

# The Royal Summer Palace, Ferdinand I and Anne\*

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This essay examines the iconography of the best-known relief from the renaissance Royal Summer Palace at the Prague Castle, depicting Ferdinand I of Habsburg and his wife Anne Jagiello. It highlights its marriage symbolism and the question of the dowry. In the relief Anne, heiress to the Czech Lands, gives her husband an olive branch symbolising peace. In the context of the political significance of the palace's decoration the relief expresses Ferdinand's view of his claim to the Bohemian throne, based on his marriage to the heiress. Due to opposition from the Bohemian Estates, this finally became his lawful right in 1545, 24 years after the royal wedding. The Italian sculptor Paolo della Stella expressed a search for a peaceful solution to Ferdinand's succession. The relief was carved between 1540 and 1550. The interpretations do not rule out the possibility that it was made after Anne had died (1547).

## KEYWORDS:

Royal Summer Palace in Prague (Belvedere); olive tree; Ferdinand I of Habsburg; Anne Jagiello; marriage symbolism; Paolo della Stella

This paper will discuss the most famous image in the sculptural decoration of the Royal Summer Palace in Prague Castle's Royal Garden, namely the relief portraying King Ferdinand I of Habsburg (1503–1564) [Fig. 1], who commissioned the building, and his beloved wife Anne Jagiello (1503–1547). In fact this scene is the reason why the building is known as Queen Anne's Summer Palace. The legend of Ferdinand's love for "the last Bohemian Queen" that began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is still alive today.<sup>1</sup> You can still read that Ferdinand I built the summer palace for Anne's pleasure, as shown by the relief of Ferdinand giving Anne a fig branch representing the palace.<sup>2</sup> Since the relief has been variously interpreted and described in the scholarly literature,<sup>3</sup> here I would like to present a number of ideas about this scene.

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1 For details of the legend see especially Jan BAŽANT, *Pražský Belvédér a severská renaissance* [The Prague Belvedere and the Northern Renaissance], Praha 2006, pp. 31–35, 143–146.

2 "Die Darstellung symbolisiert einfühlsam Garten und Lusthaus als Dedikation an die Königin, die die Fertigstellung indes nicht mehr erleben sollten", see Hilda LIETZMANN, *Irdische Paradiese. Beispiele höfischer Gartenkunst der I. Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Munich — Berlin 2007, pp. 27–28.

3 Antonín MIHULKA, *Královský letohrádek zvaný Belvédér na hradě Pražském* [The Royal Summer House Called Belvedere at the Prague Castle], Praha 1939, pp. 46–49; H. LIETZMANN, *Irdische Paradiese*, pp. 27–28; Ivan MUCHKA, *Reliefs am Lustschloss der Königin Anna im Garten der Prager Burg* (Cat. Nos. IV.23–25), in: Wilfried Seipel (ed.), *Kaiser Ferdinand I.*



I probably do not need to introduce the Royal Summer Palace in any great detail, but let me offer a brief account; here the dates are important for an interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Ferdinand I commissioned a model of the palace from architect and stonemason Paolo della Stella at the end of 1537. This was shortly after he had bought the land for the garden and built the Powder Bridge over the deep moat, allowing access to the garden and the Summer Palace directly from the Castle. The site he chose for the Summer Palace, at the far end of the garden, followed the principles for building of villas that were then common in Italy. Leon Battista Alberti's ideas are well known: a villa should be visible from far away, and should offer a view of the city and the surrounding countryside.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the renaissance Summer Palace's site on a hill next to the gothic Castle was a visible reminder of the King's presence in the city, and a symbol of the new Habsburg dynasty on the Bohemian throne.

To prepare the model Stella was sent to Genoa, where Andrea Doria's villa was an important source. The envoy of Charles V in Genoa, Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Feria, played an important role in organising this visit.<sup>6</sup> In the spring of 1538

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1503–1564. Das Werden der Habsburgermonarchie, exhibition catalogue, Wien 2003, pp. 377–378; J. BAŽANT, *Pražský Belvédér*, pp. 143–146 (with bibliography concerning the relief), pp. 289–290; Sylva DOBALOVÁ, *Pamětní deska Matouše Collina z Chotěřiny. Poznámky k její ikonografii* [Memorial Plaque of Matouš Collin of Chotěřina. Notes on its Iconography], in: Jiří Roháček (ed.), *Epigraphica & Sepulcralia III. Sborník příspěvků ze zasedání k problematice sepulkrálních památek*, Praha 2011, pp. 41–54, p. 47.

- 4 For a Renaissance history of the Summer Palace see especially: A. MIHULKA, *Královský letohrádek*; Jiří SVOBODA, *Královský letohrádek. I. část: Stavba letohrádku za Ferdinanda I.* [The Royal Summer Palace I: The Construction under Ferdinand I.], *Památky a příroda* 3, 1978, pp. 1–10; IDEM, *Královský letohrádek. II. část: Od dokončení stavby až do vyklizení budovy c. k. dělostřelectvem* [The Royal Summer Palace II: From the Completion of the Construction till the Leaving of the c. k. Artillery from the Building], *Památky a příroda* 3, 1978, pp. 67–74; Viktor PROCHÁZKA, *Královský letohrádek na Pražském hradě — stavba a úpravy* [The Royal Summer House at the Prague Castle — Construction and Alterations], *Zprávy památkové péče* 47, 1997, No. 2, pp. 33–45; Ivan MUCHKA, Č.p. 52 [Nr. 52], in: Pavel Vlček (ed.), *Umělecké památky Prahy. Pražský hrad a Hradčany*, Praha 2000, pp. 245–250; Ivana KYZOUROVÁ, *Královský letohrádek na Pražském hradě a jeho restaurování* [The Royal Summer House at the Prague Castle and its Restoration], *Zprávy památkové péče* 72, 2012, No. 6, pp. 425–431; Eliška FUČÍKOVÁ, *Císař Ferdinand I. a arcivévoda Ferdinand II. — dva starostliví stavebníci* [Emperor Ferdinand I and Archduke Ferdinand II — Two Painstaking Builders], in: Beket Bukovinská — Lubomír Konečný (edd.), *Ars longa. Sborník k nedožitým sedmdesátinám Josefa Krásky*, Praha 2003, pp. 107–122; J. BAŽANT, *Pražský Belvédér* (with bibliography); Pavel KALINA, *Praha 1437–1610* [Prague 1437–1610], Praha 2011, pp. 65–73; Jan BAŽANT — Nina BAŽANTOVÁ, *Pražský Belvédér: první renesanční vila ve střední Evropě* [The Prague Belvedere: The First Renaissance Villa in Central Europe], Praha 2014.
- 5 The Summer Palace originally had a wall three metres high — which is hard to imagine today — separating it from the garden and the bronze Singing Fountain cast in 1564. The wall, with doors and windows, was not removed until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 6 J. BAŽANT, *Pražský Belvédér*, pp. 14–15; H. LIETZMANN, *Irdische Paradiese*, pp. 74, Ref. 27.



Stella presented his model to the King and the building work commenced. Although Stella was also responsible for the decoration of the Summer Palace, he remains somewhat mysterious: we are not sure exactly who he was, and know nothing of his earlier career in Italy.<sup>7</sup> The lower floor of the Summer Palace, with the figural reliefs that are our main interest, was completed in 1550. Stella left for Italy in 1551, where he died a year later. On Ferdinand's instructions the project was altered by Bonifaz Wohlmuth, who added another storey, prolonging the construction by 14 years. By 1564, when the palace was finally completed, Ferdinand I was dying.

The palace has a graceful arcade with slender columns encircling its rectangular core, and no walls along the sides to enclose the arcade. The second floor is austere and its walls have alternating niches and windows, based on Wohlmuth's revising of the principles set out in Sebastiano Serlio's third book on architecture.<sup>8</sup> Although the Summer Palace is considered the finest purely Renaissance building to the west of the Alps, it is above all a highly original structure. Its ornamentation is rich, especially when we realise it was built before the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. In his inspirational 2006 monograph on the Royal Summer Palace, Jan Bžant counted more than a hundred figural reliefs and a similar number of decorative botanical motifs. The figural reliefs are on various levels of the building's ground floor exterior, specifically on the socles of the arcade's Ionic columns, on the columns of the balustrades on the ground floor, over the entrance doors and in the individual spandrels between the arcade's arches. Bžant suggests that the way the individual reliefs are exhibited may have been inspired by sculptural facades evoking a collection of antiquities, such as the famous garden facade of the Villa Medici in Rome.<sup>9</sup> The sculptural decoration comprises stylistically quite different artworks. To understand these variations in Paolo della Stella's style we must recall that some of the works were products of his large workshop.<sup>10</sup> It also seems that the stone carvers were learning how to work with sandstone, with which they were probably unfamiliar.

The question is how the reliefs in the spandrels and elsewhere relate to one another: whether there is a careful plan that is meant to seem a work of chance, or whether the

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7 Anne Markham Schulz did not find any connection between Paolo Stella "de Mileto", who is documented in archival sources in Prague, and the sculptor Paolo Stella Milanese, who was active in Venice. See ANNE MARKHAM SCHULZ, *Paolo Stella Milanese*, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz* 29, 1985, pp. 75–110. Jan Bžant believes in an identity of both figures and supports the hypothesis that the artist came from the circle of the Venetian architect Jacopo Sansovino, see J. BžANT, *Pražský Belvédér*, pp. 99–107; compare Jan CHLÍBEC, *Italští sochaři v českých zemích v období renesance* [Italian Sculptors in the Czech Lands during the Renaissance Period], Praha 2011, pp. 80–99; I. KYZOUROVÁ, *Králůvský letohrádek*, pp. 430–431.

8 Sarah LYNCH, *Architecture at the Prague Belvedere: Between Theory and Practice*, in: Sylva Dobalová — Ivan Muchka (edd.), *Looking for Leisure. Court Residences and their Satellites 1400–1700* (Palatium e-Publications 4, <http://www.courtresidences.eu>); forthcoming.

9 J. BžANT, *Pražský Belvédér*, p. 107.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 99–107; J. CHLÍBEC, *Italští sochaři*, pp. 83–86.



placing of the reliefs is more or less illogical, with exceptions such as the reliefs of Hercules on the socles of the columns at the corners of the building, or the coats-of-arms in the spandrels at the far ends. Jan Bažant has demonstrated that the reliefs' iconography follows a consistent plan. To summarise his account of the key motifs, the iconography celebrates the Habsburg dynasty as the bearers of peace in Europe, and it uses mythological forebears to bolster their claim to the throne. Ferdinand I is presented as a second Jupiter. The iconography of the western facade, facing the garden, clearly relates to Ferdinand I: on the arcade's main columns over the original entrance are the Holy Roman Emperor's Golden Fleece and Eagle; the facade's corner spandrels have eagles decorated with the Order of the Golden Fleece; the first relief in the spandrels between the arches depicts Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, and next to it there is the relief of Anne and Ferdinand that is the subject of this paper. Then there is Ferdinand as a hunter (?) and the legends of Aeneas, the son of Venus and the forefather of the Habsburg dynasty,<sup>11</sup> who fled burning Troy and founded the Roman Empire. Ferdinand can be understood here as a second Aeneas. This is followed by the introducing of the Golden Age and five reliefs with the loves of Jupiter. The socles of the arcade's columns depict the campaigns of Alexander the Great, the prototype for European rulers and Ferdinand's predecessor in battles with the eastern empire.

The key iconographic motif for the southern facade, facing the city, is the defeat of the Turks, rendered as the hunt for the Calydonian Boar. A scene with Meleager is an eloquent parallel to the hunting scene with Ferdinand I.

The eastern facade again represents the Golden Age, and also Charles's African campaign, specifically the conquest of Tunis in 1535 when the city was liberated from the hands of Turkish pirates, an obligatory episode in contemporary Habsburg propaganda. On this facade there are several depictions of Charles V and Ferdinand I. They begin with the "argument over a boar's head", whose meaning may well be interesting but has yet to be explained [Fig. 2]. A boar's head also played a role in an argument between Meleager and other hunters over who should be credited with killing the animal, a quarrel that ultimately resulted in war. Among the other reliefs on eastern facade we can find battles between the Emperor's warriors and Muslims; this iconographic theme also includes reliefs representing "freed Christian hostages thank Charles V" and "in the desert Charles V accepts a helmet filled with water" [Fig. 3].

The decoration of the northern facade, facing the almost indistinguishable entrance gate to the Royal Garden, is the least legible. It seems to depict a celebration of sovereign virtues, represented by the history of the Trojans and the reliefs of Perseus. Here political events are combined with scenes from mythology (the Summer Palace has only one depiction of a sacred event).

Jan Bažant believes there was a unifying iconographic plan here that was implemented in full. However, after a fire at Prague Castle in 1541 the construction was halted and 51 finished reliefs and ten *putti* were placed in storage.<sup>12</sup> The work resumed five years later and apparently continued until 1550. I would argue that the meaning of

<sup>11</sup> For details see Marie TANNER, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas. The Hapsburgs and the mythic image of the Emperor*, New Heaven 1993.

<sup>12</sup> J. SVOBODA, *Královský letohrádek I*, p. 2.



the sequence of the reliefs and the manner in which they relate to one another may have been lost, as they were not all installed at the same time.<sup>13</sup> In any case, it was unusual for reliefs to be mounted on a building during construction, when they could easily be damaged. This is a second reason why it is hard to imagine any precise logic in placing the reliefs. Any interpretation based on the close relation between the individual reliefs on each facade must therefore be circumspect — and thus I believe my understanding of one particular relief, where I ignore the sequence of the palace's reliefs, is also plausible.

However this may be, it is plain that the two facades facing the city mainly show victorious war scenes in which the Habsburgs bring peace and Christianity to the land, while the eastern facade, facing the garden, features scenes from Habsburg mythology. The relief of Ferdinand and Anne is in a prominent place that every visitor to the Summer Palace and the garden would have passed, although it is somewhat obscured by a water spout. Nevertheless, as I have argued, it is an open question whether the relief's location between other scenes on the eastern facade is significant. It is certainly one of the Summer Palace's finest depictions — not on account of any great degree of realism in the couple's portraits,<sup>14</sup> but on account of its lyricism and ambience.

The relief seems to be a typical double portrait of husband and wife amidst the trees in the garden, facing one another in profile in a declaration of love and fidelity. This kind of depiction commemorates a long-lasting union, and the flower between them symbolises the love that blossoms between two people (most often this would have been a carnation). The artist carefully depicted the couple's faces and clothing, although Ferdinand I is somewhat idealised, as he is in the other scenes at the Summer Palace. He is decorated with the Order of the Golden Fleece, while Anne has a little dog. The interaction between the two focuses on the sprig they are both holding, in a scene designated a *scène galante*.<sup>15</sup> Ferdinand is beardless and Jan Bažant has suggested that this recalls his wedding, which is why both figures have a youthful appearance. The FA monogram on the most westerly spandrel, in the corner nearest the relief in question, is another reference to the wedding [Fig. 4]. Bažant also suggests that the royal couple's grave expressions may mean that the relief was carved after Anne's death in 1547.<sup>16</sup>

Although we can dispute Bažant's reasoning (for instance, Ferdinand is beardless in the other reliefs here), I agree that this relief depicts an event that is

13 This was recognized by I. MUCHKA, Č.p. 50, p. 249.

14 As I have already mentioned, as well as stories from Roman history and classical mythology there are scenes from the recent past, specifically two scenes featuring Charles V ("freed Christian hostages thank Charles V" and "in the desert Charles V accepts a helmet filled with water"). Ferdinand I appears in two more reliefs: "Ferdinand hunting a boar" and a scene depicting the "argument over the boar's head", where he is probably depicted with Ferdinand of Tyrol and Meleager.

15 I. MUCHKA, *Reliefs*, p. 377.

16 J. BAŽANT, *Pražský Belvédér*, p. 143; Wolfgang HILGER, *Das Bild vom König und Kaiser. Anmerkungen zu Verbreitung und Wirkungsgeschichte von Herrscherdarstellungen am Beispiel Ferdinands I.*, in: W. Seipel (ed.), *Kaiser Ferdinand I.*, pp. 231–241, p. 237.



indeed related to the wedding. The iconographic indications for this interpretation are largely indirect, and the symbolism may have various layers, a principle demonstrated in the “disguised symbolism” that Erwin Panofsky formulated in his studies on Flemish painting.<sup>17</sup> His claims about the symbolic meaning ascribed to everyday objects became characteristic of early Flemish painting as a whole, but in recent years this has undergone a re-evaluation.<sup>18</sup> Concerning the wedding themes, it has been pointed out that many well-known depictions, especially portraits, can be understood as referring to wedding rituals. Such paintings probably served to present the faces of bride and groom, although their iconography does not make this explicit.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the pictures considered to be the first full-length individual portraits in Western art, the pair of portraits of Henry the Pious, Duke of Saxony and his wife Katharina of Mecklenberg by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1514, Gemäldegalerie Dresden), were also painted to celebrate their wedding; see the wreath of carnations on the Duke’s head.

If we apply the standard method for art history interpretation, then Anne’s little dog may (but need not) have a symbolic significance. In keeping with Erwin Panofsky’s famous interpretation of the iconic painting *The Arnolfini Wedding* (1434, National Gallery, London) [Fig. 5] and Émile Mâle’s view that the dog is the most loyal of animals, we can read it as a symbol of fidelity, especially marital fidelity.<sup>20</sup> The dog also appears in Alciato’s *Book of Emblems* as Emblem 191 (wifely fidelity). Anne Jagiello is therefore adored for her fidelity as the principal womanly or wifely virtue. Such little dogs were exceptionally popular in the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and appeared on gothic tombs at the feet of deceased wives, while during the Renaissance they became a general attribute of woman, and even of her vanity (Titian, Cranach). This was evidently a particular breed of dog; the commonest were the terrier, the Bolognese or the toy spaniel.<sup>21</sup> In Prague the dog’s positive significance is plain to see.

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- 17 Erwin PANOFSKY, *Die altniederländische Malerei. Ihr Ursprung und Wesen*, übersetzt und herausgegeben von Jochen Sander und Stephan Kemperdick, Köln 2016, esp. chapter “Realität und Symbol in der frühen flämischen Malerei: Spiritualia sub metaphoris corporalium”, pp. 119–153.
  - 18 See especially: Lloyd BENJAMIN, *Disguised Symbolism Exposed and the History of Early Netherlandish Paintings*, Studies in Iconography 2, 1976, pp. 11–24; Craig HARBISON, *Realism and Symbolism in Early Flemish Painting*, Art Bulletin 66, 1984, pp. 588–602; Jan Baptist BEDAUX, *The Reality of Symbols: the Question of Disguised symbolism in Jan van Eyck’s Arnolfini Portrait*, in: idem, *The Reality of Symbols. Studies in the Iconology of Netherlandish Art 1400–1800*, The Hague — Maarssen, 1990, pp. 21–67; Craig HARBISON, *Jan van Eyck: The Play of Realism*, London 1992; John L. WARD, *Disguised symbolism as enactive symbolism in Van Eyck’s paintings*, Artibus et Historiae 15, 1994, No. 29, pp. 9–53.
  - 19 Andrea BAYER (ed.), *Art and Love in Renaissance Italy*, exhibition catalogue, New York 2008.
  - 20 Erwin PANOFSKY, *Jan van Eyck’s Arnolfini Portrait*, The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs 64, 1934, No. 372, pp. 117–119, 122–127; IDEM, *Die altniederländische Malerei I*, pp. 198–200.
  - 21 For dogs see extended bibliography (till 1992) by Robert BALDWIN, *A Revised Bibliography of Dogs in the Humanities*, 2 parts, <http://www.socialhistoryofart.com/bibliographiesthematic.htm> [retrieved 20. 8. 2015].



Likewise, the glove that Ferdinand holds in his right hand is probably the commonest visual flourish added to Renaissance and Baroque portraits of men. A glove, as a luxury item, is traditionally interpreted as an attribute of authority or social standing: a hand wearing a glove cannot be doing manual work. The removal of the glove is understood as a symbol of the surrender of authority, or as a sign of love and friendship. It also pointed to the gesture of the “naked” hand.<sup>22</sup> Equally, a glove is an ancient symbol of legal obligation (a glove could be given as evidence of favour, or could serve as confirmation of an obligation, while returning a glove would mean ending the commitment). Gloves retained their exclusivity as a symbol of the higher social orders until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, after which they became a standard clothing item among the lower class.

The next aspect I will examine is who is handing the leafy sprig to whom. Here too accounts of the relief differ. Most assert, with no great interest, that Ferdinand is handing the sprig to Anne, but I believe the reverse is true, that she is handing it to him.<sup>23</sup> This gesture may be of crucial significance. The best-known example is again *The Arnolfini Wedding*. Panofsky had understood *The Arnolfini Wedding* as a depiction of a clandestine wedding, but a study of the role of the gestures in the painting resulted in it being reinterpreted as a public act of betrothal: According to Edwin Hall, Giovanni Arnolfini’s right hand is raised as he swears an oath, and his future wife Giovanna places her right hand in his left in accordance with the northern custom. The ring is missing here — in paintings of weddings the ring, passed from the groom’s left hand to the bride’s right hand, plays an important role.<sup>24</sup> In this brief account I shall not discuss the other questions surrounding *The Arnolfini Wedding*, such as the couple’s identity, nor shall I explain why the hypothesis about the wedding and betrothal symbolism has been rejected.<sup>25</sup> One interpretation may be more thought-

22 Although *Iconclass: an iconographic classification system* by prof. Van der Waal does not include the glove among its symbols, investigations into its symbolism are nothing unusual: see e.g. Peter STALLYBRASS — Ann Rosalind JONES, *Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe*, *Critical Inquiry* 28, 2001, pp. 114–132; Marieke DE WINKEL, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt’s Paintings*, Amsterdam 2006, pp. 85–91, p. 87.

23 Bažant shares this view, see J. BAŽANT, *Pražský Belvédér*, p. 143.

24 Edwin HALL, *The Arnolfini Betrothal. Medieval Marriage and the Enigma of van Eyck’s Double Portrait*, Berkeley — Los Angeles 1994 (with bibliography); rec. Walter S. GIBSON, Edwin Hall, *The Arnolfini Betrothal. Medieval Marriage and the Enigma of van Eyck’s Double Portrait* [review.], *Speculum* 72, 1997, pp. 479–481.

25 Recently: Linda SEIDEL, *Jan van Eyck’s Arnolfini Portrait: Stories of an Icon*, Cambridge 1993; Rachel BILLINGE — Lorne CAMPBELL, *The Infra-Red Reflectograms of Jan van Eyck’s Portrait of Giovanni (?) Arnolfini and his Wife*, *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 16, 1995, pp. 47–60; Lorne CAMPBELL, *The National Gallery Catalogues. The Fifteenth Century Netherlandish Schools*, London 1998, pp. 174–211; Bernhart RIDDERBOS, *How Italian is the Arnolfini double portrait?*, in: Anton W. A. Boschloo et al. (edd.), *Aux Quatre Vents. A Festschrift for Bert W. Meijer*, Florence 2002, pp. 167–174; Gregor WEDEKIND, *Wie in einem Spiegel. Porträt und Wirklichkeit in Jan van Eycks “Arnolfinihochzeit”*, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 70, 2007, No. 3, pp. 325–346; Carola HICKS, *Girl in a green Gown. The History and Mystery of the Arnolfini portrait*, London 2011.



provoking for our relief: The painting represents a contract of a dowry or gift, in this case the promising of a *Morgengave*, a gift from husband to wife the morning after their wedding night, such as jewels or a pledge of money.<sup>26</sup> The dowry which the bride's father paid to the bridegroom was quite different: unlike the *Morgengave* it was not the bride's private property. A dowry was a contribution towards the maintenance of the new household and would only be returned to the wife or her heirs if the husband died.<sup>27</sup> For the Habsburgs, as for other ruling dynasties, the structure of dowries and wedding gifts was naturally more complex, and varied according to the laws of a particular country.<sup>28</sup> What was important was that both parties "invested" in the marriage. It should be clear then that dowries and gifts played a crucial role in marriage, and could be the subject of depictions at various levels.

We can clearly rule out the swearing of an oath in our relief, because Ferdinand extends his left hand, rather than his right, to the sprig. The couple may both be holding the object, as we see in *The Wedding of Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy* (coat of arms)<sup>29</sup> or in a scene from the Marian Tower at Karlštejn Castle, *Charles IV and Anne of Schweidnitz raise a relic of the true cross*. Here, however, Anne clutches the sprig firmly, while Ferdinand only touches it lightly. Bearing in mind all of the relief's iconographic elements, the Prague relief may be related to their marriage by means of the symbolism of Anne giving Ferdinand a gift or a dowry.

The symbolism of the green sprig with fruit that is central to the relief is less ambiguous [Fig. 6]. I am assuming the plant species was carefully chosen, as the symbolism of flowers and plants became more significant in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, Alciato included 14 new tree emblems in a new edition of his book in 1546, and their motto is simply the name of the species.<sup>30</sup> The language of flowers became

26 See Herman Th. COLENBRANDER, "In Promises Anyone Can Be Rich!" *Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Double Portrait: A "Morgengave"*, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 68, 2005, No. 3, pp. 413–424.

27 Stanley CHOJNACKI, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice. Twelve Essays on Patrician Society*, Baltimore 2000, quoted from p. 83; Christiane KLAPISCH-ZUBER, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Chicago 1985.

28 Essentially, however, there was a similar division of family and private finances: the groom has to buy out his bride; the bride moves in with her husband's family; both families bring approximately equal assets to the marriage; the bride receives compensation for the loss of her entitlement to her original family's property and must be provided for in the event of her husband's death, as the property in essence remains with the deceased's original family (because the widow might remarry). For greater detail see Paula Sutter Fichtner's articles, e.g. *Dynastic Marriage in Sixteenth-Century Habsburg Diplomacy and Statecraft: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, *The American Historical Review* 81, 1976, No. 2, pp. 243–265, pp. 251nn; EADEM, *A Community of Illness: Ferdinand I and his Family*, in: Martina Fuchs — Alfred Kohler (edd.), *Kaiser Ferdinand I. Aspekten eines Herrscherlebens*, Münster 2003, pp. 203–216.

29 Eva MICHEL — Maria Luise STERNATH (edd.), *Emperor Maximilian I and the Age of Dürer*, exhibition catalogue, Munich — London — New York 2012, Cat. No. 53, pp. 224–237 (p. 227, for picture see p. 130).

30 For various aspects of this trend see for example: Gerhard B. LADNER, *Vegetation Symbolism and the Concept of Renaissance*, in: Millard Meiss (ed.), *Essays in Honor of*





especially common in portraits of women, above all in what are presumed to be wedding portraits.<sup>31</sup>

I have already mentioned the interpretation of the sprig as the “flowers of the fig tree”, despite the fact that the fig tree does not have flowers in the classic sense. Researchers have considered it to be from a fig tree, a laurel, or an orange tree. The fig tree’s iconography is very extensive: It symbolises the tree of Christ’s cross, salvation and resurrection; it may also symbolise the Virgin Mary as a New Eve; it can symbolise fertility, because it bears fruit several times a year, and some species are hermaphrodite.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the fig tree has trilobate leaves, as we can see for instance in the background of Lorenzo Lotto’s painting *The Holy Family with St. Catherine of Alexandria* (Accademia Carrara, Bergamo), while the leaves depicted in the Summer Palace relief are quite different.

Alongside fig trees, citruses were the main exotic plant cultivated at courts to the north of the Alps. In her monograph on gardens and citrus trees in Renaissance Central Europe, Hilda Lietzmann asserts that there are oranges in the relief in Prague.<sup>33</sup> It should be stressed that citruses were mentioned in Prague Castle’s Royal Garden as early as 1538, which was their first documented occurrence in Central Europe, Austria and Germany.<sup>34</sup> They were cultivated on the terraces below the Summer Palace, and in the winter they were stored in flowerpots in the palace’s cellar. A closer examination of the relief rules out citruses, although the lemon tree was also understood as a symbol of fidelity in love because its flowers are sweetly scented and it bears fruit year-round. Gaia gave Jupiter and Juno a citrus tree for their wedding as the gift of immortality. The orange is specifically understood as a symbol of marriage and chastity, and an ornament for the bride. Interchangeably with the apple, it can be interpreted as a reference to the Tree of Knowledge or Tree of Paradise. However, the fruits of the orange tree are larger and more prominent than those in Paolo della Stella’s relief.

Jan Bažant considers the sprig to be a laurel, standing for victory.<sup>35</sup> This tree was sacred to Apollo and it symbolised poetry, victory and the gift of prophecy. As an

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Erwin Panofsky (*De Artibus Opuscula* 40/1), New York 1961, pp. 303–322; Mirella LEVI D’ANCONA, *Botticelli’s Primavera: A botanical interpretation including astrology, alchemy and the Medici*, Florence 1983; Lubomír KONEČNÝ, *Mezi textem a obrazem: miscellanea z historie emblematicky* [Between Text and Image: Miscellanea from the History of Emblematics], Praha 2002, p. 12.

31 Evereth FAHY, *The Marriage Portrait in the Renaissance or Some Women named Ginevra*, in: A. Bayer (ed.), *Art and Love*, pp. 17–27.

32 Levi D’Ancona summarises twenty three different meanings for the fig, see Mirella LEVI D’ANCONA, *The Garden of the Renaissance: Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting*, Florence 1977, pp. 135–142.

33 H. LIETZMANN, *Irdische Paradiese*, p. 78; EADEM, *Ferdinand I. Verdienste um die Gartenkunst*, in: W. Seipel (ed.), *Kaiser Ferdinand I.*, pp. 259–263.

34 Sylva DOBALOVÁ, *Die Zitruskultur am Prager Hof unter Ferdinand I., Maximilian II. und Rudolf II.*, in: *Orangeriekultur in Österreich, Ungarn und Tschechien* (Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises Orangerien in Deutschland e. V. 10), Berlin 2014, pp. 113–126.

35 J. BAŽANT, *Pražský Belvédér*, pp. 143, 289–290; for symbolism of a laurel see also M. LEVI D’ANCONA, *The Garden*, pp. 201–204; S. DOBALOVÁ, *Pamětní deska*, pp. 47–49.

evergreen plant it also symbolised eternity and immortality. However, the laurel was often depicted without fruit, and if it did have fruit then these would be depicted as very little balls, each with a long stalk. A laurel as a symbol of chastity and virtue was popular in Renaissance nuptial themes, for example Giorgione's *Portrait of a Woman (Laura)*.<sup>36</sup>

A detailed examination of the relief while it was being restored in 2004–2010<sup>37</sup> revealed that this is most probably an olive branch, with large, egg-shaped fruit. The symbolism of the evergreen olive tree has pagan and biblical origins, and it is an unambiguous symbol of peace.<sup>38</sup> It was sacred to Minerva, who made an olive sprout in Athens when she vied with Poseidon for the patronage of the city. It is mentioned in Virgil's *Georgics* as the tree of peace, and, of course, in the Bible (Gen 8,11) as a symbol of the peace that God makes with mankind after the flood. I can point to two exemplary paintings where the olive has an important meaning. Firstly there is Veronese's *Happy Union* from 1575 (National Gallery, London), which came into the hands of Rudolf II along with three other paintings from the *Allegories of Love* cycle. Here the union of man and woman is sealed by the olive branch they hold, shown with mature fruit. Specifically, the scene is interpreted as showing a happy union, the peace found after the sufferings of love.<sup>39</sup> The second example is Botticelli's *The Return of Judith to Bethulia* (ca 1472, Florence, Uffizi). Judith holds a sword in her right hand, while in her left she holds an olive branch, bringing the peace of divine justice to her home city of Bethulia.<sup>40</sup>

In conclusion, to interpret the Prague relief and the question of marriage it is difficult to prove — but also to disprove — that the scene presents some kind of legal or symbolic act to do with betrothal or marriage. There are symbols confirming this hypothesis, such as the dog symbolising marital fidelity, the gesture of offering, the representation of the pair in love, and perhaps also the glove. In the context of the loves of Jupiter that adorn the same facade, the symbolism of the olive bringing tranquillity to love also makes sense. An interpretation of the political aspects of the scene is more speculative. It is striking that most of the Summer Palace's portrait reliefs take their meaning from specific political situations. The latter half of the 1540s had many events of political significance relating to Anne, especially because as a maiden she was the heiress to Bohemia. After her wedding the Bohemian Estates considered that she had forfeited this claim. Ferdinand I became King of Bohemia

<sup>36</sup> Giorgione, *Portrait of a Woman*, in: A. BAYER (ed.), *Art and Love*, Cat. No. 145, pp. 315–317; Egon VERHEYEN, *Der Sinngehalt von Giorgiones "Laura"*, *Pantheon* 26, 1968, pp. 220–227.

<sup>37</sup> For details see I. KYZOUROVÁ, *Královský letohrádek*.

<sup>38</sup> Giuseppe FONTANAZZA (ed.), *Il dono di Minerva: iconografia dell'olivo nella cultura occidentale tra mito, religione e paesaggio*, Marsciano 2012, especially the chapter by Jacopo Manna, "Literary sources and representations of the olive in European art", pp. 79–110.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137 (with basic bibliography); Allen BRAHAM, *Veronese's Allegories of Love*, *The Burlington Magazine* 112, 1970, No. 805, pp. 205–212.

<sup>40</sup> For an interpretation see Hans KÖRNER, *Botticelli*, Köln 2006, pp. 47–54, Andreas SCHUMACHER (ed.), *Botticelli: Bildnis, Mythos, Andacht*, exhibition catalogue, Ostfildern 2009, pp. 244–247; G. FONTANAZZA (ed.), *Il dono di Minerva*, pp. 208–209.



by being elected, but this act did not ensure a succession to his sons Maximilian and Ferdinand. Finally in 1545 the Bohemian Estates confirmed that he inherited the title also by virtue of his marriage to Anne. On the contrary, Ferdinand I confirmed, that he was elected from a free will of Bohemian Estates and he acknowledged contracts concluded in the context of his election.<sup>41</sup> Jan Bažant pointed out the significance of this event dealing with heirs in connection with the FA monogram on the north-western corner of the Summer Palace, near the relief in question. I believe that the relief of Ferdinand I and Anne can refer to the same situation. Ferdinand was seeking a peaceful solution to his succession to the Bohemian throne that was motivated by his marriage to Anne Jagiello. Here we should recall that we do not know exactly when the relief was made, and the issue of Ferdinand's succession was a prolonged affair (the situation in Hungary was similar). If we relate the scene to the events in 1545, it would obviously affect the dating of the relief. We can perhaps conclude that the event highlights Anne's presenting Ferdinand with an olive branch, a symbol of peace, as a gift and Ferdinand is gathering the fruits of this marriage, and pledging his commitment.



**FIG. 1:** Ferdinand I of Habsburg and Anne Jagiello, Royal Summer Palace, Prague, sandstone (© Ústav pro dějiny umění AV ČR, v. v. i., Prokop Paul).

<sup>41</sup> For the importance of this wedding see Georg HEILINGSETZER, *Ein Baustein zur Entstehung der Habsburgermonarchie. Die Hochzeit Erzherzog Ferdinands in Linz (1521)*, in: W. Seipel (ed.), *Kaiser Ferdinand I.*, pp. 67–74; in 1521 the humanist scholar and poet Kaspar Ursinus Velius wrote a poem to mark Ferdinand and Anne's wedding; see *Mary of Hungary: The Queen and Her Court 1521–1531*, exhibition catalogue, Budapest 2005, pp. 161–162, No. I.13. For a specification of a historic situation I am indebted to Jaroslava Hausenblasová, who pointed my attention to the documents in National archives, Prague [Národní archiv Praha], especially Archiv České koruny [Archives of Crown of Bohemia], Sign. 2100; *Sněmy české od léta 1526 až po naši dobu I: 1526–1545* [Bohemian Assemblies since 1526 up to Our Time I, 1526–1545], Praha 1877, p. 637 and a note in Karl VOCELKA — Lynne HELLER, *Die private Welt der Habsburger*, Graz — Wien 1998, p. 202.



**FIG. 2:** Argument over a boar's head, Royal Summer Palace, Prague, sandstone (© Ústav pro dějiny umění AV ČR, v. v. i., Prokop Paul).



**FIG. 3:** In the desert Charles V accepts a helmet filled with water, Royal Summer Palace, Prague, plaster copy of a relief (© Ivan P. Muchka).



**FIG. 4:** FA monogram, Royal Summer Palace, Prague, sandstone (© Ivan P. Muchka).





**FIG. 5:** The Arnolfini Wedding, 1434, National Gallery, London ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Van\\_Eyck\\_-\\_Arnolfini\\_Portrait.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Van_Eyck_-_Arnolfini_Portrait.jpg), retrieved 13. 11. 2015).



**FIG. 6:** A detail with a twig from a relief depicting Ferdinand I of Habsburg and Anne Jagiello, Royal Summer Palace, Prague, plaster copy (© Ivan P. Muchka).



**RÉSUMÉ:**

The text discusses the most famous image in the sculptural decoration of the Royal Summer Palace in Prague Castle's Royal Garden, namely the relief portraying King Ferdinand I of Habsburg and his beloved wife Anne Jagiello (died 1547). This scene is why the building is known as Queen Anne's Summer Palace. A 19<sup>th</sup> century legend, explaining that Ferdinand I built the summer palace for the pleasure of the "last Bohemian Queen", as shown by the relief of Ferdinand giving Anne a fig branch, representing the palace, is still popular. In his extensive monograph on the Summer Palace Jan Bažant has suggested that the relief recalls the wedding of a pair, which is why both figures have a youthful appearance. To his opinion it is Anne who gives a sprig to his husband and this sprig is laurel, standing for victory.

The Arnolfini "Wedding" Portrait (1434) serves here as an iconic example presenting different iconographic solutions. The Prague relief is a typical double portrait of husband and wife, facing one another in profile in a declaration of love and fidelity. This kind of depiction commemorates a long-lasting union. The relief may be related to the marriage also by the symbolism of Anne giving Ferdinand a dowry. Amongst visual symbols on the relief, a twig is of special significance. A detailed examination of the relief while it was being restored in 2004–2010 revealed that this twig is most probably an olive branch. An olive tree has pagan and biblical origins and is an unambiguous symbol of peace.

Most of the Summer Palace's portrait reliefs take their meaning from specific political situations. The life of married pair had many such events relating to Anne, especially because as a maiden she was the heiress to Bohemia. After her wedding to Ferdinand I the Bohemian Estates considered that she had forfeited this claim and Ferdinand became King of Bohemia by being elected. Finally in 1545 the Bohemian Diet was forced to announce that Ferdinand I had become King of Bohemia also by inheriting the title by virtue of his marriage. The relief of Ferdinand I and Anne can refer to this situation. Ferdinand was seeking a peaceful solution to his but also his sons's succession to the Bohemian throne. The issue of Ferdinand's succession was a prolonged affair, but if we relate its iconography to the events of 1545, this will specify the dating between 1545–1550. On the relief, Ferdinand is gathering the fruits of his marriage, and pledging his commitment; or, he wants to be represented this way.

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