

"Peintre de Sa Majesté Britannique". Franz Adolph of Freenthal and his portrait of Maximilian Hamilton, Prince-Bishop of Olomouc

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Abstract

This essay examines the portrait of Maximilian von Hamilton (1714-1776), the last Prince-Bishop of Olomouc/Olmütz, painted between 1769 and 1772 by Franz Adolph of Freenthal (1721-1773), a former painter to the British royal court. The study focuses in turn on three visual motifs in Hamilton's portrait: the rhetorical gestures of the sitter, his attire and the way he is depicted, and the form of presentation and the function of the painting in the ceremonial space of the princely residence. In examining each of these motifs, account is taken of the specific visual conventions applied in this genre, and of the contemporary rules of visual rhetoric. By referencing the classical motif of modesty and moderation from antiquity, Adolph underlined the importance of the ideal of antiquity and with it "natural" speech and behaviour. He attempted to express the spirit of antiquity by comparing contemporary clothing and rhetorical gestures to those of the orators or other public figures of antiquity. In a similar way to contemporary British painters, he thus referenced models taken from antiquity, with the aim of evoking a noble past and representing the ideal of the virtue of antiquity.

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"A man of many English passions"

- [1] On the last Saturday in September in the year 1769, the painter Franz Adolph (1721-1773) announced his arrival in the antechambers of Maximilian von Hamilton (1714-1776), the last Prince-Bishop of Olomouc/Olmütz. The forty-eight-year-old artist, a noted portraitist, was the proud bearer of the aristocratic title "of Freenthal", and also the honorary title of former court painter to the British King. The main reason for his visit to the Prince-Bishop's residence in Kroměříž/Kremsier was to sign and seal a contract for the decoration of the "Large Dining Hall" – the main ceremonial hall of the Bishop's residence.¹ The painter undertook to produce a full-length life-size portrait of the Bishop,

¹ The creation of the hall in the years 1769-1772 is documented by the collection of archive material deposited in the Zemský archiv Opava, pobočka Olomouc [Provincial Archives in Opava,

and also three huge ceiling paintings on canvas, whose theme was to be a historical and moral exposition of the Bishop's device *Sola nobilitat virtus* (Only virtue ennobles).



1 Franz Adolph of Freenthal, Martin Karl Keller, *Large Dining Hall*, 1769-72. Archiepiscopal Chateau, Kroměříž (photograph
© Martin Mádl, Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague)

[2] Franz Adolph (Adolphe and Adolf are also found) came from the Moravian town of Mikulov/Nikolsburg, situated on the estate of the princely family of the Dietrichsteins, less than a hundred kilometres from Kroměříž. His father Josef Franz Adolf (ca. 1685-1762) had worked there in the service of the Dietrichsteins as court painter, specialising

Olomouc branch] (hereafter referred to as ZAO-OI), collection Ústřední správa arcibiskupských statků [Central administration of the Archbishop's estates] (hereafter referred to as ÚRAS), inv. no. 12884, box 1713. – Part of the archive material has been published by Jiří Kroupa, who is also the author of a generally accepted interpretation of Adolph's paintings in the Large Dining Hall; see Jiří Kroupa, "Prameny k výzdobě Sněmovního sálu kroměřížského zámku" [Sources on the Decoration of the Assembly Hall in Kroměříž Chateau], in: *Zpravodaj Muzea Kroměřížska* [Newsletter of Kroměříž Museum] 3 (1980), 27-29. – Jiří Kroupa, "Materiálie k dějinám baroku na Moravě" [Materials on the History of Baroque in Moravia], in: *Studia minora facultatis philosophicae universitatis brunensis* F 32/33, 1988/89, 89-94. – JK [Jiří Kroupa], "Franz Adolph of Freenthal," in: Milan Togner (ed.), *Kroměříž Picture Gallery: Catalogue of the Painting Collection in the Archbishop's Palace in Kroměříž*, Kroměříž 1999, 40-46. – The contract between Hamilton and Adolph has been published in: Antonín Breitenbacher, *Dějiny arcibiskupské obrazárny v Kroměříži* [History of the Archbishop's Picture Gallery in Kroměříž] I, Kroměříž 1925, CXXIII-CXXV. – Adolph's drafts for the design of the Large Dining Hall from the ÚRAS holding have been published by Jarmila Vacková, "Nové poznatky k stavební historii Kroměříže" [New Insights into the Construction History of Kroměříž], in: *Umění/Art* 5 (1957), 252-254.

in particular in painting animals and hunting still lives.² His children followed in his footsteps – Karl Josef (1715-1771), who as court painter to the Bishops of Olomouc devoted himself to the same genre as his father; his daughter Theresia, whose married name was Girot (before 1715-1776), and about whose paintings only a few fragmentary references have been preserved; and possibly the youngest child Josef Anton (1729-after 1773), about whom, however, we know virtually nothing.³ The most prominent member of the Adolf family was the middle son Franz (1721-1773), who, after studying in Vienna and spending a short time in Paris, settled in the 1750s and 1760s in Great Britain, where he is said to have acquired the aristocratic title mentioned above, and also the title of painter extraordinary to the British royal court.⁴ After his return to Central Europe at the end of the 1760s he made a living as a portrait painter at the imperial court in Vienna, and in the 1770s is mentioned as inspector of the gallery in the Viennese town palace of the Dietrichstein family in the Herrengasse.⁵ In the eyes of the erudite sculptor from Brno, Andreas Schweigl, who was the author of the first book on art history in Moravia, Adolph personified the ideal of the well-travelled and sociable artist of the age of the Enlightenment, a man of "*great eloquence and many English passions*", whose work in Kroměříž is among the best that can be seen in Moravia.⁶

² Most of the biographical details for members of the Adolf family of painters (which in the literature are often accompanied by a number of errors and mistakes) are taken from the authentic written sources published in the article by Milan Čoupek, "Několik poznámek k životopisu malířské rodiny Adolfů" (Adolph) [Some Notes on the Biographies of the Adolf (Adolph) Family of Painters], in: *Vlastivědný věstník moravský* [Moravian Gazette for National History and Geography] 43 (1991), 179-184. – See also Jkp [Jiří Kroupa], "Adolf (Adolph)," in: Anděla Horová (ed.), *Nová encyklopédie českého výtvarného umění* [New Encyclopaedia of Czech Visual Art] I, A-M, Praha 1995, 18-19. – Alois Gehart and Ivo Krsek, "Adolph (Adolf, Adolff)," in: *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon: Die Bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, München/Leipzig 1992, 405.

³ The Christian name Josef Antonín is sometimes given in the literature to the painter Adolph who worked in Great Britain in the 1750s and 1760s; see e.g. Hans Heinrich Füssli, "Adolph (Joseph)," in: Johann Rudolph Füssli and Hans Heinrich Füssli, *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon, oder kurze Nachricht von dem Leben und den Werken der Maler, Bildhauer, Baumeister, Kupferstecher, Kunstgiesser, Stahlschreiber etc.*, 2. Theil, Zürich 1806. – Wilhelm Schram, "Adolph, Jos. Ant.," in: Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, 1. Band, Leipzig 1907, 87-88. – However, written sources from the Moravian archives, including the deed of inheritance of his father from 1761, the painter's will from 1773, and the contract with Bishop Hamilton, clearly link the sojourn in the British Isles with Franz Adolph. See Čoupek, "Několik poznámek k životopisu malířské rodiny Adolfů" [Some Notes on the Biographies of the Adolf Family of Painters], 182.

⁴ Johann Peter Cerroni, *Skizze einer Geschichte der bildenden Künste in Mähren*, Brünn 1807, manuscript deposited in: Moravský zemský archiv v Brně [Moravian Provincial Archives in Brno] (hereafter referred to as MZA), fond G 12 (Cerroni collection), Cerr. I, inv. no. 34, fol. 6-7.

⁵ Čoupek, "Několik poznámek k životopisu malířské rodiny Adolfů" [Some Notes on the Biographies of the Adolf Family of Painters], 182.

⁶ Andreas Schweigl, *Anmerkungen der bildenden Künste in Betreff der schönen Gebäude, Mallereien und Statuen in Mähren*, manuscript deposited in: MZA, fond G 11 (Františkovo muzeum) – Manuscripts, inv. no. 196. Cited from the edited version: Cecilie Hálová-Jahodová, "Ondřej Schweigl: Bildende Künste in Mähren," in: *Umění/Art* 20 (1972), 168-187, here 175: "[...] Adolf ware ein geschickter Weldmann von vieler Historie, guter Beredsamkeit, hatte ein saftige Malart und viele englische Leidenschaften. Die ganze schöne Harmonie und gute Ausführung dieses Saals ist billig eines des gresten schönsten Werke in Mähren zu achten."

- [3] At the beginning, however, Adolph's position in Kroměříž was evidently not all that easy. His first contact with Maximilian Hamilton seems to have come through his brother Karl Josef, who was the Bishop's court painter.⁷ However, loud criticism was heard from the circle of the Bishop's courtiers and artists immediately after Adolph's first drafts for the decoration of the hall were presented in the summer of 1769. The leader of the opposition seems to have been the Bishop's court engineer and architect Johan Anton Krzaupal von Grünenberg, and it also probably included the sculptor Franz Hirnle, who had drawn up the first plans for the hall, but who was now relegated to the sidelines with the appointment of Adolph. Grünenberg even allegedly got into a dispute with Hamilton himself as a result of some remark he made about the Bishop and the artistic and even the ethical qualities of Adolph's painting.⁸ Adolph was therefore obliged to respond to the reservations of his opponents, declaring that while his composition was unusual, it was a noble one, and would bring nothing but honour to the Bishop.⁹
- [4] According to Jiří Kroupa, the cause of the dispute seems to have been Adolph's unusual interpretation of an otherwise conventional theme.¹⁰ For the painter, in the spirit of contemporary Enlightenment criticism of Baroque iconographic programmes, rejected the usual devices of Baroque emblematics and based his approach on historical (or mythological) and moralising narrative. At the same time it is paradoxical that most of the iconographic motifs used by Adolph were taken from an older written concetto drawn up after a design by the grand master of Austrian ceiling painting, Franz Anton Maulbertsch (1734-1796). Maulbertsch had originally been commissioned to decorate the Large Dining Hall in 1760, but eventually after the death of Hamilton's predecessor Leopold von Egkh nothing had come of this.¹¹ This original conception had been

⁷ Hálová-Jahodová, "Ondřej Schweigl: Bildende Künste in Mähren," 175. – Johann Peter Cerroni also mentioned the role of the Bishop's brother Anton Johann Hamilton (1722-1776), field marshal in the Habsburg army, who was staying in London around the year 1750, and is said to have supported Adolph there, see Cerroni, *Skitze einer Geschichte der bildenden Künste in Mähren*, fol. 6. – Bishop Hamilton and his siblings came from the family of James Hamilton, Duke of Châtellerault (ca. 1516-1575), grandson of Mary Queen of Scots and regent of Scotland in the years 1554-1565. The Austrian and Moravian branch of the family was descended from James Hamilton, 2nd Lord Paisley, 1st Earl of Abercorn (1606-1618), whose grandson Alexander, while in the service of the Electors Palatine, became Count of the Holy Roman Empire at the end of the 17th century and acquired estates in Moravia and Hungary, and whose great-grandson Julius Franz Xaver Leopold (died 1759), the father of Bishop Hamilton, acted as Court Councillor to the Bavarian Elector in Munich, and later at the imperial court in Vienna. Sir James Balfour Paul, *The Scots Peerage: founded on Wood's edition of Sir Robert Douglas's The Peerage of Scotland*, Edinburgh 1904, vol. I, 47-48.

⁸ Breitenbacher, *Dějiny arcibiskupské obrazárny v Kroměříži* [History of the Archbishop's Picture Gallery in Kroměříž], 79.

⁹ Letter from Adolph dated 26 November 1769, in: ZAO-OI, ÚŘAS, inv. no. 12884, box 1713, fol. 182-183.

¹⁰ Kroupa, "Prameny k výzdobě Sněmovního sálu kroměřížského zámku" [Sources on the Decoration of the Assembly Hall in Kroměříž Chateau], 28.

¹¹ Klara Garas, *Franz Anton Maulbertsch*, Budapest 1960, 49-50. – Franz Martin Haberditzl, *Franz Anton Maulbertsch*, Wien 1977, 147-149. – Lubomír Slavíček, "Franz Anton Maulbertsch et son cercle en Moravie," in: Jiří Kroupa (ed.), *La Moravie a l'âge Baroque 1670-1790. Dans le miroir des ombres*, exh. cat., Paris 2002, 217-231.

introduced by the statement that in a place of relaxation and refreshment "*pleasant poetry is appropriate*", such as *The Banquet of the Gods at the Wedding of Peleus and Thetis*, *Parnassus* with the Muses playing music and the Graces dancing, or *The Judgement of Paris* with the choice of pleasure in the terrestrial world.¹² In Adolph's interpretation, however, the original "*light-hearted pictures after the painter's fantasy*" (*Schertzbilder nach des Mahlers Fantasie*) became a moral exposition of the Bishop's device *Only virtue ennobles (Sola nobilitat virtus)*. (Figs. 2-4)



2 Franz Adolph of Freenthal, *Marriage of Thetis and Three Graces (Victory of Love)*, 1769-72. Archiepiscopal Chateau, Kroměříž (photograph © Martin Mádl, Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague)



3 Franz Adolph of Freenthal, *Abduction from the Bed of Sensuousness (Victory of Wisdom and Authority)*, 1769-72. Archiepiscopal Chateau, Kroměříž (photograph © Martin Mádl, Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague)

¹² ZAO-OI, ÚŘAS, ref. 30/21-3, box 1713, fol. 5-7: "dass die Mahlerey des Saales in Betrachtung, dass es ein locus refectionis ist, in lauter angenehmen Poesien und Allegorien gestehen solle."



4 Franz Adolph von Freenthal, *The Apotheosis of the Olomouc Bishop Maximilian Hamilton (Allegory of the family motto "Sola nobilitat virtus")*, 1769-72. Archiepiscopal Chateau, Kroměříž (photograph © Martin Mádl, Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague)

- [5] Nevertheless, it was precisely because he combined the higher genre of morally instructive allegory with the lighter genre of poetry, thus introducing into Baroque dining halls and summer palaces an easygoing playfulness, sensuousness, and relaxation from omnipresent ceremonial, that Adolph turned on its head the typical principle of Baroque rhetoric, calling for forms that were suitable and appropriate for the given function and content (*decorum, bienséance*).
- [6] The series of unwritten ethical and aesthetic rules and conventions, often derived from the ceremonial function of the rooms for which the majority of 17th- and 18th-century paintings were created, and which fundamentally influenced and shaped the form of the pictorial depiction, is also evident in the distinctive genre of the portraits of the Prince-Bishops of Olomouc. In this context, too, Adolph's portrait of Maximilian Hamilton in the Large Dining Hall of the chateau in Kroměříž (Figs. 5-6) represents a fairly unconventional work, although this unconventionality is displayed in seemingly marginal details. However, in the following exposition we will try to show that it is precisely these details that may be the key to deciphering and understanding the work as a whole and its meaning. In Hamilton's portrait we find at least three motifs that are important for visual interpretation: a) the gestures of the sitter, b) the composition of the painting and the position of the sitter within the pictorial space, and c) the position and function of the painting in the space where it was displayed.



5 Franz Adolph of Freenthal, *Portrait of Maximilian von Hamilton*, 1769-72. Archiepiscopal Chateau, Kroměříž
(photograph © Martin Mádl, Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague)



6 Franz Adolph of Freenthal, *Portrait of Maximilian von Hamilton*, 1769-72. Archiepiscopal Chateau, Kroměříž
(photograph © Zdeněk Sodoma, Olomouc Museum of Art – Kroměříž Archdiocesan Museum)

The portrait of Maximilian Hamilton and the tradition of Baroque rhetoric

[7] In painting a full-length lifesize portrait of Maximilian Hamilton, Franz Adolph of Freenthal chose the format of an official state portrait of the court of Maria Theresa, the origin of which was linked primarily with the name of the imperial court painter and director of the Viennese Academy Martin van Meytens II (1695-1770).¹³ It was Meytens's portrait of the Prince-Bishop of Olomouc Ferdinand Julius von Troyer in 1746 which became the basic model for official portraits of the Bishops and Archbishops of Olomouc essentially up until the beginning of the 20th century. (Fig. 7)



7 Martin van Meytens II, *Portrait of Ferdinand Julius Cardinal von Troyer*, 1746. Archiepiscopal Chateau, Kroměříž
(photograph © Markéta Ondrušková, Olomouc Museum of Art – Kroměříž Archdiocesan Museum)

[8] Its basic function was to represent social distinction and the ethical qualities of the ruler such as princely magnificence, justice, and clemency. To this end Meytens developed or

¹³ Rudolf E. O. Ekkart et al., "Mijtens," in: *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T057936pg4> (accessed 20 August 2012). – The portrait of Cardinal Troyer has until now been attributed to the leading Central European portrait painter Franz Anton Palko; see e.g. JK [Jiří Kroupa], "Franz Anton Palko, Cardinal Ferdinand Julius, Count Troyer, Bishop of Olomouc," in: Milan Togner (ed.), *Kroměříž Picture Gallery: Catalogue of the Painting Collection in the Archbishop's Palace in Kroměříž*, Kroměříž 1999, 261-264. – A more in-depth analysis of this painting, including its attribution to Meytens, can be found in more detail in the forthcoming book Pavel Suchánek, *Odhánění noci. Umění a duchovní aristokracie na Moravě v 18. století* [Keeping the Dark at Bay. Art and the Clerical Aristocracy in 18th-Century Moravia], Brno 2012 [with the printers].

introduced a whole series of striking pictorial devices – for example, situating Bishop Troyer in a monumental architectural setting, depicting symbols of authority and magnificence and using them as important elements in the composition of the painting (e.g. an ermine cappa magna and a velvet baldachin), or carefully arranging and precisely depicting the material qualities of the jewels and other luxury attributes of Troyer's office (a princely crown and a bishop's mitre, a sumptuously gilded table with a marble desktop). But what will interest us here are two other motifs: the gestures of the hands and the body language.

- [9] These two elements are connected with two key terms used in the theory of portraiture at that time: "air" and "attitude". Understandably, the majority of early modern art theorists did not attach nearly as much intellectual value to portrait painting as they did to historical painting, which was considered the noblest genre in the painting hierarchy. On the contrary: in the eyes of Renaissance and Baroque academic theory, portraiture was in principle not a sister art to poetry, was not supposed to portray feelings, emotions, or passions, and the suspicion lingered that it was concerned only with mechanical imitation of reality. The first serious attempts to establish artistic and intellectual criteria for a new evaluation of portrait work date only from the beginning of the 18th century – as does the use of the two terms mentioned above.¹⁴ The term "air" is in a certain sense genuinely connected with reality: in a painting its most striking manifestation is movement, most often gesture. By contrast, the term "attitude" indicates stability, since it is connected with the expression of character. In other words, using attitude, the body language, or the way the subject is positioned within the space of the painting, it is possible to express or convey ideas. While "air" implies something real, whether it be the appearance or the manner of the sitter, the term "attitude" relates exclusively to the pictorial representation and the artist's inventiveness: the human subject is completely transformed by means of art. And because emotions and passions – the main tools of "noble" historical painting – were forbidden in portraiture, the portrait painter had to concentrate particularly on the correct gestures, body language, and attitude. The ideal examples and models for them, as with historical painting, were to be found primarily in the classical tradition: above all in the rhetoric of antiquity, extended to include the rules and conventions of contemporary oratory, and also the tradition of the sculpture of antiquity, which in the 18th century was essentially codified in several corpuses of binding models from antiquity.¹⁵

¹⁴ The first theorist to devote more attention to portraits was Gerard de Lairesse in his well-known handbook *Het Groot Schilderboek* from the year 1707, but it was not until Jonathan Richardson's text *Essay on the Theory of Painting* in 1715 that we find the first genuinely systematic approach to the art theory of portraiture. It is in Richardson that we find the two terms that we are considering here; cited after Arline Meyer, "Re-dressing Classical Statuary: The Eighteenth-Century 'Hand-in-Waistcoat' Portrait," in: *The Art Bulletin* 77 (1995), 45-62.

¹⁵ An important role in this respect was played, in particular, by the treatise *Raccolte di statue antiche e moderne* by Domenico de Rossi from the year 1704. See too the chapter "Control and Codification," in: Francis Haskell and Nicolas Penny, *Taste and Antique. The Lure of Classical*

- [10] As we have just said, the term "air" is connected primarily with gestures. In Adolph's portrait of Maximilian Hamilton, the right hand is hidden in the folds of the drapery. The only visible gesture is therefore that of the Bishop's left arm, which is extended sideways roughly to the level of the waist. The palm is turned upwards with the forefinger raised and the remaining fingers flexed. Even a superficial glance shows that the Bishop's gesture in Adolph's painting is completely identical with the gesture of Hamilton's predecessor Cardinal Troyer in the portrait by Meytens mentioned above. However, there is one fundamental difference between the two paintings. In the older one, which has been located under a baldachin in the hall of the Bishop's feudal court in the Kroměříž residence since it was painted in 1746, we see Bishop Troyer full face. His gaze and his rhetorical gesture were clearly directed at the viewer, whether they were participants in proceedings of the feudal court or attending other ceremonials at the Bishop's court.¹⁶ While the scene in Adolph's painting of Bishop Hamilton is identical, this time we see him in profile – here, the Bishop's hand is not directed towards the viewer, but towards somewhere in the background of the painting. This, however, has at least one important consequence for an understanding of the painting: what was previously a clear rhetorical gesture now becomes essentially unreadable for the viewer, and the question logically presents itself, whether in this case we are also dealing with a rhetorical gesture addressed directly at the observer of the painting. Is Hamilton's gesture perhaps directed at a fictional viewer, standing hypothetically somewhere to the right in front of the Bishop? Or could the movement of the Bishop's hand be connected rather with the attributes of the episcopal office that lie in front of him?
- [11] Strangely enough, it is not possible to make a completely clear-cut answer to these seemingly simple questions. Judging from the position of the table (which incidentally is quite identical with the one in the Meytens portrait), and from the shadow that the figure of Hamilton throws on the floor, it would seem that the table is standing directly in front of the Bishop and that his gesture is thus not directed at it, but somewhere beside it in the pictorial space. However, even if we assume that the Bishop's gesture is intended for a hypothetical viewer situated somewhere on the right in the pictorial space, Adolph's composition would still not make a great deal of sense, because Hamilton's gesture would be at least partly hidden from the viewer by the table with the princely crown and the Bishop's mitre. For the time being, then, we can conclude our examination by saying that

Sculpture 1500-1900, New Haven/London 1994, 23-30.

¹⁶ Events that took place in the feudal court hall included taking the feudal vows of loyalty to the Bishops, and it was here that the enthronement ceremony of a new bishop started. It was in this hall in 1759 that Franz Anton Maulbertsch created his famous fresco with the celebration of the feudal system of the Bishops of Olomouc and its history; see e.g. Garas, *Franz Anton Maulbertsch*, 47-49. – Haberditzl, *Franz Anton Maulbertsch*, 134-148. – Antonín Jirka, "Totus erat caesareus. Das Programm des Frescos von Franz Anton Maulbertsch im Lehnsaal des Schlosses von Kremsier," in: *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Gallerie* 32-33 (1980-1989), 5-17. – Michaela Šeferisová Loudová, "Maulbertsch and Stern in Kroměříž – On the history of two paintings," in: *Acta historiae artium* 50 (2009), 95-105.

while the rhetorical gesture in the portrait of Ferdinand Julius Troyer was depicted fully in the spirit of contemporary rules and principles of public oratory and was undoubtedly addressed directly to the viewer standing in front of the painting, in the portrait of Maximilian Hamilton the identical gesture was deliberately made unclear by the unusual composition of the painting.

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The rhetoric of antiquity and the reform of portrait painting

- [12] In spite of these ambiguities, there exist a number of reasons for assuming that an observant viewer who was familiar with contemporary rhetorical rules for public speaking would still have been able to identify the Bishop's gesture in Adolph's portrait fairly easily. It was in fact an *adlocutio*, a widespread rhetorical gesture signifying either greeting and welcome, or clemency and benevolence, or both elements together.¹⁷ However, while with Troyer's portrait the function of this gesture was clear at first glance (the painting "took the place of" the absent Bishop in the feudal court hall), in the portrait of Maximilian Hamilton the same feature, because of its ambiguity, became a motif for further visual interpretation.
- [13] And here we finally come to the crux of our problem. Naturally, Adolph's unusual approach to the portrait of Maximilian Hamilton did not come from nowhere, but was the result of searching for a new concept of the portrait as a modern artistic genre in the Enlightenment period. In other words: there is no doubt that the work we are looking at reacted to the new critical and intellectual evaluation of portraiture, not from the viewpoint of its traditional role in a ceremonial setting, but from the position of taste as the new criterion for assessment among the cultivated public. The painter from Mikulov was a direct witness of and participant in this search during his stay in Great Britain in the 1750s and 1760s, when he is said to have been granted his title of painter to the royal court for his equestrian portrait of the later King George III in 1755.¹⁸ And Franz Adolph of Freenthal, in creating his work in Kroměříž, was fully in line with the reforming attempts of British portraitists in combining the painting of the Bishop with the archetype of a Roman statesman or publicly active citizen, as conceived of in classical Roman sculpture.

¹⁷ On this traditional meaning of the gesture in the rhetoric of antiquity see Richard Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art. The Use of Gestures to Denote Status in Roman Sculpture and Coinage*, New Haven 1963, 68-69. – Similarly, John Bulwer, author of a well-known Baroque handbook of rhetoric, likewise interpreted this gesture in the sense of benevolence, kindness, or goodwill. Bulwer also emphasised the power of this gesture to elicit a strong emotional reaction in listeners; see John Bulwer, "The Canons of Rhetoricians Touching: The Artificial Managing of the Hand in Speaking," in: James W. Cleary, *Chiologia: or the Natural Language of the Hand and Chironomia: or the Art of Manual Rhetoric by John Bulwer*, London/Amsterdam 1974, 174.

¹⁸ This painting is known only from a graphic reproduction: Bernard Baron after Franz Adolph, *Equestrian Portrait of George, Prince of Wales*, 1755, engraving, 635 x 480 mm, signed *Adolphe Pinxit. B. Baron Sculpsit*.



8 Allan Ramsay, *Portrait of Norman, Twenty-second Chief of Macleod*, 1747. Collection of Macleod of Macleod, Dunvegan Castle, Isle of Skye (reproduction from: Alastair Smart, *Allan Ramsay. A complete catalogue of his paintings*, New Haven/London 1999, 29)

- [14] For it is only in this way that it is possible to explain the meaning of the unusual gesture of the right hand, which is completely lost in the folds of the long train of his episcopal cappa magna. It is this feature that lends the painting a certain dynamism, for the painter emphasised it in his composition through both the attitude of the sitter and the beam of light falling onto it and reflected on it. What is more important, however, is that although in his painting Adolph attired Maximilian Hamilton in clothing that was typical for an official state portrait of a Prince-Bishop of the Holy Roman Empire, he did so in a highly unconventional way. For Hamilton's cappa is not depicted in the way it is normally worn, but the Bishop has it thrown over his shoulder like a toga in antiquity. That this was the intention can be seen from a comparison with a number of portraits by Adolph's British contemporaries. For example, only two years before Adolph's arrival in London (1750) the outstanding British portrait painter Allan Ramsay (1713-1784) used a completely identical, explicitly "classical" approach in depicting the traditional Scottish plaid in which he attired Norman, Twenty-second Chief of Macleod (Collection of Macleod of Macleod, Dunvegan Castle, Isle of Skye). (Fig. 8) With this conceptual approach

Ramsay tried to meet the requirements of a number of contemporary critics who called for a genuinely modern, civic portrait recalling a noble past and representing the ideal virtues of antiquity.¹⁹ This motif of a visual parallel between the Scottish plaid and the toga of the ancient Romans – and thus by extension between modern virtues and those of antiquity – was later also used by the famous Roman painter Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787) in his original portrait of "A Scot in Rome" – *The Honourable Colonel William Gordon* from 1765/1766 (National Trust for Scotland, Fyvie Castle, Aberdeenshire).²⁰ (Fig. 9) However, these and other similar ways of expressing the spirit of antiquity by making contemporary clothing and rhetorical gestures look like the attire and gestures of the orators of antiquity are particularly characteristic of 18th-century British portraiture, and similar approaches, often considered to be a British invention, were used by a whole series of Adolph's British colleagues and rivals in their work. We will therefore probably not be mistaken if we look for an explanation for this particular motif in Hamilton's portrait in the British cultural and artistic milieu.



9 Pompeo Batoni, *Portrait of the Honourable Colonel William Gordon*, 1765/1766. National Trust for Scotland, Fyvie Castle, Aberdeenshire (reproduction from: Edgar Peters Bowron and Peter Björn Kerber, *Pompeo Batoni. Prince of Painters in Eighteenth-Century Rome*, New Haven/London 2008, 67)

¹⁹ David H. Solkin, "Great Pictures or Great Men? Reynolds, Male Portraiture and the Power of Art," in: *The Oxford Art Journal* 9 (1986), 44–45.

²⁰ Christopher M. S. Johns, "Portraiture and the Making of Cultural Identity: Pompeo Batoni's The Honourable Colonel William Gordon (1765–66) in Italy and North Britain," in: *Art History* 27 (2004), 382–411.

- [15] The original source of the motif of the arm wrapped in flowing clothing, worn in the manner of a toga, is to be found in classical rhetoric and sculpture.²¹ The Baroque rhetorical tradition had already associated this gesture with the moderate oratorical style of the ancient Greek rhetor and founder of a school of oratory, Aeschinus of Macedonia, which was seen as being to some extent a contrast to the dramatic rhetorical style of his rival Demosthenes. Aeschinus's gesture as an orator of concealing his hands in the folds of his clothing was therefore considered to be an expression of the modesty and unpretentiousness of the speaker, and was recommended for moderate and refined speeches.²² (Fig. 10)



10 Aeschinus, Roman marble copy after a Greek bronze original, before 79 CE. Museo Nazionale, Neapol (reproduction from: Francis Haskell and Nicolas Penny, *Taste and Antique. The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900*, New Haven/London 1994, 154)

²¹ On the visual motif of the Roman toga and its significance in the context of the newly defined, modern, moral and civic portrait in the 18th century, and also more generally on the representation of civic and public virtues by means of references to the rhetorical tradition of antiquity, see more detail in David Mannings, "Shaftesbury, Reynolds and the Recovery of Portrait-Painting in Eighteenth-Century England," in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 48 (1985), 319–328.

²² Cleary, *Chiropomia: or the Natural Language of the Hand and Chironomia*, 175–176.

- [16] The modern British interpretation of this otherwise universally understandable ancient gesture of modesty and restraint then, in the second half of the 18th century, had a direct influence, not only on the emergence of a whole series of portraits with the motif of a hand hidden in toga-clothing, but also on the establishment of a type of portrait that was similar in meaning (and no less popular), with the gesture of a hand inserted into a coat or waistcoat. This innovation was likewise used in a whole series of contemporary likenesses of British politicians, and Arline Meyer, in her study on the meaning of this motif in British portrait painting at that time, even pointed out a connection between this ancient gesture of Aeschinus and the patriotic demonstration of British virtues, where "Aeschinian" modesty and reasonableness were contrasted with French ("Demosthenian") theatricality and artificiality.²³ Thus, whether we have to do with an arm hidden after the manner of the orators of antiquity in clothing reminiscent of a toga, or with a hand inserted into modern clothing, in late 18th-century portraiture in both cases we are dealing with a modern interpretation of an ancient rhetorical gesture, evoking a noble past and establishing a parallel between the statesmanlike and political virtues of contemporary publically active figures and those of antiquity.

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The power of image, or the power of art?

- [17] At the same period, Franz Adolph of Freenthal decided to apply this specifically British creative approach in a milieu where the form of official portraits was still quite closely associated with the ceremonial character of the residence, and where movements, actions, and even the way paintings were perceived were tied to a whole series of unwritten rules and regulations. The conventions and restrictions of the genre can be clearly seen in Hamilton's portrait, for example in the type and manner of the conception of the pictorial space, in individual elements of the composition, and likewise in the attributes and signs of nobility and power. All of these elements are clearly taken from Meytens's canonical model.
- [18] However, unlike the portrait of Ferdinand Julius Troyer in the hall of the feudal court, Adolph's painting of Bishop Hamilton was not intended for a room bound by ceremonial and ritual rules, but for the Large Dining Hall, in other words a social space, in which, on the contrary, contemporary rules indicated that signs of distinction ought to be suppressed, and where the host and his guests behave and act on an equal footing. In such a room the function of the painting naturally changed as well. In this connection we should remind ourselves once more that Meytens's portrait of Bishop Troyer in the feudal court hall essentially "represented" the Bishop during the ceremonial of an official state audience, and that its "power" thus had its source in the direct experience of the

²³ Meyer, "Re-dressing Classical Statuary: The Eighteenth-Century 'Hand-in-Waistcoat' Portrait," 59.

encounter with it in the ritualised time and space of a Baroque residence. The same role of acting as a "representative" of the absent or distant Prince-Bishop was played by a copy of Meytens's painting, which hung in the garderobe of Troyer's princely palace in Brno, although it had no other practical purpose than being the centre of the world of the Bishop's courtiers.²⁴ In both cases the Bishop's portrait thus represented the absent authority, became the bearer of power, and thanks to its ritual use acquired – to use David Freedberg's phrase – "*the aura of a living presence*".²⁵

- [19] With his portrait, however, Franz Adolph of Freenthal shifted the whole genre of episcopal portraits into the category of *Art* in the modern sense of the word. He suppressed the traditional perception of such a painting by simply allowing the viewer to observe the scene of a state audience, not from the position of an active participant in the ceremony, but in the role of a disinterested observer, who watches the whole scene from the side and thus outside the direct range of the Bishop's strict gaze. He likewise suppressed the traditional rhetorical meaning of gestures by making unclear the movement of the Bishop's right hand (meaning "clemency" or "benevolence"), and, in referencing the ancient "Aeschinian" motif of modesty and moderation, he on the contrary emphasised the importance of the ideals of antiquity, and with them natural behaviour and action. Adolph also used several artistic devices that were more typical of historical painting, which ranked higher in the hierarchy. For example, the motif of the "toga" clothing, so important for the interpretation of the painting, did not receive the traditional descriptive treatment typical of portraits and motivated primarily by the attempt to capture the material qualities of the attributes of power and authority depicted in the painting. On the contrary, we find an almost academic study of drapery, executed with lavish brush strokes and the use of colour and light modelling. Furthermore, with its overall brightness of colouring, the portrait of Maximilian Hamilton programmatically develops and complements the cool, grey-green background, shot through with flashes of silver, of Adolph's *histories* on the ceiling of the hall.²⁶ Further features that correspond to the genre of historical painting are the *poetical* motifs of putti with vine tendrils and clusters of grapes, executed using the *trompe-l'œil* method on the imposing twisted columns in the background of Hamilton's portrait.

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The search for a natural portrait

- [20] We can thus consider Adolph's portrait of Maximilian Hamilton to be a painting that is situated on the borderline between two epochs in art history. On the one hand it does not

²⁴ ZAO-OI, Olomouc Archbishopric collection, inv. no. 3325a, shelf mark Tr5, box 1457.

²⁵ David Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago/London 1989, 234.

²⁶ For a formal analysis of Adolph's work in Kroměříž see Kroupa, "Frantz Adolph of Freenthal," 46.

deny its connection with the conservative tradition of the official court portraiture of the 18th century, but on the other its unconventional approach reveals a certain loss of confidence in the established conventions and traditional function of the genre. We should therefore see Adolph's work as one of the possible ways forward in the contemporary search for a new type of public art. The portrait is here being designated as a modern pictorial device, serving to express new moral and civic values, and the genre is being newly defined using modern criteria that are closely linked with the sentimental aesthetics of the time and the beginnings of modern art criticism.

- [21] At the same time we should emphasise that it is only "one of the possible ways forward". Franz Adolph of Freenthal himself would have been able to note several possible alternatives during the time he was working in Britain. He himself tended to follow in the footsteps of his Scottish contemporary and rival Allan Ramsay, several of whose portraits have incidentally recently been linked to Adolph.²⁷ In the matter of "attitudes" and "airs" Ramsay frequently opted to reference selected models from antiquity in the form of famous statues and to position them essentially in isolation in a more or less neutral or unimportant pictorial space. His aim was to evoke the ideal of the virtues of antiquity by means of isolated figures, programmatically emphasising the relevant model from antiquity, which was the main bearer of the meaning of the painting.²⁸
- [22] However, in the 1750s – in other words at the time of Ramsay's and Adolph's great successes at the British royal court – a completely new approach to portrait painting was being pioneered by their only slightly younger contemporary Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792). His concept of portraiture evoked the ideal of modern civic and public virtue by connecting this "lower" genre with another traditional source of cultural authority – the noble style of historical painting and its theory grounded in humanist values. While referencing antiquity does play a certain role in Reynolds's work, what is more obvious in his portraits is the attempt to suppress the traditional impact of a single isolated figure that plays the role of the principal bearer of the message of the portrait, and instead to tend towards a greater integration of the figure into the pictorial space and to aim at an overall unity of the work following the model of historical painting.²⁹ Reynolds's concept of portraiture, derived from a carefully thought-out intellectual and theoretical basis, and inspired by the traditions of 16th- and 17th-century classicist historical painting, naturally became one of the principal models for modern portraiture after the foundation of the Royal Academy in London in 1768.

²⁷ Cf. in particular the remarkable portrait of Caroline D'Arcy, fourth Duchess of Lothian, from around the year 1750 in the collections of the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh. I am grateful to the curator Helen Smailes for providing me with detailed information about this work.

²⁸ Solkin, "Great Pictures or Great Men? Reynolds, Male Portraiture and the Power of Art," 46.

²⁹ Solkin, "Great Pictures or Great Men? Reynolds, Male Portraiture and the Power of Art," 46-48. – Walter J. Hippel, "General and Particular in the Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Study in Method," in: *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 11 (1953), 231-247.

[23] Nevertheless, we should not overlook the fact that until his death in 1784 it was Allan Ramsay who was the Principal Painter in Ordinary in London, and that it was Franz Adolph of Freenthal who was chosen by the Empress Maria Theresa herself in 1770 to paint the last portrait of her daughter Marie Antoinette. This was made shortly before the Princess's wedding in Vienna and her departure for Versailles in April 1770.³⁰ And Maria Theresa is known for her exacting expectations of portraits of her favourite daughter and those who painted them. Her fascinating, almost obsessive desire to possess a "natural", i.e. emotional and sentimental, portrait of the Princess that would correspond to her "*image in [the Empress's] heart*" provides more than eloquent testimony to the way portrait painting was regarded and appreciated at that time.³¹ We do not know whether Franz Adolph of Freenthal lived up to his reputation as a genuinely inventive and modern portrait painter in the eyes of the Empress. However, at the same period Maximilian von Hamilton expressed an unequivocal view when he wrote that all of Adolph's work in Kroměříž was carried out "*with exceptional diligence, art and skill, with the best of taste, and to the greatest satisfaction of Ourselves and all those knowledgeable about art.*"³²

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³⁰ Adolph mentioned this portrait of Marie Antoinette, which has so far not been reliably identified, and the Princess's forthcoming "proxy" wedding in Vienna in April 1770, in a letter written to his brother Karl Josef in Kroměříž on 18 March 1770, in: ZAO-OI, ÚRAS, inv. no. 12884, box 1713, fol. 184-185. – See also Kroupa, "Materiálie k dějinám baroku [Materials on the History of Baroque]," 91-92.

³¹ Mary D. Sheriff, *Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art*, Chicago/London 1996, 158-165.

³² Hamilton's testimonial dated 12 December 1772, in: ZAO-OI, ÚRAS, inv. no. 12884, box 1713, fol. 204: "[...] mit sonderbahren Fleiss, Kunst und Geschicklichkeit, mithin nach dem besten Geschmack zu Unserer, und aller Kennern der Kunst vollkommenen Zufriedenheit, verfetiget habe."