁵ J. Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, 133.

¹⁶ Л. Мирковић, *Мозаици у цркви San Vitale у Равени*, 159; М. Mass, *Las guerras de Justiniano en Occidente y la idea de restauración*, *Desperta Ferro* 18, Madrid 2013, 6-10.

¹⁷ N. L. Okunev, *Lesново, L'art byzantine chez le Slaves*, Les Balkans, Paris 1930, 226-235; С. Радојчић, *Сѣпаро срѣско сликарсѣво*, Београд 1966, 143-148; В. Ј. Ђурић, *Истѣоријске комозиције у срѣском сликарсѣву средњеѣ века и нѣхове књѣжевне ѣпаралеле*, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 11, Београд 1968, 108-109; С. Радојчић, *Лесново*, Београд 1971; В. Ј. Ђурић, *Визанѣијске фреске у Јуѣославији*, Београд 1974, 64; С. Габелић, *Нови ѣодаѣак о севасѣокраѣорској ѣиѣѣули Јована Оливера и време сликања лесновскоѣ наоса*, *Зограф* 11, Београд 1980, 54-62; И. М. Ђорђевић, *Зидно сликарсѣво срѣске власѣеле у доба Неманића*, Београд 1994, 153-154; С. Габелић, *Манасѣир Лесново. Истѣорија и сликарсѣво*, Београд 1998, 112-118; Б. Тодић, *Наѣѣѣис уз Јована Оливера у наосу Леснова*, *Прилоѣ хронолоѣији лесновских фресака*, *Зборник радова Византолошког института* 38, Београд 199/2000, 379-381; E. Dimitrova, *The Portal to Heaven, Reaching the Gates of Immortality*, Niš and Byzantium Symposium. Collection of scientific works V, Niš 2007, 373-374; S. Korunovski, E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia L' arte medieval dal IX al XV secolo*, Milano 2006, 195; E. Димитрова, С. Коруновски, С. Грандаковска, *Средновековна Македонија. Кулѣѣура и ѣмеѣносѣ*, in: П. Кузман, Е. Димитрова, Ј. Донеv (Ed.), *Македонија, Милениумски кулѣурно-историски факти*, Скопје 2013, 1733-1735; E. Dimitrova, *V. I. Personalities in Medieval Macedonia, Five Paradigms of Supreme Commissionerships (11th - 14th century)*, *Folia Archaeologica Balcanica* III, Skopje 2015, 615-617; E. Dimitrova, O. Zorova, *Imago Historica: Thy Name is Beauty - Feminine and Masculine*, Niš and Byzantium Symposium. The Collection of scientific works XX, Niš 2022, 419-420.

¹⁸ И. М. Ђорђевић, *Зидно сликарсѣво срѣске власѣеле у доба Неманића*, 154; С. Габелић, *Манасѣир Лесново. Истѣорија и сликарсѣво*, 112; Б. Тодић, *Наѣѣѣис уз Јована Оливера у наосу Леснова. Прилоѣ хронолоѣији лесновских фресака*, 379-381.

vanity could be, by all means, ascribed to his outstanding diplomatic skills, at times – highly controversial, his financial potential and his substantial relation with the Serbian King, whose political commissions were very often turned in Oliver's own favor.¹⁹ The wreath that Jovan wears as a head band clearly points to his noble status of a sebastocrator, the highest possible title given in the Serbian state at that time.²⁰ Yet, his costume does not correspond to the design of sebastocrator's outfit and is much more complicated than any costume worn by medieval nobility in the Balkans.²¹

His luxurious ensemble of stylish garments consists of linen shirt decorated with circlets printed in two different shades of the colors red and blue with floral ornamental motifs inside them, sleeves buttoned with a row of twelve white pearls each and gold-like wristbands embellished with circular adornments. Above the shirt, he wears a short-sleeved dual part royal-blue garment - *cavadion* made of firm, yet soft material, decorated with vertical stripes embroidered with pearls, a waist band and arm ribbons of the same design, while the belt and the silky handkerchief as accessories, as well as the *diadem* as a head ornament - are the finishing touches to the impeccable outlook of the breathtaking trendsetter. Yet, the most innovative component of his avant-garde costume is the heart-shaped breast plate made of crimson red broadcloth, stitched on the front side of the attire covered with genuine pearls and golden medallions encircling the motif of an eagle.²² Uniting the most luxurious textiles, oriental influences in the design of its outlook, pearly embroidery, as well as associative elements that resemble a heart-shaped vest as a militant detail to the tailor made garment, the costume of Jovan Oliver itself tells a story of an individual who sees himself as a unique representative of the highest class of nobility.

However, something else is there which gives this portrait an extraordinary significance as a picture of a powerful, dominant, potent and authoritative character. Namely, on the western façade of the architectural replica, sideways of the entrance, there is certain decoration which is nonexistent on the actual façade of the temple.²³ Still, the long fingered right hand of Jovan Oliver elegant-

¹⁹ E. Dimitrova, *The Portal to Heaven, Reaching the Gates of Immortality*, 373-374; Eadem, *V. I. Personalities in Medieval Macedonia, Five Paradigms of Supreme Commissionerships (11th – 14th century)*, 613-617.

²⁰ И. М. Ђорђевић, *Зидно сликарство српске власице у доба Немањића*, 154; С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново. Историја и сликарство*, 115.

²¹ И. М. Ђорђевић, *Зидно сликарство српске власице у доба Немањића*, 154; С. Габелић, *Манастир Лесново. Историја и сликарство*, 115; Т. Вулета, *Лесновске облак крајне*, *Patrimonium Mk 12*, Скопје 2014, 173; Eadem, *Лесновски кавадион Јована Оливера*, *Patrimonium Mk 13*, Скопје 2015, 192-193; E. Dimitrova, O. Zorova, *Haute Couture of Macedonia Byzantina: Fashion, Jewelry, Accessories, The Collection of scientific works XVI*, Niš 2018, 258-259.

²² E. Dimitrova, O. Zorova, *Haute Couture of Macedonia Byzantina: Fashion, Jewelry, Accessories*, 259.

²³ E. Dimitrova, *"The da Vinci Mode". Unsolved Mysteries of Macedonian Medieval Fresco Painters*, Niš and Byzantium Symposium. *The Collection of scientific works VIII*, Niš 2010,

ly points to it, while positioned in the very center of the portrait representation (Fig. 5). If one looks closely at that decoration, one will notice that it comprises elements shaped in a form of graphic ornaments which display: a sword, a helmet and a shield,²⁴ Esoteric enough to warn those who could have recognized them, that Jovan Oliver is not only in close relationship with the Serbian court, but with much more powerful military and political forces, as well.²⁵ Probably, that is the reason why the Serbian king is “out of the picture” and the list of feudal titles written next to Oliver’s right shoulder contains even the one that has not been assigned yet. Confident in his position of a trusty diplomat and experienced mediator between the Serbian king and the Byzantine emperor amidst the furious social war in the Empire, Jovan Oliver has proven that he is not just a pretty face. He handles with care and great mastery both rulers in a political situation dangerous for everybody, yet manages to manipulate them to a great extent despite their intelligence and proficiency, while working for his own social benefit and political profit.²⁶ One can say that *the suit does not make a man*, but in this case, the suit that is at the same time a luxurious outfit and a symbolic armor, makes the powerful Jovan Oliver even more powerful than a naked eye can see.

➤ Third portrait: *Giant of historic tragedy*

- Location of portraits: *the church of Saint Archangel Michael in Prilep & the church of Saint Demetrius at Sušica*
- Dates of portraits: Annis Domini 1372 & 1390

When tragedy strikes, no one wants to be portrayed since that picture will show all the weaknesses of the individual whose portrait is to be produced. Still, there is a character who has found strength and courage, wisdom and energy, to make the most dramatic moments bearable and livable. Maybe the sculpted portrait of Ivan Meštrović is too ferocious for the delicate medieval taste of creating an image of a King, but not too pretentious to depict an individual passionate and fearless, decisive and zestful, vibrant and vigorous (Fig. 6). Actually, King Marko, or as the literature and epic poetry knows him as the *young king Marko*, lived in the most dramatic times of Balkans’ history. Not trying to portray him as a victim of historic turbulences caused by the ruthless Orientals, one should say that he was the One who bore the heaviest cross (pun intended) struggling to maintain a surviving position vis-à-vis the Ottomans, as

256 ; Eadem, V. I. *Peronalities in Medieval Macedonia, Five Paradigms of Supreme Commissionerships (11th – 14th century)*, 617.

²⁴ E. Dimitrova, “The da Vinci Mode”. *Unsolved Mysteries of Macedonian Medieval Fresco Painters*, 256; Eadem, V. I. *Peronalities in Medieval Macedonia, Five Paradigms of Supreme Commissionerships (11th – 14th century)*, 617.

²⁵ E. Dimitrova, V. I. *Peronalities in Medieval Macedonia, Five Paradigms of Supreme Commissionerships (11th – 14th century)*, 617.

²⁶ E. Димитрова, С. Коруновски, С. Грандаковска, *Средновековна Македонија. Култура и уметности*, 1735.

well as the Serbian nobility in a time difficult for physical endurance, let alone political administration. Yet, he became such a popular figure in Balkans' history owing to his skilful political *joggling* with the enemy, which brought some composure to the already horrendous situation after the savage Ottoman attacks. In that regard, Meštrović's portrait, although augmented in the manner of aesthetic approach to Marko's physiognomy, indisputably discloses his heroic character much more than his facial features or his masculine traits and potential.

Two portraits of King Marko have been preserved in the fresco ensembles of medieval Macedonia, created at two equally dramatic, yet socially different historic momentums. The earlier one, executed sideways of the entrance to the church dedicated to Archangel Michael in Prilep²⁷ shows King Marko in his full articulated masculinity (Fig. 7), dressed in a snowy white sakkos, with a lavishly decorated crown resembling the form of a *corona muralis* (8).²⁸ This portrait is quite ambivalent since the white garment expresses the mourning of Marko for his dead father, King Vukašin, slaughtered at the Marica river by the Ottoman army; on the other hand, not being properly crowned at these times of unpreparedness to cope with the ruthless and bloodthirsty Ottomans and their ravaging penetration into Macedonian territory, it seems that Marko ordained himself as a ruler of this region in order to handle the alarming situation, without any recognition from the feudal lords of the Serbian state. In fact, the open crown (contrary to the kamelaukion worn by the Serbian monarchs) is a visual symbol of Marko's self-proclamation in a historic moment when there is no one else to take care and defend Macedonian territory.

Entirely different political message radiates from King Marko's portrait executed on the southern façade of Saint Demetrius church in Sušica²⁹ (Fig. 9)

²⁷ С. Радочић, *Порџреџи срџских владара у средњем веку*, Скопље 1934, 60-64; Р. Miljković-Peppek, *Contribution aux recherches sur l'èvolution de la peinture en Macèdoine au XIIIe siècle*, L'art byzantin du XIIIe siècle, Beograd 1967, 191-192; Idem, *Живојисој и џрилејскиџе зоџрафи*, Прилеп и прилепско низ историјата, Прилеп 1971, 101; В. Ј. Ѓурић, *Визанџијске фреске у Јуџославију*, 80; R. Hamann-Mac Lean, *Grundlegung zu einer Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Monumentalmalerei in Serbien und Makedonien*, Giesen, 1976, 283-285; Ѓ. Здравев, *Облекиџе на кралојџ Волкашин и на кралојџ Марко на фрескоживојисој од XIV век*, 322-323; Кралот Марко во историјата и во традицијата, Прилеп 1997, 322-323; З. Расолкоска-Николовска, *Кџиџиџорскиџи џорџрејџ во сигнојџо сликарсџиво во Македонија*, in: *Средновековната уметност во Македонија* (Д. Николовски, ed.), Скопје, 2004, 297-298; S. Kocunovski, E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia L' arte medieval dal IX al XV secolo*, 144-146; E. Dimitrova, O. Zorova, *Imago Historica: Thy Name is Beauty – Feminine and Masculine*, 426-429.

²⁸ E. Dimitrova, O. Zorova, *Imago Historica: Thy Name is Beauty – Feminine and Masculine*, 431.

²⁹ К. Балабанов, *Новоџџкривени џорџрејџи краља Марка и краља Вукашина у Марковом манасџиру*, Зограф 1, Beograd 1966, 28-29; Idem, *Новоџџкривени џорџрејџи на кралојџ Марко и кралојџ Волкашин во Марковиџи манасџир*, Културно наследство III, Скопје 1967, 47-65; В. Ј. Ѓурић, *Визанџијске фреске у Јуџославију*, 80; Z. Gavrilović, *The Portrait of King Marko at Markov Manastir(1376-1381)*, Byzantinische Forschungen XVI, Amsterdam 1991, 415-428; Ц. Грозданов, *Маричкајџа биџика, вазалиџејџиџи на Крал Марко (Марко Крале) и*

where he is dressed in the official costume of Serbian rulers and wears a kame-laukion crown as if he has been officially crowned as a successor of his dead father, which, of course, has never happened. Yet, in his right hand Marko holds the horn of Old Testament kings used at the ritual of their anointment, as a painterly component inspired by the verses of the 88th Psalm³⁰ (Fig. 10). Referring to the idea of Marko's privileges as the sole Christian ruler on the territory penetrated by the Turks after the death of all his political rivals at the battle of Kosovo Polje, the metal plated horn represents the emblem of Marko's sovereignty, as well as his God protected governmental throne. Although never officially crowned as a monarch, Marko managed to make his ruling prerogatives quite sustainable by becoming a vassal to the Ottomans, thus keeping control over the entire Macedonian territory for almost a quarter of a century,³¹ a period in which the Christian culture continued to flourish and Christian church maintained to keep all its duties and commissions. The fact that the khetorial ensemble executed on the south façade of Marko's monastery also includes the figure of his father, late King Vukašin (Fig. 11), speaks in favor of the notion that despite being unrecognized by the Serbian nobility, he is far from a ruthless tree; he is the oldest son of a former king which gives him the right to claim succession to the throne. That throne was thorny, not comfortable and beneficial, but it saved the territory and the people from Ottoman attacks and violence for a period of 25 years until the death of King Marko – the heroic, fearless and greathearted historic figure from the end of medieval times.

➤ Fourth portrait: ***Giant of Renaissance culture***

- *Location of portrait: National gallery of ancient art in Rome*
- *Date of portrait: Anno Domini 1540*

If one should ask himself whether a gentleman and a humanist can turn into a tyrant and a monster in the course of turbulent historic and personal circumstances, one should say only one name – King Henry VIII, ruler of England,

живојисој на Марковиој манасџир, Семинар за македонски јазик, литература и култура (Охрид 1991), Скопје 1992, 120; И. М. Ђорђевић, *Представа краља Марка на јужној фасади цркве Свџгој Димџирија у Марковом манасџиру*, Кралот Марко во историјата и во традицијата, Прилеп 1997, 299-307; З. Расолкоска-Николовска, *Кџиџорскиој џорџреј во сигнојо сликарсџво во Македонија*, 297-298, 297-298; I. Sinkevic, *Representing without icon, presence and image of king Marko in the church of St. Demetrios near Susica*, Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Volume III, Abstracts of Communications, London 2006, 317-318; E. Dimitrova, *The Portal to Heaven, Reaching the Gates of Immortality*, 379; Eadem, V.I. *Personalities in Medieval Macedonia, Five Paradigms of Supreme Commissionerships (11th - 14th century)*, 607-609; E. Dimitrova, O. Zorova, *Imago Historica: Thy Name is Beauty - Feminine and Masculine*, 429-431.

³⁰ В. Ј. Ђурић, *Визанџијске фреске у Јуџославији*, 80.

³¹ Ц. Грозданов, *Маричкаџа биџка, вазалиџеџој на Крал Марко (Марко Крале) и живојисој на Марковиој манасџир*, 2021.

Ireland and France.³² King at 16 (Fig. 12), tennis champion at 25 (Fig. 13), challenger and opponent of the Pope in religious matters at 36 (Fig. 14), Henry is probably the most controversial political character of Western European history. His personal portrait artist, Hans Holbein³³ did not have an easy life at the Tudors' court since the vain King wanted to look handsome, powerful, menacing and seductive at the same time, thus the painter had to put a colossal effort to satisfy Henry's desire for irresistibly enticing images. In that regard, the most famous picture of the monarch which portrays him as a brutal, cold blooded and merciless autocrat concurs with the time of his both physical and physiological demise (Fig. 15). Although Tudor dynasty historians would refer in this respect to his jousting accident and transient loss of occipital to his brain,³⁴ his distorted facial features, as well as inflated corporal structure point to a complete visual change from a monumental and attractive to an obese, plumped and deformed masculine figure.

Regardless of Henry's unpredictable choleric temperament and extremely unpleasant character, his court was always an oasis of cultural delight: talented musicians, romantic poets, famous playwrights, actors, dancers, skillful acrobats, reputable philosophers, linguists and orators were highly welcomed guests in his palace where literary, visual and performing arts have become everyday spectacles in the days of his conservative Catholic high chancellor Tomas More,³⁵ as well as during the time when his chief minister was the Reformer Tomas Cromwell.³⁶ In other words, regardless of his changeable and highly opportune religious standpoints, King Henry VIII was always generous towards the creation of any kind and any scope. Although Hans Holbein was his most beloved artist among hundreds of executives that made the monarch happy fulfilling his constant desires for cultural product, unfortunately, the most memorable character in history, is the young musician Mark Smeaton due to his dramatic arrest, torture and beheading.³⁷ French fashion (both male and female), Spanish jewelry, Italian handcrafts, oriental textiles and international cuisine, foreign instructors for ballet lectures, Latin speaking tutors and highly educated staff at all levels of service were some of the features of the kaleido-

³² J. Bowle, *Henry VIII: a Study of Power in Action*, Boston (1964); J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, New Haven 1997; T. Betteridge, T. S. Freeman (Ed.), *Henry VIII and History*, London 2012.

³³ P. Ganz, *Henry VIII and his court painter, Hans Holbein*, *The Burlington magazine* 63, Washington D. C., 1933, 144-155.

³⁴ H. Ashrafian, *Henry VIII's Obesity Following Traumatic Brain Injury*, *Endocrine*. 42 (1), Oxford 2011, 218-9

³⁵ See: R. Marius, *Thomas More; A Biography*, New York 1984; Idem, *Thomas More: a biography*. Boston 1999; W. Roper, *The Life of Thomas More*, Oxford 2007.

³⁶ G. R. Elton, *Thomas Cromwell's Decline and Fall*, *Cambridge Historical Journal*. 10/2, Cambridge 1951, 150-185; S. Brigden, *Popular Disturbance and the Fall of Thomas Cromwell and the Reformers, 1539-1540*, *Historical Journal*. 24/2, Cambridge 1981. 257-278; R. Hutchinson, *Thomas Cromwell: The Rise and Fall of Henry VIII's Most Notorious Minister*, London 2008.

³⁷ A. Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, London 2008, 314.

scopic cultural panorama that has been the Tudors' court in the time of Henry VIII. Creative and imaginative himself in the spheres of music, dancing, poetry and literature, the King made his court welcomed by everybody who has been gifted to produce culture for his personal entertaining or for the lavishly organized banquets and abundant parties he was throwing for the high class nobility and his intimate protégées. A powerful monarch, head of the Church (prone to reformation, yet fan of religious ceremonies), athlete and womanizer, Henry is a catalogue example of a Renaissance gentleman, at least until in the course of the first half of his reign over England.

Although augmented in the approach to depict his masculine dominance, while his facial features are already disclosing his poor health and agonizing mindset, the most popular portrait of Henry VIII is mastership by Holbein since it speaks through the sound of a visual complot. Henry's corporal grandeur, his always fashionable, expensive and tailor made costume, the pose of a dominant male character and the glamorous jewelry and regalia are what make this portrait so impressive and formidable; yet, his pale complexion, swollen face, bulging forehead and squinty eyes say otherwise: *I have to look as I use to as much as I can*. In that regard, master Holbein did what he could – he has hidden the obese figure of the monarch under the too luxuriously combined costume made of silk, velvet, chiffon and fur which had an additional element in a form of a decorative belt to make Henry's enormous stomach look less noticeable. However, in his last years, Henry was only a pale shadow of the man that once charmed everybody at the Tudor's court: talented musician and inspiring poet, philosopher and linguist, seducer of ladies and favorite of foreign ambassadors.³⁸ His last portraits produced by master Holbein (Fig. 15) show fashionable, yet disfigured middle aged giant 6 feet 3 inches tall in his shameful decline as an individual and a male. In those times, nobody remembered the young and remarkably handsome Harry, except only for Holbein himself, who, true to his painterly vocation, could not beautify the old King no matter how hard he tried to accentuate Henry's luxurious taste for presentable clothing and accessories. Feared by everybody probably not so much due to his unlimited power as a monarch, but to his paranoiac mindset that caused so many futile death sentences, unjustified and reasonless,³⁹ Henry VIII is still the most popular character of British history, its narratives and royalty.

³⁸ S. Gunn, *Tournaments and Early Tudor Chivalry*, History Today. 41/6, London 1991, 543–560; T. Betteridge, (2005). *The Henrician Reformation and Mid-Tudor Culture*. Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies. 35/1, Durham 2005, 91–109; R. Hutchinson, *Young Henry: The Rise of Henry VIII*, New York 2012.

³⁹ D. Loades, *Henry VIII: Court, Church and Conflict*, Richmond, 2009.



Fig. 1. Ravenna, San Vitale, Emperor Justinian with his entourage



Fig. 2. Ravenna, San Vitale, Empress Theodora with her entourage



Fig. 3. Ravenna, San Vitale, Presbytery



Fig. 4. Lesnovo, Saint Archangel Michael, Sebastocrator Jovan Oliver



Fig. 5. Lesnovo, Saint Archangel Michael, Sebastocrator Jovan Oliver



Fig. 6. Ivan Meštrović, Portrait of King Marko



Fig. 7. Prilep, Saint Archangel Michael, King Marko



Fig. 8. Prilep, Saint Archangel Michael, King Marko



Fig. 9. Sušica, Saint Demetrius (Marko's monastery), King Marko



Fig. 10. Sušica, Saint Demetrius (Marko's monastery), King Marko



Fig. 11. Sušica, Saint Demetrius (Marko's monastery), King Marko and Vukašin