The Hunt in the Performance of Archducal Rule: Endurance and Revival in the Habsburg Netherlands in the Early Seventeenth Century

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After decades of civil war, the archdukes Albert and Isabella drew on the princely hunt to consolidate their regime in the Habsburg Netherlands. In essence a performance of dominion, the hunt served to enact their exalted birth and the return to peace and order. Attempts to unify the hunting laws of their possessions were, however, frustrated by provincial liberties. As a result the archducal hunt had to derive its prestige from where it was held, rather than from the species that were hunted. Appropriating the cult of Saint Hubertus and patronizing artistic representations further enhanced the prestige of these locations.

INTRODUCTION

SOMETHING IS STIRRING in the early modern forests. Historians have long abandoned the romantic reverie that forests lay beyond the pale of productive society and merely existed to serve aristocratic pastimes. Only recently, however, have they also begun to consider them as political spaces.[1] Yet the boundary markers were out there all along. Forests constituted a separate administrative and judicial sphere. As the foremost providers of an essential commodity, they were brought under the purview of princely officials and of expert law courts.[2] As the habitat of the more prestigious species of game, their usage was

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference "Le Cacce reali nell'Europa dei Principi" at the Reggia di Venaria in Turin in November 2012. I wish to thank Houssine Alloul, Erol Baykal, Marnix Beyen, Henk De Smaele, Wannes Dupont, Dagmar Germonprez, Sarah Moran, Abigail Newman, Steven Thiry, Jim Van der Meulen, Maarten Van Ginderachter, Jonas Van Mulder, Karen Vannieuwenhuyse, and, in particular, Susan Koslow for their help, comments, and advice.

[1]The hunt as part of monarchical political culture is explored on a vast scale by Allsen. To this should be added the case studies of Goldberg; Hughes. Other recent contributions on the subject can be found in the volumes of essays by Corvol, d'Anthenaise, and Chatenet, and Bianchi and Passerin d'Entrèves, as well as in the *Royal Hunts Issue* of *The Court Historian*, 18/2 (2013).

[2]As treated by Warde.

Renaissance Quarterly 69 (2016): 116–54 © 2016 Renaissance Society of America.

https://doi.org/10.1086/686328 Published online by Cambridge University Press

concurrently controlled by hunting laws and rangers. Inextricably entangled in the world of privilege, the hunt bestowed prestige and asserted dominion, but could also serve to challenge positions of power.[3] The hunt and the forests may have been far removed from the rituals and settings that historians habitually associate with early modern political representation, but they nevertheless constituted a performative sphere unto their own.[4] In the Habsburg Netherlands of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries that sphere not only encompassed the spaces, infrastructure, game laws, and hunting practices, but seamlessly extended onto tapestries and paintings.[5] As such, it opened an alternative avenue to reassert dynastic rule after the upheavals of the Dutch Revolt.

THE PRINCELY HUNT AS PERFORMANCE OF DOMINION

In terms of performance, the princely hunt addressed multiple audiences. One was foreign, the others domestic. Taking a long-term and transcontinental view, Thomas T. Allsen has typified the princely hunt as a mechanism that was driven by "positive reciprocity" and that came to encompass most of the Eurasian continent.[6] Eager to emulate their fellow monarchs, rulers engaged in exchanging animals of the chase and their specialized caretakers, inviting foreigners to join hunting parties, and patronizing and disseminating artistic representations of hunting practices. Thus they elaborated an international repertoire that asserted sovereignty while providing a sphere of conversation and gift exchange that transcended differences in religion and culture.[7] Distinction, on the other hand, was the stock-in-trade on the domestic side. Here the hunt was part of an intricate economy of rule in which the prince was expected to enforce social as well as ecological boundaries. At least in Europe, the right to hunt was by definition a matter of privilege. Specialized officers and law courts policed the line between legal hunting and illicit poaching.[8] At the same time the hunt had become an ecological necessity in more densely populated areas such as the Low Countries. Bears had been driven to the brink of extinction for want of suitable habitats; wolves were being tracked down without mercy.[9] As a result,

[3]The performance of dominion is also dealt with by Christianson. For examples of the control over forests and game, see Pioletti; Derex; Boissière. See also Beaver, who demonstrates how royal authority could be challenged in hunting preserves.

[4]As in Silver, 170–82.

[5]Koslow, 1996 and 2011.

[6]Allsen, 268.

[7]Ibid., 268–77.

[8]Faider.

[9]De Schepper, 16–70.

https://doi.org/10.1086/686328 Published online by Cambridge University Press

deer and wild boar — by far the most prestigious quarries of the hunt — had fewer and fewer natural predators to contend with. Searching for food, these animals were prone to venture out of the cover of the hunting grounds onto neighboring fields. The damage that they caused could only be avoided by man keeping their numbers in check. Thus ecological necessities dovetailed with the symbolic performance of rule. It was for the prince to uphold the differences in social status as well as to enforce the borders between nature and culture.

Eric J. Goldberg has made a strong case for seeking the origins of the European format of the princely hunt in the reign of Louis the Pious (778–840). As evidenced by the chroniclers of the day, Charlemagne's successor cultivated the hunt to bolster his rule in several ways. Firstly, the princely hunt was preeminently an exercise in dominion, a way to mark possession of the land as well as power over nature. It harkened back to the aristocratic mores of Roman culture and as such gave substance to the imperial ideology that had recently been appropriated by the Carolingians. At the same time, it integrated cherished notions of Frankish martial prowess and bravery into the business of rule. As the consolidation of the empire's borders left very few opportunities to exhibit military capabilities on the battlefield, the court repaired to the forests for a demonstration of endurance and skill. Together, Roman traditions and Frankish bravura combined to portray Louis the Pious as the worthy son and heir of his illustrious father.[10]

Set in the clime of the Rajput principalities and the days of the British Raj, Julie E. Hughes's study of courtly hunting practices brings home their enduring significance for monarchical representation. The rise of British power in the subcontinent had compelled the Indian princes to renounce essential attributes of sovereignty, such as fighting wars or conducting diplomatic negotiations. In their absence, the princely hunt, or shikar, became an instrument to assert martial dexterity and sovereign domination. Progressing forth to put down a tiger, spear wild boar, or shoot black buck, the rajas engaged in an enactment that defined their dual roles as dazzling and benevolent rulers of their Indian subjects, and loyal if aloof vassals of their British suzerain.[11] Hughes furthermore describes the princes' predilection for hunting locations that had — in the days before British paramountcy — witnessed important military exploits of the dynasty.[12] With one foot in a glorious past and the other in an exquisite present, spaces mattered just as much as decorum.

In spite of the distances in space and time, the situation of the Rajput princes shows interesting similarities with those faced by the archdukes Albert (1559–1621) and Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566–1633) as rulers of the

[10]Goldberg, 623–24. See also Rösener, 26–34.

[11]Hughes, 4–12.

[12]Ibid., 186–205.

https://doi.org/10.1086/686328 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Habsburg Netherlands. In an attempt to extract the Spanish monarchy from the ruinous Dutch Revolt, King Philip II (1527–98) had ceded his possessions in the Netherlands as a dowry to his daughter and soon-to-be son-in-law. A careful reading of the Act of Cession of May 1598 reveals that the king intended to set up a cadet branch that would rule as sovereign princes, albeit in close collaboration with the senior branch in Spain. It was hoped that the new reign would usher in a return to peace and unity in the Low Countries and restore the monopoly of Roman Catholicism. Neither of these goals was ever fully attained. As a result the archducal regime was left in permanent need of Spanish military support and could only rarely afford the luxury of taking separate diplomatic initiatives.[13] Compared to the princely states of India, the regime's level of subordination may not have been as pronounced, yet its need to assert itself was nevertheless the same. The new regime faced a double challenge. Surrounded by mightier neighbors, it strove to make its mark as a middling power in the international arena. On the domestic front it sought to consolidate monarchical rule after three decades of revolt. On a mission to reconquer the hearts and minds of their subjects, Albert and Isabella turned to every available medium to strengthen the reputation of their regime and of their dynasty. Much like the Rajput princes — as this article purports to show — they were to instrumentalize hunting to these ends.

In the process, the hunt regained its performative function, enacting the exalted birth of the archdukes, the magnificence of their court, and the restoration of order and tranquility under their benefic rule. The muster was at hand. A century earlier, Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519) had fashioned his self-image for a considerable part on his skill as a hunter.[14] The memories of the exploits of Emperor Charles V (1500–58) and Mary of Hungary (1505–58) still lingered on.[15] Hence, all that was needed to restore the performative function was to revive the Burgundo-Habsburg tradition of hunting. Yet restoring it to its former glory would entail a lengthy and no less costly campaign in a country devastated by decades of civil war. The revolt had also caused great disorders in the forests. Six years into the reign an ordinance for the county of Flanders lamented that "everyone has taken the liberty to shoot at wild beasts, even at deer, which are often found killed."[16] Nature too seemed to be in rebellion. Wolves once again roamed in places where they had not been seen or heard for generations.[17] Such insolence made it imperative to reassert the

[13]Duerloo, 2012, 57–102.

[14]Silver, 170–82.

[15]Kerkhoffs, 163–73.

[16]*Recueil des ordonnances*, 1:231.

[17]De Schepper, 60–62, 185–94.

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legislative and judiciary prerogatives of the Crown regarding hunting. In a well-ordered realm, man and beast needed to be kept in their place.

There was a further complication. Most of the infrastructure of the archducal hunt was situated in the duchy of Brabant, and her denizens enjoyed extensive privileges with regard to hunting. Provided they steered clear of the ducal preserves, they were even entitled to hunt big game, be it deer or wild boar.[18] The archducal hunt could therefore not add to the luster of the regime by the nature of its quarry. Instead it had to derive its prestige from the area where the hunt took place, in particular by reconnecting with spaces that carried particular ancestral meaning. As it turned out, the foremost of these spaces held strong associations with the Carolingian court, a clear reminder of the tenacious influence exerted by the example that Louis the Pious had set for the European princely hunt.

Not every scholar subscribes to the political efficacy of the princely hunt though. To Paul Warde it was forestry rather than hunting that served as a basis for state formation in the early modern duchy of Württemberg. In an economy where wood was indispensable for construction, implements, and heating, a ruler could extend his powers by developing forestry law and seeing to its application. Considered a means to ensure a fair distribution of scarce resources, this legislation was generally accepted, if not always meticulously respected.[19] Hunting, on the other hand, is seen by Warde as a highly divisive exercise. While providing the excitement of the chase and the occasional benefit of firsthand inspection of the land for the duke and his entourage, it came at the price of burdening the peasantry with damaged crops, restrictions on keeping dogs, and imposed labor.[20] The grumbling acquiescence with which the Württemberg peasantry underwent all of this seems to have stood in sharp contrast to what went on in the English forests on the eve of the Civil War. The scene of brutal attacks leading to the slaughter of deer by the hundreds, the forests, chases, and parks were, in the words of Daniel Beaver, "dynamic political arenas" in which honor was defined in accordance with traditional assumptions, beliefs, and practices.[21] As the legitimacy of the Stuart regime crumbled, they witnessed the redress of grievances being acted out with a particular style of violence.[22] Yet the two approaches are only seemingly irreconcilable. In fact, it can be argued that they are essentially on a different time scale. The policies of forestry were measured at the pace it took a tree to grow to maturity. The politics of honor and dissent shared in the heat of the chase. Thus two perceptions of time cohabited

[18]Galesloot, 1854, 22–24.
[19]Warde, 174–80.
[20]Ibid., 206–13.
[21]Beaver, 268.
[22]Ibid., 8–11, 154–58.

https://doi.org/10.1086/686328 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the early modern forest. Usually they ran parallel. Occasionally they clashed head on.

Research into public ritual largely ignores the forest or issues of competing perceptions of time. Instead, it tends to be biased toward the singular and the spectacular. A considerable body of work minutely analyzes the messages that such ceremonies were meant to convey and speculates on how much of it all was actually understood by the assembled spectators.[23] The hunts of the archducal court — or for that matter those of any other ruler — did not qualify for such treatment. They took place without an elaborate ephemeral apparatus of floats, triumphal arches, and tableaux vivants. They ran their course far from the urban crowds. Then again, these hunts were not wholly without an audience either. The prince would be followed by part of his court and his staff of huntsmen. Those living in the vicinity could be called upon to perform labor. The casual passerby might observe the party as it rode out, shot by in hot pursuit, gathered for the kill, or returned for the evening. In keeping with ancient custom, one might even attempt to approach and address the prince.[24]

It is one of the underlying contentions of this article that — although it was only occasionally witnessed by outsiders — the daily grind of courtly ritual nonetheless contributed to the consolidation of the early modern state.[25] A subject need not have his feet washed by the archduke on Maundy Thursday or receive her basket of clothing from the infanta on the day of the Annunciation to be aware of the existence of such yearly rituals.[26] Knowing that they were performed regularly at the court of Brussels sufficed to propagate the aura of a benign monarchy. Nor would he have to accompany Albert and Isabella as they followed the procession of the most holy sacraments of miracles, or, for that matter, would she have to join a pilgrimage to the shrine of Scherpenheuvel and see for herself what novel architecture was under construction there.[27] Word of mouth, sermons, and cheap prints heralded how church and state were working in unison to return the Habsburg Netherlands to the Catholic fold. So it was with the archducal hunt. The depredations that were committed in the hunting preserves during the Dutch Revolt do not seem to have amounted to the indiscriminate slaughter that would erupt in England half a century later. Yet the challenge to Habsburg authority was there just the same, and the newly established archducal regime had no other option but to confront it.[28] The restoration of order in the forests was part and parcel of the overall restoration of

[23]For the Habsburg Netherlands, see Soly; Thøfner.

[24]Silver, 171–72.

[25]Emich, 195–96.

[26]Duerloo, 2012, 111.

[27]Ibid., 405–06; Duerloo and Wingens, 71–155.

[28]Pierron, 2:224–25, 323.

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peace and justice that the new sovereigns sought to bring about.[29] In fact, it represented that restoration in those parts of the Habsburg Netherlands that could be said to lie beyond the pale of ordinary society. Separated from the cities by walls and from the villages by boundary markers, the forests constituted a zone set apart for nature, a zone that was, moreover, particularly vulnerable to disorder and lawlessness. Given these circumstances the resumption of the seasonal rituals of the hunt by the archducal court constituted a performative reassertion of dominion.

Susan Koslow has argued convincingly on a number of occasions that some of the foremost Netherlandish painters of the generation responded to the ongoing renewal of the hunt. The *Wolf and Fox Hunt* — the colossal visual manifesto through which Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) sought to bring a new sense of drama to the genre of the hunting scene — was clearly inspired by recent legislation on the subject.[30] More or less at the same time Frans Snyders (1579–1659) and his workshop engaged in the production of hunting scenes and of still lifes with venison that appealed to patrons eager to display their seigniorial lifestyle.[31] It has so far not become clear, however, whether these innovations constituted a functional contribution by artists to the archducal policies regarding the hunt. They may, for that matter, have merely been independent initiatives cleverly cashing in on an upcoming trend. Either way, the renewal of the genre indicated that the instrumentalization of the hunt by the archducal regime should not be studied solely in terms of its infrastructure, regulation, or indeed practice. It should also cover how the regime employed artistic projects and representations to leave its mark.

THE RESTORATION OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE

At the time of their accession, the archdukes Albert and Isabella found the princely hunt in a sorry state. Three decades without a permanent Habsburg court in Brussels had inevitably led to neglect. War and rebellion had taken a heavy toll on the preexisting infrastructure. Within a few miles of the Koudenberg palace in Brussels lay the Sonian Forest. Situated toward the east and southeast of the capital, it comprised roughly 10,000 hectares (25,000 acres) of hunting grounds stocked with everything from deer and wild boar down to partridges and quails.[32] Hunting parties would set forth from the castle of Tervuren, an ancient retreat of the dukes of Brabant on the northern edge of the forest. The castle was surrounded by a deer park and the falconers' aviary stood

[29]Duerloo, 2012, 53–54.

[30]Koslow, 1996, 700–02.

[31]Koslow, 1995, 219–57; Koslow, 2011.

[32]Pierron, 1:96–102.

https://doi.org/10.1086/686328 Published online by Cambridge University Press

among its outbuildings.[33] On the western fringe of the forest at Bosvoorde a rambling assembly of buildings housed the staff of the princely hunt, including kennels for the hounds, storage for fodder and equipment, and a prison for poachers who had been apprehended.[34] Alternatively, the court could repair south to the woodlands of Hainaut and engage in the hunt at Mariemont. The domain had been conceived by Mary of Hungary — whose passion for the hunt was well known — as a hunting lodge annexed to her country seat at nearby Binche. Due to the modest size of the grounds, they had to be periodically restocked with game from the Sonian Forest.[35]

Mariemont had only seen a few seasons of active use. A mere four years after its completion the army of King Henry II of France (1519–59) singled it out for exemplary retaliation in the summer of 1554, setting fire to the buildings, wreaking havoc in the gardens, and cutting down trees in the lanes and woods. It took until 1560 for most of the domain to be restored. By that time Mary of Hungary had retired to Spain, soon to be followed by the royal court. During the Dutch Revolt military operations in the area resulted in further depredations in 1572 and 1578. In the absence of princely hunters, only the more urgent repairs were undertaken.[36] Meanwhile, order broke down in the Sonian Forest. The instructions of the duke of Alva (1507–82) to arm a company of rangers proved to little avail.[37] The forest became the refuge of freebooters who did not shy from pillaging and burning down the complex at Bosvoorde in 1584. Three years later they even ambushed and slaughtered the lieutenant grand huntsman and five of his companions.[38]

Change came in many guises after the advent of the archdukes. On 4 November 1599 — two months after Albert and Isabella made their solemn entry in Brussels — they appointed Philippe de Rubempré, Lord and future Count of Vertaing (d. 1639), to the post of grand huntsman of the duchy of Brabant, and as such their principal officer in charge of the hunt in the Sonian Forest.[39] Six months later, on 29 May 1600, Charles de Ligne, Princely Count of Arenberg (1550–1616), became the new grand falconer of the Habsburg Netherlands.[40] Both were among the gentlemen of the bedchamber, the innermost circle of noblemen in the archducal entourage.[41] Changes in

[33]Ibid., 2:334, 399–404.

[34]Ibid., 2:249–52.

[35]Wellens, 1958–61, 98–101, 117–19.

[36]Ibid., 119–33, 138–43.

[37]Anselmo, Christyn, and Wouters, 3:517–18.

[38]Pierron, 2:224–25, 323.

[39]Ibid., 2:174–76.

[40]*Een stad en een geslacht*, 58.

[41]Raeymaekers, 76–77.

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management were also taking place in Mariemont. When still governor-general on behalf of Philip II, Albert had put a minor official, Denis de le Forge (d. 1614), in charge of the upkeep of the domain.[42] This appointment was followed, on 23 January 1597, by that of Gérard de Croÿ, Lord of Fromensen (d. 1609), as the new governor of Binche and keeper of Mariemont.[43] Fromensen was almost simultaneously sworn in as mayordomo, an office that ensured efficient lines of communication with the archducal court.[44] De le Forge saw his duties increased when he was also made responsible for the deer park on 26 September 1601. According to his instructions, he had to check the fencing on a daily basis, preserve the game from poachers and predators, keep track of the number of animals, and generally ensure their wellbeing.[45]

In the meantime, the instructions for those serving the archducal hunt at Bosvoorde had been revised through the ordinance of 28 June 1600. It reiterated and amended a similar directive issued by Mary of Hungary in 1543. The technical sophistication of the original text certainly confirmed Mary's reputation as a devoted follower of Diana. Everything relating to the hunt was minutely laid down, ranging from the different feeding times of the dogs in summer or winter to the exercise they required during Lent. Other articles stipulated which valet of the bloodhounds had the privilege of cutting up the slain deer or boar and what cuts ought to be sent to the palace kitchens. The archdukes confirmed almost all of these arrangements. They did, however, replace the traditional emoluments of the office of grand huntsman with a yearly wage of 1,200 pounds Artois,[46] ordered the abolition of three posts, granted the remaining staff a substantial raise in wages, and took measures to ensure regular payments.[47] The financial situation remained unsatisfactory, however, which led to a further ordinance being issued on 12 January 1613 to sort out which contributions in species or in kind were due to the administration of the hunt.[48]

In the wake of the new instructions, five men were hired in the course of 1601, with three more joining the archducal hunt over the next two years. The total number of permanent staff then stood at twenty-two. Apart from the lieutenant grand huntsman, a steward, and three mounted huntsmen, there were now five valets for the bloodhounds, seven for the greyhounds, and two for the

[42]Wellens, 1958–61, 138.

[43]Demeester, 245.

[44]Raeymaekers, 67–71.

[45]Demeester, 246.

[46]Pounds Artois was the standard monetary unit of accounting in the Habsburg Netherlands. Its value was equal to that of the local guilder, and the exchange rate came down to around six pounds Artois to the English pound. It is used throughout this text.

[47]Anselmo, Christyn, and Wouters, 3:508–14.

[48]*Recueil des ordonnances*, 2:160–62.

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pack. The rest of the staff was made up of two apprentices and a huntsman who lived in Brussels and took care of a number of dogs there.[49] To these numbers should furthermore be added a captain and a company of fifteen mounted rangers. They patrolled the Sonian Forest in search of poachers, took their orders from the lieutenant grand huntsman, and were stationed at Tervuren.[50]

The opening years of the archducal regime were, to put it mildly, difficult.[51] The ongoing war against the United Provinces seemed to claim all available resources. Albert and Isabella nevertheless found means to invest in the hunt. Between 1599 and 1601 they acquired through purchase or exchange close to 66 hectares (163 acres) of land bordering on the domain of Mariemont, thereby increasing its total size by 13 percent to approximately 550 hectares (1,360 acres).[52] The enlarged deer park was subsequently enclosed with a wooden palisade. Particular care was given to optimizing conditions for the game by setting aside a section where hares and partridges could take refuge, opening an area where deer from outside the park could be lured in during the mating season, and providing extra food for the animals in winter.[53] On a grander scale all villages and woods lying within a mile of Mariemont or Binche and belonging to the archducal domain were declared a princely hunting preserve in May 1606. The area that was affected covered about 11,000 hectares (27,000 acres). As such the new preserve roughly equaled the size of the Sonian Forest, though it should be added that apparently only some 13.5 percent of it was actually forested.[54] Many of the same policies could be observed in and around the Sonian Forest. Just a few months after claiming the hunting preserve around Mariemont, the archdukes reiterated their exclusive right to hunt in the forest.[55] A drive to expand the deer park at Tervuren was initiated in 1615. As some of the owners proved to be less than cooperative, it was not until the next decade that the construction of a surrounding wall could be undertaken.[56]

One after the other the facilities serving the hunt were brought back into shape. The highest priority was given to Bosvoorde. Initiated by orders of the archdukes in June 1600, the work took slightly more than a year to complete. In the restored mansion of the lieutenant grand huntsman two rooms were set

[49]ARA, Rekenkamers: Registers (hereafter ARA, RK) 48,494–95: Accounts of the Archducal Hunt, 1599–1603.

[50]Pierron, 2:274.

[51]Duerloo, 2012, 104–85.

[52]Demeester, 186–95. Examples of such transactions can be found in Wellens, 1964.

[53]Demeester, 199–200, 247–48.

[54]Ibid., 249–51. The estimate for forestation is based on ibid., 250n2, and includes the deer park of Mariemont.

[55]*Recueil des ordonnances*, 1:294–96.

[56]Pierron, 2:406–08.

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Figure 1. Jan Brueghel the Elder. *The Castle of Tervuren*, ca. 1621. © Madrid, Museo nacional del Prado.

apart: the one below for Albert, the one above for Isabella.[57] At Mariemont, the archducal architect, Wenceslas Cobergher (1560–1634), led a first building campaign in the autumn of 1605. Over the next five years he saw to the repair of the existing structures, while adding two galleries, lodgings for courtiers and guards, a clock tower, and a number of service quarters. In the process the complex grew from the dimensions of a hunting lodge to those of a sizeable country retreat. Between 1618 and 1621 the principal buildings would be expanded further still.[58]

In the pause separating the two building phases at Mariemont, Cobergher's energies were directed to the castle of Tervuren. Compared to the other two seats of the archducal hunt the castle had suffered little damage during the revolt, but its amenities were no longer up to the standards of the times.[59] In order to accommodate the archdukes and their entourage in style, many of the wings

[57]ARA, RK 27,385, fol. 13^{v}.
[58]Demeester, 202–19.
[59]Pierron, 2:404.

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were torn down and replaced. A new chapel was built in the courtyard, of which more will be said later. Interestingly enough, Cobergher spared Tervuren's most salient features: the great hall built for Margaret of England (1275–ca. 1333) and the stout wall towers, thereby preserving the castle's medieval silhouette. Contemporary depictions captured the outcome (fig. 1). By favoring the view from the north, they emphasized how the compact pile was punctuated by the towers and dominated by the roof of the great hall. Only closer inspection revealed the rows of large windows that opened up the new wings to the surrounding gardens and forest.[60] Outwardly steeped in the past yet adapted to the needs of the present, the castle could serve as a metaphor for the archducal hunt.

PRESERVING THE HUNTING PRESERVES

While the damage to the domains was repaired, the legislation regulating the hunt was couched in terms of order and social distinction. Such laws were needed, the preamble of the proclamation of 14 July 1606 claimed, "for the common weal, be it for the recreation of the nobility and of those that are by law allowed to hunt, or to ensure that our good towns and villages are better provided with game and venison."[61] For more than a decade, however, the archducal regime could do little more than redress the worst excesses. The proclamation of 1606 sought to bring an end to poaching in the forests around Brussels. A ban on carrying arms that could be used to kill or maim game was decreed for the county of Flanders on 26 January 1604. Wolves endangering animals as well as humans in the countryside around Antwerp necessitated urgent measures on 9 February 1612.[62] These were but a few examples from a longer list.

It was only with the proclamation of 31 August 1613 that the regime felt able to pursue the fullness of its political and social agenda. The principal novelty of the proclamation was that it was meant to be applied in every part of the Habsburg Netherlands. So far hunting law had varied from province to province, and the introduction of a unified legislation was likely to encounter particularistic resistance.[63] The proclamation's 116 articles covered every legal aspect of hunting. After measures to protect the archducal and private hunting preserves, the text dealt with punishments for poaching and the trade in venison and other game. The next string of articles discussed who was entitled to hunt, how and when they should proceed, and what forms of hunting were forbidden.

[60] *Het Zoniënwoud*, 141–42.
[61] *Recueil des ordonnances*, 1:294.
[62] Ibid., 1:231, 2:123–24.
[63] Faider, 93.

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Then the proclamation turned to dogs, the extermination of wolves and foxes, and to hunting birds and their feathered quarry. A final set of articles concerned the means of enforcement.[64]

Some of the articles went into great detail. There was, for example, a fine for enticing rabbits or hares out of their burrows by beating hedges when it had snowed.[65] Yet when it came to declaring who was entitled to hunt, the proclamation remained purposely vague. The situation was summed up in the articles 36 and 37. The former declared that "our vassals and subjects that have the privilege to hunt all sorts of wild animals and game in their lordships can enjoy it freely in the season" without specifying any further which groups were to be counted among those vassals and subjects. Theirs was, moreover, a privilege that they would have to share, because the following article stipulated that the archdukes reserved for themselves the right to hunt wherever it pleased them in the Habsburg Netherlands and could delegate that right to whomever they saw fit.[66] Hunting was therefore in essence perceived as an extension of dominion. Whether it was the seigniorial prerogative exercised by the lord of the manor on the local level or the sovereignty that Albert and Isabella held over their principalities, as far as hunting was concerned these powers trumped the property rights of the actual owners of the land in either case.[67] In that sense, the local lord or sovereign who rode roughshod across fields and meadows in hot pursuit of some prized quarry delivered an unmistakable message of who was truly holding the reins of power.

Another stipulation took the significance of the hunt as an expression of hierarchy one step further still. Article 29 stated that as the hunt "that is permitted to our vassals should only serve them as a pastime, without being abused, it is therefore our intention that they shall not use [that permission] unless during the season and outside of the forbidden places, with greyhounds, scent hounds, and the great hunting horn, and moreover with fur against fur and feather against feather, which is called the noble hunt in some places."[68] The effect of these prerequisites was to place the hunt beyond the reach of the common man. Defined as a genteel pastime, it could never constitute a part of someone's livelihood. Requiring the use of pure-bred hounds to chase game or trained birds of prey to intercept feathered quarry, it was moreover organized as a pastime that only the truly wealthy would be able afford.

Not quite so in Brabant though. The duchy stood out among the provinces of the Habsburg Netherlands with its highly esteemed constitutional charter, the

[64]*Recueil des ordonnances*, 2:186–96.

[65]Ibid., 2:190 (article 41).

[66]Ibid.

[67]Faider, 155–59.

[68]*Recueil des ordonnances*, 2:189.

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Blijde Inkomst, or Joyous Entry. Originally granted to cement the succession of the dukes Wenceslaus (1337–83) and Joanna (1322–1406) in 1356, it had been amended several times since. At each succession the new duke had to take an oath to uphold its stipulations. Under the Blijde Inkomst all Brabanters were guaranteed a number of privileges that had a bearing on hunting. Among them was the general entitlement to own guard dogs. These could never be subjected to cutting the hock — the joint of the rear legs corresponding with the ankle in human anatomy — to prevent them from chasing game. They were also to be left unharmed if they accidentally killed a quarry. Hunting hares and foxes was moreover allowed to all inhabitants of the duchy and so was hunting rabbits outside of established warrens. A further article declared that all "knights, squires, and good people living in the towns and lands of Brabant, will be allowed in all parts of Brabant to hunt during the season all kinds of big game, without being put to trial, except in the hunting preserves, forests, and woods of Sonian, Zaventerloo, Grotenheist, Meerdaal and Grotenhout."[69]

Many of these cherished liberties were incompatible with the new legislation. In manifest contradiction with the Brabantine charter, the sixth article of the proclamation decreed that everyone living in a hunting preserve or within a half a mile of one could only keep guard dogs on condition that their hocks would be cut and that they would be weighed down by a block at all times. The same people were forbidden to own firearms, nets, or other implements that could be used to hunt. Officers were empowered to enter and search their houses for forbidden items.[70] The Sovereign Council of Brabant, the supreme court of the duchy and guardian of the Blijde Inkomst, considered such stipulations contrary to the ancient liberties and therefore refused to publish the proclamation. No less determined to restore order to the forests, the Consistory of the Horn — the court of law that heard all cases regarding the hunt in the first instance in Brabant — nonetheless contrived to base its sentences on it. A standoff ensued. With the archducal regime studiously avoiding taking sides, neither party showed any inclination to yield.[71]

Perhaps it would not have mattered as much if Brabant had been a small county like Namur or a peripheral duchy like Luxembourg. Brabant, however, lay at the center of the Habsburg Netherlands, housed the archducal court and provided the verdant scenery for the larger part of the princely hunts. Any policy

[69]*De Blyde Inkomste van Syne Majesteyt Philippus den Vyfden*, 18. The Meerdaalwoud lies south of Leuven (Louvain). More than 2,000 hectares of it remain. Grotenhout, the ducal hunting preserve southwest of Turnhout, has been reduced to 300 hectares. Little to nothing is left of Grotenheist near Vilvoorde or Zaventerloo. The site of the latter is now occupied by the national airport. Galesloot, 1854, 22.

[70]*Recueil des ordonnances*, 2:187–88.

[71]Faider, 87–89.

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that set out to turn the archducal hunt into a performance of sovereignty would therefore have to operate within the margins of the Blijde Inkomst. In keeping with the charter, every denizen of Brabant could hunt as noble an animal as his means might allow. Consequently, it was out of the question to bank on the nature of the quarry when seeking to enhance the luster of the monarchy. Instead, the emphasis came to lie squarely on the sole right that the Blijde Inkomst reserved explicitly to the sovereign: the exclusive use of the ducal hunting preserves. Simply put, the prestige that was to be gained from going through the seasonal rites of the hunt would not derive from what was hunted, but from where the hunt took place.

The importance attached to location showed in the proclamation. No less than thirteen articles dealt with the hunting preserves and they preceded all others. All forms of unauthorized hunt were not only strictly forbidden within the preserves, but also in a zone that stretched half a mile around them. Permissions to hunt within those areas had to come directly from the archdukes. On top of the restrictions on owning dogs, firearms, and hunting implements, the people living within the designated areas risked severe penalties when turning woodlands into fields or pasture. Those coming from outside could bring their dogs but only on the condition that these were kept on a leash at all times. Given the uncertainty of the times, travelers were allowed to carry "harquebus, pistols, crossbows or similar weapons" when crossing the preserves. If they were found armed and straying from the roads, however, their arms would be seized on the spot.[72] Thus the proclamation tried to strike a balance. It sought to make allowance for the practicalities of daily life in a society recovering from decades of war. At the same time it stood firm on the historic privilege of the ducal preserves, ensuring that it was acknowledged under every circumstance.

THE SEASONAL PURSUIT OF PEACE

Toward the end of June 1605, the newly appointed archducal envoy in London, Conrad van Ursel, Baron of Hoboken (1553–1632), was invited to join King James VI and I (1566–1625) and Queen Anne (1574–1619) for the upcoming royal hunt.[73] The invitation was a token of the peace and good neighborliness that had been established between the two courts after the Stuarts had succeeded to the English throne.[74] Returning from the hunt, Hoboken relayed part of the conversation that he had had with Queen Anne. When asked if Isabella hunted regularly, he had replied that she did so "sometimes, be it on horseback or by coach, to hunt for herons, but that the war [with the United Provinces] did not

[72] *Recueil des ordonnances*, 2:187–88.

[73] d'Ursel, 21.

[74] Duerloo, 2012, 166–76.

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permit her to go as often as the Queen could in this peaceful kingdom."[75] It was a diplomatic turn of phrase. Habsburg-Stuart relations were going through a honeymoon phase that would last until the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot. The archducal regime hoped to drive a wedge between England and her Dutch allies by invoking the need for monarchical solidarity and by stressing its peaceloving disposition.[76] In this particular instance, the rhetoric and the tactics derived their sense from a number of shared assumptions about the hunt. As in the Carolingian past or the Rajput future, hunting was considered a proxy for war. It allowed the hunter to develop and display his dexterity, courage, and stamina. It was also supposed to teach him a sense of the lay of the land that could come of use in battle.[77] This close association of the hunt with the art of war held just as much sway in the courts of Christian Europe as in their non-Christian counterparts in Asia. As noted above, it provided a common language for international relations irrespective of cultural or religious borders.[78] By the same token, however, that language came with the paradox that Hoboken had sought to turn to his advantage. As much as the princely hunt may have been a proxy for war, it was by and large to be pursued in — and as such stood as a symbol for — times of peace.

So far no sources have come to light that allow a precise reconstruction of the hunting activities of Albert and Isabella. Unlike their Austrian cousins, they do not seem to have kept *Abschusslisten*, or hit lists, in which they recorded the number of kills that they had made on a day-by-day basis.[79] The accounts of the archducal hunt did, however, provide sufficient material to demonstrate the close link between peace and princely hunting. In the first years of the reign they showed an organization that had just been brought back up to strength and was preparing for better days. Workmen were paid for having "upon the orders of His Highness in the month of February 1600 hewn off branches or pruned trees in the Sonian Forest so that wild beasts can come into it."[80] The next two years salt was mixed with clay and left at chosen spots to attract deer.[81] The staff of the archducal hunt would only receive extra pay when they were active beyond the confines of the Sonian Forest. In consequence, there was no way to determine how much hunting was, in the meantime, going on in the forest itself. It was, on the other hand, apparent that there was plenty to do outside. Year after year the accounts recorded that the huntsmen had been sent out to track down wolves in winter. Large numbers of locals would be hired to assist them. Thus in February

[75]d'Ursel, 21.

[76]Duerloo, 2012, 176–80.

[77]Manning, 187–89; Rivero Rodríguez, 369–77.

[78]Allsen, 209–28; see also Richardson.

[79]Tersch, 106–11.

[80]ARA, *RK* 48,494, vol. 3, fol. 70^r (1600).

[81]ARA, *RK* 48,495, vol. 1, fol. 68^v; 48,495, vol. 2, fol. 68^v (1601–02).

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1606 no less than 690 people were paid for services rendered at wolf hunts in the course of the month.[82] The full scale of the operation showed in the payments to the man in charge of transporting the nets used to catch the wolves. The accounts of 1601 mentioned an absence of 118 days, those of 1602, an absence of 106. Gradually the numbers fell, to eighty-five days in 1606 and sixty-seven the year after.[83] By the looks of it, wolf hunting was a rough and dangerous trade that had no time to waste on the niceties of noble conventions, such as "fur against fur and feather against feather."[84] Therefore, it hardly came as a surprise that the archdukes were not even once recorded as participants.

On the whole, references to them were scarce in the account books up to 1607. Apart from the orders that they gave to prune trees and deposit salt, there were only a few entries where the mention of their names was actually of some consequence. Even then, Albert and Isabella would not always feature while hunting actively. In one such instance, huntsmen were paid for catching three wild boar and a piglet on their behalf.[85] The first indication of their hunting activity outside the Sonian Forest was recorded in 1604, when a mounted huntsman and a valet of the bloodhounds were sent to Bruges to attend to the archdukes while they awaited the surrender of Ostend.[86] In October and November 1605 the same mounted huntsman, two valets of the bloodhounds, and one of the greyhounds were called to Mariemont for the first time.[87] Perhaps the clearest indication that the archducal hunt had yet to regain its ancient luster was to be found elsewhere in the accounts. In every ledger between the one of 1598 and that of 1607 it was recorded under the heading "Keeper of the Great Cloths" that no expense had been made "because the same cloths are barely usable, due to their old age."[88] Requiring vast quantities of sturdy textiles and significant amounts of labor to set them up, hunting with cloths was a pursuit that only princes and the wealthiest among their vassals could afford. In essence it was a form of canned hunting, in which the odds were stacked heavily in favor of the hunters. After the presence of an ample supply of quarry had been established with the help of scent hounds, a vast area was fenced off using high cloths. Inside, several subdivisions were made. On the day of the hunt beaters drove the game from section to section toward the *accourre*, or final enclosure, where the hunting party would be waiting.[89]

[82]ARA, *RK* 48,495, vol. 5, fol. 74^{v}.

[83]ARA, *RK* 48,494–96, 1600–07.

[84]De Schepper, 25–29.

[85]ARA, *RK* 48,495, vol. 3, fol. 72^{v} (1604).

[86]Ibid., fol. 74^{v} (1604).

[87]ARA, *RK* 48,495, vol. 5, fol. 75^{v} (1606).

[88]ARA, *RK* 48,494, vol. 1–48,496, vol. 1 (1598–1607).

[89]Dunoyer de Noirmont, 3:364–65.

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Matters changed rapidly after the Habsburgs and the United Provinces agreed to a ceasefire in April 1607.[90] Toward the end of summer the English ambassador reported that the court of Brussels had delivered venison to all diplomats residing in the capital. In doing so it presented some tangible benefits of the peace process to the international community.[91] After a decade of neglect, the accounts of the same year carried an entry for repairs to the great cloths.[92] The results were apparently unsatisfactory, for the next year saw the purchase of an entirely new set of cloths for the hunt for the hefty sum of 3,959 pounds. Two wagons drawn by eight horses were needed to transport the cloths from Troyes in Champagne to Brussels, resulting in the expense of another 525 pounds. Poles and straps to hoist up the cloths were bought locally, as were five carriages that would be used to bring them to where they were needed in the forest. Having spent over 5,300 pounds on equipment and 528 pounds on new uniforms for the huntsmen, Albert and Isabella could finally host their first truly princely hunt in Tervuren.[93] In the following years hunts with cloths became a regular feature. The accounts recorded varying payments to the keeper of the great cloths for his services. Although the relevant entries defied precise quantification, they did indicate that such hunts were usually organized from the middle of July until the onset of winter. Using the Sonian Forest or the Ter Kamerenbos — the promontory of the forest that came closest to Brussels — as a venue, they would have Tervuren, Bosvoorde, or the palace of the Koudenberg as their point of departure.[94] By the sheer size of the operation to mount them, these hunts remained relatively rare occurrences, a quality that only served to make them all the more significant as expressions of dominion.

Meanwhile, Albert and Isabella had taken to spending time at Mariemont from the last weeks of May until the second week of July.[95] Allowing themselves a break from the affairs of state, they enjoyed the pleasures of the countryside with walks and riding tours, meals in the open air, and, of course, hunting. Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625) caught the informal atmosphere in a number of landscapes showing the complex of Mariemont at different stages of completion.[96] Among them was *The Archdukes out Hunting* (fig. 2), a work

[90]Duerloo, 2012, 202–07.

[91]National Archives, London (hereafter NA), *State Papers Foreign*, 77, vol 8, fol. 124^{r}: Sir Thomas Edmondes to Sir Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, 12 September 1607 (NB: Julian calendar dates have been converted to the Gregorian calendar in references to manuscript sources).

[92]ARA, *RK* 48,496, vol. 1, fol. 76^{r} (1607).

[93]ARA, *RK* 48,496, vol. 2, fol. 83^{v}, 87^{v}–89^{r} (1608).

[94]ARA, *RK* 48,496–99 (1609–20).

[95]Duerloo, 2012, 337, 394.

[96]Ertz, 208–11.

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Figure 2. Jan Brueghel the Elder. *The Archdukes out Hunting*, ca. 1611. © Madrid, Museo nacional del Prado.

that is usually dated 1611 and is now in the Prado. In the foreground, the archdukes and some retainers are preparing for the hunt. A small selection of hunting dogs idles around the company. Some of the attendants carry sticks to beat the game out of hiding. A young man is taking care of a falcon, while one of the two uniformed huntsmen has brought a harquebus. The accounts gave credence to this depiction. Thus the two huntsmen in the painting could well have been among the five that were called to Mariemont in the course of 1611. Bringing their dogs with them, they served in pairs or threesomes on average for twenty-six days running.[97]

For all intents and purposes such a restricted presence could only have allowed for more private forms of hunting. The relative informality allowed the small circle of invited guests far more access than any setting at court, while at the same time ensuring significantly more personal enjoyment for their archducal hosts — or, at any rate, for the infanta. Known to be a good marksman who took "extraordinary delight" in sports, Isabella would hunt as much as the weather would allow.[98] One of her letters to her half-brother, King Philip III of Spain (1578–1621), confirms these impressions. Relating her experiences during the archducal sojourn of 1610, she mentioned only one instance in which they went out coursing deer, and it involved a mere two greyhounds. Most of the time was, on the contrary, spent on

[97]ARA, *RK* 48,497, vol. 1, fol. 82^{r} (1611).

[98]ARA, *Audiëntie*, 1978, vol. 2: Elector Ferdinand of Cologne to the Infanta Isabella, 8 July 1614; Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatican State, *Fondo Borghese*, II 100, fol. 211^{r}: Nuncio Guido Bentivoglio to Cardinal Borghese, 22 September 1607.

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more or less successful attempts to shoot deer with a crossbow or harquebus. To that end, a number of areas had been enclosed with the great cloths and Isabella would go from one to the other in the hope of surprising her quarry.[99]

The new practices quickly gained the status of seasonal rituals. As if it had never been otherwise, the accounts of 1615 noted an expense of 945 pounds paid to the keeper of the great cloths, the huntsmen, and the workers who had assisted in a series of hunts held "on the orders and in the presence of Their Highnesses" between May and November of the previous year. The next entry detailed a payment for wages and clothing for the huntsmen serving in Mariemont in the course of June and July.[100] The difference between the two was clearly one of scale, frequency, and visibility. At Mariemont the archdukes went out hunting in the woodlands with only a few chosen courtiers and a skeleton staff of huntsmen, making the most of the six-to-seven weeks of their stay. Yet apart from the handpicked company, only those living in the vicinity could actually witness what went on. As such, their hunting activities differed little from those of the country squire enjoying the sporting opportunities of his estate. The elaborately staged hunts in the Sonian Forest were quite the opposite. They called for extensive preparations and involved many courtiers, the entire staff of the archducal hunt, local farmers to help transport the cloths, laborers to set them up, and a party of hired drivers. Comparatively rare in occurrence, the sheer volume of men and means that they mobilized and their proximity to the capital ensured a much wider audience. The former type of hunts could be rated a genteel pastime; the latter performed the return of peace and order in the forests.

HONORING THE CAROLINGIAN ROOTS

In May 1601, the receiver general of the archdukes noted an expense of fifteen pounds for the delivery of three bloodhounds that had been raised at the abbey of Saint-Hubert in the Ardennes.[101] The Benedictine abbey housed the relics of the noble huntsman turned bishop and was an important shrine of pilgrimage for hunters as well as for those seeking protection against rabies. In keeping with the abbey's close connection with the hunt, the monks bred a particular species of bloodhounds. Known as *chiens de Saint-Hubert*, or dogs of Saint Hubertus, they were renowned for their sense of scent, albeit not for their agility. The finest among their offspring were used as diplomatic gifts to perpetuate the neutrality of the abbey's extensive possessions, which were situated between the prince-bishopric

[99] *Correspondencia de la infanta*, 220–23. [Hennequin] de Villermont, 2:62–65, has a translation of the relevant passages in French.

[100] ARA, *RK* 48,498, vol. 1, fol. 105^{v}–106^{r} (1615).

[101] Archives départementales du Nord, Lille. *Série 1B: Chambre des comptes* 2,788, fol. 675^{v}: Accounts of the Receiver General, 1601.

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of Liège, the kingdom of France, and the Habsburg Netherlands. In that sense the hounds that had been sent to Albert and Isabella were a welcoming gift for the new sovereigns residing in Brussels. By the same token, however, the arrival of the dogs could be considered a homecoming, as Tervuren and the Sonian Forest were traditionally associated with the patron saint of the hunt, Hubertus.

The earliest version of the Lives of Saint Hubert, the *Vita sancti Hugberti*, dealt only briefly with the saint's life, concentrating rather on the miracles that were ascribed to his intercession after his death. Written shortly after his tomb was reopened and his remains were found to be uncorrupted in 743, the legend relates how Hubertus (d. 727) became bishop of Tongeren-Maastricht after the murder of his predecessor and mentor, Saint Lambertus (d. ca. 705). By enshrining Lambertus's relics in a church that he had built for that purpose in Liège, he initiated the transfer of his episcopal seat to that city. All through his see he labored to spread the Gospel and fight the remnants of paganism. Hubertus died on 30 May 727 in a place called Fura and was initially buried in Liège. In 825 his relics were transferred to the abbey of Andage in the Ardennes. Attracting pilgrims from far and near, the abbey and the surrounding town would soon become known as Saint-Hubert. The popularity of the shrine stemmed from Hubertus's growing reputation as the patron saint of hunters and, perhaps even more, from the remedies against rabies that were offered there.[102]

As the saint's cult spread, his legend was embellished in various ways. By the middle of the fifteenth century the story of the conversion of Saint Eustace (d. 118) had been incorporated into his vita. The young Hubertus was now represented as a man born into privilege, whose passion for the hunt had stood in the way of his salvation. It was told that on one Christmas Day he chose to ride out to chase deer rather than attend church services. Later that day, however, he had a vision of a majestic deer that carried a radiant crucifix between the antlers. As he fell to his knees, he heard a voice exhorting him to change his ways or else face damnation. Chastened by the experience, Hubertus would thereafter join and eventually succeed Lambertus. Some versions of the legend even claimed that the abbey of Andage stood at the site of the apparition.[103] Two further miraculous encounters were inserted at the moment of his ordination, which was believed to have taken place in Rome during the pontificate of Pope Sergius I (ca. 650–701). The first related that no stole could be found among the episcopal vestments that had been prepared for the ceremony. An angel thereupon descended from heaven, bringing Hubertus the missing item on behalf of the Virgin Mary. In the course of the ensuing Mass the newly ordained bishop had a vision in which Saint Peter gave him a gilded key, assuring him it had healing powers. The monks of Saint-Hubert claimed to possess the precious stole and

[102]Paffrath, 18–21; Dupont.

[103]Paffrath, 16.

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pulled threads from it to cure cases of rabies. The key remained at the Collegiate Church of Saint Peter's in Liège — Hubertus's original place of burial — where it was also used to ward off the disease.[104] Together, the stories of Hubertus's conversion and of his thaumaturgical relics lent credence to his dual role as the protector of hunters and the healer of rabies.

In a parallel move, Hubertus was assigned a place in the extended family of saints that had proven or assumed blood ties with the Carolingians. Some facts suggested there may indeed have been a connection. In the days of the Frankish monarchy bishops were often recruited from the aristocracy. Carloman (ca. 710–54), the elder brother of Pepin the Short (ca. 714–68), was known to have gone out of his way to witness the elevation of Hubertus's remains.[105] Even so, it required considerable amounts of antiquarian erudition and acrobatic conjecture to assemble the illustrious pedigrees that were published by the Jesuit Johannes Roberti (1569–1651) in an appendix to the updated version of the saint's legend. On both his father's and his mother's side, Hubertus was presented as a linear descendant of the Merovingian King Chlothar II (584–629). His paternal descent was said to have brought him the title of prince of Aquitaine; his maternal granduncle was supposed to be the direct ancestor of the Carolingians. Dotted all over the branches of the genealogical charts sat more than a dozen saints, including the Merovingian saintly kings Saint Gontranus of Burgundy (ca. 532–92) and Saint Sigebertus of Austrasia (ca. 630–ca. 656), as well as Carolingian kinfolk such as Saint Arnulfus of Metz (ca. 582–640), his sister Saint Itta of Nivelles (592–652), her husband Saint Pepin of Landen (ca. 580–640), and their canonized ménage of siblings, children, and cousins.[106]

Tervuren had in the meantime laid claim to being the Fura mentioned in the saint's vita. The castle was believed to stand on the site of the ancestral villa where Hubertus had departed from this world. By extension, the Sonian Forest was presumed to have been one of his favorite hunting grounds in the days before his conversion. In support of these assertions, the local parish church of Saint John the Evangelist prided itself on the possession of what was believed to be the saint's hunting horn.[107] In keeping with the castle's function as a hunting retreat, it had a chapel dedicated to Saint Hubertus in its courtyard. The origins of the edifice were unclear, but it was already deemed old and in need of repairs in the early years of the sixteenth century. Drawn to the subject by the theological arguments that could be reaped from a saint actively interceding to relieve rabies as much as by the circumstance that he was a native son of Saint-Hubert, Roberti visited the chapel 100 years later and found it in an advanced state of decay. Not

[104]Roberti, 10; Dupont, 23–24.

[105]Roberti, 56–62.

[106]Ibid., 1–3, 545–50.

[107]Van Sprang, 2011, 47–49; Molanus, 246^{v}; Duerloo and Thomas, 259–60.

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to be deceived by these humble appearances, he returned utterly convinced of the site's thaumaturgic powers. According to his report, he saw a mad dog stroll into the castle's courtyard without attacking anyone and advance toward the chapel, settle down against its walls, and peacefully die on the spot.[108]

The lore surrounding Saint Hubertus fitted perfectly in the performative strategies of the archducal regime. Working closely with the parish clergy, the local cult was upgraded to a constant reminder of how the privileged status of the Sonian Forest and of those entitled to hunt there could be retraced by almost a millennium to the days that saw the accession of the Carolingian dynasty and the Christianization of the remotest parts of their dominions. In 1605, the archbishop of Mechlin, Mathias Hovius (1542–1620), approved the foundation of a confraternity in honor of Saint Hubertus. Offering the usual spiritual benefits to its members, its primary task was to accompany the procession that would henceforth on 3 November (the feast of Saint Hubertus) bring the saint's horn to the chapel in the castle. Albert and Isabella were among the first to have their names inscribed in the confraternity's register. In spite of their patronage, the overall membership remained modest for the first decade. From 1616 onward, however, numbers began to rise significantly.[109]

The growing popularity of the confraternity coincided with the decision to replace the derelict chapel with a more appropriate edifice. Cobergher was set to the task of designing the new chapel and overseeing its construction (fig. 3). The work advanced rapidly, allowing Archbishop Hovius to consecrate the building on 3 November 1617. In the meantime, Cobergher had entrusted the task of adorning the three altars with appropriate paintings to one of his regular collaborators, the Brussels master Theodoor van Loon (ca. 1582–1649). The principal altarpiece represents *The Conversion of Saint Hubertus* (fig. 4) and is presently — like those of the side altars — preserved in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. While the other members of his hunting party continue the chase toward the left of the painting, Hubertus has dismounted and taken off his feathered cap in order to kneel in front of a towering deer bearing the crucifix between its antlers. At his feet lies a hunting horn that looks exactly like the relic preserved in the parish church. With the Caravaggesque sense of detail that typifies Van Loon's work, the short legs and hanging ears of two of the dogs in the foreground mark them out as *chiens de Saint-Hubert*. The legend continues with the painting for the side altar on the left: depicting *Saint Hubertus Receiving the Stole from an Angel* (fig. 5), its scenery changes from the woodlands of the Ardennes to the antique ruins of Rome. In the foreground the saint, attired in a bishop's robes, is startled by the arrival of an angel bringing him the stole. To his left stands a building that is most likely meant to represent old St. Peter's. In

[108]Wynants, 9, 39.

[109]Ibid., 33–34; Duerloo and Thomas, 259.

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Figure 3. Chapel of Saint Hubertus, Tervuren, 1616–17. © Frans Van Bruaene.

the open doorway Saint Peter can be seen descending from heaven to present the key to the kneeling Hubertus. Having run out of miraculous episodes, van Loon offers a more conventional rendering in topic as well as in composition in the third painting, *The Virgin and Child Enthroned between Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist*.[110] The difference in iconography may well have

[110]Van Sprang, 2011, 53–59.

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Figure 4. Theodoor Van Loon. *The Conversion of Saint Hubertus*, 1617–19. © Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Brussel / photo: F. Maes (KMSKB).

contributed to the faithful believing that the side altar with the miracle of the stole marked the spot where Hubertus had died and where his intestines had been buried in a leaden casket.[111]

[111]Willemaers, 41.

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Figure 5. Theodoor Van Loon. *Saint Hubertus Receiving the Stole from an Angel*, 1617–19. © Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Brussel / photo: J. Geleyns / Ro scan.

The renewal of the cult of Saint Hubertus was an expression of the *pietas Albertina*, the performance of public piety by the archdukes and their entourage. As such it constituted a multimedia endeavor in which church ritual,

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architecture, the visual arts, and the printed word joined forces to propagate a form of worship that served the dual purpose of consolidating Habsburg rule and Roman Catholicism in the Netherlands.[112] In this particular case, the task of setting the written record straight was performed by Johannes Roberti, whose *Historia Sancti Huberti* was published in 1621. Dedicating his book to the recently widowed infanta, Roberti emphasized the ties that bound Tervuren and the archdukes to the patron saint of the hunt and set them well apart from other hunters or hunting grounds. As the site of the saint's death, Tervuren was promoted to the fourth spot in the pecking order of places dedicated to the veneration of Saint Hubertus. Only the abbey of Saint-Hubert, the cathedral of St. Lambert in Liège, and the adjacent Collegiate Church of St. Peter's were considered of greater importance. On the list of Hubertus's relics, Tervuren's hunting horn likewise featured prominently. In a final twist, the genealogical tables in the appendix of the book not only traced the illustrious ancestry and saintly kin of Saint Hubertus, but also demonstrated how he was related to Albert and Isabella.[113] Judiciously inserted in a treatise on the legend, the miracles, and the veneration of the *magni thaumaturgi St. Hubertus*, the lists and genealogical graphs showed how the cult of that saint had been successfully appropriated to bolster the status of the dynasty, the archducal hunt, and the hunting preserve of the Sonian Forest.

HUNTS, METAMORPHOSES, AND CONFLICTING TIMESCALES

The controller of the works of the court made an inventory of the castle of Tervuren in early December 1620. Having entered the first room off the great hall, he noted the presence of two landscapes by Joos de Momper (1564–1635) and an anonymous "piece of painting representing a masquerade." The principal feature of the room was, however, a group of "paintings called the *Hunts of Germany*." At first the controller believed there were five of these, but he later corrected that number to six.[114] A subsequent inventory of the castle listed these paintings separately. Each featured Emperor Maximilian I out hunting in

[112]Duerloo, 1997, 11–18.

[113]Roberti, i–vi, 234–36, 244–46, 540–50.

[114]ARA, Werken van het Hof 365: Inventory of the castle of Tervuren, 1620. Scholarship on the collections of Tervuren is usually based on Terlinden. The earliest inventory in that publication, however, dates from 1667. While at times useful to clarify entries of the 1620 inventory, it reflects neither the losses incurred as a result of the spectacular burglary of 1624 (see Galesloot, 1867 and 1870) nor the pieces stolen by French soldiers in 1635, auctioned off to settle the mortuary accounts of the infanta Isabella and the cardinal-infant Ferdinand in 1643 or shipped to Spain shortly thereafter: see García García, 140–49.

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mountainous surroundings. Twice his quarry was identified as wild boar. Three others were registered as representing a hunt of a bear, deer, and goats, respectively, although the latter may have been a misinterpretation of either ibex or chamois. The final painting recalled a specific occasion in which Maximilian had been trapped on the Martinswand in Tirol while he was chasing chamois and was only rescued after an impressive display of devotion to the Eucharist.[115] With a nod to Maximilian's autobiographical writings, the *Hunts of Germany* introduced three themes in the decoration of the castle of Tervuren: the realm of nature, the hunt, and the achievements of the dynasty.[116]

Before elaborating on the genre of hunting scenes, the two other themes require a brief explanation. Landscapes were more or less ubiquitous in the castle, often hanging above doors, windows, or fireplaces. Many of these were ascribed to De Momper, while the two in the great hall were credited to Jacques Fouquier (1591–1659).[117] Paintings recalling dynastic achievement came in many guises. Often they had a direct connection to Albert and Isabella, like the two *Allegories of the Senses* by Jan Brueghel the Elder and collaborators in the archducal audience chamber or the "six pieces of the procession of Brussels" by Denijs van Alsloot (ca. 1570–ca. 1626) in the great hall.[118] Others rendered homage to previous generations. One of these was the *Banquet of the Dukes of Burgundy* that decorated a chimney in the apartments of the archduke.[119] In the only known representation of that subject, Albert and Isabella are joined at the table by Emperor Charles V, King Philip II, and two of their spouses, with the successive governors-general of the Netherlands waiting on them. The canvas is attributed to a follower of Alonso Sánchez Coello (ca. 1532–88) and is now in the National Museum in Poznán.[120] The inventory records several other hunting pieces, such as a *Boar Hunt* in the dining room and *A Huntress with a Falcon on Her Fist* in the principal room of the infanta's apartment; but none of these are ascribed to a particular artist.[121] Another source, however, mentions in passing that at least one Rubens, a *Tiger, Lion, and Leopard Hunt*, hung alongside an unspecified hunting scene in one of the rooms on Albert's side.[122]

The genre of hunting scenes had emerged in Netherlandish art in the fifteenth century. Catering for a titled clientele, its original medium of choice was the

[115]Terlinden, 369.

[116]Silver, 174.

[117]ARA, Werken van het Hof 365, 1620.

[118]Ibid.; Duerloo and Thomas, 59–61, 204–08; *El Arte en la Corte*, 186–89, 168–73; Thøfner, 234–44.

[119]ARA, Werken van het Hof 365, 1620.

[120]Rodríguez-Salgado, 97.

[121]ARA, Werken van het Hof 365, 1620.

[122]Balis, 1986, 138–39, 145n37.

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tapestry series, whose grand surfaces allowed ample space for a documentary approach to the different techniques and stages of the hunt.[123] Produced in the immediate entourage of the court of Brussels, the *Hunts of Maximilian* could rightfully be regarded as the quintessential expression of the genre. The tapestry series — which should not be mistaken for the six paintings mentioned above — consists of a set of twelve that was woven under the direction of Bernard van Orley (ca. 1490–1541) between 1531 and 1533.[124] Each tapestry is associated with a month of the year. The cycle begins in March, with the hunters setting out from the Palace of the Koudenberg. Events then build up to the killing of a deer in September. The next four tapestries relate the hunt of a wild boar. The last of the series is set at the court of King Modus and Queen Ratio — the personifications of practice and theory in the popular late medieval treatise on hunting (1377) by Henri de Ferrières. The couple sits enthroned, ready to receive the report of hunters, suggesting the cycle is about to start anew. Once again the Palace of the Koudenberg serves as the backdrop. The series as a whole is brimming with topographical detail. The site of Bosvoorde is depicted on the tapestry for April; the castle of Tervuren features in January. The Augustinian priories of Rooklooster and Groenendaal — two of the monasteries situated in the Sonian Forest — appear in July and September, respectively. The presence of these well-known landmarks eulogized the hunting preserve in the vicinity of Brussels.[125]

In the next generation, Johannes Stradanus (1523–1605) brought the conventions of the genre to the court of Tuscany. In the decade between 1566 and 1577 he executed a grand ducal commission to elaborate a series of twenty-eight tapestries for the Medici villa in Poggio a Caiano. It documented the hunt of a variety of quarries, ranging from the usual deer and wild boar to far more exotic species, such as lions and elephants.[126] Subsequently, Stradanus had his designs reproduced by Antwerp engravers. Encouraged by the commercial success of the first series, he would, in due course, enlarge the collection to over 100 prints.[127]

Rubens turned his talents to the genre of the hunting scene in or immediately before 1616.[128] At that moment the representational repertoire of the archducal hunt was reaching its maturity. Rebuilt and expanded, the infrastructure was again fully operational. The seasonal rituals of the hunt had been reinstated. The legal framework had been revised. In the courtyard of the castle of Tervuren the

[123]Ibid., 50–51. See also Franke, 191–215.

[124]Balis, 1979–80, 18–19. The cycle is now in the Louvre.

[125]Balis, De Jonge, Delmarcel, and Lefebure, 12–36, 80–101.

[126]Meoni, 48–49.

[127]Sellink, 111.

[128]Balis, 1986, 98.

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new chapel was well underway. For the *Wolf and Fox Hunt* — his first endeavor in the genre — Rubens drew much of his inspiration from what was going on, particularly from the terms of the proclamation of 1613.[129] Charged with an unprecedented atmosphere of drama and brushed with crude depictions of violence, the *Wolf and Fox Hunt* opened new avenues of expression that Rubens would explore further in the next few years.[130] Snyders was soon to follow suit, creating a line depicting encounters of "fur against fur and feather against feather."[131] Toward the end of the decade Rubens and Brueghel would furthermore pool their talents to produce representations of Diana and her nymphs at different stages of the hunt. Under their cooperation, Brueghel provided the landscape and the animals (be they dogs or quarry), while Rubens peopled the scene with godly huntresses.[132] Each innovative in his own way, the three masters responded to how the hunt had become a vehicle of the restoration of Habsburg rule in the Netherlands.

Yet no matter how innovative, at the same time the *Wolf and Fox Hunt* stuck to established patterns by emphasizing the social distinction between the hunter and his retainers, by clothing the figures in the foreground in a jumbled Burgundian fashion, and by opting for dimensions — a probable 3.3 to 5.2 meters in the original state — that were more appropriate for a tapestry than for a painting on canvas.[133] Hence there was every reason to believe that Rubens fashioned the painting with the archdukes and their collections in mind. Any such hopes went unfulfilled though. According to the report of one of the agents of Sir Dudley Carleton (1573–1632), Rubens had assured him in February 1617 that Albert would indeed have acquired the painting "if anie roome in his howse at Brussels would have held it, excepting always his great hall, which is yours, or mine, as much as his."[134] The underlying message was clear: by virtue of its aristocratic subject matter and its majestic size, this was a painting worthy of a prince. While that statement had a ring of truth to it, the reality was nevertheless slightly different. Albert and Isabella did, after all, possess a second great hall in Tervuren, a hall that was closed to most outsiders, served to hang paintings, and where a hunting scene would not at all have been incongruous.[135] The argument of inadequate spaces may therefore well have been a diplomatic excuse of a reluctant buyer. It may also have been an overzealous sales pitch of an

[129]Koslow, 1996, 700–02.

[130]Balis, 1986, 63–67.

[131]Koslow, 1995, 219–57.

[132]Müller Hofstede, 200–22.

[133]Balis, 1986, 22, 68, 102n3. The painting, which is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has since been reduced in size to 2.45 to 3.76 m.

[134]Balis, 1986, 102n3.

[135]ARA, Werken van het Hof 365, 1620.

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eager vendor. Even so, neither one nor the other seemed to have precluded the acquisition of a *Tiger, Lion and Leopard Hunt* shortly thereafter.[136] The painting certainly matched the representational themes of the castle of Tervuren, but it would seem exaggerated to pretend that it had set the tone.

Early modern inventories can be frustratingly vague, and the one made in the castle of Tervuren in December 1620 was no exception. As the controller proceeded further in Albert's and Isabella's apartments, he encountered various mythological subjects. In the room that had the *Banquet of the Dukes of Burgundy* over the chimney, for instance, he recorded "a great painting representing three goddesses, a sea god and several small figures fleeing from the water," an *Andromeda*, and "a small piece of a feast of the gods." In the dining room three — and possibly even four — paintings represented scenes from the life of Diana. The cycle began with "the birth of gods with several nymphs," the plural suggesting that it depicted the births of Apollo and Diana on the island of Delos. There was also a "*Landscape with the Hunts of Diana*" and a "*History of Niobe*, very beautiful." The same appreciation was given to a *Banquet of the Gods* that might well have included a depiction of Diana.[137]

Recently, Katharina Van Cauteren has brought forward that the *Landscape with the Hunts of Diana* is to be identified with the *Diana Discovers the Transgression of Callisto* (fig. 6) in the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe. Also according to her, the *Landscape with Diana and Actaeon* in the Prado is one of the other Diana paintings mentioned in the inventories of Tervuren.[138] The two canvases were a collaborative effort of two court artists. Van Alsloot painted the landscape and Hendrik De Clerck (ca. 1560–1630) added the figures. Furthermore, a third work, the *Forest Landscape with Cephalus and Procris* of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, shows a number of striking similarities, suggesting it may have served a similar purpose.[139] The collaborative effort is just one of these shared characteristics. The Vienna picture is dated 1608, while the other two are believed to have been painted between that year and 1615. Based on Ovid, each metamorphosis has a bearing on the hunt. This in itself would not set these paintings apart from other run-of-the-mill mythologies in verdant landscapes that were either produced by the two artists or by their contemporaries.

Upon closer inspection, however, their backgrounds have more to offer than random scenery. Both the punishment of Callisto and the unfortunate inquisitiveness of Procris are enacted in the proximity of the priory of

[136]Balis, 1986, 138–39, 145n37.

[137]ARA, Werken van het Hof 365, 1620.

[138]Van Cauteren, 1:105–06. The two identifications are based on a subsequent inventory: see De Maeyer, 452.

[139]Van Sprang, 2000, 184–86.

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Figure 6. Denijs van Alsloot and Hendrik De Clerck. *Diana Discovers the Transgression of Callisto*, ca. 1610–15. © Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.

Groenendaal. For his part, Actaeon stumbles upon Diana in front of the Rooklooster. These monasteries feature prominently in the *Hunts of Maximilian*, serving as a means to localize the action. While Groenendaal and Rooklooster could be said to perform a similar function in the three paintings at hand, their purpose goes well beyond a mere checking in at a point on the map. The hunting party of the tapestries and the Sonian monasteries belonged to the same day and age. It would take a huge leap of imagination to say the same of the three metamorphoses. This is particularly clear in the case of *Cephalus and Procris*, where De Clerck saw fit to include a flight into Egypt in the distance. Thus three layers of time — mythological, biblical, and actual — are made to overlap in a single frame. Produced at the time that the archducal hunt was coming into its own and set in an environment where perceptions of time differed if not competed, these pictures had the effect of blurring the boundaries between actual and legendary space, thereby setting the Sonian Forest and its princely hunters apart in a zone where the difference between past and present had been suspended.

The inventory of 1620 did not give any indication as to if and where the *Forest Landscape with Cephalus and Procris* might have hung in the castle of Tervuren. Nor is there any certainty that the other episodes taken from the life of Diana were also depicted in existing Sonian surroundings. Yet there could be little doubt how the mythological pictures contributed to the overall representational program. The perception of time and space was of the essence. Set within the context of the realm of nature, the domination expressed by the performance of

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the hunt, the memories of dynastic achievement, and the Ovidian metamorphoses combined to proclaim a revived golden age — an age in which the classical gods once again shared the same time and space as man. The trope was of particular attraction to a regime seeking to repair the damage done by civil war. It would nonetheless work just as well a generation later when Rubens's mythological scenes and Snyders's hunting compositions joined Habsburg family portraits to decorate another royal hunting lodge, the Torre de la Parada in the preserve of El Pardo.[140]

ENDURANCE AND REVIVAL: THE FOREST, THE HUNT, AND THE STATE

Half a century after the two masters had created their *Diana and Her Nymphs Preparing for the Hunt*, the French painter and art critic Roger de Piles (1635–1709) claimed that the work had been made to meet the expectations of the infanta Isabella: "The Archduchess of Austria, who loved the hunt extremely and who wanted to have all the dogs of her pack painted by Brueghel, believed that to have a work that was curious and worthy of her, it was necessary for Rubens to paint the figures."[141] The claim was basically an endearing legend. Rather than adorning the walls of the palace, the painting had initially belonged to Rubens's personal collection.[142] Tervuren did have a large canvas that was inventoried in 1620 as *Doña Juana de Lunar with Multiple Dogs*, but it depicted Isabella's pets and not the archducal pack.[143] As legends go, however, there was some truth to it. The reign of the archdukes Albert and Isabella had seen a profound renewal of the hunt in the Habsburg Netherlands. The outcome went well beyond the mere repair of the damage done to the infrastructure by decades of neglect and civil war. Once again the boundaries between man and beast were marked out clearly. Wolves were hunted down in the countryside. Hunting laws were revised with the aim of creating a uniform legislation that would perpetuate social distinctions and protect the princely hunting preserves. The archducal court enacted the advent of a fragile peace in 1607 by reviving the large scale and costly practice of the hunt with the great cloths. Staged in the vicinity of the capital, these hunts performed the restoration of Habsburg rule. The momentum brought about by the renewal of the hunt under the archdukes inspired the leading artists of the day. Though not quite as specifically commissioned as future generations liked to imagine, their works reflected

[140]Alpers, 25–77, 101–45; recently, Georgievska-Shine and Silver.

[141][de Piles], 156. The painting is now in the Musée de la chasse et de la nature in Paris.

[142]Müller Hofstede, 204.

[143]ARA, Werken van het Hof 365, 1620; Duerloo and Thomas, 135; Terlinden, 196. The painting is now in the Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten in Brussels.

https://doi.org/10.1086/686328 Published online by Cambridge University Press

how the hunt stood for the return to peace, order, and hierarchy under a monarchical regime.

Rulers have engaged in the hunt for millennia. Over the generations some must have found more enjoyment in it than others. Following in the footsteps of Maximilian I, a few were even devotees to the point of recklessness. In the particular case of Albert and Isabella it was well known that "she delighteth much in rurall pastimes, he in devotion and managing of affaires."[144] Yet personal preference alone could never satisfactorily explain the importance that was accorded to the princely hunt. On the most basic level, it was a seasonal practice that brought the court into the open where it could be observed by outsiders and approached by petitioners. The status and size of the hunting party, the number and attire of specialized staff, the barking swarm of hounds, and the rarity of the hunting birds were all expressions of princely magnificence. Like in the day of Louis the Pious, the excitement of the chase served to demonstrate physical prowess and personal bravery. Adhering to the scripts of the Eurasian princely hunts allowed rulers to reach beyond the domestic arena and communicate with their fellow princes. In terms of symbolic communication the princely hunt performed dominion over the land in ways that no other ritual could.

All these traditional elements could be discerned in the archducal hunt. What set it apart from the general picture was first and foremost its deliberate nature. In most sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century courts the princely hunt was more or less a given, the outcome of a long evolution. The archducal regime, however, had little more than ruins and distant memories to start from. Rebuilding the hunt step by step, it laid bare which elements and practices the Renaissance court considered essential. In the process the hunt was turned into a performance to consolidate its power in the Habsburg Netherlands. It was by all means a tried and tested stratagem, but circumstances imposed some unusual constraints. The restoration of Habsburg rule in the southern provinces of the Netherlands was based on a compromise whereby obedience to the monarchy was dependent on respect for local privilege. As a consequence, the regime could not enhance its prestige by the nature of the quarry that was being hunted. Instead, it had to bolster its legitimacy — much like the Rajput princes — by performing the princely hunt at locations that were exclusive to the monarchy. Yet by the same token, circumstances allowed rather unusual opportunities. Once brought back into shape, the infrastructure of the princely hunt provided a rich repertoire for the seasonal performance of dominion. As they had in earlier Burgundian and Habsburg times, talented artists stood ready to supplement the daily grind of such rituals with more durable, if not always as easily accessible,

[144]NA, *State Papers Foreign*, 77, vol. 11 fol. 33^{r}: William Trumbull to Sir Ralph Winwood, 24 April 1614.

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imagery. Not least of all, the hunting preserves were steeped in almost a millennium of dynastic lore.

The performance of early modern monarchy is often considered from the perspective of the manipulation of space, with palaces, squares, and avenues serving as prime examples.[145] While the instrumentalization of the Sonian Forest certainly qualifies for such an approach, the case of the archducal hunt moreover demonstrates that manipulating space could go hand in hand with manipulating time. In a manner that prefigures the decoration of the Torre de la Parada, the metamorphoses by Van Alsloot and De Clercq fused a mythological past with the archducal present. Simultaneously, Albert and Isabella dedicated, or rededicated, their castle of Tervuren and the surrounding forest to Saint Hubertus, the patron saint of the hunt and a member of the Habsburg *beata stirps* (saintly kinship). The move was all the more understandable, as the forest was already — by virtue of the competing demands of forestry and the hunt — a zone where different perceptions of time coexisted. For Albert and Isabella the hunt was more than an exquisite pastime. It was an instrument to reach across the ages and suspend the boundaries of space and time in order to present their restored monarchical regime as a natural state of affairs that was rooted in times immemorial.

[145]Fantoni; Cohen and Szabo; Fantoni, Gorse, and Smuts.

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