

A Heraldic Note About the Portrait of Ladislaus, Count of Haag, by Hans Mielich

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AMONG THE PAINTINGS in the collections of the princes of Liechtenstein, the earliest traceable—in the inventory of 1613—is the portrait of Ladislaus von Fraunberg, count of Haag, by Hans Mielich of Munich, court painter to the duke of Bavaria, Albrecht V (Figure 1). The painting is signed by the artist, and is dated 1557.¹ It shows the count in fashionable Spanish-style court dress, standing in front of an open window that permits a view of a wintry landscape with Castle Haag in the distance.² In the window's upper half is a stained-glass panel with the full armorial achievement of the count: gules, an argent horse, bridled sable, rearing to the sinister, and as its crest, a woman's torso, clad in a gown azure, semé with fleurs-de-lys or, holding up a pointed hat ermine, topped by a plume of peacock feathers. The mantlings are in the colors of the shield, red and white.³ The fleurs-de-lys on the woman's gown are an augmentation of honor granted to Count Ladislaus by Francis I, king of France, when he had distinguished himself in French service. The figure of the woman itself—*Frau* in German—is a canting device, as a wordplay on Ladislaus's family name, von Fraunberg; this is one of the rare cases of a canting crest (instead of a shield charge). Surrounding this heraldic achievement is an architectural frame, enlivened with figural representations of the four cardinal virtues.⁴

The room the count is standing in repeats in its red-and-white floor tiles and white walls with red wainscoting the livery colors of his arms, and it is filled with objects selected with great iconographical care to project complex messages referring to the precarious political situation in which Ladislaus found himself at the time the portrait was painted.

The county of Haag was a tiny, independent enclave within the duchy of Bavaria; it was barely one

hundred and twenty square miles in size, and located only thirty miles due east of Bavaria's capital, Munich. From 1245 on—after the earlier lords of Haag, of the Gurren family, had become extinct—it was in the possession of the Fraunbergs. The prancing white horse in the count's coat of arms is a somewhat unflattering canting device for the name of the original owners; *Gurre* is a dialect word for a mare of poor quality.⁵

For centuries the dukes of Bavaria had tried to eliminate the various independent territories within their reach. When Albrecht V succeeded to the dukedom in 1550, he focused his attention on Haag,

1. G. C. Bauman in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Liechtenstein: The Princely Collections*, exh. cat. (New York, 1985) pp. 241–243, no. 253, col. ill. The signature reads: ANNO DN.M.D.LVII.HANN S MIELICH A MONAC.FECIT.

2. Castle Haag was demolished in 1804; only its main tower (the “Bergfried”), the chapel, and a gatehouse are left standing. *Die Kunstdenkmale des Regierungsbezirks Oberbayern*, ed. G. von Bezold, B. Riehl, and G. Hager, 3 vols. (Munich, 1902) I, pt. 2, pp. 1960–1971.

3. The family arms of Fraunberg are: gules, a pale argent. Usually they are found quartered with those of Haag; here they are omitted, probably to emphasize the ownership of the county of Haag. Their original crest was a pointed hat, upturned, ermine, topped by a plume of peacock feathers.

4. Flanking the Haag arms are the standing figures of Fortitudo with a column as her attribute, and Prudentia holding a snake; reclining on the lintel are Temperantia with compass and goblet, and Iustitia with her balances.

5. The horse in the shield is leaping to the sinister, as opposed to the normal heraldic practice of showing animals as facing to the dexter. In German heraldry the arms of a married couple would be represented by two shields side by side, with the figures of the husband's shield reversed, facing to the sinister for “courtoisie.” Interestingly, however, the armorial shield carved on the facade of the main tower of Castle Haag (illustrated in *Kunstdenkmale Oberbayern*, see note 2) shows the horse leaping to the sinister, too. Possibly this “wrong” position was an attempt to identify the horse graphically as a wretched “Gurre.”



1. Hans Mielich (1516–73),
Ladislaus von Fraunberg,
Count of Haag, German
 (Munich), 1557. Vaduz,
 Collections of the Reigning
 Prince of Liechtenstein,
 inv. no. 1065 (photo:
 Walter Wachter)

which he wanted to get into his power by all means fair or foul. Count Ladislaus was in an especially vulnerable position. After the death of his younger brother, Leonhard, in September 1541, he was the last of his line. Though he had married Marie Salome, a daughter of the margrave of Baden, in early 1541, all the children of this marriage died in infancy. To complicate matters even more, Marie Salome was a Protestant, and quarrels that arose between Count Ladislaus and a monastery within his domain were blamed on her subversive influence, and taken as a welcome pretext for interference by the staunchly Catholic Duke Albrecht—then still co-ruler with his father, Duke Wilhelm—righteously posing as defender of the Old Faith.

After Marie Salome's death in 1549, Duke Albrecht increased his pressure on Ladislaus, which led to an actual blockade of the county of Haag in 1552 and in 1555 to a secret treaty between Duke Albrecht and Emperor Charles V. Taking advantage of rumors about Ladislaus's Protestant leanings, Duke Albrecht obtained the emperor's assurance that after Ladislaus's death the county would cease to be an independent territory of the empire, and would be handed over to Albrecht and his heirs in order to ensure the preservation of the Catholic faith.

In the meantime Count Ladislaus tried desperately to prevent the extinction of his house. Using old acquaintance with the duke of Ferrara, Ercole II d'Este, he married a niece of the duke's, Emilia Roverella de Pio di Carpi, in 1555. The duke showed Ladislaus great favor, offering him not only the county of Scandiano, a lordship in his domain, but also the well-salaried position of captain-general of the ducal forces, with the right to the arms of the house of Este as an augmentation to his own.⁶ Unfortunately, Ladislaus's mother-in-law insisted on adding extortionate demands to the already signed marriage contract, in order to keep Emilia's dowry as well as Ladislaus's marriage gifts.⁷ Exasperated, Ladislaus even agreed to take Emilia "only in her shift" without any dowry and to pay 10,000 crowns to her family, deposited with the banking house of Fugger. If Ladislaus should die before Emilia, this sum would be paid to her within four years; if there were any children, however, she would get only five percent interest on it as an annuity for life. If she should die before Ladislaus, the entire amount would be returned to him.

After the signing of this new contract, Emilia's mother had her daughter spirited away into a convent. When Ladislaus asked the duke for his help and arbitration, Emilia's mother managed to get another 15,000 crowns. In order to do everything possible to ensure that her daughter would become a widow before Ladislaus had a reasonable chance to sire any children, she arranged for two assassination attempts on his life.

Understandably disappointed, Ladislaus returned home and tried to have this unworkable marriage dissolved. However, the Pio family held on to their contract, and a papal dispensation could not be obtained. Minor nuisances, such as unsuccessful assassination attempts, were not counted as valid reasons for a divorce by the standards of sixteenth-century Italy. As a last resort Count Ladislaus even converted to Protestantism in 1556, in order to get his divorce from Protestant theologians, but this also turned out to be an exercise in frustration.

In the meantime his old archenemy, Duke Albrecht, had been biding his time. When Ladislaus's widowed sister, Maximiliane von Ortenburg, planned to remarry, her brother-in-law, as the guardian of her five children, laid claim to her dowry and other property. Maximiliane appealed to Duke Albrecht, the feudal lord of the Ortenburgs. The duke set up a committee for arbitration, and Maximiliane asked her brother to attend the negotiations. When Ladislaus arrived at the meeting place, Alt-Oetting, on September 12, 1557, he was arrested and conducted to Munich on trumped-up charges. In spite of the blatant illegality of this procedure, Duke Albrecht insisted on a payment of a "penalty" of 25,000 thalers, even against serious protests from his own vassals

6. W. Goetz, "Ladislaus von Fraunberg, der letzte Graf von Haag," in *Oberbayerisches Archiv für vaterländische Geschichte* XLVI (1889–90) p. 138.

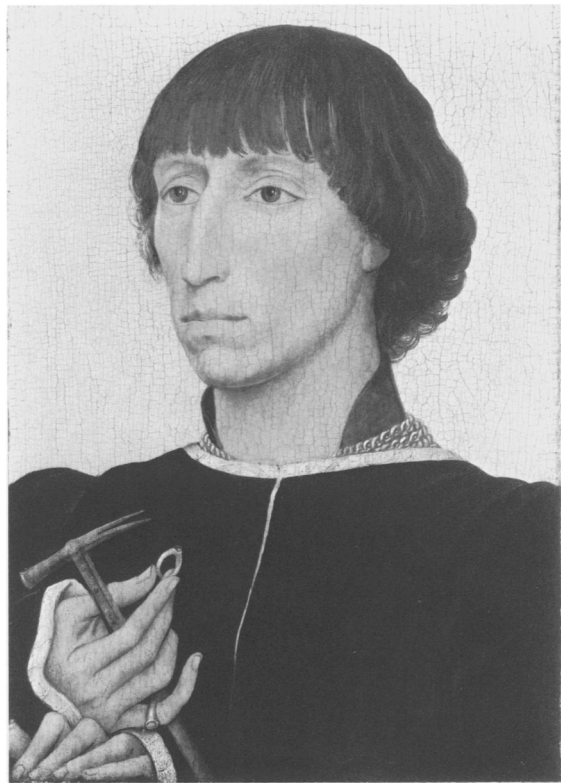
7. In the original contract Emilia's dowry was set at 10,000 crowns, to be paid as 2,000 crowns in cash at once, 4,000 crowns in the form of a palazzo at Ferrara, and the remaining 4,000 crowns in annual installments of 1,000 crowns each. To counter this Ladislaus was to offer a marriage gift of 10,000 crowns, plus a special bonus ("Morgengabe") "for reason of her virginity"; they were to be Emilia's exclusive property, to be used according to her own wish. The additions were such that the dowry, the marriage gift, and the "Morgengabe" were to stay "semper et in perpetuum" (forever and ever) in Italy, within the mother's reach.

2. Rogier van der Weyden (1399/1400–1464), *Francesco d'Este*, Flemish, ca. 1460. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931, The Friedsam Collection, 32.100.43

and lukewarm measures by the emperor. On November 2, 1557, Ladislaus was brought back to Haag, and was kept as a prisoner in his own castle until he paid the entire ransom, 20,000 thalers of it in cash, the remaining sum in plate, jewels, and so on, to be redeemed within six weeks.⁸

It would have been either during the last days of his captivity, or immediately after, during the early winter weeks of 1557–58, that Hans Mielich painted Ladislaus's portrait, in keeping with the spirit of the period, filled with poignant symbols.

The military trophy on the wall represents the soldierly career of the count;⁹ the memento mori assembly of skull, crucifix, and hourglass on the shelf, together with the Vanitas symbol of the mirror hanging from the cornice, is a reminder of the low ebb of Count Ladislaus's fortunes in 1557.¹⁰ On the other hand, the carnation—since the Middle Ages a traditional symbol for a bridegroom—in a glass vase on the table indicates hope for a new and this time more



8. All details of Count Ladislaus's stormy life are taken from Goetz, "Ladislaus von Fraunberg," pp. 108–165.

9. In 1524, at the age of twenty, Ladislaus participated in the Italian campaigns that culminated in the Battle of Pavia (Feb. 24, 1525), but he was taken prisoner by the French "because of overmuch boldness." In a characteristic show of the proverbial ingratitude of the house of Hapsburg, Emperor Charles V refused to ransom him. After his ransom was paid by his brother, therefore, Ladislaus went into French service until 1529. In the meantime he had been attainted, and his half of the county (the other half was his brother's share) was confiscated and occupied by the Bavarians. He was fortunate to get his property back after payment of a fine of 6,000 gulden. In 1536–38 he was again in imperial service, campaigning in Italy and Provence. In 1547, under the threat of the War of the League of Schmalkalden, he was appointed one of the three captains-general of the imperial forces in Bavaria, and in 1553 he was to raise twenty companies of *Landsknechte* for a planned campaign in Burgundy.

10. The branches of taxus tucked behind the trophy had been symbols of death since classical antiquity, but there might also be a specific hidden wordplay involved. Taxus is not only a favorite tree in churchyards, it is also much favored as shrubbery for hedges. A German word for "hedge" is *Hag*.

3. Reverse of the portrait of Francesco d'Este, with the sitter's arms



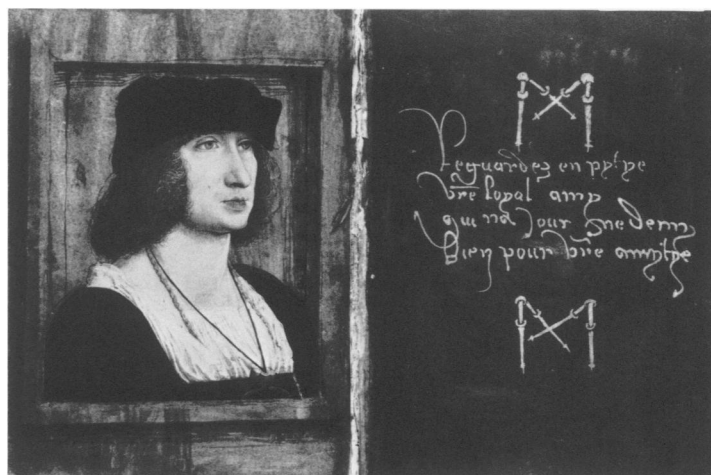
successful marriage,¹¹ which might give the county of Haag its so desperately longed-for heir.

Indeed, immediately after his return from his unhappy Italian adventure, Count Ladislaus had approached the lady of a nearby castle, Margarethe von Trenbach, and actually promised to marry her as soon as his burdensome marriage with Emilia could be dissolved. However, this was not to be, and Margarethe died, single, probably in 1565.

Ladislaus himself died in 1566, without issue, and his beloved little county was pocketed by a triumphant Duke Albrecht; it is still part of Bavaria.¹²

The most striking feature, though, in this painting—so heavily loaded with iconographical hints—is the leopard rubbing against Count Ladislaus's leg like an overgrown housecat. This leopard must have been a family celebrity. Almost a century later, in a letter dated July 31, 1640, Prince Gundacar von Liechtenstein, a grandson of Ladislaus's sister Maximiliane, advised his son, Prince Ferdinand, to show a visiting Cardinal Pio all the ancestral portraits at Castle Feldsberg, in particular the one of "Graf Lassla von Haag" by "an excellent master's hand," because this ancestor was once married to a lady of the house of Pio, and was seen in the picture with a "Tigertier," which had been given to him by one of his Pio brothers-in-law and "which used to follow him around like a dog."¹³

It is not known which of Emilia's two brothers, Ercole or Enea, was the generous donor of this gift, remarkable not only for its sheer magnificence but also for its value as a thoughtful gesture of deeper symbolic nature. The leopard was a crest of the house of Este, and, as mentioned earlier, Emilia's uncle, the duke of Ferrara, Ercole II d'Este, had offered to be-



4. Jean Perréal (ca. 1455–1530), *Pierre Sala*, with dedicatory inscription in Sala's *Emblemes et devises d'amour*, French (Lyons), ca. 1500; reproduced in reverse, the inscription being in mirror writing. London, British Library, Stowe MS 955, fols. 16v, 17r (photo: British Library)

stow on Count Ladislaus the right of using the Este arms with his own.

An outstanding example of these arms appears on the reverse of a panel painting by Rogier van der Weyden in the Metropolitan Museum, which was identified by Ernst H. Kantorowicz as a portrait of Francesco d'Este, marquis of Ferrara (Figures 2, 3).¹⁴ The armorial shield is quartered (1 and 4) with the augmentation of honor that King Charles VII of France had bestowed on the house of Este in 1432: azure, three fleurs-de-lys or, in a bordure emmanchée gules and or; and (2 and 3) with the family arms of Este: azure, an eagle argent. As a crest there is a

11. The glass vase could also be a pessimistic reminder of the German proverb "Glück und Glas—wie leicht bricht das!" (Luck and glass—how easily broken!).

12. After Ladislaus's death Emilia married again, a Count Onofrio Bevilacqua. Conte Pompeo Litta, *Famiglie celebri italiane* (Milan/Turin, 1819ff.) IX, dispensa 16, s.v. Pio di Carpi, table IV, mentions tersely that Emilia "fu dapprima moglie di un barone tedesco."

13. "Weil der Cardinal Pio die Verwandtnus selbst anziehet, so können Deine Liebden data occasione ihm alle die Ahnen zeigen und vermelden, das unser Mütterlichen Ahnfrau Bruder (Graf Lassla von Haag genannt) eine von seinem Hause Pii gehabt und das einer der Pii, sein Schwager, ihme ein Tigertier, so wie ein Hundt stets bey ihme gewesen, geschenkt habe, mit welchem Tigertier er auch noch bis dato zu Veldsparg von eines

vortrefflichen Meisters Hand abcontrafact vorhanden" (Since Cardinal Pio himself points out the relationship, you may, my dear, on given occasion show him all the ancestors and mention that our maternal grandmother's brother [called Graf Lassla von Haag] had a wife of the house of Pio, and that one of the Pii, his brother-in-law, gave him a tiger-beast as a present, which followed him around like a dog, and with which tiger-beast he can still be seen to this day at Veldsparg, portrayed by an excellent master's hand). Quoted from a letter in the Princely Archives.

14. E. H. Kantorowicz, "The Este Portrait by Roger van der Weyden," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 3 (1939–40) pp. 165–180; and G. Bauman, "Early Flemish Portraits, 1425–1525," *MMAB* 43:4 (1986) pp. 38–42, figs. 29, 30, and cover.



5. Reverse of medal of Lionello d'Este, by Master Nicholaus, Italian, ca. 1445. London, British Museum (photo: British Museum)
6. The arms of the margraves of Ferrara (center). *Grünenbergs Wappenbuch*, 1483 (photo: after facsimile edition, 1875)



seated leopard blindfolded with a long, fluttering scarf; two rampant leopards are the supporters of the shield. Above these arms are inscribed the words *vře tout*, while below is written *francisque*. Flanking the crested helmet are the monogrammatic letters *m* and *e* tied together by love knots. The inscription *non plus / courcelles* scratched into the upper left-hand corner next to the motto *vře tout* must be a later—though near-contemporary—addition.

Francesco d'Este was a natural son of Lionello, margrave of Ferrara (1407–50).¹⁵ He spent most of his life at the court of Burgundy, where he was sent by his father for his education, in 1444, at the age of fifteen; in the 1460s “le marquis de ferrare, chambellan du Duc” is repeatedly mentioned, but he also held several military commands at that time. This service at the Burgundian court would explain the French form of his name on the painting, as well as his French motto: “Votre tout” (All yours) (Figure 4).¹⁶ The letters *m* and *e* would stand for “marquis este” or “marchio estensis,” a title used by his father, Lionello.¹⁷ The last time Francesco’s name is recorded is in October 1475, when he is registered in the Chambre des Comptes of Lille as Captain of Westerloo. Kantorowicz pointed out the possibility that he might have been killed in one of the luckless battles his master, Charles the Bold, had to fight in the last year of his life, such as Grandson (March 2, 1476), Murten (June 22, 1476), or Nancy (January 5, 1477). Interestingly, right on the edge of the battlefield of Grandson is a tiny hamlet named Corcelles. Although there was an important Burgundian family, de Courcelles, who might be referred to in the enigmatic inscription *non plus / courcelles* (No more / Courcelles), and in Burgundian territory there are a couple of dozen towns and villages with names such as Courcelles, Courselles, or Corcelles, could it be

15. Litta, *Famiglie celebri italiane*, fasc. XXVI, s.v. Este III, table XII, quotes the erroneous date of 1444 for Francesco’s birth. For a discussion of the correct date see Kantorowicz, “The Este Portrait,” nn. 28–33.

16. The motto was previously read as “Voire(?) tout” (See everything). However, the abbreviation “vře” for “votre” is a common one, as in *Emblemes et devises d’amour* by Pierre Sala (Lyons, ca. 1500), British Library, Stowe MS 955, fol. 16v: “Regardez en pytye / vře loyal amy / qui na jour ne demy / bien pour vře amytye” (see T. Kren, ed., *Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts: Treasures from the British Library*, exh. cat. [New York, 1983] pp. 169–174, no. 22, pl. xxvii).

17. Kantorowicz, “The Este Portrait,” p. 167.



7. Dog collar with the initials of Christian II and Johann (Hans) Georg, dukes of Saxony, German (Saxon), 1600–11. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Bashford Dean, 29.150.154

that Francesco's military career and life ended on the snow-covered battlefield of Grandson/Corcelles?

The blindfolded leopard in the crest of the margraves and later dukes of Ferrara was an adaptation of an *impresa* of Francesco's father, Lionello. On the reverse of his portrait medals by Pisanello, Amadio di Milano, and Master Nicholas, a blindfolded feline, identified by its pointed ears and stubby tail as a lynx, is seated on a square pillow; on Master Nicholas's medal the animal is encircled by the motto *QVAE VIDES NE VIDE* (Don't see what you see) (Figure 5).¹⁸ The lynx's blindfold would be an allusion to its superior eyesight, which according to folklore was even able to penetrate walls. The animals in Francesco's arms, however, are clearly long-tailed leopards, and a blindfolded leopard was an accepted variant of the crest of the margraves and/or dukes of Ferrara since Lionello's time (Figure 6).¹⁹

The change from lynx to leopard was probably due to the blindfold in the device. As it was customary to hood a falcon in order to prevent its taking off prematurely after its intended prey, so a hunting cheetah was blindfolded to keep it from chasing off at the wrong moment. It is likely that the blindfolded lynx was mistakenly seen as a hooded cheetah, which in turn was misinterpreted as a leopard, a more canonical heraldic beast. Exact classification of species of large exotic cats is usually quite vague among nonzoologists, as the "Tigertier" quoted from Prince

Gundacar's letter bears witness. In any case, the spotted felines in the Este arms are lacking the characteristic face markings of the cheetah, and Count Ladislaus's pet is clearly a leopard.

The cypher LS on the leopard's collar has been interpreted as an unusual monogram for Ladislaus, incorporating the first and the last letter of his name. Cyphers and monograms, sometimes of a very elaborate nature, were commonly used on collars for hunting dogs; the collars of the hounds in the *Hunt of the Unicorn* tapestries in The Cloisters are fine examples in art, and in real life the collars of the hunting dogs of the dukes of Saxony, monogrammed with their owners' names and titles, are the pride of many museum collections (Figure 7).²⁰ As it can be presumed that the leopard's collar was specially made to fit this prized animal, and therefore was probably part of the original gift by the count's generous brother-in-law, the cypher LS might stand for Ladislaus and Scandiano, the lordship the count was on the point of receiving when family relations at Ferrara were still friendly.

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18. G. F. Hill, *Medals of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1920) pp. 37–38, pl. iv:3; G. F. Hill and G. Pollard, *Renaissance Medals: Complete Catalogue of the Samuel H. Kress Collection* (London, 1967) p. 9, pl. 8; U. Middeldorf and D. Stiebrl, *Renaissance Medals and Plaquettes* (Florence, 1983) pls. II, XXIX; and Kantorowicz, "The Este Portrait," fig. 4b.

19. Konrad Grünenbergs *Wappenbuch*, 1483, facsimile, ed. Graf Stillfried-Alcantara (Görlitz, 1875) pl. VII.

20. The letters on the dog collar signify the dukes of Saxony, Christian (1601–11) and Johann Georg (coregent before 1611, reigned 1611–56): C H G as a cypher—Christian, Hans Georg; H Z S C—Herzog zu Sachsen, Churfürst (Duke of Saxony, Prince Elector).